

Backtrack

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Companion fic to Rewind. No-one knows where she's from or why she's there. She's a mystery. He's determined to find out who she is, but may be putting his own secrets at risk; secrets that are far more dangerous... secrets that are lethal. TomxGinny

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Peregrine

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the *whole thing* from Tom's POV. I know, I'm sad. If you haven't read Rewind, then I'm afraid that this isn't going to make any sense whatsoever, because everything is explained in there. Sorry. Hey, it's good publicity, right? ;D
Meanwhile, you Rewind-and-Tom-lovers, here's to you. I love you all insanely.

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Backtrack

Chapter One: Peregrine

Tom Riddle sat alone on the Hogwarts Express. He never expected any different. He was glad of it. He didn't work well with other people, and other people didn't work well with him. The only person who still would dare to make contact with him was Eleanor Fionn, the Gryffindor idiot who had been selected as Head Girl.

I wonder how many people she had to bribe to get that position.
Tom's lip curled. *She probably just batted her eyelashes.*

He glanced down at the badge pinned to his robe. It was adorned with the green letters *HB*. Head Boy. It wasn't much of an achievement. Being the most intelligent in the year only meant having an I.Q higher than that of an infant mosquito.

His breath formed frost on the window. It was raining outside; it always was. He thought it was ridiculous, to travel all the way from Scotland to London, just to come back up to Scotland.

The thought of where he'd travelled *from* flashed back to him. In his head, he saw a gate – red brick – squawking children and sharp-faced Mrs. Cole –

He tore his gaze from the window, and, simultaneously, his thoughts from where he lived.

Some raucous younger students ran past his compartment. He paid no attention to them. He pulled from his trunk one of his battered, secondhand NEWT-standard schoolbooks – Defence Against the Dark Arts; his favourite subject – and flipped open the first page.

It was three-and-a-half hours and five memorised spells before the Hogwarts Express pulled into the station at Hogsmeade. Tom packed his book back into his trunk and lifted the trunk from the compartment.

The crowds were dying down as the students, all eager to get to school, rushed for the carriages. Tom moved at an even, leisurely pace. Hogwarts was the only place in the world that he enjoyed being in; where he felt at home. Yet, he felt no urge to rush around like a fool to get there.

One carriage was left, as always. Tom allowed his eyes to flicker over to the black winged Threstrals that pulled it, and then climbed into the carriage. Despite it being the last to leave, it arrived at roughly the same time as the other carriages, and he left his trunk for the caretaker to collect, as always. He followed the hoard of adolescents through the Entrance Hall doors, and found a seat near the end of the table, fairly separated from everyone else.

He amused himself by watching the first-years, seeing the fearful awe on every face. He recognised a few features from a few faces, seeing the siblings of people that he knew... and a flash of scarlet.

Frowning, he searched again for the bright redness that he'd seen. It lurked somewhere in the middle of the cluster of first-years.

"Marianne Augustine!" called the Sorting Hat.

A small, chubby girl who looked absolutely terrified stumbled up to the front. She was chosen for Hufflepuff, and the list progressed.

As the number of first-years dwindled down, that crimson became more obvious. It wasn't, as he had presumed, some Gryffindor fanatic who already had the corresponding robes... it was someone's *hair*.

A girl. She was small, but from her build, clearly not eleven. From the distance, Tom could see little of her, but could distinguish pale features, a long tangle of vivid hair the colour of fire, and an expression of being totally unfazed by everyone staring at her.

"Do not lift your cutlery yet!" Headmaster Dippet called across the Hall. "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!"

Information moved through Tom's brain rapidly, as it always did, each piece being stored separately for later probing.

Ginevra – Italian for Guinevere. Is she queenly? Does she think herself superior to everyone else? She has the right hair colour. Is she from Italy?

Peregrine – the traveller. How fitting.

She's presumably sixteen, possibly seventeen. She's tiny for her age.

Transfer-student? That's ridiculous. Where did she transfer from? Hogwarts has no connections with other schools, save for the Triwizard Tournament. Why is she here?

The Sorting Hat took an unusually long time Sorting her. Tom couldn't help but smirk. The ones that took ages normally became

Hufflepuffs – they fitted nowhere, with no personality, so they were put into the idiot's House.

However, she didn't look like the sort of person who would have no personality, so Tom was curious for the outcome.

"SLYTHERIN!"

That was certainly not what he hadn't expected. Gryffindor, at least. Even the girl – Peregrine – seemed slightly alarmed, but then seemed to accept her fate and trotted down towards the table where she was spend the meal-times of the next two years.

Unknowingly, she walked straight past him. He watched her as she headed down the table, looking for a space. She moved with a slight grace, though her step suggested clumsiness.

Peregrine looked left and right. She could probably feel him looking at her. He did that to some people. It was a shame. He didn't know why, but she'd had an effect on him. He expected her to be more than that.

No-one ever be more than that , he reminded himself. The inhabitants of the world are weak, and even the mildest concentrated gaze can chill.

Peregrine sat between Hartwin and Philips, two other sixth-years and began to engage them in conversation. The food arrived, but as Tom ate, he still watched the new girl, interested. He wondered what she was saying. What kind of person was she?

He was halfway through his slab of duck-meat when he noticed that Peregrine was having an argument with Bastet – undoubtedly the most irritating person ever to be placed in Slytherin. Bemused, Tom tuned in.

"I'm sorry," he heard, echoing loudly from the other side of the table – with a screech of her bench being pushed back, she stood, glaring

evenly across at Bastet, "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* ."

Though Tom's expression didn't change at all, inwardly, he raised one eyebrow. He was clearly going to find out about her by process of elimination. She wasn't the type to be obsessed with make-up – that much was apparent from the wild tangle that her red hair was. She didn't stand for people like Bastet. She was fierce, and she didn't care about making a bad impression.

...Interesting.

Tom watched, setting his fork down. Who would back down first? The new girl, surely. Bastet was the sixth-year Slytherin Queen, in her own mind. In the first five minutes, surely Peregrine couldn't-

"What's going on?" asked Professor Vander, the Charms teacher, standing to break up the fight.

...And Bastet turned away first.

Tom stared through narrowed eyes. Despite himself, he felt a grudging respect for anyone who could destroy Claude Felina Bastet within five minutes of meeting her.

Peregrine sat, returning to her conversation with Hartwin and Philips, both of whom looking as equally astounded as every other Slytherin did. She didn't seem to notice this, and continued to chatter with them. For the most of it, as Tom watched, she seemed perfectly cheerful and welcoming... however, one comment made her face fall one notch, a flash of extreme sadness echoing across her pale face, and then she was back to being friendly, smiling.

She's sad, but she hides it... for her own benefit, or for others'?

Hartwin knocked a cake-plate into a second-year sitting across from her. This was when Tom remembered that he hadn't finished eating, and continued to fork duck-meat into his mouth.

"Students!" Dippet called, stepping up from where he sat at the teacher's table. "I hope you have enjoyed your dinner, and now, if you continue to your dormitories. Prefects, if you could show the... oh. Bother." Dippet frowned.

Tom inwardly rolled his eyes. *You've forgotten to choose the Prefects again, haven't you?*

"Head Boy and Girl, and if you could the first-years to your Houses. Tom, if you could show the Slytherins and Hufflepuffs? And Eleanor, the Gryffindors and Ravenclaws, please."

As Tom stood, he heard Dippet call, "Miss Peregrine?" He ignored this, and located the first-years on both of the tables that he was set to show the Houses of. He loathed eleven-year-olds, but as it was his first duty as Head Boy, he wasn't going to refuse to do it.

"Up those stairs and to the left is the Hufflepuff common room," Tom said uninterestedly, pointing towards a spiralling set of stairs at the end of the Entrance Hall. "The password is *vulagrises*."

He, at least, found it amusing that the Hufflepuff common room's password was Latin for *commoners*. Seemingly, none of the first-years spoke Latin, so he left them there.

"Slytherins," he said. "This way."

It was strange to think that, as he descended the cold stone dungeon steps, he wouldn't be coming down here this year, save for Potions. He had every right to – he could now go into every common room – but he simply saw no reason to. His own common room was not only far better, but also more solitary.

Except for Fionn.

"The password is *Ophiuchus* ," Tom left them with that, and climbed the stairs to the third-floor, where the Head common room was. "*Condolesam* ," he said to the portrait of Robin the Rich.

"Certainly, sir," said the portly man, sweeping into a bow. "Enjoy your Headship."

As Tom stepped through the portrait-hole, he narrowed his eyes. Robin the Rich had been foul to him for six years, and now that he was Head Boy, he was practically kissing his foot. It was sickening.

"Hi, Tom!" chirped Fionn, bouncing up to greet him. To his alarm and horror, she flounced closer – and closer – and kissed him on the cheek. "How was your summer?"

"Fine," he muttered – a total lie – and ignoring his suddenly very warm cheek.

There was a silence.

"Aren't you going to ask how mine was?" Fionn prompted after her a second, tilting her head in a silly way so that all of her blonde hair fell sideways.

"No." Tom turned his back on her and made his way up the stairs to the door marked *Head Boy – Tom Riddle*. He pushed it open and snapped it shut behind him.

Hm.

The Head Boy dormitory was spacious, and apparently, by enchantment, he supposed, decorated to exactly his taste. Dark green. Dark desk, dark wardrobe. He unpacked neatly, and then sat on the edge of the large and comfortable bed.

This is much better than the Slytherin dormitories.

He stood again, and crossed to the bookcase where he'd set his schoolbooks. He took out the Defence Against the Dark Arts book

again and continued to read.

About half an hour later, a soft knock came on his door.

"Can I come in?" Fionn's Irish voice asked from outside.

"No." Tom closed his book. "I'll meet you in the common room." This room was strictly his, and he would not stand for it being invaded by other people. He grabbed his cloak from the back of the door – he didn't like being seen in anything less than the full school uniform. It made him feel uncomfortable. Then he headed back towards the common room.

Fionn clearly didn't feel the same way he did about uniform. She sat in only her school skirt and shirt, curled up in the armchair. Her feet were bare.

Tom sat as far away from her as possible.

He didn't like feet.

"We need to organise when the first Prefect meeting is going to be," Fionn told him.

"After breakfast, tomorrow."

She blinked. "...Okay." She leafed through a sheet of paper. "Er... I have the Prefect list here... do you want to read it?" She tossed it onto the table between them.

Taking the list, Tom flipped to the first page. *Amelia Brown... Robert Harris... Olive Hornby... Scott Reeve... Antonia-May Durrell... Gareth Coville... Ginevra Peregrine... Jack Swithin...*

A frown creased his forehead. Peregrine? But she was new.

"Peregrine?" he asked Fionn.

The blonde shrugged. "I dunno. Ask Dippet, not me."

"Is that all?" he said coldly, setting the list of Prefects and the table and pushing it towards her. He stood. Even three metres away, he was much too close to her feet. It didn't help that the feet belonged to someone he despised.

Fionn looked slightly upset. "Do you hate me?" she asked.

He groaned silently, to himself. He looked away at the ceiling. Why. Why him? He folded his arms and looked back at her lower-lip-jutting-out face. "I *adore* you," he told her icily. "Now can I go?"

She sighed. "Okay. Goodnight, Tom."

He suppressed a shudder. He hated the use of his first-name. He climbed back up to his bedroom; spared a glance at his waiting Defence Against the Dark Arts book, but instead went to sleep.

A year with Fionn. This is going to be terrible.

Tom was early for breakfast. He finished his food first, but stayed to watch the owls come in. He liked owls. They could be aloof and cold-hearted and no-one would complain. They could bite people, and then those infuriating *aww look at the little birdies* type of girls would back off. They could fly – and best of all, they didn't talk.

He never received any post; he never expected any post. Yet, for some reason, he still looked up when the tremendous ruffle of feathers and parchment filled the Great Hall.

He later scolded himself, because while he watched the birds, something happened, and he hadn't been paying attention.

"... They don't matter," Bastet's snide voice rose above the others, drawing him back to reality. "And *you* don't matter either." She was talking to Peregrine, he realised, and looked over to see her reaction.

It was quite astonishing, actually, how rapidly Peregrine's face flushed from white to scarlet. And then she threw a plate at Bastet.

Tom's eyebrows rose.

Bastet had flung her hands up, so was sadly unharmed, but she still looked furious. "You... you ripped my robes, you little *bitch* !"

"You have no idea how it feels to lose *everything* ."

Tom barely heard her speak; her voice was so low and lethal that it chilled him. She was definitely not your average sixth-year.

Hartwin grabbed at Peregrine's arm, but the redhead stormed from the Great Hall. Applause from every table followed her, but she didn't seem to care. She disappeared through the door and didn't come back.

Show's over. Time to go.

The Head Boy stood and moved away from the table towards the Head common room for the Prefect meeting. He moved silently, in clear view of everyone, yet somehow not being seen.

Fionn wasn't back from breakfast yet when he arrived. He fetched his schoolbag from his bedroom, dropped it by the portrait-hole, out of the way so that people wouldn't step on it, and then sank into a seat.

The first to arrive was Fionn, followed by the Gryffindor Prefects – Brown and Harris. Clearly when she left, they had pursued her. Then Durrell, Hornby, Coville, Swithin, and Reeve.

Only one was missing.

Peregrine.

After about ten minutes of waiting, Tom heard from outside, "Er. Can I go in? I'm a Prefect."

His eyes narrowed. *You need the password, stupid.*

Robin the Rich asked, "Do you have the password?"

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

Yes, you are.

"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," Peregrine complained.

"I suggest you start looking, then."

There was a shallow groan, then a pause. "Er... conda... no, condel...? *Condolesam* , that's it," Peregrine said.

"Yes; you may enter."

Tom stood. He hadn't welcomed anyone else, if that was the right word for staring coldly at people as they came in, but he crossed to the portrait-hole.

The painting swung backwards in opening, and Peregrine stepped inside.

What do you think? Yeah, it's kind of stupid. In this fic, I decided that Tommy was going to be Scottish. I don't know why. In my head, his accent is slightly Scottish, so why not? By the way, if you want a song that *literally* suits every mood – fights, sadness, happiness, fluff – then try I Need You by Relient K . It's amazing. It works with the fluffy bits better than anything.

Also, I have to say that this is going to be slow posting, because while I skipped ahead to do the fluffiest bits (couldn't resist –wink-), I still have to type up the boring bits, which is actually really hard, because all that space-filling sub-plots that

Ginny was involved in, like Scott and Grace and Alden and working out mysteries and Svengali and stuff, he's got nothing to do with... but because he's such a lonely loser, he has no sub-plots. So it's kind of lame, but also really difficult.

Anyway, please review!

Heart, me. x.

Distract Me

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: YAYYY! Next chapter up. I am SO busy, because I have to write it, edit it, update it, and then also get on with that annoying thing called Real Life. Pah. Yeah, here's the next chapter...

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Backtrack

Chapter Two: Distract Me

" Yes; *you may enter.*"

Tom stood. He hadn't welcomed anyone else, if that was the right word for staring coldly at people as they came in, but he crossed to the portrait-hole.

The painting swung backwards in opening, and Peregrine stepped inside.

It struck Tom again how short she was. The top of her head just about reached his shoulders. He saw her forehead furrowing as she tried

to adjust to the brightness of the room.

Then she tilted her head back to look straight up at him.

His breath caught.

Hers caught too, though hers was more obvious than his, as he was accustomed to hiding everything.

Now, finally, less than a metre from her – closer than he could ever remember being to anyone, though he hadn't intentionally placed himself so near to her – he could see her in astonishing detail.

Ginevra Peregrine's face wasn't flawlessly pale, as he had assumed, seeing her from a distance. It was instead splattered with the largest quantity of freckles that he had ever seen on a person. Her hair was pulled over one shoulder, perhaps in anxiety; not so much auburn, like some of the other ginger-haired students at Hogwarts. There was no other word for it than *red*. It was dark, tangled, scarlet, wild, a slight fringe falling over into her eyes. And it was her eyes that had stopped his breath. They were the most unbelievable colour that he'd ever seen – they were so *many* colours. He could see chocolate and black and gold and emerald and jade and hazelnut and tea and grey and the barest amount of an almost feline yellow, near the pupils. Eyes outlined in green that only made her eyes bigger and more round and more astounding -

He wondered why he hadn't breathed yet.

Perhaps it was because she was beautiful.

Disgusted with himself, he felt a strong dislike for Peregrine – simply because he loathed the fact that anyone could have such an effect on him. "You're late," he said.

She took a deep breath. "I got lost," she said. "I'm new." Her voice was soft, but strong.

He was trying not to let her have any other effect on him, but his eyes flickered involuntarily from the freckles to the dark eyelashes to those eyes again.

"I know," he replied coolly.

"Um." She attempted a smile. "My name's Ginny Peregrine."

Why does she cut it short to 'Ginny'? What a vile, infantile name. Ginevra is perhaps precocious, a name for a Queen, but surely it's better than the name of some child.

"Riddle." He turned his back promptly on her and returned to his seat.

"Hey, you must be Ginevra Peregrine," said Fionn, leaping to her feet, smiling broadly.

"Ginny," Peregrine corrected. Tom's lip curled.

"Oh, sorry," Fionn apologised. "I'm Eleanor Fionn, Head Girl." The others followed her example and gave their names and Houses. "So, where'd you transfer from?"

Tom would have interrupted to tell them to save their meaningless chatter for later, but was mildly interested in this. He listened.

"Er. London."

He frowned. She didn't sound like a Londoner.

"But I'm actually Irish."

She *certainly* didn't sound Irish. He suppressed a groan. There would be no stopping Fionn now; she was Irish, too.

"Really?" Fionn squealed. "Oh, me too? Did you learn Wizarding Gaelic?" She promptly began to chatter away in a foreign language that Tom didn't understand a word of. To his satisfaction, Peregrine also looked totally blank.

"Sorry," Peregrine said. "I haven't lived in Ireland since I was a baby, so I don't actually know Wizarding whatever. Gaelic. That."

"Oh."

"Once you've *quite* finished." Tom decided that this was cue to cut in. He noticed that Peregrine looked at the floor, instead of at him. He wondered why. "This was not called as a social session. We have matters to discuss." He glanced across at Fionn.

The blonde cleared her throat. "Of course. 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."

Harris' jaw dropped. "What could be more exciting and fun than *food*?"

Just about everything, Harris. May I also recommend a diet?

"How about a dance?" Durrell said, tossing her hair back. "A big fancy ball like Durmstrang had at the last Triwizard Tournament. That'd be fun."

Good God, no. Fionn, stop her.

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

Excellent.

"We could have a disco for the under-fourteens," Peregrine volunteered. Tom's eyes snapped to her. His dislike for her increased as she unhelpfully continued, "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."

NO. His gaze flashed to Fionn. *Don't you dare .*

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

... *I hate you.*

Peregrine lifted her thin hand straight into the air; as did the other girls, Coville and Reeve. For some reason, when Peregrine looked Tom's way, she seemed very smug to see that he hadn't raised his hand.

"Majority rules," Fionn said, thus dooming Tom to a terrible Hallowe'en. "Now, let's have two teams. One works on the ball, and the other works on the disco. *Equal* teams, please."

Tom pulled a roll of parchment from his bag and wrote *Hallowe'en Ball*, then, beneath that, *Tom Riddle*. He refused to work with the pathetic younger students who would be terrorized by him. Then he sat back. "I'm not working with glitter and fashion parades for the younger ones," he said coldly.

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

His eyes narrowed and his lip curled. He didn't appreciate being made fun of. He certainly didn't appreciate his first-name being used so flippantly in front of other people.

He watched as Reeve, Durrell, Brown and Coville signed up their names beneath his. Soon, the only person who hadn't signed up for either team was Peregrine.

She picked up the quill, and leaned over the pieces of parchment set out for her to choose between. Her hair fell forwards, hiding her face. Then, after a pause, she scrawled untidily *Ginny Peregrine* on the sheet for the disco.

Good.

"Alright, then, Ginny, you're with us," Fionn said brightly.

Tom stared forwards. He was glad that she wasn't working with him – she was an irritating distraction. Yet, somehow... he wanted to be distracted. And then he was furious with himself for letting go of everything that he knew was safe and good. Those ideas were dangerous... fatal.

When Tom entered the Head common room, he saw with alarm and disgust that Fionn was with her friends, Adel, Corgan and North. They were all sitting on the floor, talking loudly. Fionn had curlers in her hair and was painting something red onto Corgan's lips; Adel was colouring her toenails...

Feet!

Tom took a step backwards. Good God. Four pairs of bare feet. Would he make it to his bedroom before it was too late?

"Hey, Tom!" Fionn said, beaming.

"What the ruddy hell are you doing?" he growled.

Her grin got wider. "Having a party!" she said cheerfully. "See?" She wiggled her toes at him.

He took another step back. "Can you do that somewhere else? In your room, perhaps?" he suggested glacially.

"But then we wouldn't get to see you," Adel screeched with laughter.

Tom fired mental spears at the Gryffindor who had just spoken, seething. "You've seen me – now get lost."

"We were here first," Fionn pointed out, narrowing her blue eyes at him.

I do not give a damn. GET OUT.

However, something was rising instead him – something terrible – he had to get away – his bedroom was closest – but – he clenched his jaw tight, breathing deep to calm down. It was the feet that had triggered it.

"Fine," he snapped, and, with a swirl of his cloak, stormed away.

He headed for the library, thinking of how he could probably find a copy of his Defence Against the Dark Arts textbook there, and focused on this thought to calm himself down.

Pushing the door open, he located the book he wanted and then moved towards an unoccupied table.

His eyes were tracing over the diagrams of a new incantation when he heard the door open. He didn't look up.

Someone cleared their throat.

Tom didn't bother to look up. What could they possibly want?

"Um. Can I sit here?"

It was Peregrine. His surprise made his eyes, without him commanding them to, flash up to hers, finding her strong hazel eyes immediately. She raised her eyebrows, as if to say 'well?'

"I'm not stopping you," he said, and then looked back down at his book.

A loud noise broke his concentration as Peregrine dragged her chair back, dumped her bag, and dropped her books on the table. He looked up at her, jaw tightening, annoyance screaming through his head.

"Yes?" she asked innocently, smiling at him.

He pressed his lips together into a thin line. "I didn't say anything," he said, his tone short, and continued to read.

The next distraction came in the form of a soft munching noise. Irritated, Tom looked up again. Peregrine was eating a bar of chocolate absent-mindedly as he wrote, though it seemed to him that most of it was on her cheek, not in her mouth.

"What are you eating?" Tom asked, frowning, though he already knew.

"Oh." Peregrine coloured. "Nothing." She stuffed it back into her robes.

He lifted one eyebrow. "If that's the case," he said sarcastically, "then you have quite a lot of *nothing* smeared on your cheek."

The pink on her face deepened to a scarlet. She wiped her cheeks with the sleeve of her robes. "Anything else?" she said hotly, seeming not to care about being caught pigging out on junk food.

"Yes. Why are you here?" He leaned back, resting his elbows on the arm-rests of the chair he sat in.

"Erm, because I'm doing my homework?"

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

"Don't you have a Head common room to *read* in?" Peregrine retorted.

Touché .

"Yes, I do, but it's currently being used the Head Girl to hold one of her ridiculous girl-talk, toenail-painting, hair-curling parties," he snapped, his lip curling just at the memory. "Excuse me if I don't wish to take part in such activities."

"What, no pretty pink toenails?" Peregrine smirked.

"No."

"My toenails are pink," said Peregrine. She batted her eyelashes at him, slowing down the world for a split-second for him before it came back to normal speed with the words: "Want to see?"

"No, I do *not* ." His eyes narrowed lethally at the very thought of feet. He had come here to *escape* feet, not to be pursued by them!

"Aw, I bet you do!" Peregrine had this silly grin on her freckled face, and he knew what was coming before it did. "*Here it cooomes !*"

She was kicking off her shoe – reaching for sock – PANIC –

He whipped his wand out and pointed it at her face. "*Move that sock one inch further down your foot and I will jinx your head off .*"

Too late he realised that this was a deadly mistake that could kill her – emotions flooding his system – heart pounding – head swimming – threatening death – the thing inside him agreed, roared, snarled – he fought to keep control, though he didn't show it on his face. That would be weakness, and weakness was unacceptable, no matter how susceptible to it he really was.

"Okay, okay!" Her eyes were wide, and she put her shoe back on, wriggling her ankle to get the shoe to fit. "Jesus Christ, Riddle. Couldn't you just threaten to take off House points?"

With a slight internal struggle, Tom lowered his wand, and stowed it inside his robes. "I'm in your House; I'd be removing my own points," he told her, though in all honesty this reason for pulling his wand on her had never crossed his mind. "Besides, jinxing off someone's head is immensely satisfying."

A smirk pulled at Peregrine's lip. "My thoughts exactly."

Tom paused for a second to ensure that he had total control of himself, before continuing the conversation – if it could be called that – and voicing: "You still haven't told me why you're here. I had a feminine party to avoid. What's your excuse?"

She sighed, which caught him off-guard. She had been so cheeky, so uncaring as to what everyone else thought – and now this flash of what she really felt-

"Nothing," she said, perfectly normal again.

There she went, hiding behind her smile.

What he would give to know what went on behind those freckles of hers, inside her head.

"Or have you come merely to irritate me and distract me from my work?" Tom asked. Then he realised what he had actually said – *distract me* . For a moment, he panicked... Luckily, the context in which he had said it meant that she could take that as meaning that her irritating distracted him... and nothing else.

"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?" he demanded, returning to the original question.

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

"Why!?"

"Because you're infuriating!"

"I'm infuriating." He was incredulous, for the most part. Infuriating? He had scarcely said three words to her before now. " *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," he muttered. What had Dippet been *thinking* ?

"And I, of you Head Boy!"

WHAT? !

" *What the hell is that supposed to mean ?*" Riddle snarled, standing. He could feel control slipping away, but right now this girl had angered him to the point where he didn't care.

"CHILDREN!" Madam Crofton came into view. "WHAT ARE YOU DOING? THE LIBRARY CLOSED AN HOUR AGO. YOU'LL MISS CURFEW IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL. HONESTLY. TEENAGERS THESE DAYS."

Oh God , Tom realised with a start, seeing how angry he'd become. He tried to breathe normally and calm himself down. He despised her, certainly – but not to the point of wanting to get her killed.

Peregrine snapped her gaze from him and turned Madam Crofton. "I'm terribly sorry, miss. I must have not noticed the time fly, what with all our..." her eyes flashed sideways in an impressive glare, "*sweet-talking* ." She grabbed her bag and stalked out of the library.

Tom, head spinning, slung his own bag and moved quickly from the library, head hurting with the effort of keeping himself normal...
human ...

He hurried back to his dormitory as quickly as possible. Flora's friends were still there, though the bare feet didn't bother him nearly as much as what was going on inside his head – an argument with himself.

She infuriates you... kill her...

STOP IT. SHUT UP.

You might as well... she's only been here a day... no-one would really miss her... she has no family, you heard that much in the Great Hall...

I'm not listening to you.

Kill her...

SHUT UP.

He slammed his bedroom door behind him, threw a Silencing Charm at the walls, and then roared and kicked the desk as hard as he could, letting the warped, destructive urges that weren't his own come out. He broke one of the drawers, and it rattled out, shattered on the floor.

Staring down at the broken drawer, Tom took a deep breath.

Calm down. Breathe.

This was ridiculous. How could some pathetic new girl have this effect on him – she'd only been here a day! It was almost impossible to hate someone as strongly, as fiercely as he hated her. Everything about her was designed to infuriate him, designed to go against what he knew. Hazel and red... she was colour, he was black and white. She was happiness, he was misery. She was brave, and he hid within himself. She was life... he was death.

HAHAHA. He doesn't like feet. Sorry, I just find that really funny. For all you people asking why not – does he need a reason? I mean, I don't like fish, for absolutely no reason. There is no point to it. I just hate them. Lol. Reviewwww!

Heart, me. x.

Touche

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: YAYYY! Next chapter up. I am SO busy, because I have to write it, edit it, update it, and then also get on with that annoying thing called Real Life. Pah. Yeah, here's the next chapter...

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Three: Touché

He slammed his bedroom door behind him, threw a Silencing Charm at the walls, and then roared and kicked the desk as hard as he could, letting the warped, destructive urges that weren't his own come out. He broke one of the drawers, and it rattled out, shattered on the floor. Staring down at the broken drawer, Tom took a deep breath.

This was ridiculous. How could some pathetic new girl have this effect on him – she'd only been here a day! It was almost impossible to hate someone as strongly, as fiercely as he hated her. Everything about her was designed to infuriate him, designed to go against what he knew. Hazel and red... she was colour, he was black and white. She was happiness, he was misery. She was brave, and he hid within himself. She was life... he was death.

The temperature outdoors dropped with the passing weeks. Most people wore scarves and hats now. Tom didn't. He wasn't bothered by the cold. He preferred the cold, as it meant that no-one would stare at him for wearing every item of the school uniform that he

owned, whereas in the summer he usually received at least one unpleasant comment about never even removing his cloak.

Tom had previously scheduled the next Prefect meeting for Thursday, but Fionn had complained and whined about wanting to see her stupid friends on Thursday for a week, even though to the lengths to leave him little notes on his door saying, *Please reschedule the meeting*. Though was amusing to see that she didn't feel brave enough to do anything without his consent, he reluctantly gave in, so at the last minute, it had been changed to Tuesday.

Probably few of the Prefects will have heard, and no-one will turn up, he predicted as he finished writing down his homework for Transfiguration.

"Class dismissed," called Professor Dumbledore to the students in front of him, but as Tom began to pack his things, he heard, "but, Tom, please, could I see you?"

Annoyance at the use of his birth-name flickered on Tom's face, but he masked it well, and moved towards the front desk. "Yes, sir?"

Dumbledore smiled. "I just wanted to congratulate you on the Headship," he said warmly. "I think you deserved it more than anyone else. Professor Dippet made a good choice."

"Thank you, sir," said Tom stiffly.

You called me back just to say that? This was pointless.

"Is that all, sir? I don't mean to seem rude, but I have a Prefect meeting to supervise," said Tom. Silently, he corrected, *I mean to be every bit as rude as I'm acting.*

"Oh, yes. Well, good luck, Tom."

The seventeen-year-old swept from the classroom and made his way swiftly towards the Head common room, to wait for the others.

Fionn and Coville were already there.

Surprisingly, everyone turned up... actually, not *quite* everyone.

Just as Tom was about to say that Reeve and Peregrine probably hadn't heard and that the meeting should start without them, he heard footsteps coming down the hallway. He stood to... 'welcome' them again.

"I know how it is," said Reeve's voice, disgustingly flattering, a display that was only put on for females. " *Condolesam* ."

The painting swung open, and Tom came face to face with Peregrine, sticking her tongue out at him. Reeve burst out laughing.

"Um. Hello," said Peregrine. "I wasn't poking my tongue 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..."

Tom disregarded her discomfited apology, and said coldly, "Is being late for everything a habit of yours?" He longed to add, *I suppose that you could always continue your irritation circus-act by not turning up at all... but I think I'd prefer that anyway.* He kept it to himself.

"Oh yes," Peregrine said airily. "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."

As soon as the words were out of her mouth, she became totally still, as if afraid.

Anger flashed through Tom's face, but then he really that, being perfectly honest, she was right. He had no idea what made him say it... perhaps it was those infuriating eyes... "Touché."

He turned away from her and sat down again. As soon as Reeve and Peregrine were seated, he began. "Today, as those intelligent of us

would know," (he didn't change his tone for that sentence, but the word intelligent had a silent, unspoken emphasis that flickered up an image of Peregrine. In his peripheral vision, he saw her glare at the floor. So she hadn't missed that comment. Good.) "is the fifteenth of October. The time to prepare for our delightful bal-and-disco is growing short."

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

"Very well." Tom wrote beside his name on the original scrap of parchment that they had decided the teams on, the word *President*.

I am the Head Boy, after all. Why shouldn't I be the President of the team? I'm the oldest, and the most intelligent. There's no need for a nomination.

"If the ball could come this way, and we could be quite separated so that each party will be unique," said Tom, beckoning boredly with one hand. He glanced across at Fionn, who was quite famed for stealing other people's ideas.

Reeve came up with the idea for a Ghost Ball, and, on a spare piece of parchment, began to sketch out ideas. Tom couldn't be bothered to argue. It was just a ball, after all.

When the latest look at his pocket-watch showed Tom that five minutes had passed since they had separated to discuss their ideas, he called both groups back together.

"Who is the leader of your group?" Tom asked, leaning back. He already knew the answer, of course-

"Me," said Peregrine, smirking and raising her eyebrows.

WHAT? I'm not working with her – she's insane. Fionn is supposed to be the leader!

"Happy?" Peregrine simpered.

"Very," he said flatly.

"So what's your plan?" asked Fionn.

"A ghost ball," Reeve said, holding up his sheet of parchment to explain the drawings. Tom was disgusted when the Ravenclaw male tossed a wink at Peregrine – something close to anger, but not quite the same, rose inside him – and then continued. "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 Fionn. "Now. Ginny?"

Peregrine leaned forwards to closely inspect what Reeve had drawn and written. There was a pause, and then she said, "I'm working here from your ideas..." she paused again, her eyes flickering under her fringe from one diagram to the next. "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."

"What about the ball?" Durrell asked, looking at Tom.

"Midnight."

Peregrine chuckled. Everyone else looked blankly at her, not understanding her humour.

"Like Cinderella," she explained, grinning.

Tom smirked. How immature... but of course that was how she would see it. Peregrine glanced over towards him, and said, "Never

mind."

Then, however, a thought came to Tom. How did she know about Cinderella? He frowned. She was a pureblood. Perhaps she had already gone over that section of the Muggle Studies course at whatever school she'd come from.

The meeting drew to a close shortly after, and Tom was unsure why... but Peregrine cast him an unreadable glance before exiting with Durrell and Reeve.

One thing was for certain. Almost everything that he had originally assumed about her was wrong, for he never could have guessed this strange, mysterious character.

Ooh... anyone else recognise that unfamiliar burst of hot anger? We'll be seeing a lot of it. –wink- I love you all, please review!

Heart, me. x.

Alone In A Boat

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: Thank you for the reviews, I love you all. If you want a brilliant song to listen to that makes you cry even when you're *not* reading anything, just thinking, then listen to *Give A Little Love* by Noah and the Whale. It's amazing. Also, I'd like to say that yes, Ginny was classified as a Mugglie. However, if you skip back a bit, all the times that Claude was having a go at her or something, Tom wasn't paying attention. Like, the first time, he only looked up in time to hear Ginny say "you have no idea how it feels to lose everything" and flounce out, so he missed the whole "urrr you're a Muggle" conversation. And also he's in denial, because he doesn't believe that it can be possible that he's not in the only impure Slytherin. Thanks!

The chapter title is really weird... hahah.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Four: Alone In A Boat

Then, however, a thought came to Tom. How did she know about Cinderella? He frowned. She was a pureblood. Perhaps she had already gone over that section of the Muggle Studies course at whatever school she'd come from.

The meeting drew to a close shortly after, and Tom was unsure why... but Peregrine cast him an unreadable glance before exiting with Durrell and Reeve.

One thing was for certain. Almost everything that he had originally assumed about her was wrong, for he never could have guessed this strange, mysterious character.

The thought of spending more time with a certain annoying red-haired female Slytherin Prefect was not a thought that Tom dwelled on, because, in his opinion, this was the worst possible thing that could have happened.

However, it had to be done. To save himself at least five minutes of seeing her, Tom sent a message across to her via Philips, who was tolerable, telling her that their meeting for getting the final details of the Hallowe'en ball and disco was scheduled for Saturday, in the early afternoon.

The day had come.

He wasn't looking forwards to it.

After breakfast, he had sat himself down in his usual seat and began to write out the letter for Dippet that was necessary for any outside-of-curriculum activities.

Tom heard Peregrine come in, but didn't bother to look up. Neatly copying out his rough notes into letter-form, he said, "There's a word on the tip of my tongue right now. It starts with 'L' and ends in 'ate'."

"Levitate?" Peregrine sank into the seat opposite him.

Not bad for a split-second comeback.

"Not quite," he replied coolly, and he held his gaze with hers before looking back down at his notes. "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," Peregrine said.

"I happen to enjoy being a... what was it? An ' *obnoxious up-myself arsehole ninety-nine percent of the time* ' , I believe it was." He smirked.

"Word for word? My, my, Riddle, you are a talented little boy, aren't you?" Peregrine grabbed a piece of parchment and began to scrawl across it.

Tom was a perfectionist, and was irritated by the messiness of her writing, but didn't comment. Instead, he said, "I hardly think you're anyone to speak of 'little'."

"The best things come in small packages." Peregrine grinned, winking at him. It lit up her face, as if setting fire to her freckles... she seemed to glow...

Tom raised one eyebrow at her, and then continued to write. For once, apparently, Peregrine felt not the need to say stupid things to fill the quiet... it had him wondering if she felt the need to say stupid things at all. Perhaps it was another one of these things that she hid behind...

She was a mystery, that much was true in every aspect...

Tom realised after a couple of minutes of abnormal silence that Peregrine had stopped writing. Perhaps she was daydreaming. He considered startling her back into reality, but decided instead that it would be more satisfying to be finished long before her, and to say snidely, *Aren't you done yet?*

A low, rapid mutter filled his ears.

Perhaps she's finished before me. That isn't good. Perhaps she's re-reading her letter to Dippet.

The mutter became faster and louder...

What is she doing?

THUMP.

Tom looked up in alarm. Peregrine was on the floor – it was almost funny how she was small even to be completely hidden by the table. He peered around the corner of table, and came across a frightening sight.

Her eyes were rolled back inside her head – she was shaking – shuddering –

She was acting like *he* did when the monster inside him was too strong to control.

Fear paralyzed him for a second. Did she know about him? How could she possibly know? Was this some sick joke? Because it wasn't at all funny – not in the slightest.

Then his reactions kicked into action, and he pushed himself out of his chair, his quill clattering to the floor. Warily, he crouched beside her. "Peregrine?"

And she began to scream.

"Peregrine!" he shouted. "Peregrine – Peregrine, stop it! Stop it!"

The scream was getting louder and longer and sharper – it was hurting his head –

Though he was never, *ever* admit it, even under torture, at that second, terror coursed through him. He imagined that this was it. He imagined that in a moment the scream would stop, and the heartbeat would stop, and that would be it... she'd be dead, and she wouldn't move, and he'd be trapped alone in a room with a dead girl... a dead girl who happened to be beautiful...

PANIC – FEAR – something was coming up inside his chest, snarling, snapping – PANIC -

"PEREGRINE!"

Suddenly, her eyes fluttered shut and then flashed open.

"Peregrine, can you see me?" he said. Now that she was awake, he rapidly attempted to squash his concern and fear from his features... he couldn't let her know how frightened for her he'd been... "Can you hear me?"

Slowly, so very slowly, she nodded.

Tom wondered what it was about her. That first Prefect meeting, when he'd found himself closer to her than he'd ever been to anyone... and now he was closer still. He could, faintly, hear her heartbeat, sprinting a mile-a-minute. He could hear how hard it was for her to breathe.

He could hear how hard it was for *him* to breathe.

"What's in *shit's* name was that?" Tom demanded. How *dare* she make him worry about her. How *dare* she effect him so strongly. The thought that maybe he wasn't the only one who had to live through this was still pounding through him.

"I... I..." Peregrine struggled to sit up. Her voice was quivering terribly. "W-what happened?"

"Do you think I know? That, genius, is why I'm asking *you* !" Despite this, he was disappointed. If she was like him, then she would know what happened... she wasn't the same.

He was in this boat alone.

"No... I mean..." she tried breathing more evenly. "To... me."

Tom's jaw tightened. He didn't want to remember it. "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* ..."

There was a silence; Tom heard her heart stagger. Then, abruptly, her eyes went wide and she skidded backwards on the carpet, away from him.

"What?" he said, bewildered. Annoyance seeped through him. He was beginning to feel normal now. "What's going on *now* ?"

She said nothing. She stared up at him, and for the first time, he could see what she *really* felt in those round green-gold eyes... she was absolutely terrified.

"Peregrine, what the hell's going on?" Tom shoved a hand backwards through his hair. He didn't care right now that he was losing control in front of someone. He knew that he would care later, but not right now. "Why are you looking at me like that? Why are you-"

However, before he could finish, she stumbled to her feet and sprinted from the dormitory.

"What the-?" Tom stared after her. She was absolutely bloody insane. " *Peregrine* !" he bellowed.

She didn't come back.

Yeah, the chapters are getting kind of short... sorry about that. The first few were miles long, I know, and these ones are a little bit stubby. My bad. Anyway, please review! :D

Heart, me. x.

The Strangest Feeling

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: Thanks for the reviews. Listen to *When It Rains* by Paramore for this chapter, it suits it. Enjoy!

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Five: The Strangest Feeling

"Peregrine, what the hell's going on?" Tom shoved a hand backwards through his hair. He didn't care right now that he was losing control in front of someone. He knew that he would care later, but not right now. "Why are you looking at me like that? Why are you-"

However, before he could finish, she stumbled to her feet and sprinted from the dormitory.

"What the-?" Tom stared after her. She was absolutely bloody insane. "Peregrine!" he bellowed. She didn't come back.

Tom was totally bewildered by her behaviour. For a while, he stood stock-still, staring at the back of the portrait of Robin the Rich, unable to believe the sheer *insanity* of what had just happened.

He let out a rough sigh. It was stupid to be so worried about so he didn't even know. It was even more stupid to be so worried about someone that he loathed.

First making sure that he looked perfectly calm and unfazed by anything that had happened, Tom set off for lunch. He was quite

hungry, and looked forwards to whatever the house-elves were serving today.

He ducked sideways through a tapestry, into a secret corridor that few knew about, and moved quickly towards the Great Hall.

Perhaps they'll have omelettes again. I like omelettes.

He emerged from behind the tapestry, walked down a flight of stairs... and found himself behind none other than Peregrine.

Still annoyed, Tom opened his mouth to demand something along the lines of "what the hell is your problem" but then noticed that she wasn't alone.

He fell back a few steps.

She was with Reeve.

Reeve was laughing... holding her hand. "Ginny, you're so... so – you." His words were soft... he was turning, looking into those beautiful eyes that he'd been looking into only a few minutes ago... only, instead of that hazel adoration, it was terror.

That same sort of anger that he'd felt in the Prefect meeting a few days ago filled him so that it was almost clouding his eyes. It was the strangest feeling. Not... fury, no. Just a sort of...

It was hard to explain. But it was hot and angry inside him and it all stemmed from him staring at their clasped hands.

"I suppose that's a compliment?" Peregrine whispered, barely smiling.

"Probably," Reeve said, and he was blushing.

Tom had now stopped entirely and was about ten metres behind them, breathing hard through his nose and watching this exchange.

"So, should we... go and eat, then?" Reeve suggested.

You're not eating with her! Tom surprised himself by his head giving an angry outburst. *You're a filthy Ravenclaw! You stay at your own table, and she stays at mine!*

"Yes," Peregrine stuttered. "I'll just – go. Yeah. Thanks for bringing me. Yeah." She looked embarrassed, but also pleased. She moved her hands to fix her hair. "See you."

Reeve leaned forwards-

Realisation hit Tom in the stomach so that his head snapped back.
He's going to kiss her-

DON'T YOU DARE!

Just as his anger boiled over and he was about to hurry forwards and snarl at them both, Reeve rocked back on his heels, scratching his neck. He'd decided not to. "Yeah," he mumbled, and then hurried into the Great Hall.

Tom's jaw tightened; his eyes narrowed to slits. He stormed past her – she was too busy giggling like an idiot at the idea of Reeve walking her to the Hall to notice – and found his usual seat at lunch.

Remembering how hungry he was, Tom piled omelette onto his plate. It seemed to be his lucky day, as food went. He could enjoy this thoroughly.

Not sure why, Tom glanced up, across, and down the Slytherin table to find the redhead at the other end. She was talking to Hartwin and Philips. Hartwin said something... Peregrine glanced behind her, at the Ravenclaw table, and smiled sheepishly, going red. She turned back to her food, and, behind her back, Reeve grinned smugly to his friends.

The hot anger in his chest started up again until he was positively seething. He pushed his plate away.

He wasn't hungry anymore.

Hallowe'en came. Tom was not looking forwards to it.

He didn't bother dressing up especially, like everyone else. He suspected that he'd be made fun of if he stayed in his school robes, so instead wore plain black trousers and a grey jumper over a normal shirt. Basically, he wore the school uniform... minus the Slytherin crest and the Head Boy badge.

Tom combed his hair, straightened his collar, and then made his way down towards the Room of Requirement, where the Hallowe'en Ball was being hosted.

When he arrived there, he found everything to be perfectly in order. The food had arrived and the band was setting up. Prefects were scurrying around organising everything. He didn't really have anything to do.

For some reason, he felt a temptation to go down and see how awful the disco had turned out to be.

Yes, he decided, that would be quite amusing. But I don't trust any of the Prefects not to burn the whole place to the ground.

He moved over towards the punch bowl to place an enchantment on it so that no-one could spike it with more alcohol than the small measure that was already in there.

A mental video hit him, though he wasn't sure why.

Peregrine, dancing in the Great Hall. Spinning, arms out, waving her hands like a lunatic. Then she begins to shake and scream. She falls over. She hits the ground, hard, and her eyes roll up inside her head.

She screams, then falls silent. She's unconscious. Others, crowding around her. "Someone help!" No-one is there; the teachers are all taking care of the students up in the ball who are trying to prevent everyone from getting totally wasted. "Somebody help us!" Peregrine doesn't move. She's limp and cold. Her heartbeat is audibly slowing...

Panic hit him, as though someone had thrown a brick at him.

He cast a glance over the Prefects, trying to decide who to leave it charge. Coville... perhaps... Brown... she was an idiot, much the same make as Fionn... Reeve... Tom's lip curled. No. Durrell... perhaps. He chose Coville.

"Coville," he said, not raising his voice at all, but everyone heard. "You're in your charge. I'm going to see how Fionn is doing."

"Okay," said Coville warily.

Without waiting for anything else, Tom moved swiftly from the Room of Requirements. In the reflection of the goblets, he saw Reeve make an obscene hand gesture at his retreating back. Tom's eyes narrowed, but he didn't do anything about it. He couldn't be bothered.

He arrived there fairly quickly. His eyes flashed from side to side. Peregrine wasn't there. He found Fionn to talk to. "I'm surprised," he told her.

Astonished to hear his voice, she almost fell off her step-ladder. "Hang on," she said, holding up a hand, and climbed down. "Hi." She brushed off her skirt. "What are you surprised about?"

"You haven't destroyed everything yet," Tom noted, observing the decorations. They weren't bad at all. Actually, he was fairly impressed with how well the idiot had managed on her own, but he wasn't about to tell her that. "Then again, I suppose that there's still another three hours."

"Thank you," said Fionn. "I know that's as close to a compliment as it gets with you." She raised her eyebrows. "So what've you left the others doing? Surely, if anything, that's what'll destroy everything."

"I left Coville in charge, and I don't think they'll wreck the place if I leave them for seconds-" His words crashed to a halt as Peregrine appeared beside him. She had her face turned towards Fionn, though – she was ignoring him. He picked up his sentence again easily. "-but even so, I suppose my hard work isn't worth the risk."

"Oh, alright. I suppose you'd better get back to them, then," said Fionn. "Ginny! Hello! What's up?"

"The Ugly Basilisks are coming soon."

His jaw tightened instinctively at the mention of a basilisk. He must, surely, have been imagining it, but he swore that Peregrine's eyes flashed to him briefly but studiously, as though she was watching his reaction. What did she know? What was she doing? Was she trying to make a point of some sort?

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

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

With perfect timing, a Patronus rushed through the doors and said in a human voice, "We have arrived."

A grin spread across Fionn's lips. "Good timing." She patted her hair, and then moved quickly from the Hall. "Be back in a minute," she said. "Gin, you're in charge."

Peregrine frowned noticeably at this. Tom wondered why. Then, a moment later, she closed her eyes.

"Don't get *too* lost in thought, will you?" Tom said sardonically, smirking. "You might not come back."

Her features hardened into hostility, and she turned to glare at him. "What do you want?" she said coldly.

"The childish pleasure of annoying others that you seem to divulge in," he replied, amused.

"Grow up."

He would have laughed if he hadn't been hiding his emotions carefully for seventeen years. That was rather high-and-mighty for Peregrine.

"Bit rich, don't you think? Coming from you?" he pointed out. His eyes caught the devil horns of Jack Swithin. Where was Peregrine's costume? "Aren't you supposed to have a costume, Peregrine?"

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

You had me fooled , he thought, his gaze flickering once more over the everyday black skirt and green blouse that made her eyes more overwhelming than ever. He ignored this thought.

"What are you dressed as? The cheap, irritating drama-queen? I tell you, the fashion parade is yours," he sneered.

For a second, hurt showed in her eyes, then it was shut down.

"You're an asshole. 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," she told him angrily. She pulled a pair of plastic vampire-fangs from her dungarees pocket and pushed them into her mouth. Then she snapped at him, teeth clinking.

"They're not that childish," he retorted coldly. He'd had it with her. How immature she was. How intelligent she was. How annoying she was. How he couldn't bear the thought of her having another

screaming attack, whatever chilled her fear to the point of passing out.

"If I was a vampire, that would have been a compliment, you realise. Try better insults."

"The term, Peregrine, is vampress – and you are not one. Vampressi are famed for charm, wit, power, and extraordinary beauty," Tom said, his voice glacial, never to warm up for her. How was that for a better insult? The last part wasn't true – not the least – but she didn't need to know that.

Her eyes widened, expanding the surface of hazel, drawing him in, making his head hurt. "You bastard," she gasped, her voice strangled with pain. He got the feeling that his words had made much more impact on her than they intended, for reasons he did not know.

And then she slapped him.

The metal of his retainer sliced into the side of his mouth, and pain echoed around his cheek and gum. "Are you *mental*, woman?" he demanded, his voice muffled, clutching his face.

"Oh, it's nice to know that you now consider me a woman!" Peregrine said, her voice shaking.

"Are you *crazy*?" he hissed, and, despite how unhygienic it was, he spat out blood onto the sand that the floor had been decorated with, and then cleaned it up with a flick of his wand. "That *really* hurt – I have a retainer, for God's sake!"

Peregrine stared up at him, not saying anything for a few seconds. And then she burst into laughter.

"What?" Tom was really annoyed now. He had been expecting an apology, not *laughter*. This wasn't right.

She clutched her stomach and laughed harder. "You – hahahaha – have – a – *hahahahaha* !"

" *What ?*" Tom demanded.

"HAHAHAHHA! You have a *retainer* !" she giggled.

Oh of course, I forgot how hysterical my brace is.

He folded his arms, glaring coldly. "And what, pray tell, do you find so phenomenally funny about my dental care, Peregrine?" he snapped.

Peregrine held a straight face. "Nothing." Then she continued to laugh raucously.

"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," Tom said icily, not appreciating this mockery at all.

"I'm being rude? *I'm* being rude? Says he, 'you couldn't be a vampress'!" she said angrily, and she was right, he had to admit. "By all means, leave, Riddle – it would automatically make the party a hundred times better!"

"It took you a long time for that comeback, didn't it?" Tom sneered, though it had been quite instantaneous. "Careful, Peregrine. Your brain's too small to be let out on it's own; it'll hurt itself."

"I assure you," Peregrine growled, "that it has company. My brain is babysitting *yours* !" Her eyes narrowed to slits. "Why are you here, Riddle? 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'," Tom scoffed. "It was the lesser of two evils."

"You're avoiding the question."

"What was the question, remind me?" Tom said mockingly.

"Why are you here?" Peregrine demanded, setting her hands on her hips and tilting her chin up at him defiantly.

Hazel. All that he could see was hazel. He was drowning in her eyes, and he hated it. Yet, somehow, their colour dazed him into speaking the truth. "If you must know," he said quietly, "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 the ball upstairs, and you would only be treated by Fionn, who is an idiot, and a group of infantile and naïve twelve-year-olds."

Peregrine's eyes narrowed, locking her eyes with his. "I'll manage," she said coldly. Her direct, point-blank stare was a challenge, he understood. He decided to shock her.

Tom surrendered immediately. He retreated, turned, and left without even glancing backwards.

I don't have much to say here. The updates of Backtrack might slow down, because I'm going to focus on Press Play right now so that I can get it finished before my Fast-Forward inspiration disappears. Please review!

Heart, me. x.

Ignoring Guilt

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: Thank you for reviews... I don't have much to say here. This is the second half of Hallowe'en... listen to something a bit romantic-ish, but fast. I recommend *Emergency* or *Pressure* by Paramore. Aww. Tom doesn't believe in soul-mates.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Six: Ignoring Guilt

Peregrine's eyes narrowed, locking her eyes with his. "I'll manage," she said coldly. Her direct, point-blank stare was a challenge, he understood. He decided to shock her. Tom surrendered immediately. He retreated, turned, and left without even glancing backwards.

The Hallowe'en wasn't a disaster. This having been said, it wasn't brilliant either. It was fairly uneventful, and therefore uninteresting for Tom. He stood in the corner with his glass of punch, observing everything around him and noting all that he observed. Fionn was looking as though she'd found her soul-mate in a Hufflepuff – Tom rolled his eyes at this. He didn't believe in soul-mates. Philips and Hartwin, Peregrine's friends, had looked rather comfortable together as well.

And then, the doors to the Room of Requirement swung open. Hartwin came in... with Peregrine following, looked mildly interested. The look on the redhead's face changed to one of being stunned.

Tom smirked. It was nice to know that his efforts on the room hadn't been for naught.

Peregrine moved next to the drinks table... and took a Firewhiskey. She downed it in one go and stared gloomily straight ahead. Tom wondered what was wrong, but didn't try to find out. He doubted that she would be prepared to tell him anything.

There was a brief confrontation with Bastet, Mohana and Xau, but then they flounced away, leaving Peregrine alone again. A song that was tolerable to Tom's music tastes struck up, and for one insane second he considered dancing with Peregrine.

What in God's name is wrong with me?

However, Hartwin reappeared a moment later, taking some punch. This reminded Tom of the drink in his hand, and he sipped some before continuing to watch what was happening with the two Slytherin sixth-year girls.

Peregrine began to scan the room, her eyes flickering from each face. She never found *his* face.

Tom wondered what she was looking for.

Frowning, Peregrine continued to speak to Hartwin; the brunette promptly snorted punch all over the redhead.

That's quite disgusting , thought Tom, his forehead wrinkling slightly as he made the smallest of grimaces.

Hartwin sashayed away across the dance-floor, presumably to find Philips for another dance, leaving Peregrine to close her eyes tightly and grab another Firewhiskey.

Tom watched from the other side of the room as Reeve approached her. Though he longed to, he couldn't hear what they were saying – he was much too far away, but from the body language, it was apparent what was happening. Reeve was asking her to dance.

The Ravenclaw held out a hand... for a second, Tom's heart stopped. What was she going to say?

She shook her head.

It felt as though a vice had been gripping Tom's ribcage tightly, threatening to crack him. Now the vice was released, and he breathed easier, sipping from his glass of punch.

However, he continued to watch the redhead. He saw her shoulders slump with – was it disappointment?

A moment later, Reeve was back again, and suddenly they were dancing, spinning-

The vice crushed tighter than ever and shattered a few ribs.

Eyes narrowed, he watched them spin around in circles. Peregrine really was a terrible dancer, but that wasn't what made the hot anger start up again. It was, for some reason, the hand on her waist, the fingers linked through hers... the joy shining in her eyes.

