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Subject: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Mon, 24 Oct 2011 02:47:24 GMT  
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Spoilers: Season 7 of BtVS (specifically 'Chosen'); through book 6 of HP and large parts of book 7.

Disclaimer: I own all these characters! Yeah, that's the ticket! I own all these characters and ALSO the entire planet Earth! Yeah! And I'm expanding outward into other star systems as we speak! <takes meds> Uhh, what was I saying? Oh yeah. I own none of them. What, are you crazy?

A/N1: If you're a H/H shipper, you won't like this. Move along, move along, nothing to see here... I am sticking with the canon ships of Hermione/Ron and Harry/Ginny for the purposes of this story. Also, if you want character bashing, you're in the wrong story.

A/N2: Yes, I had to mess with the timelines to make this start on the right day. C'est la vie.

A/N3: By necessity, I am borrowing a lot of the dialogue from the end of Book 6 and lots of the plot of Book 7, since this story will take a while to go fully AU.

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## Chapter 1 In the Beginning

Ginny Weasley knew she was about to die, and that it would be the most painful death imaginable.

She was trapped, pinned down helplessly, and at the mercy of Bellatrix Lestrange, a woman who had no compassion whatsoever. She had lost her wand under hundreds of pounds of rocks, and no amount of accio had been able to summon it. She and Bellatrix were separated from the rest of the fighters, so no one would be coming to her rescue. And Bellatrix looked really, really angry.

It had all seemed so easy when Harry had left a few hours ago. He had given them all of his remaining felix felicis and asked them to keep watch on the Room of Requirement, in case Malfoy pulled anything. She had figured the three of them, plus a ton of good luck, could easily beat Draco and his two bullyboys. In her opinion, Crabbe and Goyle together had less magical ability than Dennis Creevey, and less smarts than Buckbeak.

But that had been before they found out just how right Harry really was about Malfoy. Draco had led a small army of Death Eaters into the seventh floor of the castle, and blinded the defenders with some of that Peruvian Darkness Powder. She told herself that if she got out of this alive, she would strangle Fred and George and their stupid joke shop. But their luck held, and they escaped that danger with no injuries. And her luck had continued to hold. She had been dueling with the most dangerous woman in Britain, and Bellatrix had yet to hit her with a spell. Ginny had always

managed to move in the right direction to avoid getting hit, or throw a protego at just the right time. It had made her overconfident, and had made Bellatrix furious.

Ginny had found herself completely separated from the other Hogwarts fighters, and Bellatrix had given up on hitting her opponent. That was when the evil bitch had blasted the ceiling apart over Ginny's head. Tons of stone fragments had come crashing down around her. And, incredibly, she hadn't been killed. That was the good news. The bad news was that she had lost her wand somewhere under the rubble, and what felt like a couple hundred pounds of rock had landed on her legs. The pain was horrible. At least one of the rocks had a sharp edge that had sliced through her robe and her jeans to rip her calf apart. And that didn't cover the crushing weight on her legs and hips. She was buried from her butt downward, and she couldn't move any of the rocks, either. She had tried. Oh Merlin, how she had tried!

Bellatrix strolled up to her, laughing cruelly. "So the ickle baby girl wants to play, does she? Let's see how she likes playtime now. Crucio."

Ginny screamed in agony. She had heard Mad-Eye Moody well, she thought it was Moody at the time talk about the Cruciatus Curse, and she had seen his demonstration in class. She had heard Harry talk about being hit by a couple of Cruciatus Curses by Voldemort. But she had never really understood how unbearably, unbelievably painful it was. It felt as if every nerve in her body was overloading. It felt as if her entire world was nothing but agony. It felt as if she would die from the horrific pain.

She opened her eyes. Her face was flat against the cold stone floor, and she was staring at a pair of black boots peeking out from a black robe. The pain still throbbing relentlessly throughout her body made every movement hurt. She turned her head slightly and saw Bellatrix leering down at her. "Does the wittle bitty girl still wanna play? It's so simple. I'll keep using this little curse, over and over and over again, until you beg me to kill you. And then wittle baby will die. And then I'll go show mummy and daddy what I did to their baby girl, before I kill them too. Do you understand?"

Ginny had never hated anyone so much in her life. If only there was something she could do. If only the felix felicis could come through with another bit of good luck. If only she could survive this for more than another couple seconds...

Bellatrix lifted her wand. She growled, "Do you understand?"

Ginny forced herself to say, "I understand you're crazier than the entire staff of the Quibbler put together."

Bellatrix smirked evilly. "That's not a very nice thing to say... to the woman who's about to rend the flesh from your bones, a piece at a time." She pointed her wand.

Ginny silently prayed for some sort of miracle, but she knew the felix felicis must have run its course. And for all she knew, the after-effect of taking the stuff was a run of horribly bad luck.

She gritted her teeth, awaiting horrific pain.

And a voice echoed through her head. A woman's voice. A woman she had never heard before. A young American woman, by the sound of her.

The voice called out, "Are you ready to be strong?"

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 26 Oct 2011 19:53:50 GMT  
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Chapter 2 - Creation

"Are you ready to be strong?"

Ginny desperately thought, "Oh Merlin, yes!" And suddenly she felt it. It was like a wave of power washing over her and flooding her very soul. It was like the whole world suddenly shimmered into focus. It was like she had spent the entire fifteen years of her life feeling sickly, wrapped in blankets, laden with weights, muffled in cotton, looking through dirty glasses... and suddenly all of that was gone.

She felt strong. Stronger than she'd ever felt. She felt better than she'd ever been before, even the day she won the Quidditch cup and Harry had first kissed her. She could see everything, even the cracks in the broken ceiling overhead. She could hear everything, even the distant fighting in the other rooms. The pain from the Cruciatus was mysteriously gone, and the pain in her leg was no longer so agonizing. The intense pressure of the rocks was somehow lessened, as if the rocks had been transfigured into cardboard. She could hear Bellatrix's heartbeat change as the madwoman prepared to hit her victim with yet another torture.

"Crucio!"

The spell hit Ginny right in the chest.

She was expecting unbearable agony. And it hurt. But it didn't hurt like a Cruciatus Curse was

supposed to. It certainly didn't hurt like that other Cruciatus had. It hurt like the time Millicent Bulstrode had punched her right in the breast. She could tell that Bellatrix knew something had gone wrong, because the woman had a shocked look on her crazy face.

Ginny grabbed the rock pinning down her right thigh. It was bigger than her whole head. There was no way she could budge it when she was pinned face-down and she could only get one hand on it. She had already tried. Twice.

She lifted the rock with one hand and threw it like it was a quaffle. And even though she was face down on the floor and throwing a small boulder, her aim was perfect. Bellatrix didn't have time to scream before the rock hit her square in the chest and knocked her against the wall ten feet behind her.

Ginny quickly pushed the remaining rocks off her legs. The rocks that had been too heavy to move? Suddenly they felt like they were made of plaster. Her right calf looked bad, with a wickedly deep cut that seared most of the way from her knee to her ankle. The rest of her legs were battered and bruised. There should have been no way she could move without help.

She moved. She stood up. Her legs hurt badly. But not too badly. Not nearly as badly as they ought to.

She took a couple steps. It seemed impossible, but she could walk. She ought to have legs that were crushed into bubotuber pus. She ought to be screaming in agony every time she even flexed her right leg. But somehow, she was walking. Somehow, she was handling the pain. It hurt. It hurt a lot. But now, somehow, she could bear the pain. She easily flipped aside several more rocks, including a couple that were more than two feet across, until she found her wand, which was miraculously undamaged except for a couple small scratches. She checked Bellatrix, who was unconscious and breathing raggedly and bleeding from her mouth. She should have been upset about possibly killing the woman, but she found herself too worried about everyone else. She pocketed Bellatrix's wand and rushed out to rejoin the battle.

She ran into the main corridor to find several people helping Neville and her big brother. Oh Merlin, her brother had been slashed by something horrible... something like Fenrir Grayback. She was suddenly seized with a ferocious urge to do something drastic to Grayback. Like stabbing him through the heart with a silver blade. She hastily knelt down, ignoring the damage in her legs. "Neville? Are you okay?"

He nodded. "Yeah, but Snape and the others got away." He pointed down the hall toward the front doors. "Harry ran after them, but there's too many of them..."

"Harry?" Her heart leapt into her throat. She jumped to her feet, threw her damaged robe away, and sprinted down the corridor toward the entry. She just knew the Death Eaters would be

rushing to get to the edge of the Hogwarts wards, so they could disappear away, just like Hermione had predicted. She knew Harry would try to stop them. She knew he was no match for a dozen of the most dangerous Death Eaters that Malfoy could let into the castle. Not even Professor Dumbledore could stop all of them at once.

"Ginny!" Hermione called out to her. She ignored the yell. She ignored the pain in her legs and ran. She had always been quick, but she had never been this fast before. It was almost as if the rest of the world was in slow motion. She passed Tonks like the woman was out for a stroll, instead of running at her top speed.

"Oi! Ginny! Weasley, stop!"

She didn't stop. She didn't bother to answer. She was already down a hall, around a corner, and at the top of a long flight of stairs. She didn't bother to run down the stairs. She didn't bother to stop. She leapt into the air.

She cleared the entire staircase. She hit feet first, somehow knowing to roll onto her shoulder and then back up to her feet. Her legs should have broken under the stress of the landing. Her already-injured legs should have been screaming in crippling agony. She just ignored the pain and kept running.

The front doors were wide open. She dashed out into the darkness, and found that it wasn't as dark as it should have been. At least, not to her. It seemed as if she could see as well in the pitch-black night as she normally could at dusk. She could see Death Eaters scrambling away, and in the far distance, she could see a battle. Harry and... oh Merlin, it was Snape! She growled like an animal, and sprinted after the closest... prey.

They were prey. She suddenly felt it. She was a predator, and people like those Death Eaters were little more than her prey. It was like she had become part animal. It was like she had become less than human. She refused to think about it. She sprinted onward.

The Carrows were well within her range before they even realized someone was closing in behind them. "Stupefy! Stupefy!" She hit them both with stunners before either could turn around to face her. Her aim was nearly as impressive as her quickness, or the silence with which she raced through the night. Both dropped to the ground, and she rushed past them.

Hagrid's hut was on fire, but Hagrid and Fang were clearly safe. She ran past them, ignoring Hagrid's shout of "Ginny! Whadda ya think you're up to? Come back!"

A huge blond Death Eater was up ahead. She could see Snape running past the wards and disappearing. She could see Harry lying on the ground, struggling to get to his feet. The big Death Eater was going to attack Harry! She sprinted at the guy and fired off a pair of stunners.

Both stupefy spells hit the huge man squarely in the back. Both bounced off, doing little more than making the man stagger. "Giant," she growled. The man was easily big enough to be part giant, and it would explain why spells bounced off him. Plus, something inside her, a sort of knotting discomfort in her stomach, just knew he wasn't fully human.

The giant whirled and fired a jet of green death at her. She dodged to the right, easily avoiding his attack. It was like he was moving through treacle. He fired off another curse, but by then she was close enough to hear him start to mutter the words. She dodged before he finished the phrase. The purple curse missed her by at least three meters. Her wand was useless against him, but something inside her told her she didn't need a wand. She shoved her wand into her pocket and leapt at him. She couldn't believe how far she was leaping. In mid-air, she kicked him in the wrist so hard his wand flew out of his hand and through the air. A brutal snapping sound told her she had broken his arm.

He kicked out at her as she landed, but she nimbly dodged his slow effort. It was so easy. It was like the big man was mired in tar, instead of doing his utmost to kill her. She smoothly slid behind him and kicked the back of his knee, dropping him onto his face when he couldn't catch himself with his broken wrist. She didn't know how she knew to do that, but she just did. As he struggled to lift himself with his good arm and his good leg, she slid past his guard and punched him in the jaw. Something told her not to hit him as hard as she could, but she still felt his jaw break. He fell unconscious to the ground.

She ignored the pain in her knuckles and rushed over to where Harry was struggling to get to his feet. She grabbed him under the arms and lifted him to his feet. She just about threw him into the air before she managed to rein in her strength.

Harry looked at himself standing up and, clearly confused, said, "Guess I'm not as hurt as I thought. Thanks, Ginny. What are you doing out here?"

"Looking for you," she smiled. She gently kissed him on the cheek and slipped one of his arms over her shoulder so she could help him back to the castle without him realizing how much she was helping him.

"Ginny... You shouldn't be out here... Not safe..." Harry groaned. "Death Eaters... Snape... He... he killed Dumbledore!"

She gasped in horror. Oh no. This was a lot worse than she thought. She helped Harry limp back to the castle, easily holding him up every time his legs gave out. Where was everybody? Why wasn't anyone rushing out here to help Harry?

They were halfway back to the front door before Tonks came rushing out with another Auror in

tow. Tonks glared at her, "Merlin's beard! Ginny Weasley, what were you thinking?"

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 30 Oct 2011 20:06:53 GMT  
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Chapter 3 Darkness upon the Face of the Earth

"Merlin's beard! Ginny Weasley, what were you thinking?"

She fumed, "I was thinking no one was helping Harry and tons of Death Eaters were about to catch him from behind! He fought Snape, and then the big blond part-giant came up behind him-

"Sounds like Thorfinn Rowle."

Ginny went on, "-and both Carrows. They're all out there, that way. You need to pick them up before they can get away." She pointed toward Hagrid's hut. "And someone needs to help Hagrid put the fire out, his hut's burning down."

Harry said, "Snape. He killed Dumbledore. We have to stop him."

Tonks and the other Aurors looked appalled, and rushed off into the night.

Ginny said, "Come on, Harry, I need to get you up to Madame Pomfrey."

"No." He stopped walking forward, and pulled against her. She was surprised at how much effort he was making, given he could hardly walk. "We have to find Dumbledore."

"I thought you said Snape killed him," she said.

"Yeah. He took a Killing Curse right in the chest and fell from the tower. We have to find him."

Ginny wasn't sure she wanted to see a body that had fallen all the way from that tower, but Harry was relentless. And she was worried about him. Like she hadn't always been worried about him, ever since her big brothers blabbed about Harry's first year at Hogwarts. Ever since The Boy Who Lived came to visit the Burrow, and the twins told her that Harry's family was keeping him locked up in a room with bars on the windows and no way he could use magic.

People in dressing robes and nightgowns were slowly starting to peek out of the huge front doors, trying to figure out what was going on. Ginny helped Harry walk on around the side of the castle, away from the front doors, until they were underneath the astronomy tower. And there, in the pitch black shadows of the castle, lay the crumpled body of Albus Dumbledore.

Harry pulled free from her and rushed to his side. Ginny slowly followed Harry, but she could tell that Professor Dumbledore was dead. There was no heartbeat. No breathing. The smell of blood was sickening. Professor Dumbledore, the man Ginny had always believed would save everyone from He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, was dead.

Harry whispered to himself, "Where is it? Where is it? We didn't go through all that to lose the thing..." She knew he didn't say it to her, but she could still hear his whispers. He looked around in the shadows without seeing anything. But Ginny could see it. She could see in shadows, like a cat. Or a vampire. She knew it: she had turned into some kind of thing.

The crowd of people had come to see what Harry Potter was up to, and Hagrid had caught up to them as well. A score of lumos spells lit up the grounds and the body. The crowd gasped in horror, once they realized what they were looking at. Hagrid moaned in shock and agony at the sight.

Ginny watched as Harry scrambled for the locket. He cracked it open and unfolded a piece of parchment. Even from six feet away at night she could read the spidery handwriting.

To the Dark Lord

I know I will be dead long before you read this  
but I want you to know that it was I who discovered your secret.  
I have taken the real Horcrux and intend to destroy it as soon as I can.  
I face death in the hope that when you meet your match,  
you will be mortal once more. R.A.B.

Ginny looked at the horror on Harry's face, and suddenly understood. Harry knew what was going on. He knew what the locket was supposed to be. He and Dumbledore had gone through some huge effort to recover it, and it was crucial to stopping Voldemort. Only this wasn't what they were after. It was a fake. Someone else had the real one.

Ginny watched as Harry sort of crumpled. He didn't seem to hear all the upset voices yammering at him. She just took his hand and helped him to his feet. Then she walked him into the castle.

Professor McGonagall appeared before them, looking as shocked and helpless as Ginny had ever seen her. Ginny suddenly wondered: was this what the felix felicis had done? Had it saved her and Ron and Hermione, and cost the lives of others instead? She wasn't sure she could live with herself if that was true.

Professor McGonagall said, "Mister Potter. Miss Weasley. Please go to the hospital wing at once."

Harry muttered, "I'm not hurt."

Professor McGonagall looked at him, and then at Ginny. "Miss Weasley, your leg needs immediate treatment. Mister Potter, please make sure she goes to see Madam Pomfrey at once. The others are all up there already."

Ginny looked down at her leg. There was still a huge rip in her jeans. There was still a huge rip in her calf. There was blood all over the back of her leg. She said, "I'm fine. It looks worse than it is."

Professor McGonagall gave her an intense look, and waved her wand in a silent scourgify. The blood cleaned itself up.

Ginny glanced at her calf and tried not to gape at it. The horrible wound that should have crippled her? It looked like it was already starting to heal up. She knew that was impossible without several of the right kinds of potions and some medical spells and a lot of time. It was just as impossible as her strength, and her speed, and her resistance to spells. It was like the felix felicis had given her the most astounding piece of luck she could imagine. If getting turned into some sort of sub-human monster was good luck.

Professor McGonagall stared at her calf and said, "I believe you need to have that healed promptly. Mister Potter, make sure she does as I said."

Harry nodded, but as soon as Professor McGonagall left, he whispered, "Ginny? The hospital wing? Who else died?"

She sighed. "No one." But she had to explain to him about Bill and Neville. That was so typically Harry. He expected so little for himself. He had been through one horror after another tonight, and yet he was worried about everyone else.

She was careful not to help Harry too much now, or he'd notice. But she got him up to the hospital wing. Neville was asleep on one bed. Professor Flitwick, looking even tinier than usual, was in another bed, reading a textbook and ignoring the big bandage on his head. Ginny could feel that knotting in her gut that told her Professor Flitwick wasn't a hundred percent human either. But everyone knew the professor was part goblin, and it wasn't like she was human anymore, either. Plus, she knew he wasn't bad. He was kind, and thoughtful, and a good teacher. She was the monster who attacked a part-giant and beat him unconscious.

Everyone else was gathered around Bill's bed. Ginny nearly burst into tears when she saw Bill's face. She had just assumed Madam Pomfrey could fix him. That Madam Pomfrey could fix anything. But it was explained to her that these were cursed injuries. His face was all ripped and slashed. Once again she felt a ferocious anger welling up inside her, trying to tear her chest apart... trying to make her run off to do something foolish and angry and brutal.

And, as Harry told the horrific story of Dumbledore's death, Ginny heard the sound. She heard it well before anyone else in the room could. At first it was faint even to her ears, but she recognized it long before the others even noticed it. Dumbledore's beautiful phoenix Fawkes was singing a painful lament for its beloved owner.

She listened to the beautiful, painful song as Harry and the others talked over what had happened in the last few hours. Snape's betrayal. The horrors Harry had witnessed atop the tower. Everything. It was all Ginny could do not to burst into tears. When her parents and Fleur came rushing in, the dam finally burst, and she sobbed helplessly. She couldn't go to her mother to be consoled, because Bill needed mum so much more. And he needed Phlegm. Ginny had never liked Phlegm, and she knew what the part-veela would do now that Bill was so horribly maimed. Ginny knew how hurt Bill would be. But all she could do was cry like a baby and watch.

And Fleur did a completely un-Fleur thing. She stood up to Ginny's mum and told her she wouldn't stop loving Bill for something as silly as some scars. She pushed mum to the side and took over applying the ointment to Bill's damaged face. And then Fleur and mum were holding each other and crying, and Ginny was crying for them.

Harry went with Professor McGonagall, but Ginny followed along behind them as soon as she drank one of Madam Pomfrey's potions and accepted a special bandage along the cut. She wasn't allowed to leave the room until Madam Pomfrey was satisfied. Ginny had seen how strong Harry was, but she knew she was stronger. Maybe not inside, where Harry always seemed to have the strength of a basilisk or someone who could slay a basilisk but physically. And she was afraid that he was going to need her strength. She waited patiently for him, outside the door to the headmaster's office. That, and she really didn't want to have to tell her family what had happened to her tonight.

Harry came out looking frantic and exhausted. She helped him hurry through the corridors and into the Gryffindor common room, where everyone was waiting. She heard all the muttering, even the conversations far enough away that she shouldn't have been able to make out anything. Someone had stupefied both Carrows, and someone had beaten Thorfinn Rowle unconscious. Hagrid was insisting it wasn't him, but no one else was seen out there besides Harry and Ginny. And who could have beaten Thorfinn Rowle unconscious beside Hagrid or maybe Grawp? All right, Ginny wasn't supposed to know about Grawp, but she had spent more time than normal over the last couple years, just hanging out around Hagrid's and helping him, while hoping to get to spend some time with Harry. So she knew a lot of stuff Hagrid wasn't supposed to be telling

other people.

Harry was fading fast, so she slipped her arms under his legs and back, and carried him up to his room like he was a child. He was already out on his feet by the time she carried him into his dormitory, so she just put him on his bed. She set his glasses on his nightstand, slipped off his shoes, and pulled a heavy blanket over him.

She stepped out of Harry's room, and found herself facing the last two people she wanted to face right then. Her over-protective big brother and her way-too-smart friend.

Hermione frowned, "Ginny, how could you carry Harry up all those stairs and up to his room?"

Ron gaped, "Bloody hell, how could you even lift him? Especially when your leg's hurt?"

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Chapter 4 The Face of the Waters

"Bloody hell, how could you even lift him? Especially when your leg's hurt?"

She led them down through the crowded common room, out into the corridor, and over to a dark corner. She gulped and admitted, "Umm, something really weird happened to me."

Ron asked, "Weirder than drinking a luck potion and fighting off Death Eaters?" Hermione elbowed him hard enough that he winced.

Ginny nodded. She started talking, and she found she couldn't stop. She told them everything: the fight against Bellatrix, the voice in her head, her resistance to a Cruciatus curse, her strength, her speed, seeing in the dark, stunning the Carrows, fighting the half-giant with her feet and fists, carrying Harry, all of it. When she finished, she was almost afraid to look into their eyes to see the shock and revulsion.

Hermione patted her hand. "Ginny, I don't know what happened, but I'll research it first thing tomorrow."

"Thanks," she whispered.

Ron squeezed her other hand. He murmured, "When you going to tell mum?"

Ginny jerked backward sharply, easily tearing her hands out of their grasp without realizing it. "I can't tell mum, she'll... She's got Bill to worry about, and now I turned into some sort of monster, and-"

"You're not a monster," Hermione insisted.

"Yeah," Ron agreed. "You're still my little sister. My extremely annoying sister."

Ginny tried not to weep. "Please don't tell mum. Or dad."

Ron said, "I'm not going to tell anybody. But you have to. You need to tell Harry as soon as you can, and you need to talk to mum and dad." He looked at the fear in her eyes, and he added, "As soon as you feel up to it. But the sooner the better. You know what mum is like if you're keeping secrets you should've told her. Remember dad's car?"

Ginny sniffled, "Thanks, you two. You're the best." Then she couldn't resist teasing, "So... Ron. When did you get smart?"

Ron just grinned at her. "It's my new rule. I just ask 'What Would Hermione Do?' And then I know what to do. OW!" He rubbed his bicep where Hermione had just hit him. He glared at Hermione and said, "Except for the bit about punching people."

They let her walk up to her room and go to bed. She slipped into her nightgown and looked at herself. The bruises that should have been so vivid and painful were already starting to heal. Her leg was still aching, but it was looking much better. She washed her face and studied herself in the mirror. She wasn't sure what she was expecting maybe fangs or fur or pointed ears or scales or something even worse but all she saw was plain old Ginny Weasley. After what she had done in the last few hours, why didn't she look any different?

