

“Everyone’s sort of noticed that the golden trio hasn’t been very, well, trio-y lately,” Ginny breached. “I s’pose we all thought you’d figure it out.”

“I don’t know if we will this time, Gin,” Harry admitted aloud for the first time. There was so much more going on; so much Ginny wasn’t aware of. Harry wasn’t sure whether he was being too paranoid when he thought Ron and Hermione were spying on him for Dumbledore, but either way he was a different person with different priorities and they didn’t seem able to handle that.

The three of them walked in silence for a while, Harry still glowering a little, when Ginny cleared her throat. “Hey, Harry. On the subject of friendships... I wanted to say sorry, actually.” Harry looked at her in confusion, and she ducked her head. “The last couple of years I’ve been a bit... well, stalker-y is probably one word for it,” she said with a grimace. “Only I’d heard so much about you when I was a kid from Mum, and then you were *there* and you were my brother’s friend and you were so *nice*, and I developed a bit of a crush.” She managed not to blush as she said this. Harry didn’t bother pointing out that ‘bit of a crush’ was somewhat of an understatement; he didn’t want to be mean.

“Anyway, this year since we’ve hung out more and everything, and you’re so close with the twins, you’re basically one of my brothers now and it would be pretty strange to keep fancying you,” she said, her words coming out rushed and her ears as red as her hair. “So I’m just gonna nip that in the bud and say I’m sorry for being weird about it before. But if it’s alright, I’d really like to be your friend.” She looked hopeful, embarrassed by her own actions in the past.

Harry was silent for a moment. “On one condition.” Ginny eyed him warily. “*Please* stop telling everyone I’m crap at kissing.”

The redhead burst out laughing, having to stop walking to catch her breath for a minute. “I can do that,” she agreed. Harry grinned, slinging an arm over her shoulders.

“Then I guess you’ve got a seventh big brother.” He looked over his shoulder, where Neville was watching them both in utter bemusement. “As your big brother, do I need to have a word with Neville over there?” Ginny turned bright red, and Neville began spluttering.

“Don’t you dare,” she told him, elbowing him in the side and darting away before he could retaliate. “Or I’ll hex you the same as I do my other brothers.”

“Noted,” Harry said with a grin, holding his hands up in surrender. “I wouldn’t really, anyway. Not unless you asked me to. You seem like you can look out for yourself.” Growing up with six older brothers, two of whom were Fred and George, Harry didn’t doubt that Ginny was probably better at looking out for herself than he was.

Ginny smiled at him, and the three walked side by side for a little longer. Ginny glanced up at him again, before they made it to the Entrance Hall. “Harry,” she began. “Since we’re family and all... do you think I could have a go on your Firebolt sometime? When the others aren’t around? They always make fun of me when I say I want to fly.”