And then she fell over.

Some students began to laugh; even Tom smirked. Then Scott pulled her to her feet, saying something-

Her face froze.

Tom set down his punch, preparing himself for the screaming and shuddering that was soon to follow, surely. It never came. Instead, Peregrine held her head between her hands and walked away from Reeve. She downed a glass of Firewhiskey, and then sat heavily on a nearby chair.

And from that position she did not move for the rest of the night.

At one point, Tom became concerned that she might have died sitting up, but then she reached up for another Firewhiskey... and

another... Slowly, he watched her state of insobriety become worse and worse.

The time came to midnight, and Tom stood to announce that the Ball was over.

"If everyone could return to their dormitories now so that the Prefects and I can clean up the Room of Requirements," Tom said unenthusiastically. He noted a few couples looking very ruffled and drunk. He added with distaste, "Also, I will be going on patrol in about an hour to check that everyone has returned to their common rooms, as opposed to hiding out somewhere with their... *companions*."

The couples looked disappointed.

So far, Peregrine had not yet moved from her seat. Hartwin began to talk to her, and Tom looked away to begin the cleaning, sweeping his wand across the room and Banishing the items to their original places. Then the tables had to be Levitated back down to the Great Hall... a full report of the Ball given to Dippet... and then a patrol...

By now, it was almost one in the morning, and Tom was not looking forwards to searching the entire castle for secret couples at it like rabbits.

The Head Boy lit his wand and looked into a broom cupboard before glancing through a tapestry and making his way down the stairs to the Entrance Hall.

Casting yellow light across all of the surfaces, Tom looked into the House-cup room, where the vials were to show the House points... Ravenclaw was in the lead... he scowled... he looked into the Great Hall, locked up the main Entrance Hall doors, and then continued his search, heading down into the dungeons.

His boredom turned to alarm when he saw that at the bottom of the first flight of stairs, was a collapsed Peregrine, and Hartwin, trying to

drag her to her feet.

"What the devil is going on?" he said, frowning.

Hartwin looked up, gasping with relief. "Oh, good. Please help. She's really heavy."

"What happened?" Tom asked, eyeing Peregrine's unconscious form with disdain.

"Er." Hartwin scratched the back of her neck. "She's wasted." She pulled a face. "And she fell down the stairs, and hasn't woken up since she hit the bottom."

His frown deepened. "She fell down a," he flickered his gaze to the stairs, "ten metre flight of steps, hasn't woken up since collapsing at the bottom, and you haven't checked to see that she isn't seriously hurt?" he said disbelievingly.

"I have," Hartwin protested, going red. "She's alive, look." Without further ado, she kicked Peregrine in the side. The redhead groaned. "See?"

"As reassuring as that safety procedure is," Tom said sarcastically, "I'd prefer to actually make sure that she hasn't been harmed."

"Okay."

There was a silence.

"Well, go on, then," Tom said irritably, nodding towards Peregrine.

Hartwin raised her eyebrows. "I thought you were doing it."

"I never said that. Now check that she's okay."

"She's fine."

"Do it."

"I don't know how! If you want so much to give a 'real' ," she used her fingers as inverted commas, "check-up on her health, then you do it," Hartwin said.

Tom scowled at the ground. "Fine." He crouched next to her. "Peregrine?" he called.

"She won't answer, doofus. She's unconscious, remember?"

"Yes, I realise that! It's part of the Ministry-approved safety procedure. Shut up." Tom glared at the sixth-year brunette, and then returned his gaze to Peregrine. He knew how the safety procedure went... he just *really* didn't want to have to do it on her.

Er. Just... er. Do the procedure. Imagine it's Fionn. You don't care about Fionn.

I don't care about Peregrine, either, he argued.

And yet you're kneeling in the dungeons trying to check that she isn't in any way hurt.

Tom glared. *Shut up.*

Nervously, he set a hand on her thin shoulder and shook her. "Peregrine?" he called, tilting his head sideways to see if her eyes were open. They weren't. "Peregrine..."

Okay, steps one and two done. She can't see or hear me. Now. Step three. Recovery position.

Tom's jaw tensed, and then he gingerly pushed at her left shoulder until she rolled onto her right. Now he had to move her legs... er...

"Can you move her legs?" Tom asked.

Hartwin smirked. "Why, are you scared to?"

He glared at her. "No," he told her, "it's a violation of law for me to touch her legs while she's unconscious – she's underage."

"No, she's not," Hartwin said loudly. "Today's her birthday. She's seventeen."

His brow furrowed. "Is she?" he said. She was the same age as him now. Guilt flooded his system. He'd been an asshole to her on her birthday. *Guilt*. He ignored it.

Oh crap. Now *he* had move her legs, as opposed to Hartwin doing it. *Damnit.*

Swallowing around a lump in his throat, Tom reached towards her. He didn't know what to do. He hated feet, but any higher up and he'd go bright red, which Hartwin would see, and then she'd tell Peregrine, which was bad.

Tom inhaled shortly and poked her shins to manoeuvre her into the right place, using all of his concentration to keep his face at a normal temperature. Then her face...

He gently tilted her face down so that she wouldn't choke – distractions – freckles – eyelashes – smooth skin – he pulled his hand away and then sat back on his heels.

"Okay, recovery position," he said aloud, quietly.

Step four... check for broken bones or deformation. Okay, that was going too far.

"Check for broken bones or deformation," Tom told Hartwin.

"You do it," she replied, annoyingly.

He gave her a contemptuous look. "Somehow I don't think that Peregrine would appreciate being *felt* by me while she's passed out," he said coldly.

Hartwin laughed evilly. "Good point."

Less than five minutes later, it was determined that Peregrine was fine (cue an "I told you so" from Hartwin), and Tom helped the Slytherin girl to pick her up. Hartwin was clearly struggling, but he couldn't go into the girls' dormitory anyway.

"Don't drop her," he said witheringly, and continued on his patrol. He found nothing else that needed his direct attention, though a few things were spotted that he would mention to Dippet.

Back in his bedroom, he took the second-hand acoustic guitar that he'd spent years saving up for out of its case. He fiddled with the tuning, getting it just right... thinking.

You saw how her face fell, froze – just before she spent the rest of the evening getting drunk. What did Reeve say? Was it something that Reeve said at all?

Was it something I said?

The notes on his guitar rang clear, but Tom didn't play. The idea that had just struck him was a chilling one. Ten metres down a flight of stairs. That could have killed her.

He could have killed her.

Isn't it interesting how, from Ginny's POV, you never knew that he was the one who helped her from the bottom of the stairs? Hehe. I still have, I think, two more chapters typed up of Backtrack, and then it'll be on a brief hiatus for me to do Press Play. Well, please review!

Heart, me. x.

Poison

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: Honestly, the perfect song for this chapter is *That's What You Get* by *Paramore* . It goes: *that's what you get when you let your heart win* . Aw. How sweet. This is when Tom watches Scott and Ginny meet on the stairs and snuggle. D: Unhappy!Tom comin' up.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Seven: Poison

You saw how her face fell, froze – just before she spent the rest of the evening getting drunk. What did Reeve say? Was it something that Reeve said at all? Was it something I said?

The notes on his guitar rang clear, but Tom didn't play. The idea that had just struck him was a chilling one. Ten metres down a flight of stairs. That could have killed her. He could have killed her.

Tom frowned, trying to work out how to phrase the final paragraph of his History of Magic essay. He wanted to finish it before the Prefect meeting which was – he glanced up at the clock on the wall, above the fireplace – in approximately ten minutes. It should be okay.

There was a creak as the portrait of the Robin the Rich. Someone came in very quietly.

"Fionn, the meeting isn't for ten minutes," Tom said icily over his shoulder. He wasn't in the mood for coping with her for a full ten minutes. "You can return to your silly friends."

No-one answered. He frowned.

He set down his quill and turned to see who was there.

The person that he least expected was standing silently in the middle of the entrance area for the common room. Instantly he noticed that she wasn't hiding behind a smile. All that was on her face was a flat, blank mask. He realised instantly that she was upset, but said nothing. He didn't really care.

"Peregrine," he said. Then he frowned further. There were ten minutes until the meeting. Did his eyes deceive him? It would explain why she was so quiet, if she was only a hallucination. However, having hallucinations, that wasn't very good. "You're... early." He checked the clock behind him. She was, indeed, early.

"I'll go," she said shortly, and turned.

"Why did you have a seizure?" he demanded, getting the question out before she left.

"Why weren't you at your own ball?" she retorted.

Yes, I was. Why... was she looking for me?

"Looking for me, were you?" he sneered. "I'm *touched*."

"Looking for something to *throw* at you," Peregrine said, and he was alarmed by the level of sheer hatred in her voice. "I'm leaving."

"You're dodging the question – and you have to stay here for the Prefect meeting, unfortunately," he reminded her.

"Oh yes, how unfortunate, to be stuck with a stupid little sixth-year who occasionally has screaming convulsions on the floor," she hissed vehemently. "I apologise for any inconvenience it causes *you*."

"Why don't you just to the Hospital Wing, if you're that unwell?" Tom snapped.

"Because it's not something that Madam Royce can fix," Peregrine said coldly.

Instantly, things were beginning to piece together, like a puzzle that he'd finally found the last piece to. He started to say that she was being stupid, and that if it was that bad then she would be hospitalised for having mental disorders, which wouldn't be that far off the mark, but the others came in just then. He settled for glaring at her.

"Hello, Ginny! You're early," said Fionn in surprise, looking over at the clock just as Tom had. She sat, and waiting for everyone to settle down, before announcing, "I convene this Prefect meeting, the fourth of November, 1958. Right. We're here to discuss the ball and disco, then. I thought that it was brilliant, and I reckon we should have another one at Christmas!"

" No ," Tom hissed, and was accompanied by the disagreements of Harris and Swithin.

" Yes !" the others exclaimed delightedly.

"Seven-three! We win, you lose!" Brown yelled, jumping into the air. She was precisely the formula of person that he detested above all others. Actually, that wasn't true. That formula had changed a few weeks ago – the formula now was: *small, thin, red hair, hazel eyes, freckles, fierce, brave, loud, irritating, no regard for time-keeping* .

"We have to run it by Professor Dippet first, so don't get your hopes set too high," Tom told Brown icily.

"Just destroy every happy feeling," said Peregrine, so suddenly that it caught him off guard, so quietly that he barely heard, so glacially that it was enough to make a lesser person shiver. "Riddle, you're

like a *Dementor*, for God's sake. You feed off everyone else's misery, don't you?"

I've had it with you!

"What is your problem, Peregrine?" he snarled. "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?" she spat.

Anger built up inside him.

Poison? I came down to the Hallowe'en disco – I sacrificed myself to the wrath of Fionn and lots of excited eleven-year-olds, just to make sure that you didn't get yourself killed by having another spastic attack... and what do I get for it?

"Poison, yes, but also comes the antidote. And what good that got me," he said blackly.

She understood immediately, while the others looked confused. He supposed that it was a Slytherin thing. Her eyes narrowed to slits. "Then fool you for playing with snakes," she spat.

He glared at her, and then Durrell said, laughing, "Like the view?"

Peregrine stood, and for a second her lip curled as she battled for something to say to him, but then she turned and stormed away. He stood immediately, staring after her.

"Obviously not!" Fionn giggled.

"This meeting has just been adjourned," Tom said, his tone final.

"But we haven't finished-"

" *This meeting has just been adjourned* ," he repeated, much more sharply this time. He glared around at the Prefects. "Get out."

They were only too happy to obey, scrambling out of their seats and fleeing the common room, sensing that a storm was brewing, and that they were currently sitting in the eye of it.

"What was that for?" Fionn said angrily. "We weren't done!"

" *I don't care !*" he snarled.

For the first time, the blonde stood up to him. She tilted her chin up bravely. "*I do* ."

"We can discuss it another time," he growled, and then stalked up to his bedroom. The instant, however, that he had slammed the door, he realised that this wasn't where he wanted to be, and he opened the door again. Luckily, Fionn had already flounced away to do her own thing, and so he was able to slip out of the portrait-hole and make his way through the castle to find Peregrine.

It wasn't too hard, as she hadn't gone far. He heard her voice and moved towards it.

"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* ..." a familiar voice sobbed.

Tom frowned. She was... she was *crying* . He wasn't very good with crying people. It would be best to retreat-

"Don't worry, Ginny," said a second voice, and Tom's blood boiled.

Reeve.

Now he crept closer, pressing himself against the wall to stay hidden in the shadows. There they were. Sitting on the stairs together, curling up... they fit. They were like two pieces of a perfect puzzle.

Tom watched in silence as she cried into Reeve's shoulder. He wasn't bothered by her crying – after all, he loathed her. He was surprised, but he didn't really care.

"Thank you," Peregrine finally whispered, lifting her face from Reeve's shoulder.

"It's okay." He smiled at her, looking down into her eyes.

There was a silence where nothing happened; they just gazed at each other. And *then* he kissed her. It was a light kiss, innocent enough, but somehow it didn't seem right to Tom. It seemed ugly, and it made the hot anger that he didn't recognise start up again.

Tom didn't move. He remained, close to the wall, seeing them kiss. He wondered why the sight made his stomach hurt. His jaw tightened, and his lips pressed into a thin line. He dug his fingers into the stone wall behind him.

A moment or two later, and then Peregrine drew away. "Sorry," she mumbled, standing up.

"Ginny," said Reeve, following her lead. "You don't have to be sorry for anything." He took hold of her face, his thumb by her ear, his fingers in her hair. He kissed her again.

This one wasn't as chaste as the first, and Tom's head started to spin. He was finding it difficult to breathe, and for some reason he felt slightly sick. Poison? He felt like he'd *swallowed* poison. He stared straight ahead, looking at, but not seeing, the display of affection in front of him.

"I have to go..." Peregrine said apologetically, pulling away first. There were tear-tracks standing out brightly on her pale face. "Thank you for everything, Scott."

Reeve smiled. "Come on, I'll take you... where it is that you're going." He touched his lips to Peregrine's freckled nose, and then

took her hand, walking away with her.

Tom remained there for a second, pressed tight to the wall. Then he breathed for the first time since he'd seen them there, a sigh. That first breath made his stomach hurt even more. He didn't want to know why. He went back to his dormitory.

Actually, I have writer's block on Press Play – I have the whole plot, but I can't word it right, so I'll be updating them equally still, because I have time to write Backtrack. 'Cause there's still a billion chapters left of Press Play to update. Well, review!

Heart, me. x.

Sleeping Beauty

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: RAH! I posted this chapter, but it died so I have to post it AGAIN. GR. Yeah, you've read this before, so I'm posting two chapters for you, yayy. Writer's block easing off on PP, so Backtrack's probably going to slow down.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Eight: Sleeping Beauty

Reeve smiled. "Come on, I'll take you... where it is that you're going." He touched his lips to Peregrine's nose, and then took her hand, walking away with her.

Tom remained there for a second, pressed tight to the wall. Then he breathed for the first time since he'd seen them there, a sigh. That first breath made his stomach hurt even more. He didn't want to know why. He went back to his dormitory.

"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 realised 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 mostly used to this now. Tom had little money, had often couldn't afford all of his books. This meant that the books he got were unpleasant second-hand things from the teachers that had been scribbled in.

"Where should I find one, Professor?" Tom asked.

"Er, Professor Gladwyn should have some for you. Muggle Studies classroom – down the hall, up the stairs," Berthold said absent-mindedly, gesturing towards the door.

Tom left without a thank-you.

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.

Tom didn't take Muggle Studies, so he didn't know the teacher. He saw no reason to take the class. He knew enough about Muggles already. He scowled.

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 noises 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, Miss 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. Hm. He had presumed that Gladwyn would be male.

"Professor Gladwyn?" he inquired, keeping his voice flat, distant, and formal, as always. It was polite, and teachers seemed to like it. Students, not so much.

"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 the vicious Slytherin 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 his 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.

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.

"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.

"God, that was a loud scream. Still, 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?"

Not again... not again... not again...

"Ginny!" cried Philips. 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!" Tom hissed.

"Ginny?" asked Philips worriedly.

"Ohmigod." The blonde paled. "She's not pretending, is she?"

"I thought you'd have realised that when she pitched forwards off the stage," snapped Tom furiously.

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.

"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. "Miss Peregrine, can you hear me? Miss 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 Philips, 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 kiss 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.

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?

At least when she was passed out drunk she was vaguely close to life... all I had to do was drag her...

"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.

Okay, now onto the next chapter... you probably won't review this one... don't really blame you...

Heart, me. x.

And She Didn't Even Know

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: Okay, you've read the first half of this chapter as well, but I changed a few things, so you can read it again if you want. I don't have many chapters left typed up, as my writer's block for Press Play has been momentarily cured, and I've typed up another chapter... whatever comes into my head depends on how reliably I'll update Backtrack. Sorreh.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Nine: And She Didn't Even Know

"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...

She was also very warm. Despite having passed out, her pale skin was warm, amplified by the heavy robes. The heat was even going through the front of his jumper, which he didn't like at all.

Tom had observed her, from a distance, a thousand times, as with everyone else, but he watched her again now. 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 hair out of her eyes without using her hands. She 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 against the soft, freckled skin of her cheeks; 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.

His heartbeat stopped. And then, for a reason that he didn't understand in the slightest, it skipped a beat, thundering faster than normal.

He could feel her warmth more than ever now. He could smell the faint scent of apples. His head began to reel.

She snuggled the side of her face into the material of his school jumper.

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.

For a few seconds, she didn't move, just blinked up at him. Then, frowning in confusion, she looked sideways at what she had been cuddling into. She was met with the sight of his school-jumper-clad

chest, and he felt slightly self-conscious. Then she yelped and threw herself out of his arms.

She landed in a heap on the ground.

Tom was numb. He was alarmed by how empty his arms felt – how *cold* they suddenly felt.

"What the hell was that for?" Peregrine started to shout. "That HURT!"

What? He was confused. "What- Peregrine, I didn't do anything!"

"You dropped me!"

That's insane!

"No, I didn't," he snapped. "You flung yourself onto the floor!"

She went red. "Well, it's your fault," she said angrily.

"Oh, of course," Tom said sarcastically, coldly. "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* ! And it's *your* fault!" Peregrine yelled.

"It is *not* ," he retorted icily. "I refuse to partake in this childish argument." He folded his arms, as if that could make up for the feeling of cold. "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. You can take yourself."

"Fine," snapped Peregrine. "I will."

"Do you know something?" Tom said, angry now. "I was actually fool enough to think that you might say *thank you* , that you might actually be *grateful* ."

"Why should I thank you for dropping me on the floor?"

" *I didn't drop you on the floor !*" Tom snarled. "That. Was Not. My Fault."

His heart was echoing through his head. He hated his. He hated *her* . He hated how she could twist him into being worried about her. He hated how she made him feel disappointed when she didn't thank him for a favour.

He loathed her so much that he was struggling for control. *Breathe. Breathe. Calm down.* His temper – his other self that wasn't him – was flaring.

"It was ."

"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," Tom hissed, sending every ounce of his hatred for her into those words.

Pain exploded into her eyes, so much that it made his stomach hurt again. He'd caused that pain. Why did he care so much?

"You bastard," she whispered.

Tom glared, trying to hide how he felt sick for causing that agony to reveal itself in her face, always usually so well hidden. "I thought you knew that." His voice was strangled. He despised himself at some points.

"You're right," Peregrine said, voice shaking. "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."

He was surprised. She'd... she'd thought that there might be more to him? What did she mean? What had made her think that?

"This is a special case, though," she hissed. "Because my first-impression was *spot-on* ."

He was hurt. Then his repugnance for himself deepened for letting this mere *girl* cut through him so easily. "I'm shocked," he said coldly. "Most people understand within the first ten seconds of meeting me. 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," Peregrine said softly, resentment in her tone. "You learn something new every day."

"Why does that happen?" Tom demanded. "Why?"

Peregrine glared up at him. "D'you really think I'm going to tell you after how... how *pleasant* you've been to me.

"I already have a vague notion," Tom ignored what she'd said. He was going to release his theory to her. "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." Tom stared at her through narrowed eyes. "It's traumatic memories."

"Yeah." Peregrine stared up at him, and he saw tears glowing in those petrifying, intoxicating eyes. "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."

I'm right?

He was shocked. Was it really trauma? Had something *that* bad really happened to her?

What in God's name had she been through?

She turned and headed towards the Hospital Wing.

Tom had to say something. Anything. "...Peregrine-" he tried.

"Riddle, I thought we agreed that you weren't going to take me to Hospital Wing," Peregrine spat, spinning so fast that again it hit him – apples – red hair – hazel eyes – and it took an effort not to take a step backwards.

He shut down everything in his face so that she couldn't see what he was feeling. *He* couldn't even determine what he was feeling.

"Get lost," she said coldly, and disappeared through the Hospital Wing doors.

He stared blankly after her.

It was dark. Tom made his way towards the Hospital Wing, confident that no-one would see him. Nobody ever paid any attention to him anyway, so it didn't really matter.

Madam Royce glanced at him as he came in, but he ignored the elderly matron and continued forwards. In a bed near the end was a head of flames. He moved towards it.

He stood by her hospital bed, staring down at her. She looked so small, so frail... so vulnerable, compared to how fierce and independent she was when awake. He felt an urge to protect her, and took a step backwards, where hopefully her infuriating beauty couldn't affect him.

The beautiful mystery, wrapped so tight so that no-one could find out her problems. But she'd left loose ends, and Tom had unravelled her. He wished that he hadn't.

Ginevra.

"I'm sorry," he said quietly, sighing.

He was apologising to her – sincerely, honestly apologising for what he thought was the first time in his life – and she didn't even know.

As though half-awake, Peregrine – Ginevra – rolled over onto her back. Her fringe fell into her face, and he felt an irresistible urge to push her hair out of her face, to push it behind her ear...

I'm still too close, he realised, and walked away. He took one backwards glance at her. "Madam Royce?"

"Yes, Mr. Riddle?" she asked, fussing about and making a potion.

"...I'd like to remain anonymous," he said coolly, as though it didn't really matter to him. It did matter. It mattered a lot. She was never to know that he'd been watching her sleep.

"Of course, Mr. Riddle," said Madam Royce, friendly enough, though she frowned slightly at this request.

Tom didn't bother to thank her. He walked away. His mind was concerned. He found himself wondering how powerful his hatred for her really was.

Aww. See, it took Ginny's a while to become his friend, and ages to fancy him, whereas he practically fell in love with her from Day One. How sweet. Please review!

Heart, me. x.

Lower Your Defence

A/N: Haha, thank you to storm-brain for pointing out a typo – Tom doesn't do Muggle Studies, sorry, it's History of Magic. :P My bad. Well, I hope you like this chapter. I love it, it's fluffy and also quite funny at the start...

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Ten: Lower Your Defence

"Madam Royce? I'd like to remain anonymous," he said coolly, as though it didn't really matter to him. It did matter. It mattered a lot. She was never to know that he'd been watching her sleep.

"Of course, Mr. Riddle," said Madam Royce, friendly enough, though she frowned slightly at this request.

Tom didn't bother to thank her. He walked away. His mind was concerned. He found himself wondering how powerful his hatred for her really was.

Ginevra was down at breakfast the next day. Tom saw her come in looking angry, followed by an ashamed-looking Reeve. They ate separately, which was unusual, as they had been staying in each other's company whenever possible since they had begun to go out.

Perhaps they had a fight, Tom mused, drinking some pumpkin juice.

Hartwin and Philips were sitting a lot closer to him than they usually did, he realised, and when Ginevra sat with them to eat, he noticed that he was within eavesdropping distance.

"Hey," Ginevra said to Philips. She then leaned over him to greet Hartwin. "Hey, Grace!"

"Are you feeling better?" Hartwin asked. Tom wondered if the brunette had mentioned to Ginevra that he had given her a health-check on her birthday while she was unconscious. He hoped not.

"It was so scary, Ginny," said Philips. "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-"

"Wait." Ginevra's eyes were wide. "Riddle was panicked?"

Tom frowned. *I wasn't. Was I?* He hadn't thought that he was panicking... at least, not much... not noticeably...

"*I told you so*," Hartwin sang cheerfully. "He fancies you. You should chuck Scott so that I can marry him, and then you should go with Riddle."

Tom choked on his toast.

The first-years that he was sitting opposite looked frightened; he glared at them, but the effect was somewhat spoiled by him coughing his lungs out halfway through the glare.

I what now? He swallowed the toast, this time getting it down his throat as opposed to his windpipe, which was helpful. *Since when do I... 'fancy' Ginevra ? 'I told you so'? They've discussed this before ?*

What the hell?

"When – pigs – fly," said Ginevra firmly, piling bacon onto her plate.

Yet, somehow, despite being adamant in his opinion that he didn't ... 'fancy' her, this last comment made him lose his appetite.

Bastet was approaching, sashaying her hips from side to side in a manner that Tom supposed she thought was supposed to be attractive... honestly, from a male's point of view, it really wasn't.

"So is it true?" Bastet sneered, sitting opposite Ginevra.

"Is what true?" the redhead asked, not bothering to look up.

"That you collapsed in Muggle Studies. 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," said Claude snidely.

Two things whirled through his skull. The first was: *What does she mean? Ginevra's not a Muggle.*

The second was a low, angry growl: *Muggles – are – not – repulsive*
–

"Shut it," Ginevra snapped.

"Oh!" Bastet swooned sideways, smirking. " *Oh* , help me! I feel *faint* !"

"I said *shut it* !"

Tom narrowed his eyes dangerously, glaring at the three girls who dared to insult his blood status-

"Claude..." Xau whined. "I don't feel comfortable."

"Me neither." Mohana shivered.

"What? Pull yourselves together," said Claude crossly. Then her face furrowed. "What *is* that?"

"It's like someone's *watching* us..."

Ginevra became totally still. Then she turned, scanning the table... and found him. Their eyes collided for a bare few seconds before her

face screwed up, and she excused herself from her friends, leaving.

Tom pushed his plate away. He grabbed his schoolbag, slung it over his shoulder, and followed her, moving quickly so that she didn't get to the Slytherin common room before he could catch up. He couldn't stop thinking for some reason that apologising to her while she was unconscious wasn't enough. He sped up.

She was a couple of metres away, down the stairs already, kicking walls and stomping her feet.

"Peregrine."

The female kept going as though she hadn't heard him, despite how his voice had echoed off the stone walls and floor all around her. She stared at the ground and moved faster.

"Peregrine, wait."

She turned, glaring an impressive death-glare. "Yes?" She put one hand in her pocket. Probably getting her wand ready so that she could hex him into oblivion. He'd better get this over with.

"Look, Peregrine," he said uncertainly. "I... I apologise for what I said last night." He'd never before been so unsure of what he was saying. He kept his eyes fixed on the ceiling above her head, so that this apology wouldn't have to be made so much harder by looking at her. "I realise that my words may have been," he cleared his throat, "rather harsh." That was an understatement.

"Rather?" Apparently, she thought it was an understatement, too.

However, annoyance flashed in his eyes and he looked down at her. "Peregrine, if I were you, I'd shut up and take the apology," he said icily. "They're rare things, coming from me. Somewhat like a solar eclipse; they only occur once every seven years."

Ginevra's eyes narrowed. "Why seven?" she demanded.

What the hell? Why not seven?

He eyed her for a second. Was she serious? "It's my favourite number."

"Oh."

The next thing that she did didn't go unnoticed – she looked at him. She met his gaze, looking into his eyes... but, for the first time, without a trace of hatred or coldness. He'd never noticed before because he'd never seen it before so directly, but when her eyes were anything close to friendly, they were like smiling gold... drawing him in... breathing was becoming difficult... he couldn't remember what he was supposed to be doing... what *was* he supposed to be doing... er...

Leaving?

Right, he recalled. *Leaving*. He cleared his throat a second time, to check that the little episode of her warm eyes hadn't left him horribly verbally-impaired, swallowed, and then walked away.

"Riddle?"

Tom stopped. He didn't bother to turn around, but, curious, tilted his head to show that he was listening.

"Um." Her stammers echoed and echoed. "Thanks. For taking me to the Hospital Wing. And... it *might* have been my fault that I fell." She paused. "Maybe."

He turned his head slightly towards her, though still not turning around, and nodded. Then he continued up to the Entrance Hall.

Observantly, in the reflection of a gold lamp on the wall, he didn't miss seeing Ginevra pull her wand out at lightning-speed and point it at the back of his head. For a second, his heart stopped. Still moving – he mustn't look suspicious – he moved his hand to his own wand,

ready to defend his life if he had to, though he had no idea why he would need to...

And Ginevra lowered hers.

Surprise making him raise his eyebrows, he watched her scowl and move back into the security of the Slytherin common room.

What the hell , Tom wondered as he made his way towards Arithmancy, *was all of that about?*

Hahaha... he forgot what he was doing... I can imagine this awkward silence where Tom just stares at her, not moving, and nothing happens. Awwwkwaaard... LOL. Anyway, please review.

Heart, me.

Empty Coincidences

A/N: YAY! An update. I have more time for Backtrack now, because I've finished Press Play, but the updates are going to be less frequent than they used to be. I hope you like this chapter! It's cute. Well, I think so. It's probably kind of creepy.

Listen To: *Fix You* by Coldplay

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Eleven: Empty Coincidences

Observantly, in the reflection of a gold lamp on the wall, he didn't miss seeing Ginevra pull her wand out at lightning-speed and point it at the back of his head. For a second, his heart stopped. Still moving – he mustn't look suspicious – he moved his hand to his own wand, ready to defend his life if he had to, though he had no idea why he would need to...

And Ginevra lowered hers. Surprise making him raise his eyebrows, he watched her scowl and move back into the security of the Slytherin common room. What the hell, Tom wondered as he made his way towards Arithmancy, was all of that about?

Tom hated Hogsmeade days. He'd never been there, as the lack of guardians for him meant that no-one could sign the permission form, and he wasn't particularly interested in going. As far as he could tell, all that was there was a pub and a few joke shops. Every time there was a Hogsmeade outing, students came back hyper and excessively friendly with their companions of the opposite gender.

As he returned to the castle from the greenhouse, having giving Professor Ornella a note from Professor Selene and also handing his

homework in early, to his distaste, he met one of those excessively friendly couples.

Ginevra and Reeve.

The first thing that Tom noticed was their entwined fingers, and then their dishevelled hair. That strange, hot, fierce anger rose again, but he didn't let it show.

"Oh. Hi. Riddle." Ginevra, looking embarrassed, let go of Reeve's hand. Tom wondered why she felt ashamed to be seen holding onto the Ravenclaw. Interesting. The anger didn't ease much.

"Peregrine." He nodded curtly at her. Then his eyes flashed sideways to her companion. "Reeve." His voice was verbal ice.

Sarcastically, Reeve retorted, " *sir* ," and slid his arm around Ginevra's thin waist, pulling her closer. For some reason that Tom didn't understand at all, the female sixth-year wouldn't look at him, now that she had been obviously 'claimed' by her pathetic boyfriend, fitting close to him. Her cheeks fired up red.

His eyes couldn't leave that scarlet flush.

Reeve twisted Ginevra's face sideways and kissed her. In front of him.

Tom forgot how to breathe. Nothing existed except the sheer, bubbling...

JEALOUSY.

What? Tom stared. Was that what it was? No, that was impossible. Ridiculous. He was *not* jealous of *Scott Reeve*. A *Ravenclaw* . An *idiot*.

A Ravenclaw idiot who happened to have the most beautiful girl in the school.

STOP IT.

Ginevra dragged her lips away... and looked at Tom. He didn't know why she did this. He didn't want to know why. However, she did, and in the three seconds before he restrained his facial features, he knew that surely she must have caught a glimpse of the whirlwind of confusing things he felt and thought.

His eyes flashed up to Reeve. The younger male was smirking, smug pride glowing off every inch of his face. The natural instinct for his lip to curl back, to narrow his eyes, to snap something sarcastic, but that would already be giving away too much.

He walked away.

Every footstep rung loud in his ears, drowning out Reeve and Ginevra's meaningless tiff behind him, footsteps loud and angry-sounding, his heartbeat louder, angrier.

A hot, fierce anger to challenge his heartbeat swirled inside his head. Inside his chest. Inside his ribcage. It was taking over everything.

So this is my sin, envy.

Impossible. This wasn't jealousy. This was a strong, perfectly reasonable dislike for an idiot. That was normal. This fury that boiled his blood had nothing to do with anything – or *anyone* – else. This inconsolable rage had nothing to do with *Ginevra*.

He didn't give a damn about her.

Breathing was becoming difficult.

He stumbled into the shadows.

He couldn't breathe.

Staggered into a secret corridor, away from prying eyes.

Darkness clouding his eyes.

He was far away enough from other people, he was sure. However, it was better to be safe than sorry, and he hurried further, grabbing at the wall as his knees buckled.

A haze of black in his vision.

A snarling from within.

A feeling of gladness that was not his own, a self-satisfied gratification.

He was far enough now.

Dragging in own last gulp of air as his head constricted painfully, clinging to the wall once more as he fell under the darkness... and then he let it take him.

Blearily, and in pain, Tom forced his eyes open.

Instantly, he realised that the aforementioned pain was coming from his head, and not his arm. Which meant that he hadn't unconsciously attacked his arm, as per usual. Which meant that something *else* had happened.

Eyes narrowing in wary suspicion and a slight worry, though he would never let anyone know, he looked around.

And saw Ginevra.

What the hell is she doing here?! Panic flooded his system. *Shit. SHIT.* This was bloody Myrtle Tristanebury all over again... except worse. Why worse? Because this time, he *knew* the person he'd killed? Because this time, he... didn't hate her?

Tom struggled forwards to crouch beside her. Was she alive? *Oh God, please don't let her be dead.* Just as he was about to start

hyperventilating and shouting, " *GINEVRA*" , her eyes snapped open – focused on him – widened – she screamed.

Oops .

He had to admit that even he would be alarmed by someone leaning over him when he woke up. He moved backwards slightly.

With a struggle, Ginevra sat up.

"How did you get here?" Tom demanded. Maybe it was a coincidence. Maybe he hadn't dragged her down here and tried to kill her. Maybe... maybe she just wandered into the Chamber of Secrets by mistake and fell asleep.

...Maybe not.

"What..." Ginevra rasped, looking around. "I... get where?" Her hazel eyes grew in size, perhaps in fear, though she couldn't possibly recognise where she was. Then she keeled backwards, hit the floor hard, and the screaming began.

This time, however, it was different.

This time, she was screaming, " *TOM* !"

"What?" Tom blinked. She had never even referred to him personally by his first name... why would she scream it? Perhaps it was another Tom that was haunting her nightmares. Perhaps, again, it was coincidence.

It seemed extremely unlikely.

"What – PEREGRINE!"

Her eyes flashed open and focused on his face. It was actually very annoying how even when she was lying weakly on the floor of the Chamber of Secrets, in the dark, those eyes still made him dizzy. He ignored this.

"What did you say?"

"Er. Did I say something?"

" Yes ." By God, this girl was irritation personified. "If you hadn't, I wouldn't be asking about it. Now why did you say my name?"

"I said your name?" Ginevra whispered warily.

" Yes. " He ground out the word from between his teeth. Honestly, if she was any slower, she'd be going backwards. "'Tom'," he explained carefully, cold annoyance lacing every letter. "You said 'Tom'. Why?"

With a heavy sigh, she put her face in her hands, and then pushed her damp, loose hair backwards with one hand. "Look... I... I don't know. Okay? I have no idea why... why I said that."

Tom stared at her. She was lying, of that he was fairly certain. Why would she lie? Yes, most people thought that he was intimidating, but firstly, Ginevra was not most people, and secondly, he had never *intimidated* anyone enough to give them nightmares about him. That just felt strange.

A thought hit him. Maybe she knew.

Dread poured through him. Maybe she knew about his... *problem* . Maybe she knew that he could attack her at any time. He wouldn't, though. He only attacked Muggleborns...

So why had he unconsciously brought her down here?

"How did you get here?"

She laughed bitterly. "D'you think I have any idea?"

Oh dear.

He *had* attacked her. It was him. Why would he attack her, though? It didn't matter now. He could think about this later, once they were

both safely out of the Chamber. "We should get out of here." He got to his feet and glanced discreetly backwards at the hidden cavern where by far the most unfriendly of Hogwarts monsters would emerge from.

Ginevra began to get to her feet, but suddenly cried out and collapsed.

"What's happening?" Tom was bewildered. He walked back towards her, crouching awkwardly next to where she was crumpled on the stone tiles. "Peregrine, are you alright?"

"No . If I was fine, d'you think I would have yelled and fallen over?" she snapped.

Tom smirked. "Let me see."

"How about *no* ?"

I know that you despise me, but really, if you're hurt then there's no point in being a martyr just so that you won't have to admit that I helped you.

Or is it really just that? Or is she not as above the 'Mudblood' comments as I thought?

A chill going through him at the thought of maybe the only person who didn't care about blood-statuses having a prejudice against him, he snapped, "Peregrine, just because I'm a half-blood doesn't that I'm not decent at Healing."

However, to his surprise, she stared at him and said disbelievingly, "You're a half-blood?"

She didn't already know? I'm practically a legend – come and see the only Slytherin mud.

Oh great. And now the prejudice comes.

"Yes..." he said. "Muggle father, witch mother. Is there a problem with that?"

There seemed to be no distaste on her face though – just confusion.

Storing away another puzzling thing about this moment to muse over at a later time, Tom looked down at Ginevra's hand, where she was clutching her arm. Blood trickled through her fingers.

There was no doubt about it now. He had attacked her.

"Peregrine, I really think you should let me see."

She stammered in bewilderment, following his gaze, and gasped. Without waiting for permission – she'd just snap at him and tell him to go away – he knelt beside her again, pushed her free hand away from her arm, and carefully peered at the problem.

The slash had cut straight through her robes and deep into her skin. Due to the large amount of sticky blood, the fabric was sticking to the wound, which would probably be quite painful. He silently thanked Ginevra in his head for not being whiny when it must have hurt quite a lot, and set about Healing it.

In his peripheral vision, Tom saw her look up at him very quickly, as though she had just realised something important. He gave no noticeable reaction to this, though he longed to know what was going on inside her head.

When it was Healed as best he could, he looked back up at her through his fringe. She looked deep in thought. He took a sharp breath to bring her attention back from whatever she was thinking about, and quietly lied with the perfect tone of innocence and disgust, "I don't know what did this, and I don't think we want to." Using his wand, he wordlessly siphoned the blood away, and then found a pack of tissues from inside his robes to press gently to the wound.

"D'you always carry tissues with you, just in case you come across a copiously-bleeding Prefect?" Ginevra asked, smiling weakly.

The smallest of smirks turned his lips. "Always." He charmed the tissues to stay in place, and then fixed the fabric of her robes so that no-one would become suspicious as to why there was a large gash in a student's sleeve.

Very quietly, as if exhausted, Ginevra said, "Thanks," with a heavy sigh.

Her eyelids were falling heavily as she struggled to stay awake. It was insane, but he felt fiercely protective of her for a second. Focusing his face into a smooth mask through which no-one would ever see, Tom stood. His dark eyes moved down to Ginevra. She would probably have a hard time standing... and moving. Without any warning, his brain spontaneously extended his hand towards her.

By this offer, Ginevra looked as equally bewildered as he felt. There was a long, awkward silence where she merely stared at his outstretched hand, eyes wide. As he began to feel uncomfortable and put his hand down, she reached up and took his hand, curling her fingers through his, and he pulled her to her feet.

He ignored the static current running through their fingertips.

"Can you walk?" he asked her, already seeing images of her collapsing again, and probably knocking her brains out on the hard stone floor. That was the last thing he needed.

"Mm-hm..." she mumbled, blinking sleepily. "M'fine."

"No, you're not," he retorted, seeing her petite figure sway to one side almost to the point of falling over before swaying back in the opposite direction.

"Riddle!" said Ginevra, annoyed. "I am *perfectly* capable of walking."

Sure.

"Okay," he said, looking over her again, her knees trembling with keeping her standing, her head rocking from side to side. He waited for her to begin moving.

She didn't even make one step before she crumpled.

Instantly, again the image of her brain on the floor flashing back to him, Tom lurched forwards and caught her. Everything about her hit him in about four seconds, actually jerking his head back.

She was warm, despite having been passed out in the Chamber of Secrets for a while. She was extremely thin. The overwhelming smell of apples – *hell, I've never even seen her eat a single apple* . Her soft, shaky breathing. Her scarlet hair, pressed against his cheek. Her eyes , wide with shock. He was holding her. He was *holding* her – close enough to count her eyelashes, or her freckles.

It took another four to seconds to remember how to breathe.

"See, Peregrine, *my* definition of walking is being able to safely manoeuvre on your feet, preferably without collapsing," he said, speaking with a forced calmness, as though it didn't really mean anything to him that he was *holding Ginevra Peregrine* .

With a sigh, she surrendered to letting him help her out of the Chamber.

See, I can be helpful. That wasn't so hard, was it?

The silence that cloaked them as Tom led her slowly towards the exit was so peaceful that took a lot of effort to constantly remind himself that they were in the Chamber of Secrets, that he'd just attacked her, that this was dangerous, that this shouldn't be happening...

I shouldn't care about her. If I care about her, then I'll get emotional if things happen to her, and getting emotional isn't something I can

afford.

Him caring for her was what had started this whole thing. He cared about her, so he became annoyed – not jealous, no, that was just ridiculous – when he saw her with Reeve, and accidentally attacked her.

I need to stop caring.

But caring was what had gained him this moment, and even he could never have anything of her, he had this, and even though she was barely conscious and tired and injured, in his head it would last forever.

At the sound of the creak of the secret door into the library, Ginevra twitched back into reality. She twisted sideways slightly to look over her shoulder at where they had come from... and it was *really* difficult to try and stop caring when she was pushing her shoulder into his chest.

"Is anyone here?" Ginevra whispered, looking around the library.

"I don't think so." Tom glanced down each row of bookcases, even though he was fairly certain that not only was no-one here, but that they wouldn't get in trouble even there was. "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 in and sort the situation out by yourself, so called the nearest Head or teacher – namely, myself. 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," he added, thinking of how he planned to sit in his armchair for a very long time and consider everything that had happened and why, "is not something I can fit in my schedule."

Ginevra said nothing, but in the narrow beam of moonlight that sparsely glowed from the windows her face was lit up with incredulity.

Well, yes, I suppose I don't have that important a schedule at two in the morning... still.

As they left the library, she tensed and subtly moved further away from Tom, though he noticed. His arms felt empty and he hated it.

She shivered slightly, before saying quietly, "I can make the rest of the way on my own."

"No, you can't, Peregrine." He didn't want to do this, but he felt he had to. He had to be cruel so that she could never guess that his reason for accompanying her would be that he was afraid of her being hurt again. "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?"

She went red.

Luckily, from there it wasn't far to the Slytherin common room, so the awkward hush didn't last long.

" *Ophiuchus* ," Ginevra said to the bust of Salazar Slytherin, and turned back to Tom as the door to her common room opened. "You know, I was perfectly capable as coming on my own."

"Yes, Peregrine, and if my memory serves me well, you were also '*perfectly capable*' of walking," he said sarcastically. "I had to come with you."

"Aw, d'you love me really?" she sneered.

Tom was alarmed by two things. Firstly, the amount of venom in her voice. Secondly, the weird feeling that four short words came him. " *No* ," he snapped, but this made the weird feeling get stronger. "The fact of matter, Peregrine, is that I'd rather make sure that you got back to your little common room safely that have to deal with a mess in the morning after you get attacked again."

She stared at him, hazel eyes wide. He concentrated on breathing normally.

"What's wrong?"

"Riddle," she said, very slowly, "I don't think that I ever mentioned being attacked before."

Crap.

Tom stared back at her through narrowed eyes. It took him a few seconds to come up with an answer. "Unless, of course, I am to assume that you knocked *yourself* out and dragged *yourself* down in a secret chamber that no-one knows about, and sliced open your *own* arm for good measure?"

"You're right," Ginny retorted. "Nobody knows about that place. How did you? Was it chance, you knowing that I'd be down there, and that I had been attacked?"

"I didn't *know* that anyone would be down there," he said icily. "Anyway – it's simple logic." He folded his arms across his chest. He still felt empty.

I loathe myself.

"Is it?" Ginevra hissed, and stalked into her common room.

He felt emptier than ever.

Aw. I thought that was really sweet... but sad, in a way. He's trying so hard not to like her... but it's *really* not working. Hahah. Loser. LOL. Anyway, please review!

Heart, me.

No Such Thing

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: I'm working full-time on Backtrack now, which is really interesting. I like this chapter. It's, for me at least, so cool to see these things from Tom's POV. I love it!

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Twelve: No Such Thing

*" I didn't know that anyone would be down there," he said icily.
"Anyway – it's simple logic." He folded his arms across his chest. He still felt empty.*

" Is it?" Ginevra hissed, and stalked into her common room. He felt emptier than ever.

Bleed for tomorrow

Because there's no hope

For today

He never even made it back to his common room. The overwhelming anger took over him. Tom couldn't breathe past the fury. It was so vicious that it was painful. He staggered to the wall nearby and grabbed onto it for support.

Not twice in one evening. That was ridiculous. That was dangerous.

He couldn't risk his possession taking him down to the dungeons and targeting Ginevra.

Into a corridor he staggered. His head was swimming. Voices were snarling in his head, so loudly that he couldn't determine separate words.

*KillriptearkillbloodPeregrinebloodtearDumbledorePeregrinekillDippetr
ipGinevra-*

He picked out the word Ginevra. "No," he gasped through his teeth.

Not able to remember how he'd got it, a knife was suddenly clutched between his fingers. He hesitated for only a split-second before stabbing it into his arm.

Everything went dark.

" *Riddle !*" A high-pitched, strangely familiar scream tore through Tom's unconsciousness.

He blinked. What was going on? His arm and his head were pounding with pain... and a girl was crouching next to him, eyes full of tears.

"Riddle – Tom – Tom Riddle – *Tom Marvolo – Riddle !*" she screamed.

WHAT?

His eyes widened.

Marvolo.

Who the hell was this girl, and more importantly – *how did she know about Marvolo ?*

"Who are you and how the hell do you know my middle name?" he demanded, struggling to sit up, pain throbbing through his skull and left forearm.

The girl's eyes widened, and she blinked the tears away. "Riddle??"

"Yes, that's my name, and how do you know it?" he asked angrily. She couldn't possibly know. He didn't even know who she was. She didn't even go to Hogwarts! How the devil did she know about the Chamber of Secrets, anyway??

She swallowed hard, avoiding that question. She averted her eyes from his, biting her lower lip and looking down at her hands.

It was an incredibly familiar gesture.

Tom frowned, his brow furrowing into a V of deep confusion. "Do I... do I know you?"

Yes, he was sure that he knew her. That way of looking away nervously when she didn't want to give something away... that soft, but simultaneously strong voice... he knew it. Who had it? *Whose voice was that? Whose face? Whose... eyes...?*

Her eyes.

The colour was undeterminable in this darkness... but those eyes... round eyes... short eyelashes... a certain glow...

Damn, I know this! He felt like pummelling his forehead to try and help him think.

"No, you don't," the girl said, and it didn't escape him how she immediately changed the subject. "What happened? Who did this to you?"

"Nothing. No-one." He glared at her. *Now go away.*

"I see." The girl picked up a wand from the floor, presumably hers... that was strangely familiar in familiar fingers. She put it quickly inside her jumper... his eyes flicked over the clothes.

What the-?

"What the devil are you wearing?" Tom said incredulously, his eyes falling on a too-big jumper with a hood and trousers so tight that they were barely there. That was hardly suitable... "And who comes down here in the dead of night anyway?"

"Nothing. No-one." She raised her eyebrows. Her large eyes glowed, mocking him with their familiarity.

"Look – whoever you are," Tom muttered, standing up with difficulty, "you wouldn't believe me even if I told you."

"Need help?" the strange girl offered. "You probably lost a third of the blood."

"No."

"So," she continued casually, walking beside him as he tried to walk away from him. He moved more slowly than usual, as he was weak from blood loss, as this girl had predicted, and couldn't run away. It was infuriating. "Was it the basilisk?"

WHAT?

Tom stared. "Okay, stop this *right now* ," he snapped. "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* ?"

The girl smirked. She only answered one of the questions, with: "I am Wellvren Sayoley G."

That's a stupid name.

"What kind of a name is *that* ?" he demanded, not caring if he was being rude.

"What kind of a name is *Lord Voldemort* ?" she asked sweetly.

What's that supposed to mean? Who the hell calls themselves a Lord?

"I don't know. Your cousin?" Tom replied sarcastically.

The girl stared. It was too dark for him to see anything of her expression, as the light was behind her, but there was a long silence before she shrugged, and then walked.

They didn't speak as they left via the library, which gave Tom to think about why this strange person was so familiar. Dark, curly hair... dark skin... but it was those eyes that were the key, and she kept those hidden either behind a curtain of hair, or by bowing her head low.

Once outside the library, Tom cast a longing glance towards the painting of Robin the Rich, but flicked his gaze back towards... 'Wellvren', or whatever she claimed that her name was. He wanted to stay and interrogate her. Find out who she was.

Find out who was the closest to discovering one of Hogwarts' darkest secrets.

Something attracted his eyes, however. Slowly, the girl's curly hair was flattening into straight, long sheets... and it was changing colour.

"Your hair..." A frown creased his face. "It's... changing."

She's becoming herself – I can find out who she is!

But too late he realised that if he had not alerted her to her changing appearance, then perhaps she would have stayed long enough for him to work out why she was so damned familiar.

As it was, she turned without any explanation, and fled down the hallway; leaving him with only a glimpse of her eyes to stay with him as they widened in panic before ripping away from him-

Gold.

Tom frowned. Who the devil had gold eyes?

I should follow her , he understood, but she'd already disappeared. He cursed his idiocy. He could have at least seen what direction she'd headed in, to get an inkling of what House she was probably in.

His lip curling in self-annoyance, he threw a scowl at the wall before stalking back to his dormitory.

Fionn was in the common room, reading a book. She looked up upon his entrance, her large blue eyes moving briefly towards his slashed arm and then back to his face, but said nothing. He certainly wasn't going to say anything, and silently mounted the stairs to his bedroom.

Closing and locking the door behind him, Tom pressed his back to it, resting the back of his head against the wood, looking at the ceiling as his own thoughts immediately mobbed him.

Wellvren Sayoley G.

Some familiar.

She asked me a question... something about... Lord someone.

Lord... Lord Volomot?

No. Lord... Voldemort. She said it as though it was supposed to mean something to me.

Lord Voldemort.

Lord Voldemort.

Something hit him suddenly, and a deep frown curved through his eyebrows. The name that he'd first thought of when trying to remember what that bizarre girl had said – Lord Volomot.

It had Tom in it, backwards. And then, immediately before it, 'volo'.

His frown deepened. It was so close to the real name that she'd said, *Voldemort*, that perhaps...

Surely not.

He knew now that there was no such thing as coincidences, and moved swiftly to his desk. He didn't bother pulling his chair out to sit in. He grabbed a quill, an inkpot, and a piece of parchment, scrawling across it.

Lord Voldemort.

Lord Volder -- Tom

Lrd de -- Tom rvolo

-- Tom rvolo Rddle

That wasn't right. It was missing three letters. M, A, and I. Scanning across what he'd written so far, he tried to fit them in somewhere. What he came up with drained all of the colour from his face.

I am Lord Voldemort -- Tom Marvolo Riddle

There was no such thing as coincidences.

The girl had said it as though it was supposed to mean something to him. As though he was supposed to know it... that explained the blank stare that she'd given his reaction.

Something else fired into his head at a rapid-fire pace.

Wellvren Sayoley G.

He guessed that she would also use ' *I am* ', as that had, indeed, he recalled, been what she had said. Somewhere in her name were the letters, I, A, and M.

Now Tom pulled the chair out, dropping down heavily into it, his eyes narrowed with furious concentration.

He scribbled the answers in classes that day without really paying attention to what he was doing. He knew all of the answers anyway. When he returned to his dormitory after dinner, he didn't sleep.

But by morning, he was no closer to working out the answer.

As far as he knew, there was no-one in the school with a name that was anything remotely close to what he had been given.

Just checking – do you get why he can't find out who it is? Because *I am Wellvren Sayoley G* is an anagram of Ginevra Molly Weasley, not Ginevra Aiobheann Peregrine. Teehee. He's such a numpty. Please review! I love you all.

Heart, me.

This Dazzling Mystery

A/N: Okay, so I've found that there are at *least* two people reading Backtrack who haven't read Rewind, and are quite confused. XD I think it was something like reader103 , an anonymous reviewer, and someone else who I forget. Hi, if you're reading this. This fic, Backtrack, is actually a take on my other fic, Rewind. The story is originally told from Ginny's point of view, so it explains everything there. But Tom's POV is so cute that I decided to post it up. :D So, yeah, if not everything makes sense, then maybe read Rewind.

Hey, I'm doing promotions and explanations *simultaneously* ! Sweet. Thanks for the reviews, I luff you.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Thirteen: This Dazzling Mystery

I am Lord Voldemort -- Tom Marvolo Riddle. There was no such thing as coincidences. The girl had said it as though it was supposed to mean something to him. As though he was supposed to know it... that explained the blank stare that she'd given his reaction.

Something else fired into his head at a rapid-fire pace. Wellvren Sayoley G. Now Tom pulled the chair out, dropping down heavily into it, his eyes narrowed with furious concentration. When he returned to his dormitory after dinner, he didn't sleep. But by morning, he was no closer to working out the answer. As far as he knew, there was no one in the school with a name that was anything remotely close to what he had been given.

And I think too slow

And I move too fast

And the first rainbow I see will be my last

Tom had thought that he was onto something when he worked out the anagram that was *I am Lord Voldemort*. However, a week had passed, and he was no closer to understanding the mystery of Wellvren Sayoley G, the strange girl who somehow knew everything about him... who he had never known the real name of.

It was terribly confusing, and in the end, he dismissed it as a figment of his imagination. However, he couldn't stop noticing small girls around him with dark curly hair... though of course 'Wellvren' had Transfigured herself, and it was not her real appearance.

That one had her curls... that one had her skin tone... that one had her shape face... that one had her height...

Someone extremely familiar walked past, and in that instant, Tom recognised her. That face shape. That height. The shape of those eyes. That way of walking. He *knew* her –

Wellvren.

He spun to stare after her, and was met by the sight of... Ginevra.

Tom frowned. Ginevra?

Impossible. He would have understood that it was her, no matter what form she took. He would have seen those eyes and realised in an instant who he was talking to.

He ran *Peregrine* through his head to compare to *Wellvren Sayoley G*.

It didn't fit.

He frowned further. Why had Ginevra been so suddenly familiar then? ...Perhaps it wasn't familiarity he had seen. Perhaps it was merely recognition.

He was spending way too much time around her.

Behind him, as he turned away from watching her disappear down the corridor in the crowd, apparently not having seen him, Tom heard a gasp of, "Slytherin Quidditch team try-outs!" in that loud, obnoxious melody.

He had remembered about the try-outs, even if *she* hadn't. He had intended to lurk in the shadows of the pitch and see if she was actually any good at the ridiculous flying sport, or if she was just all talk, but his previous decision that he spent too much time around her ruled this out.