She silently slid into her bed and lay still. She was still so worked up she wasn't sure she could go to sleep. She was expecting nightmares. She was expecting dreams about her duel with Bellatrix, the pain of the Cruciatus, the fights, the horror of seeing Harry down on the ground, Dumbledore's broken body...

She wasn't expecting the nightmares she actually had.

A brunette girl in Victorian Muggle clothing was fighting vampires. Aggressive vampires, with yellow eyes and deadly fangs. She was staking two when a third grabbed her from behind and broke her neck.

Another girl somehow she knew it was the same girl, only looking different and in different clothes was fighting vampires and losing, a fierce fanged face sinking its teeth into her neck.

Another girl, a petite blonde girl in a cave, faced a white-faced bald vampire so old his visage was a monstrous fanged threat. He sank his teeth into her neck and then threw her face-first into a pool.

The same blonde was fighting a powerful black-haired vampire in a deadly swordfight.

The same blonde was diving off a rickety tower into a glowing portal.

The same blonde was swinging a strange weapon that was part axe and part stake, slicing through an army of massive vampiric monsters.

A black girl in a black duster was in a subway car like in what the Muggles called the Underground, fighting a vampire with bleached blond hair who looked strangely like Draco Malfoy. They were punching and kicking each other until she missed with her stake and he ripped it from her hand. He brutally beat her to the floor and sank his fangs into her neck...

A thing was racing through the brush of a desolate savannah, chasing down a demon. Only it wasn't a thing, it was a girl. A native girl covered in daubs of mud, her hair a matted mess, running and scrambling like a wild thing until she leapt onto the demon and twisted its neck. Ginny felt the vertebrae separate. She heard the horrible sound as the demon's head tore loose from its body.

Ginny woke up gasping. She felt her heart was pounding at a hundred beats a minute. Her heart hadn't pounded like this when she was sprinting the whole way to the edge of the wards to save Harry.

"You okay?" whispered one of her roommates.

She lied, "Yeah. I'm fine." She didn't think she could go back to sleep. Right then, she wasn't sure she could ever go to sleep again. She slipped out of her bed, wrapped herself in a dressing gown, and slipped out. She silently eased down the stairs to the Gryffindor common room, trying to make sense of the dreams.

She had always had weird dreams. Well, ever since she was ten or eleven. Mum said it was psychological, that she was projecting her fears about leaving home and going to Hogwarts into something physical. Monsters and threats. But she'd never been afraid of going to Hogwarts. She'd always wanted it so much. Especially after Harry came to stay with them for a few weeks. She had crushed so hard on him that she'd been unable to speak to him. Every time she tried, she choked up, stuttering and stammering like an idiot. Or else she humiliated herself in some

other way, putting her arm in the butter dish or spilling her oatmeal into her lap or tripping and falling face-first into the garden. She had spent the entire time Harry had visited either wishing Harry would suddenly fall in love with her and think she was the most wonderful girl in the world, or else wishing lightning would strike her dead so she wouldn't continue to be a humiliated mess. Fred and George had naturally made everything a dozen times worse. No, she had always wanted to go to Hogwarts. Even after the horrors of Tom Riddle's diary and the Chamber of Secrets, she had still wanted to go back to Hogwarts.

Now she knew those old dreams weren't some stupid psychological thing. They were too much like these new dreams. And she was still really strong. She checked, lifting an entire wooden table with one hand. Whatever had happened to her while she was lying under all that rubble, it hadn't gone away when the felix felicis had worn off. She had powers that no one on earth had. Not even Dumbledore had spells that would make you run so fast, or react so quickly, or be so strong, or stand up to spells so well.

She really, really hoped Hermione could figure out what happened to her. She really, really hoped she hadn't been turned into some sort of inhuman magical creature.

She looked out the window. Something inside her wanted her to run out into the darkness and... do something. Something physical. Something brutal. She was afraid she might become even less human if she let herself run out there. Instead, she buried herself in her textbooks, since she was sure she was going to have to take her O.W.L.s whether school was cancelled or not. If she concentrated hard enough on her History of Magic notes, she could probably put herself to sleep...

She was still awake and studying when the sunlight came in through the windows, and Dobby popped into the room to tidy up. She left him to his chores and went up to take a shower. She should have been exhausted. She should have been too sickened by the last night's horrors to feel like eating. She should have looked tired and wan and miserable.

She felt fine. She felt wide awake. And she was really hungry. She looked at herself in the bathroom mirror. She looked hale and hearty and vibrant, unless you saw the worried shadows about her eyes.

The mirror said, "You're looking good this morning, considering what happened last night. But you really need to do something about that hair."

She just said, "Thank you" before she brushed out her long tresses.

She walked down to breakfast before her roommates and made sure to sit with Ron and Hermione and Harry, so she wouldn't have to answer more questions about last night. Harry still looked exhausted, and Hermione looked like she needed more sleep. Ron looked like he wasn't

sure if he even wanted to eat breakfast, which was a sure sign he was a lot more upset than he wanted to admit.

But she was starving. She ate six or seven sausages, when normally she never had more than one or two. She devoured the toast and bacon and eggs and everything else that was within reach. She didn't stop until she saw Hermione was staring at her in alarm.

Hermione asked, "Are you okay? Because I think you ate more than me and Ron and Harry combined."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 06 Nov 2011 19:29:21 GMT  
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Chapter 5 And There Was Light

"Are you okay? Because I think you ate more than me and Ron and Harry combined."

Ginny said, "I think it's..." Her voice dropped to a whisper. "You know."

She caught Harry's look, and Ron's answering headshake. She heard Ron whisper, "That time of the month. Drop it."

She let it go, because she was hearing everything. She was seeing everything. She was noticing everything all around her. Seamus and Dean looking her way. Three Ravenclaws walking behind her and paying attention to her and Harry. Half a dozen Slytherins talking and focusing on her group of Gryffindors. Professor McGonagall looking her way before standing up. It was like she had some sort of... what did the Muggles call it? Ray-door? Oh yeah. Radar.

Professor McGonagall announced, "May I have your attention? Classes are cancelled. We will be ending school early, with no exams."

Ginny distinctly heard Hermione gasp, "Oh not again!"

"Those of you who were planning on taking your O.W.L.s or N.E.W.T.s will be notified by the Ministry of times at which they will be doing your testing. I recommend that you do not stop studying, because I do not want this school to be embarrassed by poor marks! We will hold a funeral service for Professor Dumbledore here on the grounds, in three days. Those of you who wish to attend may all do so. Those of you who wish to go home early may also do so. All your

parents have already been notified of this decision, so you may start preparing today for your departure. You will receive notification from the Ministry of the decision on next year's classes." There was a hitch in her voice as she said, "I hope to see all of you back again next year, but if not, I will understand."

Once she sat back down, there was an uproar. Ginny's newly-sensitive hearing made her want to cover her ears, but she tried to pretend the noise wasn't unusually loud to her. Even if it was painfully loud. She could hear everything. That git Smith insisting that he would never set foot in here again. Two Slytherins enjoying how the school might now change to reflect their views. A couple Hufflepuffs worrying about their friends in fifth and seventh years. It was too loud, and she could hear all of it.

Ginny found that she didn't want to think about her O.W.L.s. The more she thought about it, the more she was sure she was some sort of horrid, grotesque creature who would be locked up forever and not allowed to go to Hogwarts anymore.

Hermione tapped her on the hand and left the table. Ginny glanced over to see that Luna was getting up as well. She waited a few seconds before getting up and following them out of the Great Hall.

Hermione led them to an empty classroom and performed a muffliato spell to give them privacy. She said, "I found out something big. The whole wizarding world is talking about a wave of power that swept out of California minutes before the Sunnydale Hellmouth collapsed and was sealed up, just last night. Mid-day in California, nighttime here. No one knows what the magical wavefront was doing, just that it was unbelievably powerful, and it swept across the whole planet." She paused and stared into Ginny's eyes. "And as far as I can work out, it happened just about when you heard that voice."

Ginny managed to say, "I, umm, I know what it did. It made me strong. It made me fast... and strong... and... I can see in the dark... and..." She remembered all too well what she had done last night. She tried not to sob. "...and I think it made me not really human anymore."

Luna looked up at the ceiling and said in her usual dreamy tones, "Oh. You've become a Vampire Slayer. Ginevra the Vampire Slayer. The Slayer of vampires and demons is almost never a witch, but it's always a teenaged girl."

Hermione started into her usual automatic disagreement with anything Luna said about unusual creatures. And she froze, her mouth agape. She gasped, "That's it. That's it! Hold on, I've got a book that has this!" She rushed off to the Gryffindor tower.

Luna smiled serenely. "I did tell her."

Ginny managed a bit of a grin in return. "But how many times have you told her something about creatures that she believed?"

"Oh. That. Besides this time? I believe... umm... maybe the time I told her about nargles? And I'm sure she believed me about the heliopaths..."

Ginny let it drop. She knew Hermione hadn't believed those tales either. Instead, she let Luna talk about the new story in The Quibbler that Cornelius "Goblin Crusher" Fudge was making a big comeback by wrestling trolls in Diagon Alley's new theatre while using the alias The Masked Luchadore. Having met Fudge before, Ginny didn't think he could outwrestle a house elf. Given how Fudge had treated Harry all last year, she didn't think he could outsmart a house elf either.

Hermione was back in fifteen minutes, breathing hard and looking like she had run most of the way up and back. She hurriedly found the passage she was looking for. "Here it is! 'The Vampire Slayer is commonly regarded as popular folklore. Unsupported Muggle accounts go back to the dawn of written history, if not earlier. However, Dictatio the Elder wrote in his memoirs that in 1232, in what is now Bavarian Germany, in the middle of the Germanic Giant Wars, a Muggle farmgirl suddenly became immensely powerful. She defeated giant after giant, ending the Fourth Giant War when she battled the giant leader Gurrorka to the death.'"

Ginny goggled at that. Sure, she was strong enough to beat up someone like Thorfinn Rowle, but this was pretty hard to believe. "Wow. She killed a giant? A giant strong enough to be a giant king?"

Hermione winced a little, and her heartrate jumped. "Umm, they kind of killed each other."

Ginny tried again. "But she was killing giants for a long time, right?"

Hermione winced even harder, and Ginny could hear Hermione's heartrate speed up again. "Umm, no, she only lived about... umm... let's see... seven weeks after she got her powers."

Ginny cringed. "Eww."

Luna purred, "The Slayer burns brightly to light the darkness, but the brightest candle burns out the fastest." Ginny didn't like the way that sounded.

Hermione found another section of the book and said, "It is believed that a new Slayer is Called the moment when the previous Slayer dies."

And Ginny gulped. "Oh Merlin! You mean someone died last night and I got her powers?"

Hermione nodded uncomfortably. "Umm, that's what the book says. Probably, the current

Vampire Slayer died in California as part of the whole Sunnydale Hellmouth collapse, and you got her powers."

Ginny swallowed hard at the horrible thought that her incredible luck last night meant that some poor girl somewhere else had had dreadful luck and had died a horrible death. She was never going near that *felix felicis* stuff ever again. She muttered, "And we know why someone like me would be called right now, right here."

Hermione winced and said, "Yes."

Luna looked at the ceiling and said in dreamy tones, "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named."

Ginny stared at the floor. She felt like someone had just punched her in the stomach. Slayers had superpowers, and died horribly while fighting monsters. And she knew the monster she was going to have to fight.

Hermione said, "But Voldemort isn't your fight."

Ginny wrinkled her brow in confusion. "How can you know that?"

Luna smiled in that apparently aimless way she had. Ginny knew from years of classes with Luna that it really meant Luna was seeing things in ways normal people didn't. "The prophecy in the Ministry. It was about Lord Voldemort and Harry Potter. It has to be about Harry fighting Voldemort and winning, or else Voldemort wouldn't have tried to kill Harry when he was still a baby. And the prophecy was told to Albus P. W. B. Dumbledore. No one else has those five initials. I think Professor Trelawney must have given the prophecy to the headmaster. She has the right initials. That would be why he kept her here after she was fired, and why she's still teaching when she is not a good teacher for her subject matter."

Ginny noticed how Hermione's heartbeat raced every time Luna made another guess about Harry's prophecy. Her new powers were making her into a human lie detector. Or maybe an inhuman lie detector. And she felt like she was invading Hermione's personal privacy by doing it. But it told her that Hermione knew the prophecy, and was really worried about how accurate Luna's guesses were. Well, lots of people tended to forget there was a reason Luna was in Ravenclaw.

So Harry must have found out, maybe from Trelawney or Dumbledore, and then told Hermione. And if Harry told Hermione, then he was bound to tell Ron too. Probably both of them at the same time. And that stupid git Ron hadn't told her. Some big brother he was. Even if he hadn't grassed on her to mum and dad. Yet.

But Hermione wasn't done. She said, "And there's one more part, over with the chapter on

vampires. I'm sure of it..." She looked through and finally stopped. Then she winced, "Umm, never mind."

Ginny easily pulled the book out of Hermione's hands. It was like taking a rattle from a baby. She was so much stronger than a human could ever be. And the section was obvious. She read it out loud, trying not to let her voice crack. "The vampire community has their own bogeyman: the Vampire Slayer. A feral monster that was once human, and now seeks only to hunt supernatural creatures and kill them." She looked up at Hermione and asked, "Is that what I am now? A feral monster so horrible even vampires fear me?"

But Luna dreamily said, "We demonize that which we fear. Even vampires do it. They see the thing that they fear as feral and monstrous, just as we see vampires as feral and monstrous."

Hermione said, "Luna's right. You're not a feral monster. If you were, you wouldn't be so upset about turning into something less than human. You're still our friend Ginny, just with... some new accessories."

Luna said, "Think about how much more powerful and dangerous you were after Harry's D.A. classes, compared to when you started at Hogwarts. Did you become a monster? No. You just... grew." Ginny felt better about that, until Luna kept going. "Just like the baby heliopath is not nearly as dangerous as the full-grown heliopath, which is-"

"Luna, did you have a point?" Hermione interrupted.

"Sure," Luna said serenely, as if Hermione had never interrupted her. She turned back to Ginny. "Just because you've become Ginny the Vampire Slayer doesn't mean you're not still Ginny the Quidditch player or Ginny the good friend or Ginny the little sister. You're just... more."

She really, really wished she believed Luna. But she didn't.

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Chapter 6 The Light from the Darkness

Ginny had a couple days before the funeral. But she kept putting off telling Harry what she needed to tell him. She was just too... scared. What if he thought she was some kind of monster? What if he didn't want to be with her anymore? And then it seemed like every time she

got up the nerve to talk to Harry about things, he changed the topic, as if he had something he didn't want to talk about. Hermione and Ron kept pushing both of them to talk, so she was pretty sure what she'd hear.

Instead, she just spent as much time with Harry as she could. She went to the hospital wing a couple times a day to see Bill. She could feel the not-fully-human part of Fleur now, but it didn't feel bad, like Thorfinn Rowle did, just... uncomfortable. Still, it didn't matter, because she was going to have to get used to it. She could tell. It looked like it would take wild thestrals to drag Fleur away from Bill.

Ginny had a couple uncomfortable talks with her mum at Bill's bedside, all of them about Bill and the night Dumbledore died and the upcoming funeral. Ron knew she hadn't told mum about the Vampire Slayer deal yet. And she knew Ron hadn't told their folks yet, because mum hadn't gone spare. Her folks wanted her to study hard and take the O.W.L.s in a week or so, when the Ministry was set up for the Hogwarts students. She figured it couldn't be that awful. There were only thirty-seven students in her year, including her, and if the tests were at the Ministry, they could probably get a dozen professors in to grade the students, so the practicals ought to go pretty quickly, even if she would be the last student called every time. Oh, the joys of having a last name starting with 'W'. At least their last name wasn't Zabini... and they didn't have Blaise's horrible mother for a close relative. Even if mum said Blaise's mother was a really distant cousin on the Prewett side of the family.

Plus, Hermione had given Ginny a massive stack of hand-written study guides, and notes on the O.W.L. test questions for the last five years. She was pretty sure Hermione had O.W.L. test questions for the last fifteen or twenty years, if not more, but was opting not to bury Ginny in parchment.

Ginny put on her best dress robes when it was time for the funeral. Half the students had already gone home. Almost all the Slytherins had left, naturally. Hardly any of the Gryffindors had, even if a couple of them had then had horrible arguments with their families right in front of the whole school. She sat with Harry and Ron and Hermione, and tried not to cry too much. The funeral was tragic and excruciating and tearful, and yet somehow inspiring.

And then, once it was over, Harry looked at her. She knew from his expression that he was going to say something painful. Something he needed to say.

"Ginny, listen... I can't be involved with you anymore. We've got to stop seeing each other. We can't be together."

She knew. She just did. It wasn't like Harry was malicious or tricky. He was straightforward and dedicated and strong. He was everything she'd ever dreamed of in a boyfriend, and she wasn't about to let him go. She tried to smile, but her pain made her mouth warp in what was probably a

really ugly leer. She made herself say, "It's for some noble reason that's really stupid, isn't it?"

He nodded. "The last few weeks... with you... They've been like something out of someone else's life. But I can't... I've got things to do alone now. Voldemort uses people his enemies are close to. He's already used you as bait once, and that was just because you're a Weasley and Ron's sister. Think how much danger you'll be in if we keep this up. He'll know. He'll find out. He'll try and get to me through you."

She knew that arguing wouldn't do any good. Not when Harry had his mind made up. So she was going to have to tell him the truth. She stood up and lifted him to his feet. He stared in shock at her surprising strength. She just said, "Come on." She tilted her head at Hermione and Ron, so they'd follow.

Harry tried to stop her, but he couldn't pry his hand from her grip, and he couldn't slow her down. He walked with her since it was obvious she could drag him if she had to. When he said so, she muttered, "I could throw you over my shoulder and carry you, but that would be pretty embarrassing."

They walked until they were past the remains of Hagrid's hut and a couple hundred feet inside the Forbidden Forest. She turned to face him, making sure Ron and Hermione were right there.

She took a deep breath and started talking. "A week ago, I would have just sat there and took it. Just been the noble sort and let you go off on your mission, hunting Voldemort and being a hero. But I'm not the girl I was a week ago. The night Dumbledore died, something happened to me." He started to say something, probably that it was one more reason why she had to let him go. She quickly put a finger over his lips before he could get out a single word. She could see the surprise in his eyes at her speed.

"No. Let me talk. This is your big secret. But I have one too. Hermione and Luna know. I figure Ron knows the truth by now. He's been trying to get me to tell you. You know the thing from Defense Against the Dark Arts about the Vampire Slayer?"

Harry looked puzzled. "Maybe? I don't think it's anything I studied."

Hermione groaned, "Oh Harry!"

Ron said, "I can't believe I'm saying this, but mate, it really would have been better if you'd done your homework just this once."

Hermione sighed. "The Vampire Slayer is a legendary figure. A girl, magically empowered to have the strength and speed and healing to fight vampires and demons, along with some other powers."

Ginny gave Harry a hard stare. "And guess what that felix felicis gave me when I needed it the most?"

Harry frowned in puzzlement. "You're telling me you got the powers of a Vampire Slayer for a while?"

Ginny snorted. "No. I got the powers. I still have them. That night when you dueled Snape, who do you think fought Bellatrix Lestrange?" His jaw dropped open. "I put her in St. Mungo's. Then I outran Tonks and everyone else, and I stunned both Carrows before they could react. Then I beat Thorfinn Rowle."

Harry looked stunned. "B-but they said he's half giant. And whoever it was broke his arm and broke his jaw and damaged his leg. It had to be Grawp or Hagrid, didn't it?"

Ginny tried to sound calm as she said, "It was me. I hit him with a stupefy that bounced off, so I leapt in the air and kicked him in the wrist so hard I broke it. When I landed, he tried to kick me. I dodged his leg, slid behind him, and kicked out his knee. He fell and couldn't catch himself with that broken wrist. So before he could get back up, I punched him in the jaw but not as hard as I could. I still felt it break. Harry, that was me."

Hermione said, "In 1232, an ordinary farmgirl became a Vampire Slayer and gained the strength to fight giants. She killed Gurrorka, the famous giant leader, in single combat. Harry, that night, Ginny had that huge cut in her calf, and she just picked you up like you were a baby and walked up the stairs and put you to bed. She's the strongest human in the world right now. She may be stronger than Hagrid."

Harry gritted his teeth and said, "But how's that going to save her from Voldemort? From Death Eater attacks? From being targeted because of me?"

Ginny said, "It won't. But you're missing the point. Everyone at school already knows about us, so half the Slytherins have probably already told their mummies and daddies about someone who they can use against The Boy Who Lived. I put Bellatrix and Rowle in St. Mungo's and put both Carrows in Azkaban. Bellatrix knows it was me, even if the others don't... yet. That means the Death Eaters will be after me no matter what. I'd actually be safer with you than all by myself. And if they come after either of us, I can defend myself. Harry, I'm some sort of magical creature now. I can dodge spells, and the ones that hit me don't do what they're supposed to. Bellatrix hit me with a Cruciatius right after I got my powers. Dead on. Right in the chest. It felt like someone had punched me. I shrugged it off."

Hermione said, "Look Harry, just try it. Try to stupefy her."

Harry looked around at the sticks and roots jutting up from the hard ground. "What? Here?"

Ginny said, "Look, just try. I'll dodge the first three times, and then I'll let you hit me with the fourth one." Harry looked at her like she'd said she was going to flap her arms and fly about the treetops. "Just try. Plea-

"Stupefy." He had already whipped his wand out and aimed at her.

But she was moving faster than an ordinary human. A lot faster. She saw his motion, and she moved. The spell shot past her and hit a distant tree.

"Stupefy. Stupefy!" He tried twice more. She easily dodged both times. It was like he was waving his wand in slow motion.

She stopped and said, "This time, I'll hold still."

"Stupefy." She watched as he made a tight, clean, rapid motion with his wand. Now that her eyesight and reflexes were so much better, she could really see just how good he was as a duelist. The spell hit her squarely in the stomach.

"Ooh," she moaned. "That doesn't feel all that good."

Harry's jaw dropped open. "Ginny! You... you're okay!"

She nodded. "Sure I am. And I'll stay okay. Weren't you listening when I was talking about Bellatrix? I can't be tortured with a Cruciatus Curse. I can't be stunned, or lots of other spells. I am kind of worried that I can't be healed with the usual mediwitch spells, but I heal up a lot faster than normal. I can run twice as fast as anyone else. Maybe faster. I can see in the dark. I... I have these dreams, and I think they're real prophetic dreams. You need me along when you and Hermione and Ron go after that Horcrux."

The Golden Trio all froze in shock. Harry asked, "How'd you learn about Horcruxes?"

She said, "The night Professor Dumbledore died. When you read the note from R.A.B., I could see well enough in the dark that I could read the note too. So I know it's something Voldemort's done to make himself immortal. And I'm guessing it ties in with that prophecy that says you have to fight Voldemort and beat him."

Hermione gasped, "Ginny! How do you know about that?"

She admitted, "I listened to Luna. And you. Every time she guessed right about the prophecy, your heart pounded extra fast."

"You could hear my heartbeat?" Hermione winced.

Ginny nodded uncomfortably. "Yeah. When I concentrate, I can hear everything. I could hear the phoenix singing that night, a long, long time before anyone else even noticed there was a sound. Just like I can hear the three centaurs coming up behind me right now."

The others turned to look. But it was long seconds before they could hear anything, and then a couple more seconds before Bane stepped into view, two more centaurs flanking him and aiming their bows at the humans. Bane carefully said, "Harry Potter. We do not wish to be your enemies, but we must ask that you not use the Forbidden Forest as a hiding place, for fear of what you will bring down upon us. And we do not trust..." He looked directly at Ginny. "it." Both flankers carefully swung their bows her way.

"She's not an it!" Ron said hotly.

Bane ignored him. "It has been foretold that when Mars was brightest, it would near Orion. But the daughters of Artemis are dangerous."

