

Harry Potter

**Somewhere
Near the Heart**

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Summary: Ginny struggles to find the perfect gift for Harry's Christmas. Will an old story give her a glimpse of the right thing for him?

The Burrow was a melee of activity: children running everywhere, their laughter and gleeful screams filling the space that wasn't occupied by their wiggly, warm bodies, adults crammed into every space possible.

It wasn't a Molly Weasley Christmas if someone out there might possibly be celebrating alone, so Ginny's mother had invited everyone to the Burrow.

Augusta Longbottom and Andromeda were in the far corner of the living room, sipping cups of spiked eggnog while they chatted. Neville and Ron were locked in a heated battle over the chessboard. Ginny was glad to see someone actually giving Ron a challenge in the game.

George and Angelina were singing loudly over near the tree, making up words to the old Celestina Warbeck song that was wafting above the chaos of the room. Something about the music was off, however. Ginny suspected that George either charmed the wireless or done something to make Celestina sound much sillier than she already did. After so many years of hearing the song, though, Ginny didn't mind George's version. If her mother heard, however...

With a roar, Harry rose from the floor and small bodies flew everywhere. Ginny had to laugh at his loud dragon sounds. The shrill little giggles emitting from Teddy and Victoire, who hovered just out of his grasp, and the squeals of delight from little Freddy and Molly, who had been grabbed by the mean old Norwegian Ridgeback dragon, were enough to make Ginny laugh. The children adored Harry. They knew he'd be down on the floor playing with them the moment he came in the back door of the Burrow.

Hermione came up on Ginny's side and linked their arms together. "This is just what Harry needs, you know."

Ginny stiffened, but nodded all the same. The hints her mother, and the rest of her family, had been giving had been getting less and less subtle over the years she and Harry had been married.

"He lights up when he's here," Hermione laughed as Harry lifted Freddy up high and pretended to eat his belly, growling and snarling the whole time. The two year-old wove his hands into Harry's hair and snatched his glasses right off his face.

"Good thing those are charmed not to break," Ginny sighed. "Harry had to replace them twice when Teddy was that little. They're a perfect target for those chubby little hands."

Hermione sighed contentedly, and shook her head when Teddy and Victoire finally got up enough nerve to dive back into the wrestling pile, struggling to bring Harry down to the floor again.

Harry grinned and winked at Ginny from across the room before Teddy finally managed to wrap fully around him and tug him down.

Hermione opened her mouth to speak, but Ginny smiled tightly. "I'm going to go in and see if Mum needs any help." She slipped away, trying to swallow back the irritation and frustration of everyone sticking their nose into Ginny and Harry's business. When they were ready to have children,

everyone would know. Right now wasn't the time, no matter how much everyone poked and prodded the subject.

It wasn't as if Ginny was getting too old for children or anything. She was only twenty-two, for Merlin's sake. She and Harry had only been married for two years. Children would be wonderful, but it was something Ginny could see in the distant future, not just around the corner.

Besides, Ron and Hermione had no place to say anything. Hermione's five year plan, which she actually had charted out on her home office wall, was a family legend.

It would be different if Ginny wasn't at the height of her career, fresh off a World Cup win, and just about to start her fourth year as the Harpies Most Valuable Player.

She and Harry were doing just fine.

Ginny nudged the door to the kitchen open, and had to gasp at the heat of the room. Pots and pans bubbled on top of the cooker, and her mother danced around the kitchen, humming the real version of Celestina Warbeck's song.

"Oh, Ginny, dear," her mother greeted. She looked a bit frazzled, her red hair slightly frizzy at the ends, and her apron askew. "Did you need something?"

Ginny smiled at the familiarity of the scene. There were a hundred dinners that she could remember seeing this same scene. Her mother's hair might be a little less red and a little greyer, and there were more lines along her face, but it was the same Molly Weasley, showing her family how much she loved them by filling their bellies with all manner of food.

"Just to help you," Ginny protested. "Somehow, I thought it would be a bit less chaotic in here." She chuckled, gesturing toward the food that was heaped on all surfaces.

