

Harry Potter

**Who Am I to Beg
For Difference?**

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Who Am I to Beg For Difference?

Fandom: Harry Potter.

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Characters: Ginny Weasley. Harry Potter.

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Summary: Harry is always melancholy around Halloween and the Weasleys have decided to cheer him up. But what can Ginny do to help? She's not even his friend.

She hides in the shadows of the common room, listening in when they think they are alone. She's done it for years, not because she's incredibly sneaky, but out of necessity. Little sisters are menaces she's been told, and they never wanted to share secrets with freckle-faced, pig-tailed little girls.

It's become a habit; one that she can't seem to break.

But she can't quite hear tonight, so she edges out, trying to look casual in case one of them spots her.

Brothers.

She thinks they are probably up to no good. Well, maybe the twins are, but it's less likely when they've included Ron in their secret little meeting. Even Hermione and Harry have been excluded. This is Weasley Family Business. Except they've not told her, so that means she wants to know what they're yammering on about even more.

She only manages to hear Harry's name in a flurry of whispers before Ron's gaze narrows in on her.

Damn.

"Ginny! What're you doing down here? It's two o'clock in the morning."

She stares at him incredulously, waiting for him to realize that she has just as much right to be down here at this time of night as he does.

But it's *Ron* so he doesn't get it.

Fred and George both give her sympathetic looks and fight back laughter.

"Restricted meeting?" she asks. "Or did I just not get the owl?"

George slides over and pats the worn cushion next to him dramatically. Ron splutters as Ginny plops down.

"She has nothing to do with this. It's... it's *private*."

"Unless you're talking about the fit of your pants, your shower routine, or what, exactly, the smell emanating from the boys' Quidditch changing room is, then you should be aware there are very few secrets around here, Ronald."

He narrows his eyes at her and locks his jaw, but Ginny knows she's already won the argument. Fred and George are on her side this time, so Ron has nowhere to turn. And since he's excluded Harry and Hermione from this summit, he's without allies.

"So, what're we planning?" Ginny asks gleefully. "Throwing Umbridge from the Astronomy Tower?"

“Brilliant idea!” Fred crows.

“Capital! Capital!”

She laughs at their enthusiasm and then clears her throat, indicating she’s serious about wanting to be involved.

“We’re worried about Harry.”

She’s startled by the admission, even though she worries enough about Harry for everyone.

“What about him?”

Ron rubs his eyes and sighs. “He’s... out of sorts.”

“Listless.”

“Distracted.”

Ginny tries to follow their line of thinking, but she’s lagging behind, or they’re not communicating as well as they think they are, because she’s lost. “And?”

“We can’t figure out what’s wrong, other than the obvious,” Fred says.

The obvious, meaning the mental connection to a mass murderer, the return to life of said mass murderer, the infiltration of Hogwarts by The Toad, and all of the other issues that come with simply being Harry Potter.

“So he’s sort of... sad?” Ginny asked. “More than his usual brooding, I mean.”

They all look at Ron, who shifts in his seat, clearly uncomfortable talking behind Harry’s back.

“Well... yeah. I guess you could say that. And when we ask him, he says it’s nothing. But that’s not new, is it?”

Ginny tilts her head and looks at her brothers, waiting for them to make the connection. “It’s quite obvious what it is, then.”

They perk up and wait for her to continue.

“It’s October,” she says. “And almost Halloween.”

The twins seem to have caught on and they nod. “Makes sense.”

“Hadn’t thought of that.”

Ron is still clueless. “What?”

“He misses his parents, Ron,” Ginny says. “But it’s likely he’ll never admit that to you. He’s got much more pressing issues. In fact, I doubt he even really knows why he’s feeling this way. He’s as

thick as you are at times.”

“Oi!” Ron tries to argue with her, but, once again, Ginny has backup and he’s on his own. She wins by default.

“Well, that settles it then,” Fred says and slaps his pyjama-clad knees. “We’ll get right on it.”

“Right you are my scheming twin.”

Ron still looks lost. “Settles it? What’re you planning, then? Really, if anyone is planning something it should be me and Hermione. We’re his best friends.”

Ginny refrains from rolling her eyes and doesn’t even hex him. She’s noble like that. “Harry is our friend, as well,” she points out. When he opens his mouth to protest, Ginny glares at him. “Don’t even go there,” she says. “You do not *own* him.”

Then she turns to the twins. “Whatever you’re doing, I’ll help with whatever I can. Just let me know.”

“Sure thing, Ginny.” Fred ruffles her hair and George blows a raspberry on her cheek before they walk up the boys’ stairs.

“It’s not that I don’t think you can be friends with him,” Ron says. “It’s just that... well, you’re really not, are you.”

Ginny wants to hex him, wants to see his nose grow even bigger, swell up until he has to throw it over his shoulder so he doesn’t trip on the stairs. But she grits her teeth and doesn’t pull her wand from the pocket of her dressing gown.