"What is that supposed to mean?" Ron grumbled.

Ginny stepped toward Bane. "I wouldn't hurt y-"

One of the flankers over-reacted and fired his arrow.

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Chapter 7 The Moving Creature

One of the flankers over-reacted and fired his arrow.

Before Harry could even blink, Ginny snapped her arm upward.

"Bloody hell," Ron whispered.

"Uhh, yeah. That," Hermione nervously agreed.

"Ginny!" Harry gasped.

Because Ginny was standing there holding the arrow in her hand. She had just snatched it out of the air like it was a quaffle. She calmly said, "I know that was going to go past me as a warning. But I want you to know I'm not a threat to you!"

Bane said, "The daughters of Artemis are a threat to all magical beings. They must hunt, and the hunted cannot stop them." The centaurs turned and cantered off.

"Ruddy mules," Ron muttered. Hermione and Harry glared at him, and he complained, "What? Hagrid said it! And they called Ginny an it!"

Ginny asked, "What on earth was he babbling about?"

Ron said, "Dunno. The whole thing about Mars? We heard that one before. Remember first year? Harry and Hermione and Neville and Malfoy here in the forest late at night? Harry told me all about it. 'Mars is bright tonight.' Ugh. You can't get a straight answer out of a centaur."

And Hermione grabbed his arm. "Ron! That's it! You're a genius!" She looked at the other two. "Mars represents war. Orion is the hunter. The centaurs have been telling us for six years that Voldemort would be coming back and bringing war again, and we were too stupid to understand! And the hunter? The daughter of Artemis, the goddess of the hunt? That's Ginny. She's a part of our war with Voldemort now, whether we want it or not."

Harry frowned, "I don't like the sound of that."

Ron muttered, "And maybe we ought to leave the forest, just to make the centaurs happier."

Ginny said, "One more demonstration first." She walked over to a downed tree branch. It was nearly a foot across at its thickest, and stretched thirty feet farther into the forest. She looked at Harry and said, "Try to pick it up."

He shook his head. "Come on, it would take Hagrid to lift that..."

Ginny lifted it with one hand. Then she moved to where the branch was perhaps four inches thick. She lifted the branch in two hands and flexed.

The branch snapped like a twig.

Ron winced. "Ginny? Maybe you could keep from punching your big brothers in the arm this summer? Especially me?"

Ginny suddenly realized something awful. She could hurt someone just playing around. If the twins played a trick on her, she couldn't just hit one of them. She was strong enough to throw a boulder. She was strong enough to kill someone by accident.

Maybe Bane was right. Maybe it wasn't safe to be around a Vampire Slayer, any more than it was safe to be around The Boy Who Lived.

As they walked back to the castle, Hermione asked, "She knows about the prophecy and the Horcruxes. Should we tell her the rest?"

Harry said, "Professor Dumbledore wanted me to keep it to just you two."

"Why?" asked Ginny.

Harry said, "I always figured he was trying to keep the secret to a really small group so we wouldn't have to worry about someone else getting hit with Legilimency, or getting tortured to talk, or any of that. If the secret got out, Voldemort could make more Horcruxes and beat us."

Hermione said, "If Ginny's immune to a Cruciatus Curse, she's probably immune to Legilimency too."

Ginny said, "And if you won't tell me, I'll just start looking up Horcruxes in the school library."

Hermione said, "It won't do you any good. Professor Dumbledore took out all the dark tomes that covered the material. I accio'ed all of them out of his office a couple days ago." At the sudden, shocked stares, she cleared her throat and primly said, "Because we can't leave those kinds of books lying around where someone might find them..."

Ginny tried another tack. She took Harry's hands and pleaded, "Harry, please. Think about it. Think how lonely you've been for years. A Chosen One, up against everything out there, with only Hermione and Ron for help. Haven't you ever wanted someone to talk to who understood? I mean really understood? I do. As of a couple days ago, I'm a Chosen One too. I've been given powers so I can fight dark forces every night until I die. And then a new girl will get Called, and she'll do the same thing, and die the same way. Harry, I really need to be able to talk to someone about this, and the only person I know who'll really understand is... you."

Harry looked over her shoulder at his two best friends. Ginny could feel them both nodding.

He blew out a puff of air. "Okay, let me tell you the prophecy first, and then I'll tell you about Tom Riddle and the seven Horcruxes. Then you and Hermione can fill me in on this whole Vampire Slayer story."

They walked out to the Quidditch pitch as they talked. After hearing Luna's guesses about the prophecy, and reading R.A.B.'s note about the Horcrux, Ginny wasn't all that surprised, although learning that the evil diary was another Horcrux was pretty eerie. And hearing that Voldemort killed people for purposes other than creating Inferi and just hurting people in general? Not exactly a shock. Voldemort pretty much made Gellert Grindelwald look like a saint.

Hermione finally said, "Come on. We have to get back to the castle. We all need to pack. The train leaves at nine tomorrow morning."

Harry said, "Then I have to go back to the Dursleys' until my birthday. Professor Dumbledore was really clear about that. It's blood magic. It will protect me until I turn seventeen. Then I'd like to visit my parents' graves in Godric's Hollow before I track down the rest of the Horcruxes. But I'm not going back to school. He wanted me to track them down. It's why he told me all about them." He glanced at Ginny and said, "There are still four of them out there, and then I have to get the last one. The one in Voldemort's body. I'm the one who's going to kill him. And if I meet Snape along the way, too bad for him."

Ron said, "We'll be with you."

"What?"

Ron said as if he couldn't believe Harry didn't understand, "At the Dursleys', and then wherever you're going."

Harry tried to disagree, but Hermione said, "You said to us once before, five years ago, that there was time to turn back if we wanted to. We've had time, haven't we?"

Ron said, "I don't like dragging Ginny into this, but it looks like Ginny can drag the three of us up a mountain now, so I think you've got all three of us with you."

Hermione said, "Maybe you have to bring Ginny. What if Professor Dumbledore was only partly right? What if the power you have that Voldemort knows not isn't just love, it's how you and Ginny love each other?"

"Blimey, I hadn't thought of that," muttered Ron.

Ginny smiled, "And you have to come to our house." At the confused look on Harry's face, she grinned, "Bill and Fleur's wedding. Remember?"

"Yeah. We shouldn't miss that," he finally agreed.

Hermione looked smugly at Ginny and said, "And you'll finally get to dance with Harry."

Ginny smiled. She didn't say it out loud, but she was going to catch that bouquet even if she had to throw half a dozen girls to the side and leap ten feet into the air.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Thu, 17 Nov 2011 02:24:40 GMT  
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## Chapter 8 Cattle after Their Kind

The ride home on the Hogwarts Express was tense. If people like Goyle and Crabbe and Parkinson had been onboard, it would have been unbearable. But there were few students who were left to ride back to London. Only half the students had been there for the funeral, and most of them had gone home with their relatives immediately afterward. Ginny knew her mum and dad had let her and Ron stay, just so they could spend more time with Harry and Hermione. Ginny knew her mum was already hoping to have Hermione as a daughter-in-law one of these days, whether Ronald knew it or not.

Ginny was sharing a compartment with a crowd. Harry and Ron and Hermione were in there, naturally. But so were Luna and Neville and Colin and Dennis. And half a dozen others were in the corridor outside, chatting away with the door open. With a mostly-empty train, everyone instinctively wanted to be near The Boy Who Lived. Since most of the train was Gryffindors, and most of the Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws who were along were connected to Harry's D.A. group, it wasn't really surprising.

Ginny held Harry's hand and wondered what she was going to do. She knew what it meant when Harry said he had to go back to the Dursleys' house. What Harry hadn't said, Hermione and Ron had. She couldn't believe he had to go back to that horrible place until his birthday. She couldn't believe that people were just going to let it happen! She knew Harry couldn't do magic to protect himself when he was at the Dursleys' house.

But now she could do things without needing any magic. She could help Harry. Assuming she could get to Harry's house. She knew there would be no using the Floo Network. George and Fred had told her all about their little trip to the inside of the Dursleys' fireplace, and the aftermath of that disaster. George and Fred still thought it was hilarious, especially when Dudley ate that Ton Tongue Toffee, but she knew the Dursleys' fireplace was no longer hooked up to the Floo Network, since her dad had told all of them that he had only been able to have it hooked up for

half a day that one time. She couldn't floo there, and she didn't know the Portus Charm, even if portkeys weren't highly regulated. She couldn't fly on a broom all the way there, when she didn't even know how to get there. And her mum would ground her for a century if she pulled something like that. She was too young for apparation, so what did that leave her? The Knight Bus?

At the station, she kissed Harry goodbye before they left the train, even though that earned her a few good-natured hoots from their friends, and a hypocritical grimace from Ron. Then she let her parents load her and Ron's things into their car and drive her away from the station.

As soon as they were on their way out of London, she started. "Mum, we can't leave Harry there with those... people! They're horrid to him!"

Her dad said, "Don't worry, we'll go get him when it's his birthday. He can spend the rest of the summer with us."

Ron asked, "Can't we go stay with him? Protect him, even a little?"

Her mum frowned, "You can't invite yourself over to someone else's home for days at a time! What would they think of us?"

Ron frowned, "They already hate us, you know."

Her dad added, "And you can't do any magic there. That would just get Harry in even more trouble. How would you cope with no magic?"

Ron thought out loud. "I'd... umm... No, I..." Ginny waited impatiently for him to stop being dim. He finally muttered, "Okay, I see the problem."

Ginny said, "Mum, could you side-along apparate me over to Mrs. Figg's, or maybe we could floo there, and then I could go see him for maybe an afternoon now and then?"

"Ginevra, there's going to be no visiting or anything like that until you've taken your O.W.L.s. The Ministry sent us an owl. The tests will start Thursday morning. I have the schedule at home. I want you to study until then, and I want you to focus better than Harry and Ron did last spring."

Ron complained, "Mum! It wasn't our fault Aurors attacked Hagrid right in the middle of the Astronomy test and nearly killed McGonagall! And it wasn't our fault Voldemort sprung his attack at Harry right in the middle of the History of Magic test!"

"Hmph! I notice that didn't stop Hermione from getting top grades."

"Mu-um!"

Ginny said, "It's not fair to compare Ron to the smartest witch in the last thirty years."

Ron gaped at her like he couldn't imagine her doing something nice for him. That really made her feel like a brat. Was she really that horrible to him most of the time? She hoped not. But he was still hiding her big secret, and she owed him for that. Fred and George? They would have been teasing her constantly, dropping little hints everywhere to drive her mad, and coming up with weird pranks to test just how strong she was. And God only knew how irritating Percy would be if he knew her secret. Merlin's beard, he'd be lecturing her nonstop about being responsible, and not taking after Fred and George, and not lying to mum and dad, and not brushing her teeth three times a day, and on and on.

Maybe she should be nicer to Ron.

Ron said, "Even with attacks in the middle of our exams, I still got better grades than anyone in the family except Percy and Bill. And if I had such bad grades, why did they make me a prefect?"

Their dad asked, "Do you think you'll be Head Boy this year?"

Ron and Ginny looked at each other in shock. How was he supposed to answer that one? They knew Ron wasn't going to be going back to Hogwarts, because he was going to go off on Harry's mission. Ron said, "Oh, I'm sure McGonagall won't pick her own house to be Head Boy and Girl."

Her mum said, "Well, I think you'll have a very good chance, since Narcissa's boy won't be in school next year. He's more likely to be in Azkaban."

Ginny looked at Ron, and she just knew what he was thinking. If only they had listened more to Harry about Malfoy. This time. Even if Harry tended to go overboard about Malfoy every time.

Ron said, "Since Ginny's going to be doing O.W.L.s for the next week or two, can I go see Harry? We can just sit outside and talk, or play chess, or something. Just so he gets a break from his relatives."

Their dad said, "Molly... they did lock him in a room with bars on the window for weeks on end."

Ron fumed, "They used to keep him locked in a little space under the stairs!"

Their mum said, "And they don't feed him enough... So. Ronald. How do you propose to get there?"

Ron looked at Ginny and smirked, "I thought you could side-along apparate me over to Mrs. Figg's. And maybe dad could get me some Muggle money in case I want to buy Harry an ice pop,

because they never let him have any Muggle money and there's no place around there he can spend Galleons."

Ginny said, "Hey! You could owl Hermione and get her to visit him some of the days when you aren't going. We could have a round robin!"

Ron grinned at her. "Harry guarding."

Their mum turned and glared at them from the front seat. "There will be no guarding... or fighting... or any of that! I'm going gray just from hearing what you two get up to at school!"

Ginny wanted to make a smart remark about how much better they were than Fred and George at not getting into trouble, and how she or Ron never divebombed a teacher as they ran away from school on swiped brooms, or turned a school hallway into a swamp. But she knew that would start a big argument, and mum was still upset about the Weasley's Wizard Wheezes business, even if the twins were doing really well for themselves. Ginny would never have guessed about Harry and the money from the Triwizard Cup, if he hadn't told her. She certainly wasn't going to tell mum and get Harry in trouble.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 20 Nov 2011 21:07:35 GMT  
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## Chapter 9 Every Thing That Creepeth

The next eleven days were just as tedious and stressful as she had expected. Although, after battling Bellatrix Lestrange in a life-or-death duel and then being tortured by said crazy woman, a two-hour written exam just wasn't as scary.

With her mum keeping an eye on her, and Ron 'helping' her study even when she didn't want to, she hardly got out of the house at all for the first five days. She was only sleeping about four hours a night, and she had this urge to get out and prowling around, but her dad had these stupid charms on the house so no one could go in or out or even get anywhere near the house without setting off an alarm. She had to repress her Slayer urges and study instead, which wasn't all that easy. The only thing that kept her sane was that her inner Slayer liked it when she practiced dueling, so she did some serious Defense Against the Dark Arts workouts in the kitchen at night when everyone else was asleep. And she dueled Ron whenever she could, even if she had to deliberately miss him all the time, or their duels would be over before Ron could get his wand up. (Or when she let him pull out his wand and start, she had to miss him on purpose so their duels

wouldn't be over as soon as his hex bounced off her and she had a turn. Or when she let him put up a good Shield Charm first before they started, so it was more fair.) She still ended up feeling jittery and edgy all the time. It was like she needed to go out and run for half a mile, except with her new strength and speed she wasn't sure how many miles she might have to run to tire herself out. And what would her mum say if she saw Ginny running twenty or thirty miles at speeds no human sprinter could hope to match? She would surely know something was going on. She'd probably decide it wasn't Ginny at all, but some sort of illusion by some Death Eaters. That would not end well.

The good news was that Hermione's study notes were amazing. She wished she was half as smart as Hermione. She had a feeling that in another thirty or forty years, Hermione Granger would be the next Albus Dumbledore, assuming she didn't do something stupid like marry Ron and decide to do nothing but have babies. And the old tests were a great study tool, because after she worked through a section she could look at Hermione's own answers and see what she got wrong, or, or what things she needed to go look up, or what things she just didn't think about writing in. Some of the time, it seemed like Hermione was writing two or three times as much as she needed to, but that was Hermione for you.

And then there were the O.W.L.s themselves. The first morning of the exams was the one that took some getting used to. She and her mum took the Floo Network right into the Ministry, and checked in, with the security wizard at the desk checking her wand and then giving it back to her. She and a couple other students from her year were led to a large room that was set up as a classroom, with thirty-seven desks. There were already a dozen students in there, and a couple more came in before she was seated and equipped with an anti-cheating quill and some specially-charmed parchment. She knew there were thirty-seven kids in her year including herself she had counted them off one by one the year she was Sorted, since she went last but she didn't think all that many students would show up for the exam, given what happened at school. She was kind of surprised when everyone except three Slytherins and one Hufflepuff showed up.

Then she just had to sit down and take the History of Magic exam. Two of the essay questions were almost exactly off one or the other of the previous tests, so she knew exactly what to write for them. She did okay, except she couldn't remember what year the Second Goblin Rebellion ended, and she couldn't remember who invented the Wingardium Leviosa charm, and a couple things like that. Once she got home later on and looked some facts up, she realized that she completely messed up the question on the fourth goblin war, because for some stupid reason she wrote in a bunch of stuff about the fourth Germanic giant war. She wondered if that was Slayer-related. Or maybe she was thinking about Slayer stuff too much and not concentrating on other history. Well, she didn't really care what she got in History of Magic, as long it was better than a T.

After the exam, her mum came and took her over to the Ministry cafeteria, where they had lunch with her dad and one of his co-workers. Naturally, Percy wouldn't come eat with them, since he

was too busy having a meeting with important Ministry workers. She thought about all the names Fred and George would be calling him if they were here, and she didn't feel so discouraged.

The rest of the exams went basically the same way. If she had an exam to take, she would flog in and go to the testing room. The astronomy exam was at night, naturally, and it was on top of a building, with a special charm covering them so the city lights were screened enough to view all the celestial bodies. The example tests she'd already done made it easier than she expected. After all, nearly all the planets and other objects were roughly in the same place they had been three or four nights ago when she had done her practice exams at nearly the same time back at the Burrow. Not needing as much sleep at night finally paid off somewhere.

The DADA practical exam was the most fun, since she got to show off some of the spells Harry had taught her. She even got to demonstrate her Patronus, which earned her a big smile from her evaluator. The DADA written exam made her grin, since it had questions on the phoenix and the basilisk, both of which she thought she knew more about than anyone else in the room, because of the whole nightmarish mess with Tom Riddle's diary. She made sure to write down about phoenix tears, and she even wrote about the lament of the phoenix. The Potions practical was a lot easier than brewing potions under Snape's evil eye in a gloomy dungeon. The Muggle Studies test went really well too, even if she felt like she could have written for another hour on some of the essay questions.

The only difficult moment was during the practical for Divination. She was staring into the crystal ball, when she suddenly felt like she was falling into a Pensieve.

She saw that same petite, pretty blonde fighting for her life in that cave, against that army of vampire-like monsters, just as in her dreams. She saw a redhead with green eyes doing a spell with no wand. And then the redhead pulled up power like nothing Ginny had ever seen before. The redhead's whole body glowed, and her hair turned a vibrant white. Her hair seemed to blow in a breeze of pure magic. A wave of eldritch magical power erupted from her. And then the little blonde was stabbed through the stomach...

"Oh Merlin!" Ginny pushed back from the table so hard her chair scooted back a dozen feet. The force of her push nearly tipped the table over.

After that, she had to explain in painful detail every thing she had 'seen'. Then one of the testers brought over a real Pensieve just like great-aunt Muriel's and showed her how to get a copy of that memory into it. Everyone watched the Pensieve intently, until a little old witch finally pointed at the redhead with white hair and said, "That has to be the Red Witch. Who else has this kind of power?"

Another tester said, "And the blonde woman has to be the current Vampire Slayer. Or perhaps I should say the previous Vampire Slayer." Ginny winced, but no one seemed to think that was

odd.

A third one studied the memory and said, "I think we now know exactly what happened to the Sunnydale Hellmouth."

Her tester smiled at her and said, "This is really very good. Astonishingly good. If you don't want to study under Sibyl next year, please owl me. I would love to have a pupil as promising as you."

Ginny didn't know what to say. It was some sort of Slayer 'dream' and she didn't think she should be getting this kind of attention for dreaming about the blonde's horrible death at the hands of an army of monsters. She also had no idea who or what the Red Witch was, except that the testers seemed really interested in her, and maybe kind of scared. How powerful did a witch have to be, to frighten witches as powerful as the people the Ministry would bring in as examiners? She thanked her tester and walked out, making sure not to stagger no matter how disoriented she felt. Had she just seen how she became the Vampire Slayer? She was really worried that the answer was a resounding 'yes.'

After that traumatic moment, none of the other exams seemed too stressful. Herbology was sort of fun. In the practical, she had no problems working with the Venomous Tentacula, since she was fast enough to dodge every attempt it made to sink its thorns into her, and she just sort of knew when it was coiling up to launch another sneak attack. The Herbology written exam had several questions that made her wonder just how much of Harry's adventures the Hogwarts professors knew, because she knew about Devil's Snare and mandrakes more from Ron's stories about Harry than from her studies. Still, knowing the answers was all that counted.

Except in Divination.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 23 Nov 2011 19:48:17 GMT  
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Chapter 10 Man in Our Image

Ginny took one day of relaxation after the last exam before she started begging her mum to take her to see Harry. Ron had been three times, and had complained bitterly about the Dursleys, who wouldn't feed either him or Harry, and treated both of them like the second coming of Voldemort. While Ginny had been studying, Ron had been practicing his apparation so he could go visit Harry when he wanted to. Ron needed their mum to show him how to get to Mrs. Figg's house that first time, but after that, he was apparating over there and apparating back all on his own. And

ignoring when the twins kept teasing him about needing two tries to get his apparation license.

Ginny knew from Ron that Hermione had managed to visit Harry once, but Hermione was working on some huge secret project so she couldn't manage any more than that; Ginny wondered if it was the secret project Hermione had needed one ounce of Slayer blood for. It sounded from what Ron had said that Hermione's parents had driven her over, and had taken Harry out to lunch. Ron had laughed really hard when he heard the whole story, because Hermione's parents had showed up in a car that was a lot nicer than Mr. Dursley's, and that was humiliating for Muggles like the Dursleys.

She had to nag all day for two days in a row before her mum gave in and took her to Mrs. Figg's. It was either that or banish her to her room for a week. For a while, Ginny thought her mum was going to opt for the punishment. Maybe if Ginny could have gotten out at night and done whatever her urges were making her want to do, she wouldn't have been so irritable and pesky. All right, she was a huge brat about it. But as it was, she could hardly sit still.

But then she finally got to go. She dressed in Muggle clothes: jeans, trainers, and a lightweight blouse. She thought about putting her hair up, or doing something fancy with it. She thought about changing and wearing a dress, but she didn't have a Muggle dress she liked, and what she really wanted was one of those Muggle 'minnie skirt' things Elizabeth wore that time that all the boys kept staring at her legs. That was what she wanted. For Harry to stare at her like she was a veela and not be able to talk because he was so struck with her beauty. Even if she was just plain old Ginny. Who now had superpowers like a Muggle comic book character.

Ginny hung onto her mum's arm and let her mum side-along apparate her over to Mrs. Figg's. When they apparated into Mrs. Figg's living room, the cats jumped up and fussed until Mrs. Figg came out of the kitchen. "Oh, I see Miss Fluff and Mister Mittens haven't met you before." But Ginny was sure the cats were acting like that because they knew there was something odd about her. Something odd and threatening.

Ginny noticed right away that Mister Mittens looked an awful lot like Filch's cat Mrs. Norris. When she mentioned that, Mrs. Figg just smiled. "Yes, I've been cross-breeding cats and kneazles for years now. And poor Argus needed something special. You have no idea how awful his family was to him when it turned out he was a Squib." Ginny suddenly wondered if Crookshanks was part kneazle too. That cat was awfully smart. Like it was possible for Hermione not to have a smart pet.

She said, "Mum, will you be all right here for a while? I'm just going to walk over and see Harry, and maybe walk with him. I'll be back in... a few hours?"

Her mum smiled and said, "I'll just apparate home, and check back in a couple hours. But stay near that house. And no magic! The Ministry is just looking for an excuse to cause trouble right

now, and Harry's underage. For another five or six weeks." But her mum looked tense, and Ginny wondered if her mum would be carrying the Prewett family clock with her everywhere she went, just to see if Ginny's arm suddenly leapt from wherever it was to 'in mortal peril.'

Ginny said, "It would be a lot easier if Mrs. Figg's fireplace was hooked up to the Floo Network."

Mrs. Figg smiled uncomfortably and said, "It's a tiny Muggle fireplace, Ginevra. You couldn't get in and out of it."

"Oh." She had never thought of that.

Mrs. Figg gave her careful directions so she wouldn't get lost, even though Harry's house was really close. Ginny shortly found herself walking up to the front door of Number 4 Privet Place. The house looked just like every other house on the street. It was like someone had done some bizarre geminio spell on everything, over and over. How could you even find your house when everything looked so identical? No wonder Harry hated it here.

