

Harry Potter

**Words That  
We've Borrowed**

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# Words That We've Borrowed

**Fandom:** Harry Potter.

**Author:** hgfan1111.

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**Characters:** Ginny Weasley. Harry Potter. Hermione Granger. Ron Weasley. Rubeus Hagrid.

**Pairings:** Ginny/Harry. Hermione/Ron.

**Other Tags:** None.

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**Summary:** When Harry feels overwhelmed, a visit with Ginny helps him get a little perspective.

**Warnings:** None.

Harry watched the flood of students exiting the Hogwarts gates, anxiously scanning for the riot of color that would signal Ginny. She wasn't in the first wave and he'd had to endure the curious looks and open stares of the students—a few were even brave enough to come up and shake his hand and attempt to engage him in conversation. But Harry kept his answers clipped and he was sure he actually offended Dean and Padma Patil with his grunted words. Ron seemed to find the whole situation amusing and didn't seem anxious to see his girlfriend at all, or so it seemed to Harry.

"Maybe she doesn't really want to see you."

"Shove off." Harry glared at his best mate, even though he knew Ron was just teasing him. There was a nagging fear at the back of his mind that maybe Ron was right, even though he knew it was unfounded. Ginny's letters were enough to ensure that Harry knew she thought about him often enough. Neither of them were into mushy, lovey, honey-laden words, but he knew her well enough now to know that she thought of him at least as often as he thought of her.

A mane of bushy brown hair approached and Harry stood on his toes, trying to see past the other students. Ginny was rather small, so it was easier for her to be lost in a group.

No such luck, however: Hermione joined them, alone.

Harry turned away when Ron greeted her and tried not to let his cheeks heat too darkly at his best friends' display of affection. Don't get him wrong, he was happy that they were so... well, happy, but that didn't mean he wanted to watch them snog in the middle of the lane.

"I didn't think you were coming, Harry," said Hermione after giving him a quick hug. "Ginny said..." She trailed off with a contemplative scowl and Harry stared down at his foot, digging his toe into the moist soil there.

"Yeah, well..."

"He's not supposed to be here," said Ron, although he sounded far more amused than disapproving. "Called in sick."

Harry's hand twitched with the urge to jinx Ron's knees rigid, but he refrained. Hermione would just fix it and Harry would have to listen to yet another lecture from her.

"Harry..."

He cut her off before she could get really going. "I know, Hermione, but I haven't had a day off in weeks." The stress from the Ministry sometimes overwhelmed him and Harry found himself hiding in his flat more and more, declining offers of meeting his friends at the pub, or dinner at the Burrow. He kept telling himself it was just a funk he was in, just something that came with the changing of the seasons, or this time of year. Or maybe he was getting sick.

"Where's Ginny anyway?" Ron asked. Harry wasn't sure if he was trying to defuse the tension or was simply curious.

Hermione scowled at both men. "Well, she's not coming, is she?"

Harry's heart thumped loudly, threatening to climb right out between his ribs. The monster in his chest that usually purred at even the mention of Ginny deflated in disappointment.

"Whad'ya mean she's not coming?" Ron was outraged and took a step in the direction of Hogwarts, as if would march right up there and set Ginny straight. Harry had half a mind to follow. He felt empty inside, but tried to console himself with the fact that he *had* told her he wouldn't be at the Hogsmeade weekend in his last letter. It wasn't her fault he'd had enough of the Ministry and needed an escape.

"You told her you weren't coming," Hermione said, looking at Harry. "She didn't see the need to—"

"Oh, I like that!" Ron spluttered. "Didn't see the need to come down and see her own brother?! Even if *Harry* wasn't coming, I'm here, aren't I?"

Hermione had the grace to look abashed and busied herself with straightening her robes. "She was trying to be polite, Ron, by giving us time alone. And since Harry wasn't supposed to be here..."

Harry stared up at the spires of the castle. For so many years this place had been his home—the only one he'd known—but things were just so different now and he wondered... what would it have been like to come back?

He knew Ginny struggled, she'd written him letter after letter about how hard it was and how more than once she'd found herself staring at one repaired section of wall or another and feel the urge to fly back to Devon immediately.