Tom was halfway through a piece of garlic bread the day of the Quidditch try-outs when, so loudly that everyone, even the teachers, stopped what they were doing, there came a yell from the Entrance Hall of, "IF YOU *EVER* SPEAK TO ME AGAIN, THEN THE REEVE FAMILY LINE WILL COME TO AN ABRUPT *END* ! BECAUSE, SCOTT, YOU WILL LOSE THE ABILITY TO HAVE CHILDREN !"

That sounds like Ginevra's sweet, timid tone.

There was a silence in the Great Hall. A teacher coughed. Someone on the Hufflepuff table giggled. (Honestly, Tom felt like laughing himself. The idea of Reeve being put through the immense pain of losing the ability to have children was quite funny.)

Tom paused for a moment to see if anything else would happen – a scream of " *VERMUS NEZ* !", followed by a yelp of pain, to the Head Boy's immense satisfaction – before continuing with his dinner.

Well, he presumed that Ginevra and Reeve had split up then. He wasn't quite sure why, but this knowledge gave him a warm, happy feeling in his stomach.

He didn't like it.

When Ginevra, Hartwin and Philips entered the Great Hall, the noise started again, to pretend as though each person in the room hadn't been eavesdropping – if it could be called that – on what the redhead had been saying. Tom didn't look up at her. He was trying to stop caring.

As he finished his meal, he heard Ginevra gasp and drop an item of cutlery. He didn't let himself even glance her way. He heard her leave the Hall very quickly. He didn't watch her leave.

However, by this time, he had already stopped eating. Tom stood, watching with shallow amusement as the leftover contents of his plate disappeared into thin air, and then tried to catch the eye of Fionn.

Even though he was quite obviously glaring at her, she was ignoring him.

Fionn, damnit! His lip curled. *Don't make me come over to your godforbidden table.*

Of course, she continued to pretend that she couldn't see him, chatting merrily, to her friends, and he had no choice but to make his way towards the Gryffindor table.

Every red-clad person's eyes followed him.

Oh, get lost, you stupid lions.

He came to a stop on the other side of the table from Fionn. Everyone was watching him.

"Fionn," he said coldly. " *Fionn* ."

"Oh, Tom!" she said pleasantly. "What a surprise to see you here."

His eyes narrowed lethally.

"Do you want to sit down with us?" she continued in her disgustingly bright, chirpy manner. "We're still having pudding – you're perfectly welcome to."

" No ."

The tone of his voice caused a first-year five metres away to flinch. Now *that* was impressive. Usually he had a two-metre radius of intimidation. Still, he'd thought that Gryffindors were supposed to be brave.

"I merely noticed," he said, jaw set and voice icy, "that despite it being your patrol night, you were still sitting down and eating, though you were supposed to have set off for a lovely tour of the castle fifteen minutes ago. I was wondering if I was going to have to again remind you that this year, your out-of-class duties extend beyond the norm of gossiping inconsequential drivel with the numerous other idiots that you find with similar brain capacity to your own."

Proving his point, her friends looked blankly at each other, with '*what did he just say*' expressions matching in each pair of eyes.

Fionn, however, understood perfectly. She scowled. "Tom," she complained, "stop confusing my friends."

"Why should I when it's so simple?"

"Please, Tom, dearest, can't you do tonight's patrol? There's a Gryffindor party and I really want to go to it," Fionn said, fluttering her eyelashes.

"You mistake me for someone who cares."

" *Pleaaaaase* , Tom!" she begged. "Just this one night." She turned a beady blue eye on him suddenly. "You owe me."

Incredulity flashed in his eyes. " No , I do not," he snapped.

Swiftly, motioning to her friends not to follow her, the blonde stood and moved away from the tables, one glance telling Tom to follow her.

"Listen," she said, her voice quiet but sharp. "Last week, one day, you never came back to the common room. You weren't at dinner; you weren't even at lunch. The next morning, you turn up before breakfast, in yesterday's robes, damp, freezing cold, tattered, and not too mention *bleeding* . I haven't said a word to anyone about that, even though, as Head Girl, it's my *responsibility* , as you like to remind me, to look after other students. And, though, I *hate* to blackmail," she simpered, "it *might* slip out when I go to say goodbye to my friends before heading out on patrol."

Tom's lips pressed into a thin line.

If there is Satan embodied into human form, then it leaves no doubt that he chose Fionn.

An alarming thought crossed his brain.

Or perhaps me.

Fionn tilted her head sideways at him. "We're Gryffindors, Tom. We gossip. Trust me – if I tell, the whole school, including teachers, will know about it before you even get to the Entrance Hall."

Tom balled his hands into fists. His loathing for anyone was outshone by this loathing for the *blackmailing* girl he shared a dormitory with.

"Now," she said sweetly, "this could all be avoided... maybe if I didn't have to say goodbye to my friends... maybe if I didn't have to go on patrol..."

Lip curling back, Tom snapped, "I don't care if you're have a heart attack and have to be submitted to St. Mungoes'; you're doing my

patrol tomorrow." Then he turned his back sharply on her, and left, his annoyance boiling over-

NO. Calm down.

Breathe. In – out. Breathe. He closed his eyes as he headed up the Entrance Hall stairs, focusing on squashing down the anger, the irrationality filling his head, and, most importantly, the voices that were starting up.

A voice floated faintly out to Tom's ears as he walked down the second-floor corridor. He thought not much of it, assuming it to be from a classroom, but then realised that it was coming from Moaning Myrtle's abandoned bathroom.

He stopped, and stood beside the door for a moment to listen.

"Killed?" It was Ginevra. "You mean... *killed* , killed?"

A sense of foreboding overcame him.

"No, I meant *chicken-pot-pie* , killed," Tristanebury retorted in a terrible comeback. "Yes, *killed, killed* . I was murdered in this bathroom in the evening after I ran away from Olive Hornby."

Tom's blood ran cold.

This was bad.

Screw *bad* , this was as terrible as it got.

"But – murdered – murdered by *who* ?" Ginevra demanded incredulously.

Time to intervene .

Deliberately making as much noise as possible, Tom entered the female bathroom by slamming his shoulder into the wooden door. As his eyes flashed over to Ginevra, they passed over Myrtle, and

though, hopefully, the redhead couldn't see, beneath his fringe they flashed a silent, deadly warning.

"Peregrine," he said, his gaze landing coolly on her. "I thought I heard you in here."

Glaring what was clearly her worst glare, but was still rather pathetic, Ginevra turned to him. "Riddle." Her eyes were slits of anger.

He tried to hide his wariness of the conversation that they had just been having behind his shallow bemusement at how openly Ginevra made her irritation show. "It's two minutes until curfew, Peregrine," he said, his voice cold but uninterested. "Don't you think that you're cutting it a bit fine? You're not even allowed in here." He flashed another warning at Myrtle in a split-second glance.

"Sorry, Riddle," she said sardonically, before looking back at Myrtle. "Who?"

Now that Ginevra was turned and could no longer see his expression, he was free to unleash the deadliest and darkest of glares at her.

If you dare to tell her, then death will be nothing compared to what I'll do to you.

A well-behaved, ever-obedient Myrtle shook her head. "I... I can't," she wailed in response to Ginevra, though her staring with wide eyes at him wasn't very subtle. She dived back into the toilet, hopefully before the redhead noticed.

"Come on, Peregrine." Tom turned and left the bathroom, not wanting to linger any longer in a female bathroom than necessary.

Tom liked silence. In silence, you didn't have to engage in conversation, or pretend that you were interested in someone else's conversation. He never usually did either of these things, but the sentiment was right, and he didn't like it. However, now, with the only

noise around being their breathing, and Ginevra's heavy, crashing footsteps, it didn't seem right.

As they headed towards the stairs, Tom said calmly, "I suppose that you're ignoring me because you still think that I attacked you."

She didn't answer.

"Peregrine, I *didn't* ." He stared down at her sideways. "I was in my common room at the time that you were attacked!"

What a lie.

"How the hell am I supposed to believe that?" Now she spoke up. "How , Riddle – after, just last week, I was amazed by 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* ," he replied coldly, thinking back to all the uncovered untruths that she'd told him.

She met his gaze with frozen hazel. "I thought you were smarter than that."

"I don't believe it," Tom said, his eyebrows lifting in incredulity. "Are you simultaneously insulting and complimenting me?"

I didn't even know that was possible.

She walked faster.

"Peregrine, I *did not* attack you!" He had no idea what created this irrevocable urge to make her believe that it hadn't been him... even though it had been. "Why the hell would I?"

Because there's a second soul inside me that likes to kill people.

He hoped she couldn't read minds.

"I don't *know* , Riddle!" she suddenly yelled, whirling to glare up at him. "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!"

They had unconsciously stopped walking. Tom took an automatic step backwards when her dazzlingly cold eyes came within his vulnerability radius. He prayed that she hadn't seen.

"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 over things?"

To protect people, you idiot!

"Why do you 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?"

I look after you because I care about you a lot more than I should, and I'm horrible to cover it up so that you'll never realise!

"Why are you such an *arsehole* ?" Ginevra threw her hands up 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," he snarled, eyes narrowing.

"How can you hate Hogwarts so much?" she demanded. "It's an amazing place – just step back and see what an absolutely incredible place we're in!"

It may seem that way to you, yes.

That, however, is only because, with the exception of Bastet and Malfoy and Slughorn, nobody here loathes you.

"Yes, Peregrine," he said, no longer raising his voice, but the level of soft anger in his voice higher than it had ever been, "but unfortunately, this isn't the film set of The Littlest Elf. 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 realising it, what with your perfect life and friends and blood status-"

"Okay, Riddle, shut the hell up for *just one second* !" she suddenly interrupted, stepping closer.

He didn't have time to step back. His fury and her beauty took over his head in one great sweep, and he was immobilised.

"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."

Tom stared.

"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. *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."

He'd forgotten how to speak, but this time, not because of her. Because of what she'd said.

None of his suspicions on traumatic memories had come close to this.

He watched in a stunned silence as tears trembled in her eyes.

"Don't you *dare* ever make assumptions about my life," she said, and though her voice was shaking, this did by no means lessen the blow of the poison in it. She drew in a breath. "I can make the rest of the way to the dungeons unaccompanied."

He stared at her still.

"And by the way, Riddle – don't give me that crap about how hard life is not being pureblood..." she continued, subdued but glacial. "I'm Muggleborn. I am, so quote: 'one of those filthy Mudbloods'."

Tom would have been shocked in silence had he not already long surpassed that stage.

"Goodbye."

She walked away.

Impossible.

It took two minutes of a bored inability to move after she'd disappeared for Tom to get moving again, and continue on his patrol.

At least he now understood why he'd attacked her. It was annoying, actually, how even his subconscious knew that she was Muggleborn before he did.

It was impossible, though. Ginevra couldn't be Muggleborn. Muggles... Muggles were, supposedly, mud.

There was no way that any mud could possibly be that intelligent – brave – fierce – loyal – *beautiful* – dangerous –

He pushed a hand backwards through his hair before smoothing the mess back down.

This dazzling mystery was one that he wished he'd left alone.

Aw. He's so Slytherin, deep down, that he believes all that 'Muggles are mud' turd. How... unpleasant. Please review, updates will be daily now because I'm translating it into his POV *really* fast. :D

Heart, me.

Explain That Static

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: I think this chapter is really sweet, but at the same time, kind of creepy... anyway. I'll leave you to decide for yourself. :D Read and review, please!

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Fourteen: Explain That Static As Best You Can

" And by the way, Riddle – don't give me that crap about how hard life is not being pureblood..." she continued, subdued but glacial. "I'm Muggleborn. I am, so quote: 'one of those filthy Mudbloods'." Tom would have been shocked in silence had he not already long surpassed that stage. "Goodbye." She walked away.

At least he now understood why he'd attacked her. It was annoying, actually, how even his subconscious knew that she was Muggleborn before he did. It was impossible, though. Ginevra couldn't be Muggleborn. Muggles... Muggles were, supposedly, mud. There was no way that any mud could possibly be that intelligent – brave – fierce – loyal – beautiful – dangerous – This dazzling mystery was one that he wished he'd left alone.

I started looking in a purple burst

I started looking for excuses

Come on in

I've got to tell you what a state I'm in

Omelettes.

Tom moved quickly to breakfast, hungry. He slipped through the crowds, unseen despite being in clear view of everyone around him. The Great Hall was filling slowly, and, as usual, he chose to sit alone, near the end of the table.

He filled his glass with pumpkin juice, forked an omelette onto his plate, and reached towards the fruit bowl for a pear. He loved pears. Amazingly, he ignored his omelette, and went straight for the pear.

Mm... pear.

Only three bites through the pear Tom managed.

Then Ginevra came in.

His eyes widened, his mouth fell open, and the small green pear slipped through his fingers, bouncing off his metal plate with a clatter and then rolling across the floor.

She was a smaller, more fierce model of some unknown flame-haired Greek goddess. She had actually *brushed her hair* ; scarlet tresses spilling smoothly like molten sunset down her back. Her eyes had never been so big.

She sat down alone, for once, instead of with Hartwin and Philips, and began to eat, still pouting a smirk, evidently quite pleased with herself. Did she *know* that she was stunning?

Tom couldn't take his eyes off her.

Malfoy appeared a moment later, and Ginevra began to talk to him. Tom paid no attention to Malfoy. It was only her. His hand was still frozen in the air, curled around the shape of a pear that had fallen to the floor long ago. He had no idea what he was supposed to be doing, and he didn't care that he wasn't doing it.

She was bloody *beautiful* .

Ginevra looked uncomfortable, and she quickly stood and hurried from the Hall. Malfoy followed a moment later.

Tom stared after her.

"Um. Are you gonna eat that?"

He jolted back into reality, and looked down to see a nervous second-year eyeing his omelette, holding his fork and knife up as though ready to pounce on the eggy delicacy at any moment.

"What?" Tom blinked. "Oh. No." He didn't care for omelettes or pears anymore.

Standing, he made to follow Ginevra and Malfoy. He had been so distracted by *her* that he'd almost missed how the blonde male had been looking at her. *Almost* missed it. He hadn't though, and he didn't like that look at all.

Hartwin and Philips seemed to have the same train of thought, as they were abandoning their meals and pursuing the redhead out of the dinner hall, urgent looks on their faces. They found her before he did. He didn't know yet what they found, but it caused two horrified cries of ' *Ginny* !'

Tom shoved through the Great Hall doors, walking as fast as he could. His head snapped sideways, looking for her-

GINEVRA-

Malfoy-

Pinned against a wall-

Mouths-

Struggling-

Trying to get away-

An attempt at a scream-

The deepest, darkest fury that Tom could remember feeling in a long time exploded out of him. " *Peregrine* !" he roared, and he didn't even know what spell he was casting, but he wanted it powerful and he wanted to hurt – by *God* , he wanted it to be *agonising* -

Purple light so bright that it scarred his eyes for several seconds flashed, filling the whole room.

Philips and Hartwin were saying something to Ginevra – she'd collapsed to the ground – was she alright – *MALFOY* – *breathe* –

He could hear his heart in his ears. It was echoing so loudly that it seemed, to him at least, that it was reflecting off the stone walls of the Entrance Hall. He couldn't feel anything. There wasn't a single emotion left inside him – everything – *everything* – had been replaced by this scorching, dominating rage.

He wanted to kill something. Some *one* . Preferably Malfoy.

The urge to laugh was unbelievable. To laugh, to storm over to the blonde, to point his wand down at his chest, to let out the worst curse he knew, to watch as the younger male writhed in absolute ruddy *AGONY* , and laugh and laugh, chuckling as he went down screaming-

NO. STOP IT.

Tom struggled to calm down.

Breathe.

The effort of staying as Tom Riddle rather than as someone else was incredible. He dug his fingernails into his palms.

Calm down-

GINEVRA-

Breathe-

MALFOY-

Breathe.

There was a soft, faltering gaze on him, and Tom's eyes flashed to the weak figure on the ground. Their distance was at least ten metres, but he could see her eyes in perfect clarity from here, like two green suns, only much brighter. She was so beautiful. So fragile.

Who the hell would want to hurt her?

The anger boiled up again faster than lit mercury, and he moved quickly towards Malfoy, his fingers tightening on his wand, to curse that-

"Leave him."

Tom turned to stare at Ginevra. Was she insane?

With an evident struggle, she stood, and then moved towards Malfoy. "*Ennervate.*"

Annoyance fizzing through him, Tom snapped, "What are you *doing* ?", but the younger Slytherin was already awake, and despite the fact that it looked as though part of his brain was coming out of his ear (that was interesting... Tom had sworn he didn't have a brain), he managed to stand up and smirk.

Then Ginevra punched him with everything she had.

Tom's eyebrows flew up into his hairline.

Nice.

"*Merlin !*" Philips exclaimed. "That was one hell of a punch."

"Never underestimate the power of short redheads," Hartwin agreed.

Ginevra turned to grin at them, but then, with only a gasped groan to give any indication as to what was happening, she collapsed backwards.

An unexplainable pain grabbed Tom's stomach, and before he even considered what was happened, he found himself crouching next to her, paying no heed whatsoever to the possibility that he might fall over if he put himself too close to her, because all that mattered now was *her* -

"Oww..." She grabbed her head, holding onto it with a wince. Then, as if realising that he was there, she looked up into his eyes, and the rest of the world faded out.

It was like looking at one clear picture in the midst of static – something so perfectly lucent, surrounded by blurs of darkness.

"Peregrine, are you-"

Hartwin and Philips pushed in front of him, breaking the connection, and he quickly got to his feet, stepping backwards and away. He didn't like being so close to people.

Yet you didn't mind Ginevra.

Go away.

A small crowd was gathering around them, poking Hartwin and Philips' shoulders to ask what was happening. No-one asked Tom, though he was clearly involved, standing close enough to be seen, and probably everyone in Scotland had heard him bellow her name upon seeing what was going on.

"Come on. Let's get you checked up at the Hospital Wing," Philips suggested, and they took Ginevra away.

Blood was still racing through Tom's ears. He took a deep breath, and walked towards his next class more slowly than his normal pace.

He moved at a sluggish speed in a vain attempt to slow the rest of his – his brain, his heartbeat, his stomach – which was moving as quickly as possible in a whirlwind of confusion.

It wasn't because it was her. It was just... I don't like Malfoy.

That excuse didn't even fool *him*, let alone anyone else – as though he was ever going to tell anyone else.

He let out a rough sigh, staring down at the material of his schoolbag.

He hated her. She was everything he went against.

And yet there was no other explanation for this protectiveness of her, this insane anger whenever Reeve had used to hold her, this *pain* when something hurt her... the explanation that he never thought that for him what be anything near possible:

He didn't hate her nearly as much as he had intended to.

To be precise, he liked her – and a great deal more that was ever supposed to happen.

I think it's so cutee... because Ginny had to kiss him unconsciously before she even began to consider that she might like him... and Tom is already working out that he might be falling in love with her... that's so lovelllyyyy... hehe, I'm on a fluff high.

Sorry that this chapter was so short.

It's so great to write up Backtrack at the same time as Press Play, because this is nice and fluffy, and at the moment, PP is really depressing, and I'd probably kill myself or something. Anywho, please review, maybe leave a hug or two!

(I'm a poet and I don't even know it.)

Heart, me.

Shiver

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: I adore this chapter. It's sad at the start, then really sweet later. And also, it has part of it that reminds us that even though he's sweet and fluffy and naïve and all that cute stuff, he's also still the Heir of Slytherin... and therefore not the nicest of chaps. I love it. Read and review!

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Fifteen: Shiver

Blood was still racing through Tom's ears. He took a deep breath, and walked towards his next class more slowly than his normal pace. He moved at a sluggish speed in a vain attempt to slow the rest of his – his brain, his heartbeat, his stomach – which was moving as quickly as possible in a whirlwind of confusion.

He hated her. She was everything he went against. And yet there was no other explanation for this protectiveness of her, this insane anger whenever Reeve had used to hold her, this pain when something hurt her... the explanation that he never thought that for him what be anything near possible: He didn't hate her nearly as much as he had intended to. To be precise, he liked her – and a great deal more that was ever supposed to happen.

Green eyes

The spotlight shines upon you

And how could anybody deny you

Tom was on his way to Herbology when he noticed sixth-year Slytherins queuing up outside the Charms classroom.

An uncontrollable urge came over him, and despite the fact that he was going to be late for Herbology, he turned to the Charms classroom, walking in the wrong direction, hiding by the wall, unseen in the shadows.

Ginevra-

"Why?" she was saying, to Philips. "Jealous? ...So how about that ball?"

"What ball?" Hartwin asked.

"Oh! But... don't you know? The Christmas Ball! Dancing, music... mistletoe..." Ginevra said, smiling pointedly at the last mention.

Mistletoe . Tom felt his face getting very hot. Damn Fionn for insisting that the Christmas Ball would have mistletoe... because *this* time, Ginevra was working on the Ball with him... and the thought of Ginevra, mistletoe, and him, wasn't a thought that he wanted to linger on.

"I'll probably go," said Hartwin, shrugging. "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," replied Philips, "you still have the rest of November, and most of December to buy something."

" *Merlin* ! I'm not talking about what to wear." Ginevra raised her eyebrows, hands on hips. "I'm talking about who to *go with* !"

Tom recalled the reason why he was standing in the shadows a few metres away, instead of going to class. That very reason that she was chatting to her friends about. A stupid, stupid idea, but for some

reason, despite his solid theory that it was stupid, he couldn't stop himself from doing it.

"We don't have to go with anyone," said Hartwin.

"I s'pose not," Ginevra agreed, looking thoughtful. "But it would be so *romantic* , wouldn't it?"

Tom stared straight at the wall in front of him, clenching his jaw tight in an effort to keep his face at its normal colouring. Romantic wasn't something that he did. This wasn't going to work very well, if those were her theories on the Yule Ball.

Due to his ponderings on romance – he twitched – he missed the next few sentences, and when he paid attention again, Hartwin was muttering uncomfortably about someone named Trey.

"What about you, Alden?" Ginevra asked, looking at him through lowered lashes. "Are you going with anyone? Has anyone asked you?"

His reply was incoherent. Tom wondered why she was interrogating him. It didn't seem very fair.

"Then, technically, you're still fair game."

Professor Vander emerged from the classroom, assembling the students into a line. Tom knew he had to act now; if he lost this moment, he'd never have enough courage – or reckless foolishness – to ask her again. His heart was suddenly in his throat, and breathing was becoming difficult.

It's not that bad. Just step out of the shadows... 'Ginevra, do you-'

"Alden, d'you wanna go to the ball with me?"

Tom froze with his foot in the air, mid-step to reveal himself from the darkness to Ginevra and the rest of her class, though, apart from Hartwin and Philips, everyone else would probably just ignore him.

He didn't know where his heart was now, but it wasn't in his throat anymore. It certainly wasn't in his ribcage.

In a silent state of a weird emotion that was a mixture of feeling sick and stunned, Tom watched Ginevra duck her head behind her hair, rapidly turning red with embarrassment. She peeked up at him through her eyelashes, hazel peering through copper, and in that instant, with the sun from a nearby window on her hair, she had never looked so beautiful.

It wasn't fair.

Feeling nauseous and tired, Tom swallowed down the words that he had just prepared, and took a step back into the shadows. Then another. He didn't need to stay around to hear Philips' answer. He didn't have to. No-one sane could ever deny Ginevra. Then he continued to Herbology, staring at his feet.

Tom didn't know if Ginevra had made the Quidditch team, as he had refused to allow himself to turn up at her try-outs, and as she was the only person he actually talked to – with the begrudging exception of Fionn – he had absolutely no idea.

He didn't know why this bothered him, but it did.

Therefore, he arrived halfway through the Slytherin-Gryffindor match. He arrived halfway through, instead of at the beginning, firstly because in his opinion Quidditch was more boring than watching chicken defrost, and it was better to only come at the end to watch the outcome, and secondly, because the first half was spent arguing with himself as to whether he should turn up at all.

Tom slipped into the Slytherin stands, near the stairs, so that he could escape when the Snitch was caught and not be caught in either the victory stampede or the vast crowd of sore losers who would take out their irritation on anything in their path.

"-and it looks like Malfoy and Swithin are having some sort of argument in the 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-"

He cast his gaze sideways in an attempt to find Ginevra. Again he wondered if she was actually any good.

She's on the team, so she must be.

Tom had only ever been to one match, in his first-year, had found it uninteresting, and had never come back, so he'd forgotten what to expect.

He scanned the players for her familiar face. What he didn't realise was that she'd be going too fast to see.

Where the hell is she?

Eventually, he recognised that she was there – she was the blur of scarlet that sometimes invaded his vision.

Even Tom, who knew next to nothing about the sport, could understand that she was very good. She was diving and rolling and flying faster than his eyes could follow, not even slowing down to catch the Quaffle, or even to throw it.

The points ticked up.

His head was beginning to hurt from the strain of trying to follow fourteen people's very rapid movements all at the same time, and he considered leaving early. It was in that second that he heard, "FLAX! BLUDGER!"

Ginevra was finally still enough for him to see – a resigned dread on her freckled face, eyes wide, vivid red ponytail tangled down her back – in a split-second before the Bludger hit her.

For a moment, Tom almost panicked. Then he remembered that two other people had been hit by Bludgers, and it wasn't that big a problem, as long as you weren't hit in the face, which Ginevra had not been. Calming down, he saw that it was actually quite amusing to watch her spinning around and around from impact.

Then she fell.

He was pretty sure *that* wasn't supposed to happen.

He stood immediately, holding onto the back of the chair in front with tight fingers. Someone in the crowd nearby screamed.

She'll get back up, she'll get back up, someone will catch her, they won't let her-

Crunch.

Tom could only stare at her spread-eagled figure on the sand. Then his reactions kicked in, and he flew from the stands, moving down the stairs so quickly that he barely touched each step.

They were supposed to catch her!

She was already being carried out when he reached the bottom of the stairs. Tom heard footsteps stomping behind him and pressed himself tight to the wall so that Hartwin and Philips could pass. Hopefully they hadn't seen him; hadn't seen his alarm.

The Head Boy remained in the doorway of the stairwell, having another stupid argument with himself. Sadly, it was something that happened a lot.

Go after her – she sounded like she broke something – she's hurt –

Hartwin and Philips are there – they'll tell her that I was panicking, even though I'm not –

You are panicking –

He scowled at this final addition to the argument. Finally, his cautiousness self-protection won over his concern, and he merely watched them take her away before heading towards lunch.

"Tom, could you please take this to Rubeus for me?" Professor Dumbledore asked as the Transfiguration lesson drew to a close, holding out a thin letter. "It's quite important. There's some sort of fluffy purple thing under my bed... I think it's a Nargle, but I'm afraid of hurting it – this letter explains the situation and asks him to help me. I would take it myself, but I have a staff meeting to attend... you do have a free period next, don't you? I presumed so, but I may be incorrect..."

That was far too much information.

"Yes, sir," Tom said stiffly, despite every inch of him radiating a mixture of irritation, reluctance and loathing; a loathing not only for Dumbledore, his most despised of Hogwarts teachers, but also for Hagrid, the great oaf of a gamekeeper-in-training. In his opinion, there was no need for a gamekeeper – and certainly not a gamekeeper who he had spent so long trying to get rid of.

"Thank you." Dumbledore gave him a bright, twinkly smile.

Extending a hand towards the Transfiguration Professor, Tom took the letter and left the classroom as swiftly as possible.

He was not looking forwards to this.

It was very cold when Tom stepped out into the grounds, and he thought wistfully of his scarf, back in his dormitory. It was too late to get it now... it would just be a waste of time. Still, he didn't mind the chill that much as he walked almost silently across the thin blanket of frost that covered the dead grass.

Tom paused for a few seconds in front of the massive door to the little shack where Hagrid lived. That was another thing that he hated

about the idiot half-giant. He was taller than him, and Tom didn't like having to look *up* at people.

Pressing his lips into a thin line, he raised a hand and knocked sharply on the wood, then stepped back to wait for it to open.

Odd noises were coming from within the hut, and it was a moment before the door swung open. Hagrid's young, but large face peered down at him. "What do ye want?" he asked sulkily.

"I have a letter from your boyfriend, Dumbledore," Tom said coldly, though honestly it was difficult to decide which one of them would be the female, as they were both pretty pathetic. "Of course, if my appearance means so little to you, I could always throw it to your stupid Flobberworms."

Hagrid's eyes narrowed. "Give it 'ere, then," he said, sticking his hand out.

An idea struck Tom, and he smirked slightly. "How much would you be willing to pay for it?"

"What?" Hagrid stammered. "Haven't ye already done *enough* ter me?"

"Not quite," said Tom coolly, and, though it was childish of him, held the letter in front of Hagrid's face before tucking it behind his back. He met the eyes of the idiot before him with an icy, challenging stare. "I need a flower."

Hagrid stared. "Why the hell do ye need a flower?"

Tom nodded slightly. "Ah – how tragic. And to think, I so wanted for this letter to arrive intact." He took it from behind his back, and instead held each corner at an angle, as though to rip in it half.

"Hey, don'!" Hagrid complained. "Just get a flower from the Green'ouses."

"I doubt that the Greenhouses have anything more docile than a Venomous Tentacula, which, in the interest of an invalid, would not be appropriate."

Hagrid's eyebrows raised, eyes boggling slightly. "Ye're gettin' a flower *fer* someone?"

Tom's eyes narrowed to slits. "If I can have you expelled, then I can certainly have you banished, Hagrid, and if a word of this *slips* past your lips then the inside of this pitiful hovel will be all you'll ever see of your beloved Hogwarts."

With a glare, the most hated of Tom's enemies agreed.

"I think she's asleep," Tom heard Philips say in a soft voice as he neared the Hospital Wing.

"Ginny?" Hartwin said in a loud, obnoxious voice, totally disregarding what the other sixth-year had just said.

"Grace, leave her."

"Giiiiiiinny?"

Are you mad? She's certainly not asleep anymore, is she?

"Grace!" Philips said in a sharp voice, clearly thinking along the same lines as Tom was. "Let's just go." They sighed in unison, and then began to approach him.

Don't let them see you- he panicked-

"What are you doing here?" Hartwin asked with a frown as they passed him in the doorway.

Tom set his jaw. "I have a message for Madam Royce," he lied easily.

Despite the perfect lying skill that he had developed over more than a decade, Grace snorted. "Sure." He glared as she walked away, then progressed into the Hospital Wing towards the bed where they had been making too much noise to be sensitive.

"You again?" asked Madam Royce quietly, with a smirk. Tom ignored her, but silently fired mental arrows at her. She stuck her head through the curtains around the bed at the end. "Miss Peregrine, you have a visitor."

Tom frowned. *She's asleep – she can't possibly-*

"Iduncare..." came a mumbled reply. "Life hurts."

His eyebrows lifting, he folded his arms, a smirk appearing on his thin lips. She was supposed to be sleeping.

Slipping between the gap in the curtains when Madam Royce withdrew her face, Tom said on an impulse to the lump under the blanket, "Good morning, sunshine."

There was a moment's pause, and then two thin hands pulled the quilt down, revealing a bewildered face. Ginevra blinked at him. "Hello, Riddle."

"Pretending to be asleep to your friends?" He raised an eyebrow again and tutted.

"I can't stand their perkiness," she mumbled. "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."

Thank you.

And 'uncheerful' isn't a word. He kept that to himself.

"Is that so?" He smirked. "I could jump up and down and squeal, if you like," he told her, still acting spontaneously, something that he couldn't remember doing so often for a very long time, and unsure

why this spontaneity kept hitting him. He only said it because it was sarcasm – he was counting on her not to agree. "- if perky is what would make you feel better."

She rolled her eyes. "Riddle, far from making me feel better, you'd probably give me a heart attack."

True.

"What did you break?" Tom asked, going off on a tangent.

"How d'you know I broke anything?" Ginevra immediately took the defensive.

"I think that the only people who didn't hear that crunch were in Wales, Peregrine."

"You're in a good mood today," she commented, her eyes scanning his face, making him feel uncomfortable.

"Peregrine, I don't have *good moods* ," he corrected. "I have *mildly untroubled days* . And yes, today is one of those, I have noticed."

"Why?" she prompted.

"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." *And that you're awake.* This reminded him of his planned apology. He frowned, shifting from foot to foot as the awkward nervousness of apologising set in early.

"Why d'you always talk like an encyclopaedia?" Ginevra randomly asked, going pink.

Tom's eyes flashed coldly to hers. "I don't," he said, fighting the urge to scowl. Why did everyone always say that he did? It didn't matter, but it was annoying. "I believe," he recalled abruptly, "that you're still avoiding my question. What broke?" He looked up at the ceiling. He suspected the evasion of the enquiry had been due to

embarrassment, and if he didn't look at her, then it would be easier not to smirk.

"I... I just..." She pouted, clearly not happy with this change of topic. "My tailbone."

"Ah." He was glad that he was looking away from her, because it really *was* quite funny. He didn't say anything, but the corner of his lips twitched anyway.

Ginevra glared at him. "Hey, Riddle, just because I've broken *my* arse in three places doesn't mean that I won't kick *yours* ," she said fiercely.

"I do not doubt it for a second," Tom replied, remembering her vicious threats on Reeve. Thoughts of Reeve took his thoughts to the rest of the Prefects, and he recalled that he needed to pass along a message to her. "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, but, as you are a crucial member to the team," he tried not to get annoyed at this, "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."

"Okay," she said quietly, for some reason more subdued than her normal strong voice. Maybe she was just tired.

Maybe she's still upset about what I said.

His stomach clenched at the thought of apologising again. He didn't like apologising at the best of times, and doing it several times was not his hobby.

He felt a soft, warm gaze on him, and anxiously looked down to meet Ginevra's eyes.

Oh, I don't want to do this...

He cleared his throat.

"Riddle, what-"

Tom fixed his eyes on the ceiling, and decided to get it out in a rush. "I realise that you have probably forgotten and that I should quite honestly leave it but I think that I should say anyway but the thing is that I apologise deeply for calling you..." his ramble slowed down as he forced himself to say, "*Mudblood* – and, as evidence of my solemnity I brought you a gift – as an apology and also because you're sick and it's only polite to bring things to sick people."

Technically, she's not sick, but...

Ginevra frowned for a minute, looking as though she was having a hard time understanding, and then, understanding, said dubiously, "You got me something?"

He focused in on those wide eyes, and an age-old nausea came over him, so he looked down at the ground now. "Yes." He gestured vaguely towards the small table bedside the bed, where a small, yellow flower sat. He had put it there yesterday, when he came to visit her, but she had been asleep then.

Following his gesture, Ginevra gingerly rolled over and then began to scan the many items that could be his gift. She gasped. "Riddle, you got me lilies?" she whispered, looking sideways at him happily.

His jaw tightened. He glared at his feet, a hot anger coming up again. "No." His hands formed fists. "I think those are from Reeve."

"Oh." Without further ado, she set the flowers on fire. "*Incendio*. Now, then."

Tom couldn't help but get a small feeling of satisfaction.

She leaned further over the bedside table, and it was then that her hazel eyes finally caught the flower. He didn't know what kind of

flower it was – somehow, he had never considered flower identification his forte – but she probably did, judging by the awed silence with which she held it.

A thought crossed his mind. *I hope it isn't poisonous.* That would be so typically Hagrid, to get his own back on Tom by giving him some sort of venomous daisy.

"They only had Hufflepuff colours," he told her, bemused. "If I had strived for true Slytherin spirit, you'd be holding a piece of grass. Take your pick."

Ginevra breathed, "Riddle, it's..." but couldn't finish. He wondered what possible adjectives were going through her head. He hoped they were positive adjectives.

She held it to her nose and inhaled, resting her head back on the pillow, eyes slowly drifting closed...

"Peregrine, are you alright?" Tom asked, but a quiet snore answered his question. "Oh."

He stood there awkwardly for a while, not really sure what to do. It didn't seem right to just walk away, but what was he supposed to say to someone who was asleep? Goodnight? It wasn't even night-time yet.

In the end, after several minutes of contemplation, Tom reached forwards to take the flower from her, and to set it back on her bedside table. As he pulled it from her loose hands, he accidentally brushed his little finger against her cheek. A shiver took off down his arm so violently that he dropped the flower.

Face growing hot, he stooped to retrieve it, and replaced it on the table, before leaving as quickly as possible.

This is a long chapter. But it's so cute. I LOVE the Hagrid bit. It's so evil. Mwahahahaha. Please review!

Heart, me.

Raining Stars

A/N: Yay! Another cute-and-angsty chapter. I love them, don't you?

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Sixteen: Raining Stars

In the end, after several minutes of contemplation, Tom reached forwards to take the flower from her, and to set it back on her bedside table. As he pulled it from her loose hands, he accidentally brushed his little finger against her cheek. A shiver took off down his arm so violently that he dropped the flower. Face growing hot, he stooped to retrieve it, and replaced it on the table, before leaving as quickly as possible.

When Tom came downstairs in the morning on a Wednesday, he was horrified beyond all measure to see that Fionn was, not only in bare feet, but *decorating*. *Literally* everything was now Christmassy. If he stood still long enough, she'd probably cover *him* in tinsel.

Every surface that he looked at was covered in tinsel, little fluffy snowflakes, stuffed reindeer toys, or wooden angels. In one corner, there was even a hidden sprig of mistletoe. He vowed to avoid going near the left side of the room. Unbidden, an image came into his head of him, mistletoe and Gi-

Not going there.

"What," he asked coldly, "is this?"

"Oh, sorry, Tommy," she simpered sarcastically, "I forgot to explain. It's a little thing called *Christmas* ."

His eyes narrowed. "I am aware of that, due to the fact that I actually have an IQ over that of *four* ," he retorted. "My real question was something along the lines of *why the hell are you covering my common room in tinsel ?*"

Fionn scowled. " *Our* common room," she corrected. "And I'm doing it because it's festive."

"I see." He nodded. "Take it down."

"No!" Fionn exclaimed.

" Yes ," he snapped. "I'm going to breakfast now. When I get back, I will not exactly win the World's Happiest Head Boy award if that tinsel is still up."

"You were never going to win the World's Happiest Head Boy award anyway," Fionn muttered.

Tom ignored this.

When he came back, the World's Happiest Head Boy prize promptly went down the toilet.

"I told you to take it all down, not to put more *up* !" Tom exclaimed.

"Sorry. I must have misheard you." Fionn shrugged. "Because what I heard was ' *Ellie, I love all the tinsel! Please, put as much up as possible* ' !"

He ground his teeth together, but before he could leap over the coffee table and strangle her – or, more likely, stomp off to his bedroom – the portrait hole opened, and Durrell stepped through.

"Nice," she said, her eyes flicking over the room, eyebrows raised. "You two really like Christmas, don't you?"

Tom scowled.

The others arrived in groups, and, as per usual, Ginevra was the last. She wasn't late, but she was definitely cutting it fine. "Hey," she called into the room, "I'm back!"

Fionn leapt to her feet to greet her, babbling worriedly. "Are you feeling better, Ginny?" she fussed. "That was a nasty fall."

"It's all been taken care of... don't worry."

"Did you break anything?"

Tom tuned into their conversation, smirking. This should be good. Out of the corner of his eyes, he could see Ginevra looking over at him.

"No," she replied, smiling, and headed over to sit beside Brown. He lifted one eyebrow. As she passed, her eyes flashed over to Tom in a quick warning look. This, more than anything, made his amusement grow.

"Now, then, I've had a great idea!" said Fionn as she sat down, beaming at everyone. She was clearly expecting people to attempt to guess what her fabulous idea was, but, far from being disappointed when no-one did, her grin grew in size as she announced, "We're going to hold the Prefect meeting in Hogsmeade!"

" *What ?*" Tom said sharply, his voice quiet as always, but easily heard over the cheers from the Prefects."

"Well," Fionn said, turning to him, "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?" He couldn't believe it. First, she covered the common room in shiny things, and then she insisted that it wasn't festive enough, so they would have to go to *Hogsmeade* .

"-and also," Fionn totally disregarded what he had said, "to celebrate the Slytherin-Gryffindor match," though, Tom was slightly pleased to see her, a Gryffindor, glower slightly at this, "and to celebrate Ginny coming out of the Hospital Wing in one piece

"She doesn't care." Tom gave Ginevra a hard glance. "Do you?"

"Actually, I think it would be quite fun."

ARGH! Why do all the decisions rest on the shoulders of stupid females who want to do but party all the time?

He glared at Ginevra, eyes narrowed to slits, upper lip curling back.

"Yay!" Fionn exclaimed like a small child, clapping her hands. "Okay, I'll meet you guys out by the carriages in... ten minutes? Get your coats and things!" She disappeared up the stairs to her own dormitory, and the other Prefects scurried away immediately. Ginevra stayed behind.

"Thank you," he snapped, standing up so that the full fury of his glare could be taken out on her. "You could have saved me an afternoon of Fionn'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."

Leaving her with that to consider, Tom stalked back up to his bedroom.

"What?" Ginevra's voice sounded from downstairs. "Why?"

"Because I'm not going!" he snarled back at her over his shoulder, and then slammed his door shut.

Stupid, stupid sixth-years!

"Why not?" Ginevra shouted. "Riddle?" There was a pause, and then footsteps of someone running up the stairs.

Tom was too annoyed to do anything. He stalked to his desk, but saw only the *Wellvren Sayoley G* notes, and that lifted his irritation level. As he paced away from the desk rapidly, a voice started up in the back of his head.

Oh, get lost , Tom snapped at it.

"Riddle?" sounded from outside, and a soft knock on his door.

Go away!

She's alone. Fionn thinks that she left. You know, you could just let her in... find your knife...

It's not my knife, it's yours!

"Riddle?" The knocks on his door began to get harder and harder. "Riddle!" It sounded as though she had begun to kick it. " *Answer* , goddamnit!"

"I'll thank you *not* to break my door down," Tom said coldly.

"Well, then answer!" Ginevra shouted from the other side of the door. "Riddle, please come! Please, you need to have some fun."

Fun? She thinks it's because I don't want to have fun ?

He stormed back to the door and wrenched it open. Abruptly, Ginevra stumbled towards him, as though she had been leaning on the door. His annoyance just *barely* overcame the fact that she was not only within his two-metre radius, but also at his bedroom door.

"Fun?" he echoed. " *Fun ?* Peregrine, it isn't a matter of me needing... 'fun'." He said very sharply, and also slowly, so that her less-than-rapid-fire brain could pick up on what he was saying, "I – can – not – go ! In case it has escaped you, I have no guardian to sign to stupid Hogsmeade form for me!"

He slammed the door on her, but it suddenly ricocheted back into his face, almost hitting him as Ginevra yelled, "Neither have I."

Tom stopped. He'd forgotten that. He pulled the door back open to stare at her.

"Neither have I," Ginevra said, round eyes glowing a challenging stare, "and you know that, so don't try to play the woe-is-me-I-have-no-parents line."

He'd forgotten, for a few seconds, that her parents were dead as well. How did *she* get to go to Hogsmeade? He supposed that as a Prefect, none of the other students dared to stop. Perhaps he could go. Perhaps, as Head Boy, he didn't need the permission slip. He was of age – why did he need it anyway?

" *Fine* ."

"What?" Ginevra frowned, the furrow of her brow pulling part of her scarlet fringe further over her eyes.

Wondering how slow someone could possibly be, Tom said icily, "I'll go. You owe me," he added, and then shut the door in her face.

Then he realised how close they'd been, and he pressed his back up against the door, eyes wide.

He heard a squeal from downstairs as Ginevra left. Was she *truly* that happy – just because he'd agreed to go into Hogsmeade? She was easily pleased.

Tom grabbed his scarf and his cloak, and then set off down the stairs. He stopped in his doorway, blinking. His door now smelt of apples.

Ignoring the stumble and skip of his previously-steady heartbeat, he continued down the stairs towards the meeting point.

It was colder than Tom had expected, and he pulled his robes tighter around him, burying his nose into his scarf. He didn't know where exactly they were going, but he hoped that it was warmer there.

"Hey!"

Tom looked up from the material of his scarf to see Ginevra bouncing in front of him, clearly delighted with herself. He narrowed his eyes at her in his own form of greeting, annoyed about being tricked into coming by her I-don't-have-parents thing. Why couldn't Fionn have tried to persuade him? She had parents, and then Tom wouldn't have had to come.

"You know how you said that I owed you?" Ginevra was trying to conceal a massive smile.

He frowned. "Yes."

"Well..." Now she could conceal her glee no longer, and a grin nearly split her face in half, lighting up her eyes like one of Fionn's numerous Christmas trees. "You got me a flower... so I got you one!" She giggled.

"You got me a flower?" he echoed dubiously, frowning further.

"Yep!" Suddenly she danced closer – he swallowed as she invaded the two-metre radius – and grabbed his hand. He blinked, trying to fill his lungs again. Even though it was cold, and she didn't have gloves on, she was so warm that it was like putting his hand into a dying fire. She put something into his hand and then folded his fingers over it. He waited for her to move away, but she didn't, clearly waiting for his reaction. He had some difficulty moving with her so alarmingly close still, but he opened his hand, and saw...

A blade of grass.

" *Slytherin colours* !" Ginevra screeched with laughter, skipping away a few steps before turning back to grin at him. "Well?"

A small smile twisted his mouth. "Very funny," he said dryly, though he had to admit that it was quite funny.

His eyes flashed sideways to Fionn as Ginevra continued to spin in silly circles. The Head Girl was watching him with an interested smirk that he didn't like at all.

"Come on, then," she said cheerfully, jumping into the last remaining carriage, where Harris sat. "Hey," she said to him.

Harris ignored her.

As Tom climbed into the carriage, ducking his head, Ginevra stage-whispered, "Someone's in a bad mood," and gestured towards Harris.

You talk about bad moods to me ?

"Have you forgotten who you're talking to?" Tom asked pointedly, lifting an eyebrow.

"Yeah – who are you?"

"Tom. Tom Riddle."

She beamed at him, her face lighting up again, and the sky caught fire, raining stars.

When they entered Hogsmeade and moved away from the Threstral-drawn carriages, the first thing that Ginevra did was plead, "Oh, please can we just quickly go into Honeydukes?" to Tom and Fionn.

Tom frowned. He wanted to get this over with. However, Fionn glanced over at him, and, as usual, chose the opposite of his opinion, just to annoy him. "Oh, I don't see why not... yeah, sure."

Ginevra cheered, and then turned towards him.

"No," he said immediately.

"You're coming."

"Did you not hear me? No."

She set her hands on her hips, raising her eyebrows. "Am I going to have to drag you there?"

"Is there any answer I can give that will result in you leaving me alone?" Tom asked wearily.

"I don't think so. Have fun!" Fionn laughed.

Tom jumped. He'd forgotten that the blonde was there. He recalled the look that she'd given him earlier, when Ginevra had given him a piece of grass. He glared at her, but his attention was soon otherwise attracted when a warm hand grabbed his wrist.

All of the heat that was being radiated into his arm was flooding up quickly his face, and as he followed Ginevra to a small, cosy-looking shop, he focused on keeping his face its normal colour.

A bell rang as they went in, and Tom understood instantly why Ginevra had wanted to come here.

It was a chocolate shop.

It sold the most unusual variety of sweets that he had ever seen, and he began to browse through various boxes. Most seemed harmless enough, but there was one tub filled with scraggly brown lumps that seemed to be *moving* .

"What are these?" he asked in distaste, pointing.

Ginevra looked where he was pointing. "Oh." She grimaced. "Cockroach Clusters. You don't want those..." He noticed some lollipops standing up in a shallow box, startled by their disconcerting hue, which was a far deeper and darker shade of red than he had

ever seen a lollipop be before. He tried to ask what on earth *they* were, but before he could speak, Ginevra cut in, " *or those.*" She explained, "They're Blood Pops. For vampires."

He frowned. That sounded lovely.

"You want these!" Ginevra said, reaching up to take a box from a higher shelf. Tom noticed that she stood on tiptoe. He took another box, and smirked when he found that he barely had to raise his arm.

Whistling Wizards , the box said.

Interesting . "How do you know what I want?" asked Tom absently. "For all you know, I could be a vampire, and want Blood Pops."

"Riddle, my friend, I know you better than you do," she teased, moving away.

He stared at her.

My friend. He blinked. *She's my friend.* Somehow, to him, this was both a beautiful prospect, and also his worst nightmare. Being friends with someone meant caring for them. Caring for them meant a strong possibility of becoming extremely emotional. And becoming extremely emotional meant death.

"What?" Ginevra frowned.

"Nothing." Tom looked away, and started to look at the chocolate, his face heating up. Another thing that he was trying not to think about were the boundaries that friendship had.

Mistletoe kept popping up in his head.

He continued to search around the shop as Ginevra went up to pay for the many sweets that she'd collected, and as she neared the door, calling "Riddle? Come on," he found a small snake, twisted with sugar.

"What did you buy?" Ginevra asked once he'd bought it, as they moved through Hogsmeade to find the others.

"This."

He showed her the sugar snake, and, to his alarm, she started to laugh. "Why did you buy *that*?"

Tom frowned. "It looked interesting. Why – what's wrong with it?"

"Oh, nothing. I dare you to eat it."

His suspicion grew stronger. "Why is it a dare?"

"Well, it isn't. I didn't mean it as a dare. Go on. Try it," she urged, but there was a slight evil sparkle in her eyes and that he didn't trust.

"I'll eat it later," he said. "What have you got?"

She proceeded to hand him tiny bean-shaped sweets – Bertie Botts, apparently – and seemed *far* too innocent when he discovered a soap-flavoured one.

"I think I'll choose the rest myself," Tom told her. "So what, may I ask, is this delightful little food item?" He held up a small red disc-shaped tablet.

"A Whistling Wizard. Eat, eat, eat!"

He put the sweet in his mouth, and swallowed. It tasted very strange, but not in a bad way. Then a buzzing filled his ears, and with a obnoxiously noisy whistle, steam billowed from his ears.

What the-?

Ginevra burst out laughing. "Your face!"

"Yes, well, I presumed, from the name, that it would make me whistle," he said, straightening his robes, "but I also presumed that

said whistling would come from my *mouth* ."

"What gave you *that* impression?" Ginevra giggled.

Her bag of candies were soon finished, and she suggested, "Now, don't you have that snake?"

Tom nodded, and pulled his own purchase from his pocket. He still wasn't certain about eating it, as her previous reaction had been less than consolingly. He wasn't stupid enough to eat the whole thing, as he had discovered (Cockroach Clusters? Blood Pops? Whistling Wizards?) that these magical sweets could do anything to him, so he broke off the snake's tail and ate it.

For a few seconds, Tom wondered if it actually did anything. He could taste the sugar, but nothing was really happening-

And then the most fiery, incredibly painful burning set fire to his throat.

BLOODY HELL-

He sucked in a deep breath through his teeth and gasped, "Water."

"What was that?" Ginevra mocked, cupping a hand around her ear.

"I need... water... *now* , damnit," he croaked, glaring at her, but he stopped, because moving anything hurt like hell.

Giggling insanely, Ginevra skipped through Hogsmeade, while he staggered behind her, one arm tight around his stomach. One place was closed, but he didn't care for her excuses... he just needed a drink.

"Ginny!" Fionn yelled incredulously from the other side of the road.
"What did you *do* to him?"

" / didn't do anything! He bought a Sizzling Serpent!" she shouted back, laughing still. "Poor, naïve little Riddle!"

His flaming stomach contracted into a small ball of pain. So that was what happened, was it? He trusted her to take him to Hogsmeade, and she betrayed him to the mockery of her *real* friends.

Riddle, my friend, I know you better than you do.

You don't know me at all.

"I take it you won't be wanting a Firewhiskey?" Ginevra teased as she went to get some water when they finally got into an unlocked, but abandoned pub.

Tom shot her the darkest glare that he could manage past all of the pain, and dropped into a nearby chair. When she passed him the glass of water, he drank it all in one go. It was even more painful when the liquid hit his throat, but it began to feel better as the swelling and heat went down.

Riddle, my friend, I know you better than you do.

He closed his eyes and held his head in his hands.

"Er. Riddle, are you okay?"

"How could you say that?" he snarled, standing with a speed that caused Ginevra to stumble a few steps back towards the bar. "How the *hell* could you just *stand* there and say that?"

"I only asked if you were alright!" she said in confusion.

"Not that," he hissed, though of course that was what anyone would presume he had meant. He shoved a hand backwards through his air. "You said that... you said that I was your-" He couldn't even get the word *friend* out. "-and then you *humiliated* me. I didn't want to come, but I came because you asked to – and then you... you *humiliated* me."

"Riddle, I-"

"Do you have any bloody *idea* what you've done?" He had trusted her. He'd never trusted anyone with such a trust as he had trusted her, and she threw it away like it wasn't worth anything. He'd thought she was better than all the others. He'd thought she was different.

He turned away, clenching his hands into fists.

"No. I – I'm sorry, Riddle," she said, her voice tiny.

"After I *reluctantly* , *warily* trusted you, you..." He needed an insult to throw at her, but he couldn't come up with one to suit her. He couldn't come up with one that would be true.

"I-"

" *You have no idea, do you ?*" he roared, spinning back to face her, his face contorted with an anger, an embarrassment, a fury-

Kill... rip... tear... kill ... was filling his head.

And right now, it had never sounded more appealing.

"Stop it!" Ginevra cried, stamping her foot. "For God's sake, Riddle, *stop it !*"

For God's sake? For God's sake?! How dare she get so annoyed with me!

KILL... KILL HER...

NO. Tom suddenly realised what was had just gone through his head. *No.* He couldn't kill her. *No.*

He sucked in a deep breath through his nostrils to calm down and closed his eyes. When they opened again, the worst glare that he could summon fired directly at Ginevra.

The door slammed as the other Prefects and Fionn began to come in. Ginevra didn't pay any attention to them. She was staring up at

him, her round eyes beseeching, dizzying, terrible. "Please," she whispered, her voice barely reaching his ears. "... *Tom* ."

Tom turned to face her, astonished. His *name* . Three letters, one syllable, one of the shortest words in the English language... and yet it was absolutely amazing how *perfect* it sounded when she said it. His breath cut short, and then he wrenched away, shutting down his face into a shield of uncaring distance.

The sky had been raining stars, but the storm-clouds swallowed all light.

Another long one... I thought that 'raining stars' thing was really poetic and sweet... AND I THOUGHT OF IT! HAH! Sorry, I'm kind of hyper. Please review!

Heart, me.

In The Electricity

A/N: This chapter's sort of cute. It's still angsty, but in a more subtle way. And there are so many adorable parts! Like when... oh, I won't spoil it for you. :D You have to read it!

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Seventeen: In The Electricity

The door slammed as the other Prefects and Fionn began to come in. Ginevra didn't pay any attention to them. She was staring up at him, her round eyes beseeching. "Please," she whispered, her voice barely reaching his ears. "...Tom."

Tom turned to face her, astonished. His name. Three letters, one syllable, one of the shortest words in the English language... and yet it was absolutely amazing how perfect it sounded when she said it. His breath cut short, and then he wrenched away, shutting down his face into a shield of uncaring distance. The sky had been raining stars, but the storm-clouds swallowed all light.

"How are you, Riddle?" Swithin sneered. "Does your throat feel alright?"

Tom stalked past him and Reeve to sit where Fionn was setting out the Prefect meeting details and all her parchment plans for the Yule Ball.

"Say, anyone up for some sweets?" Hornby asked. She and Durrell began to laugh uproariously.

Tom stared determinedly at the wood grains of the table he sat at.

"Right, have you got your plans, Ginny?" Fionn asked. She hadn't said anything so far about what her star Prefect had done to him, only flashed him an *are-you-okay* look, which he ignored.