She rang the doorbell, and waited while some woman who sounded like a harpy shrieked at someone to get the door. A few moments later, a big blond bruiser yanked the door open. She instantly knew from Harry's stories who this was.

"Hi. You must be Dudley. I'm Ginny. I came to see Harry."

He stared at her chest for a couple seconds before he turned and bellowed, "HARRY! Another one of your hotties!"

She thought about grabbing him by his shirt and throwing him into the flowerbed. She didn't. But she told herself if he grabbed her butt, she was going to break his fingers.

Harry came scrambling down the staircase in ragged jeans and trainers that looked like they'd seen better days. His sweater was three sizes too big, and he looked like he hadn't been eating enough. But his face just lit up when he saw her, and that made her feel a hundred times better.

He ran past Dudley and hugged her and said, "I'm so glad to see you."

She smiled up into his face and kissed him. "Me too. Let's go for a walk."

Harry looked at the shocked face of his cousin and grinned, "Thanks, Dudders. See ya later."

They strolled hand in hand down the sidewalk. Harry said, "You know, it's weird, but ever since that thing last summer with the dementors, Dudley's been less of a pain."

She grinned, "Maybe it's that whole 'I nearly died horribly and you saved my life' thing that you keep doing."

He shrugged. "Maybe."

They walked his neighborhood for hours, just talking and being together. It was romantic, even if they were just walking up and down streets filled with boring Muggle houses. She smiled to herself. She was so sappy. She'd probably think washing dishes without magic was romantic if Harry was doing it with her.

She got Harry to tell her more about the Dursleys, and she managed not to explode at some of the stories he told her. After all, she already knew the worst things they had done, like making him live in the cupboard under the stairs for years, and locking him in his bedroom the summer before her first year at Hogwarts. It wasn't like Ron didn't complain a lot to mum and dad about how Harry needed to come live with them instead of 'those manky gits' as Ron liked to call them. Although some of the other things he had called them had gotten his mouth washed out with soap. She wondered where her mum learned that particular spell. And if she'd teach it to Ginny.

It was getting dark before they even realized how long they had just been walking and talking. Harry wanted to drop her off at Mrs. Figg's but she insisted on going to his house first.

When they got there, Mr. Dursley was home. The big bully immediately started yelling at Harry. "How many times have I told you boy, not to bring home these weirdoes?"

Harry saw Ginny's face, and shook his head at her. But she was not letting this go. She marched into the living room and found their fake fireplace. She took their very real fireplace poker, which they didn't need with a fireplace like that, and brought it over to Mr. Dursley. She handed it to him. "Bend it."

"What? Are you mad?"

"Bend it!" she snapped.

"You can't. It's a fireplace poker." He spoke to her like she was stupid.

She took it and easily bent it into a circle. Then she handed it back to him. "Straighten it out."

Mrs. Dursley complained, "You can't do magic! We know!"

Ginny glared at her. "It's not magic. It's pure strength. I happen to be strong enough to pick your son up over my head and throw him through your front door. And if you keep being mean to Harry, it might happen!"

Mr. Dursley was still straining to straighten out the poker. His face was turning purple with the effort. "It's... got... to... be... a... trick!" he groaned.

Ginny growled at him, "Do you want me to flip over your car? Or rip your front door off its hinges? I can do that if you don't believe me."

And, while Mr. and Mrs. Dursley stood there gaping, she stormed out. She walked back to Mrs. Figg's, and had tea with her and her cats while she waited for mum. The cats never did get used to her. They kept peeking at her from as far away as they could manage, as if they somehow knew she was the most dangerous predator in the house.

And she just sort of 'forgot' to tell her mum about the thing with the fireplace poker.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 27 Nov 2011 17:25:12 GMT  
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## Chapter 11 Every Creeping Thing

At dinner that night, her dad was exhausted from another several problems at the Ministry, and her mum was tired from dealing with several members of the Order back at Number 12 Grimmauld Place. On top of that, Ron was complaining about Hermione not having time for him because she was researching something important, and he was pretty sure it involved doing magic at her house, which she could now get away with, because she had already turned seventeen. Ron had turned seventeen already too, but he wasn't researching complicated spells. Ginny wondered if he was doing anything with his magic, other than the cleaning when their mum made him do his chores. That, and practicing apparating so he could go visit Harry again.

So, when her dad had to rush off to another emergency at the Ministry, Ginny checked to see whether he had left the 'going in and out' alarm spells active. He hadn't. She could go out! She could go out and... prowl. She waited impatiently while her mum got ready for bed. She silently paced back and forth while she waited for Ron to stop writing that letter to Hermione and go to sleep she could hear the scratching of the quill, and his muttering every time he disliked what he had just written. She kept checking out the windows to see if her dad would get home before she had a chance to get out of the house.

Her mum didn't fall asleep until nearly eleven. She could hear Ron still moving about, but she was sure she could slip out without him being any the wiser. She was still dressed in her Muggle

clothing, so she didn't need to change. She slipped out the kitchen door and headed off toward Ottery St. Catchpole, the nearby Muggle village.

She ran all the way to the village before she felt the urge to explore. To hunt. She slipped through the dark back streets and found nothing of interest. She raced through a small cemetery and kept going. She moved on down the road to the next town before she felt it. She zeroed in on a newer cemetery set at the edge of the little town. It wasn't until she felt the driving urge intensifying within her that she really understood. Oh sure, she had heard what Hermione and Luna said. But this was different. This was immediate. This was real.

There were two people standing over a grave. No, the discomfort in her gut told her they weren't human. And the soil of the grave was starting to move. Vampires waiting for their child. She was staring at a pair of real vampires.

But the dreams told her what to do. She could have used an incendio on them, but she felt a desire a need to fight with her hands. She picked up a twig and transfigured it into a wooden stake. Then she slid up behind them so quietly that not even vampire hearing spotted her. She staked the man, stabbing him through the heart and jerking back the stake before he turned into dust with a whooshing sound like nothing she had ever heard before.

The woman leapt to the side with inhuman speed, and then whirled to face her. A normal human face transformed into fangs and yellow eyes and a hideous forehead ridge. The female vampire hissed in an American accent, "Who are you? You can't be the Slayer, she's in California! She's a little blonde!"

"You know the Slayer?" Ginny wondered out loud.

"Everyone knows about the Golden Slayer! Why the hell do you think I'm over in this crappy country? My health?"

Ginny lied, "Maybe if you tell me about her, I'll let you live."

The woman sneered, "Maybe if you get down on your knees and beg, I'll kill you fast. If the Slayer died in the last couple days, you're too new to know anything. Once I kill you, I'll be famous! I'll be the one who killed the latest Slayer!"

Ginny said, "You? I doubt you could kill a-"

But the woman didn't give Ginny a chance to finish her sentence. She leapt at Ginny, fangs and claws out, and tried to latch onto Ginny's neck.

Ginny kicked the woman in the stomach and watched as she flew back a couple meters before

landing gracefully on all fours and quickly renewing her attack. This time, she tried to kick Ginny in the head and stomach. Ginny ducked the first and knocked the second aside with a sweep of her arm that she only knew from her years of dreams.

Wait. She could learn Muggle karate moves from her dreams? That was crazy!

Stopping to think about that was nearly the end of her. The vampire attacked with punches and kicks and strikes, and Ginny found she was blocking and dodging and backing up just as fast as she could. But she was fast enough and strong enough to fight a supernaturally strong, superhumanly fast killer.

She returned the favor, kicking at the vampire's knee and punching her in the face. Then it turned into a brawl, the two of them mercilessly punching and kicking each other with blows that would have instantly killed a normal human. And it felt wonderful.

Not that getting punched in the face felt good, but the fighting was exhilarating. The deadly dance they wove was giving her a sense of excitement and exultation she wouldn't have believed even five minutes ago.

They fought until the woman couldn't get back up from the leg Ginny had just broken with a kick to the knee. Ginny moved faster than the woman could counter, and she staked the woman through the heart. There was that bizarre whooshing noise, and the woman turned to dust right before her eyes.

Ginny stopped to spit out the vampire dust that had gotten in her mouth. It was vile. It tasted like death and evil and horror. It was all she could do not to be sick on the grass. She was never again going to breathe in while staking a vampire. That was too nasty to think about. And she had another vampire to handle.

Ginny was just in time. The fledgling already had one hand out of the ground, and the second hand was following. The top of the head broke the surface, and Ginny was already silently moving behind it. The body struggled to clamber out of the dirt, and Ginny staked it from behind as soon as its chest cleared the earth.

She felt great. She couldn't believe how great she felt. Her blood was singing through her veins, and she felt like she was about to burst with excitement. She ran all the way home, no matter that it was miles back to the Burrow. She couldn't stop grinning as she slipped into the kitchen.

She stopped grinning. Her mum and dad were sitting there around the kitchen table, waiting up for her.

## Chapter 12 Male and Female Created

Her mum and dad were sitting there around the kitchen table, waiting up for her.

She just knew she was going to get yelled at. They looked at her, and they both froze.

That was when she saw herself in the hallway mirror that was just past the other kitchen door. She had a bloody nose. Her clothes were torn. There were bruises and cuts on her hands and arms and body.

"Ginny! Are you all right?" her dad asked.

Her mum exploded. "Ginevra Molly Weasley! I can't believe you would do this to us! Sneaking off in the middle of the night, we had no idea where you were, for all we knew a horde of Death Eaters had you! Your clock hand went all the way to 'in mortal peril' and stayed there for three or four minutes! For all I knew, you were being tortured to death!" Tears started streaming down her mum's face, which made her feel even worse than having her mum yell at her.

Her mum yelled at her a lot more, until Ron was tiptoeing down the stairs and peeking in to see what was going on. Her dad finally pulled out a chair and motioned for her to sit. "Ginny, what happened to you? Were you attacked? Where were you? You weren't sneaking off to try to see Harry again, were you?"

She probably would have lied to them, except Ron came into the kitchen and sat down on the other side of her dad. She knew he already knew what she was. What she would be doing in the middle of the night. And he was staring right at her, waiting for her to say something. She was going to get even for him doing this.

Okay, maybe it wasn't his fault. Just maybe.

She took a deep breath. "I had to get out and... umm...well... hunt."

"HUNT?"

"Ginny, what on earth are you talking about?"

She clenched her jaws. "Do you know about the Vampire Slayer?"

"That's a myth," her dad said.

Her mom snapped, "Ginny, what does a fairy tale have to do with you running wild in the middle of the night like some sort of banshee?"

"It's not a myth," she replied. "It's real. The night Professor Dumbledore died, I... I was Called. I got these powers. The previous Slayer died, we think she died closing the Sunnydale Hellmouth, and the power passed on to someone else. A new Vampire Slayer. It's me. Tonight I went out to a cemetery and I killed three vampires. With my bare hands and a stake."

Her dad yelled, "You fought vampires? With a little piece of wood? You couldn't!"

Her mum yelled, "Ginny Weasley! If you're going to make up some ridiculous lie to explain what happened to you, then-"

Ron quietly interrupted, "She's not lying."

"What?"

"Ron, if you know something about this..." their dad frowned.

"How could you keep something like this from us? And about your little sister at that?" their mum shrieked at Ron.

Ron stared at the table and answered both of them. "I found out because I saw Ginny carrying Harry up a couple flights of stairs. I mean, she just lifted him like he was a baby, and walked up the stairs like he didn't weigh anything! And she had a huge cut on the back of her leg too. She shouldn't have been able to walk. And then she told Mione and me what she did that night."

He looked over at Ginny, and she gulped. She started talking. She told them everything. Even the awful things Bellatrix threatened her with. Even the parts where she ignored Tonks and Hagrid and ran into danger. Even the part where she beat Thorfinn Rowle to a pulp with her bare hands.

Her mum stuttered, "Ginny, th-this is..."

"Impossible," her dad finished. "There hasn't been a witch Slayer in recent memory. I'm not even sure the Slayer is real."

Ron said, "Show them." He turned to their parents and said, "She proved it to Harry. You know how good a duelist he is. He's fought Voldemort-" Both their mum and dad winced at the name. "-to a standstill. He couldn't hit her with a spell. And when she let him, it just sort of... bounced

off."

"Ron, you know that making up tales like this just comes back to-

"Dad, I'm not making this up! What would be the point?" He turned to his other parent. "Mum, everyone says you used to be a really good duelist. Try. Just try. We'll go out in the yard, and you can try to hit Ginny with a spell, say, stupefy. Then you'll have to believe her."

Their dad sternly said, "And Ron, you didn't think we needed to know this, perhaps two weeks ago?"

Ron looked right at Ginny and asked, "What did I tell you the second after you told me and Hermione about this stuff? Before Mione and Luna even figured out about the Vampire Slayer?"

She ducked her head and admitted, "You said I needed to tell mum and dad and Harry. Right away. You said you wouldn't tell them, if I said I would."

He looked at their dad and said, "I thought about telling you a couple times when I could tell Ginny hadn't owned up, but I couldn't figure out a way to tell you and not have you think someone had Confunded me."

Their dad looked at their mum and said, "You know Molly, if Ronald had come to us with this crazy story, we would have thought Fred and George were playing another prank on him."

But her mum was still furious. It took twenty minutes to convince her to go out in the side yard and try to stupefy Ginny. It took five tries before her mum finally admitted Ginny was faster than anyone they had ever heard of. It took one stunning spell to Ginny's chest to convince her of the rest, because Ginny just stood there and said, "Good aim, mum."

Her dad gaped, "How can you..."

She said, "I told you Bellatrix Lestrange hit me with a Cruciatus right in the chest, didn't I? These Slayer powers are more than just being really fast and really strong. I can see in the dark. I can hear things I shouldn't be able to hear. I can run for miles without getting exhausted. I can move with almost no noise. I'm having these dreams. They're too much like the dreams I've been having since I was ten or eleven. They're dreams about past Slayers fighting real vampires and demons. Those dreams weren't something psychological. They were real. I think I've been destined to become a Slayer for years now. I think I learned how to fight supernatural foes from these dreams, because I just knew how to fight Thorfinn Rowle, and I knew how to kill those vampires, and when I saw Bill's face I knew what to do to kill Fenrir Grayback. And something inside me wanted to chase him down and do it right that second."

But both her mum and her dad were still really mad at her. Both of them thought she deserved a serious punishment for sneaking out without telling anyone, and putting herself in danger. They just didn't understand that she needed to go out and hunt and protect people. Her mum fed her three large sandwiches. Ginny was surprised at how hungry she was and sent her to her room, telling her she was grounded until... until school started again.

Great. She sat on her bed, staring out her magically-sealed window, and wondered how she was going to explain to Harry that she couldn't come visit anymore because she couldn't control herself enough not to run around loose at night attacking vampires. And did the Dursleys even let Harry get owl post?

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### Chapter 13 Be Fruitful and Multiply

The next morning, Ginny came down to breakfast to find her dad had already rushed off to handle yet another crisis. It seemed like Muggles were being targeted more and more, now that Voldemort was back and Dumbledore wasn't around to stop him.

Her mum said, "Wash your hands, and then you can help me cook."

So Ginny had to prepare stuff without using her wand, which wasn't all that bad, but wasn't fun either. She could figure out that she was going to be on detention until her mum cooled down, which might not be for days.

While she ate breakfast, she asked, "Mum, if I'm the Slayer now, am I going to be doing Slayer things for the Order?"

"No! Absolutely not!" her mum yelled. "You can't be in the Order or doing things for the Order! You're not seventeen! And don't tell me about Harry doing those things, I don't think they should let him do anything either."

Ginny didn't say anything, but she thought her mum was wrong. If she was so powerful, and she had been given these powers right when Voldemort was coming back, she had to help. It didn't matter that she wasn't seventeen. She would have argued a lot more with her mum, but now wasn't the best time. She needed to let her mum calm down a bit. Maybe in a week or so, she could bring it up again.

Since she was grounded and in big trouble, she wrote Harry a letter. Ron was nice enough to let her use Pigwidgeon, since it wasn't a big letter. Then she went out and weeded the garden for a couple hours. She was expecting that she would end up exhausted and hot and sweaty and sunburned. But that didn't happen. Her Slayer strength and endurance just kept coming through for her. All that happened was that she got bored. And when she found a couple Gnomes, she was too fast for them. She just snatched both of them out from under the bushes before they knew what was happening, and she hurled them far over the garden wall.

Wow. She threw them a lot further than she had planned. She was going to have to watch her strength more carefully.

After lunch, her mum had her cleaning the living room and hallway and kitchen. Without magic. She had no idea what Ron was doing up in his room, but he wasn't helping with the cleaning. If she hadn't been cleaning as part of her punishment, she would have been pretty ticked off at the git.

Her dad came home that evening looking rather gray. He sat down at the kitchen table and said, "Molly? I asked around a bit, and the Vampire Slayer is real. And there's a Muggle organization called the Watchers' Council that has a nine hundred year old treaty with the Ministry. Any witches who become Slayers are... umm... required to renounce their magical heritage and go off with the Council. There's a spell they perform that cuts all ties between the Slayer and her family. Forever." Her mum gasped in horror. He hastily added, "But it hasn't mattered to anybody, because there hasn't been a British witch Slayer since before Godric Gryffindor, if ever. And the people I asked didn't know if that contract was still in force or even enforceable, because the Watchers' Council was blown up only a few months ago in a Muggle 'terrorist bombing.' They don't know who did it, but Wilkie was quite sure that it was NOT by He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. But that means no one has any idea how to contact what might be left of the Council, if anyone is still a part of it."

Her mum primly said, "Well, we just won't tell anyone about Ginny. And Ginny can just stop being the Slayer."

Ginny just stared at her for long seconds. She finally said, "Mum, can you stop being a witch?"

"What kind of a question is that, young lady?" her mum glared at her.

Ginny insisted, "It's an important question! I can't just stop being the Slayer, any more than I can stop being a witch. It's part of me. It's a big part of me. I didn't go hunt vampires last night just on a lark, it was because I needed to."

"Ginny, you didn't need to, you just felt like it."

She shook her head. "No mum, I needed to. It's like this urge inside me, and if I don't go out and look all over the place, I just feel all tense and wound up and jittery. The week before O.W.L.s I was so edgy I was getting up in the middle of the night and practicing dueling in the kitchen for hours."

But it was pretty obvious that neither of her parents believed her. She didn't know what she was going to do. Especially when both her parents made sure the alarm spells were on the whole house every night. And her mum was checking the extra spells on her window every evening.

She tried everything she could think of to burn off her edgy energy. She tried racing around on one of the family brooms, but they were all so slow it felt like walking. She tried slipping over to the meadow and sprinting back and forth until she was sick of it. She tried Muggle exercising, which felt like she was just sitting around. She tried... Well, nothing was enough to work that edge off. She just needed to get out at night and prowl. She needed to hunt down some vampires and giants, and beat them senseless. Maybe some trolls too.

She had never been this destructive, or this jittery before. It was like being turned into a Slayer had turned her into some sort of ravenous beast. No wonder the centaurs in the Forbidden Forest were afraid of her.

She finally went to Ron and told him. Just as she figured, he didn't know what to do. But he wrote to Hermione, who did. Her owl came back with four different ideas they could try out, so the next day, Ginny spent an hour and a half just chasing after apples that Ron threw from his broomstick, like they were Snitches. The chasing actually helped some. And when that got old, Ron let her chase Pigwidgeon around the meadow. Pig actually enjoyed it, and there was no way Ginny could catch a fast owl on one of the old family brooms.

But a couple weeks before Harry's birthday, Ginny noticed that something was going on. Ron was talking privately with their dad and mum, and mum was upset about it. Fred and George apparated in to talk with Mad-Eye Moody. Bill and Fleur did, too. Ginny didn't know what it was about, because Ron knew she had Slayer hearing, and warned everyone else not to talk about whatever it was when she was within a hundred feet of them. The stupid git. She was getting really frustrated. She felt like going over and punching Ron in the arm, but she was too afraid she might break his arm, or worse.

And then there was an even bigger meeting, which was held in Number 12 Grimmauld Place just so everyone could be there and she couldn't. Well, maybe that wasn't why the meeting was held there, but that was how she felt about it. She knew something was up, and it was probably going to be soon.

It was really hard to fall asleep that night...

She was walking through Harry's house. The Dursleys weren't there. But she could hear Death Eaters screaming outside as they tore past on broomsticks. And Harry was in the kitchen. And the hall. And the living room. And on the stairs. And at the front door. There were six or eight Harrys walking around, all of them acting weird. And they were surrounded by members of the Order. Hagrid was there, and Mad-Eye, and Bill, and her dad, and more. And then they were all flying up into the sky, only they were all fighting Death Eaters. Mad-Eye was hit in the back with a vicious spell, and he fell miles and miles to the ground. A spell slashed into the side of George's head. Letters were blasted to pieces. And then Voldemort attacked one of the Harrys, only Harry's wand spun in Harry's hand and attacked Voldemort, but still Harry crashed into the ground at what seemed like killing speed...

Ginny sat up in bed, gasping and sweating. She looked around, but it was the middle of the night, and no one else was up. She could hear her mum and dad sleeping, her dad snoring softly and her mum doing that little whistling noise through her nose that Ginny hadn't even realized mum did until she gained Slayer hearing. She didn't know what the dream meant, but she was afraid it was another Slayer dream. And if she could have prophetic dreams now, then that might somehow really happen. She couldn't imagine how, but...

She had to tell someone.

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Chapter 14 Over the Fowl of the Air

The next morning, before her dad went off to the Ministry, she made her parents sit down at the breakfast table, and she told them the whole dream.

At first, her parents just stared at each other. Then her mum said, "Who told you?"

"What?"

"Who told you about the plan? Was it Ron? If he told you, I'll-"

"Mum! No one told me! Ron, that bloody git, even told everyone to stay way away from me when they talked!"

"Ginny! Language!" snapped her dad.

"Did you overhear Fred and George? Those boys..."

"Mum! No one told me! I didn't hear anything! I just... I've been having these dreams, and even the Divination examiners at my O.W.L.s said they were real."

But they didn't believe her. And her mum was so mad at her for lying that she sent Ginny to her room. For the whole day. And not being able to get out and run or at least do something was the worst punishment her mum could have given her. She paced back and forth for hours. She just knew it was a real Slayer dream. She just knew they needed to listen to her.

She just knew things were going to go horribly wrong, and there was nothing she could do to stop it.

That night, her mum finally let her come out of her room for some dinner. Her mum said, "Now Ginny, I want you to stay with me until everyone gets back... from Harry's house."

Ginny's stomach dropped. She felt like she might sick up all over the kitchen floor. She whimpered, "Mum, it's true, isn't it? My dream? It really means something, and you know what. Don't you?"

Her mum finally told her, now that it was far too late to do anything about it. The Order was taking Harry out of his house early, because they suspected Death Eaters in the Ministry knew about the protections over Harry's house. They were using Polyjuice Potion so there would be six extra Harrys, and all seven Harrys would fly from the house to different safe houses from which they could then come to the Burrow.

Ginny felt a shiver run down her spine. So the dream of six or eight Harrys in Harry's house was true. It was literally true, and not some bizarre thing that needed to be interpreted endlessly to divine the true meaning. But that meant... "Mum! The rest of my dream! We have to do something!"

Her mum looked at the clock and said, "It's too late, and anyway you couldn't do anything about it if you wanted to."

And that was the moment at which the old Prewett clock clinked, and suddenly its hands for Bill and Fred and George and Ron and her dad all swung around to point at 'in mortal peril'.

Ginny nearly screamed. She gasped, "We could... You could side-along apparate me over to Mrs. Figg's!"

Her mum stared in horror at the clock and whispered, "No, it's too late, and they're all in the air, we could never catch them, we could never find them..."

"Mum, we have to do something!"

Her mum nearly sobbed as she said, "This is why you're too young to be in the Order. Sometimes you have to do as you're told. Sometimes you have to let others do their jobs, no matter how painful it is for you. Sometimes... sometimes..."