“I’m going to go upstairs right now and pretend you didn’t say that.” She doesn’t look back over her shoulder, and she doesn’t allow his words—which are sort of the truth—to take root. She knows how Harry sees her, more than anyone, and the ways he doesn’t see her.

But she’s determined that it shouldn’t make a difference. Friendship, at times, is one-sided. And she can’t ever *be* his friend if she doesn’t *act* like his friend.

* * *

“You might look nicer, dear, if you use a spell to erase a few of those nasty spots on your face.”

Ginny glares at the mirror in the girls’ dormitory and takes a deep breath. The mirror has always hated her, ever since she hexed it to stop talking for three days in her second year. She isn’t about to take a shirty attitude from a wall decoration.

“And you might look nicer if I break you into a million pieces,” she mumbles. The mirror huffs and refrains from offering any further advice on Ginny’s grooming.

Halloween is marching closer and as far as Ginny can tell, Harry’s mood is still as dark as ever.

He does laugh when Fred and George slip something into the pumpkin juice on the Professors’ table

and Snape stalks out of the Great Hall modeling an off-the-shoulder, black evening gown. Everyone laughs then. Even the Slytherins.

Fred and George seem intent on topping that stunt and Ginny knows they've stayed up late on several nights to come up with the right thing to make Harry forget that he is an orphan.

And Ron is fairly attentive to Harry, always suggesting they do things together—go out for a fly, play a prank, sneak some chocolate.

All are great ideas for a quick pick-me-up, but ultimately Ginny knows they won't change anything. None of it takes away the reality of the world Harry lives in.

When she joins the throng of Gryffindor's heading down to breakfast, she's surprised when Harry shows up next to her and bumps her shoulder.

"What're your brothers up to this morning?"

Ginny hides a smirk and tries to look innocent. "Am I my brothers' keeper?"

He laughs and shrugs. "No, but I figure you probably know them best out of anyone here. You're usually in on the things they do."

"I'm as innocent as a newborn unicorn, Potter," says Ginny. She flutters her eyes at him even though her heart is pounding away in her chest at how close he is. "If you want to know, then you'll just have to wait and find out with the rest of the school."

"Then you *do* know something."

Ginny smiles and pretends to give him a shifty look. "I know nothing about animated jack-o'-lanterns or bewitched bats dive bombing Potions class. Besides, you can't prove a thing, Potter."

Harry gives the first genuine smile she's seen from him in weeks. "See? I told you. You're the one to come to when I want top secret information."

"I'd watch yourself on the twenty-first, as well," she says. "There are rumors of a House Elf musical being tossed about. You never know what might happen on those crazy full moon nights."

He chuckles and Ginny pats herself on the back for distracting him for a few minutes, at least. They've had a conversation—an actual you-talk-I-talk conversation—and it hasn't ended up with one of them red in the face or covered in butter or stink-sap. This is progress.

"I'll keep that in mind, Ginny. Thanks."

* * *

On Halloween day, Ginny can see that any cheering up has been forgotten completely. The Toad has been especially vicious and Harry's come back to the common room later and later in the evenings after detentions.

Angelina is beside herself about his behavior and they row about it several times. She threatens his

place as Seeker if he doesn't shape up before the match that weekend and Harry looks like he might hex her, but simply walks away instead.

And it's not like Ginny isn't worried about him, because Harry seems to be pulling away more and more, but there's not much she can do. While they've had several conversations lately, it's not like Harry comes to her for advice, or even thinks about her as more than just a girl he knows.

She sees the way he fawns over Cho Chang, and aside from the fact that it makes Ginny want to vomit, she tries to remember that he doesn't belong to her. And she's seeing Michael Corner, anyway.

"Should I expect anything at breakfast this morning?" Harry asks as they walk to breakfast.

"Hmmm, it's not out of the question," Ginny says. "But best keep your eye on lunch and supper, as well."

Finally, she takes the direct approach. "You do know you can talk to us, Harry? About anything."

He peers at her and opens his mouth, perhaps to tell her to naff off, but then his expression softens.

"Thanks," he says and disappears into the crowd. Ginny can still see his mop of dark hair up ahead of her. She's probably just ruined everything, but it was worth a try. Sometimes being direct is better than tip-toeing around things.

Later, she finds Ron and Hermione arguing. Harry is not in sight.

"I blame that lard-ass cousin of his, Dudley," Ron says. "Harry said he was always taking the piss of the little orphan boy."

"It's far more complicated than that, Ron," says Hermione. "He actually witnessed his mother being murdered. Granted, he was so very young..."

Ginny doesn't stick around to hear Hermione's analysis of the situation. She doesn't want to think about Harry's younger years and the things he miraculously survived. She doesn't want to contemplate Harry growing up and watching the world pass by from his cupboard under the stairs.

She doesn't want to think about Harry at all.

And it's not his fault; it's just the whole situation. She's over this. She's over being moony around him and putting her elbow in the butter dish. She's dating someone else, for Merlin's sake! Why does his friendship and approval mean so damn much to her?