"Yeah, just in here," Ginevra replied, grabbing them out of her bag. She was sat near the end of the table – far from Tom. She didn't look at him.

"Ooh, hang on," Durrell fussed, and proceeded to clean the table with a flick of her wand. Once finished, the Prefect meeting proceeded. Tom donated none of his ideas to it, and in fact, said nothing at all.

"Brr, it's getting really cold in here," said Harris, getting up to move to the open door of the pub.

Tom said nothing, merely watched as Harris closed the door, but silently yelped, *You idiot, we're going to get locked in!*

Bang.

How the devil did you become a Prefect? I was under the impression that the position went to the two most intelligent sixth-years in your House...

But then again, if Fionn can become Head Girl, then I suppose anything's possible.

A thousand wards buzzed over the door to keep it locked. Brown leapt towards the door to try and open it, but, obviously, nothing happened. "Well, done, genius!" she yelled, and slapped Harris upside the head.

"Hey, how was I supposed to know?" Harris also attempted to open the door. Tom knew that it was a waste of time, and quietly watched their childish struggle.

"I DON'T KNOW," Brown shouted, and soon the two Gryffindors were engaged in a fight, hitting each other as hard as they could.

"HEY!" Fionn jumped up to intervene. "STOP IT!" She dragged them apart, and scowled at both. "What the *hell* is your problem, guys?"

"He locked us in!" Brown exclaimed, pointing at Harris and glaring.

Yes, Brown, we are aware.

"No, he didn't," Fionn said, leaving Tom to again doubt her intellect. "Calm down." She gave them all a composed look, then began to pull on the door handle as hard as possible.

You stupid, stupid person. Tom rolled his eyes. *It's not going to open, even if you ask it nicely .*

"Give it up!" Fionn yelled at the door, and, in her vain attempt to open the door, ripped the door-handle off.

Oh, of course. I forgot how removing the door-handle often helps to open a door.

She then began to cast furious spells at the door, but all that happened was the beams of light emitted from the charms were absorbed by the buzzing door. Then, pursing her lips and dramatically sweeping her blonde hair out of her face, she had to admit, "Ah. Robert has indeed locked us in."

"WELL DONE, DOOFUS!" Brown yelled, throwing herself at Harris again.

"STOP IT!" Again, Fionn ripped them from killing each other. "Stop it! You – are – *Gryffindors* ! Save the fighting for the Slytherins!"

Swithin and Ginevra said, "Hey!" in indignation. Tom said nothing, though he was of course far more Slytherin than either of them, in numerous ways.

"No offence," Fionn added, though of course she had meant every offence. "Now then. 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."

The others agreed, and there were several profanities heard combined with the word *Harris*, some very creatively invented.

"Expecto patronus!" Fionn said, squeezing her eyes shut, and a shimmering polecat fell from the tip of her wand. "Fetch a Hogwarts Professor – any," she instructed it. "Give them the following message: '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'."

The polecat blinked at her for a moment before scurrying silently across the floor and disappearing from sight.

"Right. Prefect meeting." As Fionn moved back towards the table, she said sardonically, "By the way, Riddle, thanks for helping."

"It was no trouble," he replied quietly, a dark gaze flickering to the Head Girl.

As the Prefect meeting continued, Tom again gave no input. At one point, unable to stop himself, he looked sideways at Ginevra through lowered lashes and through his fringe, his eyes on her hidden. He saw that she was looking at him, but couldn't see that he was looking back into her unhappy eyes. She tore her stare away to look down at her hands, and Tom saw that she was trembling.

He looked away.

For another half-hour the Prefect meeting continued, but when it ended everyone was reminded that they were *still* trapped in an

abandoned pub.

"Shall we send up another Patronus?" Ginevra asked. "Just in case they didn't get it... Riddle?" she glanced over at him, he saw in his peripheral vision. He didn't look back at her.

"He doesn't want to right now," Fionn said. Tom met her blue eyes, and though he gave nothing away, he sent a silent *thank-you* to her, before looking away again.

Patronuses weren't his forte... to say the least.

"I'll do it," Ginevra suddenly offered.

Tom's eyes flashed to her, dubious. She was, not only a sixth-year, but probably the only sixth-year who had ever encountered any idea of trauma. She couldn't do a Patronus.

"Do you know how?" Fionn asked incredulously, seeming to be thinking along the same lines as he was.

"Yeah." Ginevra shrugged, as though it was very common to have perfected the Patronus before she'd even been given the official lessons in class. She looked over each person, landing her gaze last on Tom, but the different was that when she looked at *him*, she didn't look away. "I have many happy memories," she said softly. "It just sometimes takes a while to remember that they're there." Her voice was barely more than a whisper as she looked directly into his eyes. " *Expecto patronum* ."

He wasn't even paying attention to the fox blooming from her spell. He held no trust for her now, and anything they had maybe be building in the way of – she'd suggested it – *friendship* had been shattered like a small child kicking down a alphabet-block tower, but it didn't by any means say that when he found himself staring, through his fringe, into her eyes, that he didn't lose himself in the electricity.

"Er," Ginevra ripped her eyes away from his, looking slightly alarmed as she looked down at her Patronus, "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."

As the little silvery fox ran away into the abyss that only it could see, disappearing, Ginevra asked, "So what now?" and sat back down.

"I have an idea." Fionn was grinning in that mischievous way that only ever indicated that she was planning something ridiculous. "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*."

Tom finally lifted his head to stare incredulously at the blonde. She'd had her insane moments, but this topped them all. "Fionn, are you insane?" he demanded. "You're supposed to be *Head Girl*. You're supposed to set an *example*."

"Well." She bit her lip. " *You* can set an example."

As she, and the eight Prefects, scrambled towards the bar to grab as many Firewhiskeys as they could carry, Tom glared, annoyance flaring in his eyes. At this rate, he was going to be the only keeping his position.

"Fionn, have you forgotten that the Professors will be coming soon?" he snapped. "Of course, it'll look fantastic for your Head-ship and the Prefect-ship of the others, finding you all sprawled out on the floor, utterly *wasted*."

"You just don't know how to have any fun!" Fionn retorted.

"Eleanor," Ginny hissed, grabbing the Head Girl's elbow to stop her. At least one person in the room had any sense. Then he took that thought back, as he didn't want to find himself complimenting Ginevra.

"I do not *care* for *fun* !" Tom 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!"

Before he had even registered what was happening, Ginevra had pushed past Fionn and started shouting. "Fine, then! *You* don't have to! You can sit in the corner, *all by yourself* , and absolutely *spiffing* time staring at the wall!" she yelled. "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-"

Tom's anger flared the point where it started getting dangerous, and he struggled to stay calm. "Don't you *dare* ," he hissed, drawing himself up to his full height.

"Yeah, play the *look-at-me-I'm-taller-than-you* card!" Ginevra snarled. "After all, it *is* all that you have going for you!"

"Well, then," he said, his voice low so that it was harder for everyone else to hear, though in the small room, he was still perfectly audible, "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," Ginevra said, her own tone fiercely adamant. "Whether or not you decide to pay any heed to it whatsoever is your decision entirely." Then, in no more than a whisper, she whispered, "I truly meant it, and I truly am sorry."

For a moment, pain flashed through him like leftover fire from the Sizzling Serpent started up again, looking at that face, saddened, those eyes, miserable – almost as strong and vivid as the pain

before, but he wouldn't let her know that, and he turned his back on her.

He heard her sigh unhappily behind him, but ignored that, and he sat down again, staring at the wall. He would not be involved in anything that happened next.

Tom sat in one of the booths, the hard seat making him extremely uncomfortable. He didn't bother to get more comfortable. It was pointless. This whole experience was pointless. He stared at the wall with narrowed eyes as a drunken Fionn dared an equally inebriated Reeve to kiss someone.

"Wooop!" cheered Reeve. "Lydia! I shall kiss you!"

"YAYY!" A moment later: "Let's dance!"

Giggling broke out as everyone danced and twirled clumsily around the room, shouting, "Lydia dance!" It would have been amusing, were it not so stupid and inappropriate.

He wasn't paying attention to what was happening – it was ridiculous – so it came as a shock when Ginevra fell into his lap.

"Hello," she cooed. "Would you like a hug?"

"Peregrine, get off, for God's sake," he snapped, glaring down at her, despite the fact that his face was suddenly extremely hot. He was fairly glad that she was drunk, as she totally failed to notice how red he was becoming.

"Well, you're just a *party-pooper*, you are!" Ginevra told him, frowning. "And d'you know why?"

He rolled his eyes. "Pray tell, *why*?" His throat was quite dry. He tried to cough, but it didn't come out quite right, and he fell silent

instead. Oh well. She was far from sober – she wouldn't remember this.

"'CAUSE YOU'RE PARTY-POO!" Ginevra screeched, the high noise ringing in his ears quite painfully. She then rolled onto the floor, hitting it with a loud *thud* , and proceeded to crawl away on her stomach... therefore sticking her rear end rather prominently in the air.

Eyes widening, Tom tore his eyes away and stared at the table.

He coughed.

Don't...

He glanced back at her posterior one more time... maybe twice - before looking determinedly at the wall.

"My turn," he heard her say loudly, and she stood up, so he decided that it was safe to look at her again. "Truth."

"Hm... whooo... d'you think is the nicest looking out of all of us in here?"

"Ooh!" Durrell shrieked, spinning around.

Ginevra seemed to be thinking very hard. Tom rolled his eyes again and looked back at the wall. Of course... Reeve. He didn't want to hear the answer, and neither did he want to see what would probably happen afterwards.

" *Riddle* !"

His head snapped back around to look at her. " *What* ?"

Ginevra turned to face him, setting her hands on her hips. "Yesh, Riddle. That's what I said. Because you... you are seeeeeexyyyy !" she sang, twirling around in a circle. "Mm-hmm, yeah, wooo!"

Tom's face caught fire. He stared at her.

"Cause your eyes are all glowing and you're like... BIG!" She threw her arms up in the air and boggled her eyes out. "You are the goddess of insects." She grinned at him.

Tom tried to stop staring. He couldn't.

"Ask me again," Ginevra demanded.

"Okelie-dokelie-ukelele... Whoooo... would you get involved with at Hoggie-Hoggie-wartie-wartiesss...?"

Tom's breathing started to get faster. It was stupid, he knew that – and it was never going to happen. But maybe... *maybe*, if he was the answer to the first question... maybe, by some level of insanity, he would be the answer to this one. His speeding heartbeat almost drowned out her answer.

"Well, duh! I'm already taken."

His stomach disappeared.

Of course. He was being ridiculous. She would never choose him. She had the option of dating just about any person in the school... she would never choose him. If she ever did, then there was something wrong in her head.

He was only deluding himself that she'd ever choose him anyway.

Poor Tommy. I thought that was absolutely *hilarious* when he kept staring at her butt... but trying not to. But staring anyway. LOL. Ginny may not have noticed, but our Heir of Slytherin is a perverted little devil. XD Hahaha. Anyyywhooo. Please review!

Heart, me.

Chaos

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: Hm. Cute-and-creepy chapter. Listen to *All These Things I Hate* by *Bullet For My Valentine* when you're reading the second part. It makes it so much better. The lyrics suit Tom as well. It goes: *me, you, all these things I hate revolve around, me, you, just back off...* I hope you like it!

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Eighteen: Chaos

" *Hm... whooo... d'you think is the nicest looking out of all of us in here?*"

" *Riddle!*"

" *Okelie-dokelie-ukelele... Whoooo... would you get involved with at Hoggie-Hoggie-wartie-wartiesss...?*"

Tom's breathing started to get faster. It was stupid, he knew that – and it was never going to happen. But maybe... maybe, if he was the answer to the first question... maybe, by some level of insanity, he would be the answer to this one. His speeding heartbeat almost drowned out her answer.

" *Well, duh! I'm already taken.*"

His stomach disappeared. Of course. He was being ridiculous. She would never choose him. She had the option of dating just about any person in the school... she would never choose him. If she ever did,

then there was something wrong in her head. He was only deluding himself that she'd ever choose him anyway.

I can't feel

The way I did before

Don't turn your back on me

I won't be ignored

It was two in the morning before they were all passed out on the floor. Tom knew that they probably wouldn't wake up before the Professors arrived – whenever they arrived – and it wouldn't look particularly fantastic if they were all sprawled out on the floor with Firewhiskey bottles littered around them.

He stood, moving around the room to Banish all of the bottles, and to clean up the spilt puddles of the crackling liquid. Then he stared down at the nine limp bodies on the floor.

Now what?

The closest was Reeve, and Tom was sorely tempted just to leave him there and get him a trouble. No, that was too subtle. He nudged the Ravenclaw with his toe; he didn't react.

Perhaps he has alcohol poisoning.

Tom considered this. Then he decided that he was going to get his shallow revenge anyway, and kicked him.

Satisfied with that, Tom dragged Reeve to a nearby chair and flung him over a set of uncomfortable chairs. He dragged the others to their according rows of hard-backed seats, but pulled Fionn to one of the private cubbies sofas. As much as he mostly despised her, she

was sometimes tolerable, and she'd stuck up for him when he hadn't been able to make a Patronus.

That left Ginevra.

You humiliate me , he decided, *and so I'm going to get you in trouble.*

He walked away from her sprawled-out figure and sat in a nearby chair. He was quite tired, but he was used to being tired, and didn't really mind staying up all night. He'd simply go to bed early when he got back, instead of reading for a while.

The seventeen-year-old Head Boy allowed his thoughts to wander. However, they didn't wander very well, as they continued to insist on *wandering* over to the passed-out redhead still on the floor.

Stop it , he told himself.

This didn't work.

Unable to take the complaining of his head anymore, Tom stood up and crossed to Ginevra, scowling down at her. "You're annoying," he muttered. All he wanted was some peace and quiet, and there she went, disrupting his conscience. All he wanted was to disappear, and then *she* arrived.

Taking a deep breath to prepare himself for the fact that he probably wouldn't be able to in a moment, he bent to the ground and awkwardly shifted Ginevra into his arms.

Amazingly, he kept breathing. It was probably because her eyes was closed. She was abnormally warm, as usual, but he was getting used to that. He was actually rather pleased with the maintaining of his breathing. This wasn't so difficult after all.

Then she rolled over slightly in his arms and pressed her cheek against his chest.

That was when he stopped breathing. *And* nearly dropped her.

"You're infuriatingly cuddly," he mumbled, recovering himself. He moved her across towards one of the sofas and set her gently down on it. The urge to sit on the table next to her and watch her sleep for the next seven hours or so was unbelievable. He returned to his own chair without glancing back at her even once.

Well, maybe once.

At about six in the morning, Tom heard, "Mmpgghf..." Someone was awake. After a brief pause, the Someone – namely Ginevra – stumbled to her feet and said blearily, "Haven't we been rescued yet?"

"If we had been rescued, don't you think that we'd be back in the castle?" Tom retorted.

"You and Eleanor can Apparate," Ginevra said accusingly. "You could've Apparated up to the castle and got a teacher."

"Have you never bothered to read *Hogwarts: A History* ? You can't Apparate onto Hogwarts grounds!"

Ginevra seemed to flinch for a moment, but then fired back with, "You could've at least Apparated outside of the bloody pub!"

"If it was that easy, I would have *done* it by now, wouldn't I? We – can – not – get – out!" he snarled. "There are wards all over the whole building!"

Glaring, she sat back down and didn't say anything else for an hour and a half. Tom counted. It seemed to be an unofficial silence competition, and he would see to it that he would not lose, no matter how childish it was.

Indeed, the redhead broke from the silence first, as Professors Vander, Dumbledore and Dippet unlocked the door from the outside and rescued them. She immediately ran to them, grabbing her shoes. "I'm so sorry, Professors, for dragging you out here, and thank you for rescuing us and-"

"Whose brilliant idea was this?" Dippet asked severely. "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 were going – no-one knew where you were at all! I assure you, he or she who decided on this trip will lose their position of power for sure."

I hate to say 'I told you so', but...

Fionn was trembling, pale.

I told you so.

"It was me."

Tom stared at Ginevra. What was she doing? She was going to lose her Prefect-ship for no reason.

"I suggested it," she said quietly. "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, about their warnings that it would be dangerous, and they followed, to keep me out of trouble."

You're insane! Fionn came up with this – and you're taking her punishment?

"That still doesn't explain," said Dumbledore gravely, "why you went without telling anyone."

"I... I was..." Ginevra swallowed. "I drank a lot of Butterbeer before the meeting." She flushed red and hid her face. "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."

She said that I was a brilliant liar? Tom thought incredulously, still marvelling at the 'embarrassed' blush on her freckled cheeks, and the supposed misery in her 'confession'.

"I see." Dumbledore looked over at Dippet.

"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," said Dippet.

"Yes, sir."

She's going to lose her position as Prefect. She... sacrificed herself. She's insane. She's... he couldn't find a word that would explain what she could possibly do to give him this stunned respect for her act of lunacy.

Her eyes flickered over to his, but then her expression hardened and she looked away.

Vander ushered them out of the pub, leading them all back out of Hogsmeade. Fresh snow had fallen, luckily, covering the tracks that said that they had been wandering all over the town, instead of just following Ginevra, as her lie spoke.

The redhead in question fell back to talk in hushed voices with Fionn; one voice anguished with guilt, the other attempting shallow bravery. They were both such fools.

He didn't realise that he was staring at Ginevra until Fionn cleared her throat loudly a few feet away, and she gave him that smirk again.

He hurried on, pushing in front of the female Slytherin Prefect so that he wouldn't even have the option of looking at her.

Thankfully, the first thing that he had was a free period, for which he slept – not sleeping all of last night was beginning to take its toll. However, he found to his horror that, apparently, one hour was enough for the entire school to hear of his Sizzling Serpent accident.

Snickers passed him as he moved towards the dungeons for his Potions class, and irritation filled him. He preferred being ignored to being mocked, by far.

In Potions, Yaxley dropped into the seat beside him. "Can I just ask," he said as they prepared Mandrake Healing Potions (something that Tom found ironic), and didn't wait for an answer before plundering on, "how did you *not* know not to take a Sizzling Serpent?"

Tom disregarded this in favour of concentrating on not cutting his fingers off, because his hands were shaking slight with controlled annoyance at the memory of what had happened in Hogsmeade as he sliced the stem of asphodel into pieces.

"No, don't tell me-" Yaxley paused. "You didn't know because you've never been before – because your filthy parents wouldn't let you go, right?"

Tom gritted his teeth. He didn't want to point out that his parents were dead.

Riddle, my friend, I know you better than you do.

He didn't want to think about Hogsmeade.

"I didn't do anything! He bought a Sizzling Serpent!" Ginevra shouted back, laughing still. "Poor, naïve little Riddle!"

"I have to admit, I gotta hand it to you." Yaxley lifted one eyebrow at him. "Getting beaten by a girl?" He laughed, shaking his head.

Before he could stop himself, Tom muttered, "She's not just any girl." Then he froze, seeing how that could translate. Why was he so weak all of a sudden?

"Aww," Yaxley cooed, translating Tom's words in exactly the way that he had feared. "Riddle's in love..." He fluttered his eyelashes mockingly, but what was worse was when he snorted and sneered, "Don't kid yourself that she'd ever want anyone like *you* ."

" Okelie-dokelie-ukelele... Whoooo... would'you get involved with at Hoggie-Hoggie-wartie-wartiesss...?"

Tom's breathing started to get faster. It was stupid, he knew that – and it was never going to happen. But maybe... maybe, if he was the answer to the first question... maybe, by some level of insanity, he would be the answer to this one. His speeding heartbeat almost drowned out her answer.

" Well, duh! I'm already taken."

The anger, mixed with humiliation and now self-pity, flared so strong that he couldn't hold it in anymore. This was bad. This was very bad. He clenched his hands into fists, forgetting that he was still holding the knife, and blood streamed through his fingers.

The smell of it was driving him crazy.

Except that it wasn't him.

BREATHE. BREATHE. CALM DOWN.

"I mean, there is the fact that you are a higher blood status than her... but only by one iota, maybe. You're mud... she's muddier."

Fury pounding through his veins-

"Time is up!" Slughorn called. "Please bring your potions to my desk for marking, and then clean up. Once I am satisfied with the state of your work space, you may leave."

BREATHE.

Kill rip tear kill blood murder Slytherin kill blood rip tear kill-

Tom swept up his potion faster than anyone else. He had to get out of here. He had to protect these people, regardless of whether he loathed every one of them.

"Sir," he said respectfully – Slughorn looked at him in alarm as his voice twisted into wrong, sick, warped... Tom coughed to cover it...

Kill Slytherin blood murder kill-

Pain was ripping through his head, and when he waited by his desk, he had to dig his fingernails tightly into the wood to hold on...

Just a while longer... just a while... calm down... breathe...

KILL-

His breathing was coming rougher. Yaxley was looking at him weirdly. Tom kept his head bowed. He knew that his eyes would be getting darker. He locked his elbows into place while he held onto the table, waiting for Slughorn... his arms were shaking violently...

KILL RIP TEAR NOW -

Breathe in out breathe in out-

KILL-

"Mr. Riddle, are you alright?" asked Slughorn as he stopped in front of his desk.

Tom couldn't speak; he nodded. He stared down at the desk. His vision was fading out. If he had looked at Yaxley, two feet away, he would have been barely able to see his silhouette.

His emotions were chaos. He couldn't see. He couldn't *breathe*. He was shaking. His hands curled into claws.

"Very well; you're dismissed, you two."

He spun on his heel and walked swiftly from the classroom. No-one would dare follow him, though some would be curious after his classroom display...

KILL RIP TEAR BLOOD MURDER KILL-

Pushing into a deserted corridor, Tom began to run. Far away. He had to get far, far away.

The absolute pain was burning his eyes and his knees were buckling. He sprinted past a kissing couple, knocking them with his shoulder – he nearly fell – he kept going – his hand grabbing at the walls for support –

PAIN-

Going blind-

No longer able to hear anything-

Unfit, Tom could run no longer-

He staggered a few more steps forwards and then he crumpled to his knees.

He was still holding his Potions knife.

Excellent.

Involuntarily, his actions no longer his own, Tom lifted his hand to smell the blood on his palms. A thrill that didn't belong to him raced through him like an adrenaline high, his heartbeat screaming through his head...

Then everything went black.

Uh-oh... does anyone remember what happens next? –sly smirk- Mwahaha. Well, I tried to make that as creepy as I could... I don't know if it worked. I'm not very good at creepy stuff. I work best with fluff and angst. I hope you liked it – review!

Heart, me.

Everything

A/N: This chapter was really hard to write. Tom's so weak for all it... it's really annoying putting so many dot-dot-dots. Mergh. Come on, To. Be a man. Deal with it. –grumble- Anyway, I hope that you think it's okay anyway.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Nineteen: Everything

He staggered a few more steps forwards and then he crumpled to his knees. He was still holding his Potions knife. Excellent. Involuntarily, his actions no longer his own, Tom lifted his hand to smell the blood on his palms. A thrill that didn't belong to him raced through him like an adrenaline high, his heartbeat screaming through his head...

Then everything went black.

Pain.

Tom opened his eyes.

On the floor... red... a *lot* of red... a body... *savaged*...

He swallowed hard, eyes widening as reality slowly sank into his weary head.

He'd killed someone.

Weak... tired... arm bleeding... so exhausted... barely strong enough... he was a danger... he had to stop this... he could kill anyone... another student... another teacher... like Vander, barely

metres away... like... *Ginevra* ... for her at least, he had to protect the world... even if it meant that it was a world without him...

He struggled to cast the curse...

Instantly, he felt the strength rushing out of him. That didn't matter.

No-one could reach Vander now, he realised. He felt bad. But that didn't matter either. Tom would die soon, and then the curse would be disabled. Then the world would realise that he was the killer... but it would be too late for the panic and awe... he would be gone...

It was almost peaceful as he felt everything draining away...

A great sadness filled him... the last thing that he'd said to Ginevra was cruel... he was never going to see her again... and, in his whole life, that was his only regret.

Slowly, as faint screams were heard nearby, he felt life emptying itself... it hurt like hell... he could barely breathe... he wanted to cry out... but he wouldn't die that way... he would die in silence... having lived the majority of his life that way... as in life, as in death...

The ceiling at which he stared began to fade out.

"Riddle!"

The most agonisingly concerned voice that he'd ever hear... concerned... for him...?

Not quite gone yet...

A light touch on his arm... unusually warm... he recognised that...

"Riddle, please!"

The touch moving to the side of his weak, pained throat... warmer than ever now, not muffled by his robes... burning through his skin in

its soft warmth... so tired... so wanting to fade away... so desperate to see her one last time...

Struggling up from the darkness like swimming to the surface from very dark, very deep, very heavy water... eyes... opening... barely... just enough to see her face... so worried... she cared...

"P...Peregrine..." he croaked, his voice painful to use.

She cared... her huge hazel eyes... that, more than anything, he wanted to be the last thing that he ever saw... he was happy now... it didn't matter that he'd never had anything... he had *her*...

He frowned...

How was she here? The cursed barrier was only disabled once he had died... she would have had to *walk through it*...

"How... how did you..."

"Riddle, Riddle, shh," Ginevra said softly, still looking worried to the point of tears, kneeling beside him and carefully holding onto him...

He didn't want to die anymore... he wanted *this* ... even though he knew that it only happened when he was injured... and that he was only injured when *this* happened... and that he never wanted *this* to happen again...

An image flashed to mind... *Ginevra's* savaged body... that idea hurt...

Even though Tom had decided that he'd changed his mind, he wanted to live, he was still trapped by his own curse... disappearing into nothingness in Ginevra's arms...

"Mr. Riddle, you will need to come immediately to my office to sort out this mess." Dippet's voice was faint through the haze that Tom was fading into, but he could tell that it was strong, and demanding...

"What?" Ginevra stood, eyes wide. Tom tried to breathe... but it was so hard... so painful... breathing... no...

He lost the rest of what was happening... an argument... but he needed to move from this area... or he would die... he didn't want that anymore... they wanted him to move as well... so painful though...

"Miss Peregrine, I have already had two murders in my school! I will not be subject to any more! This – business – ends – *now* !"

No... Ginevra couldn't... she couldn't believe... "Peregrine..." he rasped.

She turned to look at him... he could see her through the fog... unclear, but she was there... scarlet... pale... hazel... beautiful...

Not me... he pleaded silently, unable to make himself say anymore... breath was being crushed from his lungs... so painful... *please believe... not me...*

The argument continued... Ginevra, looking upset, tried to help him to stand... no... wanted to do it himself... he stood... *PAIN*... he stifled his gasp... was stronger than that... so difficult...

Staggering... Vander... towards Dippet... stepping...

Something ice-cold hit him and instantly the most incredible agony hit him, the Sizzling Serpent times a thousand... every ounce of energy and strength he had left for surviving whooshed out of him, and, with a single groan of pain, he collapsed against the wall.

The world... fading... he didn't want to die... it was happening anyway... this wasn't fair...

Ginevra's face appeared in front of his face, disappearing as blindness overtook him... beautiful... so painfully beautiful... it hurt...

didn't matter... a warm hand around his shoulders, helping him to stand... grateful... falling anyway...

...darkness.

Feeling slightly stronger...

Dragging himself back up from the darkness...

Still, agony...

Faint voices... Fionn... tolerable, now... *Ginevra* ... he struggled to hear...

"For what?" Ginevra was saying. "If this is about sticking up for you in the Hog's Head, then just forget about that, because I already-"

"No." Fionn, interrupting... "It's not that. It's... Riddle."

Me...?

"Wait... what d'you mean?" Ginevra, confused...

"Well, it's just... he's been here seven years – just like me. But... *un* like me – I just... I don't think he's ever had a friend before. Or even just someone who cares for him."

Tom sighed... Ginevra... cared... she *cared* ...

The fact that the question of his life or death meant something to her made everything feel a little less painful...

"I-I-" Would she deny it...?

"Ginny." Fionn... so annoyingly patronising... "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."

Tom blinked blearily... An embarrassed flush heated his face, but he couldn't help the small smile that twisted his lips...

"If that's not caring for him, then what the hell is? And..." Fionn continued, "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."

He blinked again... *excuse me?*

"I mean honestly? I don't think that there is a single female student over fourth-year who hasn't, at some point, fancied him."

His eyebrows lifted slightly, though it was painful...

"Hell, I did."

Tom frowned. That was far too much information.

"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."

He closed his eyes, tired, and let the memory of a warm hand on his neck float back to him... a beautiful face floating in front of him the last thing that he had seen... she cared... so tired...

Though he was not aware of the time passing, Tom knew that maybe an hour or two had slipped by... the curtains moved slightly... a small figure in the gloom... coming closer... crouching beside him...

Ginevra...

Eyes barely open, he watched her look intently at him... her eyes flickering over his hair, hiding his face... she lifted her hand... he wondered what on earth she was doing... hesitating... and then, leaning closer to him so that he could have counted her freckles if there was enough light to do so... she made the pain go away...

But then again... that was probably just because breathing hurt, and he stopped breathing when she came close... so it didn't count...

She paused again... her warm breath just brushing across his face... so close... she brushed his hair out of his face...

And she shrieked.

The loud noise hurt his ears, but he didn't react... too tired to move...

" *Hell* , Riddle, you *scared* me!" She clutched her heart. "I didn't expect you to be awake."

"I... I didn't... expect you to... visit... but I didn't... scream..." he said quietly, not able to make the words any stronger... dying really took the strength out of people...

She hadn't moved back since she had leaned closer... he needed to breathe... couldn't... he was trying to avoid breathing still, as his difficulty with it would probably be noticed and deemed as a health problem... he didn't want to be submitted to St. Mungoes'... he didn't like hospitals...

He had to breathe... when he did so, it was how he imagined angels would smell... he gave a small sigh... closed his eyes... it was easier that way...

A pause in Ginevra's words... Then... "Are you okay?"

"...No." He wouldn't lie to her... at least, not for this...

"Will you be?"

"...Yes." He hoped so.

She sighed with what seemed to be relief, and despite a memory of Hogsmeade lurking in the back of his head, he couldn't help but feel

ridiculously *happy* as he lay there, struggling to get back from a state where death welcomed him.

She *cared* ...

"Is there anything I can help you with... anything I can get you?" Ginevra asked timidly.

Tom tried to shake his head, but it didn't really work... *In these two minutes, I have everything I could ever want.*

"Um." She cleared her throat. "I'll just – um – go, then, I suppose," she said with false brightness, and he heard her stand up...

Unable to help himself, he whispered, "No..." He cracked his eyes open, difficult as it was with weakness and sleep, and watched her beautiful confusion. "Just... stay..."

Her eyes tilted up at the corners with a sort of sadness. "Okay." She grabbed a chair, sat cross-legged on it, and looked at him quietly with a sad, sympathetic sort of expression.

Tom wanted to keep his eyes open, to look at her forever, but he was so tired... he fell slowly asleep against his own wishes. He didn't mind that much, because he knew that just beside him, on the other side of these sleeping eyelids, would be the one who would never know that she was everything.

Ergh. I didn't like that. It was so annoying making him so pathetically weak. Gr. Well, I tried. There won't be an update for a while, as this is the last chapter that I have typed up in his POV, but that should be fixed soon enough. Please review!

Heart, me.

Hahah. I'm getting on with Fast-Forward now, and I just had a go at writing some smut. Didn't go so well. XD I think I'll stick to fluff.

So Much Less And Yet So Much More

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: I'm back... thankfully, Tom is more of a man in this one. And not so pathetic. But he's still a bit pathetic. This is a long chapter... oh well. I'm obsessed with Rascal Flatts right now. It's so country-rock-ish. Love it. Except that Cascada covered their best song and destroyed it. Now whenever I hum it, people are like, "Omg, that's, like, Cascada, right? I, like, omg, wtv, heart that song, lol!" Gr. Well, you missed my rants, admit it.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Twenty: So Much Less And Yet So Much More

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If it's cold outside

Show the world the warmth of your smile

But more than anything, more than anything

My wish for you

Is that this world becomes all you want it to

Tired, Tom drifted in and out of consciousness. His memory was limited each time that he woke up, and he could only pray that this was due to him being asleep... and not due to anything else.

Sleep...

He had the strangest feeling of being moved around.

When he dragged his eyes open after an endless sleep, he found himself staring up at an unfamiliar ceiling. He frowned; turned his head to look out of a large window with hideous pink curtains. The view outside it was most certainly not Hogwarts. It was London. He turned his head the other way, and saw more beds with other people who he didn't know resting in them.

His dark eyes narrowed.

I hate hospitals.

With a grumble, he closed his eyes again.

Tom didn't like the way that he was tired all the time. It annoyed him to no end. Every time he began to feel an edge of weariness sinking through him, it made him feel like a small child who needed a nap. It was infuriating.

Despite how he loathed sleeping so much, it was taking its toll, and his strength was building up again. Moving was easy now, though he didn't really bother with it much, as there was nothing to do.

I hate hospitals, he thought for what was only the eighth time in the past three seconds.

The food tasted strange. The wards smelt strange. The nurses were strange. He didn't like strangeness.

Bored, Tom watched the long-hand of a clock on the wall flicker a minute past, with nothing better to do with his life, but a distraction came in the form of one of his irritatingly cheerful nurses calling, "Mr. Riddle, are you awake? Your fiancée is here!"

He blinked – frowned – turned. "I don't have a-" he started, utterly bewildered, but at that moment spied a short red-haired girl through the glass.

What the hell?

Looking sheepish, Ginevra waved. She cast a backwards glance at the nurse before pushing through the door and approaching. "Hey, Riddle."

"Funny." Tom lifted one eyebrow at her. "I don't recall asking you to marry me."

"Don't worry," Ginevra said flippantly, her eyes teasing, "it was a long time ago." A grin cracked her freckled face. "It was the only way they'd let me in. Look, I've even got the ring!" She extended her arm to him to show him the slightly too-large gold band around her ring finger.

"Lovely." *Not very accurate, though*, he mused, his eyes sliding over the sparkling gold. He closed his eyes with a sigh that he hadn't intended to make audible. *I'd never be afford to anything like that.*

He wasn't sure why this hurt.

There was a creak of wood to his ears as she sat down nearby. "Um. How are you?"

"How do I *look* ?" he muttered.

"Um," said Ginevra again. "You look... good!"

Tom opened his eyes to stare at her in bewilderment, raising his eyebrow again. There was probably something wrong with her – though he had no way of knowing what he looked like, he could feel how untidy his hair was, and the ragged stubble on his jaw. Also, how drained and tired he felt could surely have no positive impact on his complexion.

The redhead cringed. "Honestly? You look like you've been dragged through a hedge backwards."

That's more realistic.

"Riddle..." her voice pulled him back to reality from a world where he wasn't paying attention, just focusing on the smell of apples that he'd been aching for.

"Mm?"

"Riddle, a while ago – two days, maybe three – a friend of mine was really sick... and... and I asked him, ' *are you okay*' and he said, ' *no* '. Then, I said ' *will you be okay* '. And he said ' *yes* '." Ginevra bit her lip, looking down in anxiety before fixing her eyes on him through lowered lashes – leaning closer – something he'd been missing – "Did you mean that?"

He had a vague notion in the back of his brain that he should probably breathe, but it didn't seem that important right now. "Yes."

"Did you mean *that* ?" she asked, with a small laugh.

A deep breath. "Yes." A small smile took him by surprise, appearing on his face before he had realised that it was going to rear its head.

"When do you think you'll be coming back?" Ginevra said with a exaggerated pout; attracting his dark gaze to her lower lip – hastily looking back up at her face before he did something stupid – "I have no-one to shout at."

"Won't Reeve do?" he asked, amused.

"Alas, no." She gave a melodramatic sigh. "If I shout at him, I'll end up getting *really* pissed off his-" She froze halfway through her sentence. "Eh." Her eyes flickered sideways to his several times in uncertainty. "Well." She cleared her throat. "It'll be painful. And the Reeve family line will come to an abrupt and ungainly end."

Oh, ouch .

He couldn't help but twitch in sympathy, and Ginevra, seeing this, laughed out loud, though she blushed at her awkward phrasing of the previous comment, and then proceeded to inform him of Vander's funeral (a guilt grabbed the bottom of his stomach), and of what she was planning for the Yule Ball (interest, as well as an annoying discomfort that brought the image of Philips to mind), complaining about homework – all trivial, unimportant, even *boring* , things.

Yet he found he was fascinated by every word she said.

Ginevra gave an exclamation as one conversation trailed to a close, glancing backwards over her shoulder out to the hallway. "I have to go." She cringed. "Sorry."

"Oh."

She shifted from side to side. "Yeah." She twisted her hands together in front of her. She bit her lip; Tom determinedly kept his gaze on the upper half of her face, feeling his face heat up slightly. "Um. I'll see you later, I s'pose."

A disappointment was sinking in slowly, taking its time for the loneliness to make itself known. "Goodbye," he said, his voice quiet and subdued. He was tired, so it didn't really matter... he'd just go to sleep... the very thought was making his eyelids heavy.

She stood. "Get better soon." She looked down at him, and then abruptly giggled, though she tried to smother it. "Oh, and Riddle? Shave."

Excuse me? Tom's eyes flashed up to her, frowning in a mixture of embarrassment and bewilderment.

"Sorry!" she snickered, pressing her hands to her lips in a vain attempt to stop herself from laughing at his expense. "It's just... you look like a beaver."

Tom raised his eyebrows. *Right*. "Peregrine," he said wearily, the formal surname slipping easily off his tongue as though that was how he always thought of her, "I think that you are probably the only person I've ever met who would compare me to a beaver."

"Aw. You know you love me."

The statement caught him off guard and just about every thought that he'd ever had about her was filing through his head like a broken typewriter stuck on one key, mixed with almost every emotion he'd ever felt.

"Alright, Sleeping Beauty, I *really* do have to go before the nurse calls security to take me out by force," she mocked.

"That would make my day." Tom gave a small yawn as his eyes slid closed... he hated being so tired all the time... couldn't wait to go back to Hogwarts... sleepy...

A soft sigh from beside him. She sounded... disappointed. Disappointed to leave? Disappointed that he wasn't leaving with her?

She cares.

He heard her walk away, but he couldn't leave it at that. Before her footsteps faded away, he said quietly, hoping that she could hear, "... I heard what Fionn said."

"What?"

"...in the Hospital Wing." So tired. "Before she left..."

"Oh." A shifting of feet; an embarrassment radiating from her like light from the sun, like beauty from her eyes. "Um." She cleared her throat. "Well."

It didn't escape him that he heard no denial, merely a mortified modesty.

She cares.

His breathing slowed, and he murmured, "...Thank you" just before he slipped under the darkness.

Tom Riddle was released from St. Mungoes' on a Wednesday, sporting a headache from the constant smell of disinfectant and a large white cast on his left arm. He had already decided that the instant he was on the Hogwarts grounds he was going to go up to the Hospital Wing and demand that Madam Royce removed it.

However, to his dismay, he couldn't immediately return to the school.

First, he had to go to a small red-brick orphanage in the country-side of Scotland.

He Apparated to the back of an abandoned building lot which hadn't been used by anyone except for Muggles teenager with substance abuse problems and from there progressed through the small town to the find the one place which, upon his seventeenth birthday, he had hoped never to return to.

Knock-knock.

"Hang on!" called a shrill voice, and then, after a brief pause where Tom stuck his hands in his pockets and stared at his feet, the door

swung open. The thin, acne-ridden face of a young copper-haired girl peered around the side. "Oh, it's just you." She opened the door further to reveal the masterfully hidden scene of a small toddler who had vomited all across the floor.

With no response, Tom slipped past her, twisting his shoulder so not to as bump hers in the narrow corridor, and moved quickly up the familiar wooden stairs to the main dormitory.

"Mrs. Cope is into the sitting room!" the girl called after him. "She'll be out in a sec. She's just having one of her big 'serious talks' with Gladys."

Thank you for taking your time to share that with me, but I don't give a damn.

He pushed open a thin chipboard door with his toe and found himself looking into a long, rectangular room with a line of neatly-made grey beds on either wall. He made his way across the swept floor to the furthest bed from the door, in the corner; stood silently beside it.

No matter how hard he tried to get away, he always found himself back in the same place. A reminder that no-one wanted him.

Tom ducked into a crouch, reaching out – *ouch* . Wrong hand. Wincing, he dragged a suitcase out from under the bed with his good hand, keeping his weak arm limp by his side, and then lifted it onto the un-made mattress, cold from not having had an occupant in a long time.

Quickly checking that none of the other orphans were watching him, he flicked his wand, minimised it to miniature-size, and slipped it into the pocket of his coat. Then he retrieved any other belongings from the locked drawer of his bedside table, and moved back downstairs, turning his back on what had for so long been his living space and not glancing back.

"Tom," called a voice from the sitting room as he neared the bottom step, a sulky-looking ten-year-old pushing past him. "In here."

He moved the last few strides into the sitting room and paused in the doorway, staring into the cleanly-kept but unforgiving room. "Mrs. Cope," he said stiffly, remaining in the doorway.

"What happened to your arm?" the head of orphanage asked, frowning at the cast he sported.

"I had an accident at school." He swiftly veered the conversation away to another topic before she could intrude further. "Was there something that you wanted?"

"Ah, yes." Mrs. Cope glanced at her battered pocket-watch. "Mr. Newman called – he has plenty of free spaces in his schedule for the next two weeks, and he'd like to see you as soon as possible. In fact, this is very convenient, you turning up; he might be available now."

"Very well." Tom saved his scowl until he turned away from Mrs. Cope, his eyes narrowing to slits.

If there was one thing that he hated more than hospitals, it was *dentists* .

Tom rotated his jaw in uncertainty as he walked through the gates to the Hogwarts gate. It felt strange, not having a retainer. He lifted one hand to his chin, trying to see if there was something wrong, or if it was normal to feel this way.

As he made his way across the short, frost-encrusted grass up to the castle, roars came from the Quidditch pitch. Though not really interested, he wondered idly if it was a Slytherin game, and who was winning. He didn't care for the flying sport, but if Slytherin won then it would give him a reason to gloat to Fionn when he got into the Head common room.

Chants of " *SLY-THE- RIN , SLY-THE- RIN* ," reached his ears, verifying his theory that it was a Slytherin match, and then an outbreak of screams and happy yells informed him that it had just been finished. The "SLY-THE- RIN " shouts became louder, and a smirk made itself known on Tom's lips.

Fionn had some arrogant gloating coming at her.

He was moving up the steps to the Entrance Hall when he realised that therefore, Ginevra would be playing, and would soon be due to come out.

His desires vacillated between seeing Ginevra and revelling in Slytherin's success in front of Fionn. Ginevra... smug victory... Ginevra... smug victory...

With a sigh of resignation at how hopeless for her his unrequited feelings were, he turned to face the Quidditch stadium, leaning one shoulder against the huge doorframe to wait.

It was at least five minutes before her small, almost-slight form emerged from the changing rooms, though still robed in her Quidditch attire, tangled ponytail scattered across one shoulder, her face turned in conversation to a fourth-year who Tom vaguely recognised as Vegrandis.

She was approximately twenty metres away before she registered that he was there. She stopped walking, and then her face split into a grin.

How can she possibly be so happy to see me, he couldn't help but challenge her, and was almost tempted to glance over his shoulder – to check that it was indeed *him* that she seemed so delight to see.

"Riddle!" she squealed loudly, and then, with no further warning, broke into a sprint up the path towards him.

He pushed his shoulder from the doorframe, smirking slightly at the thought that it was him she was eager to greet, even though he knew that it was childishly possessive of him...

A frown creased his eyebrows.

She wasn't slowing down.

Surely, in a moment or two...

Or not...

"Peregrine, slow-" he began, in alarm, but before he could say a word more, she ran into him with all the force of a steam-train, pushing him backwards a step, knocking the wind out of his lungs, throwing her arms around his stomach-

(*PERSONAL SPACE* , his brain squeaked desperately in the split-second of realisation that he was granted before she was *there*)

-and hugging him so tightly that he was sure blood circulation would be cut off.

Don't panic don't panic breathe calm down breathe in breathe out , he told himself very rapidly, even though her arms were tightly knotted around him, her small hands resting on the small of his back, the side of her face pressed to his chest.

But that was nothing. That was fine.

"O *kay* , Peregrine," he said bemusedly when he recovered the air to his lungs. "It's nice to see you, too," (*understatement...*) "but I don't quite feel the urge to spontaneously attempt to rugby-tackle *you* to the floor."

... *That was a really bad choice of words* . He swallowed, banishing from his brain certain thoughts that had arrived with this realisation, and took another deep breath to steady the flow of blood to his face.

She turned scarlet and immediately let go, sliding a step backwards. His hands began to automatically lift to hug her back to him, but he clenched his fists to keep his stupid hormones under control and simply looked down at her.

I hate myself , he cursed, his stomach and chest extremely warm where she'd hugged him.

"I didn't knock you to the floor, did I?" she said teasingly.

The banished thoughts came back. He mentally kicked himself.

"Anyway," she pouted. Regardless of whether or not he wanted it to, his attention was drawn towards her lips.

Damnit, she was *not* helping...

"It wasn't a *rugby-tackle*. It was a glomp," she explained.

He blinked. "A *what* ?"

The colour in her face deepened in its red hue. "Never mind."

You know what? I don't want to know. He shook his head slightly. "I'm not even going to inquire as to what a ... *glomp* is."

" *Never mind* ," said Ginevra, more firmly this time. Her face was slowly cooling down. "It doesn't matter. It's just like a hug."

"Do you call that a hug?" Tom asked incredulously. He raised one eyebrow in disbelief. "I call that a potentially lethal assault on my person."

"Pah," the redhead said flippantly, flapping a hand at him. "It *would* have been lethal had you been shorter. However," her eyes flashed down his tall frame; he shifted infinitesimally in discomfort, "you're colossally tall instead, so you didn't have to worry." When he started to speak, her eyes focused on his mouth, and she exclaimed, "Your retainer! It's - where'd it go?"

Tom gave a small shrug, as though it didn't matter, though a minute part of him was thrilled that she knew him well enough to notice. "After I left St. Mungoes', I went..." he hesitated, "home."

Home. It didn't sound right. Home was Hogwarts. Home was... home was wherever Ginevra was.

He pretended even to himself that this wasn't the case, but he avoided going into further detail... he had an insecure feeling that maybe she wouldn't like him if she knew where he'd come from.

"While I was there," he continued, not saying anything else about where he lived, "I was ordered to the dentist. I don't have to wear it anymore."

Ginevra looked as though she was going to say something, but another Slytherin Quidditch player – Vegrandis, the one that she had been talking to previously – pushed angrily past them, and her attention was distracted.

"Hey!" she called after him. "What was that you were saying to me a second ago?" She cringed. "Sorry, I just kind of ditched you. What did you say?"

"Doesn't matter," he muttered darkly.

"Palmer!" Ginevra said, sounding frustrated and slightly despairing.

"Who the *hell* said you could call me by my first name?" he snarled, and he spun back to face her so violently that Ginevra took an alarmed step backwards away from him.

"Sorry for caring," she said heatedly.

"If you must know, I was going to ask you to the Ball," Vegrandis snarled. "But I take it back – you're obviously going with lover-boy here."

Tom abruptly forgot to breathe. A large pink balloon swelled inside his stomach, and the sun shining determinedly outside despite the cold seemed so much brighter and more beautiful...

"Hey!" she 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!"

Pop. Lips pressing into a thin line, he sobered up immediately and stared at the floor.

"I wouldn't go with you anyway, you Mudblood filth!"

Tom's anger flared – *Mudblood* – an orphanage – his father – an effort not to throw himself at Vegrandis and punch him around the face – *no. You're supposed to be Head Boy.* He stepped quickly between Ginevra and Vegrandis as he saw her coil like a cat, ready to spring. He took deep breaths to steady himself.

She sprung anyway, not yet realising that he was in the way, and crashed into his spine. His steady breathing hitched. "That, I believe," he said icily, "will be a week's detention with Slughorn for offensive and discriminating language, Vegrandis."

" *Biased arsehole* ," Vegrandis mumbled, glaring at his feet.

"Two weeks," he amended, his jaw set. "Did you think I didn't hear that?"

"I don't care. You can have her. As the saying goes, blood should stick together. Or in this case-"

MUDBLOOD – Ginevra – Riddle – Gaunt –

He was dirt, but she was far too good for that-

Far too good for you?

"Okay, let me deal with this," interrupted a vicious voice from behind Tom, and before he had time to comprehend what was happening,

Ginevra had emerged from behind him and had the tip of her wand pointed between Vegrandis' eyes.

Fear flashed in the youngest Slytherin's eyes before he snarled one final, " *Mudblood* !"

"Oh *no* !" she gasped, her voice mocking in all its sarcasm. "I'm a *Mudblood* ! My blood... is mud!" And then she laughed. " *Does it look like I give a damn?* "

Tom stared silently at the exchange happening directly in front of him. She didn't care. She was even less than he was... and yet she was so much more.

"See, the thing is, Vegrandis, that I don't care," Ginevra continued, her voice low and fierce. "That's the *wonderful* thing about me."

It's only one of many.

"You can call me Mudblood and filthy and worthless until the cows come home – and 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."

"Will you?" A single flourish cast the terror into Vegrandis' eyes and kept it there. " *Vermus nez!* "

Green flooded Tom's vision, and when everything finally had the right shading again, he could identify one Slytherin writhing on the floor and another standing watching their pain.

"Making friends, all the way – just making friends," he said sarcastically, though he could well appreciate the effect that her hex had on the unpleasant fifth-year slime Vegrandis.

"Shut it, you." She turned to face him, rolling her eyes. "I just defended you. Though I have to confess that I was impressed by

your heroic attempt at protecting me."

Heat rushed up to Tom's face. He tried to stay still and not fidget awkwardly in the compliment's moment of hanging in the air, instead deciding to hold out the steady gaze trained on him. Yet looking down into beauty personified only reminded him that she was everything he could never be – unashamed of who he was, unashamed of what he'd been, brave.

Again his thoughts came back to the same thing as they had perhaps two minutes previously: *he* was dirt. She was too good for that... too good for him. It was like watching a golden sunset through a window – able to understand how perfect something was, but also knowing that it was a thing intangible that would never be any closer for him to take than a star in orbit.

Next is my favourite chapter in all of Backtrack. I adore it. It's just so... argh. Don't have a word for it. Sorry that this was so late, and so long, but I hope it was worth the wait! Please review; it makes me smile.

Heart, me.

The Speaking Of Silence

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: Haha, I goofed the last chapter by accident. Well, I don't really have to hope that you'll like this chapter, maybe, because this is, without a doubt, my favourite Backtrack chapter. It's major fluffy, minor sadness for unrequited love (yay!), and also funny... Yes, it's a chapter that you have, in theory, seen before, but you haven't! It's been hugely edited, and a never-before-seen bit has been added at the end, which you never saw from Ginny's POV. This chapter is hugely inspired by these songs, so listen to either:

Love Story , by Taylor Swift .

What Hurts The Most , by Rascal Flatts.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Twenty-One: The Speaking of Silence

" Shut it, you." She turned to face him, rolling her eyes. "I just defended you. Though I have to confess that I was impressed by your heroic attempt at protecting me."

Heat rushed up to Tom's face. He tried to stay still and not fidget awkwardly in the compliment's moment of hanging in the air, instead deciding to hold out the steady gaze trained on him. Yet looking down into beauty personified only reminded him that she was everything he could never be – unashamed of who he was, unashamed of what he'd been, brave. Again his thoughts came back to the same thing as they had perhaps two minutes previously: he was dirt. She was too good for that... too good for him. It was like watching a golden sunset through a window – able to understand

how perfect something was, but also knowing that it was a thing intangible that would never be any closer for him to take than a star in orbit.

" Do you ever think about the future?"

" All the time."

" What do you see?"

"... You."

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. He didn't usually make any use of his mirror at all, as the normal sight which would greet him would not be his own reflection...

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.

His face became hotter and he firmly 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 which brought with it an image of hazel eyes, but he left it as a rhetorical question.

He didn't like that answer.

His eyes lingered on surreptitiously-placed mistletoe around the room.

He didn't like that thought, either.

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 Hartwin, who was standing at the bottom of a sweeping staircase that he was fairly positive had not existed when he had entered the room.

"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.

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, wide, round, making his head spin in a feeling similar to the one he'd get if he'd had ten wines instead of half of one - eyes delineated in thin, delicate purple. Her arms and shoulders 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 in a small, perfect crescent-shape. Her dress was merlot, the colour of the darkest wine, the skirt swirling out and hiding her feet, the top half a sort of corset thing that was *far* tighter than he had ever seen her wear anything, thus drawing his attention to...

His eyes widened.

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, only 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, daring to briefly lift his eyes towards her, deciding that it would be safe enough to do so if he kept his gaze determinedly above her shoulder-level. Her eyes were huge, like doe-eyes, coloured green and gold – *not good* . He tore his gaze away from her and stared at his wine, focusing on breathing. 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 , he thought furiously.

She twirled quickly; her merlot skirt swirling out and brushed against his feet, red hair spinning like fire, the smell of apples... subtly, he gripped onto the side of the table behind him to keep himself steady.

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 to her compliment, 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 the most beautiful person I've seen in my life.

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 holding onto her, 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. Images – flashing back, faster and faster – holding her hand to take her out onto the dance-floor, spinning her into his arms, a waltz, maybe a jive, breathing in that smell all night – he shrugged slightly, his pretence perfectly capturing the essence of someone who didn't give a damn.

"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* to do, 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 asshole 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.

Damnit...

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 had almost always thought of her, had the desired effect. She stopped walking. And then she turned. Wild red curls flowing out and crashing around her pale face...

Dragging in a deep breath in the split-second before the nausea sank in -! Hey. He was getting good at this.

"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... not *her* . "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.

Warmth fired through his arm.

His internal organs moved on to a salsa. His lips pressed immediately together to ensure that his hyperventilation wasn't audible.

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. He would have to hold onto her. *Crap crap crap er just*

walk away it's not too late to run ... He would have to hold onto her waist . He would have to look at her dress .

He inhaled slowly, and let his eyes flicker down (trying his hardest not to, but his gaze lingering just a second longer on the fairly-prominent and never-before-displayed cleavage than on anything else anyway) to look at her waist, where, shortly, his hand would be.

CRAP CRAP CRAP.

He nervously rested his hand in the smooth hourglass curve between her left hip and her-

For God's sake, stop it.

He made a deal with himself that for this dance, he was going to keep his gaze either on her waist or on her face, and never on the in-between zone.

Merlin . He'd forgotten how warm she always was. His heart attempting to thrash its way out of his ribcage, he stared anxiously at his hand. He didn't trust his system to keep going if he looked at her. He'd probably have a nervous breakdown, stop breathing, and fall over.

That wasn't the best way to start a dance, as far as he knew.

A short pause, and then Ginevra settled her free hand on his neck; a vicious shiver ran down his spine that had nothing to do with the snow. She was extremely close to him. He tried to pretend that it was Fionn he was dancing – anything to cool his face down and help him to breathe.

Once under control, he swallowed, looked back up from his hand, on the top of her hip, to her face (he was quite proud of himself for fiercely ignoring the view that, due to his height, was displayed very obviously at the top of her dress) 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.

All of his efforts had been for nothing as in less than a second when their eyes met he forgot how to breathe and his stomach disappeared and the rest of the world faded out and he fell for her.

There was nothing but her.

Nothing but the soft, melodic ballad; her glowing hazel eyes, overwhelming in all of their peaceful fierceness, contradicting colours, contradicting feelings, looking up at him through cinnamon; that section of fiery tresses that had escaped and was curling delicately over her shoulder; the unnatural warmth seeping through him from where they were in contact; 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.