But her mum didn't have to tell her that sometimes people you loved died. It seemed like for as long as she had known Harry, people he loved died. His parents and the Potter family were long dead before she knew him, but then there was Sirius and Cedric and Professor Dumbledore and... She couldn't stop seeing Mad-Eye falling through the air, or George being hit in the side of the head with a spell, or the letters blasted into the air, or Harry crashing horribly. She clenched her fists and tried to stay calm.

"Ginny!"

She looked down and saw that she had crushed the fork she was holding in her right hand. "Sorry, mum."

Her mum took the fork and fixed it with a quick reparo. Then she gave Ginny a new fork and told her to be more careful.

It seemed like forever before the hands on the clock moved again. The hands for Fred and Arthur swung to 'traveling' and they both breathed a small sigh of relief. Then Bill's swung similarly. Ron's hand and George's hand were still set at 'in mortal peril'. Her mum sobbed a little.

After another couple minutes, Ron's hand swung to 'traveling'. George's remained stubbornly fixed. They sat and waited. And waited.

It seemed like ages before Ginny heard someone outside, and she rushed out to find Harry there with Hagrid. She flung herself into his arms and hugged him until he gasped, "Ginny! Air! Can't... breathe!"

"Oh! I'm so sorry!" She loosened her grip, but she still hugged him fiercely. Then Remus arrived, holding George up. Ginny could smell the blood. She could see the damage even in the dark. She raced over, swept George from Remus' arms and hurried him into the living room.

"Merlin's beard!" Hagrid muttered.

"When did Ginny get so fast?" Remus wondered. "Or so strong? She did pick George up and carry him, right? I'm not Confunded or anything?" He paused for a second and snapped, "Is that really Ginny?"

She could hear Harry say, "No, you're not Confunded. And Ginny's the only person who can do that, so you know it's her. Let's get inside."

Once George was on the couch with her mum tending to him, and the others walked in, Ginny hurried over to Harry. She asked, "Are you okay?"

And Harry whispered, "Hedwig. They killed Hedwig while they were trying to get us. She flew right in the way of one of the spells..."

"Oh no," she gasped. Because she finally understood the blasted letters in her dream. Owl post. She had seen George getting hurt, and Hedwig getting killed, and... "Mad-Eye! They got Mad-Eye too!"

Remus asked, "Ginny, what are you talking about?"

"In my dream! I saw it. I saw all the Harrys, and I saw the Death Eaters, and I saw Harry fighting Voldemort, and I saw George, and Hedwig, and... I saw Mad-Eye falling and falling to the ground."

Ginny heard someone else arrive outside, and she sprinted out before anyone else could react. She breathed a sigh of relief when she saw it was Hermione, with Kingsley Shacklebolt. She hugged Hermione too, but she was careful not to hurt her.

It was only a few minutes more when her dad and Fred showed up, safe and sound. Ginny hugged Fred and rushed both of them in to see George. Even though Professor Lupin and Kingsley Shacklebolt were still being really careful about security and had to be convinced it was really them.

The whole family was horrified when Professor Lupin revealed that he had seen Snape hex George. And it was the Sectumsempra curse, which Ginny knew from Harry took a really complicated piece of magic to repair. And if Snape was the only person who knew how to repair the results... Ginny felt sick.

When Bill showed up on a thestral, with Fleur behind him, everyone found out that Ginny was right about Mad-Eye too. They had seen Mundungus disappear away, and Moody had taken the hex meant for the 'Harry' riding behind him.

And finally, Ron showed up on the back of Tonks' broom. Ginny was going to give him a hug too, but Hermione beat her to it. And Hermione didn't want to let go, either.

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## Chapter 15 The Fruit of a Tree

After everyone was safe except Mad-Eye and George she overheard her mum and dad talking in the hallway. She didn't want to overhear, but she couldn't help it when everyone except Ron kept forgetting her hearing was so good. Her mum was feeling so guilty for not listening to Ginny, and now one of her sons had a horrible injury they might never be able to heal.

Ginny wished there was something she could do. Her mum looked so guilty every time she looked at George, Ginny just wished she could make it all better. But she couldn't. She wasn't Albus Dumbledore, she was just a girl who could beat the stuffing out of vampires. She was just a girl who could hear things she wasn't supposed to hear, and could break things she wasn't supposed to break.

As soon as a team rushed off to try to find Mad-Eye's body, Harry got up to leave too. Ginny watched as her mum and dad and Hagrid and George and Hermione all made Harry face facts. Leaving wouldn't make them any safer, and it wouldn't make Harry any safer. And when Harry insisted his wand spun in his hand and attacked Voldemort on its own, no one believed him. Ginny went up to him and hugged him and said, "I believe you."

George said from the couch, "Well, yeah, she'd believe you if you said you were a hippogryff."

Ginny just said, "I saw it. In my dream. Along with everything else. Everything else came true, so I believe it."

Her dad patiently said, "Ginny, even if the wand did spin in Harry's hand like he said, that still doesn't mean it did it by itself. There are plenty of spells that can make a wand spin in your hand. Ron told me Harry's used the compass spell before. So it still could have been Harry. Under that kind of stress, there's no telling what Harry could do."

Ginny walked out with Harry into the yard, and Harry walked over to pat the thestral. Ginny watched him and looked at the thestral. She wondered how many real deaths she had 'seen' in

her dreams. It seemed like she had seen hundreds of Slayers die, and more vampires than that turn to dust.

Then suddenly, Harry clapped a hand to his scar and sank to his knees. Ginny rushed over and grabbed him, even as Ron and Hermione ran out into the yard to see if Harry was all right. It took Harry maybe a minute before he was able to explain what he had seen. Voldemort interrogating Ollivander about wands. About the connection between Harry's wand and his own. That was why Voldemort had used Lucius Malfoy's now-destroyed wand instead of his own. But Ollivander didn't understand why that kind of interaction could happen between two wands that weren't brothers.

Ginny thought Hermione looked utterly terrified. Hermione gasped, "Harry! He's taking over the Ministry! And the newspapers! And half the Wizarding world! Don't let him inside your head too!"

It wasn't until much later, after her mum and Tonks had done everything they could for George, that Ginny got another chance to talk to Harry in private. Well, almost in private.

They sat on the floor in Ginny's room, which Hermione was going to be sharing, and Harry told them everything he could remember. And then, just to embarrass her as much as possible, Ron told them that Ginny had gone out and staked three vampires, and gotten caught when she snuck back in. If she hadn't been afraid she'd accidentally break his arm, she would have punched him.

Hermione asked, "So, your parents know now?"

Ginny nodded unhappily. "Yeah. And I'm grounded, until..."

Ron unhelpfully added, "... Hagrid decides to switch over to raising cute little bunnies."

Even Harry grinned at that.

They had everything arranged for Harry and Hermione to stay for the rest of the summer. Ginny's bed was transfigured into twin beds, and she had picked her clothes and books and things up off the floor and her desk and her dresser, so Hermione wouldn't have to climb over junk to get to her bed. Ginny had even done an expansion charm on her closet so there was enough room for Hermione to hang up her clothes too. On the other hand, Ginny's mum had charmed the window so it would yell out an alarm if anyone opened it.

Ginny knew perfectly well that Ron hadn't cleaned his room up a bit, but it seemed like her brothers didn't care about stuff like that, and she hated to think it, but maybe Harry didn't care either. Hermione did. Ginny's mum had told her more than once that witches and wizards were a lot less alike than you would think, and part of having a serious long-term relationship was working out all the little things like 'bathtub charmed or not' and 'gnomes in the garden or not'. And getting

your husband to pick up his dirty clothes was all part of the 'working things out' part, unless you had enough house elves you didn't have to deal with it. Ginny figured Ron wasn't going to get off that easy, with Hermione being all worried about house elf rights.

But still, Ginny was shocked when they were going to bed and Hermione burst into tears. Hermione was holding a Muggle picture that didn't move. In it were two smiling parents and an eleven-year-old Hermione in a fancy white dress.

Hermione put it on the nightstand in between the beds. Tears streamed down her face as she confessed, "I was going to obliviate them and make them go to Australia and forget all about me so they'd be safe from V-voldemort, but it seemed so ruthless and heartless, and then I thought about doing a Fidelius Charm..."

Ginny gaped in surprise. "Isn't that really, really advanced magic?"

Hermione nodded. "I looked it up, and I figured out I could do it, but I'd probably have to make another wizard the Secret-Keeper, and all their friends wouldn't be able to find them anymore, and they'd still be vulnerable when they went to work or to Tesco's. So I gave up on that. But then I found the spell the Watchers' Council and the Ministry of Magic used to cut ties between a Slayer witch and her family. I used that ounce of your blood that I got from you, and... I did it. I don't belong to the Grangers anymore. A wizard trying to find them won't turn anything up, because they're not connected to me anymore. They're a nice, perfectly normal family now. With no daughter. But they're s-safe... from wizards trying to track my relatives down when I go with Harry. A-and if I can't reverse it I'll never have parents again!" She burst into tears and sobbed on Ginny's blouse for long minutes.

Ginny waited until Hermione stopped crying so hard, and asked, "So... what about the Dursleys? And what about my family?"

Hermione sniffled and finally said, "A couple Aurors took the Dursleys off to somewhere safe. No idea where. As for Ron, well, Fred and George came up with a plan that I have to admit is brill. They're going to transfigure your ghoul so it looks like Ron with a horrid case of spattergroit. Then 'Ron' can stay here while we go off after those..." She glanced around to make sure no one was listening. Ginny could hear that there was no one nearby. "Horcruxes," she whispered to Ginny.

Ginny asked, "And what about me?"

Hermione winced. "I don't know. Spattergroit is kind of contagious, so maybe your folks wouldn't let you go to Hogwarts until they were sure you weren't a carrier. But if someone came by to check up on you, they'd know you weren't here. That could be really bad for your mum and dad. Let me think about it for a bit and see if I can come up with something."

## Chapter 16 All the Host of Them

The next morning, Ginny noticed when Hermione woke up and stretched. Crookshanks hopped up on the bed and nudged Hermione right on the cheek.

Hermione petted Crookshanks and giggled, "What? Am I not giving you enough attention?" And that was when she noticed Ginny was already dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, already showered, and sitting at her desk. She was studying out of some of Hermione's magic textbooks. Hermione worried, "Did I oversleep? How late is it?"

Ginny smiled at her. "It's only six or so, but I've been up for a while." At Hermione's concerned look, she admitted, "It's okay. Ever since... that night, I'm only sleeping about three or four hours a night. It's the Slayer, wanting to go out and hunt."

Hermione gasped, "You get four or five extra hours to study? I would do anything for..." And then she realized what she was saying. "Oh. Sorry." Because someone would have to die for her to get those powers, and that wasn't something Ginny was ever going to feel good about. And now, the person who would have to die was Ginny. Instead, Hermione hastily changed the subject. "So... what are you looking up?"

When Hermione and Ginny went downstairs for breakfast, Fred and George were already at the table, wolfing down food and making horrible jokes about ears and holes in the head and everything you could think of.

Ginny would have joined in, but she could hear her mum. Every time her mum looked at George, she sobbed. It was really quiet, but not quiet enough for someone who now could hear people's heartbeats when she tried to.

Their mum finally wept, "I should have listened to Ginny! Oh George! It's all my fault!"

When the twins looked at each other in confusion, their mum broke down and told them all about Ginny's new powers. Ginny could have guessed what the twins would say.

"Wicked!"

"Cool!"

Their mum snapped, "It's not cool! Your little sister's stuck like this!"

Fred smirked, "Hey Ginny, can you hold Ron upside-down on the wall while we do a Sticking Charm on him?"

George grinned, "Come on Ginny, aren't we your favorite big brothers? Please?"

Ginny gave them both a smile and said, "You're my very favorite twin big brothers."

"Thank you... Hey!"

"Oh, and can we test some of our new inventions on you?"

Their mum shouted, "BOYS!"

Ginny smiled evilly and said, "Oh sure. We can make a trade. I practice my vampire fighting techniques on you, and then you get to test something on me. I broke my dresser and a brick wall last time, so I need to practice on something I don't mind breaking."

Hermione played along. "But you boys have pots and pots of that bruise removal cream, right? And you probably have something for broken bones too, so it won't be that bad."

"You know, I think one of our potions might be bubbling over-"

"-so we really need to go check on it-"

"-right away-"

"-if not sooner!"

By then, they were already halfway up the stairs to their room. Her mum waited a couple seconds, and then opened her mouth to give Ginny a good talking to. But Hermione stood up and held up one hand for silence. Ginny was amazed that her mum stopped.

Hermione peeked out into the stairway, and then came back. She performed a couple quick charms, and then said, "They can't hear us now. They had some more Extendable Ears out."

"Those boys!" her mum fumed. "I told them not to..."

Hermione calmly said, "They're selling them in their joke shops now. They probably have hundreds of them made up."

Ginny grinned, "And how do you know this?"

Hermione said, "I read through one of their price lists, so I'd know everything they're selling. After that business with the Peruvian Darkness Powder, I don't plan to be caught unawares any more."

Ginny repressed a shudder. "Once was enough."

Hermione added, "And I'm working on an antidote or counter-curse for every one of their inventions. The love potions are bad enough. Just imagine what a Death Eater could do if he slipped something in your food and then you wanted to do anything in the world for him! He wouldn't even have to perform the Imperius Curse on you."

Her mum said, "Love potions have always been dangerous. And that's not counting all the ways they can go wrong. It takes a very skilled potions expert to brew one and be sure of the results."

All three of them looked up toward the twins' room. Her mum muttered, "And yet they didn't do well on their Potions O.W.L."

Hermione said, "Professor Flitwick said the swamp they did in the corridor was a really nice bit of magic. So they can do it if they want. I think they knew what they wanted to do when they grew up, and that's all they've ever concentrated on."

Mum said, "But they need to... Ginny?"

"What, mum?" Ginny said as soon as she swallowed the sausage in her mouth.

Her mum sounded worried as she said, "There were fifteen sausages left after the twins finished."

Ginny looked at the plate. There were only five sausages left. She looked at Hermione, who was still working on her first one. She looked down at her own plate. There was one sausage left, amidst the grease marks left by a small armada of now-eaten sausages. Merlin's beard, she must have eaten eight of them while she was listening to Hermione! She admitted, "I'm just eating more. Sorry, mum."

Hermione said, "She's eating a lot more. I think it's the Vampire Slayer powers." Ginny noticed that her mum winced slightly.

Her mum got up and moved back to the stove. "Well then, I'd better cook up some more sausages. Harry and Ron will want something. It's just such a... change having you eating like Fred and George put together."

Ron and Harry finally came down for breakfast. Ron watched as Harry deliberately sat next to Ginny. Ron finally shrugged and sat down next to Hermione. He shoved a huge chunk of

sausage in his mouth and asked, "So, what are we going to do today?"

Ginny breathed a sigh of relief when Harry didn't answer back with a mouth full of food. She knew Harry wasn't perfect, but she still thought Hermione had a lot more work to do on Ron than she did with Harry.

Hermione glanced over to make sure Ginny's mum wasn't listening. She instantly started listing her plans for the day in a whisper. "I thought we could divide up tasks. We need to do research, and we need to start planning, and spell practice would be good, and I wanted to read through Harry's Defense Against the Dark Arts books, and-"

Ron interrupted loudly, "I thought Fred and George wanted to play Quidditch today."

Mum heard that and just about exploded. "Ronald Weasley! How can you think of Quidditch when your brother has that dreadful injury!"

Hermione frowned at Ron for interrupting her, but she said, "Mrs. Weasley, it was George's idea. Really."

"Molly, dear. Please call me Molly," mum insisted.

Hermione smiled and said, "I'll try... Molly."

Ginny just tried not to look over at Hermione, because she knew her mum was thinking about having Hermione as a daughter-in-law some day.

Hermione thought for a few seconds and then said, "You know, a game of Quidditch might be just the thing." Ron's jaw dropped open in shock. She went on, "Ginny needs some exercise, and chasing after something might help calm her down so she can sleep at night. We could play teams, and have Ginny run instead of ride a broom."

Her mum said, "You know, that's a very good idea, Hermione. Especially if it keeps her from needing to... run around loose at night."

Ginny just rolled her eyes, while Hermione sat there looking like butter wouldn't melt in her mouth. She had no idea how Hermione did it.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 18 Dec 2011 17:05:17 GMT

## Chapter 17 The Earth and the Heavens

After breakfast, it was just like always. The Quidditch players needed to argue for an hour about who should be on which team to make it 'fair'. In George and Fred's case, that really meant 'so my team will be better'. Everyone agreed Harry and Ginny couldn't be on the same team. Everyone agreed that whoever had Hermione had to get some extra advantage, even if Hermione hated being the one who was really bad at something. Finally, they ended up with a team of Ginny, Ron, and George. But Ginny had to run instead of flying on a broom. She could tell Fred figured that would give his team a big advantage. He even decided he and George would be the Keepers. She looked at Ron and smirked. Ron checked to make sure Hermione wasn't looking his way, and he smirked back.

They played for about an hour and a half. Ginny ran the whole time, with a few breaks here and there. Her side won 370 to 240. And Fred was covered in bruises, because Ron's strategy was to get the quaffle away from Hermione and throw it to Ginny, then let Ginny outmaneuver Harry. That worked a lot, because everyone including Harry was on Weasley family brooms, and an old Cleansweep Five wasn't as fast or as maneuverable as a Vampire Slayer. And once Ginny got close enough to the goal, Fred had no chance of stopping her shots. She bounced a few of them off his head and his bottom, just to teach him a lesson.

"Bloody hell, Gin!" Fred complained as he limped into the kitchen.

"Go little sis!" George laughed.

Hermione asked, "They do have enough of that bruise removal cream, don't they?"

Ron grinned, "Yeah, they have pints of the stuff."

Fred turned and glared at Ron. "Well, I bloody well didn't figure on having to bathe in the stuff!" And he limped up the stairs to his room.

Ginny slumped down in a chair and had a big glass of cold pumpkin juice. She felt great. Tired, but great. Playing Quidditch like that finally gave her enough chasing time and enough exercise that she wasn't jumpy and edgy.

After lunch, the four of them ducked into Ginny's room to talk about their plans. Harry pointed out, "For right now, we can only prepare, since I can't go after the Horcruxes until the Trace breaks on my birthday.

Ron suddenly worried, "Uh-oh. What about Ginny's Trace? Hers isn't going to break for a long

time."

Hermione looked a little embarrassed as she admitted, "It's okay, Ron. Ginny's Trace broke the night she became a Slayer. I'm sure of it, because it was gone the next day when I looked up the spells and checked on it. It probably broke the second she became a Slayer, because we've seen magic doesn't work so well on Slayers."

Harry grinned, "So Ginny can go with us? And no one will know they can't follow her using her Trace?"

Hermione smiled wickedly. "And I can probably figure out how to duplicate the Trace somewhere in the Burrow, so anyone who tries to check on her will think she's right here."

Ron rolled his eyes. "Probably. Wouldn't surprise me if you could figure out how to travel through time. Oh wait, you already did that."

"Ron!" Hermione fussed. Then she stopped and thought out loud, "You know, it's really a shame all those Time-Turners got broken, because we could really use that as a backup weapon if-

Harry grimaced, "It's probably just as well, since we've got so many Death Eaters loose in the Ministry these days. Fudge would probably give Lucius Malfoy as many as he asked for."

"Ugh," Ron complained. "That'd be all we need. The bouncing ferret with his own Time-Turner."

Hermione pulled out a sheet of parchment with a schedule on it. "Now here's what I propose. Ron and I can teach Ginny magic she wouldn't learn until next year. Apparation, voiceless magic, advanced Charms. Harry's the only one who can't do magic yet, so his job is research. Finding out what Godric Gryffindor and Rowena Ravenclaw might have left, and where they are, and which of them went missing since Tom Riddle was at Hogwarts."

"Ugh," Harry groaned.

"And if Ron decides not to work harder on spellwork, he can help Harry with the research," Hermione continued.

"Hermione!" Ron gasped in horror. Ginny had to work hard not to burst out laughing.

Hermione added, "And I have two hours every evening marked out for me. Studying Harry's DADA books I haven't read yet."

Ron asked, "What about Quidditch? Are we going to play every morning?"

Hermione sighed. "I think so. Your mum will be a lot happier if she thinks we're just mucking around and playing games. And Ginny probably does need the chasing and exercise."

Harry said, "Besides, it was hilarious when Ginny bounced that shot off Fred's bum."

Ron said, "The best was the one off his forehead. I laughed so hard I almost fell off my broom."

Hermione said, "You do realize no one's going to want to play Keeper against Ginny after today."

Harry said, "We'll probably have to allow that Keeper to use some kind of Shield charm."

Ginny smiled. "We don't have to mention that to Fred and George yet, do we?"

"Ginny!" Hermione fussed.

Harry said, "Yeah, we've got to figure out where Voldemort could have hidden all this stuff, and what things he might have used. We know about the cup and the locket I mean the real locket and Dumbledore was pretty confident about the snake. That still leaves something of Ravenclaw or Gryffindor. Then I have to face Voldemort."

Ginny frowned, "But there's nothing in the prophecy that says I can't tenderize him a bit, first. Right?"

Harry grinned at her. "Especially if you're my power he knows nothing about. I always wanted to have a secret weapon. I just don't want you to get hurt!"

She said, "I'm the Vampire Slayer. Hurting monsters is what I was made for." She didn't say anything about the whole 'dying really young' part. She was trying not to think about that. But when she looked at Harry, it was easy to tell herself it would be a good thing if she saved Harry, even if she died doing it.

They managed to spend most of that day and night sticking to Hermione's schedule. Ginny could tell it was going to take a long time for her to learn voiceless magic, and she didn't seem to have a knack for apparation either. She didn't like the idea of Hermione having to side-along apparate her everywhere they needed to go. Harry spent the afternoon poring through what seemed like an entire library of books Hermione had stashed in her purse. Ginny knew that trunks and suitcases in stores with charms like that cost a fortune in Galleons. She only wished she knew how to do those spells so she could make her own purse like that. Then Hermione stayed up reading so late that even Ginny got sleepy.

\* \* \* \* \*

But their schedule fell apart completely the very next morning. First, Harry and Ron needed to pull Ginny and Hermione aside right after breakfast. Ron convinced the twins to be a distraction, so they had time to talk in the meadow before they played Quidditch.

Harry groaned, "We have a problem." When everyone was looking at him, he said, "I had another flash from Voldemort. He was talking to Thorfinn Rowle. They already have him out of prison, even if his jaw is still sort of swollen. Rowle told Voldemort the whole story. A girl in Muggle clothing broke his arm, smashed his knee, and broke his jaw, all before he could get in one good punch. Voldemort figured it out. He knows I have a Vampire Slayer on my side, and he's figuring out how to counter her."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 21 Dec 2011 20:27:36 GMT  
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Chapter 18 Every Plant of the Field

"Voldemort figured it out. He knows I have a Vampire Slayer on my side, and he's figuring out how to counter her."

He added, "But he doesn't know it's you. I think he believes it's a Muggle."

Hermione winced. "Oh, this isn't good. This isn't good at all! What are we going to do? I'll start researching ways of countering a Vampire Slayer, and we'll have to think about ways to counter his moves..."

Harry nodded. "Okay, you come up with possible plans for Voldemort, and then work with Ron on counters. Maybe chess moves to lure him into a trap so we can checkmate him."

Ron started to reply, but the twins interrupted. "Strategy session over, mates! Mum's wised up. If we don't start playing right now, she's got cleaning for us to do instead."

Then after the Quidditch game, her mum cornered Harry out in the yard. And Harry told her most of the truth. That he was going to go do the mission that Dumbledore gave him, and not go back to Hogwarts. Then her mum cornered Hermione, who said she was going with Harry. Then Ron spilled the beans too. Stupid git. Why couldn't he just lie and tell her he was going to do what she wanted?

Oh yeah. The whole spattergroit plan.