"Well, only because I charmed the door to keep anyone under four feet tall out," her mother protested. She scowled and pulled her wand, casting a quick spell toward the door. "And Ron and George."

Ginny chuckled and moved toward the counter. She rolled her sleeves back, and began to shuffle things around.

"Do you have everything prepared for Christmas next week?"

Ginny scrunched her nose and nodded at the same time. "I suppose so. We've had Teddy's gifts forever. Harry couldn't resist when Andromeda mentioned that she thought Teddy would be ready for a real broom now. He ran right out and bought the latest model, as well as a selection of Quidditch banners and jerseys. Teddy's still convinced he wants to play for the Harpies," she chuckled.

"He's such a little dear," her mother mused. "Does he know about the all-witches rule?"

"We've tried to explain," Ginny shrugged. "But he's only four. The difference between girls and boys is still a bit of a mystery."

"What about Harry?"

"He definitely knows the difference between witches and wizards, Mum," Ginny laughed.

Molly gave her a slightly disapproving glance, but it was covered by a bit of a smirk. "I meant have you found what you're going to give Harry?"

Ginny finished scooping the parsnips into a bowl and levitated it further down the counter before Scourgifying the pot they'd been in. "He's a bit harder, actually. He keeps telling me that he has everything he wants. His broom is still top of the line, and all his clothing is fine. I did get him some new dragon-hide gloves, because his were wearing a bit thin." She sighed and sank into a seat. "I just can't seem to find something that I think he'll really love."

Her mother sighed in sympathy. "Sometimes the ones we love the most are the hardest to find gifts for. Your father and I have been together so long that at times I think I'll never come up with something. And finding a gift that's really one from the heart is even harder. One year..." She trailed off and stared out the foggy window, lost in thought.

"One year..." Ginny prompted.

Molly started, and her cheeks flushed pink. "Well, we were very poor. Your father was still junior in his department, Bill and Charlie were just little, and I just discovered I was expecting Percy. The thought of another child, so close to the others... Well, it wasn't an easy year, I'll tell you. We'd lost Fabian and Gideon that summer, and it took me a long time to get over that."

Ginny winced at the heartbroken look on her mother's face. Even now, so long after her brothers had died, Molly still felt the pain of their loss just as acutely as it must have been back then. And Ginny understood that. She still grieved for Fred regularly. Whole days would go by where she didn't think of him once, and then it would hit her like flying into a brick wall.

"I barely had enough money from selling eggs in the village to buy the yarn for your brothers' jumpers, let alone something for your father." Molly smiled wistfully. "And he said it didn't matter, he said that getting something for the boys was more important, that it was enough for him to know we were happy and healthy."

"I can see him saying that," Ginny agreed. Her father had never been impressed by the things the world saw as being wealthy.

"For weeks I worried," her mother continued, "trying to find something that would be perfect for him. When we were married, my mother gave me a set of silver spoons. They'd been my grandmothers, and she wanted me to have them."

Ginny scowled, trying to remember if she'd ever seen the spoons before. Surely in all these years, her mother would have brought them out at least once.

"One day, after worrying about it all night, I bundled Bill and Charlie up, wrapped those spoons in a cloth, and we walked down to the village."

Ginny's stomach swooped in dismay. Now she understood. Her mother had sold the spoons to be

able to buy something for her father.

"I felt horrible," her mother confided, "but we didn't need fancy spoons. I understood the sentiment behind the gift from my parents, but I simply couldn't see a time when I would bring the silver out, polish it up, and use it to serve dinner. Your father meant far more to me than some old spoons." She smiled wryly. "I didn't get nearly as much as I probably should have, but I sold those spoons, Ginny. And I used the money to buy a watch chain for your father.

"When he turned seventeen, his father had given him a fine watch, but in all our years together, he'd never had a nice chain for it."

Ginny bit her lip, guessing at where the story was going. Her father didn't have a watch, and certainly not a nice family heirloom.

"I was so proud of myself," her mother chuckled dryly, and directed her wand to stir the pots on the cooker once more. "I swore Bill to secrecy-he was old enough to understand what we were doing-and we hurried home.