Harry felt the same way, occasionally, when things got overwhelming. Like today. He'd wanted nothing more than to come to Hogsmeade, see Ginny, share a warm butterbeer and perhaps steal a few kisses from his girlfriend, but he had nothing but stacks of paperwork on his desk at the Ministry waiting for him when he woke this morning and knew he couldn't face it today. Not when the sky was such a brilliant blue, and the wind crisp, and the leaves golden red orange.

"Don't feel bad, Harry," said Hermione. "I'm sure if she'd have known, she would have come down."

"S'okay," he mumbled and stuffed his hands in his pockets. "She didn't know. I should have sent an owl or something."

"She didn't want to feel like she was holding us back," Hermione explained. "And she really didn't want to have to deal with Roary McClaggen after she'd told him she wouldn't come with him."

Ron spluttered and Harry scowled at Hermione. "McClaggen? As in... *McClaggen?!'*" Ron roared. "The same McClaggen who—"

Hermione cheeks flushed and she wrung her hands in front of her. "She told him no, Harry. And, yes, Ron, Roary is Cormac's cousin. He's in Ginny's year—a Hufflepuff. He's very nice."

"Yeah, but everyone knows Ginny's with Harry, right?" Ron's brow furrowed in confusion and Harry

had to admit he felt the same. "I mean, it's not like they were under the Invisibility Cloak when they were snogging at King's Cross. I thought Mum was going to explode when they put that photo on the front page of the Prophet."

Harry growled, more out of frustration than the current situation. Obviously, he didn't want some Hufflepuff—or any other boy, for that matter—sniffing around Ginny, but he trusted Ginny. He knew he didn't have anything to worry about from her, but the whole situation made his chest feel tight.

And it wasn't like there weren't witches that asked him out. Several very forward witches that worked at the Ministry, in fact, had taken to popping out of doorways and corridors when he passed, scaring the life out of him before they propositioned him. All of it made him uncomfortable—some days his hands were actually sweaty with the thought of what they might attempt if he kept turning them down.

Hermione and Ron exchanged a look and it made Harry feel worse. "I could go back up and try to find her, if you'd like," Hermione offered, although he could hear the resignation in her voice. Ron's grip on her hand tightened and Harry knew he couldn't let Hermione ruin her day just for him. "I think she was planning on catching up on some sleep, and writing a few essays, but I'm sure if she knew you were here..."

"No," he said quietly. "You two go on ahead. I'll just... find something to do."

"Come with us, Harry." Hermione looped her arm through his and tried to tug him down the lane, but he planted his foot and didn't budge.

"Really," he said, "I'm not great company today, anyway. Maybe I'll go see Hagrid."

His friends looked reluctant but Ron pulled on Hermione's hand, leading her away. He gave a nod in Harry's direction and Harry watched them walk away, pleased he wasn't going to play third wheel, but feeling more alone now than ever.

The idea of sitting in the Three Broomsticks and trying to be happy didn't appeal and even though he'd said he'd visit Hagrid, Harry wondered if he should just Apparate home and go back to bed. In the end, he found himself standing at the gates of Hogwarts, looking up at the castle. Before he could change his mind, he conjured a Patronus and sent it cantering off toward Hagrid's hut where a lazy drift of smoke danced up into the azure sky from the crooked chimney.

In no time at all Hagrid was there, jangling his keys and grinning wide beneath his bushy beard. "'Lo, Harry. Been a long time since you came ter see me!"

"Too long," Harry agreed. He didn't know what it was about Hagrid, but the gentle giant could always make Harry feel better. The instant the gates were open, Harry allowed Hagrid to pull him into a crushing hug. He staggered at the force of the back pats that inevitably came, but remembered them with extreme fondness.

"Let's have a cuppa," Hagrid suggested and they walked back to his house, Fang barking and lumbering around them the whole time. It was such a nice day they decided to sit out on the steps. Hagrid asked about the Ministry, about being an Auror, about whether Harry got out to play Quidditch ever, and everything else under the sun. While Harry normally hated questions, he didn't

mind them from Hagrid. At least he could trust that Hagrid wouldn't run off to sell his story to the nearest tabloid—Harry had learned that lesson the hard way with some of the Aurors he worked with. The tabloids would pay a pretty price for any direct quote from him, whether it was in context or not.

"I figured ye'd be down in Hogsmeade with Ginny," said Hagrid after they'd lapsed into comfortable silence. "Not havin' troubles are yeh?" His beetle-black eyes crinkled in Harry's direction and Harry shook his head.