"Ginny? You're not planning on going with Harry, are you?" her mum glowered. "Because you're definitely too young."

She stood her ground, even if it was her mum. "I have to. After Professor Dumbledore's funeral, the centaurs gave us a prophecy. About Voldemort, and Harry. I'm in it too. I have to go, and I have to help Harry."

"You can't go!" her mum insisted. "You're underage! You still have the Trace!"

"I don't."

"What? Lying like that is completely pointless, young lady. You're not seventeen, and you won't be for months!"

Ginny made herself look at her mum instead of the ground. "Hermione checked the morning after I became the Vampire Slayer. My Trace had already broken. She thinks it probably broke the second I was Called."

"But you're too young! I forbid it!"

She stood there and let her mum yell at her for a long time. But she had made up her mind a long time ago. She was going, and she was going to help Harry no matter what it cost her. Hermione was already giving up her family, maybe forever. How could Ginny do any less, when it was for Harry? Her mum finally wound down and realized Ginny was going to go with Harry, no matter what.

So her mum took another tack. She gave each of them a million tasks to do for Fleur's wedding. And she planned it so they were always separated. Even Ron figured it out by late afternoon.

\* \* \* \* \*

That night, they met at midnight in Ginny's room.

Ron yawned, "Well, the kneazle's out of the bag. Mum got Fred and George to tell her about transfiguring the ghoul. Fred said she only screamed at them for about ten minutes before she rushed off to yell at me some more. Dunno how they got the ghoul to go along with the plan, but he's looking forward to it. Figure she's going to do anything she can to keep us apart."

Harry said, "She's already keeping us apart with all the wedding details. And she's talking about tasks she needs you and Ginny to do after the wedding, so I guess she's trying to stall us until she can figure out how to scuttle our plan."

Hermione said, "I'm working all that out right now. We just need to get all our things together, get our clothes all washed and packed so we're ready to go at a moment's notice, and keep working on our parts of my schedule. Any news on that?"

Ron said, "Well, I'm getting better on apparation. Be easier if I didn't have to go all the way to the meadow to practice, but dad's got his anti-apparation wards set around the whole area. And it'd be easier if Fred and George would lay off me."

Harry said, "I got in a couple hours of research in your books. There aren't that many famous artifacts for Rowena Ravenclaw and Godric Gryffindor anymore. The only one for Gryffindor is his sword, and we already know that isn't a Horcrux. There are a couple possibilities for Ravenclaw. Ravenclaw's goblet is still on display in a Wizard museum in London. Ravenclaw's belt is supposed to belong to the Bones family. And then there's Ravenclaw's lost diadem, but it hasn't been seen for centuries."

"What's a diadem?" Ron wondered.

"It's like a circlet or a tiara," Hermione instantly explained. Hermione nodded, "That's a good start. We can check on the goblet and the belt first. Maybe we'll get lucky. We'll check whether the goblet is a Horcrux, and we'll ask Susan Bones if she'll talk to the Head of Bones House for us, and maybe they'll let us see the belt."

Harry asked, "And if it's not either of them?"

Hermione shrugged. "Then we'll have to keep doing research until we find out what the Horcrux is, and where it might be."

Harry frowned, "If it's like the locket, it may be somewhere that only has meaning for Tom Riddle. And it may be really heavily guarded."

Hermione said, "I know. But all of Riddle's life before Hogwarts is going to be in Muggle files, so we may be able to dig up information that even Professor Dumbledore couldn't track down."

Ginny didn't say anything, but she hoped Hermione was right. If she was wrong, it might be like looking for something that wasn't hay in a whole field of haystacks.

Harry just said, "Dumbledore knew Riddle's entire life before Hogwarts was that lousy orphanage, and he knew a lot more about what went on in there than he ought to. But he didn't know what Riddle got up to after he worked for Borgin and Burke's, and that might be what we need to track down."

"That'd take a bloody miracle," groused Ron.

The next day was more of the same. Ginny got sent off to groom the meadow and touch up the rock walls. She could see Harry cleaning up around the henhouse and Ron working over in the front garden. Hermione was probably stuck inside with mum pestering her non-stop.

So it wasn't until lunch that the next problem reared its ugly head. Ginny was appalled when her mum and Fleur wanted Harry in disguise. Her mum thought Polyjuice Potion was probably the best choice, except for the long preparation time. Ginny decided right then she wasn't going to tell anyone that Hermione had already brewed up an enormous batch of the potion.

Ginny fussed, "Mum! I want Harry looking like Harry!"

"Stop whining dear, Harry will still be there, just..."

"Mum! I'm not whining!" she complained. She was sure she wasn't whining.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 25 Dec 2011 08:59:25 GMT  
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Chapter 19 Man of the Dust

They argued throughout lunch, and then every time Ginny came in for water or a snack. It wasn't until dinner, which included Ginny's dad and half a dozen other members of the Order, that Hermione finally made a breakthrough. She asked Kingsley and Ginny's dad, "Is anyone at the wedding going to be a Death Eater, or someone who might talk to Death Eaters?"

"Well... no," her dad finally said.

Hermione smiled brightly, "So will it make any difference? And if it does leak out that Harry came to the wedding, he'll be long gone well before then."

Her mum wasn't convinced, but Fleur was satisfied.

Then it turned out Fleur's little sister Gabrielle wanted Harry to be at the wedding so she could dance with him and try to ensnare him with her slinky veela ways. So that was why Fleur was all right with Harry not being in disguise. Ginny suddenly wanted to go punch a certain part-veela in the face.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ginny paced back and forth in her room for hours. Hermione tried to calm her down. "Be reasonable, Ginny. Harry picked you, not her."

"She's a veela!" Ginny snapped. "You know what they're like! You know what they can do!"

Hermione gritted her teeth. "Of course I know! Whose boyfriend was it who couldn't stop staring and stammering every time Fleur walked into the room last summer? Was it Harry? NO!"

Ginny ducked her head. "Oh. Right. Sorry." She kept pacing, though. "I just need to get out... and... you know."

Hermione thought for a minute and finally said, "I have an idea."

"Really?"

Hermione nodded. "First, let me see if I can undo the alarm charms on your window." It took Hermione almost ten minutes of testing and looking in books before the window flew open on its own. The alarms didn't sound. The window didn't scream about being opened.

Hermione grinned, "Next, we need brooms."

"We?" Ginny checked.

"Yes! We. I'm going with you. And there's no way I can run ten or twenty miles like you can. So..." She opened her little purse and reached into it. Two school brooms came out when she withdrew her arm.

Ginny asked, "How many brooms do you have in there?"

Hermione grinned, "Six, including Harry's Firebolt." She stopped and thought. "Next, I need to do Disillusionment Charms on both of us." She tapped her wand on her head, and she took on the coloring of the wall behind her. Then she tapped Ginny on the head.

Nothing happened.

Hermione tried it again. And a third time. Finally, she muttered, "I should have known a spell wouldn't work." She marched to the door, flung it open, pointed her wand up the stairs, and hissed, "Accio Harry's cloak!"

There was a rattling upstairs, and a few seconds later Harry's cloak flew into her arms. Hermione blushed a little and said, "I needed to get this folded away and put in my purse anyway."

Ginny wrapped the cloak tightly around herself, and tucked it under herself once she was on her broom so it wouldn't blow off while they were flying. Then she leaned forward on her broom and expertly flew it out the open window. Hermione followed a bit more carefully.

"Where to?" Hermione whispered from what looked like thin air, if you couldn't spot an odd, Hermione-shaped wavering there about a broom that seemed to be hovering without a pilot.

Ginny pointed, and then realized that was useless when she was invisible. She whispered back, "South, past Ottery St. Catchpole. Can you see my broom?"

"Yes," Hermione whispered. "And I can see your legs most of the time too."

So Hermione followed Ginny across the skies. Ginny flew low, keeping a lookout for suspicious vampire activity as she went. She wondered how in Merlin's name a Vampire Slayer was supposed to do her job on foot. Maybe that Watchers' Council did lots of research for her and told her where she needed to be. She wondered if Hermione would agree to be her Watcher and help her with all this. If they survived Voldemort and the Death Eaters.

When Ginny finally saw two stealthy shadows sneaking through a cemetery, she knew what to do. She waggled her broom to get Hermione's attention, and dove toward the ground. She staked the first vampire on a chest-level flyby, and leapt off the broom before the second vampire even figured out there was a threat. She dropped the cloak and punched the vampire so hard he went flying back into a stone mausoleum.

She grinned as the vampire got back on his feet. She leapt to attack him.

She didn't see the two vampires coming up behind her. One had a shovel.

The other one had a rifle. He took careful aim at her back.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 28 Dec 2011 08:05:54 GMT  
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Chapter 20 The Breath of Life

She didn't see the two vampires coming up behind her. One had a shovel.

The other one had a rifle. He took careful aim at her back.

Suddenly she heard Hermione shout "Incendio!" She dove to the side and rolled, figuring there had to be a threat behind her if Hermione was getting involved.

Two voices screeched for a fraction of a second before the familiar whoosh of dusting vampires reached her ears.

The lone remaining vampire struggled to get to his feet after being pummeled by Ginny's fists and feet. He groaned, "No fair using a bloody flamethrower!"

Ginny glanced back at the gun on the ground amidst a spray of vampire dust. She growled, "Says the vampires who brought a rifle!"

"We didn't know we had the bloody Slayer on our hands! We just figured it was some Hunters. Maybe those Torchwood pillocks. But how can you be the Slayer? You're not the Golden Slayer, and you're sure not the Dark Slayer. You look more like the Red Witch."

Ginny refrained from staking him. "Two Slayers? I thought there can be only one."

"Me too, Ginger. Me too. But I got a sire who went over there and never came back. He's sent us a couple letters, though. Two Slayers now. And the brunette's a bleedin' psycho. So you're number three? Or maybe someone finally snuffed the Dark Slayer."

"What if someone killed the Golden Slayer?" Ginny wondered.

"Nah, word is Summers is pretty much indestructible. Wiped out or corrupted the whole Order of Aurelius from The Master on down, helped take down Kakistos, killed Dracula for good, put the fear of the gods into the Order of Teraka, beat a hellgod, stopped The Dark Witch, you name it, she's killed it. I'd bet fifty quid it isn't her."

He looked up into the air and then smiled in what he hoped was a disarming way. "So, what do you say, we call it all a misunderstanding, and I just take the next ferry over to France and you never see me again? I mean, you got that hovering invisible black helicopter or whatever it is up there with that flamethrower for your backup, so it's not like I've got a chance..."

He suddenly threw a chunk of rock at her head and lit out like an army of dementors were after him.

She dodged the rock and pulled out her wand. "Incendio." The vampire disintegrated into dust.

Hermione floated down to about ten feet above the ground. Ginny could tell where Hermione was by her faintly wavering outline, but she wasn't sure any normal person would be able to tell. Hermione whispered, "I'm guessing the shovel wasn't for burying anyone."

Ginny nodded. She tossed the invisibility cloak over herself and mounted her broom. Then they began searching the graveyard.

There were four new graves. When Ginny put her ear to the ground, she could hear movement underneath three of them. She could feel something knotting in her gut that told her she had found three newly-sired vampires. She flew over to Hermione and whispered, "I think I should have let that last vampire run. If there's a... a whole gang of them-"

"A nest," Hermione corrected her. Naturally, Hermione had done research on vampires.

"-a nest, we need to find it and wipe it out."

They used quiet incendio spells to take care of the three fledglings as they emerged from the ground. Hermione didn't even bother to speak out loud when she did her spells. Ginny reminded herself that she really wanted to learn how to do that.

Then they flew back to the Burrow. They carefully ducked as they flew into Ginny's room. Then Hermione went to work. She dispelled the Disillusionment Charm on herself and packed away Harry's cloak as well as the broomsticks. Then she made sure the right alarm spells were back in place on the window.

Hermione did a couple quick reparo charms and a tergeo to fix Ginny's torn and dirty clothes. Then she tried some medical charms to take care of Ginny's bruises. The medical charms didn't work.

Ginny looked at the bruises on her knuckles and frowned, "What do Muggle Slayers do?"

Hermione said, "They must go through an awful lot of clothes and an awful lot of bandages."

Ginny sighed, "Maybe they're a lot better at it than I am."

Hermione pursed her lips and unwillingly admitted, "If they really have these Watchers around to help them and train them, I suppose it's possible. I don't know how to do training for Vampire Slayers. But you could use spells instead."

Ginny grimaced. "That's the thing. I don't want to. I just have this... urge to get out there and attack them... and hit them... and beat them senseless... and kill them. It's like I turned into some

sort of monster."

"Or some sort of Glaswegian," teased Hermione.

They giggled over that for long minutes as they got ready for bed.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next morning, as Ginny's mum gave everyone orders for their morning tasks, Ginny could see Harry and Ron were right pissed at her. And at Hermione.

As they walked out into the yard, Ron complained to Hermione, "Merlin's baggy Y-fronts! Why'd you sneak off like that? Why couldn't we come too?"

Harry said to Ginny, "I would have let you borrow the cloak if you'd just asked."

Ginny ducked her head and admitted, "We had to accio it. Hermione's Disillusionment Charm won't work on me."

Ron asked, "So... What was it like tagging along with the Vampire Slayer?"

Hermione gushed, "It was amazing. Ginny's so fast she's a blur when she's fighting, and she threw a vampire so hard he broke a stone wall! And I got to take out a couple vampires with spells." She looked over at Ginny and added, "And the bruises she had last night are pretty much already gone. With no potions."

Ginny said, "We need to meet up tonight in my room and do some planning. That town's got a vampire nest we need to get rid of before there's a really nasty problem."

Hermione frowned, "And it's not like the Ministry will bother itself with loads of Muggles being killed by vampires or turned into new vampires."

Harry suddenly stopped in his tracks. "And it just happens to be within a couple hours' walk of the Burrow? Or a lot less than that if they just steal a car? Maybe Voldemort's building up a few vampire armies to attack some Order strongholds. Maybe this is his counter to the Vampire Slayer. Give her half a dozen gigantic nests of vampires to track down all over the countryside, so she can't help me."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller

## Chapter 21 The Man Whom He Had Formed

"Maybe this is his counter to the Vampire Slayer. Give her half a dozen gigantic nests of vampires to track down all over the countryside, so she can't help me."

Ron groaned, "Oh lovely. So there could be another nest of the blighters in London near Grimmauld Place? Or maybe near Hogwarts? Or hiding in Knockturn Alley getting ready to rampage through Diagon Alley some night?"

Hermione calmly said, "We'll just have to get a list of suspected Order hideouts, and go patrol around each one of them. Maybe Professor MacGonagall's home, and Professor Flitwick's..."

Ron complained, "And that'll go over so well. 'So dad, we thought we'd like to go out in the middle of the night and risk our necks hunting loads of vampires. Care to tell us where the Death Eaters think the Order are hiding out?' Mum will bloody well explode."

\* \* \* \* \*

Ginny figured Ron had to be right this time. For once. But her mum had all of them come in and clean up for dinner, because guests were coming over. It was Kingsley and Tonks. And, despite her mum's wishes, Hermione and Ron were already in the Order, just like every other Weasley except her. And Percy. So Hermione was already working on a plan to get secret information out of Aurors who ought to be too smart to fall for something like that.

Finally, over dessert, Hermione got the opening she was looking for. Tonks was talking about their concern that several key people in the Ministry had been put under the Imperius Curse, and Hermione seized the opportunity. She asked, "So does that mean some of the Order are in danger? From being suspected of being in the Order?"

Kingsley gave her a smile and explained in his deep voice, "Not really. Only Moody was suspected of that, so the other Aurors like myself and Tonks are just... in the usual danger of being Aurors when Death Eaters are on the loose. Most of the people suspected of being in the Order are either dead or at Hogwarts: Hagrid, MacGonagall, Flitwick, Vector, and Sprout are all safely behind the Hogwarts wards. Daedalus Diggle, and a couple others who are suspected, are out of the country guarding the Dursleys and out of harm's way. Peter Pettigrew knew that Remus was one of the Order, but Remus is quite hard to track with the usual spells because of his lycanthropy, and Dumbledore before he died managed to locate a hideaway for Remus that not even the Ministry knows about. That leaves only a couple people who are generally suspected of being Order members, like Amelia Bones. As you know, she isn't even in the Order."

"What about us?" checked Ron.

Kingsley cleared his throat uncomfortably. Tonks glanced at him and spoke up. "You're not considered threats. Percy Weasley has badmouthed your father so much to Fudge and Scrimgeour that no one believes Arthur Weasley is competent enough to be a member of the Order."

Her dad glowered unhappily, even while Harry asked, "Umm, maybe Percy is protecting his family by acting like-

"A ponce?" tried Fred.

"A nattering git?" asked George.

Fred went on, "Maybe a pinheaded-"

"BOYS!" snapped her mum, and they shut up.

\* \* \* \* \*

The foursome met up again in Ginny's room at the stroke of midnight. They talked over everything they had learned from Kingsley and Tonks, and they decided they would hunt for vampire nests around the Burrow, Hogwarts and Hogsmeade, Bones Manor, and Number 12 Grimmauld Place.

At long last, Hermione grudgingly gave in. She had wanted two other sites added in, but Ginny thought they were overextending themselves already, and Harry kept pointing out that Ginny was the Vampire Slayer on the team so they should listen to her on the subject.

Hermione said, "We'll just have to find a computer where we can do some searches on recent violent deaths and missing persons. If there's anywhere in Muggle England with big jumps in both, it's probably either Death Eaters or vampire nests." Then she had to stop and explain to both Weasleys about computers and the internet and search programs.

Ron asked, "So here's what I want to know. How can they not know exactly who's in the Order? They have Snape on their side! They have to know mum and dad and the whole family are in it!"

Harry said, "I've been thinking about that. Maybe Dumbledore has a hex on him so he can't tell."

Hermione frowned, "I don't see how that's workable anymore. With Professor Dumbledore dead, Snape has to be able to talk about Grimmauld Place, since the Fidelius Charm would fragment,

and Snape would now be one of the Secret Keepers. Like we are now. And if there was something like an Unbreakable Vow so he couldn't talk about the Order, Voldemort could break it now that Dumbledore's dead. Or he could make Snape tell and just not care that it killed Snape to do it."

Ginny wondered, "So why aren't Death Eaters busting down our doors right this second? Or going after Kingsley and Tonks and them in the Ministry?"

Hermione frowned, "I don't know. It doesn't make any sense. There must be some piece of the puzzle we don't have, and if we had it, things would make sense."

Harry muttered, "I still don't get why people are so afraid to say 'Voldemort' instead of 'You-Know-Who' and 'the Dark Lord'."

Hermione snorted and said, "You ought to know about that! It's in the chapter of Modern Magical History that you're in. The last time, Voldemort was able to empower a massive Taboo Curse." Ron actually winced, so Ginny figured he knew what that meant. "He could maintain a magical map of Great Britain, and if someone said his name out loud, there would be a marker on the map, and he could send Death Eaters there to kill them."

Ginny asked, "So when Dumbledore kept saying 'Voldemort' like it was nothing..."

Hermione nodded. "He was being incredibly brave. Voldemort had to know that someone in Hogwarts was using his name indiscriminately, and he had to know from Snape that it was Dumbledore. It's a wonder Voldemort never launched a massive Death Eater attack at Dumbledore. Or at the school."

Harry pursed his lips. "That we know of. Maybe Dumbledore defeated enough attacks that Voldemort didn't dare try any more of them."

Ron groaned, "So now, without Dumbledore around to protect it, the school's going to be a target, right?"

Hermione sighed, "Well, it does have all those wards and protections..."

Harry said, "Well, I know you can't fly a broom through the wards without disabling the anti-broomstick enchantments, but why couldn't they apparate to the wards, break them enough to get through, walk in, and then mount their brooms to attack the castle?"

Ron muttered, "Forget that. Just get a thousand giant spiders to attack the castle and eat everyone inside."

"Ron, they're acromantulas," corrected Hermione.

"Fine. Giant, man-eating, talking acromantulas who didn't eat everyone in Hogwarts because Hagrid asked his mate the head spider not to. And it's dead now, so we're just little spider treats if they come across us."

Ginny knew Ron had a fear of spiders, but she didn't make fun of him this time. Not when he'd had to face down hundreds of spiders bigger than he was, back when he was twelve. And she figured he was probably right. "So, when the Death Eaters are ready to attack Hogwarts they'll probably just get their nearby vampire army to sweep through the Forbidden Forest and drive everything in there right at the castle."

Hermione nodded unhappily. "We need to take care of those vampire nests, and anything else we can move away from the Hogwarts grounds."

Ron said, "Hermione, in case you hadn't noticed, there's only four of us. And we have something else we have to do first."

Hermione said, "I can count, you know. And I don't think we'll be able to find all the Horcruxes just one, two, three, and be done with it. I think it's going to take time and lots of research, and possibly lots of exploration."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
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Chapter 22 In the Midst of the Garden

The next morning, Ginny was again surprised when Hermione wanted to play Quidditch. Her mum was all for it, assuming everyone did hours of chores first. Even Fred and George had to apparate home and help out, if they wanted to play Quidditch with Harry later.

And so, after lunch, the six of them hiked out to the meadow with their brooms. As soon as Hermione thought they were out of sight, she said, "Go ahead and start without me. I have to run a couple errands." She pulled out her wand and disappeared.

Ron grumbled, "Oh. So that was why she was so keen on playing today."

Fred smirked, "So let's make her one of the Keepers for the day."

George gave an identical smirk. "With Ginny on the other team."

Ron cleared his throat in as much of a threat as Ginny had ever heard Ron give the twins.

"Oh! does Ickle Ronnikins-

"-want to play Keeper against Ickle Sister?"

There was a pop behind Ginny, and Hermione reappeared. Breathlessly, she said, "Did anyone notice I was gone?"

Ginny noticed that Hermione had what looked like two or three newspapers hidden behind her back. It couldn't be the Daily Prophet, since Hermione still had a paid subscription that arrived every morning by owl. And Ginny couldn't make herself believe that Hermione would willingly read The Quibbler, no matter what. She figured Hermione had snuck off to a Muggle town and picked up some Muggle newspapers.

Harry said, "No one down at the house did."

Hermione looked down at the Burrow. "Can you play two on three while I sneak off? I want to go to a couple Muggle libraries that have internet connections, and see if they have more information on dead bodies. Or missing people. Or girls whose last name is Summers who died or disappeared in California on the day when that Hellmouth closed."

"Missing people?" Ginny checked.

Hermione nodded. "It would be a lot smarter for the vampires to kill people and turn them, then bury the bodies yourself in a forest or some other remote area. Maybe your own backyard or basement. You could let them rise without letting the bodies be found by the police and then buried in the cemetery. You could build up a much bigger army of vampires before anyone figured out what was going on. You could take hundreds of homeless people or prostitutes or runaways and turn them into your own vampire army before anyone even realized they were gone."

Ron said, "Hermione, have I ever mentioned that I'm very, very glad you're on our side?"

George said, "You'd be one scary vampire-"

Fred said, "-without even mentioning the whole vampire with magical powers problem."

Ginny groaned, "Ugh. All I need is a magical duel with a vampire wizard."

Harry wondered, "Would Unforgivables even work on a vampire?"

Hermione stopped and thought it over. "I don't know. They're already dead, so the Avada Kedavra might be useless. They're magical creatures and very strong, so the Cruciatus Curse might not do much, if anything. And I have no idea if the Imperius Curse would have anything to affect. I wonder if there's any books on the subject..."

"Are we going to play or not?" asked one of the twins.

Hermione pulled herself out of her thoughts. "Oh. Right. You five play, while I go do research." And she disappeared again.

Ron said, "Right. Harry and Ginny against the three of us, with one of us getting Harry's Firebolt." He looked at the twins and said, "And we take turns playing Keeper. We change after every five goals they score." He looked at Harry and said, "First team to 300."

Harry took Ginny aside. "I say we play as two Chasers and no Keeper. If we can keep them from moving the quaffle down the field, they won't get all that many shots on goal anyway."