Barely breathing, he twirled her out, back in again, a circle across the floor, fingers tangled, heads tilted sideways so that their eyes never broke contact. Twisting to face her, Tom vaguely noticed that they were closer now than they had been a moment ago...

The slow song had stunned everything in his head into silence. He wasn't aware of anything around him. There was just him and this insanely beautiful Prefect, looking up into his face... it was strange... his eyelids were getting very heavy, as though preparing to shut... breath getting rougher... tilting his face down slightly a few inches... lips parted, numb... her face slowly blurring out of focus as his eyes began to close... his breath hitched, stopping completely as she was *finally* tangible, finally reachable, finally, maybe, *his ... kiss her-*

"I'm sorry," she whispered.

Reality crashing back around him like the wreckage of a burning plane, he straightened up immediately. 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.

I'm sorry too , he thought, thinking back to his unconscious preparation to kiss her. Then again, it was probably better that he hadn't. He sighed. Definitely better, he told himself. It was, he realised, the stupidest idea that he'd had in a long time.

The tall Head Boy 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.

Instantly knowing what his hormone-addled brain was going to come up with, Tom tried not to think about Ginevra, but that only made him think about her, and then – *that could have been us* , he thought quietly, his face growing hot.

Something else drew his attention as he recalled a piece of information that made his stomach hurt. *That's Ginevra's boyfriend.*

"GET A ROOM!" Ginevra suddenly yelled across the room; however, she 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!" Ginevra bellowed, grinning. The other two beamed back at her, before turning back to each other again, and for a moment she watched them in bemusement. Then she returned her gaze to Tom shyly.

"Now," she smiled. "Where were we?"

The world spun. Maybe it was the wine starting to kick in. Maybe it was what she'd just said; what it had meant when she ended it with Alden. Maybe it was something else.

For what was the first time in a long time, Tom dropped his shield and he smiled too. "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.

His heart stuttered.

She slid her hand around the back of his neck.

His heart stopped.

And they returned to the music, dancing in a place that time forgot and that only they could see.

Thank-you speeches over with, Prefects tired of tidying, food cleared up, musicians dismissed, the Yule Ball drew to a magnificent close. As Tom hadn't actually set up, it therefore disqualified him from having to help tidy up, and instead he leaned on one shoulder against the wall, watching everything that was happening.

Fionn giddy with happiness from her night with the object of her pathetic affections... Jack Swithin grinning, as he'd shown the whole school, much to their distaste, how far he was willing to go with his girlfriend in public... Ginevra, talking to Durrell... Ginevra...

He twisted his mouth sideways in thought. Hm. She was probably far enough away... she probably wouldn't notice... he could probably allow himself to stare at what was revealed above the top of her merlot-shaded dress, and also stare at the curve of what *wasn't* revealed...

Whoa.

...

...

...

"Hey, whatcha lookin' at?" chirped a familiar, annoying voice.

Startled, Tom ripped his gaze away before Fionn could follow the direction of what so avidly held his attention. "What do you want?" he asked, slightly irritated at having his staring session interrupted, but far too happy to be irritated enough to do anything about it.

"What did you think of the Ball, then?" Fionn said, leaning against the wall beside him. "I didn't massacre it, did I?"

"It was... decent," he said begrudgingly, never to admit his opinion that it had been amazing.

"Thank you," she said with a smug nod, reading what he meant. "So..." she flashed him a wicked smirk. "I saw you getting pretty cosy with Ginny..."

"No, I wasn't," Tom said, alarmed.

"You were."

"I *wasn't* . I danced with her *once*- "

"All night."

"-for *one song*- "

"A waltz. And it was way more than one song."

"-and I wasn't cosy- "

"If you didn't consider that cosy, then you have no concept of personal space."

"-because I kept my distance, thank you very much-"

"With difficulty."

"-and – what the hell is that supposed to mean?" Tom demanded.

" *You tried to kiss her...* " Fionn sang, infuriatingly cheerful about something that really wasn't funny in the slightest. " *You wanted to snog her face off...* "

"No – I – did – not."

"Let me be the judge of that." Fionn stared him directly in the eye, her face frighteningly close to his. "Listen very closely to what I'm about to say..." She paused for effect, and then whispered, "Ginny's waiting under the mistletoe..."

A garland of the festive Christmas flower, mistletoe, blooming over theirs heads, as they stood together, hands entwined, lips locked together-

"HAH!" Fionn crowed, dragging him back to reality. "You were imagining kissing her, weren't you?"

DAMNIT. He mentally kicked himself. God, that was so obvious.

"No," he retorted. "You're insane."

The Head Girl opened her mouth to say something more, but Ginevra cut in, dancing into the conversation with a grin on her face. "Hello," she said brightly, beaming. "What's happening?"

Tom narrowed his eyes at Fionn. She wouldn't. She wouldn't *dare* .

Seeing the threat in his expression, the blonde sighed. "Oh, whatever." She flapped her hands flippantly at him. "I'll see you later." She rolled her eyes. "Don't deny it, dearie," she left him with one final sentence: "I saw what you were staring at." She then turned her back on the two Slytherins left behind and sashayed away. Tom glared at her, imagining her blonde hair catching fire and melting her down into a puddle.

"What was that all about?" Ginevra frowned.

"No idea," Tom lied.

They moved away from the Room of Requirements, down a flight of stairs, not much to say. He didn't know what was going through her head; he just listened the silence. He knew that it was probably the stupid voices in his head – though really, there was only one, and it seemed to be silent for the evening – but he was positive that the silence was talking to him.

It was telling him to kiss her.

Shut up , he told the silence, but he couldn't stop himself from observing that the moonlight was shining through a nearby window... they were totally alone... and he had a very vivid picture in his head that he wanted so much that his stomach hurt.

"That was some party," Ginevra said, breaking the silence. He was glad for it, as then the quiet voices shut up. "I didn't think it would be that great, but it was."

"Mm," Tom agreed mono-syllabically, not looking at her incase his hormones got the better of him. He watched their shadows dancing across the walls in the torch-light like black flames.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw her look across at him. "You're quiet," she commented as they walked down the third-floor corridor, his footsteps silent, hers echoing. Polar opposites attract.

"I'm always quiet," he reminded her, still keeping his eyes fixed ahead of him.

"True." She shrugged. "You're quiet, even for being quiet."

"I suppose." Tom glanced over at her, but he could only manage a split-second before he looked away again. He let his eyes rest on the portrait of Robin the Rich for only a moment before spontaneously deciding to accompany her to the Slytherin common room, moving swiftly down the stairs to the second-floor with her.

"Are you coming?" Ginevra asked in surprise.

His shoulders twitched in the tiniest of ambiguous gestures. "I might as well."

"I feel so flattered," she teased, and then stumbled on an uneven step of the stone floor. She yelped, and Tom only had a split-second to react and grab her wrist to stop her from toppling forwards onto her face. "Whoa," she muttered, touching her temple with a finger. "I may be slightly more tipsy than I realised."

Tom let go of her arm as though she was the red in a box of live wires, continuing quickly. Coming with her had been a bad idea.

The air cooled as they descended into the dungeons a few moments later. Ginevra shivered, and Tom's eyes followed the contours of her trembling shoulders before snapping to the forward direction again. It was officially. Tom Riddle and wine was a bad combination. Especially when Ginevra was tossed into the equation.

"Here we go, then," she announced as they slowed beside the bust of Salazar Slytherin. "Er. Thanks for randomly deciding to join me on my trip down to the dungeons." She fidgeted, and Tom, now daring to, looked down into her face. "And..." she tilted her head slightly. "I really did think that tonight was going to be terrible, because, you know, I was supposed to be going with Alden and everything... but he cleared off with Grace, and I cleared off with you... and it actually turned out to be brilliant... so thanks."

She hugged him before he had time to prepare himself.

Panic flooded through him, but then things worked in slow-motion.

He took a deep breath in through his nose, very slowly, the smell of apples clouding his head, his eyes closing, the warmth like being hugged by a small sun infiltrating into him, the silence screaming at him again...

She began to let go, and her face was so close... just as he was leaning rapidly forwards to close the distance between their lips for once and for all, she said with a smile, "Well, thank you, and... I guess I'll see you tomorrow!"

Tom jerked upright, and nodded, breathing deeply to calm himself down. He turned away from her to head back to his dormitory, not staying to watch her go in case he accidentally called after her.

Fionn was waiting up, but he pretended that she wasn't there, and ignored her simple question of, "So how'd it go?"

He walked straight up to his bedroom and shut the door tightly behind him, pressing his back up against it and closing his eyes, tilting his head back to rest it against the wood.

Whoa.

He loosened his bow-tie with one hand, staring up at the ceiling.

Whoa.

Aw, it's so sweet that it makes my throat choke up every time I read it. I love it... Ginny never realised that he tried to kiss her twice... it's sad... but also weird. How secretly perverted he is. Lol. He's such a gentleman when people are paying attention, but when they're not... -ogle- Teehee. Well, please review.

Heart, me.

The Sky Reversed

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: Yay! Last chapter got a great response, reviews-wise. I'm glad you all liked it so much. It makes up for the fact that I just discovered that the Tom-Riddle-esque guy at my school has a girlfriend. Meh. Oh well. I have chocolate and fanfiction, so what else do I need? Who needs a social life when I can instead write about imaginary people's social lives? :D

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Twenty-Two: The Sky Reversed

For what was the first time in a long time, Tom dropped his shield and smiled. "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. His heart stuttered. She slid her hand around the back of his neck. His heart stopped. And they returned to the music, dancing in a place that time forgot and that only they could see.

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In a book, in a box, in the closet

My wish for you

Is that this world becomes all you want it to

On the morning of the twenty-fifth of December, Tom was not a happy bunny.

His head and stomach hurt, despite his post-Yule-Ball hangover (something that Fionn had been delighted to discover the morning after it, when he refused to get up) having faded several days ago. Also, there was a bitter aftertaste in his mouth, like he'd just been sick.

Reluctantly, he rolled out of bed, made up the blankets with a flick of his wand in the general direction of the mattress, and crossed to the desk... a dark gaze falling on the scraps of parchment strewn across it. His personal project. Words jumped out at him.

-my star-

-beautiful-

-everything-

She was his poetry. And he made hers.

His eyes followed the deep ink scars etched through each line of feeble attempts on how much she meant to him; each attempt a failure. With a short exhalation through his nose, he dropped into the chair and pulled another piece of parchment towards him.

He sat there for a long time, the clock ticking obnoxiously behind him, quill balanced between his long fingers, tipping it from side to side for a second as he tried to phrase the chaos in his head.

Knock-knock-knock.

"Go away, Fionn," he said absent-mindedly. "I'm busy."

Knock-knock-knock.

He frowned, his attention being brought fully to the irritating noise of someone persisting to try and see him despite how it had made it fairly clear that he didn't to see *them* .

"Fionn, *go away* ." He picked up his quill again and waited for the sound of footsteps shrinking smaller as the Head Girl headed back down the stairs. Today was not his day, and he didn't feel well as it was.

Knock-

Tom shoved his chair back, the floor protesting with a loud screech, and wrenched the door open. " *I – am – busy –* "

Wait.

His sentence trailed away as he stared down at a small person in an over-sized Father Christmas outfit, the hat falling over the eyes of that someone, only the miniature stature and the vibrantly-hued hair allowing him to recognise who it was.

"Merry Christmas!"

He ran over the date. *Twenty-fifth of December. Oh. Christmas Day .*

"Ginevra?" he said incredulously once he had got over being stunned by her appearance.

"I'm not Ginny Peregrine – or even Ginevra Peregrine!" she exclaimed, her voice several octaves deeper than normal. She sounded stupid. "I am Father Christmas!" She held something out to him.

"I see ." He lifted one eyebrow higher. "And may I inquire as to *why* you are outside bedroom at-" he looked over his shoulder at the

clock, "-six-thirty in the morning, dressed as such?"

The tone of her voice implying that he was quite brainless for even having to ask, she said, "Because I have your present!"

Tom frowned, not really understanding. "My... my present?" Why was she giving him something? He hadn't given her anything... had he supposed to have? Guilt and panic yelled through his head.

"Mm-hm!" The thing that she had been holding out, she now pushed forwards at him – quite violently – and he had to catch it from her hands before she let go of it, else it would have dropped to the wooden floorboards. He now looked at it. It was bright yellow; a strange choice of colour for *his* gift.

"Peregrine, I-"

" *Father Christmas* !"

Sighing wearily, Tom corrected himself, " *Father Christmas* , then." Then, hesitant, said quietly, "I... I don't understand why you got me something."

"It's Christmas! At Christmas, you give presents to your friends. And, as a friend, I believe that you qualify."

He stared at, but not seeing, the yellow of the wrapping paper. "I – Peregrine-"

" *Father Christmas* !"

Tom sighed, rolling his eyes towards the ceiling. *For God's sake*. He took a few breaths before looking back down in a hazel sky, reversed. "Thank you."

"Just open it!" she grinned at him, freckles catching fire.

"Yes, yes." She was so impatient. He slit the corners and tore the paper neatly away from what was inside, and the item that he found

sitting in his hands when finished was...

A beaver?

Tom stared at the plush teeth, the fluffy fur, and the sparkly hat. Surely, she was joking. "You got me a *beaver*?" he said disbelievingly, poking it.

"Yup!" She burst into giggles. "Check under the hat."

Suspicion edging his apprehension, he lifted the hat. Tucked there was a piece of small paper, folded into four. He opened it, and read the untidy words scrawled upon it.

Merry Christmas, Tom!

Remember to shave. Tsk tsk.

Love,

Gin(evra)ny xxx

For a few seconds before he could tell himself how to react, he could only stare at the letters in front of him – the loopy, fat-pen-written letters: *love*. Then he took control of himself, forcing aside the dizzy feeling. Sentences, brief paragraphs, words, suddenly snatched out in memory from what was written on the paper on his desk.

Then embarrassment edged in, remembering her comment on his appearance while he had been unwell. Even though he had already shaved, he felt an urge to reach a hand up to his jaw in self-consciousness, just to check.

"Who, may I inquire, is Ginervany?" he asked wryly, smirking once he'd recovered himself.

"Me, you idiot." She scowled. "Did you get me anything?"

"Oh." He scratched his head. He should have known this was coming. "No, I haven't," he admitted. A memory flashed back to him though, of crashing waves, salt water, and a small green rock. " *However ...*" he frowned, struggling to remember. Where was it? " *However* , I think there's something – yes..."

He recalled that he had brought all of his possessions from the orphanage when he had been released from St. Mungoes'... and unpacked the small suitcase... and put the contents... somewhere.

"Hang on."

Turning back into his dormitory, he closed the door over out of habit, set the beaver on his desk, and then scanned the small room in thought. Perhaps the stone was in one of the cupboards...

"Er. Can I come in?" a voice called from outside.

Tom froze.

A thousand things rushed into his head.

His strict no-one-invades-my-personal-space rule.

Ginevra.

Being alone with her.

The things that sometimes happened in bedrooms.

The parchment on the desk, displaying poetry. What if she saw it?

His friend, that was acceptable enough. She could come in.

Fionn hearing what she'd asked. If he said yes, then the blonde would never let him live down her theory on him having feelings for Ginevra.

Having that infuriating smell of apples seeped into every surface of the one place she'd never been, the one place he was safe.

The things that sometimes happened in bedrooms.

He panicked.

"I'll just wait out here," Ginevra amended, her tone of voice awkward.

"No – you can come in," he said hesitantly, telling himself to stop being stupid. "Just... just bear in mind that no-one's been in here before." He moved at lightning-speed across the room, closing the doors to his wardrobe and bathroom, Banishing the mirror in case the sheet over it fell off and she accidentally caught a glimpse of who he really was, snatching up the thousand scraps of parchment and hurling them into a nearby drawer, closing the drawer, locking the drawer, tossing the key under his bed-

"Are you trying to warn me that it'll be messy-"

PANIC-

Personal-space rule-

Ginevra-

The things that happen in bedrooms-

Stop it!

Tom flew to the desk, rifling through books to try and find the stone, pretending that he'd been doing that the whole time. He looked through a drawer (not the one with stupid poems in it), busying himself. He didn't need to see Ginevra to know that she was observing his dormitory, subconsciously judging what she observed.

"Is that a guitar?"

Damn. He'd forgotten to hide that.

Heat rushed up to his face. "It was the last time I checked," he said as though he didn't really care, but surreptitiously pointed his wand at the curtains next it, magically pulling the curtains over the instrument to hide it from view.

"Hm. Didn't see you as the musical type."

Tom looked through another drawer, racking his brain for where her spontaneously-decided 'present' could be. "Well. I didn't see *you* as the type to give people-" he glanced at the beaver on his desk, "-vastly over-sized beavers. And, if I may ask, what type *did* you see me as?"

"I dunno." She moved to sit on the armchair.

No, don't! He followed her movements with his eyes, his shoulders slumping slightly. *I sit there.* He scowled down at his desk, already the smell of apples reaching him from across the room. *Now how am I supposed to ever be able to concentrate?*

"The voodoo-doll type," she finished. "The collector-of-shiny-knives-and-torture-implements type."

Oh, ha-ha. He fired a withering look over his shoulder. "Very funny." He turned back to his desk, but he just finished looking through it, and the stone wasn't in it. "Damn," he muttered. Where was it?

"You know, you honestly don't have to get me anything."

Yes, I do.

Maybe it's on the bookcase...

He looked over at the shelves where his few books stood. "Aha." Indeed, the stone was there, blindingly obvious where it sat. He probably looked so stupid right now. He retrieved it from the bottom shelf. He dusted it off against the front of his robes, and then moved back towards her.

Seeing him approach, Ginevra sat bolt upright, looking up expectantly.

The things that happen in bedrooms-

Jesus, stop it !

"Merry... Merry Christmas," Tom said nervously, holding out to her the pale green stone. He watched her reaction, yet she didn't seem to have one.

Almost as though she was watching *his* reaction, she looked up into his face before taking it. Unable to stand waiting for her expression to take on that fake happiness that he could recognise a mile away, he turned his back on her, pacing the room to keep his brain distracted.

"It's beautiful," her voice said from behind. She sounded... sincere. "Is it peridot?"

"Probably not." He stopped pacing. "I live – lived -" Again, the paranoia that maybe she'd be like all the others, she wouldn't accept him for where he came from. "-near a series of coastal cliffs." He said no more about it. "I found it at the bottom of one of the cliffs when I was ten."

"Oh, it's lovely – thank you!" Now it was happiness in her tone. "Well, I remember distinctly you saying you were busy, so..." In his peripheral vision, he saw her wave. "I'll see you later." He heard her footsteps as she moved towards the door.

"Peregrine?"

She turned back to look at him in curiosity.

"Prefect meeting tomorrow, after breakfast," he told her. This reminded him that he hadn't actually had any breakfast yet today. Oh

well. He wasn't really hungry. "And thank you." Smirking, he lifted the plush beaver from his desk to indicate what he meant.

Ginevra grinned. "Same to you." She held up the green stone, and then, with one final chirped, "See you", she skipped away down the stairs. "Hey!" sounded from the bottom of the stairs.

Tom moved to the door, pulled it open, and looked down the stairs. Conveniently and *very coincidentally* sitting at the bottom of them was Fionn, 'reading' a book that she was holding *upside down* (... genius), who waved goodbye to Ginevra as she left before looking up the steps to Tom, one eyebrow slightly lifted.

Subtle.

He shut the door on her.

I /love Eleanor Fionn. She worked it out way earlier than Ginny did, and she's so unsubtle that it's great. Well, please review and tell me what you think!

Heart, me.

Note: storm-brain, can you please just give me the link for the trailer? Maybe put spaces between each character or something. When I search on Youtube, it doesn't come up. :(Thanks!!

A Thousand Colours

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: Someone panicked when they remembered what happened in this chapter. Not sure why. It's not that bad. It's mostly just fluffy. O.o Either way, here it is. I've found so many songs lately that suit Tom so much at very different points of the fic. Like when she leaves, and he never tells her he loves her – *if I could do it over, I would trade, give away, all the words, that I saved, in my heart that I left unspoken*. MERGH. It makes me all sad inside. Even though we all know that it gets better after that. Oh, I'm going to *hate* writing that part! It's just going to be so angsty. I can handle Ginny-angst, but Tom-angst will make me cry buckets.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Twenty-Three: A Thousand Colours

Ginevra grinned. "Same to you." She held up the green stone, and then, with one final chirped, "See you", she skipped away down the stairs. "Hey!" sounded from the bottom of the stairs.

Tom moved to the door, pulled it open, and looked down the stairs. Conveniently and very coincidentally sitting at the bottom of them was Fionn, who waved goodbye to Ginevra as she left before looking up the steps to Tom, one eyebrow slightly lifted. He shut the door on her.

Come up to meet you

Tell you I'm sorry

You don't know how lovely you are

When Tom woke up, he felt like he was dying, slowly, from a horrible disease. It was just like it had been yesterday, only so much worse. He rolled over, stuffed his face into his pillow with a groan, and pulled his quilt over his head.

He lay like that for a very long time, not moving, barely breathing, until a soft knock came on his door.

" *Wha' ?*" he grumbled, his voice muffled by the pillow.

"You skipped breakfast," said the disapproving voice of Fionn.

"Go 'way..." he muttered.

"Are you okay?"

"M'fine."

"Well, you're not talking like a dictionary, so you're obviously not."

I don't talk like a dictionary.

" *Go – 'way .*"

"Do you not feel well?"

" *Fionn . Ge'lost.*" He rolled onto his back and buried the back of his head in his mattress. "'Il be down f'r the meetin'..." That gave him fifteen minutes of feeling sick before he was forced to move.

However, fifteen minutes passed, then twenty, but he still felt like he was going to vomit if he moved. Faintly, he heard a voice say, "Sorry I'm late – oh. Has the meeting not started yet?" He recognised that voice. He wanted to see her... but he couldn't move... "Where's Riddle?"

Well, that's the first person whose cared... or even noticed...

"In his room," Tom heard Fionn reply.

Suddenly, an overwhelming pain gripped his stomach as the voices started up in his head... for no reason.

Stop it...

He struggled to stay himself, which wasn't made easier by being weakened by sickness. It wasn't fair. He caught some horrible disease, and his stupid alter-ego tries to possess him. It was hardly good sportsmanship. He didn't really have a chance.

The next thing that he heard was Swithin shouting.

"Jack, sit down now!" Fionn snapped.

" *None* of us 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!" Swithin yelled.

No... go away...

"No!" he heard Ginevra cry out, and then the stomp of someone coming up the stairs.

"JACK!"

As fast as he could, Tom got out of bed. His head lurched, and he wanted to be sick.

Then his door was blown off its frame.

Anger fizzed through Tom like electricity. " *Get the bloody hell out of my bedroom !*"

"You get your lazy arse down there! None of us want to be here, but-" Swithin sounded like he was going to say his whole speech about having important things to do again.

Blood murder kill-

" *Get – OUT !*" Tom roared, pointing at the empty space in the doorway where his door had been before some idiot sixth-year smashed it down.

"No! I'm not going to-" Swithin abruptly stopped, and his eyes focused on... a large toy beaver sitting on Tom's desk. Dread sank through him. *Crap*. Swithin laughed. "What the hell is that?"

" *Get out now*. " Tom's voice was loaded with lethal poison in every syllable.

"Okay, I'll get out... I'm going... REEVE, CATCH!" Swithin yelled, and in a movement sported by only Quidditch players, so swift that there was nothing Tom could do but watch, he snatched the beaver up and hurled it down the stairs.

Laughing maniacally, Swithin hurried down the stairs.

"Swithin, where the *hell* did you get this?" Reeve said disbelievingly.

Tom closed his eyes in horror, shoving his hands backwards through his hair. For a moment he just stood there, unable to believe his bad luck – then he stormed down the staircase.

"Hey, what's that?" A pause. Something being unfolded. " *Merry Christmas, Tom !*"

He stopped dead, a few steps from the bottom of the stairs. He was still in the shadows, though Fionn could apparently see his silhouette. She gave him an apologetic cringe. He pretended he hadn't seen; he didn't want her sympathy.

" *Remember to shave! Tsk tsk!* " Reeve was in stitches. Even Fionn, previously on his side, was biting her lip to hold back a snicker.

"Who the hell is it from?" Brown asked.

NO-

Reeve read the last part of the note, and his eyes widened.

"ENOUGH!" Tom snarled, gathering the courage to emerge from the stairwell. He snatched the two items away – tore the parchment in two, and threw the stupid beaver at the wall.

Too late though.

" *Ginny ?*" Reeve gasped incredulously.

Tom couldn't look at her, though everyone else did the job for him. He stared at the floor without breathing until finally Fionn stood up and said firmly, "This meeting has just been adjourned."

Ginevra grabbed her bag and immediately fled the room, leaving a wake of an awkward silence behind her. The other Prefects followed her example, though not quite as dramatically.

Tom stood still, looking at the wooden floorboards of the Head common room. Then he lifted his eyes to glare at Fionn.

"I tried to stop him," said Fionn pleadingly. "I'm sorry."

You had to mention that I was in my room, refusing to come down, didn't you?

Too annoyed and humiliated for words, Tom pushed past her, moving quickly up to his bedroom. He headed back to bed, but stopped halfway across the room. Guilt was hurting him in the bottom of his stomach, and, with an irritated sigh at how pathetic he was, he grabbed his cloak from the back of his door and went to find Ginevra.

Fishing his wand out of his pocket, he laid it flat on his palm, and non-verbally cast a spell to locate her. It spun across his palm, skimming the tops of his fingers, and then stopped, pointing down the corridor.

He followed its tip to find her, and found himself some five minutes later standing in front of a locked door. Not bothering to ask if she was in there, he knocked gently on the wood.

No-one answered.

Weary, and feeling more sick than ever, Tom gave a small sigh. "Open the door, Peregrine."

Still no-one replied. Tom began to wonder if she was even in there. He unlocked the door with a flick of his wand, and slipped through. She was, indeed, in there, and ignoring him; curled up on the floor by the teacher's desk in this abandoned classroom, hiding her face in her knees.

"What do *you* want?" she said crossly, her voice twisted quietly by her arms in front of her face.

Disregarding what she'd said, Tom sat heavily on a nearby table and looked at his hands. "Peregrine," he started quietly, "I-"

"Don't you *dare* tell me how embarrassed you are."

"Peregrine, don't act like this doesn't affect me, too," he snapped in reply, taking out his wounded pride on her. "I'm not supposed to *be* that person!"

"What person?" Her voice was ice.

He stood up, wanting to leave. He regretted coming. This whole conversation was stupid. "The one with guitars and stupid poems – and a giant *beaver* , for God's sake!"

Suddenly she was leaping to her feet, absolute rage scarring the most beautiful eyes. "I'm sorry!" she yelled. "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!* "

An unfamiliar pain stung through Tom's chest. She wasn't supposed to take it that way – not at all. *He* was stupid. His embarrassment was stupid, and his reputation was stupid as well... though it didn't mean that he was going to drop either.

As she whirled away, grabbed her schoolbag and began to disappear, slipping through his fingers, he reached out and grabbed her wrist, pulling her back. He hadn't, however, accounted for her clumsiness; she stumbled, and ended up a lot closer to him than he originally intended.

WHOA-

"I did not mean it like that," Tom said, but his voice was slightly strangled due to her close proximity. He breathed slowly, deeply, building up his immune system against the best disease. Her.

She wouldn't look up at him.

Why was everything so difficult? She had no idea about so many things. Like the voice in the back of his head, mostly soft enough for him to tune out, sometimes too strong to get rid of, always whispering things... whispering urges of killing her. She had no idea about how he, reluctantly, depended on her. She had no idea how those two factors clashed terribly and sometimes even caused him pain.

"Pere-" He sighed. "Ginevra."

The redhead looked up at him, a faint shimmer in her hazel eyes, a soft starting glow of tears. She took a deep breath, struggling to exhale, and then, when she did, it was in a sob –

And she threw her arms around him.

Tom tensed, his eyes closing, his breath not making its way out of his lungs due to the warmth infiltrating through his robes, the apples' scent filling his head, the tangled hair brushing his jaw and throat.

Maybe if he stayed perfectly still, she'd get off sooner or later. Yet the thing was that, deep down, he never wanted her to let go. Hesitantly, though, he put his hands on her back, ignoring the part of him that wanted to hug her back even more tightly than she was hugging him, and said, "Peregrine. *Peregrine* ."

"Sorry," she muttered, letting go of him abruptly and stepping back, leaving him with only the warmth in his hands from their brief contact with her.

There was a short silence. Though his eyes were closed and he couldn't know for sure, Tom fairly sure that Ginevra was looking at him, and he felt worry in her eyes.

Don't worry.

"Riddle – Tom – are you... are you alright?"

He was absolutely exhausted, and he still felt like death. However, his opinion was that if he was well enough to go and find Ginevra, then he was well enough to stay around after he found her.

Tired to the point of falling asleep standing, Tom tipped his head back slightly before looking down at Ginevra with barely-open eyes and mumbling, "Fine..."

She stepped slightly closer to him again. He was too close to the edge of fainting or being sick to be dizzied by her closeness, and all that he could was quietly watch the thousand colours in her eyes, wondering how it was possible that he could be in so much pain because of her, and yet could be so lucky as to have her to cause his pain.

"D'you want a hug?" she asked softly.

Even though it was clearly a joke, Tom help but sigh on the inside. *More than anything.* He didn't voice this aloud. He didn't think that he

had the strength to say anything more... and he never would have admitted the truth anyway.

It was because of this that as she gently put her arms around him and held onto him, he couldn't help but think that he was the luckiest man in the world.

Awww. Ginny should become a nurse. :D I have this Latin song from my choir stuck in my head. It's annoying. It goes: *pleni sunt caeli et terra, Gloria tu, Gloriaaaaaa...* and I can't stop humming it. Gr. Stupid Romans and their stupid language and their stupid songs. –sigh- Well, more AdorableFluffyButMoreThanSlightlyHormoneControlled!Tom is on the way. Haha. That was a *long* word. REVIEW! OR PERISH AT THE HANDS OF JACK SWITHIN ON SUGAR!

Heart, me.

Fire

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: I couldn't decide on a title for this chapter. If you can think of a better one for it, please tell me in a review. Haha. What a great of way of forcing reviews on you. LOL. No, just kidding, but seriously, help me out here! The trailer for Rewind is up, mega thanks to storm-brain , its wonderful creator – thanks so much! Search *pop-pop-bananas* on Youtube, click on Rewind trailer. It's great, I love it! Well, I hope you like this chapter.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Twenty-Four: Fire

" D'you want a hug?" she asked softly.

Even though it was clearly a joke, Tom help but sigh on the inside. More than anything. He didn't voice this aloud. He didn't think that he had the strength to say anything more... and he never would have admitted the truth anyway. It was because of this that as she gently put her arms around him and held onto him, he couldn't help but think that he was the luckiest man in the world.

' Cause I'm on fire when you're near me

On fire when you speak

I'm on fire, burning out

With your mystery

Tired, Tom pushed through the portrait hole, into his common room. To his irritation, Fionn was hosting a New Year's Eve party on the sofas there with her closest idiot companions, Adel, Corgan, and North. He glanced at the four of them before deciding that the best option would be just to leave as quickly as possible.

"Hey, Riddle," North chirped brightly, fluttering her eyelashes at him. "Want to join our party?" She held up an empty Butterbeer bottle and giggled maniacally. "Guess what game we're gonna play!"

He ignored her, and continued making his way to the stairwell where his sanctuary waited.

"Don't be stupid," chided Adel. "He won't wanna play with us. He's too *Coolsville* for that!"

"Plus, he's got Peregrine and everything," Corgan said melodramatically, clutching her heart.

Tom stopped dead at the bottom of the stairs, his back still turned to the tipsy Head Girl and her equally inebriated friends.

"*Lily*," Fionn hissed, and there was a soft noise: *thump* -"ow" of someone subtly kicking someone else in the shin. "*Shut up* !"

"Oops," Corgan cringed.

Tom spun back to face them, his eyes, narrowed to furious slits, flashing across each guilty face. No-one spoke; North, Adel and Corgan merely squirmed under the microscan intensity of his death-stare.

"Fionn," he finally ground out. "A word?"

"Nah, I'm okay, really-"

"*It wasn't a request* ."

He was already in a bad mood – he hadn't fully recovered from his mysterious sickness, the voices were being particularly annoying, there were feet on display in his common room, and now *this* . Breathing deeply and concentrating on not changing personalities was difficult, at best.

" *Pleas e* , Tom." Fionn rolled her blue eyes. "It's not like it wasn't blindingly obvious."

"I – do – not – I-"

Kill... it started off quiet.

"Why don't you just tell her?"

" *Because I don't like her the way that you insist* ," he snapped. "How about that?"

Kill... getting louder.

"Fine. Put it this way." Fionn stood up and squared her shoulders off him threateningly. "You tell her, or I do."

Tom's jaw tightened with the glare that contorted his face with the darkest face. " *You... would... not... dare ...* " he growled, his voice barely audible, and yet ringing with poison.

"So it's settled, then," Fionn clarified, rocking back on her heels, smug with triumph. "I keep my friends reined in and quiet, and you tell her that you fancy her face off. If, within a month, she doesn't know how you pitifully adore her, then I let my friends loose."

Pitifully adore her?

Tom whirled away, each of his footsteps up the stairs to his dormitory echoing with anger. The fists that his hands clenched in drew thin lines of blood; he slammed the door behind him, breathing laboured.

"Silencio," he barked at the door.

Kill...

He tried to imagine Ginevra's reaction.

" I happen to have feelings for you far stronger than was ever intended." An awkward way of putting it. Standing there stupidly, waiting.

" Oh!" Embarrassment. Maybe she'd try not to hurt his feelings, perfect as she was. "Well. Er. Thanks." She'd try to think of how to phrase the nicest way of saying that she hated him. "I'm really sorry, but..."

With a snarl of unnatural rage building up inside him like a trapped explosion, he kicked the wall, pain firing through his toe, fuelling the fury.

No. Stop it.

He set his hands on his knees, doubling over, and focused on breathing slowly, calming down. Breathing. Just breathing. Nothing else mattered. Only when he was certain that he was okay did he straighten up.

He would not think of Ginevra or Fionn for the rest of evening, he decided.

Tom kicked off his heavy school-shoes and, after a moment of standing idly in the middle of his dormitory listening to the ongoing rain against his window, moved through to the bathroom for a shower.

Fifteen minutes later, he emerged, scratching his head and mussing his damp hair, now sticking up in unruly clumps on his head. He retrieved his schoolbag from where he'd thrown it, onto his armchair, before he had headed down to dinner. He looped one hand through its strap and tugged it to his desk, dumping it on his desk and

determinedly ignoring the smell of apples that was radiating from it since it had been on the armchair.

As he picked up his quill to scratch his name neatly at the top of a roll of parchment, he couldn't help but reflect that he was choosing to do homework instead of attend one of the many New Year's Eve parties currently being held. He might as well have ' *misanthropist* ' stamped on his head.

Still, he mused as a loud crash came from the common room below, followed by a shriek, *I would only attend one of Fionn's parties while hanging from a noose.*

His memory flashed back upon what she'd said to him minutes previously, but he shut those thoughts down and instead focused on his History of Magic essay.

It was a good hour and a half before he dotted the final full-stop on his parchment, and rolled it up in his schoolbag for the next day's classes. The only sound from Fionn and her friends downstairs was the occasional manic giggle, or a faint hiccough.

He pushed his chair back and stood, stretching slightly as he looked around the room. He itched the back of his foot through one sock, wistfully thinking of his library book, which he'd left downstairs in the common room. However, he would *not* be venturing down into a room of drunk girls with bare feet, especially not when he was dressed only in his school shirt and trousers.

Glancing around the room, Tom's dark eyes landed on the locked left-hand drawer of his desk. He didn't need to retrieve the key from under his bed to open it to check what was inside. He remembered.

" If, within a month, she doesn't know how you pitifully adore her , then I let my friends loose."

His jaw tightened. He didn't like his personal project anymore.

" It's not like it wasn't blindingly obvious ."

Maybe Ginevra already knew. Maybe she was hoping that, pathetic as he was, he would plan never to tell her, and therefore, by never bringing it up, she would never be put in an awkward position.

Or maybe... maybe she knew... and the beaver, the smiles, the caring, the hugs - were a subtle way of saying that she felt the same.

Everything came rushing back.

" Aww," Yaxley cooed, translating Tom's words in exactly the way that he had feared. "Riddle's in love..." He fluttered his eyelashes mockingly, but what was worse was when he snorted and sneered, "Don't kid yourself that she'd ever want anyone like you ."

He sucked in his breath from between his teeth.

Kill...

No. I'm supposed to be calming down. Breathe.

And yet this didn't stop from stalking across the room to his robes, retrieving his wand from the pocket, Summoning the key from under his bed, unlocking the drawer... and promptly setting on fire every shred of curled, scratched parchment within it.

Kill... rip... KILL...

He felt no remorse as he watched every word burn. She would never know. Let Fionn tell her. She wouldn't believe any of it. She thought that she knew him. She didn't. And because of it, she would never even begin to comprehend that Fionn spoke truth.

She would never know.

Kill... KILL... tear...

Breathing was becoming harder. No. *Stop it*. He was getting *rid* of his feelings... so why was this... *happening*?

PAIN-

NO-

Tom could barely breathe. He folded his arms across his stomach, clinging to each forearm desperately, letting the pain of a thousand unconsciously self-etched scars on the left try to bring him back. The fire in his desk drawer danced higher, higher, laughing at his pain...

KILL...

No... stop it... he could feel his pupils dilating, turning darker... he gripped one of the posts of his bed, digging his fingernails into the expensive wood, gasping for air as he started slipping under...

I... will... KILL ...

Stumbled – fell – on his knees – couldn't breathe – couldn't see – clawing – *no* – pain – head spinning – couldn't *breathe* – *stop it* – PAIN –

He could hear himself destroying things, shaking, collapsing, something burning, the nauseating smell of his previously-controlled flames... attacking the surface of his desk...

NO... vision fading out... blood pooling on his arm...

Kill...

Darkness.

"...TOM!"

... *Hm...?* In a very deep pool of water... struggling to the surface... pain... light filtering through his heavy eyelids... slowly... waking

up...

"Tom – Riddle – Tom, can you hear me?"

Yes... he tried to speak, but it wasn't working... eyes hurting... better just to sleep... but the floor was cold... didn't like it... wanted his dormitory...

"Er. Wake up. Wake up... now!" Someone rambling stupidly. Vaguely recognised as Ginevra. "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..." he mumbled blearily... so damn tired... wanted to sleep... stupid alter-ego... middle of the night...

"Well, you're being sarcastic, that's good." Ginevra sighed heavily. She sounded relieved. *She cares.*

"That was hardly sarcasm..." he muttered, coughing a cough that scratched his throat raw. He dragged himself into a sitting-upright position and forced his eyes open. It didn't make much difference, due to the dark, he noted as he surveyed the Chamber of Secrets...

The Chamber of Secrets.

His eyes focused on Ginevra in front of him. "How did you get in?" he demanded of her... "And-" he abruptly noticed that she was absolutely saturated with water, dripping on the already-wet stone floor. "-why are you wet?" He also became aware that her thin school shirt was now extremely transparent.

His eyebrows lifted slightly.

"You left the door open," she told him, snapping his attention back to her face – she didn't seem to have notice what he'd been looking at – at least, he hoped she hadn't.

Then what she'd actually *said* sunk in.

WHAT? Panic rushed through his head. *Anyone could have come down here. Anyone could have found me. Then they'd know... everything . They'd know that I was the Heir of Slytherin. They'd know that I was the one who killed Myrtle. They'd know what I am...* Then he calmed down, realising that no-one *had* found him, except Ginevra, but that was okay. He didn't need to be alarmed. "Did anyone notice?" He was fairly certain that no-one would have, but needed to verify just in case.

A smirk stretched her lips. "It's midnight," she pointed out. "Did you expect anyone to?" Then, the smirk disappeared in place of a frown. "You know, for someone who was just knocked out and had their arm slashed open, you seem rather casual."

"The surprise this life holds," he muttered darkly. He didn't want to talk any further about it, should she remain inquisitive about his nonchalance; he prepared to stand up, but only then saw his attire.

He wasn't fully dressed, so to speak.

Dread sank through him. ...Perhaps if he didn't mention it, then she wouldn't notice.

"Come on, then," she said brightly, standing easily. She held out a hand to him. "Up you get."

Tom wasn't totally sure that she could take his weight without dropping him, which wouldn't help his feeling of sickness. Nonetheless, he reached up, folding his hand over hers, and let her pull him onto his feet.

"D'you need help walking?"

His eyes flashed down again. He wasn't wearing shoes... or a jumper... or a belt... or robes... or a tie... and he didn't like it. He thought of her steadying him as he walked, probably holding onto him. "No," he refused, and began to walk by himself, despite the stinging pain each step caused him – and he stumbled.

"Let me try again – d'you need help walking?" The amusement in Ginevra's voice was apparent as she walked easily beside him.

He clenched his teeth together. "No." He took another step, and that was when he fell.

Today is not my day , he only had time to think as the stone floor rushed up to meet him, and then Ginevra's shoulder appeared in front of him to support him. Using it to prevent himself from probably smashing his skull out on the floor, Tom dragged himself slowly to a standing position.

" *Merlin* , you're stubborn!" she said incredulously, throwing her small hands up in the air. "Look, you're going to hurt yourself. Just let me help you."

He opened his mouth to deny her offer again, but before even a sound came out, she had twined an arm around his waist.

Tom jerked sideways as though he'd been burned, the sensation extremely similar – more than a million volts coursing through his side.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

Don't say don't say don't panic , he told himself, struggling to breathe. *Don't say it and maybe she won't notice but she isn't letting go make her let go she's still holding on can't breathe can't breathe don't panic-*

"Is your side hurt? What?" Though he wouldn't look down at her, he could hear the concern in her voice. *Damnit* , and he was trying so hard to destroy everything he felt for her... and there she went, simply setting it all ablaze, stronger than ever. "Tom – what's *wrong* ?"

Maybe if he told her, she would let go. His face was very hot, and he tried frantically to think of an escape route which would involve *not*

telling her – but it was difficult to think at all, what with her arm wrapped snugly around the small of his back, her side pressed to his, the damp of her shirt slowly soaking through his.

Finally, he muttered, "I'm not dressed."

In disbelief, she stared at him for along time, and then began to laugh. "You're not *serious*?" she giggled, glancing over what he was wearing. This made him extremely uncomfortable – even more so than he had been to start with. Then, seeing from his awkward expression that he was, Ginevra said, "Tom, all that you're missing is your outer robes and your shoes! You're hardly naked."

Heat rushed up to his face, as her last three words had been accompanied to his brain with a series of rather *intimate* images.

The things that happen in bedrooms...

Or in the Chamber of Secrets?

He doubted it.

"Now, come on. We should go." She gave a slight tug on his waist, and reluctantly he let her help him through the Chamber of Secrets, her gait slowed to the pace of his unusually small steps, echoing quietly through the dark, damp room.

As they walked, Tom felt his strength coming back slowly, and he found that he needed to lean less on Ginevra, though he didn't move away completely. That would just be stupid – to refuse *this*. Near the top of the stairs up to the library, Tom saw that the entrance, which she had claimed was open, was not.

"The door is closed."

"Well done," she said sarcastically, opening it. "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."

Tom smirked. Imagine her, trying to murder him and hide him in the Chamber of Secrets.

In actuality, it would be in other way around.

The smirk slipped from his face.

"We have to hurry now," she informed him, glancing around in the library, her voice a hushed whisper. "Are you okay for hurrying?"

"I don't need to hurry," he said, smugly proud of the powers that his Headship gave him. "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... You were saying?"

The smirk that crowned her triumph of the dispute was met by a scowl. He didn't like being wrong. He didn't answer her.

The next words exchanged between them were five minutes later, stopping outside the portrait of a half-asleep Robin the Rich; Ginevra sighed, and stepped away from him, her arm falling away from his waist. The emptiness that the lack of her warm arm left behind almost hurt. She looked up at him.

"Well, our interesting little journey ends here. I'll see you tomorrow. Or, more accurately," she noted, "today..." She gestured down the hallway at a clock which spoke one-thirty in the morning.

"True." He took a deep breath, considering everything that had happened this evening. Including what Fionn had said. Maybe... maybe it would be okay. Maybe...

He opened his mouth, the words, 'there's something I have to tell you' prepared. He only managed the *th* and then it morphed into an

uncertain, "Thank you, Peregrine."

"Any time," she teased, seeming not to have noticed the unwieldy start to his sentence. "That's my job – hauling bloody Head Boys up from underground rooms that aren't supposed to exist?" She grinned. "Oh yeah."

Such subtlety with the Hogwarts secrets... no-one else would have said it. He mentally tutted. "Very well, then," he said. "Goodnight." He turned to Robin the Rich, who was sleepily rubbing his eyes and looking very grumpy. " *Condolesam.* "

"Took you long enough." Robin the Rich swung the painting forwards to admit him.

Tom stepped awkwardly through the portrait hole, wincing at the pain that fired through his arm as it moved slightly. Looking into the common room, he saw that, luckily, Fionn and her idiot friends were all fast asleep on the sofas – Corgan sprawled out on the floor, probably passed out as opposed to sleeping –

"Oh, and Tom?"

He turned his head back slightly towards her to show that he was listening to what she was saying.

"Happy 1959," her voice said happily from behind him.

New Year's Eve. A new beginning. A new chance.

Never a better time to tell her.

On the spur of the moment, he spun back towards the portrait hole, dragging in the deep breath that he would need to keep him going once he blurted out his feelings-

She was gone.

He exhaled his drawn breath in a short burst, staring out into the corridor. He couldn't distinguish which was the stronger emotion, the relief or the disappointment. Either way, he watched the painting close back over the entrance, and then moved back up to his dormitory.

The state of his usually-meticulous bedroom was astonishing. The lower half of the desk was burnt by fire; the few intact remains of parchment from his thousand-stock collection of foolish poems were torn and scattered across the floor. Blood was pooling on the floorboards. Then his gaze landed on the shards of pale wood and steel strings that had, until a few hours ago... been his guitar.

A sharp sigh tore out of him.

It didn't matter that much, he knew. It was a cheap guitar, bound to break sometime soon anyway; he could repair it easily by magic anyway. Yet he found himself making plans of how, once fixed, it would be best to sell it – he would need as much money as he could get when he left school, with no occupation planned.

Grabbing his wand from his robes pockets on the back of the door, he began to clean up, and then, once satisfied, went to scrub the blood, dirt and slime from his skin.

So damn tired...

He stumbled towards his bed, pushing a hand backwards through his tangled dark hair. He was setting his wand down on his bedside table when realisation struck him, and he straightened up in surprise.

She called me Tom.

Haha. He's so stupid. It took him ages to work out. Ooh, Fionn is forcing him to tell her... ooooooh... what will happen now? – coughcough- Well, I don't know, and *you* don't know, so we're just going to have to find out! XD Please review!

Heart, me.

Black Hole

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: New obsession for me – *Mr. Brightside* by The Killers . I love the official music video, it's really weird, but somehow the way that the guy singing (I can never remember his name...) does these tiny actions that reminds me of Tom, like secretly watching the girl he likes with her boyfriend when she's not paying attention, like when he's holding his head and going, *it was only a kiss* . It's perfect for this chapter.

You've already read the majority of this chapter, but, like the Yule Ball chapter, it's been edited, and there's an add-on at the end, because this is two chapters together, instead of just the one that I posted in Rewind. I hope you like it...!

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Twenty-Five: Black Hole

On the spur of the moment, he spun back towards the portrait hole, dragging in the deep breath that he would need to keep him going once he blurted out his feelings- She was gone. He exhaled his drawn breath in a short burst, staring out into the corridor. He couldn't distinguish which was the stronger emotion, the relief or the disappointment. Either way, he watched the painting close back over the entrance, and then moved back up to his dormitory.

He stumbled towards his bed, pushing a hand backwards through his tangled dark hair. He was setting his wand down on his bedside table when realisation struck him, and he straightened up in surprise. She called me Tom.

It was only a kiss

How did it end up like this

It was only a kiss

It was only a kiss

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 on New Year's Eve; his new book from the library - which he had wanted to read earlier but had been unable to due to the fact that it had been, for a while, in the common room, which had been occupied by Fionn - 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? Especially after what she'd said on New Year's Eve...

His jaw tightened.

Well, Fionn, you'll be de- lighted to know that I've already tried to tell her... twice .

The sigh that he gave next was short and inaudible.

' Tried' being the operative word.

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.*

A memory of another voice - ' *oh, and Tom?* ' – hit him, but he ignored that. 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.

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... if it's not NEWT year, how dangerous could it be?

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-"

His sentence stopped, as he was distracted by a blur of scarlet in his range of vision. It was probably better that he had stopped speaking anyway, as a few seconds later, 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 huge hazel eyes glowing in his line of vision, so overwhelmingly close that he stopped breathing, *in fact, I think it's Ginevra*.

-and then crushed his lips underneath her own.

Tom's eyes widened as he had a split-second to grasp what was happening.

Then his logical 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.

Frozen. 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..."

Tom stared forwards.

"Er. Mr. Riddle, are you alright?"

A tiny voice of consciousness and reality woke up in Tom's brain.

He's talking to you , it chided.

"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.

It took him a while to find the door-handle, and then a while still to close the door successfully.

For a few minutes, he stood on the other side of the door to Ginevra. Just standing there. Staring at the wall. Dazed.

What exactly just happened?

The intelligent part of his brain that didn't get confused by girls (or at least, not too badly) kicked into action, and coming up with a prompt response for him.

Ginevra just kissed you.

He sucked in a gasp, his eyes widened times a hundred, he had to lean against the wall to stop himself falling over. He struggled 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... maybe she felt something... maybe forgot to breathe sometimes... maybe went numb sometimes...

Don't be ridiculous.

Tom stared at the wall where his hand was leaning. Slowly, reality was sinking in.

She kissed me.

He abruptly found that his head felt very dizzy. His first kiss. Ginevra.

She kissed me.

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 a very long time, Tom went bright red, and then, his brain still dead, his muscles numb, and his lips stinging, he walked away as though absolutely nothing had happened.

And yet as he walked away, he still catalogued it as the best three seconds of his life so far.

A moment later, students began to emerge from various classrooms on that corridor. Foreseeing the mockery that would come if he stayed still, he hurried down the corridor, quickly slipped behind a tapestry of a beribboned little girl and lurked silently in the corridor behind, having nothing to do, but still unwilling to leave.

Even though he told himself very firmly that this was *not* was he was going, he sub-consciously knew that he was waiting for Ginevra.

Waiting for her reaction.

It was a few minutes (in which time someone entered the corridor and looked at him strangely; he ignored them, and they continued on their way) before he knew that she'd left the classroom, as her loud, obnoxious footsteps rang out in the hallway outside.

Still, as she approached, it was a while before he could hear whatever she was saying.

Voices becoming clearer, slowly.

"Yeah." She was adamant about something, stubborn as ever. Her tone was not one of protest, it was one of *and-that's- final* . "And I think that Devin's lying to cover his own back."

Philips' voice joined in, sounding amused. "Ginny, people don't do that here. The students do, but the teachers? No."

There was a shallow *thump* , like an angry stomp, or the kicking of a wall. It reverberated into the passage where Tom stood.

"Don't worry about it," Philips continued, reassuring Ginevra. "It's probably just a big misunderstanding."

Tom frowned. *What is?*

"Hell yeah!" Ginevra exclaimed, sounding relieved that finally someone grasped what she'd been trying to say for quite some time... whatever it was. Also annoyance in her voice, that no-one else had realised in the first place. "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."

The Head Boy behind a tapestry stood silent, unseen, staring blankly forwards as those two familiar voices faded away as the distance between them grew.

His stomach was a black hole, gravity sucking in darkness.

As his head began to spin rapidly – a numb feeling in his chest like heartburn – wanting to be sick – a stab of pain through his chest - Tom turned sharply on his heel and stalked away down the corridor. His cloak flared around his ankles, his usually muted steps loud, snappish with the uncharacteristic speed and force with which he walked.

Entering the passageway on the other side of it was Fionn, who greeted him with a big smile. "Hey," she chirped, and then her face fell into a concern that he hated so much it hurt. He didn't want her sympathy. He didn't want her worry. He didn't *anyone* . "What's wro-"

He pushed past her, hitting her with his shoulder and not caring.

Tom stormed away through the castle. He didn't know in the slightest where he was going. He didn't give a damn. Somewhere. Anywhere. Somewhere where the rest of the world *wasn't* .

Especially Ginevra.

He never wanted to see her again.

Poor Tom needs a hug. Well, I know lots of fan-girly reviewers who be in a line to give you a hug, so don't worry, Tommy dearest! :D Please review, and you get to hug an angsty young Dark Lord of your choice.

Heart, me.

Last Chances

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: Hey, guess what? It was the birthday of the Tom-look-alike two days ago. He had a big badge on saying **EIGHTEEN** in orange. ... Maybe he's not that similar to Tom in personality, then. Either way, HAPPY BIRTHDAY! Sorry, this chapter hasn't been edited thoroughly, so if there are loads of typos, that's why.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Twenty-Six: Last Chances

"Hell yeah!" Ginevra exclaimed, sounding relieved that finally someone grasped what she'd been trying to say for quite some time... whatever it was. Also annoyance in her voice, that no-one else had realised in the first place. "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."

Entering the passageway on the other side of it was Fionn, who greeted him with a big smile. "Hey," she chirped, and then her face fell into a concern that he hated so much it hurt. He didn't want her sympathy. He didn't want her worry. He didn't want anyone. "What's wro-" He pushed past her, hitting her with his shoulder and not caring. Tom stormed away through the castle. He didn't know in the slightest where he was going. He didn't give a damn. Somewhere. Anywhere. Somewhere where the rest of the world wasn't. Especially Ginevra. He never wanted to see her again.

Oh, and if there's any love in me

Don't let it show

Oh, and if there's any love in me

Don't let it grow

The good thing about Hogwarts was that it was big, it was a labyrinth, and Tom Riddle knew every one of its hidden passageways. It was due to this that he found avoiding Ginevra very easy.

A single glimpse of scarlet hair – a snatch of a laughing voice – a heavy, bratty footstep – and he was gone.

There was always somewhere to escape to, which he was grateful for, as Fionn had taken to sitting on the top of the steps by his bedroom door and calling loudly through the door for him to 'grow up', 'just tell her you like her', 'come on, be a man' – the list went on. He therefore spent as little time as possible in his dormitory, choosing unreachable places to do his homework or read his books, and when he was in his bedroom, he locked and Silenced the door.

Yet, sub-consciously, Tom knew that it wouldn't last forever. There would come a time when there would be no escape; a time when she would confront him, not understanding, confused, upset by him ignoring her.

And then he'd be faced with a choice: tell her how he felt, or let her slip away.

It was a choice that he knew would tear him to pieces.

His only hope was to pray that he wouldn't have to see her for a very long time, but this time came much more quickly than he would have preferred.

On his way back to his dormitory – he had deemed it safe on Thursdays, period three, as it was a free hour for him and not for Fionn – from Arithmancy, he walked past a junction in the corridors, from one of which directions came a solitary, wandering redhead Prefect.