"Christmas morning I handed your father his gift, and he handed me one, as well. I was shocked because I'd told him the same thing that he told me: that I didn't need gifts to make me happy."

"He sold his watch," Ginny whispered.

The truth was displayed all over her mother's face, but she nodded. A single tear dripped down her red cheek and she moved over, rummaging in the back of the sideboard. She brought out an elaborate wooden case and opened it. Inside was lined with brilliantly red velvet, with a space for two large spoons.

"He sold his watch and bought me a case for my spoons."

"But you sold the spoons to buy a chain for his watch," Ginny concluded. Her throat felt thick with emotion. The comparison to she and Harry didn't really work, because they really could afford to buy whatever they wanted, honestly, but Ginny understood the message behind the story.

"All these years, I've kept this empty case," her mother said softly as she ran her fingers along the smooth fabric. "It holds something much more important than two fancy spoons, you know. It holds his heart. And your father keeps that silly old chain in his pocket-puts it there every single day before he goes to work-and he says that my heart is always at the bottom of it."

Ginny stared down at her fingers, picking at a bit of cuticle that was pulling away from her nail. She wanted something like that for she and Harry, but nothing was coming to her mind.

"You'll find the right gift when the time is right," her mother assured her with a soft squeeze to her shoulder. "Now come over and help me lift the roast from the oven. I'm not as strong as I used to be."

* * *

Ginny was unusually quiet through dinner, lost in her thoughts as she tried to imagine the perfect

gift for Harry; something that would truly make him understand just what she felt about him.

Harry asked her several times if she was feeling well. She nodded and assured him that she was simply thinking of something her mother had told her. The story was bittersweet and kept coming back to her. Her parents loved each other so much they'd both sacrificed prized possessions to be able to give the other a moment of happiness and joy.

As much as she wanted to be able to do that for Harry, Ginny simply couldn't find the right thing in her mind. Whatever it was, it needed to be something only she could give him.

"Are you ready to go?" Harry's arm slipped around her waist once the meal was over. He wore a concerned look. "You're still staring off into nothing."

Ginny felt her cheeks heat. "I'm really fine, I promise. Mum's story just... I don't think she's ever told anyone, and it gave me a lot to think about."

Harry didn't look convinced, and Ginny almost laughed at his raised eyebrow. He looked as if he'd like nothing more than to haul her home, stuff Pepper-up potion down her throat and tuck her into bed. At times he mothered her horribly, but Ginny understood the sentiment behind it; Harry had never had anyone who was there simply for him, so he made sure she always understood just how precious she was to him.

"If you're sure..."

"I am." Ginny smiled and pressed her lips to his cheek. "I'm just going to help Mum tidy up a bit in here. You go and enjoy."

Harry gave her a soft kiss, and one last concerned look, before he nodded. "Let me know when you're ready to leave."

"I will," she promised.

Hermione, Angelina, and Audrey all stayed to help with the cleanup, and clean dishes were soon zooming around the kitchen. Ginny was grateful for the distraction of chatter and laughter. Her mind felt overloaded and it was draining all the energy from her.

When they were finally finished, Ginny wiped her wet hands on a towel and wandered out to the living room where it was suspiciously quiet. Teddy and Victoire were sprawled on the floor near the base of the stairs, building an entire village out of the old enchanted building blocks Ginny had played with when she was their age.

Neville and Ron were bent over the same chess board as before, although Ron had considerably fewer pieces now. Another large group was sitting near the Christmas tree, talking quietly and simply enjoying being together. Harry wasn't with them, however, and Ginny went in search of him.

She was going to venture up the stairs and surprise him coming out of the loo, when she heard a sound in the front entryway.

Harry was there, walking back and forth in the narrow space, bouncing little Dominique on his

shoulder lightly, and whispering softly to her. The baby was fussing, but slowly calmed down as Harry rocked her.

The tenderness on Harry's face made Ginny's chest grow tight. She recognized the look; she'd seen it once before.