Ginny eavesdropped on the other team and said, "They're going to play two Chasers and a Keeper, and one of the Chasers has the Firebolt. I think that means they're always going to get some shots on goal."

Harry nodded. "But if they're on my Firebolt, we can't defend the goal very well on these old Cleansweeps anyway, so we might as well let them take the shot."

She gave Harry a kiss on the cheek. "And if I beat up Fred and George enough with the quaffle, they won't be doing all that well as Chasers."

He grinned naughtily.

The game was surprisingly even. She was the best Chaser on the field, but Harry was a decent second. He was better than her at flying and intercepting the opposing Chasers, but she was definitely better at throwing the quaffle. The other team had the Firebolt as their big advantage, so they got a number of easy shots on goal. And she noticed that Ron was better than either of the twins as Keeper.

Hermione apparated under one of the trees not long before Ginny won the match 300 to 240, with a shot that ricocheted off Fred's head through the goal.

Ginny flew right over to Hermione and asked, "Did you find out about the Golden Slayer?"

Hermione sadly shook her head. "No. All we really have is a last name. A really common last name. I looked through the obituaries for that week in as many California papers as I could, for a blonde girl around twenty with the last name Summers. No luck. And there's no way to track anyone down by a vampire nickname. And it makes no sense that there's two Slayers! I've got to find a book on the Slayer line."

The rest of them clustered around Hermione and Ginny, the twins complaining about Ginny's aim. "Next time, I want a Shield Charm."

"A big Shield Charm."

"Definitely a full-body Shield Charm."

"And a helmet."

Ron rolled his eyes and ignored them, even though he still had a bloody nose. And a swollen left hand from one of Ginny's shots he had blocked without using a Keeper's glove.

Harry said, "Maybe next time, we could play four on two. With three Chasers, you ought to have more of an advantage."

Hermione looked at the bruised Weasley boys, and winced at the idea. She stepped over to Ron, whispered episkey to fix his nose, and made him let her examine his hand. "I've got a potion that will take care of the swelling, and I know you have a little tub of bruise cream up in your room."

"And what about us?" the twins asked in unison.

She said, "If you're good boys, we'll let you come with us on our adventure tonight."

They looked at each other and instantly said, "We can be good."

Fred asked, "Can you tell us what we're doing?"

Hermione looked at Ginny. Ginny said, "We're going to track down a vampire nest, squeeze some information out of some deadly vampires, and then wipe them out."

"Poor, poor vampires," George kidded.

Ron said, "They're close by, because Voldemort wants to wipe out the Burrow in a vampire slaughter."

"Those evil vampires-

"-have got to go."

Harry explained, "Voldemort figured out we have a Vampire Slayer, but he doesn't know she's a witch. He's trying to build some vampire armies to keep her too busy to help me, and simultaneously wipe out some Order strongholds with strong wards. Here, probably Hogwarts and Number 12 Grimmauld Place, and we think Bones Manor is on the list."

The twins stared at Hermione in awe. "You interrogated Kingsley, right in front of mum, and no one spotted it!" They both bowed. "We're not worthy!"

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Tonight, get a broom each, apparate to Ottery St. Catchpole, use a Disillusionment Charm so you can't be seen, and meet us at midnight by the weathervane on top of the town hall."

"And how are you-

"-going to get past mum's alarm spells?"

Hermione just gave them a smug smile.

They said together, "We really aren't worthy!"

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 08 Jan 2012 08:20:36 GMT  
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Chapter 23 The Tree of Knowledge

Ginny looked up from her preparations when her bedroom door opened. Harry and Ron slipped in as quietly as they could, even though she could hear them coming down the stairs.

This time, she was wearing a special long-sleeved blouse and long pants that Hermione had cast Anti-Ripping Charms on. Maybe they would hold up better. She had her hair back in a French braid so it would be harder for someone to grab her hair. Those dreams where a vampire grabbed the Slayer by her hair from behind and sunk his fangs into her neck? Brrr.

Hermione handed her a wide choker collar and a pair of driving gloves. She quickly fastened the

plastic collar about her neck and tugged the gloves on.

"What's with the gloves and the neck thing?" Ron whispered.

Hermione smiled wickedly. "Surprises for vampires. The gloves have a Hardening Charm on them so Ginny can hit harder without splitting her knuckles open again, or breaking her hand. And the collar has an inner lining of cotton batting soaked in holy water. If a vampire tries biting her, he's going to get a nasty surprise."

"Where'd you get the holy water?" Harry asked.

Hermione frowned. "Don't ask." Ginny thought that meant Hermione had snitched some from a Muggle church. Hermione was pretty uncomfortable about doing things like that. Sometimes Ginny suspected that Hermione must have been worse than Percy when she was a Firstie, back before Ron and Harry loosened her up a bit.

Ron asked, "So would it work if Ginny poured a bucket of holy water all over her head and her clothes before she fought a vampire? Every time the vampire hit her or grabbed her, he'd get burned, right?"

Ginny frowned, "But then I'd be sopping wet all the time. I'd rather just have Hermione as my backup."

Hermione added, "Any vampire who can beat up a Slayer probably is old enough and mystical enough to handle holy water with just a few minor burns. So it's not exactly a panacea."

"What about holy water in a water balloon?" Harry asked.

Hermione sighed. "I tried that. Holy water stops being holy if you use it for sacrilegious purposes. Putting it in a water balloon or a squirtgun seems to destroy the blessing on the water."

Ron asked, "So, what about the holy water in the collar?"

Hermione shrugged, "I can't tell yet if it will work. And I'm really hoping we never have to find out the hard way."

"Eww," Harry winced as he thought about some of the ways Ginny could end up having that collar 'tested'.

Ron rubbed his hands together, clearly not wanting to think about where the conversation was going. "So. We ready to meet up with Gred and Forge?"

Hermione nodded. She pointed at the four broomsticks standing beside the window. "I've got the broomsticks. I'll do Disillusionment Charms on us three, and Ginny will wear Harry's cloak. I already turned off the alarms on the window." She glanced at her watch. "If we leave in four minutes, we should get to the top of the town hall right on time."

Ron asked, "Are there more bodies buried that are going to rise tonight?"

Hermione nodded. "I know which cemetery, so we'll be ready. I just can't believe how stupid the reporters are. And the Muggle policemen! I found three deaths listed in the newspapers as barbecue fork accidents. Barbecue fork accidents? To the neck? That are fatal? How would that even be possible?"

"Maybe it's extreme grilling," Ron snickered.

She rolled her eyes and said, "And I found some useful information on the computer. Alcester in the West Midlands has had a surprising number of recent violent deaths and disappearances that are being attributed to 'gang violence' in supposed quiet country towns. But I'm sure Bones Manor is near there. These are probably more vampire killings."

Ron asked, "Hermione, do you know where every Hogwarts student lives?"

Hermione admitted, "Umm... Just my friends. And members of the D.A. And a number of our enemies, like Malfoy and Crabbe and Goyle. And Millicent Bulstrode. I still haven't found out where Parkinson Manor is, since it's Unplottable and warded. And I don't know exactly where Malfoy Manor is, just the general area."

Not for the first time, Ginny decided Hermione had to be a lot smarter than Voldemort, even if Riddle had spent decades learning dark arts that Hermione didn't know. Not that Hermione couldn't learn them, just that she hadn't bothered to try. After all, Hermione learned how to brew Polyjuice Potion in her second year.

Hermione looked at her watch and said, "It's time." She waved her wand at the window, and it opened for her. Then she mounted her broom and carefully slid out through the opening.

The three Quidditch players mounted their brooms and flew out a lot faster. Hermione cast Disillusionment Charms on herself, Ron, and Harry, while Ginny wrapped Harry's cloak of invisibility around herself. They headed off toward Ottery St. Catchpole as a group. Mostly. Harry had insisted on taking his Firebolt so he kept speeding ahead of them every time his attention strayed.

They arrived at the weathervane atop the city hall just as two hard-to-see broomsticks flew toward them.

"Well there's something you don't see everyday."

"Four brooms flying all by themselves with a pair of legs hanging off one."

Ginny couldn't be sure, but Ron sure sounded like he was rolling his eyes. "And would someone remind me why Hermione invited them?"

Hermione said, "Everyone follow me. I mean, follow my broom. And stay close, so no one gets lost. We're going to try to do this without Harry having to do any magic, because he still has the Trace on him."

Ron said, "So when we get to the cemetery, we count the vampires. I take the first one, Fred the second, George the third, Hermione the fourth, and Ginny the fifth. If they have that many. If they have more, we may have to use Harry too."

Hermione said, "The last time, some of them had weapons and tools. So first, we'll go in order and accio everything out of their hands. Then we'll incendio all but two and let them run off to their nest. We'll follow on brooms, with Harry in the lead because he has the fastest broom. Everyone else stick with me, and if Harry gets too far ahead, I'll do a locator spell so we can follow him."

Ginny said, "Once we find the nest, we'll have to do reconnaissance and figure out how many there are, and what ways in and out they have."

"Got you-

"-little sis."

If she hadn't known how much they had practiced to get their little routines down, she would have been a lot more impressed. But she'd seen them doing this since she was old enough to crawl into their room when they didn't want her to come in.

Hermione said, "Follow my broom. Stay close enough you can see it, but not so close you'll crash into anyone."

Ron said, "Ginny and Harry behind Hermione. The twins right behind them. I'll be at the rear."

"As usual!" Fred and George laughed simultaneously.

They followed Hermione to the cemetery. She wasn't flying as fast as the Cleansweeps could go, but it wasn't that far to the next town.

As soon as they reached the cemetery, Hermione moved to the middle of the plots and whispered, "Everyone keep a lookout for any movement coming in. And no noise. Vampires have good hearing."

Ginny drifted to a couple feet above the ground, and flew over the newly dug graves. Ugh. Two of them were going to be rising soon. She could feel it in her gut. She rose to about thirty feet over the second grave, and waited impatiently for the vampires to come help their child dig its way out.

Ginny really wanted to beat the vampires to a pulp and then stake them, but Hermione had other plans. She knew it was the Slayer in her that wanted to hunt and kill those monsters, so she tried to stay calm and controlled.

It was harder than it sounded. After a couple minutes, she was gripping the broomstick hard enough that the wood groaned.

When she felt the vampires coming, she swept toward that side of the cemetery. Ron was already sweeping the rest of the team in that direction. She could see three vampires, two of them with rifles and one with a pickaxe. Fighting that lot by hand would be a problem.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 11 Jan 2012 08:16:30 GMT  
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Chapter 24 Of Good and Evil

Ginny listened as Ron whispered, "You know what to do. On three. One. Two. Three." He, Fred, and George pointed their wands.

"Accio firearm!"

"Accio pickaxe!"

"Accio firearm!"

The vampires looked around frantically as their tools flew up into the sky.

Ron gestured with his wand. "Incendio." The first vampire exploded into dust as soon as the fire

hit him.

The other two vampires panicked and took off running. And they were fast. They were faster than these old Cleansweeps. She could see that Harry was able to keep up with them, silently flying high overhead, but she and the others were slowly left behind.

Hermione hissed, "Stay with me!" Ginny knew Hermione was using a tracking spell so they could follow Harry.

A few minutes later, she saw Harry's Firebolt hovering a hundred feet in the air over a large, apparently abandoned warehouse.

Ron looked down and whispered, "Aren't they supposed to use creepy old castles?"

Hermione frowned, "Ron, that's a stereotype, and it's typical of the kind of prejudiced-

Ginny interrupted before Hermione really got wound up. "I think we need to plan now and explain later."

"Right," Hermione said. She sounded like she was blushing, but no one could tell since she was still under that Disillusionment Charm. "Reconnaissance first, action second. All voiceless spells. No one goes near a vampire except Ginny. And remember, Ginny needs time to get information out of the vampires."

Ron sighed, "Hermione! It's not like you didn't go through your whole plan for what Ginny's supposed to say about four times."

Ginny said, "Six times. She didn't think I had it down well enough."

Hermione said briskly, "Right. Reconnaissance. Ginny flies around the place at several heights and tries to locate our vampires. Harry inspects the roof for access and guards. We each take a side and look for doors, and use Seeking Spells to look for tunnels out of here. We meet back here in three minutes."

Ginny started at the level just below the roof. It didn't take her long to figure out there was a whole wall of offices on the shorter east side. She couldn't see in through the windows, but it looked like the windows had been painted over on the insides so the room would be safe for vampires during the day. There were maybe five or six vampires in the office rooms, and none anywhere else aboveground. However, it felt like there was a small army of vampires down below the warehouse. That would be pretty dangerous if she was a Muggle and didn't have anyone helping her.

She flew upward and had to dodge to avoid Ron, who didn't see her. She'd have to keep in mind that she had eyesight and hearing the others didn't.

Hermione quietly had everyone report. After she explained about the vampires in the offices and under the warehouse, the twins started talking.

"Three garage doors big enough for a Muggle lorry on the south side. A regular door too."

"Two regular doors on the north side, at each end of the building. And a big underground basement area."

Ron asked, "How did you find that?"

"Oh little brother, for shame... The big sub-grade windows in the window wells all along the building."

Ron sounded embarrassed as he said, "Oh."

Hermione said, "No doors on the east side, but there are two tunnels underground there, heading off toward the river. I found them with a Seeking Spell."

Harry finished up, "And there's one regular door on the east side. It looks like it used to open up into a fancy lobby, and it used to have a sign over the door."

Hermione said, "Right. Everybody go back to their side of the building. Put up Shield Charms to block every door and low window, so nothing can get out. I'll block those tunnels about a hundred feet out from the building, so they won't know they can't get out that way. We go in and block the entrances to the basement while we clear the top floors. Then we escort Ginny and let her play Vampire Slayer, just like I explained before. Everyone clear on what to do?"

She received three 'yes' answers and two 'oh definitely my goddess of sneakiness' answers. Ginny couldn't see Hermione's face to tell if she was fed up with the twins yet.

They flew in through a roof exit Harry had spotted, and put up a Shield Charm behind them. Then they flew down into the open warehouse toward the offices. Ginny could see that each row of offices faced a walkway with stairs at either end of the row. There were four stories of offices, and it felt like the vampires were all in the top two floors.

Hermione whispered, "Wood and plaster and papers. No incendio spells up here. Save the fire for down in the basement."

Harry whispered, "Make it reducto and sectumsempra only."

Ron whispered, "Make it silent."

Ginny flew with five shapes that she could only see because she knew what to look for. She hoped the vampires wouldn't notice anything. She pointed them toward three offices. One had a vampire looking out over the warehouse and supposedly guarding the place. She was sure it was Ron's shape that moved to take it, with Harry's shape backing him up. Another office had three vampires playing cards. The twins moved in that direction. The third office was on the top floor. She flew up there with Hermione's shape alongside.

She rushed in as soon as she saw what was in the last office. One vampire enjoying the show, while a second vampire drank blood from a sobbing woman. She staked the first vampire in the back as she leapt off her broom. She punched the second vampire in the back as she threw off Harry's cloak.

"What the bl-" The second vampire wheeled around to see who was interrupting him. She kicked him to the other side of the room. A silent *sectumsempra* from Hermione beheaded the vampire, turning him into dust.

Ginny stared in horror at the woman. Some helpless Muggle shopgirl or secretary, still dressed for work. The woman was probably around thirty, but looked a lot older now that she was nearly bled to death. The woman was horribly pale, with several sets of bitemarks on her neck.

Ginny turned and insisted, "We can't just leave her!"

Hermione tapped herself on the head, and her Disillusionment Charm dissipated. She reached into her pouch and pulled out a pink bottle shaped like a sphere with a cylindrical chimney on top. She knelt by the woman and held the bottle to her lips. "Drink this."

The woman sobbed, "Just let me die!"

Ginny held the woman in a sitting position. "We're not vampires. We're rescuing you. Drink it, it's good for you. Then we'll take you to a hospital."

The woman struggled to drink the potion. Ginny could see how much the woman's neck hurt. Once the woman was finished, Hermione had Ginny lay the woman down on the floor. Hermione flicked her wand, and a pale blue light played over the woman, who seemed to pass out.

Hermione whispered, "It's a sleep spell. The bottle was a blood replenishing potion. We'll put a Shield Charm on the doorway just in case, and then when we're done we'll take her to the hospital. I think I'll have to obliviate her so she won't remember us or the vampires." She caught Ginny's look and frowned, "I don't like using a spell like that, but I can do it. If I don't use it, she'll

tell the police she was attacked by vampires and rescued by a super-strong girl with a stake. They'll either put her in an insane asylum, or they'll send the Watcher's Council after you. Or both. The local police would just chuck her in a loonybin, and the higher-ups might still know enough to alert the right people in Whitehall."

Ginny winced. Just thinking about being taken from her family and knowing they would never remember her again... She shuddered. "She's pretty badly bruised, and she's got all those bitemarks on her neck. How's she going to explain any of that?"

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 15 Jan 2012 08:17:35 GMT  
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Chapter 25 Which Compasseth the Whole Land

"How's she going to explain any of that?"

Hermione muttered, "Barbeque fork. I'll make her think she was assaulted by some gang and they stabbed her with a metal fork to torture her."

Ginny said, "You hate the barbeque fork excuse."

Hermione rolled her eyes and said, "Well... yes. But what else are we going to have her remember?"

Ginny stopped and gasped, "What if... What if all those people are thinking barbeque fork accident because Aurors are obliterating them? What if there are already Ministry people messing around after vampire attacks?"

Hermione grimaced. "I don't think so. They're vampires. We know which department that would be. The Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures. Do you really think the likes of Macnair would care what happened to a bunch of Muggles?"

Ron's voice burst in on them. "What's keeping y... Oh bloody hell. Is she alive?" Ginny looked up and saw a Ron-shaped shimmer in the air where Ron was still under the Disillusionment Charm. Other than the faint edges around Ron's form, all she could see were the front and back of the broomstick, sticking out from underneath him.

Hermione nodded. "We need to take care of the vampires down below, and then drop her off at a

hospital."

Ron checked, "We can't take her first?"

Hermione said, "I wish we could. But we have a small army down in a cramped basement area and we have to keep a couple of them alive. I think we need every one of us. Even Harry. Just in case. I gave her a blood replenishing potion and put her to sleep, so she should be fine until we get back."

Ron gritted his teeth and said, "Fine. But there are times when I don't like you being right."

"Oh Ron! There are plenty of times when I don't like finding out I'm right."

Ron just nodded. At least, it looked like he was nodding. "The basilisk. Professor Lupin being a werewolf. Needing a hex on the sign-up sheet for the D.A. You've been right about a lot of big things."

She groaned, "And I've been wrong about a lot of big things too! I thought the Ministry of Magic would protect Harry... and all of us. I thought Lockhart was... dashing. I thought Quirrell was on our side. I... I really did think Crookshanks had eaten Scabbers, I just didn't think it was fair to blame a cat for being a cat. I believed Professor Moody..."

"Hermione, we all did! Even Dumbledore!"

She frowned again. "That's something I never understood. How was it no one noticed Mad-Eye Moody wasn't acting right? If the headmaster and a dozen other members of the Order and all those Aurors he trained knew him for years and years and years, how did he manage not to ever trip up, and how did he manage to know everything Moody was supposed to know about all of them? There had to be something else going on there."

Ron muttered, "Yeah. Snape. Snape probably told him everything he needed to know about every single person at Hogwarts."

Ginny said, "But if Snape could do that, then Snape could tell Voldemort about everyone too. And then the Death Eaters would have already killed Kingsley and Tonks and Emmeline and all of them."

Hermione looked at the injured woman and said, "Later. We have a vampire nest to clear out, and an intelligence mission to run. You know what to say?"

Ginny sighed at Hermione the same way she did with her mum. "Yes, I do." She pretended she didn't hear Ron snickering.

Hermione ushered them out and redid the Disillusionment Charm on herself before putting up a Shield Charm to protect the woman. She said to the group, "All right. Everyone go out to your side of the building and do Shield Charms on the windows and doors so no one can get in or out. I'll block those two tunnels far enough down that we can let our vampires run for cover and keep them nicely contained. Then we meet in the middle of the warehouse halfway to the ceiling, and Ginny leads us into the basement."

"Roger that, general!" two Disillusioned shapes said as they snapped off almost-invisible salutes.

Ginny listened to Hermione grumbling to herself about the twins as she flew off. Ginny wrapped herself in Harry's cloak once again and then found the entrance to the basement. It was a large metal stairwell that went down into shadowy darkness and would probably clang like a bell if anyone walked on those metal steps. She could feel there were vampires somewhere down there, but not anything really close to her.

In a matter of seconds, all the rest of the group were back, and waiting for her to make the first move. She stuck one arm out from under the cloak and pointed down the stairs, then she flew into the stairwell.

It was dark and spooky. She could feel vampires ahead of her in the basement. If she hadn't been the Slayer, she would have been terrified. Instead, something inside her was urging her forward.

At the base of the stairs, the room opened up into a huge basement area supported by a couple dozen massive concrete columns. She could hear an angry male voice yelling at someone. Maybe the someones who they had chased out of the cemetery.

While the angry vampire who sounded like he was the boss told his minions how he was going to rip their throats out for messing this up, Ginny closed in from behind. There were at least twenty vampires crowded around watching. All but four were standing around watching the other four. Two of the four were kneeling before a little raised platform that had flaming torches mounted at either side. On the platform was the obvious leader, a big angry vamp who was still yelling at the two, and beside the leader was a female vamp in a slutty dress and cheap makeup that made her look like a Muggle prostitute.

Just about the time the head vamp was threatening to stake the two kneeling vampires, Ginny handed Hermione her broomstick and Harry's cloak. She stepped forward with her wand held behind her back and casually said, "I'd be happy to help you with that, if you don't think you're up to it."

Twenty fanged faces spun to confront her.

She looked at the rows of threats, and did just what Hermione had suggested. She waved her empty hand and hissed, "Burn!" A wall of fire rushed from Hermione's wand and destroyed the closest seven vampires. It had to look to the vampires like the flame came out of nowhere.

One of the vampires still standing turned even whiter than he already was. He shrieked, "It's the Red Witch!" And he ran for his life, straight toward one of the tunnels.

"Not the Red Witch!"

"Aaagh! I'm too young to die again!"

"I'm outtahere!"

"Nooooooooo!"

All but four vampires ran for what they assumed was safety. They rushed into the tunnels, only to smash into the magical shields. Once they were bottled up in the tunnels, the twins used a couple more silent Incendio spells to turn them to dust.

Ginny stalked toward the four remaining vampires. The leader stood on his little podium, with his slag girlfriend by his side. The other two vampires were big men who stepped in front of the leader like bodyguards. Ginny glared at them. "Do you want to tell me what you think you're doing here?"

The leader pompously insisted, "Leave now while you still can, Red Witch! I have the protection of Lord Voldemort, the most powerful wizard in the world!"

Ginny had a good idea why they thought she was the Red Witch, since from what she had seen in that crystal ball, the Red Witch looked like she could be one of Ginny's siblings. An older sibling.

She scoffed, "Voldemort? That loser? The guy who's running scared of a sixteen year old kid? You're doomed if you think he can protect you." She stopped and remembered just what Hermione had wanted her to say. "So let me guess. You're supposed to put together a big vampire army for this guy, and then go eat up some wizards? You and the other four groups?"

The slag said, "Three groups."

"Shut up!" snapped the leader.

Ginny lied like Hermione had said to. "Oh, so your boss didn't trust you enough even to tell you how many vampire armies he's working on, huh? Doesn't sound like he's going to leave you

walking around for long after you do his dirty work. You must already be in trouble if you got stuck out here, instead of London or that place up in Scotland."

"How does she know so much?" hissed the girl.

One of the guards hissed back, "She's the Red Witch, stupid!"

The leader stood tall and insisted, "I'm from around here. I know the area. Not like those Londoners. They'd stick out like a sore thumb."

Ginny pretended not to believe him. She scoffed, "Oh, naturally. You probably don't even know how to contact Voldemort and his losers."