"No, just... I didn't think I could make it today and Hermione said Ginny was behind in her school work. I can't expect her to drop everything and spend the day with me because my plans changed."

Hagrid made a sound in the back of his throat and stroked his beard thoughtfully. "I don't know much about witches, Harry, but I expect Ginny'd want to see yeh no matter what."

Harry felt a swell of guilt inside him because he knew Hagrid was right. If it got back to Ginny that Harry had been in Hogsmeade—and it would, no doubt—and he hadn't even tried to see her, he'd never hear the end of it.

"I guess I'll just go see if I can find her."

"If I know Ginny—an' I like ter think I do—she'll be... Yep, righ' there!" Hagrid pointed a thick finger toward the Quidditch pitch and Harry narrowed his eyes, peering into the bright sunlight. He hadn't noticed the two figures on broomstick at the far end, hovering near one of the hoops, but now that he had, he could see the distinctive way that Ginny sat astride her broom—one foot wrapped over the shaft as she hovered and tossed the Quaffle back and forth in her hands.

"She's going to play professionally, you know," Harry said, offhandedly. He watched as she swooped low and set-up another run at the Keeper who was hovering right in the middle of the rings, not moving at all. Whoever the massive, muscle-bound bloke was, Harry thought, he wasn't very good. An irrational stab of jealousy made him wonder if this git was McClaggen. Ginny's pass sailed right through, past the Keeper who gave a half-hearted attempt to block it, and she whooped in glee. The sound echoed across the grounds and it made Harry happy.

"I wouldn't expect anythin' different," said Hagrid proudly. "Go on, she could probably use a break."

Harry grinned, feeling much lighter than he had before. He thanked Hagrid for the tea, wiped Fang's slobber off the side of his trousers, and started making his way to the pitch. Ron and Hermione fell in step with him almost immediately.

Ron's face colored when Harry peered at him. "Er... too nice a day to be stuck in some pub. Thought we'd have a walk around the lake, you know."

Harry felt a well of gratitude for his friends and returned Hermione's grin. "Thanks."

The three of them watched Ginny from the ground as she pelted the Quaffle at the Keeper, who threw both arms over his head and weaved out of the way just in time to avoid getting hit and stopping the score.

“Neville! If you’re not even going to try...!”

Harry couldn’t hold in a laugh at the scene. Now that he was close enough, he could tell that the *muscles* on the bloke weren’t natural at all, and were, in fact, far too much padding for a normal match: two helmets, several chest pads, knee pads strapped up the entire length of his legs. It made him look enormous and very muscular, although horribly awkward and wobbly on his broom. And the small bit of his face that were showing were pale as snow.

“Harry!”

Neville looked horribly relieved and nearly fell of his broom in his haste to descend. “Thank Merlin you’re here. Maybe now she’ll let me...” He trailed off as Ginny landed and loped over to them.

“What’re *you* doing here, Harry?!”

Ron elbowed him and smirked. “*There’s* a greeting for you, Harry. Make any bloke feel welcome, yeah?”

Ginny’s face flushed and she glared at her brother. “That’s not what I meant at all.” Her sparkling eyes settled on Harry and she brushed a long strand of glorious hair out of her face—the wind kept whipping it first one way and then the other—before securing it in her fist with a ‘harrumph’. “You said you couldn’t get away.”

Harry shrugged a shoulder and wished, not for the first time, that Ron and Hermione would be on their way to their walk around the lake already. Neville was already backing away slowly, trying to remove himself from either the reconciliation or the idea that Ginny might make him practice with her again. Harry didn’t like to be rude, but he really wanted to talk to Ginny alone, and give her a proper hello, at least.

“I wanted to come here instead,” Harry said simply. He could tell from Ginny’s expression that his words weren’t going to skate, but she held her tongue. Instead, she threw herself into his arms, dropping both the Quaffle and her racing broom.

“Hi.”

She laughed and planted her cold lips against his cheek, kissing down to his mouth, where she lingered, hovering just in front of his lips, their breath mingling.

“Hi.”

“Er... we’ll just...” Ron cleared his throat and Harry heard his shuffle off to their side.

“Have fun, you two,” said Hermione before she dragged Ron away.