Swearing under his breath, Tom picked his pace up to several times faster, though still walking steadily, for all appearances calm. He swore again when he found that there were no nearby tapestries or paintings hiding secret passageways – or even crevices where he could lurk until she went past and left him behind. His best chance were the back stairs down to the fourth-floor classrooms.

Footsteps hurrying after him.

Damnit , he wasn't moving fast enough...

Nearing the stairs – maybe – *possibly* -

"Tom!"

Still desperately contemplating his chances at freedom, Tom walked on a few steps before reluctantly slowing down his rapid-fire speed of walking, and finally stopping completely.

"Tom," Ginevra repeated, her voice closer to an exhalation than a phrase, a name. She sounded... vaguely relieved. For the first time, a thing that he'd never thought possible, he hated *her* use of his first name.

As she neared him and slowed down, he immediately began walking once more. He walked much faster than she did; perhaps she'd just be left behind. However, Ginevra moved more quickly than normal, a sort of step-step-hurry- *hop* to keep up with him.

"Hey," she said cheerfully, looking up at him with a smile.

"Evening," he said shortly, his chest constricting painfully at having to talk to her, loathing how the ever-present numbness in his stomach was fading in its place now that she was here.

"Evening?" she echoed, frowning. "Silly boy, it's only-"

"Five o'clock," he said unemotionally, throwing a meaningful glance sideways at a clock on the wall, which showed five hours on its hands. Ginevra followed his glance, and saw that he was right. She didn't reply.

Together they walked down the stairs in a tense silence before she attempted to make conversation. "So, how about that Quidditch match tomorrow? Gryffindor-Ravenclaw? Should be interesting."

"Not really." His voice iced over serpent venom. "A hoard of arrogant idiots versus a hoard of know-it-all idiots, each trying to kill each other."

"Exactly!" She grinned in a mockery of pride and exultation. "Now you're starting to the whole *point* of Quidditch. It's just basically two Houses trying to kill each other, and then the two other Houses watching, cheering, and hoping that somebody gets into a fight."

It was clearly intended as a joke. Tom didn't even look at her, much less act amused to humour her. He moved swiftly down the steps, his dark eyes darker with the shadow of resentment, fixed straight ahead.

"Okay, stop it," Ginevra's voice suddenly snapped angrily from several steps behind him. He hadn't realised that she'd stopped walking. He didn't care. "What did I do?"

He came to a sharp halt halfway down the stairs. He pretended that she wasn't there, that no-one had spoken to him, but there was a dead giveaway smell of apples. He recalled against his own wishes how she'd tasted of apples, too, and his shoulders tightened in his own self-abhorrence.

"What have I done wrong now?" she demanded furiously. "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* ."

His fists clenched tightly by his sides as a shockwave of pain – anger – flashed through him. His brain hit again on his choice.

Tell her how you feel or let her slip away.

Feeling his internal organs being torn into several pieces, he forced out the words, "It's not."

"Not what?"

Tom took a short, deep breath. "It's not that." His voice was low and dark. For the first time, his gaze snapped sideways to look at her, over his shoulder slightly.

She was about two steps above him, arms folded across her stomach, the look of annoyance on her freckled face more curious, confused, troubled – than angry. The sadness in those huge eyes was the worst. It was like seeing his whole life reflected in still green water, highlighting the worst in every second.

Say it.

He stared silently up at her.

Ginevra, the truth is... I... I...

He exhaled heavily, having nothing else to say her. Seeing in her face that this was letting her go as he'd feared, it took him a more painful effort to turn his back on her that it should have, and continuing down the marble steps hurt more still.

"What is it, then?" asked a soft voice from several metres behind him.

Do you really want to know? He stopped again, for a few seconds actually considering *telling* her. *Do you actually want to hear how stupidly I need you?*

Tom was being stupid, he knew that. He forced himself to shake his head in a blank refusal to tell her what was going through his head, and walked away from her. The tiny dejected sigh that he heard follow him faintly down the steps reminded him quietly, *she cares* .

When the seventeen-year-old Head Boy reached his dormitory, he wrenched the door open so violently that the hook on the back where he hung his robes fell to the floor with a clatter. The slam of the door closing against dragged the hook with it and bent it out of shape.

She started to slip away and he did nothing to prevent it. He sat in a dark silence watching the sand slide through his fingers.

Since meeting on the stairs, Tom had made sure that his avoiding-Ginevra techniques had been fine-tuned to perfection. He didn't want to have to see her again, and he was pretty sure that after his aloofness to her, she wouldn't want to see him again. It was partly because of this that he had a minor spasm when he found her standing on his stairs.

He was returning from lunch, and noticed when he came into the common room that there was a sense of someone else nearby... and sense of someone that he couldn't place. Probably just Fionn in her bedroom, he had decided.

He walked through the room, manoeuvring smoothly past the crowded furniture-

Knock-knock-knock . "Tom?"

In alarm, his hand twitched violently sideways and knocked over a large vase full of some of the flowers that Fionn insisted on having placed everywhere. With a muttered, "*damn !*" he lunged forwards and caught it before it hit the floor and alerted Ginevra that he was here.

"Well, I've probably just cemented all reason for you not coming to answer the door – *oh great, it's Peregrine* ," her voice continued as he replaced the vase on the table. "Tom, can you come out? I know you're in there."

Well, I'm not .

He stood blankly in the middle of the common room, not quite sure what to do – glanced between the bottom of his stairs, the portrait hole, the bottom of the stairs, the portrait hole again. He wanted to go to his dormitory, but there happened to be a distinctly Ginevra-shaped obstruction in the way of *that* idea. He had nowhere else to go, and he didn't want to go anywhere else.

It was *mainly* for this reason that he chose not to leave the Head common room straight back the way he had come, but there was also a notion that this was his last chance... and despite everything that had happened, he was willing to hurt himself again a thousand times over just to hold onto it.

"Please answer the door! I even have a big speech prepared, but it's not going to work if I have to say it to a door." *Knock-knock-knock* .
"Hello?" *Knock-knock*. She sighed. "Fine."

Tom moved a few steps forwards in a worried curiosity. Was he too late?

"I'm sorry."

He stopped again, drawing his head back in surprise.

"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 that all I've done since I got here is embarrass you." She took a deep breath, her honesty hushing her voice so that it was hard of hearing. "Me passing out and having to get you to carry me... the Hogsmeade incident... me and my stupid beaver... and now this."

Tom stared at his feet. Yes, his life had been simpler before Ginevra. Quieter, yes. Less emotional, yes. Less dangerous, without a doubt. Meaningless... also, yes.

He took a few steps to the bottom of the stairwell, and then cautiously up one of the stairs.

"And I am 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." Her nervousness showed in the body language that he could see from the back of her; fidgeting with her hands, with her hair. "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."

Memories.

" Riddle, my friend, I know you better than you do."

" I didn't do anything! He bought a Sizzling Serpent!" she shouted back, laughing still. "Poor, naïve little Riddle!"

His jaw tightened.

"Except," she amended, thinking clearly along the same lines as he was, "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 point of passing out." Her voice twisted with effect of perhaps a cringe or a grimace. "That wasn't good."

Another step up. A few seconds, and then she'd be finished. She'd turn. She'd see him, be embarrassed, maybe run away. Or worse – she'd stay still for an answer. He didn't know what he would do if she did the latter.

"If you don't want to, then I – um – I get the message."

The message which he'd known he was giving out: *I don't want you*. A message which he didn't know how to take back.

"And... I am sorry, and... well. That's it really, so *please* open the door!" she said imploringly, rapping her knuckles on the door. She pushed it open a crack and peered through into the dark room. Randomly, she yelped, "There's a fire! Help me, Tom, I'm burning alive!"

Interesting. He lifted one eyebrow in incredulity, smirking at the sheer – there was no other word for it – *insanity* of this transfer student.

"I'm going to cry..." she sang through the door.

"Well, we couldn't have that, could we?" he said bemusedly.

She let out a yell of fright, jumping backwards, whirling around rapidly – he had a glimpse of her hazel eyes, multiplied by fear, his breath stopping for a second – and then she was tumbling down the stairs.

He stared in shock as she rolled down the numerous, vaguely aware that she would probably be in pain and that he she probably stop her from rolling right over him and taking him with her, but luckily she gave to a stop in front of him.

"You're supposed to be in your room," she said huffily.

"Yes, and you're *not* supposed to be on my stairs," he replied calmly. "I think you'll find it's a fair contradiction. With a smirk, he offered a hand to help her up, which she took.

Red flushed her face dark. "Er. Sorry." She faltered. "I'll just... I'll just go." In a concerned unease, she tugged at her lower lip with her teeth, and Tom was taken aback by just how strong the urge was to move swiftly down the steps, take her face in his hands and capture that lower lip with his-

"Sorry. Bye." She averted her eyes from his and carefully edged past him before hurrying away anxiously. He turned to watch her go, following her movements with his gaze.

Last chance-

Sand slipping away-

"Wait."

He closed his eyes briefly. He didn't know if he was finally doing something right. He took a deep, steadying breath, resting one hand on the banister for support. "...I heard your speech."

"Oh." The scarlet already filling her cheeks deepened in intensity. "Okay, then." She made to leave again-

"Peregrine?"

Again Ginevra spun to look up at him.

Very slowly, not sure what horrors he was agreeing to, he said, "Hogsmeade... that's tomorrow, at half past twelve, isn't it?"

"Yeah."

He nodded. "I suppose that I'll see you there, then."

Looking confused, the redhead blinked. Then grinned, as understanding hit her. "Okay."

"Peregrine-"

"Will you just let me *leave* ?" she said wearily. She reached up to push the longer section of her red fringe behind her ears, raking the shorter section out of her face even though it fell immediately back.

"Never."

"You wanted something?"

Last chance-

"Apology accepted."

Ginevra beamed. "Can I go now?"

As though it was no real bother to him whether she left now or stayed forever – *forever and a day* – Tom shrugged indifferently, and watched the spin of her scarlet hair as she skipped away before turning to finally reach the haven of his dormitory that he'd been aiming for all along.

It was strange, he mused as he moved to the bookcase to prepare his books for his next class, how perfectly happy and at ease he suddenly was now that he'd taken that last glimmer of a chance and seized it, even when he knew she was pain in its purest form.

Hm. My obsessions are forming a list. Taylor Swift, Rascal Flatts, the Killers, and the Goo Goo Dolls right now. *Interessant* . Well, please review! This was a weird chapter, I know, but still, reviews make my day.

Heart, me.

Corners

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: I swear that all of my regular reviewers have moved to Antarctica or something. Well, either way. Here's a nice chapter. The start is funny, the end is fluffy. What a nice combination. We all love suggestiveness, don't we? –wink- Try listening to *Become* by Goo Goo Dolls.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Twenty-Seven: Corners

Last chance- "Apology accepted."

Ginevra beamed. "Can I go now?"

As though it was no real bother to him whether she left now or stayed forever – forever and a day – Tom shrugged indifferently, and watched the spin of her scarlet hair as she skipped away before turning to finally reach the haven of his dormitory that he'd been aiming for all along. It was strange, he mused as he moved to the bookcase to prepare his books for his next class, how perfectly happy and at ease he suddenly was now that he'd taken that last glimmer of a chance and seized it, even when he knew she was pain in its purest form.

You're the only one I ever believed in

The answer that could never found

The moment I decided to

Let love in

Tom had forgotten how infuriating Fionn could be. During his and Ginevra's short period of not talking to each other, everything had been about apologising and oh-so-subtle hints at explaining that the reason he was ignoring her was because he ' *fancied her like whoa* '. Now, it was even worse.

"See," she said triumphantly, curled up on the sofa. He was counting a few coins out of her heart-shaped piggy-bank (he hated having to borrow money from her, but he couldn't remember where he'd put his wallet) and was therefore fully at her mercy. "Hogsmeade... eh? *Eh* ?" She cackled. "I told you it would all get better eventually."

"I fully resent having told you," he muttered, searching through the hollow orange heart for one last Sickle.

"Well, you had to, didn't you, or you'll have to let her pay for everything, and that's not being a gentleman," Fionn teased. "God forbid what would happen if you weren't *polite* ."

He ignored her.

The blonde sat up, a serious look on her face. "Tom-"

" *Riddle* ."

"Tom," she repeated, just to annoy him, and then continued, "now, listen very closely to me. When we went into Hogsmeade last time, you saw The Three Broomsticks, right? Now, there's an alley down the side of it which leads to a little fountain, which can be very romantic if you play it right, so I recommend that you make use of the bench provided – or you can stand up, I'm not bothered, but she's kind of short, so it might be easier to sit down – and just sha-"

" *Fionn* ," he growled, interrupting her. He then proceeded to tell her, in the most colourful language he knew, to go and get intimate with Dumbledore.

"Hey!" she reprimanded. "I don't *have* to give you money, you know."

He narrowed his eyes balefully at her.

"As I was saying – well, yeah, I s'pose that maybe that's taking it a bit too far, because it *is* snowing, after all, and it would be kind of awkward for you to get frozen together-"

" *Fionn, shut up* ."

"-so I need you to concentrate on what I'm saying – *wait until you get back to the castle* !" Fionn said firmly. "I don't care how perfect the moment is, *I'm* not thawing her legs away from your-" She ducked expertly, and a well-aimed vase flew over her head before – *crash* - smashing against the wall. "Temper, temper."

He turned his back on her, and left the common room – Fionn determinedly trilled, " *Buy her some flowers* !" after him before the painting of Robin the Rich swung shut behind him.

Tom rolled his eyes as he walked down the stairs. He had never met anyone as untiringly suggestive as Eleanor Fionn in all his life. While he was begrudgingly grateful for the borrowed money, he could have easily done without the pep-talk.

I hope I'm not late , he thought, noting the slight crowd of students in the Entrance Hall as he came into the grand Hogwarts lobby. His eyes flickered quickly from face to face until he found the figure of a short girl with shiny red hair in a ponytail. She was scouring the crush in front of her for him, eyebrows furrowed in dogged concentration.

"Hello," he said simply, once behind her.

Ginevra shrieked loudly, spinning to face him, eyes wide, clapping her hands to her heart. " *Jesus* , Tom!" she yelped. "What is it with you and creeping out of dark places to scare me?"

A smirk twisted his lips. "Are you planning on leaving, or is standing in a corner all I am to expect?" he asked of her, tilting his head slightly in mocking question.

"Ha-ha-ha," she retorted sardonically. "I see you've brightened up."

He raised an eyebrow at her. " *Bright* is not an adjective most commonly used to describe my attitude."

"Well, neither is *beaver* ."

"That's not an adjective."

The redhead scowled. "Silence, fool."

Together they left for the carriages. They had no choice but to share with some giddy third-year girls, which Tom did not appreciate. Still, he was glad for other people (even it was stupid third-years) because his mind kept flashing back to Fionn's pep-talk, and he didn't want to be alone with Ginevra.

However, he quickly decided that he would have preferred to risk being alone with her, as a memory of '*I think that every girl has, at some point, fancied him* ' came back to him when one of the third-year took advantage of a bump in the road, and threw herself into his lap.

Ginevra burst out laughing; his responsive scowl made her only laugh harder and louder. Yet she came to his rescue with saying loudly, "Say, Tom, when are you going to propose to Nancy?"

What? was his first thought, not understanding. Then he realised what she meant.

"I'm not really sure," he replied coolly. "I might ask her over the summer, if I can get her father's permission first."

"You'd ask her dad first?" Ginevra echoed disbelievingly. 'How old-fashioned *are* you?'

He wasn't sure why, but Tom suddenly found himself remembering that *her* father was deceased. So any proposal of his wouldn't work. Hypothetically, of course. He wondered if it would matter to her. She didn't seem to care. He wondered if she would say yes anyway...

And then he realised that he was considering marrying his friend.

Merlin, stop it . He mentally gave himself a slap upside the head. "Middle Ages," he said in reply to her question, and then swiftly moved the topic away before he could embarrass himself, but saying, "I believe we've arrived."

The small town of Hogsmeade was frosted with snow, giving it all the appearance of gingerbread houses; the trees, decorated with tinsel of ice and hangings of melting icicles as they tried to escape approaching spring.

The third-years that the two Slytherins shared the carriage with jumped out before it had even come to a stop, and Ginevra yelled, "HAH!" after them, slamming the door in their startled thirteen-year-old faces.

"Was that really necessary?"

"Of course," she said, putting on a show of being highly affronted.

When the Threstrals pulling the carriage stopped, Tom ducked his head to get out, and then held the door open for Ginevra following behind him. He would have offered to take her hand to help her down from the high step as well, but was worried that then he wouldn't be able to let go afterwards.

"Thanks," she said with a dazzling split-second smile, tying her scarf. A stark contrast of snowflakes crowned her hair, white on red, innocence on blood. He couldn't help but think of the irony.

"Where to?" he asked of her.

"I'd say... Honeydukes!" she said brightly.

Tom frowned, recalling the last time he was there. He wasn't sure that he trusted – or even *liked* – a shop that sold poison disguised as sweets.

"Halt, Sir Riddle." Ginevra jumped in front of him, her voice so deep it was ridiculous. "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."

Aiobheann? It suited her.

She stuck a hand out. "Now shake my hand."

"Has anyone ever cared to inform you that you sometimes act bizarre beyond belief?" he asked her, incredulity lifting his eyebrows.

"Many times." Somehow, this didn't surprise him in the slightest. She extended her hand to him more firmly. "Now shake my hand," she repeated, the command in her voice obvious.

You're insane, he sighed, and loosely shook her hand, giving all of his attention to letting go after three seconds – no shorter, he had decided, as that would seem dismissive, and no longer, as Fionn would determine that wonderfully suggestive. He hadn't remembered how warm she always was, though, and it distracted him. He forgot to count how long he held on. Damn.

"Excellent." She grinned at him. "Now we can go to Honeydukes."

Some ten, twenty, minutes later, Tom and Ginevra pushed through the heavy door for The Three Broomsticks pub, a bell tolling shrilly to alert everyone of their entrance. A few other students in there gave the two of them curious looks, especially him, but he ignored that, and let Ginevra lead him to a table.

"Two Butterbeers, please," she said to a nearby waitress, without verifying that this was indeed what he wanted. It made no difference; he didn't even know what one of those was.

Interestedly, he observed the people around them. He saw Professor Slughorn in one corner with Professor Selene; in another corner, Brown and Coville, cuddling up. It hadn't escaped him that all of people sitting in corners were romantically-attached couples.

He and Ginevra were not sitting in a corner.

He longed to be in a corner so much that it was making his stomach sting.

"What d'you think, then?"

Ginevra's voice broke him from his wistful thinking, and he looked back at her face. "What, may I inquire, is a Butterbeer?" he asked, frowning slightly.

"Oh, don't worry," she reassured him. "Everyone drinks them. It's sort of frothy and gold-brown coloured..." Her lips twisted in concentrated thought. "It's hard to describe the taste. But it gives you a warm, fuzzy feeling."

He raised his eyebrows.

"It does!" she insisted. "It honestly does."

"I'm sure it does."

She *hmp*ed and folded her arms across her chest. "Just you wait," she told him in a manner designed to cause apprehension and worry. It didn't really work.

A waiter came to the table with two bubbly glasses of Butterbeer; Tom reached for his (well. Fionn's) money, but Ginevra was already handing two Sickles and four Knuts to him, and then the waiter was gone.

"Why did you pay?" he demanded when she turned back to face him.

She looked confused. "It's not free, you know."

"Not that – I'm not stupid." He let out a short exhalation of annoyance. "I mean, why did *you* pay for *me* ?"

"Er." She frowned. "I thought I was being nice."

Tom thought of how he'd had to borrow money from Fionn; how if had been able to find *his* money, it might not have been enough to afford it anyway. "I'm not a charity." He lowered his head. He could imagine Fionn's reaction now – '*you let her pay?!*'

It was more a question of his shame, though. No matter what he reminded himself (*her family was killed in front of, she was taken away from her friends, she doesn't have a single person outside of this school left to care for her*), there was still a sickening jealousy in the pit of stomach.

At least it wasn't their choice to leave her.

At least they wanted her.

"I never said you were," Ginevra said, bringing him back to reality. "It's not charity – it's buying your friend a drink out of kindness. If you don't want it, *I'll* have it."

Automatically, he held his glass protectively away from her.

"Just drink it," she sighed resignedly, taking a drink from her own glass.

Tom watched her as she drank some of the Butterbeer... nothing seemed to be happening to her. Then warily, he tried a small amount of it, aware of Ginevra watching him for his reaction.

It was warm, but not so hot that it burnt. It was like the warmth that you know that even an iota more heat and it would be too hot to drink, but for now, it's perfect. The taste was sweet, sugary, but had a tinge of being only slightly alcoholic – not enough to get drunk, however, as there were many third-years giddily drinking huge amounts of it. It made him feel... strangely happy.

Warm, perfect, happy, intoxicating... he couldn't help but reflect that it was like being close to Ginevra.

"Well?" she challenged. "Warm fuzzy feeling?"

He considered her enquiry. "...It's nice."

"I told you so!" she crowed, a little more loudly than was really required. "Warm fuzzy feeling! Warm fuzzy feeling!"

Professor Slughorn and Selene looked up at the loud noise, frowning.

Oh, go back to your stupid corner, he wanted to shout at them, most of his irritation rooted down to envy, but instead settled for a quick flash of a glare.

" *Warm – fuzzy – feeling !*" Ginevra said adamantly. "I was right! I was right, wasn't I?"

"No."

"Did it make you feel warm?"

"...Yes."

"Did it make you feel fuzzy?"

"What the hell, Ginevra? No, it did not *make me feel fuzzy* ."

"Yes, it did!"

"No, it didn't."

"Did you feel happy after you drank some?"

"...No."

"You hesitated – you *did* feel happy."

"Only slightly."

"Hah! Oh, sorry, *someone* just lost. It makes you warm and happy; that qualifies it as a warm fuzzy feeling," she said triumphantly, smirking.

"Is there a rulebook that determines what is and what isn't a 'warm fuzzy feeling'?" he said sardonically.

"Well, duh."

"Turn to page one-hundred-and-eighteen. I think you'll find that rule ninety-six counts me out of the matter," Tom said smoothly, as though there was really a warm-and-fuzzy-feeling-determining rulebook that he read often.

Ginevra stared, her jaw dropped.

"I was being sarcastic."

" *Oh !*" she exclaimed. "I was going to say, I was joking about the rulebook. And somehow I never put that down as *your* type of reading material." She took another long drink from her glass, and he followed suit. "Warm fuzzy feeling?"

"You're not going to let this go, are you?"

"Nope." She grabbed some salted peanuts from the bowl in the middle of the table, her Butterbeer finished.

Tom sighed. He might as well surrender all dignity now. He folded his arms at his wounded pride, and muttered, "Yes, I did."

"I'm sorry, what was that?" Ginevra cupped a hand around her ear and leaned across the table; he suddenly found that she was inside his personal space bubble, her head tilted to one side in this pretence just to embarrass him further, scarlet ponytail spilling over her left shoulder and brushing the surface of the table, a sun glowing in her eyes. "I didn't quite catch what you said."

He swallowed to recover himself, taking a deep breath. Then, he said irritably, "Yes, Ginevra, the Butterbeer gave me an alleged '*warm fuzzy feeling*'." He pointed an accusatory finger at her. "It will never happen again, though."

"That wasn't so hard, was it?" she asked, sitting back down in her seat and grabbing a few more peanuts from the bowl on the table before standing. "Shall we go?"

Tom drained the last of his Butterbeer, and then also stood, moving quickly through the chaos of tables and wooden chairs to follow her out of the pub.

As they walked out of The Three Broomsticks, Tom noticed the side-alley that Fionn had mentioned. He saw the fountain. He saw the bench. His imagination went into over-drive. Warmth flooded his face, and he looked away.

"Eh, it's freezing," Ginevra said, rubbing her hands rapidly across her arms and hugging herself to keep warm.

Tom hadn't noticed. He twitched from his shoulders his cloak without really thinking about it, and, gathering it up, folded it across his arm and held it out to her.

"But-"

Just take it , he thought, thinking of the uncomfortable silence that always followed those multiple tiny rejections that held an underlying meaning that she didn't seem to realise she was giving away.

He draped it around her shoulders – accidentally, his fingers brushed against the back of her neck, and he dropped the cloak onto her thin frame more clumsily than had been intended, due to the fact that a fierce shiver took off through his fingers, making it more difficult to control his hands.

Not really caring how her lack of his height caused the cloak to trail in the mud-tracked snow, he gestured with a nod down the path. *Let's go.* Obediently, she followed.

"Um." She rolled the cuffs back once, twice, three times to get them around her wrists. "Thank you, Tom."

He turned back to look at her. His eyes flickered over the colour in her face, no longer pale with complaint at cold; over the uncertain smile; over the way that, despite how long it was around her feet, her having to hold the ends up like one would a skirt, the cloak seemed to *fit* .

He smiled.

Found a new band called Boyce Avenue. It's brilliant, so talented. They do great covers of all these great songs that I adore. Well, please review!

Heart, me.

Intoxicated

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: Thank you so much for reading and reviewing and just following my fics in general, I love you all so much. For this chapter, listen to a fast but fluffy song. I recommend, *When It Rains* by Paramore . It's cute. :D I hope you like it – me thinks you will.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Twenty-Eight: Intoxicated

" Um." She rolled the cuffs back once, twice, three times to get them around her wrists. "Thank you, Tom."

He turned back to look at her. His eyes flickered over the colour in her face, no longer pale with complaint at cold; over the uncertain smile; over the way that, despite how long it was around her feet, her having to hold the ends up like one would a skirt, the cloak seemed to fit.

He smiled.

I love you

Even when I try so hard not to

Get close to you

Do you know what you do

The last of the snow had been on Tom's Hogsmeade trip with Ginevra, now that spring was showing its face upon the world. This greatly annoyed him, as he could no longer use 'it's too cold' as an excuse to huddle in his bedroom and ignore Fionn. Today the blonde Head Girl and her mindless gaggle of friends seemed intent on irritating him to death, and he had fled, perhaps fifteen minutes previously, for the safe haven that was his corner of the library.

Homework was demanding to be completed, so he pulled out the book he had borrowed a few days ago (namely, *The Complete History of Wizarding Disease*) and continued to read through it, absorbing information and writing key points down on a scrap of parchment, where he could transform these points later into written notes.

A slight rustle of clothing brought to Tom's awareness that someone was approaching. He didn't look up. A muffled footstep. Who would approach him? It wasn't the smart clack of a Professor's step, nor was it the echoing of one of Fionn's ridiculous high-heeled shoes, and that left...

"Hello, Peregrine." Tom didn't look up at her.

"How did you-" spluttered an incredulous voice in front of him, confirming that it was indeed Ginevra.

Now he lifted his gaze to hers. She had an expression on her freckled face that showed that she was cross and surprised. She was holding her school-bag strangely – he suspected that she had planned to drop it noisily on his desk.

"You're not a quiet person, Peregrine," he told her. "Don't even try."

With a small noise like an angry cat, she dumped herself in the chair opposite where he sat and began to pull various items from her bag. He watched her for a moment, watching how her hair fell untidily of her forehead, watching her eyes almost cross over in concentration, before returning to enjoy his reading, settling into his own little world-

"Anyway," said Ginevra loudly – he scowled at her for interrupting him – "where's *Peregrine* suddenly come from? Whatever happened to 'Ginevra'?"

He looked at her, his dark eyes flickering over her innocent face. Did she know that he'd, in his mind, at least, referred to her by her long, beautiful Italian name for the longest time?

Ginevra lifted her chin, self-conscious under his stare.

"Alright. Ginevra, then," he amended.

"Yay." She flashed a brilliant grin at him that, paired with the glitter of her eyes from the sunlight coming through a nearby window, left him momentarily dazzled, confusing his brain so that he could only stare at her. Then she flipped through her textbook and beginning to scrawl her untidy handwriting across a piece of parchment.

Tom looked back down at his book, but only a few seconds later, a dark-red head appeared his line of vision as Ginevra leant over the page he was reading. "Whatcha reading?"

He didn't reply; she could read it for herself.

"Spattergroit?" Oh, so she could read, then. She peered up into his face, round eyes meeting his. His breath caught at the sudden proximity she'd put them in, but he pretended that it hadn't happened. He was getting more used to this. "Rather morbid interest, don't you think?"

"It's for a History of Magic project. The history magical diseases and maladies over time." Tom held up his book, revealing the cover and the title, which backed up his sentence as excellent evidence. He silently shifted his chair slightly back. Being so close to her was distracting.

She wrinkled her nose. "Lovely." She sat down.

"It is, actually," he said, a smirk twisting at his lips as he read a caption of the miniscule text that reminded him of *someone*.

"Is that so?"

"Indeed it is. Have a listen to this extract, why don't you?" His smirk was growing in size.

She was definitely suspicious.

" *Spattergroit* ," he read. " *Tis a deadly infliction of the macroscopic anatomy-* "

"The *what* ?"

"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, trying to hide his slight annoyance. This wouldn't have the full effect if he had to explain every other word.

"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...* " He was almost grinning. This was going to be priceless. " *The first and foremost symptom is the dying skin. It becomes pockmarked and blemished with fair, light brown spots, generally accentuating the paled skin .* "

A frown puckered her forehead. "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 finished. Oh, this was fantastic.

"Hey!" Ginny cried. "That's not fair!"

"No, wait, there's more." The urge to burst out laughing was almost irrepressible. " *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!"

" *The symptom that truly affirms the state of the spattergroit present in a person's genes is stunted growth . The Inflicted may show 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 Ginevra furiously. "Give me that!"

She threw herself across the table to try and grab it. All that Tom had to do to be out of reach of her flailing arms was to rock back on two legs of his chair, and he continued. The book had only contained the first two extracts; now he was improvising. Her reaction, however, was sheer brilliance.

" *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!" Ginevra wailed, reaching out for the book. "Mean, Tom, *mean* !"

" *Also, the Inflicted soon develops a compulsive obsession for sweet food – most often, commonplace, cocoa ,*" Tom said. He could feel the grin coming out now.

"MEH!" Ginevra dropped into her chair. A pout curled her lower lip, and he startled himself at the vicious urge to lean across the table, close his eyes and - "I hate you." She began to collect her things, to leave.

"Where are you going?"

"You're horrible." She stood.

"You're not *seriously* going to run off just because a book says that you're hazardously ill, are you?" Tom asked, raising one eyebrow slightly. He was glad right now that he was able to do it. It made making fun of Ginevra so much easier.

"No, I'm leaving because you're being mean to me! Good *bye* , Mr. Riddle!" she declared.

"Come back, you idiot," said Tom bemusedly.

" *See what I mean ?*" Ginevra squealed. She swirled on her heel – a wave of sparkling hair and the smell of apples hit him – he swayed for a second - and she began to walk away.

"Ginevra..." Tom stood up. "You're being really childish..." he sang. Yes, he sang. He didn't usual sing-song his words, but here was a chance. He didn't know why this insane euphoria had come over him, but it was infectious, and it somehow all could be traced back to *her* .

" *I* am not the childish one here!" Ginevra said, spinning back.

Tom hadn't realised how much closer he'd put himself to her until she turned, and his face was suddenly alarmingly close to hers.

This time, when his breath stopped, he couldn't make it start again. He could see every freckle on her pale face... he could count the delicate russet eyelashes... a few scarlet strands separated from the rest of her untidy hair, glinting in the sunlight as it fell across her the bridge of her nose... her eyebrows were furrowing in the most attractive scowl he'd ever seen... and beneath those, large, glowing hazel eyes, a swirl of green and brown and gold, drawing him in... she was beauty personified... she was still talking – probably ranting on at him stupidly... not talking *to* him, more like talking *at* him... this

realisation drew his attention to her lips... pink and vaguely heart-shaped... he was numbed by her closeness... the rest of the world had faded into a glorious sunlight that lit up those freckles, sparkled in those eyes, danced across that mouth... before he knew what he was doing, he bent his face to hers and pressed his lips to hers.

Time stopped.

There was just her and him, together, kissing, and-

KISSING?

His eyes snapped open and he dragged himself away, restraining the urge to yelp in fright. His heart was a violent salsa drum-beat inside his chest, and his throat had constricted. " *Oh shit* ," he gasped.

Ginevra was staring at him. A deer-in-headlights look was frozen on her face, hazel eyes wide. Even totally shocked, she was so beautiful that it was a fight for control that he didn't just kiss her again.

"Oh God, I'm sorry," he stammered. "I'm – I'm sorry. I'm so sorry, Ginevra – Peregrine – I'm – God – oh – oh Merlin – sorry – I'm sorry-"

WHAT THE HELL DID I DO THAT FOR?

He shoved a hand roughly backwards through his tidy hair, not caring that he'd just mussed it after meticulously brushing it through, and then he whirled around and fled.

People had been watching!

The *library* ! Madam Crofton, and – and – other students – and books – and bookcases – and *Ginevra*... oh *shit* almighty.

He didn't know where he was going, except that he was walking away extremely fast, and that in one corridor he turned too soon, not

realising that he hadn't reached the corner yet, so that he walked face-first into a door.

Some younger students nearby began to laugh hysterically. He would have gone red, but his face couldn't gain any more colour. He was on fire – oh God oh God oh God -

Tom practically ran into the common room. Fionn and her friends were in there – luckily they hadn't seen it – but they saw him distraught, sprinting up the stairs to his bedroom and slamming the door so hard that the hinges rattled.

" *Silencio* ," he barked, flicking his wand at the door. Then he let out a raw yell of anger and kicked his wooden trunk as hard as he could. " *DAMNIT* !"

Stupid Ginevra! It was her fault. She'd made him look like a fool. He wasn't supposed to like anyone, even as friends! And now *this* ! God, first the stupid beaver and then the stupid Imperius and now...

You kissed her , reminded an unhelpful voice in the back of his head.

"SHUT UP," he snapped at it. "It was her fault! She was the one with the stupid doe-eyes! She was the one standing so close to me! She was the – she – she – it was her fault! All her fault! I just... I just... I just..."

Reacted badly? The voice supplied cheerfully.

"DAMNIT!" he roared, kicking and kicking his trunk until a massive dent appeared.

This wasn't fair! She didn't like him that way – she'd made that painfully, excruciatingly clear in the hallway, to Philips, a few weeks ago, after that first Imperiused kiss – and he wasn't supposed to like her that way – it was practically illegal, this – so wrong – and yet, yet , there had never, ever before in seventeen years of his life that felt so incredibly right.

Her face floated in his head and his stomach lurched. His face heated up again, remembering the urge he'd had when she'd pouted... he might as well have... at least, then, it would have been less public than by the library doors, in front of everyone in the library and also in the hall outside...

Blood screamed through his head so fast that it was almost enough to make him keel over and pass out. His vision was swimming around, jumping around... he curled his hands into fists so tight that his fingernails drew blood...

Kill... KILL...

"SHUT UP!" he bellowed, spinning around and yelling at the ceiling, even though that wasn't where the voice was coming from. "I DO NOT NEED YOU RIGHT NOW!"

His throat was raw from shouting so loudly, and he flinched his head sideways. He was breathing hard through his nose. He aimed another kick at his trunk, and another. "DAMNIT!"

Just as he had suspected, the entire school knew within a few minutes. He hid inside his bedroom and pretended that he couldn't hear the hoots of laughter coming from the common room where Fionn and her companions were.

Only once did he dare to venture downstairs. He had waited until he was certain that Fionn didn't have her silly friends there, but even so, she was terrible.

" *Ohmigod !*" she squealed, leaping up. His heart sank. She clapped her hands together, jumping up and down like a small child on sugar. "You – *you snogged Ginny !*"

Without a word, Tom spun around and went back upstairs.

However, he couldn't breathe in this stuffy room. His anger at himself and his troubled emotions had seeped into every surface and was suffocating him... not helped by the smell of apples throbbing from his armchair, which he was now so in tune to that he could smell it across the room, even when it was fading.

She tastes of apples, too.

He'd never even seen her eat an apple.

Tom couldn't stand be another second trapped in his dormitory. He was fairly sure that everyone would be eating now, and would be safe to slip outside.

The cold night air felt good on his hot face. He remembered why his face was so hot, and that only made his face hotter.

Tom walked a full 360 degrees around the castle. He walked quickly, and so hadn't spent more than fifteen minutes on his journey, but the icy air and the frost had cooled him down and made him feel better. He now felt that he would be perfectly able to hide inside his bedroom for the rest of his life.

He walked through the Entrance Hall doors.

What he hadn't counted on was *her* being there.

Tom froze absolutely still in the doorway.

Ten metres away, maybe twelve, Ginevra stopped. Hartwin and Philips followed her example. Hartwin, very unnecessarily, sang quietly, " *Awkwaaaarrd* ."

Thank you, Hartwin, for that.

Go away... he pleaded silently. Please go away... walk towards the dungeons and pretend that you haven't seen me...

He could easily walk straight past her, but her wide, almost fearful eyes were holding him there, holding him captive. He tried to breathe, but he couldn't. He tried to swallow, but he couldn't do that either.

The best bet, he realised, would be to say something. However, he couldn't, not with Hartwin and Philips there. And he probably wouldn't have been able to, even if she was alone. In all honesty, an idea that was sounding more and more appealing to him was scuttling sideways into the shadows, sitting there and hiding until she left.

He could hear his heart in his ears. That was good. So even if he'd forgotten how to breathe, he was still alive. Though now he would've given anything to be six feet under.

Tom understood that he was in her way, and that she wasn't going to come any closer while he was blocking the exit. With so much effort that it hurt, he ripped his eyes from hers, and stepped out of the doorway. He stared determinedly at the marble floor, waiting for her to walk on.

"Er. Ginny?" Hartwin asked.

She's not moving... Tom's face began to heat up violently. *Why isn't she moving, goddamnit?*

Obviously she was leaving it for him to do this the hard way. Tom stalked past her, keeping his head low so that she couldn't see how red he'd gone. He hated being so pale. He could hide his emotions expression-wise, but try hiding your embarrassment when your face is scarlet.

He hurried up towards his common room. Fionn and her friends were in there, but they were pulling on her robes. She shooed her companions out, and then held up her hands. "Not going to say anything," she promised. "I'm going to the Gryffindor common room tonight with these guys." She gestured outside, where the others were waiting. "This place is yours tonight. Don't worry."

He shifted uncomfortably from one foot to the other. "Thank you," he muttered, hating having to *thank* the blonde for something.

"Anytime," she beamed. She looked as though she was going to say something, but held it back, and replaced it with, "I won't embarrass you." She smirked. "Yet. I have to say, though, you were cutting it pretty fine."

He looked sideways at her darkly, not understanding and not really caring at all.

"Remember what I said?" She used her fingers for inverted commas. " *If, within a month, she doesn't know how you pitifully adore her, then I let my friends loose* . Remember that?" She grinned. "It's exactly a month, tomorrow." She moved towards the portrait hole, but paused with one hand on the edge of the painting, turning back towards him. "Hey?"

This time, he didn't even bother looking at her.

A smirk was twisting her lips as she tilted her head knowingly to one side. "I told you so." She then flounced out of the door.

With a loud sigh, he sank onto the sofa. It had always been much too squashy for him – it sucked him in – but now he didn't sink in far enough. He imagined being dragged into the sofa's depths and never being seen again. He stared desolately into the flickering, dancing fire.

The fire... it was such a dark, deep red...

That only reminded him of *her* , and his stomach hurt.

The portrait of Robin the Rich creaked as someone came in.

Will you just leave me alone , thought Tom in a mixture of misery and annoyance. *I'm just going to retreat to my room.*

He dragged himself to his feet and turned.

"I thought you were leaving, Fio-"

Ginevra.

The firelight from in front of her was dancing across her, and a nervous expression was being lit up upon her face by the pale orange glow. Her hair was sparkling in the twisted-coloured light – red, orange, auburn, brown. And he could see her eyes, those eyes, those spectacular eyes that left him with no choice but to fall for her.

Tom's eyes widened. He swallowed hard. *Think of something to say*, his head screamed at him. *Get out of there!*

I have to see Dippet.

I have to talk to Fionn; there's something urgent that I forgot to tell her.

I left something downstairs and I have to get it before someone steals it.

I need to-

Before he could decide which was the best, she was moving towards him at a ridiculous speed – the panic was setting in –

"Don't you dare run away because I got just as embarrassed as you in the library-"

ESCAPE-

– she was coming closer –

"but I didn't feel the need to hide from the rest of the world-"

– *closer* –

OH GOD-

"and anyway *this* is going to be a hell of a lot more embarrassing and probably not going to work-

Yes, but it's different for you! he screamed inside his head, frustrated, panicked, anticipating – not able to breathe- *You're brave!*

"-so shut up and-

You dare to do all of these things and don't care! You're brave and beautiful and amazing and I have no bloody idea but I'm starting to think that you've made me fall in love with you!

His eyes widened in astonished realisation.

I love you .

Then she was there – and oh God she was in his personal space – his eyes got wider – *hazel eyes – scarlet hair – freckles* – he could make shapes out of her freckles, that was how close she was – it was almost ridiculous, that his brain had shut down and that all he could think of was stupid things. *She has so many freckles – oh look. There's a triangle.*

Slow motion set in so he almost watched, as if from above, her grab his shoulders, drag his head down towards her... stupidly, his head squirted out one last desperate *personal space invasion!* before she smashed her mouth into his.

He closed his eyes and universes imploded in darkness behind his eyelids.

She was tangling her hands in his hair and he was instinctively pulling her closer, even though to be honest she couldn't get much closer – breathlessly pushing his lips back against hers – holding her – *bliss* – sheer freakin' *bliss* personified into one person - he was never going to let go – noses touching – everything he'd been dreaming of and so much more - his heart was going so fast that he couldn't distinguish separate beats -

And when she dragged herself away, it was much too soon for it to end, even though he thought that he was going to pass out from not breathing for so long...

He was probably still going to pass out, as he hadn't yet recalled what breathing was like and how exactly it worked.

It wasn't helped by still having her crushed against him, her fingers curled into his hair, her eyes so close to his eyes that he could only see hazel – green and gold and brown – she was so devastatingly beautiful that the only thing stopping him from kissing her again was the shock of it all – *she kissed me... she kissed me... she kissed me... she kissed me...* and he could feel his knees giving out... slowly... there they went...

Ginevra let go of him, and twisted her gaze away from him. "Er." Her voice was shaky. "Goodnight, Tom."

Stunned, he stared after her as she turned and left the common room. The portrait-hole clicked closed... he could hear her talking to Robin the Rich... something about being nosey... then her footsteps, fading... she was gone...

And *then* his knees buckled.

With a spectacular *thud* , he hit the floor, cracking his head on the side of the table.

" Ow ," he gasped, dragging in air with that one word, breathing finally coming back to him.

Realising that he was being stupid and totally irrational, Tom pushed himself up to his feet and stumbled to grab the back of the sofa for support. "Ow," he mumbled again, holding his forehead where he'd hit it on the table. There was going to be an interesting bruise tomorrow unless he healed that...

Oh well. He could always heal it in the morning. The pain wasn't bothering him. He had the world's best anaesthetic. All that he had to do was remember what had just happened and he went numb.

He stumbled upstairs and closed the door, pressing his back tightly against it.

Breathe... breathe...

A huge grin spread out across Tom's face, and he spun around and around giddily. However, being so ridiculously happy made him stumble again, and he only barely managed to fall into the armchair.

God, today is the best day of my life.

Then a thought came to him to what he'd wailed inside his head when she first approached him.

You're brave and beautiful and amazing and I have no bloody idea but I'm starting to think that you've made me fall in love with you!

His heart stuttered and struggled to maintain its normal rhythm. That couldn't be right, surely? He hadn't known her long enough... had he? He'd *hated* her for the majority of this time.

Then he thought of how dizzy he was when she came close... how he couldn't breathe... there was a word for that kind of thing... *intoxicated* .

Tom heaved a sigh. Oh, crap. Fionn had been *right* . She was never going to let him live this down.

Slumping back into the armchair, his eyes sliding shut, he couldn't stop himself from running the words in front through his head. *I love you. I love you? I love you.*

In his head, she was there, sparkling in the sunlight, glowing in the firelight, radiant with that nervous smile, her hair all spilling to one side, fringe in her eyes.

"I..." he tried to speak. It was only one sentence. One short sentence. It wasn't hard. "I think... I think I... I... lo..." His throat was choking up, and his stomach was constricting tightly. "...lo... I lov..." His breath built up at the top of his windpipe, struggling to come out with the words, three easy words: *I love you*. "I..."

Then he realised that the words weren't coming out, and he just let the held breath rush out of his lungs. His eyes snapped open.

He couldn't do it.

Having an idea, he crossed to his desk and grabbed his quill, parchment, ink; not bothering to sit down, he dipped the tip of his quill in the ink and then carefully wrote out: *I love you* .

When he looked at them, written out that easily, it seemed stupid how much difficulty he'd had with saying it aloud. Idly, he folded the corners in to make a paper aeroplane, and then threw it forwards.

It flew perfectly – and then hit the door, crumpling noiselessly to the wooden floorboards.

There was always something in the way.

Awww. I love this chapter. It's so cute. I had a different end written to it, but it was too short and I didn't like it, so I rewrote it for the paper aeroplane idea. I hope their first glorious snog was to your satisfaction! Please review, thanks for reading this far!

Heart, me.

Of Sorts

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: I just got back the photos from my annual army camp. Mud, water, camouflage cream... yeah. I look sexy . :P Anywho. Someone complained about the amount of unnecessary crap at the top of chapters, so I'll make this short: READ – CHAPTER – NOW.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Twenty-Nine: Of Sorts

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There was always something in the way.

Nobody thought to tell me

How much I need you

But I somehow worked it out all by myself

Tom woke up early the next day. He'd been contemplated something... meaning that he'd been panicking all night about what he thought was a good idea.

Okay, breathe... it's not that hard.

He turned to the mirror. It was weird, seeing *himself* in the mirror. He'd enchanted it so that he would see only himself and not any other twisted versions of who he was supposed to be, but it was still strange.

"Silencio," said Tom, pointing his wand at the door. Then he looked at the mirror. "Er... I... see, Ginevra, I..." He stared at the floor. "Er." He pointed at his reflection, as though it was her. "You. Yes. Um. I like you."

What the hell was that?

"This is stupid," he muttered.

Take two.

"Ginevra... I, er, sort of like you. Sort of a lot. Sort of almost obsessively."

WHAT THE HELL?

Take three.

"Hello. I'm Tom, but you already knew that... why the hell would I introduce myself?" he frowned.

He skipped breakfast to run through all the possible directions that the conversation could take. Prefect meeting before lunch. Okay. That worked well. He had Herbology before the meeting, but he skipped that. He felt guilty – he never skived classes, but the guilt was overcome by the nervousness.

Finally, it was time.

Tom sat in his usual seat. He was *not* going to greet her.

"Hey," said Fionn, turning up from Herbology. "You skived, you nasty little cheater," she teased. "So how did it go last night?"

He tensed. "What do you mean?" he said stiffly.

Fionn grinned. "I passed Ginny on the way in... and she gave me a little message..."

A frown appeared on Tom's dark brow. "What did she tell you?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing. She looked very nervous, though... what did she do?" Fionn asked curiously.

Tom didn't answer. He stared at the mantelpiece above the fireplace, focusing on a swirl of wood to keep the colour in his face normal. Going scarlet would not be good.

The Prefects arrived. Only two left now. Harris... and her.

"Back again, are you?" Tom heard Robin the Rich ask.

Again? Murmurs went around the meeting, accompanied by giggles. *Why, when was she last here recently?*

"Yeah. *Condolesam* ."

Her voice. Oh God. It reminded him of the speech she'd given yesterday, and what she'd done afterwards. He concentrated again on the mantelpiece. His heart was louder than the rattling of a train going over uneven tracks.

"Hey," Ginevra said cheerfully, glancing around at the people sitting down and joining Antonia on the left-wing sofa. To get there, she walked right in front of him. His head spun as it hit him – red hair –

smell of apples – and tried not to fall backwards against the back of the sofa. He stared at the mantelpiece.

"Hi, Ginny," Fionn welcomed her. "We're just waiting on Robert."

"Coolsville... How are you?"

For a split-second of alarm and panic, he thought that she was talking to *him*, but then Antonia responded, and he breathed easy again. Well. Easy.

Harris arrived a moment later, being seated beside Coville.

"Right. I convene this Prefect meeting, the third of February, 1959," Fionn said formally, writing down the date on the piece of parchment in front of her. "Now, we need to discuss what fund-raising event we're planning for Valentine's Day."

"Another Ball?" asked Brown hopefully.

"No. 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."

Good. Despite this opinion, he imagined dancing again with Ginevra in his arms for a whole evening. The idea of a Ball didn't sound all that bad, actually.

"If they break the brooms, they should pay for them," said Swithin; an opinion that Tom shared.

"Any ideas?"

"We could do a bake-sale," said Durrell. "That was fun last Easter."

"Yeah! With heart-shaped cookies and things. So cute."

Oh God. Heart-shaped cookies. As if it isn't already the worst day of the year.

"It'll be fun," Durrell comforted the other males who were less than enthusiastic. "Trust me. For us, the food is free." She grinned.

"A bake-sale, then," said Tom dully. "Would we be cooking the items ourselves?"

Instantly, he felt her gaze flicker up to him, and his eyes flashed sideways to meet hers. Only a second lasted before she looked away, colour rising in her cheeks. Coville was speaking - then Fionn – Brown saying something about poison – Tom couldn't take his eyes from Ginevra.

"Okay, it looks as though we're relying on you, Gareth," said Fionn, dragging Tom back into the real world.

"Any other notes to be added to the meeting?" he asked, looking at the Prefects. His gaze lingered longest on the redhead by Durrell. "None?" They shook their heads. "This meeting is adjourned."

He got to his feet.

He remembered his plan, and the panic set in.

Oh God oh God oh God can't do this run away run away run away –

Everyone has a fight-or-flight instinct. It just so happened that Tom's was particularly inclined towards *flight* .

Ginevra stood.

She's going!

Don't let her go!

Call her back!

Let her leave, don't embarrass yourself-

"Hang on-"

WHAT ARE YOU DOING? I SAID TO LET HER LEAVE. He cursed his brain, which was on auto-pilot.

Tom swallowed, and took a deep breath. "...Peregrine, if you could stay behind."

Brown wolf-whistled loudly and the others laughed. The temperature of Tom's face began to rise rapidly. Oh God oh God this was such a bad idea...

"Very funny," said Ginevra sardonically.

Tom didn't yet look at her.

Fionn started to hum an annoying tune and began to select a book from the bookcase. She chose a thin purple one, and dropped herself delicately into an armchair. She looked up at him. "Yes?" she said sweetly.

Then he recalled what she had said yesterday. *I won't embarrass you. Yet.*

He glared at her.

"It's my common room, too," said Fionn, beginning to read. "Just because you want to flirt with her doesn't mean I have to leave."

Tom's face temperature stepped up a couple of thousand degrees. He heard, over to the left of the fireplace, Ginevra shifting, clearly uncomfortable with the way the conversation was going.

Sighing, he leant against the wall and glanced up. *Please, if there is any sort of God up there... make her go away.* He returned his eyes to the blonde. "Fionn, I mean this is the nicest possible way when I say *get lost*."

"Fine." She huffed, affronted. She bounced away, leaving behind her a wake of disgusting perfume. He didn't miss the subtle wink that she threw at him before she left, but he pretended he hadn't seen.

You're alone... you're alone...

Say something...

Panic inflated his stomach... he couldn't remember how his speech went! Fionn was probably listening at the door anyway.

"So," Ginevra said brightly, "Hi. You wanted...?"

He straightened up from the wall and put his hands in his robes pockets. "Er."

DAMN. How did that slip out?

He glanced at the portrait-hole, where Fionn and the Prefects were undoubtedly pressed to wall, listening. "Do you mind if I cast a Silencing Charm on the door?" he asked her.

Oh, hell, that sounds really weird and suggestive... crap... this is going badly and I haven't even started yet...

"Yeah, go ahead..." she was frowning. "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 told her, and pointed his wand at the door.

Silencio.

A shallow buzzing filled his ears as the room became impossible to hear into.

"You find this awkward and uncomfortable?" Ginevra raised her eyebrows.

Wrong thing to say! Oh hell oh God oh crap oh...

"Not *this* , right now, but..." Tom cleared his throat. He stared at a spot on the ceiling. This speech wouldn't be made any easier by her looking at him, so... so *her* . No, that wouldn't help at all. "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, 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-"

He was going red.

Why red? Why him? Why *now*?

"-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.

That's one way of putting it.

"So..." her frown was furrowing deeper. "Is that your peculiar way of telling me... you fancy me?"

And now the red appeared on his face, at the best time *ever* . The time when he really needed to look calm and nonchalant... and he went red.

"In short, I suppose is how it could be put, in a simpler approach..."

Or we could go with, 'I lov-'

"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."

Tom stared determinedly at the ceiling. Here it came. The big, magnificent reply. Oh God.

There was a pause.

"Is that your peculiar way of asking if I fancy you as well?"

Do you have to make everything so difficult for me?

He swallowed, hard. "Of sorts." He'd forgotten how to breathe. He set his jaw. Here it came. If she said no, then it didn't matter.

"Er. Well. Actually..."

Her eyes were on him, killing him...

He ran through the next few sentences, preparing them. *Well, that's okay. I mean, it's not that big a deal. I just felt that I should tell you, and also apologise for my actions in the library, which were unfair to you. You can fully put the blame on me when you refer to that incident with anyone else. I don't mind. I'm truly sorry and-*

"Yes-"

"W-what?" He stared down at her. His heart had been going like a tribal drum a second ago, but now he couldn't remember where it was... he couldn't remember if it was supposed to beat at all...

What did she just say?

She took a deep breath. She was flushing scarlet. "Yes. Of sorts," she joked.

She likes me. She likes me. She's insane! Why would anyone like me that way? I'm horrible. She likes me...

His head spun. He nodded. "I had a speech prepared for the event of this answer as well but I'm not sure I actually expected it."

Ginevra began to grin. "So where do we go from here?"

"I suppose I could attempt my speech..."

"It being...?"

Tom looked back up at 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-"

OH GOD OH GOD OH GOD BACKTRACK BACKTRACK-

"-I had thought that perhaps we could progress from here by way of, er, bywayofcourting," he blurted out.

"Come again?" she echoed. "By way of what, exactly?"

Oh, do you have to do this? This isn't fair on me...

He flushed scarlet. His ears were so hot that they hurt. "Courting," he muttered.

There was a silence.

"Is that..." Ginevra stammered, eyes wide. "Is that you asking me out?"

Tom attempted sarcastic humour. "In my peculiar way," he said lamely. He looked down at her now, not daring to breathe, not daring to move.

There were a thousand things – real things, not disguised things – flashing through her face. He saw only a few.

Fear – worry – happiness – anxiety – guilt – happiness – fear -

She took a deep breath, and then those eyes were on him, those eyes were *in* him, reading his soul, and he waited – he waited – "Yes."

Tom took a few seconds to comprehend what she meant. To remember what the question was. To then remember what her answer had been. Then he smiled – no, *grinned* – like a total idiot. He stumbled backwards, spun around, shoving a hand through his hair-

My... girlfriend?

My girlfriend.

My girlfriend.

Ginevra. "Are you okay?" she said, with a nervous giggle. "You look like you're on drugs."

I've never been better in my whole life. Of course I'm okay.

"It's a change from being a beaver," he said, still grinning. "What now?"

"Hm." She tilted her head, putting two fingers to her chin as if to stroke a beard, like a philosopher. "We could try lunch. Big, dramatic entrance. Lots of whispering and staring. Should be fun."

