"What's the matter with him?" he asked. Ginny glanced up at him and smirked.

"He asked Fleur Delacour to the Yule Ball."

Harry gaped. "He *what?*"

"I don't know why," Ron moaned. "What was I thinking? She was just stood there, talking to her friends — there were *so many people watching* — but I'd heard she didn't have a date and I just— it just happened!"

Ginny pat his arm sympathetically, biting her lip so hard Harry thought it might bleed. He sucked in his cheeks to stop from grinning.

"You'll find someone," he encouraged.

"What if I don't?" Ron's voice was full of despair. "I'll be the only one in our year without a date!" Was that really true? Harry was impressed at everyone's ability to pair up. "Except Neville, of course."

"Neville's got a date," Harry piped up, glancing at Ginny curiously. Hadn't she told him?

"What?" Ron groaned loudly. "Great! Just great. Even bloody Neville's going with someone, and I'm not. Who'd go with him, anyway?"

"Me." Ginny's ears were red, but it was with fury more than embarrassment. Harry was glad he wasn't the only one wanting to smack Ron for talking about Neville like that. "I'm going with Neville."

"What? But— what?" Ron didn't seem to know how to react to that.

"He asked me, I said yes. Neville's nice." Her voice dared him to argue.

The portrait hole opened, and Hermione walked in, eyeing the scene with confusion. "Why weren't you two at dinner?"

"Things to do," Harry replied vaguely.

"Ron got turned down for the Yule Ball," Ginny piped up, a little more viciously than she would have before Ron said something about Neville.

"Oh? Eloise Midgeon starting to look a little more attractive, now?" Hermione asked icily. "All the good-looking ones taken? I'm sure you'll find someone, somewhere who'll have you."

Ron scowled. Then his face did a bizarre 180 of emotions, staring up at Hermione in hopeful realisation. "Hermione. You're a girl."

"Really? I hadn't noticed."