* * *

Harry's hand twined around hers was tight, as if he thought she might possibly float away from him in the crowd. Then again, perhaps she would. Winning the World Cup was certainly something that made her feel all light and airy. The noisy celebration around them rode just below Ginny's consciousness as they wound their way through the camps toward the large tent the Weasley Family had erected right in the center of the moor.

They were stopped frequently as fans enthusiastically asked for Ginny's autograph. Harry smiled in a longsuffering sort of way and allowed her hand to slip from his so she could sign brooms, photographs, t-shirts, and various other items that people waved in front of her.

Eventually, though, they were left alone to make their way toward the tent. Harry seemed content to take a slow, wandering path toward it, however. He stared at one particular family as they passed a campsite. A young father was playing with two small children, and the little ones were giggling loudly as they chased him around and around the tent.

"You want kids, don't you, Gin?"

The question came out of the blue and made Ginny stumble. "Er... yeah, of course."

Harry nodded, but his eyes stayed on the family as the mother came out, levitating a tray of food in front of her. Her belly was round with another child, and Ginny wondered how she could possibly keep up with her family.

"What brought this on?" Ginny turned to Harry and peered at him. He was smiling softly as he watched the scene in front of them. "We've not even been married two years, Harry. I just won the Cup for Merlin's sake. We're not nearly ready for something like that." She gestured toward the family and shuddered at the idea. Merlin, *she* wasn't ready for something like that.

"No, I know," Harry shook his head, although his face heated lightly. "I just... we never really talked about it before we got married." He trailed off and tightened his grip on her hand, giving it a quick squeeze. "Forget I said anything."

Ginny tugged him back and studied his face for a long minute. "Are you saying that you're ready? That you want a whole houseful of kids and me being pregnant?"

Harry shook his head, but she could see the confirmation in his face. "No, I just... I was just thinking out loud, more than anything."

Annoyance and frustration welled inside her, but she tamped it down. "We've got plenty of time, Harry."

"We do," he agreed with a tight smile, and pressed his lips to her cheek. "Come on, your family is probably going to send out a search party soon."

* * *

The memory melted away, and Ginny blinked as Harry stared at her. Dominique was sleeping against his shoulder now, her breath coming in short little puffs of air on his neck.

"Hi."

Ginny felt her face heat and her mind whirled. As much as she wanted to deny it, she knew what her gift for Harry was going to be now.

"Hi." She moved forward and wrapped her arm around Harry's waist before resting her free hand on the baby's back. "She looks comfortable in my favorite spot."

"I think it's all the people in the house," Harry excused. "She just needed a little escape from the chaos."

Ginny swallowed past the lump in her throat and nodded. "We could all use that from time to time."

"Are you ready to go?" Harry asked.

Ginny looked up at him, her insides twisting once more at the rightness of the decision she was about to make.

"I am," she said softly.

Harry pressed his lips to her temple and held them there a long minute. "I'll go get her settled with Fleur and gather our things."

"Okay," Ginny agreed and watched him leave.

Sometimes the right thing and the hardest thing are the same thing. How many times had she heard her parents say that?

Quitting the Harpies at the height of her career.

It was a huge decision that seemed impossible to make. But the minute she'd recognized the soft look on Harry's face, seen the longing for a family of his own there, Ginny had known the decision was coming. It hit her with the force of a Bludger tonight, knocking everything out of perspective until all she could see was Harry standing in front of her, dreaming of his very own family.

A child would tie him to everything he'd been missing his entire life: it would be a connection to the past, tangible evidence that everything he'd gone through in the past was worth it, and a far reaching pulse into the future.

And even though she'd never really considered it before, Ginny knew she wanted to give him that. Just like her mother's story earlier, Ginny would be sacrificing something that meant the world to

her-her own success as a professional Quidditch player—for something that Harry wanted most.

And it was alright.

The calmness that settled on her in that moment was unexpected, although welcome. No matter what it cost her, this was the gift that she wanted to give to Harry. Guilt and selfishness nudged at her for not paying closer attention to what Harry wanted from their relationship. Ginny had been so caught up in what she was accomplishing, what *she* wanted, that she had set Harry's dreams aside for the time being. But she hadn't done it knowingly, really, and she hoped he would forgive her for indulging in her success up to now.