"*Fun*?" Tom pretended to frown up the idea of fun.

"Fun," she repeated his words softly. She stepped closer and laced her fingers through his. He could have sworn that he saw her shiver.

Good, then. It wasn't only him who felt the static in their fingertips.

They didn't even make it all the way down the Entrance Hall stairs before the dramatic entrance began.

"Oh, look, the lovebirds have decided to show their faces together, then?" Bastet sneered, from a few metres away, at the bottom right-hand corner of the stairs.

"Yep!" Ginevra chirped. Her happiness was intoxicating, and the barest of smiles appeared on his lips – in public.

"Riddle and Peregrine, sitting in a tree," sang Mohana, one of Bastet's friends. "K-I-S-S-I-N-G..."

Ginevra turned to Tom and raised her eyebrows. He knew what she was implying, and didn't want to. Kissing her? He could live his life, never breathing, never eating or drinking or sleeping, as long as he could kiss her every waking moment. Kissing her in front of people? He would, frankly, rather eat his own head. If that was possible.

He sighed shortly, and nodded.

In front of seven people, and also in the view of the Great Hall doors, so that most of the people inside could see, Ginevra stood on tiptoe and kissed him.

He heard gasps and giggling and whispering, but none of that mattered, she was here, she was now, and –

She twisted away, and said sharply to the gasping Slytherin sixth-years, "What? You started it."

Blinking, he reminded himself that it was just for show, to prove to these people that they didn't care about people making fun of them, so there was no need to feel this numb when she ended the kiss so quickly.

"One thing," Tom hissed as they made their way to the Slytherin table, where an astonished Philips was staring at them, and Hartwin was beaming. "Never make me do that again."

"Which," she teased, eyes glowing, "the kissing or the kissing in public?"

Tom gave her a withering look. The kissing he could handle – the kissing, he never wanted to live without. Especially, he thought as he glanced smugly across at the Ravenclaw table, as the look on Reeve's face made it so much more worth it.

Ginevra laid her cheek on the top of his arm and sighed.

He couldn't ever remember being so happy.

-squee- Yay! Fluffiness. Argh, real life is biting me in the butt and I haven't got any more chapters typed up. I'll try to get one done but it's so hard, I have writer's block for Fast Forward and I'm getting bored with Backtrack and I'm trying to get The Serpent And The Siren going as well... gr. So tired. Well, I'll keep trying! Please review to keep me going! XD

Heart, me.

In Harmony

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: I couldn't decide what to call this chapter. I was torn between 'Chocolate And Apples' or 'In Harmony'. If you can think of one that works better, then please review and let me know! Sorry that my updates are less frequent; I've been really busy. Still, I hope that this update makes up for it. :)

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Thirty: In Harmony

Tom gave her a withering look. The kissing he could handle – the kissing, he never wanted to live without. Especially, he thought as he glanced smugly across at the Ravenclaw table, as the look on Reeve's face made it so much more worth it.

Ginevra lay her cheek on the top of his arm and sighed.

This was the happiest he'd felt in his whole life.

Dance, dance

And all you see is

Flash-backs

Of who you could have been

"Toooooomm...?"

The Head Boy finished the word that he was writing and then lifted his quill from the parchment where he wrote the method of making Veritaserum, still revelling in the fact that he was no longer doing his homework by himself... and his theory was that, guessing from Ginevra's far-too-innocent voice, she *certainly* wasn't.

"Yes?"

"What's the significance of the Knell formation when divided by a factor of eighty-two?"

Theory proven.

He turned in his chair to look at her. The expression on her heart-shaped face was as equally over-innocent as her voice had been. "Are you doing your Arithmancy homework, or am I doing it *for* you?"

She graced him with a sweet smile. "Now, Tom, dearest, where would you get an idea like that?" she simpered. "Now answer the question."

I sometimes get the feeling that I'm being taken advantage of. "What would happen, I wonder, if I refused to tell you?" he said thoughtfully, smirking.

"Why – I'd *fail* !" Ginevra gasped, propping herself up on her elbows from where she was sprawled out on his bed – something that he'd been slightly annoyed at when he noticed, as his *bed* was not a good place to have her smell of apples soaked in, but by the time that he realised, it had already been too late. "You wouldn't let me *fail* , would you?"

He arched one eyebrow in a *just-try-me* gesture. "I make no comment." He turned back to his own homework.

" *Meh* !" Ginevra huffed. "I hate Arithmancy. And," she added crossly, "I hate you, too."

I adore you. He lifted his quill and scrawled down the last few sentences of the Veritaserum method; looked over what he'd written to check for mistakes. There were none, as far as he could tell, and he set his quill back in his ink-pot. He stretched slightly before turning around again, resting one hand on the back of his chair and setting his chin on top of his knuckles.

Ginevra was idly tracing the outline of something she'd sketched on the empty page of her unfinished Arithmancy homework, repeatedly shading it in darker and darker with every passing second he watched her.

"What are you drawing?" he asked, unable to recognise it upside down.

"Just a rune I found. No idea what it means though." She set down her quill and looked over it, but shook her head.

I study Ancient Runes... it might be a language I've learnt.

"Give it here," he said, holding out his free hand.

She passed it across to him and waited as he observed the rune, now turned up the right way. It wasn't a letter from an ancient language that he'd *learnt*, as such... but it was definitely one that he knew.

He couldn't help but wonder where the hell she'd found written Parseltongue.

"Wynn," he said.

"Excuse me?"

"It's a rune called 'wynn', in Base Archaic." He gave the parchment back to her, his eyes lingering on the rune before it was taken from his view.

"Oh, cool! I understand." She nodded. "No..." She frowned. "No, I don't. What?"

"Base Archaic," he said again, more slowly, as though she had some sort of mental problem. Judging by the crazy things she sometimes did, it was a possibility. He stood up to turn his chair around to face her; twisting his whole body around was getting uncomfortable. He explained, "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 in the world – very difficult, and very dark. It set the standard for creating every other language globally spoken."

"So what does 'wynn' mean?"

He shrugged slightly. "It's just a letter. It sounds like..." he caught himself just in time. "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 glanced back at his homework. He wasn't quite sure if it was one centimetre cubed of boomslang fat or two... it was probably one, like he'd written, but he wasn't certain. It would say so in his textbook. He stood and crossed to his bookcase to find the answer-

"Like Parseltongue?"

Tom snapped his head around to face her, staring with narrowed eyes into her face. Interesting, how she'd *found* written Parseltongue. Interesting, how she knew what it sounded like. Interesting, how he realised now that he knew next to nothing about her, no matter how often he watched her.

"What?" she rubbed the back of her neck, self-conscious and exposed.

Calm down. She could have heard that from anyone.

He turned completely to her again. "Base Archaic, he continued to explain, "is the oldest, darkest language known to man. Simplified Archaic was – as intended to be noticeable in the name – simpler. However, it was still far too complicated, far too harsh, to be retained as a language. Some people, it was found, were better at adapting to speaking it. The language instead became a rare and dark skill."

Ginevra shivered, and hugged her schoolbag to hide it. She watched him with wide eyes, like story-time in a primary school. "What skill?" she asked, her voice barely more than a whisper.

"Someone who speaks it these days is almost like an endangered species," he said. He decided to leave out the part about this being due to Salazar Slytherin being the last person able to speak it, and therefore only his descendants having that talent. He doubted that she'd take it well... "The speaker goes by many names. Disciple of the Dark... Serpentstriker..." he ticked off his fingers. "Archan..." his eyes flashed to Ginevra's and looked straight at her, knowing that this was the answer she'd been waiting for: "...and most, commonly – Parselmouth."

Even though Tom knew that the Parselmouth information had been what she wanted, she gave no reaction except a brief startled flutter of her eyelashes, and then she seemed not really to care.

"How different are the Base and Simplified Archaic?" she asked, rolling onto her back and stretching like a cat. She seemed not to notice how his eyes were drawn to the pale skin of her stomach that was revealed as she stretched... She had a cute freckle next to her bellybutton-

He snatched his stare away and turned to the bookcase to find his Potions textbook. "Fairly dissimilar." He located it, and pulled it from the shelf. "And, by the way," he told her, "the significance of the Knell formation when divided by a factor of eighty-two is," he paused for a second, "three-point-eight to avis of seven."

Ginevra squealed, "Thank you!" and rolling back onto her stomach to write down the answer.

Damnit . Today was not a good day for his hormones. She was lying on his *bed* , he'd seen her *stomach* , and now the back of her bloody skirt was riding up. *Damnit* .

He told himself to respect her privacy – and dignity – and not to look. He realised that he was staring anyway.

"I knew you wouldn't let me fail. And," she pushed her homework into her schoolbag untidily before standing up. Her skirt fell back down, and he quickly restored his gaze to her face, hoping that heat in his face wouldn't give him away. She didn't seem to notice, "I apologise earnestly, but this is where I bid you farewell."

He recalled that it was curfew for ickle non-Heads, and felt a wistful regret that she couldn't stay longer. "You said that I talked like an encyclopaedia," Tom said mockingly, tutting at her. He rested his textbook at the page on Veritaserum and then stood up to say goodbye; he hugged her carefully, making sure that he didn't hold on too tightly. He gently kissed the top of her head, her scarlet hair tickling his nose.

"Mm," she agreed, pressing her cheek to his chest. Then, too soon – much too soon – she let go, and, with one last flash of a smile, darted away down the stairs.

Tom watched her go, and then closed the door behind her, absent-mindedly lifting a hand to the warm patch on the front of his shirt. He crossed to his desk to finish checking how much boomslang fat was required in Veritaserum, and then tugged his school jumper over his head to go to bed. It was only as he tossed his jumper onto the armchair and reached the bed that he realised what it was completely drowned in the smell of.

God – damn – *apples*.

He dragged a hand backwards through his hair. "Oh, crap," he groaned.

On a Thursday, Tom usually went to get a new book from the library. He had finished all of his homework by this time, and was hoping to find some extra reading for NEWTs revision. He pushed his feet into his school shoes, grabbing his cloak from the back of his door, and swiftly descended the short flight of stairs into the familiar Head common room.

"Hi!" was shrieked at him when he emerged.

He looked at Fionn suspiciously, not liking her extreme enthusiasm. Even her normal enthusiasm was annoying – this was just... bizarre. Warily, he asked, "What do you want *now* ?"

"Nothing!" she chirped, chewing on her bottom lip. "I just want to talk to you!" She beamed.

Oh God.

"Sit!" She patted the seat on the sofa next to her, and her grin grew in size. Tom didn't move; he *certainly* didn't join her on the big leather seat. Upon seeing that he clearly wasn't going to obey, Fionn heaved a big sigh and decided to talk to him minus having him beside her.

"So!" She pulled her feet up underneath her – thankfully not bare feet. She was wearing pink socks. "How far have you gone with Ginny so far?"

Tom blinked apathetically at her. "I am not talking about this to you."

"Yes, you are," she challenged. "You're doing it right *now* !" She poked her tongue out at him childishly. "Now answer the damn question."

"No."

" Yes . Do you want me to give you some tips for Valentine's Day?"

"I repeat: no."

"What do you *plan* to do, then?" she huffed, crossing her arms across her stomach. "Just throw some flowers at her? Chocolates?" She rolled her eyes and flapped a hand flippantly at him. "Puh-lease. Lamesville."

Tom promptly forgot that he was supposed to be avoiding discussing Ginevra with Fionn. He stared at her, confused. "She likes chocolate."

"Yeah, but chocolate is so clichéd," the blonde Head Girl explained. "Do something original."

He frowned. "But she likes chocolate."

Fionn sighed. "I can see I'm getting nowhere with you." She held up her hands to him. "Listen to me carefully – forget the chocolate. Think of something inventive." She paused thoughtfully. "Like..." She nodded triumphantly. "Like some pretty lingerie."

No reply was given; he just stared at her, a deep frown creasing between his eyebrows.

She explained calmly, "Lacy French underwear."

"What - I-" Heat coloured his face very quickly as he understood. "Fionn – *no* – I – just, *no* – I am not buying her-"

He began to remember why he had decided never to talk to his room-mate about Ginevra. She was annoyingly suggestive – and stubborn about it, too.

"Oh, come on... you have to admit that you like the idea," Fionn sang cheerfully, a twinkle in her blue eyes that he hated.

Very irritatingly, as if just to annoy him and to prove the other Head right, images made their way into his mind... of her... of Fionn's offered Valentine's Day gift... of the *interesting* view he'd had at the Yule Ball... the *interesting* view he'd had a few days ago, when her skirt had ridden up slightly... of her... of him...

His eyes lost focus.

"...still there? Hello? Tom? Come back to me, Tom."

Startled, Tom jolted back into reality, his head snapping around to face Fionn, who was watching him with a smug grin that chanted, *I told you so I told you so ...* She said nothing, just arched her eyebrows at him.

He stalked away, scowling.

Towards the library he walked, extremely displeased with himself for once again falling prey to his stupid hormones exactly when Fionn wanted him to, just to prove her point. He hated her. He hated himself even more so.

Down the hallway from the vast room over which Madam Crofton held control, he spied a small figure walking away, dark scarlet hair spilling down their back.

He weighed out his options.

Revision... Ginevra... revision... Ginevra.

Hm .

Slipping into a nearby corridor that he knew would bring him in a semi-circle through the castle until he finished in front of her, he moved swiftly to cut her off.

Then, once ahead, and once she had arrived (he guessed by the fall of her loud, obnoxious footsteps that reverberated even through the stone wall), he pushed the tapestry behind which he stood aside,

folded his fingers around her arm, and pulled her into the secret hallway.

Ginevra let out a short scream; he let go of her immediately, not realising how much this would probably frighten her. It was too late though; her shoulders were tensed in terror, and knowing how scared she was quickly began raising a sadism that wasn't his own. He controlled it, already regretting this.

" *God* , Tom, you scared me!" she snapped, slapping his arm hard. This revelation only made his unnatural masochistic feeling stronger. He'd scared her. Imagine how much *more* scared she would be if he showed her who he really was...

"Why?" Despite himself, he was curious if it was just him, or something else.

"Er, maybe because it's not really *normal* to drag people into alcoves!" she said angrily. "How anti-social *are* you?" She gave him a brief sideways glance of narrowed eyes, and then said softly, "And... that's what happened last time."

His chest and throat constricted painfully. He hadn't realised... that was what he had done when he attacked her. He tried to make words come out – maybe *sorry* , maybe *I didn't mean to* ... but that would be giving himself away. The less she knew, the better.

The smallest of sighs pulled from him. Two people, one body. One will to brutally murder her. The other... in love with her.

It was stupid.

"That hurt," she complained, swerving the topic back to a safer area, and she hit him on the elbow again, though not quite as hard this time.

"I apologise," he said. Then, on the spur of the moment, he ducked into a bow.

"What the-?"

Not straightening, he lifted her hand to his bowed face and touched her knuckles gently to his lips, his nose brushing the back of her hand. "May I have this dance?" he asked formally as he stood up, holding out one arm to her.

"A – what? – dance?" she stammered, not understanding.

"Indeed." He smirked slightly. "A dance."

Disbelievingly, she stared at him through the darkness. "There's no music, you dolt."

"Isn't there?" Tom tilted his head to one side, as though paying close attention to something. He could hear nothing but the silence, ringing all around them, deafening, broken only by their breathing and quietened conversation. "Or perhaps you're just not listening hard enough," he whispered.

Ginevra stopped moving, and even through the gloom he knew that she was listening... to the nothingness all around them.

This time, when he offered his arm to hold her in harmony, she took it.

Ohh, I found the most wonderful fluffy song ever . It's in a foreign language; I don't know what it means. It's called *Hollipolla* by *Sigur Ros*. I think. It's really great, though, and it's so emotional. I love it. ...I'm happy right now. It's –quotes Avril Lavigne- *SO CONTAGIOUS* , a-something-something-something, *it's SO OUTRAGEOUS...* and so on. I don't know the rest.

Heart, me.

Paper Affections

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: Sorry for such a long wait for the update. I haven't been on my laptop at all in four days, I've been so busy, let alone typing up and posting a chapter. *Phew !* Well, here I am now, so I hope you enjoy this chapter.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Thirty-One: Paper Affections

Disbelievingly, she stared at him through the darkness. "There's no music, you dolt."

"Isn't there?" Tom tilted his head to one side, as though paying close attention to something. He could hear nothing but the silence, ringing all around them, deafening, broken only by their breathing and quietened conversation. "Or perhaps you're just not listening hard enough," he whispered.

Ginevra stopped moving, and even through the gloom he knew that she was listening... to the nothingness all around them. This time, when he offered his arm to hold her in harmony, she took it.

And she was sunshine

I fell over my feet

Trying to tell you how I feel

With the final scratched curve of a lower-case 'A' on parchment, Tom finally finished his personal project.

Time had, admittedly, been wasted on it when he had promptly set a vast collection of his stupid little scraps of paper affections aflame, but he had started up again, deciding it was necessary. The chocolate idea for Valentine's Day had been thrown out of the window, thanks to Fionn, and while he didn't *completely* follow up her suggestion, he tried something original.

He quickly looked over the several lines of pathetic smitten rambling, and quickly folded it over, not wanting to have to look at it. Then he would only realise how honestly terrible he was at poetry, and would just hide in his bedroom until this stupid Cupid-inspiring holiday was over.

Pushing aside the thought of the parchment within his pocket, Tom dipped his quill in ink again and pulled towards him the informal list of his and Fionn's patrol rotas.

Monday lunch – Tom

Monday evening – Fionn

Tuesday lunch – Fionn

Tuesday evening – Tom

Wednesday lunch – Tom

He hated having to constantly reorganise the patrol schedule, but it had to be done, as Fionn was forever *forgetting to mention* that she planned to go to a party here, or a nightclub there, and had to skive her duties. There was a time when he would have complained, but he'd missed one or two of his own to be with Ginevra, so he was no longer given the option of criticising his sociable room-mate.

Once finished some twenty minutes later, Tom headed downstairs to deliver the new rotas to Fionn, but discovered that she was nowhere to be found.

Where the devil...? He thought irritably, looking around. He couldn't hear her in her dormitory, but he went reluctantly up to see if she was in there anyway. A quick glance into a bright, pink-clad bedroom told her that she wasn't.

Annoyance was building up now. He recalled that Professor Dippet had asked to see him about something at nine-thirty, and he didn't have long to find the damn Head Girl to give her the list; he didn't want to be late.

Instead, he pinned it to her notice-board, on top of the numerous invitations to stupid social conventions, for her to see later, and then left the common room.

As he headed off to Dippet's office, he remembered the Valentine's Day bake sale – that was probably where Fionn was. *And*, he thought, one hand in his pocket tracing the outline of the folded parchment there, *Ginevra as well*. He swallowed hard.

A moment later, he passed a clock on the hallway wall, he noted that he might just have time to show up at the bake sale; not for any of the food, but to give Ginevra her... *present*, so to speak.

He veered in the opposite direction to where he had been going, and made his way towards the Entrance Hall.

Indeed, a table was set up by one wall in the Hogwarts lobby, around which many students were crowded. Tom could pick out the dark, curly head of Reeve... Fionn's blonde waves... Durrell's black cornrows... and a messy tangle of vivid dark red.

Tom stayed close to the wall, partly hidden by a pillar in front of him, waiting for Ginevra to notice that he was there. He wasn't hidden particularly well, as his intention was not to go unnoticed, and the

red-haired Prefect would almost definitely realise that he was here at some point.

He hoped.

She was talking to a terrified-looking first-year, and wrapping up a large frosted cookie to sell. After the younger student had fled, she stopped working, as if she'd just noticed something. However, if it was that she'd realised he was there, she didn't show it until a few minutes later, when retrieving a fallen fork from the floor, she looked up across the Entrance Hall and her eyes fell on him.

She straightened and turned back to the table simultaneously, red hair sweeping over her left shoulder with the movement; she leaned over to whisper in Durrell's ear, and then, at the other girl's responsive nod, Ginevra hurried across to Tom.

"Aren't you supposed to be helping with bake-sale?" she chided, resting her hands on her hips with a mockery of disapproval.

"Firstly, I was assigned the task of sorting out mine and Fionn's patrol rotas – which I have just finished, upon the competition of which, I decided why not see how much a disaster this idea had turned out to be–"

Ginevra raised her eyebrows at this, and Tom didn't blame her; the last part hadn't been strictly true, but he didn't want to be confessing that he was desperate to see her on Valentine's Day.

"- *and*," he continued, "secondly, I dislike the holiday with quite an unexplained passion."

Hazel eyes rolled in agreement. "Doesn't everyone?" She winked. "Except for the dippy third-years who think you're exceedingly handsome, of course."

Very funny . He didn't like those third-years. He gave her a quick look of scorn, but then that was overwhelmed by the anxiety as his

fingers found his pocket again and the parchment inside. "You don't like Valentine's Day, am I right?" he guessed from her previous exclamation of '*doesn't everyone ?*'

She nodded, and the nervousness in his stomach eased slightly.

"Okay, that's easier for me, then," he said honestly, with a short sigh. "I was concerned that you might demand roses or something of the like."

To his surprise, she pulled a disgusted face and shuddered. "Urgh no. Hopeless romantic, yes, but I'm not big on flowers. I'm allergic to rose petals, anyway. My face swells up twice its normal size and I go red and blotchy." She grinned. "Not flattering." Then she fluttered her eyelashes sideways at him mischievously. "How ever , I wouldn't say no to a box of chocolates... hint hint... wink wink, nudge nudge."

Well done, Fionn , he thought, his mind landing on the conversation he'd had with the blonde Head Girl a few days previously. '*Chocolate is so clichéd'... that's the last time I take advice from you.*

"Well," he said anxiously, shifting from foot to foot slightly, "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!" Ginevra cut him off. "Rambling again."

She'd told him before that he did that sometimes; he hadn't realised. Swallowing hard, he nodded, and then pulled the paper from his robes to give to her. Then he hid his hands in his pockets, for want of something to do, and turned his eyes away from her, already feeling a self-conscious warmth flood his pale face as she unfolded it.

"Is this... is this a poem?" she asked quietly after a second, only glancing at it and already knowing the crudely-carved tunnel to his heart that not a single other person had found.

He swallowed again, but it didn't really help. The urge to snatch the parchment back and run was overwhelming. "...Of sorts."

Without warning, she squealed, "AH!", clapping one hand over her eyes. "I have suddenly and spontaneously gone blind. I can't see... I can't read the poem." She pouted. "Someone will have to read it to me..."

"No," he said. He could just imagine himself standing there stupidly reading aloud poetry. Then other people would hear and they would crowd around to ridicule him – Fionn and Reeve especially. In reading, it would sound silly in his flat, unfeeling voice, which would defeat the whole point of it. No. Reading the poem aloud was a line he would not cross.

"Pleeeeeease?" she looked up at him through her lowered lashes, hazel showing through cinnamon red, a single strand of her hair coming free over her freckled face.

"Ginevra, no." He sighed heavily, not wanting to leave but knowing that he had to. "I have to go now, anyway," he told her, thinking of he had planned not to be late for Dippet, but probably would be 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," (he couldn't help but reflect that only a few months ago, those words would never have passed his lips voluntarily) "and if you don't return to your bake-sale then the others will probably set something on fire or explode a cake."

"Fine." Her reluctance was infectious, and it was getting harder to prepare himself to leave her, even if it was only for a few hours. This wasn't helped by the endearing pout she gave that brought up thoughts far from platonic.

"Read it later." He *really* had to go, especially before he did something embarrassing in public; he didn't want her to read here where people could be nosy anyway. "Not now; not here." He looked down into devastatingly hazel eyes for verification. "Okay?"

More of her fringe fell into her face with her nod, and she righted it by flicking in out of her eyes before she rested a hand on his shoulder and stood on tiptoe to kiss him. A feeling to outflame any petroleum-burning house started in his stomach, but then she dropped back down onto the flat of her feet, her mouth out of reach, curved into a smile with a happy, "See you."

His response was an uncertain nod, still fighting with fire, just before she skipped back to the bake-sale table. He watched her leave, and then turned his back on her to leave, despite the stumble-skip of that once-familiar heartbeat.

Her reaction.

Tom had been waiting a day to find out. He'd decided not to rush her, and instead to ask the next morning, after breakfast perhaps, before classes started, to see what she had thought of him spilling his heart out on paper.

There was a strange sensation in the bottom of his stomach. It was similar to how he imagined that it would feel to have a large, mutated Flobberworm eating its way out of him.

He hated Flobberworms.

Stay on topic, he scolded himself as his thoughts drifted balefully away to remembering green slugs and endless Care of Magical Creatures lessons before he was given the choice of leaving it far behind and never looking back.

The first meal of the day finished – for Tom, at least – he headed outside, hands deep in pockets, his head bowed slightly against the bright glare of spring sunshine.

He wandered uninterestedly for a few minutes before coming to a stop beside the brick wall that cut a barrier between the Herbology Greenhouses' land and the rest of the Hogwarts grounds; leaning

one shoulder against it, carefully watching the path from the castle. He'd seen her come outside most mornings, and she should arrive soon.

Ginevra did appear fairly quickly – earlier, in fact, than he'd expected. She had her arms awkwardly cradling Hartwin, shuffling close to her friend and apparently saying something quietly to her, a soft and careful expression on her face.

Pushing himself off the wall, he approached, nodding in greeting at them. Hartwin, he noticed as he came closer, looked distinctly... weepy. Hm. Perhaps he should stay away. He wasn't good with crying people.

Silently, Ginevra began to slash at her throat with her index finger, narrowing her eyes at him, her face screwing up in what he could tell was a wordless message... and not one that he could comprehend in the slightest.

Here came the verdict. The reaction to his gift. *Oh no.*

The Flobberworms within his internal organs began to gnaw rather viciously.

What he hadn't foretold, however, was a furious hiss of, " *Not now !*", followed by her turning her back very sharply on him and walked away with Hartwin.

Hurt, Tom stared at her retreating back, trying to remember if there was something he had missed. Birthday? ...That was in October. Anniversary? ...It seemed unlikely. Did girls like to commemorate a month and eleven days? He wasn't sure. He would ask Fionn.

The only possible thing that he could think of to explain her behaviour was... that she hadn't liked it.

He'd tried as best as he could to justify what he felt – preferably without the word *love* in it...

And she hadn't liked it.

Tom stared until she was a small smudge in the distance, vanishing around the corner of the castle. Then he turned away and went back to his dormitory to retrieve his schoolbooks.

He found himself in the common room at the same time as Fionn; she was getting ready to leave, twining a stripy scarf around her neck, as he came in. Blue eyes flickered up to him as he stood silently by the portrait hole, but she apparently sensed that right now was not a good time to be annoying, and she didn't say anything.

It took an effort for him to gather the incentive to bring forth the imminent babble of cheerful, and then he said quietly, "Fionn."

She looked back up at him, fluffing her blonde hair out from where it was trapped against the back of her neck by the scarf. "Mm?" she replied in a questioning, tilting her eyebrows at him.

"Do girls generally celebrate the anniversary of a month and eleven days?"

The answer was immediately obvious, as she gave him a bewildered frown. "Not that I know of," she said, checking her hair in the reflection cast by a shiny trophy of last year's Gryffindor House Cup.

Ginevra had hated the poem.

Soundlessly, Tom turned on his heel and stalked up the wooden stairs to his dormitory, clicking the door sharply shut behind him. For a few seconds he merely stood in front of the door, breathing slowly and staring down at the floor without seeing. Then he moved back into action – retrieving his schoolbag from the foot of his bed, heading back down the stairs to Potions.

He was going down the stairs when *she* began coming up them. He prepared himself to walk past her as though he hadn't seen her, but she acknowledged him with a loud, cheery, "Tom!"

Oh, great.

He had already gone past her, but he couldn't force himself to keep going when she'd given him a direct greeting "Yes?" he said, tone acerbic, turning to her a cold stare.

Down at him – taller for once, with three steps between them – she frowned. "What's got your tie in a knot?"

Unconsciously, he lifted a hand to his school-tie. It was in perfect condition. He dropped his hand away, and scowled. "Nothing."

She gave him an *oh-yeah- right* look.

"Well." He shifted his weight from one foot to the other, staring down the stairs to where his lesson was. He didn't want to have to talk to her now, but it seemed now as though he had little choice in the matter. His eyes narrowed, and he muttered, " *If you didn't like the poem then that's your own opinion .*"

Ginevra's reply was a heavy sigh. "Tom, I wasn't being mean to you because your poem sucked."

He glanced at her sharply.

"I mean, it didn't suck," she amended, blushing. "That came out wrong. I didn't avoid you because of the you thought that your poem to you was-"

You're not making sense .

"Oh, God," she groaned, slapping her forehead with the heel of her hand. "I can't even speak English anymore." She took a deep breath. "Rewind. 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-"

Heat flooded his face.

"-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 short, nervous laugh. "Because *actually* I thought that your poem was just about the nicest things since chocolate." She laughed anxiously again, a vivid red colouring every surface of her face. "So... yeah." She scratched the back of her head. "I'm sorry."

"So you should be," he replied coolly, though the small smile cracking his lips was evidence that he didn't mean it. The Flobberworms previously residing within him had morphed into large butterflies. Better than chocolate? That was probably the highest compliment that he could have received from Ginevra, knowing her total obsession with it.

"I *think* ," she said, pulling out her watch from her pocket, "that I've made you very late for Potions, and made myself even later for Astronomy-"

Oh . He'd forgotten about lessons. Damn.

"-so I'll see you later – and will talk to you later – goodbye." She hopped a few steps down so that she was on the same step as him; she stood on tiptoe, and in each pause between her words, she kissed each of his cheeks, and then lightly on the lips.

With a last grin, she turned and darted away up the stairs, leaving him to for a moment before he continued to his own lesson, he just stood still to listen to the echo of her fading footsteps.

Again, I couldn't decide what to call this chapter. It was either going to be Paper Affections or Fighting Fire. I think I like Paper Affections better, though. Tell me what you think in a review, or just review anyway, please! :D

Heart, me.

Once Upon A Time

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: Yes, I know, another long wait for an update, though hopefully not as long. I'm trying to post up faster now, however, so you'll be pleased to know that. I really like this chapter; I think it's really sweet. Listen to *Hollipolla* by *Sigur Ros* while you read. I have no idea what language it's in, but my school used it for Speech Day and it was really good.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Thirty-Two: Once Upon A Time

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Angel of mercy

How did you find me

How did you pick me up again

Time was slipping away from Tom and Ginevra as he was called upon to revise for his NEWTs exams; Head duties; patrols; to consider what he would go into after school, careers-wise. He didn't have the slightest clue what he was going to do after he'd graduated. It wasn't something that he wanted to think about – not only would he have to find somewhere to live, something to do, but there would be no Ginevra.

It was stupid, he knew, to think that there would only ever be her. His first girlfriend, his first everything... it would be ridiculous to think that they'd always be together. It seemed unlikely that he would *marry* her, or anything. He just couldn't see - how did you get better once you've had the best?

The time that they did have was limited, and Tom wasn't foolish enough to waste a single second of it. Every moment was there and then, and if it wasn't, then he'd missed it, and chances were that it wouldn't come back.

Speaking of such, here and now was standing in the middle of his dormitory, arms around each other, something light, chaste, in the middle of a conversation cut short, that had turned into something else.

Then abruptly her lips were away from his, and his eyes fluttered open, struggling to concentrate. She was still dizzyingly close, her arms twined around his neck, huge hazel eyes right in his line of vision, which only made it more difficult.

"Tommy dearest..." she simpered, smiling innocently up at him.

"Oh, God." He knew *that* expression. His hands fell from her waist, and he folded his arms, looking down at her with a face mixing bemusement and curiosity. "What do you want?"

"Why, nothing, my sweetheart," she cooed, though the mischievous smile on her lips was an oxymoron against it.

He arched one eyebrow. "Fine."

"Well." She was still holding on, her nose butting his with her close proximity. "There is *one* thing." She put on a pantomime of thinking carefully, as though the idea of whatever it was that she wanted had only just come to her. "I dunno... maybe... you could get me a pass to the Restricted Section?"

"And *how* did I know?" Stepping back slightly so that her arms untangled from around his neck and her small hands slipped from his shoulders, he dropped down into his armchair. "No can do." He couldn't help but wonder why she needed to get into the Restricted Section... without the approval of a teacher. "Firstly, it would be rather obvious that I'd given you a pass for no reason, and," he scratched the back of his head, "secondly," he stretched slightly, as though uninterested, only his smirk a give-away that this wasn't so, "I see no reason to."

"Oh, but *please* !" she exclaimed, dropping down onto her knees and setting her lower lip in a pout (one that he was fairly positive wasn't intended to be seductive, but was having that effect anyway), her hazel eyes suddenly much larger and extremely sad-looking.

"I am not going to fall for the doe eyes, Ginevra," he told her.

She gave no reply, just looked away. Then, a moment later, she looked back up into his face... such a beautiful face... so twisted with sadness... there were actually *tears* in her eyes...

No, don't cry , a part of him protested, feeling his lungs choke up. *Stop – don't cry, please don't cry...*

"Stop it," he said, immensely annoyed at how well her doe-eyes were clearly working on him. He tore his gaze from her woeful face. "Stop it."

She still didn't answer. Wary of what he would see, he looked back at her. She blinked slowly. One single tear crawled down her cinnamon-coloured eyelashes, hanging at the corner of her eye... and her lower lip began to tremble.

Don't cry!

"Oh, *alright* !" he grumbled, folding his arms. "If you'll stop doing the doe eyes." He glared at his armchair. Stupid adorableness. Stupid sadness. Stupid mixture of the two.

" Yay ! You do know that you're wonderful, don't you?" she crowed, and bounced up from kneeling to hug him. Due to the fact that he was sitting down, this was quite... awkward.

Finding that his face was very warm and that his stomach was very tight, he shifted under the hug to a less compromising position. "I still can't get the pass for you," he told her, using conversation as a distraction from her, and the fact that she was more or less on top of him. "It's far too suspicious. I can get the books for you, though."

"Okay." She hopped away from the chair and stood in front of him, pushing her long hair out of her face.

Now that she was standing, he moved so that he was more comfortable and leaned into the back of her armchair. "May I inquire as to which book it is that you require from the Restricted Section?" he asked.

"Um." She hesitated for a shattered second. " The Art of Archaic or Base Archaic And Other Tongues Most Evile ."

A frown carved an impression on his brow. His mind flashed back to a sketch of a rune that she'd *found* ... to knowing what Parseltongue

sounded like... to the mystery that he had never quite realised she was. "Archaic?" His tone was sharper than he had intended to come out, his eyes narrowed. He flattened his tone to something more casual, as though it didn't really matter to him. He shook out his sleeve. "Why do you want books on archaic?" He scratched his wrist.

"Svengali."

In a space of time shallower than a millisecond, he froze, but his eyes snapped up to her like steel.

Svengali. The formal term for his problem.

The *professional* term for having a second soul inhabit a body and attempt to take over.

"Give it here," he said, holding out his free hand. She passed it across to him and waited as he observed the rune, now turned up the right way. It wasn't a letter from an ancient language that he'd learnt, as such... but it was definitely one that he knew. He couldn't help but wonder where the hell she'd found written Parseltongue.

He shrugged slightly. "It's just a letter. It sounds like..." he caught himself just in time. "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."

"Like Parseltongue?"

She took a short step backwards, something that didn't escape him, her breath stopping for a second before continuing, rougher than normal. She was... afraid. Did she already know? Was this all part of her plan? Get him to trust her, and then reveal him for what he was? ...Did she actually care for him at all?

At this last thought, a tight, hot pain flamed through his chest.

"A book on Svengali," she clarified, her voice trembling infinitesimally despite her obvious efforts not to let it do so. "Someone – something – is going around and attacking people." She spoke very rapidly. "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... and then, I dunno." She shrugged. "Save the day?"

She had included *him* in the list of people who'd been attacked... she had no idea. She had absolutely *no idea* that she was standing in front of – dating - had been hugging – had been kissing – a murderer. Someone who'd tried to kill her. Someone who could never escape the twisted fantasies of her death.

She would have to find out.

There didn't seem to be another option left.

She would have to find out.

Tom's face crumpled for less than a moment; then, realising that he was breaking down – something that he'd sworn he'd never let anyone see - he restored himself again. He suddenly found that he was shaking. With a loud sigh, he let his face fall into his hands, before jerking to his feet and crossing the room.

" *I knew this was going to happen* ," he whispered. He'd been watching the signs build up slowly – she was going to find out, voices would breathlessly simper, she was going to find out – and trying to deny what they were shouting at him.

Violently, he raked a hand backwards through his hair, struggling desperately for an escape route.

There wasn't one.

He collapsed into a seating position on the edge of his head and pinched the bridge of his nose, eyes closed, for a second; then he opened his eyes and let his hands hang listlessly from his knees. "Come here," he said tiredly, quietly.

Silently, Ginevra moved across the room and sat beside him, her face anxious.

The room was already Silenced. Everything was ready. "Can you keep a secret?"

He couldn't look at her, but he knew from the slight shift of air and the rustle of her hair sweeping down that she was nodding. He knew that she could keep a secret. He knew that he could trust her.

He bleakly *hoped* that he could trust her, regardless of whether he already did, with all his heart.

Two words. Just two short words.

"It's me."

They seemed to echo through the room. Those words were so small, so insignificant, so meaningless, even though the truth that they carried was going to change both of their lives.

Tom could feel her staring. Shock was radiating off her in waves. "Just... just give me a minute, okay?" he pleaded quietly, looking over at her. She was staring at him, hushed, eyes wide, yet not with fear. "A minute of your time, maybe two. And then, sure, run off and tell the world I'm a psychopath if you want to."

Drawing in a long, deep breath to steady himself, he began, tearing his eyes away from her. "You know Salazar Slytherin, I'm presuming? He... he had children. And..." he fought to find a way to phrase this. "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, hard. "Exact opposites – one sarcastic, one friendly. One sweet, one sour. One good, one... not so much."

It was probably stretching it a bit far to say that he, a child of Slytherin, was *ever* going to be 'friendly' or 'sweet'.

"Here's a story for you." His hands were trembling. He tried to stay still, and he began to worry about hyperventilation. It didn't matter that much. Out of hyperventilating and having Ginevra reject him, the former was much better. "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."

He thought back to his previous thought. "Well." He amended, "As pure-hearted as a Slytherin can get."

Breathe. Breathe. He swallowed again.

"Except that Merope did the worst thing possible for the Slytherin family. She... she fell in love with a Muggle." Tom tried to keep the slight emphasis off the word 'Muggle', but he couldn't. It was hard enough not to let *Mudblood* slip out. "The Muggle was... Tom Riddle."

Ginevra gave no noise to say that she was following the plot, or even that she was still listening. By not looking at her, he had honestly not the slightest clue what her reaction to all this was... he didn't want to know her reaction.

"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."

His jaw tightened, almost painfully. Again his thoughts from quite a while ago, in Hogsmeade, before he and Ginevra had begun courting, came back.

Tom thought of how he'd had to borrow money from Fionn; how if had been able to find his money, it might not have been enough to afford it anyway. "I'm not a charity." He lowered his head. It was more a question of his shame, though. No matter what he reminded himself (her family was killed in front of, she was taken away from her friends, she doesn't have a single person outside of this school left to care for her), there was still a sickening jealousy in the pit of stomach.

At least it wasn't their choice to leave her.

At least they wanted her.

"He wanted nothing to do with her..." Tom continued, staring blankly ahead into space. At this point, his voice was bleak, emotionless. It was an empty canvas only suited for being painted black. "He snatched her up on his horse, rode far away from anyone who knew them, and 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..."

That was a line that he couldn't make himself cross. He couldn't get the rest of his sentence out. He ignored the unwieldy end to that paragraph, and skipped on.

The Head Boy took another deep breath, although in his state of numbness and not caring, it wasn't necessary. "Merope was hurt, but she stumbled into a nearby town. She was bruised and battered, but otherwise fine. However, the unborn children weren't. ...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 pretence of not caring couldn't stay up any longer. His voice was becoming strained, and he could barely hear himself. Maybe then Ginevra wouldn't be able to hear him. She wouldn't understand. She would leave not knowing any more than she ever had done... except that she knew too much now; too late to go back.

"It... became a parasite."

To his shame, when he tried to keep going with his 'story', his voice cracked horribly, and he had to start again. "A few... a few months later... she had her child. Dying. She never saw her... her son."

If 'son' is the right word to use.

"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." (Or so he thought, at least.) "He hadn't absorbed extra limbs... or anything like that. The only difference was that... was that the baby had two minds."

Just a whisper now. Not much left to say anyway.

"She told the woman who had delivered her baby... to call the 'children'... Tom and Marvolo." He gulped. "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," his fairy-tale gone wrong drew to a close, "Tom Marvolo Riddle."

Ginevra sucked in a short gasp, her first actual reaction to anything he'd said. "My arm... Myrtle... *Vander* ..."

Very abruptly, he stood up. He couldn't bear her there any longer. He just wanted her to slip away, never talk to him again, never even look at him. He wanted it to be simple; he wanted it to be over. "You know, I think that my two minutes is up." He stared at the floor, clenching his fists tightly. "You can... you can go now."

And you'll let her walk away?

Of course .

A fierce pain took off in his stomach, also burning behind his eyes, and it was hard to breathe past a solid lump at the back of his throat.

Then, something that he hadn't expected – she ran forwards far faster than he had thought possible, and flung her arms around him tightly, burying her face in his shoulder.

Total bewilderment came over him. None of this made sense. Where was the terror? The screaming and running? Where was the *oh holy mother of God I'm dating a psychopath* ? "Er..." he said awkwardly, letting the most loathed of abbreviations slip out. "You... can go."

"And what if I don't give a damn for leaving?" she challenged fiercely, her arms still tight around him, lifting her face up to stare into his.

It was like he was meeting her for the first time again, and realising that she was beautiful. Red hair spilling over her shoulders against his jumper, a strong smell of apples almost enough to make his sinuses hurt, overwhelming hazel eyes that wrote out heaven in green and gold, a small frame, an unnatural warmth that burnt through everything... and a heart that could take in the fact that he was... he was *this* – and not care.

He began to wonder if there was, indeed, something perilously wrong inside her head.

"I... I don't..." His frown deepened. "You don't mind... that I'm a descendant of Slytherin?"

Ginevra smiled wryly. "If I was a Gryffindor, or a Hufflepuff, I'd probably run away screaming, but... I'm not, am I?"

So that's where the screaming and running went.

However, he was no more consoled. "And... and you don't mind that... that I'm a Parselmouth?" Perhaps there was something wrong with her. Having the signature trademark of Dark Lords – speaking to snakes – was not something that most people were okay with.

Her red eyebrows lifted. "Am I supposed to?"

"And..." Tom swallowed. His chest was constricting painfully with the thought of his next few sentences. He couldn't meet her eyes. How the hell was he supposed to phrase this... "and you're not bothered by... by..." He couldn't make anything else come out in relating to himself, and instead gestured vaguely 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?"

Instantly, his eyes found hers, staring down.

What the hell is that supposed to mean?

The monster flared up, burning behind his eyes, twisting his vision. He saw things that weren't really there, things that weren't really happening, and an emotion of longing and desire – desire for her *death* – that wasn't his own emotion caught fire inside him.

Kill her...

NO.

She hates me – she hates me – she hates me – God, I'm a psychopath – this isn't fair –

He shut down everything in his face. He'd had enough practice. He just wasn't used to doing it for her.

How dare she.

Kill... KILL...

His lip curled back. He'd trusted her. The only thing stronger inside him than the raging inhuman anger was the pain. He'd trusted her. He'd thought that she wouldn't care. He'd thought that she was beyond being the type of person who would give a damn. He'd thought that she was more than that. He'd thought that she was worth it.

He'd thought wrong.

Then, Ginevra set one hand on his elbow and looked up at him. "Not in the slightest," she whispered.

... *She doesn't care.* His expression softened. He was, for the most part, incredulous. But... she was worth it. He'd always known it.

He swallowed. "Do you mean that, or are you just trying to make me feel better when you're actually terrified of me?"

Teasingly, very quietly, she said, "If I was that scared of you, d'you think I'd do this?" She stood up on tiptoe – he saw what was happening before it did – he let his eyes drift closed – her eyes fluttered shut - she pressed her lips softly to the corner of his mouth – stars imploded behind his eyes – his breath caught sharply - and then she was gone.

Opening his eyes, Tom smiled, unable to help himself, unable to reserve his ecstatic happiness for grinning like a lunatic once she'd left, once no-one could see him. Then it hit him, harder than ever. He'd been contemplating it for a long time, but now it struck him like an arrow, straight in the stomach.

I'm in love with you.

His face fell. His heart hammered faster. Did he dare? *Did he dare?*

No, no, shit, don't –

It was coming out anyway –

"Ginevra..."

NO, STOP IT –

Panic was flooding his whole system like someone had opened the gate in a dam, and an entire reservoir of terror was swirling around him, clogging up his head – but he couldn't stop himself –

"Yeah?" She was peering up at him with those round, hazel eyes, a million colours, green, brown, gold – he could count every freckle, count every russet-coloured eyelash –

THIS ISN'T HELPING –

His breathing was coming harder and harder – he couldn't breathe –

Tom honestly wasn't sure which was worse – hyperventilating to the point of passing out, or telling her he loved her.

"You know you can tell me anything," Ginevra said kindly, her soft voice gentle with encouragement.

He decided. Telling her that he loved her was much worse.

You've only been going out with her for about five weeks –

DON'T – OH GOD – NO – SHIT – STOP –

His brain was on auto-drive.

STOP –

Excessive oxygen was making his head swim, and he stopped breathing all together as his throat choked up in a final, desperate attempt to stop himself – too late – no – *no-*

Everything in his head was lost to a blinding, chaotic panic – breathing – breathing much, *much* too fast – vision swirling – maybe about to pass out – it didn't matter – it was better than telling her –

Shit, he was going to tell her !

STOP – PANIC – NO -

NO-

" I think I lo- "

DONG. DONG. DONG.

She looked apologetic. "Damn. Sorry." She cringed. "I forgot about time passing. I have to be back to common room, I'll get in trouble. Sorry."

Tom was having trouble breathing. That was, without a doubt, the best time for a curfew-bell *ever* to ring. He struggled to regain control. His stomach had curled into a tiny ball, and he couldn't loosen it until she was gone.

Yet he didn't want her ever to leave.

"You'll tell me later, okay?" she verified, kissing him again. It was tremendous – he was so stunned and afraid of the things that he *felt* that he barely even noticed when the girl of his dreams kissed him.

"...Yes," he agreed, realising that she'd asked him a question. He looked down at her.

No , he corrected silently. *No. I'll never tell you.*

Because, despite what he showed everyone else, Tom Riddle was a coward, and he was terrified, more than anything, of *her* .

She scurried away down the stairs. Tom shut the door after her and pressed his back tight against it. He listened for the sound of her leaving through the portrait-hole and then slid down the wood of the door until he was sitting on the floor.

Stupid, stupid, stupid .

He hit the back of his head on the door repeatedly. Only now did he dare to breathe, holding his temples and pulling air in slowly so that the after-effects of severe hyperventilation disappeared.

Jesus , that was close.

Still, something hurt deep inside his chest.

You should have told her.

I would have lost everything.

Or you could have had so much more.

Thanks for reading this far, by the way, and thanks to everyone who's followed me all this way, I love you. I had yet *another* fanfic idea. :D Yay me. It's a Harry Potter take on the Shakespeare play Much Ado About Nothing , with Ginny and Draco playing Beatrice and Benedick. Yup, it's gonna be a GinnyxDracos. Should be good. Well, please review!

Heart, me.

Predator

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: YAY! I've *finally* got this chapter typed up, and I *am* going to have to give a **warning** for this one. It's a bit more mature, as A) there's quite a lot more swearing in this one, as I decided to get rid of the censorship I did in Rewind, and B) his daydreams get a bit graphic. Hm. Dear Tom. No control over his hormones whatsoever. Well, please don't hate me, I hope you like it!

Listen To: Only Hope by Mandy Moore

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Thirty-Three: Predator

Excessive oxygen was making his head swim, and he stopped breathing all together as his throat choked up in a final, desperate attempt to stop himself – too late – no – no- Everything in his head was lost to a blinding, chaotic panic – breathing – breathing much, much too fast – vision swirling – maybe about to pass out – it didn't matter – it was better than telling her – Shit, he was going to tell her! STOP – PANIC – NO- NO-

" I think I lo-" DONG. DONG. DONG.

He hit the back of his head on the door repeatedly. Only now did he dare to breathe, holding his temples and pulling air in slowly so that the after-effects of severe hyperventilation disappeared. Jesus, that was close. Still, something hurt deep inside his chest . You should have told her. I would have lost everything. Or you could have had so much more.

I'm hearing voices all around

I'm hearing voices calling now

What would they say

(To me)

What would it change

(Nothing)

In the free period just before lunch, Tom had decided to do a patrol of the school. That way, he would have lunch-time free to be with Ginevra, and he wouldn't have to lie to Dippet – or have to bribe/blackmail Fionn into not telling Dippet that he had been lying.

He glanced into a secret corridor to check for any trouble-makers, shining his wand-light down the length of it, and, finding nothing, continued.

The trouble that he found was not, as he had suspected, subtle and hidden in an unknown passageway. It was in broad daylight, being avoided or ignored by the few passers-by. A group of Slytherin seventh-year boys had a tearful third-year Hufflepuff backed up against the wall as they threw her books at her, at the head of the bullies, Ilivan Yaxley.

"Now do you want to study?" Yaxley sneered, throwing an ink-pot. It hit the wall beside her head and she flinched as black ink decorated her hair. "Sucking up to teachers – hah." He snorted.

"That's enough," Tom snapped, striding across to them and Immobilising a sheaf of fluttering parchment mid-air. "I'm reporting you all to Slughorn for detentions – now leave her alone."

"What makes you her bodyguard?"

"The fact that I'm *Head Boy* ," he snarled, levelling a glare at them as the girl scooped up her belongings, and fled, stifling a sob.

"Really?" Yaxley chuckled, but the humour slipped from his face to be replaced by an expression of icy malevolence. "Or is it the fact that she's a Mudblood?"

A cold feeling ran through Tom.

"I'm terribly sorry, sir." Yaxley swept into a low, mocking bow, while his friends laughed at their own stupidity; one even bobbed a clumsy curtsy. "I'm ashamed to say that I *forgot* you were now the Great Defender of the Filthy."

That cold that Tom had experienced flared from sub-zero to approximately near the temperature of the sun. " *What ?*"

"Aren't you?" Yaxley gasped. "Sorry. I just assumed, you know – protect one Mudblood, protect them all, right?" He shrugged. "I have to hand it to you, dude. I didn't think that you could get much lower, but, freakin' A, I was proved wrong. *Personally* , I would have thought that being a half-blood was shit enough for you... I guess opinions are subjective." He smirked. "At least you can only contaminate each oth-"

Tom had no idea what it was, why it was, or how any of it, but suddenly seven years of *Mudblood* and *scum* and *filth* and *half-blood* – a year of unrequited Ginevra – seventeen years of never being good enough – nine months of not being worth anything – exploded out of him –

Tom thought of how he'd had to borrow money from Fionn; how if had been able to find his money, it might not have been enough to afford it anyway. "I'm not a charity." He lowered his head. It was more a question of his shame, though. No matter what he reminded himself (her family was killed in front of her, she was taken away from her friends, she doesn't have a single person outside of this

school left to care for her), there was still a sickening jealousy in the pit of stomach.

At least it wasn't their choice to leave her.

At least they wanted her.

" I think I lo- " DONG. DONG. DONG. She looked apologetic. "Damn. Sorry." She cringed. "I forgot about time passing. I have to be back to common room, I'll get in trouble. Sorry."

She would never have felt the same.

" Aww," Yaxley cooed, translating Tom's words in exactly the way that he had feared. "Riddle's in love..." He fluttered his eyelashes mockingly, but what was worse was when he snorted and sneered, "Don't kid yourself that she'd ever want anyone like you ."

-and then suddenly three of Yaxley's friends had their arms twined around his, restraining him and dragging him backwards away from a Yaxley whose entire face had just become a spectacular fountain of blood.

Tom had a vague recollection of his fist shattering both the other Slytherin's nose and jaw, but couldn't remember details. All was lost in a haze of scarlet vision created by a pure, unadulterated fury.

KILL RIP TEAR KILL BLOOD

HALF-BLOOD MUDBLOOD FILTHY SCUM

KILL MURDER SLYTHERIN KILL

Yaxley straightened up, taking his hands away from where they'd been cradling his mashed-up face and staring at the blood dripping between his fingers. Then, his face very quickly becoming bright crimson with embarrassment and anger, he ripped forwards. " You piece of shit !" he roared, drawing back a bunched fist-

KILL RIP KILL DEATH

He only landed one blow to Tom's ear before the calm and composed (normally, at least) Heir of Slytherin broke free from the hold of his captors and punched Yaxley – repeatedly – as hard as he could – not caring about how much his knuckles hurt – driving his fist forwards again and again with every ounce of the *crap* he'd endured for seventeen years.

NOW! KILL HIM KILL HIM MURDER

The voices were shouting for death, and right now Tom had never been more tempted-

RIP TEAR MURDER

It was only as Tom was reaching for his pocket to draw his wand, every curse that he knew flying through his end – that included the Cruciatus Curse – the Killing Curse – that he realised what he was actually doing.

"No," he gasped, understanding how he was teetering on the edge of killing someone... *on purpose* . Staggering backwards – vision fading – red – black – pain stabbing through his stomach – shaking – and he turned and ran from the site of a crumpled, beaten Ilivan Yaxley, where his friends were tending to his wounded pride.

Couldn't see – couldn't breathe – legs giving out – stumbling through a corridor – making his way to the library – to the Chamber of Secrets – to *safety* – away from everyone else – no idea of direction – couldn't see anymore – shadows –

Crumpling against a wall-

Agony ripping his stomach into several pieces-

Someone suddenly so close to him –

"Tom!"

KILL – no longer able to resist –

"Can you hear me?"

A warm hand –

Eyes open –

RIP TEAR – *Ginevra* !

NO! He couldn't kill her – not Ginevra – anyone but Ginevra – *himself* – just not Ginevra – *so painful* – couldn't – *no* –

Never in his life had he been this close to possession – and fought so fiercely against it.

The pain that had been previously been echoing through his fist was a pinprick compared to his chest being torn sideways – his stomach imploding – his throat tight with the lust for blood – *PAIN* –

The ground rushing up to meet him –

Unconscious... fading...

WILL – NOT – HURT – HER –

Warmth permeating his robes and skin – someone so close – *apples* – such a pain for... for *her* – and yet not in the way that he'd ever have wanted – *no* –

A groan of the pain tore from his mouth and he was aware, in the back of his brain, of being dragged through a corridor, a small, fragile body struggling to support him...

So much pain, Tom... why not just give in?

NO – I – NO –

Shaking violently... darkness... forcing himself back... trying to climb to the surface... slipping to the bottom... the frantic screams of everyone he'd ever hurt, or tried to hurt, or even *killed* – echoing – his legs giving out – falling –

KILL RIP MURDER BLOOD DEATH LAUGHTER DEATH

Forcing his eyes open, he could recognise his dormitory, even with these twisted eyes – these twisted eyes, longing for her blood across his hands – and he collapsed on the bed, drawing his legs up tight against his chest –

Your own pain , he shouted silently in his head, digging his fingernails viciously into his temples as he clutched his head, trying to make the voices stop, *your own pain – NOT HERS-*

"Tom!"