“Good to see you, Harry. Ginny... thanks for not taking my head off.”

Ginny laughed and turned to look at Neville, who was already streaking as fast as his padded legs could carry him toward the changing rooms.

“Couldn’t find anyone else to practice with?” Harry asked. “You had to drag Neville out here? I

always thought he was a brave one, but..."

Ginny laughed and dug her fingers into his side before kissing him properly. Any thoughts of brooding were gone the minute her tongue touched the tip of his and Harry pulled her to him, not caring that they were out in the open where anyone could see. Her hair whipped around them, tickling his cheeks and neck and arms.

"I've missed you," Ginny said. "Letters just aren't enough."

"That's why I came," said Harry.

She grinned at him, wound her fingers through his and began pulling away, tugging him with her. "Come on; let's find somewhere else to be."

They left the Quaffle in the middle of the pitch, and Ginny let him steer when they mounted her broom together. Harry wasn't sure where he was going, other than just away. He'd fly forever with her nestled in front of him if he could.

They found a secluded little spot on the far side of the lake and Harry touched down, his feet crunching in the thick leaves that covered the ground. The silence between them turned uncomfortable as Ginny twisted her wild hair into a knot at the base of her neck and kicked leaves with her feet. Harry wished he knew what to say to break the ice. Instead, he felt like this was some awkward first date again—not that things like this had ever been awkward with Ginny in the past.

"This feels... odd."

Harry scowled and wound his hand around hers, wanting things to be just the way they were when he'd seen her last, just two months ago in London. Although without a camera to catch him kissing her this time.

"It shouldn't," he said vehemently.

Ginny's face lit and she leaned her forehead against his shoulder, soaking up some small bit of comfort that helped ease the discomfort. "I think it's the space between us," she whispered. "I feel like... like this is new and... *delicate*. Like I know you, and you know me—probably more than anyone else—but what we have is so very..."

"Yeah," Harry agreed with a sigh. He wrapped a piece of her hair that had come loose around his finger and rested his palm against her cheek. "Maybe it'll just take time to connect again."

While things didn't feel just right, Harry thought maybe they were on the right track. He pulled her down into the leaves and sat with her back against his chest, his arms around her. Being close would help. Ginny relaxed against him and he felt her very nearly purr against him, like a contented cat curled up in front of a fireplace.

He looked out over the lake and thought he could just make out Ron and Hermione on the opposite shore. Ron was skimming rocks while Hermione sat on the shore. They looked happy and Harry's earlier irritation with them melted away. Ginny was here now, in his arms. Things were starting to

look up.

"Gonna tell me what's wrong?" Ginny asked after enough time that Harry wondered if she'd drifted off to sleep. He thought about saying 'nothing', but knew she wouldn't let him get away with it. Everyone else did, but he could never lie to Ginny.

"I guess I'm just tired," he said. "I'm not sure what I thought would happen, but... but this isn't it. I feel like I wander around all day and just can't ever catch up to where I'm supposed to be. Like I'm running minutes behind all day long. That sounds stupid, doesn't it?"

She nodded slowly, running her fingertips up the outside of Harry's arm and causing a shiver through his body. "No, I know what you mean. Some days I walk around the castle in a daze and I'll find myself in some passage not having remembered walking there. But... it's not like I'm asleep or anything, I'm just..."

Harry leaned his head onto her shoulder. "Yeah."

"I don't want to feel this way," she whispered frantically and Harry heard the hitch in her voice. He wondered if she was crying, but didn't want to look to confirm. If she was, then she might not want him to see.

"I'm so... angry, and lost. *Still*. It wasn't supposed to be like this, you know," said Ginny. "Things were supposed to be better."

"And they are," he picked up. "But not enough."

Silence draped over them like a blanket and the faint sound of laughter drifted across the black water. Other couples were happy; they were laughing, and kissing, and walking along the shore. The shadow of the past and the things they'd been through weren't hanging over them like they obviously were for Harry and Ginny.

Harry hated that. He wanted everything to be fine. He wanted to wake up in the morning and *want* to go to work, *want* to see his friends. But more than anything, he *wanted* to be with Ginny.

"It'll get better." He repeated the words that everyone always told him, even though he wasn't sure if it would, but sometimes the words made him feel better, so he said them.