"I told everyone goodbye from the both of us."

Ginny started, realizing that Harry had returned. She wrapped her arms around his neck and blinked away the tears that came.

"I'm sorry," she whispered.

"It's okay," Harry soothed and rubbed his hands along her back. "You're just tired. It's perfectly understandable. The season starts in a few months and you've been working hard to train."

Ginny didn't correct his assumption that she was apologizing for her distracted behavior.

"I'll take us home," Harry said softly, and Apparated them into their flat.

They went through the motions of getting ready for bed, mostly in silence. Harry seemed just as distracted as Ginny was, and she almost asked him several times what he was thinking of, but nudged the question away. If she started talking now, she might just spill everything she'd been thinking of, and ruin the surprise that was forming in her head.

When they were finally tucked into bed, Ginny rolled over and cuddled tightly into Harry's side.

"Do you still think about having kids?" she asked, tentatively.

Harry started and was quiet for a long minute. "Yeah, at times, but you were right this summer, Gin. We have time. There's no rush to push things along."

Ginny nodded against his shoulder, even as a vision of herself growing large with Harry's child inside her swelled in her head. She imagined the joy on Harry's face when a brand new life—complete with swollen pink face—was placed into his arms. And she wanted that picture more than anything. Any success she could gain in the world of Quidditch paled in comparison to giving that gift to Harry. Besides, what better time to go out of the Quidditch spotlight than right at the top of her career?

* * *

It was early. Nearly two o'clock in the morning, on Christmas morning. And Ginny stared into the dark of the flat. Their tree sat in the corner of the room, the faint moonlight from the window reflecting off the tinsel and other shiny bobbles that hung from its branches. Her fingers ran over the box that sat in her lap, brushing the soft velvet of the ribbon on top, and hoping that she'd

made the right decision.

Gwenog was clearly torn when Ginny met with her and asked to be released from her contract. As soon as Ginny explained that it was time for a different direction to her life, however, Gwenog signed the papers with a sigh. The older witch couldn't fully understand, she explained, because she'd never felt the desire to be married, or have a family, but she wished Ginny all the best.

And now that the moment had arrived to talk to Harry about her gift, Ginny was nervous. Would he understand the sentiment behind the paperwork and the half-empty bottle of potion inside the box? Would he truly understand what she was offering?

For a brief moment, Ginny's mind wandered back to the story her mother had told. Did Molly have the same second, and third, and even fourth thoughts about her gift? Was there a point during the years that she'd looked at the empty velvet box and wished that she had the spoons back?

Even as the thought came, Ginny dismissed it. Her mother understood the exchange of gifts, just as Harry would understand Ginny's gift. He knew her so well; he'd instantly know all that she had sacrificed in order to grant his one, fondest wish.

When Harry wandered blearily into the room, blinking and shuffling his feet, Ginny had to smile. He yawned widely and scratched his chest, under his rumpled t-shirt. He looked utterly adorable, and Ginny knew that the time had arrived to give him his gift; she couldn't wait until morning.

"You were gone," he whispered in a sleepy voice.

"Sorry," Ginny mused. She melted into his warm side when he slid into the chair next to her.

Harry yawned again and kissed her head. "Why're you up so early?" he asked. "I know its Christmas and all, and I know how you Weasleys get about your presents..."

Ginny chuckled and lifted the small box in her hands. "You know me."

"This isn't one I remember from beneath the tree," Harry said softly. His finger traced the bow on the top and he furrowed his brow at it.

"That's because it's for you," Ginny shrugged. "I've just been sitting here in the dark, wondering if you'll like it."

Harry snorted and shook his head. "Ginny, you know I don't worry about presents--"

"I know," Ginny interrupted, "but this one is different."

He seemed to understand the weight behind her words, and looked down at the package. "Can I open it now?"

Ginny laughed softly. "Potters and their presents," she mused. As much as Harry teased her about her excitement over presents, Ginny knew that Harry was thrilled with seeing gifts for himself as well. It was one more hurt Ginny was trying to mend from his past; gone were the days when Christmas was a painful memory for Harry.

