

“Maybe that wasn’t the smartest idea,” Harry agreed, wincing. “But that doesn’t give him the right to be a prick about it. That stuff about keeping an eye on you in the common room is way out of order.”

“He was right, though,” Ginny sniffed. “I mean, Neville and I never did anything, not while I was with Michael. But I wanted to. Isn’t that bad enough?”

“I’m not gonna sit here and tell you you’re a bad person, Gin,” Harry sighed. “I think you’ve done some stupid things, but that doesn’t mean you deserve to be treated like that by *anyone*. Get George to give you his lecture about consent sometime; it’s a doozy.” Ginny giggled weakly.

“I never should’ve dated Michael in the first place.”

Well, Harry wasn’t going to argue about that. “Why did you?” he blurted. “I mean, I know it’s none of my business, but... I thought you and Neville really had something, after the Yule Ball.”

“We did,” Ginny groaned, shaking her head against Harry’s chest. “Merlin, Harry, Neville is... I’m in love with him. I know I am. I think I’ve known since the Yule Ball, deep down. But I’ve *definitely* known since I kissed him on the Express at the end of last year.”

Harry went wide-eyed. “Nev didn’t tell me about that.”

“Really?” Ginny looked up at him with red-rimmed eyes. “Oh. Well, yeah. I kissed him, before the train pulled in to the platform. And I spent all summer thinking about him and I just got so scared because I am *way too young* to be in love. Like, I always dreamed when I was a kid about finding Prince Charming, y’know? The one man who would sweep me off my feet and that would be it, forever. All those fairytales mum would tell me — the ones where the prince would have black hair and green eyes.”

Harry made a face, and Ginny stuck her tongue out at him.

“But I always thought I’d find him, y’know, when I’m twenty-five and playing for the Harpies or whatever. When I’ve got my life together. When I’ve had the chance to fail at dating and make stupid decisions about boys for a few years. Not at the age of bloody thirteen.”

“Well, I don’t know about having your life together, but I’d say you’ve managed the whole ‘fail at dating and make stupid decisions about boys’ part,” Harry said dryly, earning a whack to the shoulder. “Look, Gin... if Neville is your Prince Charming, then that’s that. Maybe he is, and you’ll never date anyone but him. Maybe he isn’t and you’ll break up when he graduates and then when you’re twenty-five and playing for the Harpies you’ll find some *other* Prince Charming. But is it really fair on either of you to keep pushing him away and dating boys you don’t even care about just because you’re too scared of your own feelings? I thought you were a Gryffindor.”

The redhead snarled at the insinuation she wasn’t meeting house standards, but then her face fell. “It doesn’t matter anymore, anyway. I’ve been such a shit to Neville, dating Michael,