Ginny turned her head a little and looked at him, a small smile on his face. "And one day it won't feel like there's a Dementor just hovering outside our vision."

A chill went through him at the mention of it, but not because she was wrong, because she was right.

"Is that why you pelt Neville with Quaffles?" He laughed a little at the picture in his head, but he was still grateful that she had someone she could rely on here at school, since he hadn't come back to be with her.

"Yeah." Ginny laughed a little too. "He's the only one willing sometimes. And it makes me feel more... normal. Not hitting him, of course, but playing."

"Maybe... maybe I can come up more often. Practice with you. We could ask McGonagall."

She made a noise at the back of her throat that sounded sort of skeptical, but Harry wasn't so sure. "She has a soft spot for me, you know," he said smugly. Ginny just laughed and brushed her fingers along the side of his face.

"I know. But you can't always be the one to save me, Harry. Sometimes I need to save myself, you know."

He nodded, because he really did know, but it was another thing he wanted. Always. "It's going to be really good, watching you play."

She looked surprised. "I doubt you'll be able to come up. The game is next weekend, and you're here now..."

"I meant when it's for real, you know, with the Harpies."

Her face flushed, but he could tell she was proud of the letter she'd gotten from Gwenog Jones herself. "Don't say it out loud," she said, even though he knew she wanted him to. "If you do, something might go bad and it won't happen."

Harry leaned down and brushed his lips across hers, a quick kiss that left him longing for much more. "It's going to happen."

Ginny shifted in his arms and kissed him back, words forgotten for the moment. Harry found himself forgetting almost everything when the tip of her tongue traced his teeth and her fingertips dug into his shoulders.

He wasn't sure how long they stayed like that, kissing and touching and getting lost, but he was sure several seasons had passed, maybe even years; he didn't know and he didn't care because everything he needed was in his arms.

"I'll need to get back soon," Ginny finally said. Harry groaned and forced himself to think of anything but how soft Ginny was in certain places and the sounds she made when he held her just right. "Feast tonight. I wish you could stay."

"I will," he said impetuously. "I'll come back to school, tell McGonagall I changed my mind, find my old bed tonight and just... just be here... with you."

She smiled lazily at him, but they both knew it wouldn't happen. A chilly wind swept off the lake, making them both shiver. Harry wrapped his arms around her and wished everything could be as simple as how he felt about Ginny.

"Remember what we decided this summer?"

Her lips barely moved against the skin on his neck, but she was close enough to his ear that he heard her. He remembered the day well—sitting in the shade of the orchard, hands clasped between them, watching the leaves dance above them.

"The only way is forward," he said.

"We'll be fine, Harry, I know we will. We just have to..." Ginny's words faded, but Harry knew what she meant; they'd talked about it enough.

Their eyes met and Harry tugged on the long strands of her hair that flew wildly around her head in the breeze. This thing between them was what kept Harry grounded anymore. He loved Ron and Hermione, he adored Teddy, and had nothing but affectionate respect for the Weasleys, but Ginny was the most important person in his life. Sometimes he forgot that in all of the mess—the Ministry, the press, the expectations of the Wizarding World—that bogged down his day. It was good to get a reminder.

"Are we okay?" Harry asked, because he really didn't know. He felt better, more connected, more... alive.

"We've always been fine, Harry, you know that," said Ginny. "Things are still... well, they're not perfect, but we're still moving forward."

"I just need to know that we're in the same place, I guess," he said.

Her lips curled up at the corners, curving into a smile that made his stomach flutter and demanded that he kiss her just there. "We are, Harry, even when we're apart. The letters help. And it's only a few weeks until Christmas."

Harry nodded and pressed his forehead against hers. "Thank you, Ginny. I'm sorry that I didn't send an owl earlier—"

She cut him off by pressing her finger over his lips. "Want to play for a few minutes?" They both looked at her broom and then over to the orange-bathed Quidditch pitch. "I promise to take it easy on you."

Harry laughed and wound their hands together. "I'm not *that* bad at Keeper, I'll have you know. And as soon as Ron sees us playing he'll join us."

"I'm sure he will," Ginny said with a roll of her eyes. She snatched her broom up and rested it on one shoulder. "You know when I said that we were delicate? I think I was wrong. It's everything around us that is delicate. You and I... we're good."

And Harry couldn't agree more.