Her fear made it worse.

MURDER DESTROY RIP TEAR KILL RIP

"Tom, stop it!"

Scared... of *him* ?

Him turning to look up at her – blurring in and out of focus – beautiful – even more so in death – frightened – prey – and a predator perfectly matched for her –

WHY IS SHE HERE?

DOES SHE NOT UNDERSTAND-?

"Get..." he struggled to speak, his voice strangled with the hiss and snarl of an unnatural Parseltongue. "Get... the *fucking hell* out..."

"No," she retorted, her eyes flashing with her obstinacy. "I don't give a damn about your pride or-"

" *I will kill you!* " he snarled at her. "What part of that do you not fucking *understa-* "

And then the pain was too much to talk – he could only struggle – sit there and struggle – the agony ripping through him – the agony of a soul tearing into two pieces – shuddering uncontrollably – a scream blocked inside his throat –

KILL NOW JUST DESTROY

Somehow, despite his warnings, she was suddenly there – so close – apples – and warmth- and her soft breathing – her faintly audible heartbeat – imagine if that breathing stopped – if that pulse stopped – making everything so much harder – and he was so much more determined –

"It's okay..." Warm fingers curled around one of his hands... "It's okay.... It's okay..."

KILL MURDER RIP TEAR

" *Don't hurt her* ," he hissed, squeezing his eyes tightly shut, curled in a ball, clinging to her hand so tightly that it must be painful for her, " *don't hurt her. Don't you dare fucking hurt her.* "

A warm hand, gentle, brushing against his icy forehead, pushing back his hair, whispering...

Pain lessening...

Slowly...

Darkness fading in... so tired... unable to hold on... too exhausted... safe now...

"It's okay... it's okay..."

...It was okay...

Sleep.

Senses came back slowly. Starting with feeling. Pain... in stomach, in chest, in head, in back, dry throat... the slump of crumpled blankets tangled underneath him... a warmth nearby...

Smell... nothing but apples, taking everything else over.

Hearing... just the soft, faint whisper of his own breathing, roughened by the pain of being brought back to reality from slumber.

Tom opened his eyes.

Gradually, they focused, and fixed on the image of a motionless, pale Ginevra beside him – and, more importantly, on the scarlet blood that dotted the sheets.

OhmigodohmigodI'vekilledherItriedsohardnottoandithurtsomuchandI

He rolled into a sitting position and then leaped up to kneel frantically beside her. " *Shit !*" His voice came out several octaves higher than normal, in a panic, and cracked from the unnatural pitch.

And then, to his shock, Ginevra's eyelids fluttered for a second before she woke up, frowning sleepily at him.

A gasp tore from Tom's mouth as he sank down onto his heels, raking a hand violently backwards through his hair, a vicious emotion rising inside his chest that mingled frustration with relief – and a chill of how it could have felt if he'd lost her.

"Oh, Merlin," he muttered, dropping his face briefly into his hands. He breathed deeply, trying to calm down. *It's okay. She's fine.* "You have how scared I was, do you?" he snapped, letting his hands fall away from his face and glaring at her.

"Er." She propped herself up one elbow and then pushed herself to sit up, itching the back of her head with one hand. "Well."

"Try to see this from my point of view, for a second," he said, distressed, though he was still trying to hide it. "I sometimes get... I sometimes kill people. By accident. I know that I've been... I don't know, *possessed* ," he bit out, for want of a better word, "shall we say. All I remember is that the person I l..."

He froze, realising how close he'd come to say *the person I love* .

"The person... my..." He struggled to rescue what he'd been saying, without admitting what he was fighting to keep hidden. "My girlfriend," he finished, "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 !"

Ginevra flushed red, and turned her face down in shame, biting her lip. "Sorry..."

He sighed. It wasn't her fault that she was asleep at a bad time. "You *idiot* ," he mumbled anyway, wrapping his arms around her and pulling her into a hug, resting his chin on her small shoulder.

"That's me," she said softly, leaning the side of her head against his, the short sigh that ruffled her loose red hair marking her quiet content. Then, a moment later, leaving him to only wonder how she could possibly know, she asked, "Tom – it's not usually like that, is it?"

He shifted his face slightly sideways so that he could look at her, faces inches apart. Her eyes were amplified a thousand times, holding nothing but a gentle curiosity. He couldn't help but wonder when his impassive mask had become see-through. "...No."

"Why not?" she turned more fully towards him. "Why was that different?"

This was not something that Tom wanted her to hear. He didn't want her to know that he was weak – that he was strong enough not be taken over – that he was only ever willing to be that powerful when there was a risk of losing *her* . Because then she would realise that she meant a *hell* of a lot more to him than just some teenage girlfriend.

"Because I resisted," he finally answered, his voice stony and bleak, ripping his gaze away from hers.

"Why didn't you resist before?" she asked, leaning back into his left shoulder, the top of her head fitting snugly in the curve between the top of his jaw and his throat.

His stomach tightened. "You have too many questions."

He imagined how this conversation could proceed from here.

Why didn't you resist before?

Because the only thing that I care about not killing is you. Because I... I... I love you.

To his despair, she insisted on prying answers out of him. "Why didn't you resist before?" she pressed, tilting her head awkwardly to look seriously up at him.

A short exhalation of resignation pulled from him. "Because before," he said quietly, reluctantly, taking her hand and turning it over in his, his eyes tracing the soft freckles embedded in her pale skin, "I didn't have anything that I needed to protect."

"Protect?" she whispered, the slight tremble of her voice heart-rending.

I love you . He closed his eyes and hugged her to him again, still trying to shake off the echoing numbness that had quickly filled every

part of him when he thought for a few seconds that he'd *lost* her – that there might be a world *without* her.

As if there could ever be a world without her.

The soft breathing just by his ear drew Tom's attention to her small, heart-shaped lips, and he suddenly became very aware that she was lying down in his arms, cradled against his chest, on his bed, and they were quite alone... he shifted uncomfortably. He knew that they had just reached a very deep and important point in their relationship (her lack of fear for his... *problem*), and that now was *not* the time...

...but *Jesus*, he *wanted* her.

So vividly that it was making his stomach hurt, he could imagine just moving over to turn and pin her down, that warmth closer than ever, what every freckle would taste like under his desperate lips, exploring that pale, soft skin and everywhere that it led-

A loud, complaining grumble brought him back from his fantasies, and he stared at Ginevra.

"Was that your *stomach* ?" he said incredulously, his eyebrows lifting almost to his hairline. There was no way that a body organ could make that loud a protest in hunger.

She turned to give a sheepish grin. "Maybe." Upon seeing his expression, she said crossly, "Hey, I skipped lunch. It's not a crime to be hungry."

"You can't be *that* hungry."

"Oh, *believe* me – I can." She laughed. "Do not get between a Weas-" she stopped suddenly, her eyes widening impossibly in a flash-second surprise and fear, before she corrected, "Peregrine." She amended, "Do *not* get between a Peregrine and her food." It was too late to take back what she'd said, though, and while – judging by the

colour of her face now – it meant something... but not to him, certainly. He had no idea what her slip-up was supposed to be.

"Go on, then." Tom rolled his eyes and pushed her back gently to imply that she should leave, but she didn't move. "There may be some food left in the Great Hall if you hurry, and if there isn't, you can just go to the kitchens, I suppose."

She frowned, twisting in his lap to look into his face. "Aren't you coming?"

"No, I'm not hungry." He stretched slightly, and scratched the back of his neck. "I'm too tired, anyway."

"Aw, now I feel like I'm abandoning you!" Ginevra exclaimed, giving a pout that lost him again to a whirlwind of sultry daydreams, past which he struggled to concentrate.

"I don't mind," he assured her, massaging his temples from the ache of the past-pain that lingered. "I'll see you... sometime. Maybe at dinner. Tomorrow, probably." He yawned. "I don't know." He reached up to her face to push some of her untidy hair behind one small ear; she leaned into his hand, the sweep of her eyelashes against his knuckles sending a stab of static through his heart.

His throat so tight... so close... and yet so far...

The pounding of his heartbeat drowning out all else in its frantic *ka-thump, ka-thump* ...

"I... I I..." he released his breath in a short burst, turning away and standing clumsily, using one of the poles at the foot of his four-poster bed to support him. "I'll see you later." He effortlessly smoothed the awkward of the *I-I* of 'I-love-you' into *I'll* .

He couldn't look at her as she left the dormitory.

He hadn't lost her, but he knew that he was losing her anyway. Everything – every moment, every snatch of emotion – was a constant battle between his heart and his head. However, the problem with being as intelligent as him was that he didn't have the recklessness to try and let his heart win.

Aw, I started crying like four times while I was writing this. My emotions are a *mess* . Yeah, sorry that the update took so long. I'm so busy. I had to help my friends make a film for their English project (casting me as soundtrack, director, screenwriter, photographer, costume design, and I.T technician), choreograph a dance routine for my school's dance show, coursework, my dog had a stroke, Chinese tutoring, *and* I have a cold. Meh. Life is bugging me right now. Please make up for it by... maybe... reviewing? :D

Heart, me.

Dangerous Waters

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: I'm really sorry for such a delay, I really am. This was *supposed* to be the chapter where Tom shows Ginny the whole thing about mirrors and his alter-ego and blah blah, but I just could not write that chapter. I tried so many times, and for *ages* , and then I realised that I actually hated the chapter in general anyway. So I progressed onto the next chapter and wrote it in a day (what a waste of time), which is *this* chapter, and I've decided that once I've finished the whole trilogy thing, I'm going to go back and edit and rewrite, and I am *definitely* cutting that crappy chapter out of Rewind. Sorry. I'll find another way to put that in.

Sorry for the rant!

Listen To: *The '59 Sound* by The Gaslight Anthem . Ironic song title, eh?

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Thirty-Four: Dangerous Waters

" I... I I..." he released his breath in a short burst, turning away and standing clumsily, using one of the poles at the foot of his four-poster bed to support him. "I'll see you later." He effortlessly smoothed the awkward of the I-I of 'I-love-you' into I'll.

He couldn't look at her as she left the dormitory.

He hadn't lost her, but he knew that he was losing her anyway. Everything – every moment, every snatch of emotion – was a constant battle between his heart and his head. However, the

problem with being as intelligent as him was that he didn't have the recklessness to try and let his heart win.

With every passing day, the NEWTs exams grew ever closer – especially now as the revision mocks were drawing to a close. Tom's last mock (History of Magic) was today, after lunch, and he was not looking forward to it. However, no matter what happened, there was always Ginevra.

She had spied on him for his Defence Against the Dark Arts mocks, and, during his Herbology mocks, he had heard her nearby, shouting at someone. It was impossible to concentrate when someone was *everywhere* .

Morning came, descending into the Head common room just as Fionn and some of her friends were leaving. One of them – probably Corgan – threw a, " *Hello, sunshine !*" at him, which he ignored. He fastened his cloak more securely about him, and then, shifting his schoolbag to a more comfortable position on his shoulder, pushed through the portrait of Robin the Rich.

The clouds didn't restrict the sun from coming through every window that Tom passed, blinding him. It seemed stupid for the sun to be so happy when everyone else was struggling with exams.

As he moved down the grand sweeping stairs into the Entrance Hall, he caught a glimpse of something pink, but deemed it a hallucination when he focused his eyes and saw that the only thing or person in the Hogwarts lobby was the slightly confused Philips.

Tom paused briefly in front of the sixth-year. "Philips," he said coolly. As both Philips and Hartwin were close companions of Ginevra, he felt entitled to acknowledge them now. Hartwin he had a slight resentment to, as she was much similar to Fionn, but Philips was tolerable, as he was quiet and studious and had probably been the first to accept him.

"Hey, Riddle," the younger Slytherin said calmly. "How are you? And by the way, Ginny and Grace are behind that column in giant rabbit-suits."

This was one of the strangest things that Tom had heard or seen in a long time, but stranger still was when his statement was proved to be true – two large pink rabbits emerged, one a lot larger than the other. It was easy to see which was Ginevra.

" *ALDEN !*" both Ginevra and Hartwin complained loudly, pulling off the head of their rabbit-costumes to reveal their faces, hot and flushed from the confinement of the stuffy outfit.

Ginevra turned to him, forming her hands into paws and clawing at his arm, trying, "Rawrr?" Her shoulders then slumped with resignation, and she spun to shout at Philips. "You spoilt it, Alden! MEHHH!" Then, to Tom's shock, she hit him around the face.

Tom's eyebrows lifted.

"OUCH!" Philips clutched his face, leaping away from the vicious redhead. " *Jesus* , Ginny!"

Hartwin commented, "Nice."

"Oops." Ginevra promptly flushed scarlet. "Didn't meant to do it that hard."

Philips was still whimpering pathetically about his injured face – though it was probably more his injured pride at the fact that he'd been hurt by a girl. "That *hurt* !"

"Don't be a baby," Ginevra said crossly, mirroring Tom's thoughts almost exactly, but then in contradiction, she hugged her friend. "There, there, darling, I'm sorry." She patted him on the head. "You know that I love you, right?"

It was stupid – it was *ridiculous* , even – to be jealous, but even telling himself that he was being immature and possessive didn't stop his stomach from clenching tightly into a painful ball.

She can say 'I love you' to Philips, and she can't say 'I love you' to me.

She can throw the words 'I love you' around so lightly, I can't even say it when I mean it.

In an instant, Tom felt sick and he couldn't stay any more. He stalked away up the stairs, away from the Great Hall even though he hadn't eaten any breakfast. He wasn't hungry.

As he walked quickly down the second-floor corridor, he heard rapid, clumsy footsteps coming after him.

"Hey!"

It was Ginevra. His jaw tightened, and he moved faster.

"Hey, Tom! Come *back* ! Toooooom, *WAIT* !" her pathetic howling was getting on his nerves now. He slowed down slightly, hoping that allowing her to catch up would make her shut up.

"Morning," he said, his tone glacial. He didn't even look at her. He turned to slip into a secret corridor behind a painting of the legendary Polar Nymphs.

"Hey, what's wrong?" Ginevra called after him. He could hear that she was getting further away as the tunnel became narrower. She, in a rabbit-suit, would probably not be able to fit. "Tom, please slow down, I'm in a bloody rabbit-suit!"

"That is not *my* problem, it's *yours* ," he said coldly, his voice quiet but carrying in the echoing tunnel.

"What if I get stuck?" she wailed. " *Toooooom* ! Come back! I'm going to get *stuck* !"

"Get Philips to help you. I don't care."

The sound of padded rabbit footsteps behind him abruptly stopped. "Oh *God* , Tom," she said exasperatedly behind him, "you're not *jealous* , are you?"

Tom stopped walking for a moment. Was he that obvious? "No," he said stiffly, and continued moved through the tunnel.

" *To-om* ," she said wearily, "he's my best friend. "I'd never go out with him-"

"May I remind you that you did?" he retorted, feeling that she was missing the point.

"Okay, *firstly* , that was to make jealous and that she and Alden would get together, *secondly* , that was only for a month and you had all of my attention anyway, and *thirdly* , HAH! You just proved that you're jealous."

What? Tom frowned. *How had his comment proved that he was jealous?*

He folded his arms and turned around to say, "No, I didn't. And I'm not."

"You don't *have* to be," she said consolingly, tilting her head slightly to one side. "I'm going out with you, aren't I? What more proof do you need that I fancy you and only you?"

Tom involuntarily flinched at the last sentence.

Fancy.

Never love.

" *Don't be a baby,*" Ginevra said crossly, mirroring Tom's thoughts almost exactly, *but then in contradiction, she hugged her friend.*

"There, there, darling, I'm sorry." She patted him on the head. "You know that I love you, right?"

She can say 'I love you' to Philips, and she can't say 'I love you' to me.

She can throw the words 'I love you' around so lightly, I can't even say it when I mean it.

"Why?" he muttered, shifting awkwardly from his left foot to his right.

Ginevra frowned. "What?"

A warmth filled Tom's face. "...I said... why?" he mumbled.

"Why?" she said disbelievingly, as though it was a stupid question. "What do you mean, *why* ?"

"It's fairly simple!" he burst out, no longer able to stop himself, however he tried. "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 first impressions because you can practically read their minds anyway and you're bloody *beautiful* , okay?"

Staring down at her through the slight gloom, Tom's breathing was laboured, upset... also panicked. He hadn't meant to say all of that. He was getting himself into dangerous waters.

"You could have had anyone in this school," he said, his voice lower, trying to stay calm. "You could have even had a teacher, if, so help me God, you'd decided that was who you'd set your sights on, but – but – you didn't. You – chose – *me* ."

Her eyebrows lifted. "Would you rather I went out with Professor Devin?"

" *Stop it* ," he snapped. "Stop trying to make everything *funny* , I'm being serious!"

Ginevra fell silent for a moment. And then she began.

"You're tall." She took a deep breath. "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 asshole. 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 don't realise, but you have the damn cutest puppy-dog face I have ever seen. 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. And... you're probably the only person who doesn't judge me."

Tom had nothing to say for a while. He wasn't used to hearing compliments, let alone vast quantities of them at the same time. He swallowed, and then said nervously, "The world was watching?"

"Mm-hm." She bobbed her head in a nod. "Just like they are now. Watching a confused Head Boy and an over-sized pink rabbit who's stuck in a secret tunnel."

Unable to help himself, all of his distress banished in the way that only she knew how, he smiled. "A rabbit and a beaver," he mused. "I think it goes nicely." He stepped closer.

"Yeah..." Ginevra shifted, still wedged between the two walls of the corridor. "Don't you think it would go even better if I could move?"

Smirking, he stepped closer still. "Oh?" he said softly, tipping his head as though considering what she was saying. "I think we're fine here."

In response, Ginevra grinned, but he demolished that smile with his lips, pressing a hand flat against each wall on either side of her head. She awkwardly lifted her arms from her sides to wrap tight around his neck-

"Miss Peregrine! Put that boy down this instant!" came the sharp voice of Professor Ornella from in the corridor behind them.

Ginevra abruptly let go of him and turned around to face the Herbology teacher, blushing and pushing her hair behind her ears.

"What the devil are you wearing, girl?" Ornella exclaimed, but then her eyes travelled past the redhead and landed on her companion. She blinked. "Mr. Riddle?"

Clearing his throat awkwardly, very aware of his messy hair and swollen lips, Tom straightened the front of his robes. "Yes, Professor?"

For a moment, Ornella just stared at both of them. Then she recovered herself. "Really, Mr. Riddle. You should be setting an example for the younger students," she scolded. "Please – out of my way."

Ginevra flushed even redder. "Er." She glanced anxiously at Tom, and then bit her lip, looking down at her feet. "I'm stuck, Professor."

It took ten minutes to enlarge the walls of the corridor and back her down it out the other entrance, and then to shrink the corridor again to its normal size. Once they were free, Tom received his first detention (for unacceptable public displays of affection), which he didn't really mind, as he took the detention also with Ginevra (for inappropriate attire, for blocking a communal pathway, and for unacceptable public displays of affection).

Getting in trouble had never been so much fun.

Haha. They got in *trouble...* for *snogging*. Well, you'll be happy to know that there's only about three or four chapters left of Backtrack and then... it's FAST-FORWARD! I've been working on it loads during my vaguely Backtrack-shaped writer's block, so I've got up to nine chapters to post. YAY ME! I can't wait!

Heart, me.

The Twenty Four Seven Effort

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: Yay! I can update quickly! I'm on the holidays now, so I have loads of free time. Just yesterday, I wrote four chapters of Backtrack (finishing it) and a chapter and a half of Fast-Forward. I am on a *roll* ! So, yeah, daily updates for Backtrack, and then hopefully not too long a wait before I start posting Fast-Forward!

Listen To: *Love Is The End* by Keane . I just got the new album – I LOVE it! :D

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Thirty-Five: The Twenty-Four-Seven Effort

In response, Ginevra grinned, but he demolished that smile with his lips, pressing a hand flat against each wall on either side of her head. She awkwardly lifted her arms from her sides to wrap tight around his neck-

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Getting in trouble had never been so much fun.

Sing to me the song

Of the stars

Of your galaxy

Laughing and laughing again

Night was falling, and for some reason he knew not, as Tom looked out of his dormitory window at the fading sun, he felt as though something was ending – and not just a day.

Something that was going to change everything.

He rubbed his eyes and closed his curtains. He was just being stupid. He grabbed his cloak off the back of his door, pushed his feet into his shoes, and headed down to the common room.

Curled up on the sofas were Fionn and her friends, but he paid no attention to them.

"Where are you going?" Fionn chirped after him.

Tom sighed irritably, and turned back to face them. He had *hoped* that he would be able to leave without having to talk to or even look at any of them, but that didn't seem as though it was going to happen. "I'm going on *patrol* , due to the fact that *you haven't* for the

past week , and for all we know, there could be several psychopaths hiding behind tapestries ready to attack."

"Oh, how sweet of you to protect us," one of Fionn's friends, Corgan, simpered.

He flashed her a cold look. "No – on the contrary, I'm telling them where to find you." He arched one cruel eyebrow. "The Gryffindor Tower's password is *fortitudo animus* , isn't it?"

Without waiting for any of them to say anything in reply, Tom turned his back on them and disappeared through the portrait-hole.

He highly doubted that there would be any psychopaths hiding in Hogwarts, but seven years had taught him that Fionn's friend were easily scared. They probably wouldn't sleep tonight.

A smirk was present on his lips as he checked the last secret corridor before the stairs down to the Entrance Hall, and then he descended-

What the hell?

Silhouetted against the night sky outside was the figure of a small person clutching a large bundle... a very familiar figure.

Tom hurried down the steps after her. "Where are you going at this time of night?"

Ginevra froze, and then turned to face him, biting her lower lip. "Um."

Now that he was closer, and now that she was face on towards him, Tom could identify what the bundle in her arms was that she was carrying. "With blankets, no less." He lifted one eyebrow at her.

She fidgeted with the hem of the quilt that was gathered in her slim arms. "I want to sleep under the stars-" She sounded as though she wanted to say more, but cut herself off, looking at her feet.

"Right." Tom folded his arms. "And you're going to pay no attention to safety or security or the fact that a number of paedophiles, psychopaths and prisoners might get into the Hogwarts grounds and attack you... because *you* want to sleep under the stars."

"I can look after myself." Ginevra scowled up at him.

" / know you can," he replied, even though the idea of her lying unconscious in the grass in early April, when it was still cold, was not an idea that he particularly liked. "However, in Dippet's eyes, every student has the mental capacity and maturity of a ten-year-old, and therefore must be coddled and looked after at all times."

"But-"

Tom interrupted. "Just..." he sighed. "Do what you like. I'm not really bothered. Sleep outside if you must – be careful, though." He gave a short nod, and a small smile. "I'll see you tomorrow."

He turned back to continue with his patrol, but was stopped again:

"Come with me."

Tom stopped... walked a bit further... stopped again... turned. He stared at Ginevra, trying to sort out what was going through his head.

Dangerous-

Not if I'm with her-

I'm the most dangerous of all-

Not if she's with me-

Sleeping under the stars-

With her-

The feeling of something drawing to a close... the feeling that something would be lost, and it would never be tangible again... the feeling that something might not even exist anymore...

"Please."

Tom swallowed. "I... I don't want to get in trouble."

This was the least of his concerns. Head Boys had done far worse in the past, and there was no doubt that Head Boys would do far worse in the future. His problem was that he loved her. His problem was that she didn't love him in return. His problem was that he was terrified that he would fall even more in love with her... and then he'd have no chance of going back.

He couldn't go back now from this point anyway. He didn't *want* to go back from this point.

"Neither do I," said Ginevra, and for a moment of confusion, Tom thought that she was addressing what he had been thinking – then he understood.

"You're not making any sense," he told her. If she didn't want to get in trouble, then why was she sneaking out in the first place?

She smiled. "I know."

Tom bit his lip, thinking, deciding.

It isn't as though you could possibly love her any less if you didn't go with her now.

He sighed. "If we get caught, I'm blaming you," he said, and glanced back into the Entrance Hall cautiously for anyone watching them, and then closed the doors behind them. He listened to them lock.

No going back now until six-thirty tomorrow morning .

Then he turned to her, looking down into those most astonishing eyes, and lifted one eyebrow expectantly.

Five minutes, a slightly twisted ankle (Ginevra had spun in a circle and fallen over), and a lifetime's worth of happiness later found them sitting atop her quilt under the willow tree by the Black Lake.

And every star sprinkled in the clear sky sang for them.

"Do you do Astronomy?" she asked out-of-the-blue, seeming to follow his gaze upwards.

"No," he replied. "I have never done it, and never will."

"Why not?" she twisted in his arms to peer up at his face, suddenly so close that he could count freckles, categorise the colours in her eyes.

"It is... a stupid subject."

"No, it's not!"

"Prove it," he said amusedly.

"It's really interesting." She turned away again, and stabbed a finger at the sky. "See that star there? That's called Ariel."

He couldn't see the star that she was pointing at. This was probably why he'd never been anything close to remotely good at astronomy. All of the stars looked the same to him. He decided to cover up his idiocy by just pretending that he was too bored to care. He dropped his head onto her shoulder and gave a loud fake snore.

"Hey!" Ginevra protested, elbowing him in the ribs. "You've at least got to pay attention, you berk."

"Ow," he complained. "Yes, yes, Ariel, stars, got it." He rubbed his sore ribcage. She had pointy elbows.

"It symbolises good luck and wealth," she continued to explain happily. "It makes a formation with six other stars, and the constellation 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 weirdly-shaped spade if it is... and it can only be seen once every two-hundred years."

"Hm," Tom mused. "So this is the one and only time we'll ever see it."

"Well, unless you live to be two-hundred-and-seventeen, then yeah, basically," she said gently.

"I might," he yawned.

"And we could be the longest-standing relationship that the world had ever seen."

Tom looked down at her, surprised... hopeful. "Would you stay with me that long?" he asked, not daring to think that there might be a life for him where he never needed to lose her.

Ginevra's faint smile was genuine, and she curled both of her arms around his left elbow, settling the side of her head on his shoulder. "Definitely."

A sigh pulled from his lips, ruffling her messy red hair by his cheek. A world where she was always there, always with him, always in his arms... it seemed far too good to be true. Far too perfect to be possible.

"Tom?"

She was turning again in his arms, now accidentally nestled against his chest – not something that he minded in the slightest – and looking up into his face.

"Yes?"

There was a slight pause before she spoke, seeming awkward, biting her lip (the space where her teeth had dug in left the tiniest of dents behind in her lip – a dent that he could imagine exploring with his own teeth, with his own tongue)-

"Sorry for bringing it up... but... why does it happen?"

He blinked. Well, that was a killer of romance and hormonal daydreams.

Without any doubt, Tom knew immediately what *'it'* was, but was confused as to why she was asking. He thought that he'd explained it all quite thoroughly a while ago in his dormitory, when he had first told her about his problem.

"No, wait, hang on." Ginevra frowned. "I didn't phrase that right. I meant... like sometimes... like, *now*, you're fine. And then, a few weeks ago..." she trailed off, not finishing her sentence.

"Well..." he shifted uncomfortably. "I worked that... it's – it's..." he took a short, deep breath. "Emotions. I think."

"I don't get it," she confessed after a moment.

"If I'm angry, or upset," he said, very quietly, "then it's easier, for... for... it to happen." He hadn't wanted to tell her this part about his little supernatural problem. He hadn't wanted for her to find out just *how much* she meant to him – which she surely would, if she could work that he was always happy when he was with her.

"A few weeks ago... what happened then?"

He tensed, his muscles stiffening at the memory. If there was any person he loathed above all – more, perhaps, than Fionn and her friends, *and* Dippet, *and* Dumbledore, *and* the people from the orphanage, put together, then it was: "Yaxley."

"What about him?"

"Nothing."

"Tell me."

"No."

" *Tom* ..." she said warningly, "whatever trouble Yaxley may be in for because of what he said will be *nothing* compared to what I'll do to you if you don't tell me."

Abruptly, he remembered Ginevra's multiple threats on Reeve's child-making abilities, and decided that it would be best to tell her.

"He... he called you a Mudblood. He also said... he said that I was little better, and at least we could only contaminate each other," he said tiredly, not caring to get annoyed at the memory. "Don't worry, though," he told her, seeing the dark expression that cut through her face. "You don't have to hurt him. I did enough of that."

The redhead's eyebrows rose. "What did you do?"

"I punched him a few times. I think I definitely broke his nose, and maybe his jaw as well, but I'm not certain," Tom said quietly.

" *Nice* ." Her eyes widened appreciatively.

A silence followed her exclamation, and it was one that not even the slight chatter of her teeth could break when a cool breeze swept from the Forbidden Forest – wordlessly, he pulled her closer, one arm slipping around her shoulders to keep her warm. He didn't care if she took all of his warmth. She could take everything.

"I would join in," Ginevra suddenly said, snuggling into his side, "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 spike football-boots."

Warmth flooded Tom's face. Damn. He hadn't realised that he was singing. "Sorry."

"No, it's nice."

"It's strange having someone who knows what football is," he commented softly.

Ginevra laughed. "It's strange having so *many* people who *don't* know what football is."

Of course. Before now, she had pretty much been a Muggle ... except home-schooled magic.

"I keep forgetting that this is only your first year here," he chuckled.

"Fit in that well, do I?"

Tom watched the side of her face – all that was visible of her expression was the slight crinkle at the edges of her eyes, and the twist of her smile. She fit in so much better than she realised. She fit in better than *he* ever had. She was so perfect...

Tell her.

He swallowed.

You don't even have to look at her. You don't have to see her expression while you say it. You don't have to know her reaction until you're ready.

Say it.

I love you .

Then his plans were shattered, as she turned around to look up at him.

His stomach and chest hurting from the twenty-four-seven effort of trying not to love her, he tore his eyes away and stared into the distance. It was stupid, imagining that he would ever be able to tell

her. Maybe he should just stop trying – before he ruined what they already had.

"You know, you don't have to pretend that you don't think I'm pretty," she teased, her voice full of laughter.

Tom didn't answer. There was nothing that he could say in response. Every outcome was far, far too much... too much *everything* - when he tried it out in his head.

Okay, I'll stop pretending. You're beautiful.

You're not pretty - you're so much more than that.

Hearing that he was not going to respond, Ginevra didn't either. Instead, she closed her eyes and settled her arms more comfortably around him to sleep, smiling when he held her around the waist.

"Goodnight, Tom" she said, already drifting towards a peaceful sleep.

"Goodnight," Tom murmured back to her, but the slow ease of her breathing told him that she was probably already dreaming and wouldn't hear him.

He sighed, watching the flutter of her cinnamon eyelashes with every movement she made in her dreams. He wished that he could know what she was thinking of. Her friends? Her family? ...Him?

In her slumber, she twitched slightly, pushing the side of her face into his shoulder, the top of her head tucked under his chin, her red hair tickling his jaw.

"...I..." he tried to say it, now. *I love you* . It wasn't hard – especially not now, when she was asleep. She couldn't hear him. It was easy. And yet he still couldn't do it.

Letting a rough breath that held all of his frustration towards himself, Tom rested the back of his head against the trunk of the willow tree

that he and Ginevra lay beneath, staring blankly up at the canopy of new green leaves above them.

If he couldn't even tell her that he loved her when she was unconscious, then what hope was there for him?

Aw... we know what happens next. Please review!

HUGE THANKS TO:

storm-brain: made a freakin' brilliant trailer for Rewind, which is posted on Youtube (search *pop pop bananas*, I think).

I haven't been getting any PMs, so if I haven't been answering, then that's probably why. But I honestly adore you, and I *would* comment the amazing trailer you made, if A) I had a youtube account, or B) my internet let me post comments. It doesn't let me post FF reviews, either, which sucks.

MadeNew: is in the process, I think, of writing up Press Play from Tom's POV for me! It's wonderful!

WOW, I LOVE YOU! I honestly do. You have no idea how hard it is to write up Tom's POV, thank you so much!

Heart, me.

Stupid

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: Awww... this is the sad chapter. Well, you've already read it, but you can always read it again, right? XD And I added an extra bit on the end, so that's new for you. Mehh. It makes me cry... I'm far too angsty for my own good.

Listen To: *Stupid* by Sarah McLachlan . Or something like that. I can never spell her last name. But you absolutely *have* to listen to it – this entire chapter (from his POV, at least) was inspired by it, and it just... fits! Mrawr. Can't explain it.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Thirty-Six: Stupid

His stomach and chest hurting from the twenty-four-seven effort of trying not to love her, he tore his eyes away and stared into the distance. It was stupid, imagining that he would ever be able to tell her. Maybe he should just stop trying – before he ruined what they already had.

Letting a rough breath that held all of his frustration towards himself, Tom rested the back of his head against the trunk of the willow tree that he and Ginevra lay beneath, staring blankly up at the canopy of new green leaves above them.

If he couldn't even tell her that he loved her when she was unconscious, then what hope was there for him?

I'm sorry for the angel

That Heaven let me think was you

It's too late

|x|

How stupid could I be

A simpleton could see

That you're no good for me

But you're the only one I see

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 a bizarre dream about coat-hangers and school-books, but that was nothing problematic. 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 the 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.

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 the obvious.

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.*

Mentally agreeing 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, an uninterested 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.

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 slight 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. His windpipe was completely blocked. There was no air in his lungs; just this burning emptiness.

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* .

He staggered backwards a step, and another, hitting someone – they swore at him – he nearly fell over backwards –

... *Gone*.

That one word pounded through his head, so strongly that it was painful, echoing a million times, overlapping with itself, chaos filling his head-

GONE – GONE – she's gone – she's gone – she's – GONE – gone –

Not coming back.

His fingers went limp as realisation hit him full on in the face – and agony coursed through him like lightning. He actually gasped,

sucking in a huge mouthful of air in a futile attempt to numb the pain, such unbelievable pain, and he accidentally 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.

A groan tore from his lips, him wrapping his arms tightly around his stomach, so tightly it almost cut off circulation, almost doubling over, the letter crumpling in his hand like trash, his fist pressed tight to his side.

I love you .

He turned and ran, leaving his schoolbag abandoned by the Transfiguration classroom. He didn't see where he was going – he didn't know who it was that he ran into, who he bounced off and hit the wall, who exclaimed, "Tom, are you okay?" in an unusually non-chirpy voice – he didn't *know* , he didn't *care* , it didn't *matter* –

Stumbling through a corridor, falling, having to hold onto the wall... he pressed his palms flat against the wall, eyes tightly closed. "I love you," he gasped out, though there was no-one there, no-one listening, no-one left who would care. Maybe if he kept his eyes shut, he could just imagine... imagine that she was here, she was in the corridor, she was perhaps against the wall, her face in the space between where his hands hit the wall. "I love you, I love you, *I love you I love you I love-*"

His eyes snapped open.

There was no-one in front of him.

"No - " He pushed a hand viciously backwards through his hair, clinging to the dark waves, gripping his face tightly as he struggled to inflate his lungs. " No -"

His stomach buckling, his knees giving out, every ragged and shallow breath agonising, torturing himself with the idea that maybe it wasn't true – maybe he'd done something wrong – something to annoy her – and – and this was her idea of a joke – some *sick* joke – maybe to see how much he loved her-

"I could have told you that myself!" he shouted, spinning around and punching the wall as hard as he could. His fist hurt immediately, but what hurt so much more was knowing that he was lying.

He could never have told her.

Not when he knew that he'd be opening himself with everything. Not when he knew that any hope of self-protection would be shot. Not when he knew that to her, he was only as much as *Scott Reeve* had ever been. It was a stupid idea, a stupid daydream, that he would ever be able to look her in the eye and say, "*I love you* ."

It didn't matter. It wasn't like he was ever going to get another chance anyway.

FDSFGJBASJKA. Too angsty. Oh well. For the next chapter, I tried a new way of writing it – so that it seems more like he's blocking out reality. Absolutely no descriptions of how he feels... at least until someone mentions his little Ginnyvevrah. Aw.

Also, there may be a slightly long pause between finishing Backtrack and posting Fast-Forward, because I have so many plot-bunnies for it, and I'm juggling them all, trying to fit them into the plot... and if a certain plot needs to come before all of the others, then I'll have to change all of what I've already typed up. Bleurgh. It'll come soon, me promise.

... *You Haven't Told Me Anything* by Keane on his brand-new album is so insanely catchy that it's not even funny. Ba-be-da-doo-doo-doo, babeda-doo-doo-doo-doo...

Heart, me.

The Things You Couldn't Say

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: Okay, here's the weird chapter. I'm sorry, by the way, that it takes ages to get to the point. I know, I've got *loads* of quotes and song-lyrics at the top, but I liked them all so much. And if you don't want to read them, then you can just skip past them, can't you? And this chapter has got the bit where he writes her poem. You know, the Silhouette one, which he has read out anonymously at graduation... before she came back. Or after she *didn't* come back. Whichever way you look at it.

Listen To: *The Scientist* by Coldplay .

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Thirty-Seven: The Things You Couldn't Say

His stomach buckling, his knees giving out, every ragged and shallow breath agonising, torturing himself with the idea that maybe it wasn't true – maybe he'd done something wrong – something to annoy her – and – and this was her idea of a joke – some sick joke – maybe to see how much he loved her- "I could have told you that myself!" he shouted, spinning around and punching the wall as hard as he could. His fist hurt immediately, but what hurt so much more was knowing that he was lying. He could never have told her.

Not when he knew that he'd be opening himself with everything. Not when he knew that any hope of self-protection would be shot. Not when he knew that to her, he was only as much as Scott Reeve had ever been. It was a stupid idea, a stupid daydream, that he would ever be able to look her in the eye and say, "I love you."

It didn't matter. It wasn't like he was ever going to get another chance to.

Tell me you love me

Come back and haunt me

Oh, let's go back to the start

|x|

And entering with quiet relief some quiet place

Where never fell her foot nor shone her face

I say, 'there is no memory of her here!'

And so stand stricken, so remembering her.

|x|

Come what may,

Come what may,

For I will love you

Until my dying day

|x|

Everything is here forever

Until it goes

You gave it all away

Kept nothing for yourself

Monday.

Had a revision essay on the purposes of asphodel due in for Potions, and a project on how the Summoning Charm was invented.

Skipped breakfast. Wasn't hungry. Went straight to lessons. Had Herbology first. Had Fionn as partner. She tried for five minutes to make conversation. Then she gave up.

Charms next. Handed in homework. Alcippe, the substitute for Vander, seemed pleased with it. Says he'll give back marks on Thursday. Couldn't care less.

Had free period. Hated free periods. Nothing to do. An emptiness. A blank, staring emptiness. Went to the library and revised. Group of third-years were too noisy, so checked out the books and revised in my dormitory. Fairly uninteresting.

Skipped lunch. Wasn't hungry. Sorted out Head patrol rota again – Fionn was getting invited to lots of end-of-year parties. Wrote down that he'd take all of her patrols for her. Gave her more time for doing nothing. Gave him less time for doing nothing.

Two weeks.

Wednesday.

Careers period. Went to see Dippet and some of the exam board to talk about what he wanted to do with his life.

"Hello, Tom, please take a seat," Headmaster Dippet said cheerfully, pulling a fresh sheet of parchment towards him.

Sat down.

"You took..." Dippet glanced at a document nearby, which held his reports, exam results, studies, and everything else he'd ever done at

Hogwarts. "History of Magic, Charms, Transfiguration, Defence Against the Dark Arts, Herbology, Potions... very good all-round subjects, I must say. The all-Outstandings received on your OWLs give you excellent options." He picked up his quill and dipped it in the ink-pot next to him. "Now, is there anything *particular* you have thought about doing once you've graduated?"

"No, sir."

Dippet observed him. "There must be *something* ."

"No, sir."

"How about the Ministry? I could put up a good reference for you, and try to get you something there." Dippet winked. "I could be looking at the next Minister for Magic, if you play your cards right."

"Thank you, sir."

"Is there any area of the Ministry you think that you would be most interested in?" Dippet again scanned the documents at his elbow. "You're quite into Defence Against the Dark Arts, I see. Perhaps a career as an Auror? It would mean a further four years of education, but I'm certain you'd do very well."

Didn't answer.

"Perhaps not an Auror, then." The Headmaster wrote something down. "I'll just put in a good word to the Ministry about you in general, nothing certain. How does that sound?"

"Thank you, sir."

"Very well, then." Dippet put his quill back in his ink-pot, and looked up with a mild smile. "That will be all, Tom."

Didn't answer. Stood and turned towards the door.

"Tom – are you alright?"

A flash of pain. Stomach muscles tightened. One short, ragged breath came out that he didn't have time to get under control. Composed himself. Turned back to Dippet. "Fine, sir."

Dippet didn't look too sure, but he didn't question what he'd said.

Left the room. Didn't like how Dippet had assumed that he was somehow involved in his problems, and if he wasn't, then he should be. What did the Headmaster know? He'd never lost-

PAIN.

Tom twisted his head violently sideways, squeezing his eyes shut and biting down on his lower lip as hard as he could to distract himself from the black hole within. He curled his hands into tight fists, not breathing until he was under control again. It was just a flash-fire through his chest. It didn't mean anything.

Opened his eyes and headed towards dormitory to get books for next lesson.

Another week.

Tuesday.

Fionn waited for him in common room, grabbed and abducted him. Forced him down to Great Hall. "You haven't eaten anything in days. You're going to kill yourself! And regardless of whether that was what you had planned, I *refuse* to be known as the Head Girl whose partner Head Boy committed suicide on her watch."

Couldn't be bothered to resist. She was too stubborn. He hated stubbornness. He'd known too many stubborn people.

Walked down with her. She sat at Slytherin table beside him, chatting amiably to people nearby who clearly didn't want to be chatted to.

She served herself eggs and bacon and toast and just about everything she could see.

Sat in silence, not moving.

"Hey!" Fionn hit him with her spoon. "The point of you being here is to eat something. Now *eat*."

"I'm not hungry."

"Yes, you are." Fionn sighed exasperatedly. "Look, what do you want? Eggs? Pancakes? Toast? A waffle? Some cereal? Some fruit?" She held up various items of food as she named them.

She picked up the fruit bowl.

One smell came stronger than all the others.

PAIN.

Suddenly felt as though he was going to be sick. That scent involuntarily bringing back memories that he'd fought to keep silent and still in the back of his head. Put a hand to his nose and mouth, partly to prevent any possibility of being sick, partly to block out the smell of apples. Stood up so quickly that he knocked his chair over, and left.

Happy birthday .

April the twenty-first.

One of the most painful days of his life.

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 book 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

Clenched fists so tightly that the quill shattered, spraying ink across his school shirt and his desk. Pushed back the chair, a squeal of wood on wood as it skidded backwards. Pain contorting his chest and stomach so freely, so agonisingly. Covering his face with his

hands, moving across the room, away from the parchment where written down were all the things that he'd never been able to say.

Another week. Five weeks now.

It wasn't a test. It wasn't a joke. It wasn't just someone messing with his agony. It was serious.

She wasn't coming back.

Accepting the emptiness. It wasn't as though there was ever going to be anything else. This was what happened when he opened up. Emptiness. He gave away everything that he had and then he was left with emptiness.

Head common room. At an hour in the morning when no sane human should be awake. Sitting on the sofa, unmoving. Staring into the dying fire, not seeing anything.

Realised that Fionn was nearby. Looking at him anxiously, then she sat quietly beside him. "Are you okay?" She cringed. "No, sorry, stupid question." She sighed. "Do you want to talk about it?"

"No."

"Are you sure, because I-"

" *I said NO , Fionn !*" Suddenly bellowing. Could barely breathe.

Fionn silent. "...I'm only trying to help, you know."

"Don't."

All quiet. Then, Fionn softly: "Tom. ...She's not coming back, is she?"

PAIN.

Tom dragged in a deep, short breath, becoming immobilised with the level of pain that abruptly set him aflame. Eyes tightly closed. Chest tensed with trying not to breathe. Breathing hurt. Moving hurt. Everything hurt.

He jerked into a standing position, his hands balled into fists that dug his nails deep into his palms. "No." He forced the words out. "No, she's not."

That was the last time he ever spoke of her.

EHHH. So sad. Yeah, I know, it wasn't that great. Well, did you like the weird way I tried to write it? I wanted it to be like... eh. Like he was living, but he wasn't *alive* . As though everything was just what he did, but not what he felt. Also, I'm not going to the chapter in the future from Tom's POV, because that would just be messed up. It would be like: 'MUAHAHAHA EVIL – Ginny, I love you!' ...Which would be stupid.

AND I'M SO EXCITED!! I'm such a stupid little easily-excited person, but still! I had the most MASSIVE, AMAZING plot-bunny ever for Fast-Forward, and I've just started writing it all and it's AFBKGBAGFJGASFJDAK!! –squee- I'm up to chapter thirteen, and in chapter fourteen is when it gets really dramatic and oooooohhh my gooodd. –BOUNCEBOUNCE-

Heart, me.

Illusion

A/N: This fic is only up because I am so hopelessly obsessed with my Rewind characters, so I'm posted the whole thing from Tom'

A/N: YAY!! This chapter's so sweet and romantic that *ooohh my goood* it's lovely. Well. I think so. –SQUEE- I love it. LOL, some people thought that it was finished last chapter. Nooo . –scoff- I like my happy endings. I really like the quote that I used at the top of this chapter – it's from Moulin Rouge. :D

Listen To: *The Scientist* by Coldplay . Or *Love Is The End* by Keane. Or something equally fluffy.

Disclaimer: Don't own it.

Backtrack

Chapter Thirty-Eight: Illusion

All quiet. Then, Fionn softly: "Tom. ...She's not coming back, is she?"

PAIN.

Tom dragged in a deep, short breath, becoming immobilised with the level of pain that abruptly set him aflame. Eyes tightly closed. Chest tensed with trying not to breathe. Breathing hurt. Moving hurt. Everything hurt. He jerked into a standing position, his hands balled into fists that dug his nails deep into his palms. "No." He forced the words out. "No, she's not."

That was the last time he ever spoke of her.

You cannot know true happiness

Until you have learned

What it is to love

And be loved in return

Life went on.

NEWTs mocks came back. Had top marks on everything except History of Magic. Didn't matter. Hated History of Magic anyway.

Sat on the edge of unmade bed, staring blankly forwards. Could hear Fionn downstairs, moving around. Talking. Probably some of her friends with her. Shouting to him, "HEY, TOM! GO TO BREAKFAST OR ELSE!"

Tom.

*" Oh, and **Tom** ?" He turned his head back slightly towards her to show that he was listening to what she was saying. "Happy 1959," her voice said happily from behind him.*

*" Hell yeah!" she exclaimed, sounding relieved that finally someone grasped what she'd been trying to say for quite some time... whatever it was. Also annoyance in her voice, that no-one else had realised in the first place. "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** ."*

*It wasn't helped by still having her crushed against him, her fingers curled into his hair, her eyes so close to his eyes that he could only see hazel – green and gold and brown – she was so devastatingly beautiful that the only thing stopping him from kissing her again was the shock of it all. She let go of him, and twisted her gaze away from him. "Er." Her voice was shaky. "Goodnight, **Tom** ."*

*" Goodnight, **Tom** ," she said, already drifting towards a peaceful sleep. He sighed, watching the flutter of her cinnamon eyelashes with every movement she made in her dreams. In her slumber, she twitched slightly, pushing the side of her face into his shoulder, the top of her head tucked under his chin, her red hair tickling his jaw.*

His lip curled.

He hated that name.

Faint click of portrait-hole closing. Gone.

Gone.

An omnipresent ache. Didn't change much. Could be because he hadn't eaten in ... a while. Didn't matter. Wasn't hungry. Looked across at the clock. Breakfast now. Could go and get food. Didn't want to.

Stood. Dressed. Shaved. Brushed hair. Got cloak and shoes. Picked up schoolbag. Went downstairs. Common room empty. Left, ignoring what Robin the Rich had to say.

Didn't go down to the Great Hall for breakfast as Fionn had said. Went straight to first class – Arithmancy - walking slowly, taking the long route. Could say to Fionn that was late for class and couldn't have breakfast.

Arrived by classroom just as others in lesson began heading in. Followed line of seventh-years. Found seat. Sat down. Studied.

Life went on.

Next class – Potions. Packed up bags. Was held behind by Professor Wiskunde to talk about taking an advanced Arithmancy course after leaving school.

"I'll consider it, sir." Wouldn't consider it. Sounded like some of the most boring crap he had ever heard.

"Let me know your decision as soon as possible," Wiskunde said with a fake smile.

"Yes, sir."

Put schoolbag on shoulder. Left class. Didn't like Arithmancy. Despised Wiskunde. No need for *extra study* .

"Tom!"

Immediately, he froze.

He knew that voice. A voice that haunted six weeks of dreams, of what could have been – and six weeks of nightmares... of what was.

" *Tom !*"

Don't turn. Don't. It's not her. It'll hurt. It'll-

He turned.

Some hundred metres away, at the other end of the corridor... was *her* . She was just standing there, not doing anything, just standing – and yet she was so breathtakingly beautiful it hurt.

Vaguely, in the back of his mind, Tom knew that he needed to look away, he needed to leave, before he opened himself again, and then whoever this person was casting such a perfect enchantment illusion of Ginevra would have the satisfaction of seeing him break down...

And yet he couldn't look away.

The image of Ginevra bit her lip, almost as if fighting back tears – *well* , he thought, *that part of the illusion is wrong, because Ginevra would never cry for no reason* – and then she ran towards him, fighting through the crowd.

Tom watched without breathing as she came closer and closer, running as fast as her short legs could carry her forwards, and then

she was directly in front of him, and she flung her arms tightly around his neck and kissed him hard.

It was so perfect that it was getting to the point where it was all going to boil over and it was going to be agonising – this illusion was brilliant – the smell of apples that he'd been longing for, a six-week despair – the sweet, powerful taste – the long, vibrant red hair – the bold, round eyes – the spray of untidy freckles - the warmth of her small body crushed against his –

And then he gasped against her mouth as reality hit him.

It wasn't an illusion .

He took her in his arms, lifting her higher, his hands pressed against the small of her back, her fingers tangling in the shorter hair at the back of his neck, his eyes closed in what could only be described as pure *bliss* -

He couldn't breathe, but it didn't matter, nothing mattered – *she was here* – but then she broke away, dragging in air, tears in her eyes, and instead buried her face into his shoulder, hugging him so tightly that it would have hurt, were he not now invincible.

"What are you – why – I don't – you said – the letter – it-"

Lightly, Tom set her back on solid ground, but not letting go of her, not trusting whatever higher power existed that she wouldn't just disappear.

"I know, I know, and I'm so sorry, but I'm here now and I'm never going to leave..." she whispered, hugging him desperately. Against the side of his neck, he could feel her short eyelashes flutter, and he could feel the tears threatening them.

"GINNY!"

Hartwin and Philips came sprinting down from the other end of the hallway, and Tom had to fight the urge just to hold her and never let go – to keep her for himself – to pick her up and run away where it could just be him and her and no-one else, forever.

Ginevra turned briefly to see them, and grinned, but then her expression became soft and serious; she looked back up into Tom's face. "Tom?"

He'd forgotten how perfect his name sounded when she said it. He could only nod, staring into her eyes and watching the million colours of green, brown, gold, beauty – swirling around, chaotic, peaceful.

She seemed to be hesitating, and then said gently, "I was just wondering... are you... are you in love with me?"

In an instant, he was paralysed. Everything emotion in his body had swelled to an inconsolable happiness when he saw, and now... now... he didn't know. He could hear his heartbeat in his ears. He struggled to breathe, but nothing was coming out. Nothing was working. Everything had been shut down in this all-consuming, blinding panic.

It was everything he'd always been terrified of.

It was everything he'd ever dreamed of.

It was the chance that he'd been able to make possible.

It was the destruction of everything he knew.

It was losing her all over again.

It was winning her and keeping her forever.

It was loving her.

"|-|"

Tell her. Tell her you love her.

His throat was extremely tight, extremely dehydrated, his chest heaving as he tried to breathe, a dry feeling as though he was going to be sick filing his mouth-

"I – I think so," he blurted out, his stomach clenched so tightly that he thought that he was just going to cave in and collapse. "I – yes."

Ginevra sighed, sounding relieved, and she pushed her face into the side of his neck, breathing deeply. "Good," she murmured. "Because otherwise telling you that I love you too could have been really awkward."

A nervous laugh broke out of him. "What?"

Because he could have *sworn* he heard an ' *I love you too* ' somewhere in that sentence, but *that* couldn't be right... could it?

"You heard what I said."

' *Because otherwise telling you that I love you too could have been really awkward* '.

' *Telling you that I love you too* '.

' *I love you* '.

Tom's breath rushed out very quickly, the tightness in his stomach easing. "Yes..." he mumbled, holding her and never wanting to let go, kissing her hair, breathing in that smell of apples, smiling. "I did."

Then, too soon, much too soon, she was torn away to be embraced tightly by her best friends. He didn't mind. It didn't matter if she wasn't in his arms... *she loved him* .

Still, he held onto her wrist, feeling her pulse throb underneath his fingers. That heart... was, for some reason, *his* .

She looked up at him in surprise, biting her lip in a shy curiosity, biting back her smile as he pressed his lips to the inside her wrist. "I love you," he whispered against her faintly-freckled skin, and then let go, straightening up.

The strongest smile that he'd ever allowed to be revealed past his protective shield in public flickered onto his lips.

It was the most perfect, most beautiful, happiest illusion that he'd ever had fill his brain – and the rest of him, taking over everything in this moment. She was here. She was back. She was never leaving. She *loved* him.

And the best part was that it wasn't even an illusion.

THE END

-SOB- I love it. He's so fluffy that he's like a duckling. Aw. What a messed up comparison. Well, Fast-Forward should be coming very soon – in a week, at most, two days, at least – but not immediately, because I still need to sort out the plot. But it's coming! I'm so excited! YAY. By the way, just curious, did anyone notice in this chapter, at the start, that he was moving towards Voldemort-ness before she came back? Like, how he hated his name. Just wondering.

Major thanks to:

storm-brain – for making the world's sexiest Rewind trailer on Youtube!

MadeNew – for writing up Press Play from Tom's POV for me!

Everyone who's read this far, and who hasn't thought it was terrible; everyone who's reviewed; everyone who's pestered me for updates on a daily basis. :D

The likes of *MGMT*, *Sarah McLachlan*, *Rascal Flatts*, *Coldplay*, *Paramore*, *Keane*, *Delerium*, *Eisley*, *Elliot Minor*, *The Gaslight Anthem*, *Relient K*, and other artists or bands whose music is too amazing for words.

My band. We've written at *least* two Tom-Ginny based songs. XD We really need to get lives. I don't know why I had to put that up here.

P.S. I Love You , The Notebook , Moulin Rouge , A Walk To Remember , My Girl , The Duchess , the music video of *Stupid* , and all the other films that I've stolen ideas from.

Oh yeah! J.K Rowling. Thanks, you. :D

And now? We wait for Fast-Forward. ...Have fun. I hope that the suspense eats you.

Heart, me.

WOW! What's 60 minus 23? I can't count. Because however much that is, that's how many days it took me to *write* , *edit* and *finish posting* ALL of Backtrack. I'm pretty amazing, if I say so myself.

THIRTY-SEVEN! I GOT IT! Thirty-seven days.

Oh my God, I'm pathetic. It took me like ten minutes to work out 60 minus 23. I'm supposed to be choosing to Maths at Sixth-Form... with like square roots and *pi* and stuff. I'm going to be crap.