"I suppose," she finally conceded. Her stomach flipped in anticipation, and she shifted so that she was sitting on his lap before presenting him the package. She lit the tip of her wand so that he would have enough light to see what was inside the box.

Harry blinked at the light, but focused on slowly-slower than Ginny thought should be possible-opening the box. It took him *forever* to undo just the bow.

When the box was finally open, he blinked down into it and lifted the small potion bottle. He knew exactly what the pale purple liquid inside was, but he hadn't completely connected what it meant.

"Er... thanks, I suppose. I've always wanted contraceptive potion."

"I think you'll understand if you read the rest," Ginny prompted. She bit her bottom lip until she was sure it might start bleeding.

"Don't have my glasses," Harry murmured. He used her wand to summon them from the bedroom. As soon as they were in place, he opened the folded papers and peered at them.

"It's... it's your contract." He looked bewildered up at her, and then back to the paper.

"Last page," Ginny urged.

Harry's breathing hitched, and she thought he might have just put together what she was trying to tell him. The hand holding the contract shook, but he managed to turn the page to the back, where Gwenog's flourished signature was there at the bottom.

"I don't understand," he shook his head and let the paperwork drop to his lap. He looked between it and the potion bottle.

Tears burned the back of Ginny's eyes, and she leaned in just a bit closer. "I've been horribly selfish, Harry, and I'm asking for your forgiveness."

"No, you haven't," he answered automatically. "But I..."

"My dreams have changed, Harry. As much as I loved playing Quidditch and succeeding in that, what I want has changed."

"Are you..."

"I want us to start a family, Harry," Ginny said as her stomach flipped. It was a similar feeling as when she was fourteen and seeing Harry in the Ministry, standing up to the Death Eaters-when she'd fallen in love with him all over again. "I want to give you the chance for a child of our own."

Harry opened his mouth several times before leaning forward and kissing her. "Ginny, I didn't mean for you to--"

"I know," she said. Her heart was racing and the contract scrunched noisily between them as she molded herself to him. "Remember when I told you we'd know when it was time?"

Harry nodded against her. His hands traced along her back, touching her so lightly, as if she might

possibly break.

"But... you're not actually... not yet, right?"

Ginny snorted out a laugh. "No, I'm not pregnant yet. I just... I realized the other night, seeing you play with the children, that it was time."

"But your career..."

"I had a wonderful career, Harry," Ginny protested. "And it's certainly not over, completely. I can find something else that I love to do, but my time flying about the pitch and dodging Bludgers is over."

She pulled back and winced at the tortured look Harry wore. "This is my gift to you, Harry."

He looked as if he were going to argue, but it melted away in the blazing look he gave her, right before he pulled her completely to him.

"Ginny, you..." His words died out and Ginny knew he truly understood. He knew that she'd sacrificed everything that defined her as an individual, to give him what he wanted.

And, in a way, she had, but in a way she'd gained so much more. Ginny wasn't simply a Harpy, or a Quidditch player; she was Harry's partner in life, his love, and his wife. With or without a child, they were a family together. Adding to that could only make it better.

Suddenly, Harry lifted her into his arms and stood. Ginny gasped and clung to him.

"Where are we going?"

"We're going to practice," Harry smirked as he carried her back down the hallway. "If we're going to do this, we need lots and lots of practice."

Ginny laughed. "What about my gift?"

Harry chuckled and tossed her onto their bed before climbing toward her. "Doesn't really matter now."

His cagey answer made Ginny pull away. "Harry," she warned.

He sat back on his heels and pulled his glasses from his face. "I... I bought your whole family season passes for all your upcoming games. You mentioned how much you loved it when everyone came..."

Ginny laughed and pulled her to him. "I love you, Harry. Think of how much fun we can have going to them and cheering everyone on."

Harry kissed her and they fell to the bed together. "You can't come," he protested with a laugh. "I didn't buy *you* a ticket."

Ginny laughed even louder and struggled to remove his shirt. "Let's get on with the practicing..."