She grabs her broom and heads out to the pitch. There are still a few hours of daylight left and she's determined that one of the open Chaser positions will be hers next year. That's going to take practice. Plus, the cold and repetition of drills will help her focus on what she doesn't want to think about.

But luck is not her friend, and Harry is aimlessly zooming around the pitch when she gets there.

Ginny ignores him and tucks the lopsided practice Quaffle under her arm before setting up a scoring run to the goal hoops.

“Want some company?”

She’s sweaty and tired when Harry appears at her side, appraising the Quaffle and the way she’s holding it.

“If you’d like.” She tries to act nonchalant about him joining her. Her frustration with him, with the whole situation, has melted away with the training.

“I’m not very good at Chaser,” he warns. “But I can manage a few passes.”

She watches him closely for a moment before tossing the ball to him. He moves it back and forth in his grip, getting a feel for it.

They practice basic drills until it’s almost dark. After putting the Quaffle away, they both start to walk toward the castle, brooms slung over their shoulders.

“Did you mean what you said earlier?” he asks. “About talking to you?”

She’s surprised by his question, and even more by the idea that he seems to be actually pondering doing just that.

“Of course, Harry. We’re friends.” It’s a stretch of the truth, but he doesn’t point that out. She should probably clarify; tell him that they *could* be friends if only he wanted that from her.

But he smiles and actually relaxes. “I appreciate that, Ginny.”

“Everyone could use more friends,” Ginny says. They’re quiet as they pass through the Entrance Hall and begin ascending the stairs.

“I hate Halloween,” he observes, mostly to himself.

Ginny can’t think of anything to say, so she stays quiet, by his side, matching her steps to his. His legs are long, so it takes concentration and effort for her to do.

“I’ve always hated it but didn’t know why. Even as a little kid.”

“I can imagine,” she says, because she can. She’s actually closed her eyes and pictured herself in his place. It hurt just thinking about.

“And its better here, you know,” Harry continues, “but there’s still this feeling... It’s stupid.”

“Not at all,” Ginny says. “Completely understandable.”

He forces a smile and bumps into her on purpose. “So you don’t think I’m barmy?”

“Oh, of course I do,” she smirks, “but that’s only on the best days. You’re friends with Ron, after all. Takes a mental person to put up with that.”

Harry laughs.

The staircases are empty and Ginny is extremely thankful. She fully expects someone to dart out and wrestle Harry's attention away from her at any minute. They're never allowed more than a minute of time together.

Maybe tonight luck *is* on her side.

"You... you're a good listener, Ginny. Has anyone ever told you that?"

"Occasionally," she says, "but it's rarely a compliment."

He narrows his eyes in confusion. "How could it be—"

"I'm a little sister, Harry. Which means I'm known for sneaking around, listening in when I'm not invited, and knowing far too many secrets," she proudly told him.

He laughed again. "Well, if you ask me, they're lucky. Having a sister—or even a brother—would be..." He doesn't finish as they've hit on what's been bothering him for weeks. He has no blood family.

"Yeah, well, sometimes it's a pain in the ass, but other times it's really great."

"Like when your siblings turn your teddy bear into a spider?" he asks.

Ginny smiles widely. "Or when they charm every bit of clothing in your room to be as affectionate as possible. Imagine your socks trying to kiss you before you put them on, or your jumper strangling you with the hug it gives you." She could continue and explain what her knickers got up to, but she holds that bit of information back. No need to scar the boy for life.

"They're... inventive."

"Loony," Ginny corrects, but she smiles all the same. "At least it's never a dull moment with them around."

"Very true."

"And you've gotten a bit of that lately, haven't you?"

He peers at her, as if he's not yet made the connection. But then his eyes light up. "Is that what they've been doing?"

"Trying to cheer you up," Ginny says. "We all figured you'd be down this time of year."

His face heats and he watches his shoes as they climb the last flight of stairs to the seventh floor.

Ginny pretends she doesn't notice when he lags behind. She doesn't know if her words helped at all but she's given it all she had. She can't offer more than her friendship now; the rest is up to Harry.

"Ginny, wait up!"

She's just about to step through the portrait hole when Harry calls to her.

His cheeks are red and he's stammering, struggling to find the right thing to say. Finally, he comes up with it. "Thanks."

"Anytime, Harry."

She doesn't press for more, doesn't take his hand in hers, doesn't kiss his cheek. She wants all of that, but it's not on offer right now.

"And you *are* my friend, Ginny." It's quiet, but to Ginny, those are the most perfect words she's heard in a very long time.

"Remember that when your bed curtains sing you to sleep tonight, will you?"

He gapes at her tall-tale, but then smiles. It grows into a chuckle and then into a full-on laugh that makes Ginny feel anything but the chill of the late October evening in the corridor.

And she realizes that the crush she had on him, that horrible, hateful feeling that made her do embarrassing things, is back full-force. But maybe, just maybe, something will come of it one day.