He flinched, just a little. "I... I do not need to know that! He sends his Death Eaters to meet us! We don't bow before him!"

She continued pretending to scoff. "Oh, sure. So when's the next scary Death Eater supposed to pop in and give you the secret message?"

"At a time of importance. That is enough for me. And by then, I will have had time to rebuild my army."

Ginny said, "So you don't know how to contact Voldemort, and you don't know when another wizard's going to show up and tell you what to do. That's all I wanted to know."

As soon as she said the last six words, Ron quickly incinerated the two guards while Hermione did a sectumsempra that beheaded the woman.

Ginny slid her wand into a pocket, pulled out a stake, and said to the sole remaining vampire, "Shall we dance?"

The vampire didn't leap at her neck or do something else stupid. He calmly stepped down from the podium and gracefully moved toward her. He put his hands up like those Muggle karate fighters.

Ginny suddenly realized she was in trouble. It looked like this vampire knew how to fight, and she knew she didn't really know Muggle martial arts. All she knew was what she had picked up from her dreams. She basically knew where to hit people to do damage.

Then he moved. He slid forward expertly and struck at her so fast she couldn't get out of the way. He punched at her throat, and she just barely twisted enough that his blow caught her on the collarbone. The blow was so hard that for a second she thought he must have shattered her

bones. Even worse, she could see it was only the start of a combination.

His leg shot out and he tried to kick her knee, but she flexed just enough that he missed. His leg snapped back too fast for her to catch his foot, and then he was spinning and his other foot was flying at her face. She just barely got a hand up in time to brush his foot off to the side, but he was snapping his leg back too fast to grab that foot. She managed to get a couple fingers on his shoe, but that wasn't good enough to do more than damage the leather upper.

And he was still moving. Why wasn't he stopping to gloat or something? She was trying to back up, but he was still closing on her.

"Help her!" Hermione squealed.

She blocked four lightning-fast punches and some kind of grab at her forearm that nearly got her.

"Can't get a clean shot!"

A kick at her stomach that she blocked, and another kick with the same leg that she didn't. It caught her in the ribs and sent her flying. She crashed into one of the concrete columns and fell heavily to the floor. She hoped she hadn't just broken three or four ribs.

"They're too bloody fast!"

She landed on her hands and saw he was already closing on her. She cartwheeled away from the vampire, but he was too fast. He was already nearly on top of her, kicking her in the stomach while she was still cartwheeling, and knocking her onto her back.

"Do something!" Hermione screeched.

And then the vampire grabbed her, twisting her arm and rolling her onto her stomach while forcing one arm up between her shoulderblades. She tried kicking him from her hopeless position, and he ignored the feeble try. She smelled him as he opened his mouth and bent his head to sink his fangs into her neck.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 18 Jan 2012 08:34:41 GMT  
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Chapter 26 Thou Shalt Not Eat of It

His mouth was only inches away from her throat. She frantically grabbed her plastic collar with her free hand and ripped it off, slapping it against his cheek. She could feel the water splash on her hand.

He screamed in pain. "You bitch! I'll make you pay for that!"

She could hear his skin searing from the holy water, but he didn't seem to be stopping. He reached for her fingers and...

"Wingardium leviosa!" Ron yelled.

And suddenly it felt like a dragon had been dropped on them. The vampire took the brunt of the force, as something massive crashed onto his back. The massive weight caught him across the back, smashing his head into the concrete beside her throat and momentarily stopping him.

She blinked and turned her head enough to look up. Ron had levitated the entire podium over and dropped it on them. She couldn't breathe. An ordinary human would have been crushed. And probably nothing else in the room would have stopped the vampire still lying on top of her.

"Wingardium leviosa!" Ron said again, and the podium lifted into the air.

"Wingardium leviosa!" Hermione said, and the vampire lifted ten feet off the floor. He began kicking and thrashing wildly, as he realized how much trouble he was in.

"Incendio!" "Sectumsempra!" "Incendio!" "Reducto!"

Ginny flinched as four different spells simultaneously blasted the vampire, and then nasty-tasting dust shimmered through the air onto her prone form.

Then a still-Disillusioned Harry was leaping off his broom and hugging her. "Ginny! Are you all right?"

She groaned a little at his fierce hug. "My ribs."

"Sorry! I'm really sorry."

She felt more than saw as he kissed her on the cheek. That hurt too. "Ouch. I think I better figure out all the places I'm hurt. And..." She fished her wand out of its holster and checked that it at least hadn't been broken. "Finite incantatem." She ended the Disillusionment Charm on Harry. "At least I can see you now. Getting kissed by an invisible Harry is nice, but weird."

Hermione undid her own Disillusionment and knelt down beside Ginny. She started performing some medical charms.

Ginny said, "Those won't work on me, remember?"

Hermione replied, "These aren't healing charms. They're diagnostic spells to see how badly you're hurt. And... they're not working right either!" Ginny almost grinned at Hermione's frustration.

Hermione muttered, "I guess it's a good thing mum made me get first aid trained at the Red Cross."

"What's that?" one of the twins asked.

"Thirst ade? Anything like lemonade?" the other one asked.

"First aid, George," Hermione groaned. "As in first one to assist at an accident. It means I learned how to do some of this without a wand." She carefully felt along Ginny's ribs, letting Ginny groan or gasp when she found a place that was too sore.

Ron gasped, "You mean you can do medical diagnosis spells without a wand? That's... If it was anyone else I'd say it was impossible."

Hermione snorted. "It's medical diagnosis and treatment the Muggle way. No wand. No spells."

Ginny groaned again as Hermione pressed on an especially tender spot a couple inches under her right armpit. She said, "Don't tell dad. You know what he'd be like."

George gave it his best impression of their dad. "Amazing what these Muggles think of!"

Then Fred did his impression of their dad. "Does it involve plugs?"

"I say, can you explain it to me?"

"Do you need a fellytone?"

"Is it like... aeroplanes?"

They just kept going. Finally Ginny couldn't take it any more and she starting laughing, which really hurt.

Hermione helped her to her feet and frowned, "I don't think anything's broken, but you may have a

couple cracked ribs. And you're going to have some lovely bruises by tomorrow."

Harry said, "Sounds like an excellent time to find out if that bruise cream works on Slayers."

Hermione nodded. "I'm still not sure whether Madam Pomfrey's potion helped with Ginny's calf, so we really ought to try this and find out. If potions work on Slayers even if it's just some potions we need to watch out for that. Anyone could slip something into your food and poison you."

"Or turn your hair blue!" Fred snickered.

"Or make you burp up soap bubbles," George suggested.

"Or-"

Harry said, "Or maybe you ought to remember she can throw a quaffle hard enough to knock you out at a hundred paces."

"Ooh, he's threatening us," Fred said.

"Maybe he likes you," George added.

Hermione said, "Maybe we should get home instead of putting up with this. I think Ginny's going to be too sore to do any Slaying for a couple days."

"A couple days!" Ron exploded. "I was afraid she'd end up in St. Mungo's for a month!"

Ginny stared at him, "Well then, why didn't you help sooner?"

Ron stared back at her like she was mental. "Sooner? Are you taking the micky? That whole fight was just a blur, and I helped as soon as I could."

Harry said, "The whole thing until Ron dropped the podium on you couldn't have been more than seven or eight seconds."

Ginny just stared at him, because it felt to her like it had lasted a couple minutes.

George admitted, "I couldn't get a shot in without risking hitting you too. Do you have any idea how fast you two were moving?"

Hermione said, "I was afraid to try anything like a reducto. If it could behead a vampire, I didn't want to find out the hard way if it might hurt you too."

Ginny pursed her lips unhappily. "At least the collar worked out."

Hermione sighed, "Barely. The holy water hardly slowed him down. I guess the master vampires really are a lot more dangerous. We'll have to be a lot more careful at the other nests."

Ron gaped at her and groaned, "You mean we have to go through this three more times? I was scared Ginny was going to die!"

Hermione staunchly said, "At least three more times. And the longer we take, the bigger the vampire armies are going to be, and the worse the fights will be."

Ginny tried not to wince.

Hermione started walking around the basement, occasionally scooping stuff off the floor. She said, "Fred? George? You can disappear. We'll see you tomorrow. We've got a victim to get to the nearest hospital, and then we'll apparate back to the Burrow."

It turned out to be just that easy. Hermione apparated with the still-sleeping woman over to the town clinic, which she had already located on a Muggle map of the area. She undid the sleeping charm and let the woman stagger into the clinic under her own power. She was back at the warehouse in under five minutes.

Hermione packed their brooms and Harry's cloak into her pouch. She said, "That went well. Now I'll side-along apparate Harry, and Ron will take Ginny. We'll meet in the meadow under the oak."

Ginny blinked. Ron was doing better at apparition. They were right under the oak, only thirty feet or so from Hermione and Harry. Ginny led him through the darkness, whispering, "Psst! It's us! Behind you!"

It was a good thing she could see in the dark, or else Hermione and Ron would have had to start doing lumos spells, and that would have been visible from her parents' window. Once she led Ron over, and Hermione stopped complaining about how dark it was under the oak tree, they got on their broomsticks and flew through Ginny's open window into her room. Ginny and Hermione put things away and repaired the alarm charms for the window, while Ron fetched a little pot of Fred and George's bruise cream.

While Ginny applied lots of the bruise cream to her face and arms, she remembered to ask Hermione, "What were you picking up back there in the basement?"

"Vampire dust."

Ginny asked with a wrinkled brow, "Why?"

Hermione smiled wickedly. "Locator spells."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 22 Jan 2012 08:20:57 GMT  
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Chapter 27 In the Day

As Ginny carefully got ready the next morning, she checked with Hermione again. They still thought the three other vampire groups were probably aimed just where they first figured. Bones Manor, Number 12 Grimmauld Place, and Hogsmeade. But they both figured that Ginny needed a couple days to heal up. Her bruises were barely noticeable on her face and hands and arms, thanks to all that bruise cream, but her ribs were still really sore and one arm still ached.

When she complained, Hermione pointed out, "Remember. An ordinary girl would have a crushed ribcage with crushed internal organs to go with it, a fractured cheekbone and jaw, half a dozen concussions, broken arms, broken hands, a crushed knee... Oh, and she'd be dead about ten times over, and have no blood left in her body."

Ginny pouted, "I still feel like I should have done better. Don't Vampire Slayers do this sort of thing every night?"

Hermione said, "Not against Master Vampires. They're rare, and they're really dangerous, and they're smart enough to avoid Slayers until they're ready. According to what I could find out, a Vampire Slayer is a successful one if she kills even one Master."

"Hmm. Then what about what that vampire told me about 'Summers'? Maybe she's the Golden Slayer that girl vampire told me about the first night. How many Master Vampires would there be in the Order of Aurelius from The Master on down? And he said Kakistos and Dracula, and the Order of Teraka. And a hellgod and the Dark Witch, I think."

Hermione said, "We covered the Order of Aurelius in third year, and I know I did the extra reading on it. Let's see... That would mean Heinrich Nest, the lady Darla, Angelus, Drusilla the Seer, William the Bloody... I think that's all the master vampires in that part of the line. Well, that's all I can recall. The Order of Teraka is an order of supernatural assassins, I don't know if master vampires would work for them but I can research them. So... that would mean this Summers got at least seven master vampires, maybe more. That seems pretty hard to believe."

Ginny shrugged, ignoring the pain from her ribs. "Well, that girl vampire was scared enough of her to leave the whole country, so maybe she's really dangerous." She couldn't help thinking about what the centaur had said. The daughters of Artemis are a threat to all magical beings. They must hunt, and the hunted cannot stop them.

Was that what she would become? If she didn't die soon, would she become some sort of monstrous hunter that nothing was safe from?

She had plenty of distractions from her dark thoughts that day, as her mum had a dozen tasks for her, and she didn't dare let on that her ribs and her arm hurt. The worst tasks were cleaning the ovens and checking the drains, but her mum gave those jobs to Fred and George, oddly enough.

Although it might have been because Hermione 'casually' mentioned at breakfast while her mum was still in the room that the twins were teasing Ron about not having to do so much housework since they weren't living at home anymore. Ginny knew the twins were relentless about their pranks, but Hermione was smarter.

After lunch they all trekked out to the meadow for some Quidditch. But the twins had to get back to their business, so Hermione decided that DADA practice would be a better use of their time. Everyone else was okay with that.

Harry was really good at teaching, even if he wasn't allowed to perform the spells himself until his birthday. So she worked on new spells, and she worked on silent wandwork. Naturally, the first spell Harry had her doing silently was Expelliarmus. Everyone knew it was his favorite. Still, when she finally got it to work, she realized she was a lot faster when she didn't need to say five syllables out loud.

She worked with Harry and Ron, trying to teach them to dodge magical attacks by jumping or diving to the side. Hermione didn't like that part, especially the part where she was hitting the ground and getting bruised. So Hermione was practicing what Harry had seen Voldemort do last year: dueling while apparating around your opponent.

As Ginny watched Hermione and Ron practice dueling, with Hermione apparating and Ron diving out of the way of attacks, Ginny could see that apparating in the middle of a duel wasn't as effective as she expected. First, Ginny could see Hermione make the wand movement and turn her body to disappear, so she knew what Hermione was going to do. And second, Ginny could hear the noise in the spot where Hermione apparated to. Ron could too, so he was whirling to face the noise and diving to the ground before Hermione had a chance to orient herself and fire off a hex at Ron.

Finally, Harry said, "When Professor Dumbledore apparated into a place that he thought might be dangerous, he did a spell that basically launched a wide-area attack all around the spot he was

apparating to. But he never taught me the spell."

Hermione pursed her lips and said, "Maybe I can look up what that kind of spell requires."

Ron brushed grass and dirt off his clothes and said, "At least we're learning how to prepare when someone's apparating in to attack us."

Hermione did a quick tergeo to get the grass stains off Ron's shirt and jeans, then said, "And I think if I'm going to try apparating in a duel like that, I should first use a spell that makes a blast so loud my opponent won't be able to hear me apparate in."

Harry asked, "Would a muffliato do the trick?"

Hermione shook her head no. "I tried it, but the spell silences where I'm standing, not where I'm going."

Ron said, "Then how about a spell that makes a loud explosion and also makes a light bright enough your opponent can't spot you when you disapparate?"

Harry laughed, "Sounds like one of Fred and George's fireworks."

They stopped for a while, after that. Ron and Hermione walked across the meadow together, while Ginny sat with Harry under the big oak tree. They just held hands and talked, but it helped. Knowing about the other, just being able to talk with another Chosen One. They had someone to talk to. Someone who really understood what they were going through.

The next morning, before her dad even left for work, there was an owl from the Ministry. Her mum grinned, "Ginny! It's your O.W.L.s!"

Ron grimaced, "And you didn't have psychos attacking you in the middle of your exams, so you ought to have good scores." She stuck out her tongue at him.

Still, she was surprised when she looked at the parchment and saw her grades.

Astronomy E  
Care of Magical Creatures E  
Charms E  
Defense Against the Dark Arts O  
Divination O  
Herbology E

History of Magic A  
Muggle Studies E  
Potions E  
Transfiguration E

She stared at the list for long seconds. "Merlin's beard!"

Harry looked at it and hugged her. "Ginny, that's terrific!"

Ron looked over her shoulder and said, "Yeah. That's nearly as good as Bill. And you know, Percy got an Outstanding in History of Magic... and at least six or seven other classes."

She couldn't help blushing. She looked at the floor and said, "It was Hermione. She gave me all her notes, and years of O.W.L. exams, with all her answers worked out."

Ron smiled, "And all those D.A. lessons with Harry didn't hurt."

Her dad hugged her and told her how proud he was of her before he rushed off to work. But Ginny knew the second her mum saw that 'O' in Divination. Her mum gasped and suddenly burst into tears again.

Her mum was so upset that day she hardly remembered to keep them all separated with housework and yardwork. And once they had a room ready for the Delacours, and they had prepared beds for Bill and Gabrielle they had no trouble getting permission to go up to the meadow even though they practiced wandwork instead of playing Quidditch. Ginny's ribs were still too sore to do sprints back and forth, so she knew she wasn't ready for more Slaying. Still, her body seemed to know she needed the rest, because she had no trouble settling down that night and getting ready for bed.

It was just as well, because Gabrielle was staying in her room with her and Hermione, and there was no way they could hide it from her if they were sneaking out in the middle of the night to go hunt more vampires. So they chatted in her room about the wedding. Gabrielle was a lot nicer than Ginny expected, even if the little part-veela still thought Harry was 'tres beau'. Ginny didn't know a lot of French, but she knew what that meant.

Ginny settled herself in her bed and dozed off, telling herself that if Gabrielle tried to ensnare Harry, someone was going to end up with a broken nose and two black eyes.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller

## Chapter 28 Thou Eatest Thereof

The next morning, when Ginny and Hermione came down to the kitchen with Gabrielle, her mum put them to work again. The Delacours were already eating, and so was Bill. Her mum was cooking breakfast for everyone, and the table was full. What wasn't taken up with people's plates was serving dishes or the pile of presents for Harry. Ginny winced a little bit when she saw it.

Ron waited until everyone else had eaten and was out of the kitchen before he revealed that Harry had another dream about Voldemort. Harry had been saying "Gregorovitch" in his sleep. Harry frowned at him, and Hermione fussed quite a bit at Harry for letting Voldemort into his mind.

Harry checked to make sure Mrs. Weasley wasn't nearby, and finally admitted, "All I remember is he was walking into a little town in a deep valley with huge mountains around it. It didn't look like anywhere in Britain."

Hermione was angry at Harry for not working on his Occlumency, but Ron got her sidetracked trying to think of who 'Gregorovitch' could be. And by refusing to tell her what he got Harry for a birthday present.

Ginny watched as Harry opened his birthday presents with an astonished glee that made her think the Dursleys hadn't ever done this for him. She felt like apparating right over to Number 4 Privet Drive and breaking some things. Not that she was good enough at apparition to risk it yet. And the Dursleys weren't there anymore.

Mum gave Harry a watch. Uncle Fabian's watch. Ginny knew how much that meant to her mum. She knew her mum saw Harry as another son, and she wondered if her mum was already hoping for another wedding someday. Hermione gave Harry a brand new Sneakoscope that probably cost more than all the Weasley presents combined. Ron still wouldn't tell them what he had given Harry, so Ginny was pretty sure it wasn't Quidditch gear. Then Bill and Fleur gave him an enchanted razor, the Delacours gave him a big box of chocolates, and the twins gave him a huge box of their own merchandise.

The problem was simple. Ginny didn't know what to get Harry for a present. Hermione said a book, but Ginny had known before she asked that Hermione would say a book. Anyway, it wasn't as if mum would let her go to Diagon Alley unsupervised and buy Harry something. And she knew the kinds of books she'd like to buy for Harry were more than she could afford. After all, she had seen the fancy Defense Against the Dark Arts books he already had as presents from before.

Ron said Quidditch supplies. That was stupid. All right, it was as good an idea as anything she

had come up with, but there was no way she was buying Harry something that anyone else might get him for a gift. Fred and George had several things from the Zonko's gift list that they thought would be fun, except she knew they were going to give him something that would be a lot better than anything from Zonko's that she could afford.

Her mum said she should get Harry some new socks. What? What in Merlin's name was mum thinking? What could be more dull and uninteresting than socks? Ginny knew what she wanted to give him for a birthday present, but she was underage and her mum would have a fit. Oh. Maybe her mum knew just what Ginny wanted to give Harry and was trying to make sure that didn't happen. Still... socks?

The other sorts of things she wanted to get for him, like a real dragonhide jacket, were so far out of her price range it was laughable. So she helped her mum cook his birthday dinner for him. She was unhappy that this was the best she could manage. How did Ron cope, when Harry was going to be Lord Potter and could afford a Firebolt and Hermione's parents were so well off in the Muggle world that she always had the newest books and clothes and... and...

Ginny stared down at her hand-me-down robe with its hem that was frayed despite years of reparo spells. She thought about her second-hand wand and her third-hand dress robes, and she knew what she was feeling. She was ashamed. It wasn't the first time she'd felt ashamed of being poor. The girls at school who were rolling in Galleons went out of their way to rub it in, especially the Slytherins.

She told herself it didn't matter. That it was far more important that her parents loved her and cared about the right things. That it was much better being a Weasley than being an evil, deranged bigot like cousin Bellatrix and cousin Narcissa. That it was much better being a Weasley than being a psychopathic murderess like Blaise Zabini's mother.

Then she remembered she probably wouldn't live long enough to buy clothes again. Even if she didn't die helping Harry on his mission, she was the Vampire Slayer. The Chosen One. The girl who fought monsters every night until she died a horrible death and some other unfortunate girl was cursed with her powers.

"Ginny? Ginny? Watch what you're doing with those potatoes, dear."

She glanced up at her mother and saw she had utterly failed to peel the potatoes. Instead, she had crushed them into paste.

Her mother patted her on the shoulder and said, "We'll just have mashed potatoes instead."

"Sorry, mum."

Her mum stared at her for long seconds and gently asked, "Is there something you want to tell me, dear? Something other than your problem with a simple Peeling Charm?"

But she couldn't talk to her mother about any of this. Not about how poor they were. Not about how she felt about being poor, and how ashamed of herself she felt for feeling embarrassed. Not about how stupid her present for Harry was. Not about how she was probably going to die within a matter of weeks. That farmgirl had been powerful enough to fight giants, and she only lived for seven weeks after she became the Vampire Slayer. "No mum, I'm fine," she lied.

Her mum looked at her oddly and finally said, "Then why don't you check the ovens? The pieces of the cake should be almost done by now."

It was funny. Not funny hilarious, but funny in a weird way. Normally, she never worried about the cooking. The boys would eat anything. Ron and the twins would probably eat roast basilisk if you just told them it was chicken. But she was nearly panicking over this dinner. It was for Harry. It was Harry's seventeenth birthday, and it was her present to him. She desperately wanted it to be so perfect that he'd always remember it as the best meal he ever ate. She was so nervous and fidgety that finally her mother insisted on levitating the cake out to the table herself, so Ginny didn't drop it or accidentally hurl it all the way into the meadow.

Harry stared at the huge cake in the shape of a floating Snitch, and his mouth dropped open.

Her mum said in a manner that wasn't as casual as she thought, "Ginny baked it and decorated it."

"OOOOOOH!" said the twins, in the most annoying way possible. They were so lucky the table was still covered in plates and flatware, so she couldn't pick it up and hit them with it. Ginny still turned as red as her hair.

Ron elbowed Harry and tilted his head. Ron was giving Harry advice?

Harry cleared his throat and looked at her. "I bet it tastes as great as it looks."

"OOOOOOOH!" smirked both twins. "He likes it!"

She was going to cream both of them tomorrow in Quidditch. Even if they were on her team. She was going to take that quaffle and throw it so hard they'd-

But before the twins could really make her lose her temper, something worse happened.

## Chapter 29 It Is Not Good

At first, she was hoping it was a good thing. The Minister came home with her dad. She had only met Mister Scrimgeour a couple times, once when he and a couple other department heads had dinner with her dad. She was hoping the Minister's visit would be a good thing. She was hoping that he would be kind to Harry, and sympathetic, and maybe even listen to what Harry and Hermione had to say. But what in Harry's life was ever good, or kind, or sympathetic?

The Minister took Harry and Ron and Hermione into the house, leaving the rest of them out in the garden. She got up from the table despite her mum's protests, and silently moved into the kitchen so she could eavesdrop. She stood there in the kitchen doorway and listened to it. To everything. To the way Rufus Scrimgeour treated them. To the way he talked to Harry, accusing him of things just because Albus Dumbledore left him things in his will. She would have charged in and knocked Scrimgeour across the room if her mum hadn't come into the house and grabbed her by the shoulder. It would have been so easy to shrug that hand off her shoulder, but it was her mum. And her dad was right, she couldn't let the Ministry know she had the powers of the Vampire Slayer. Instead, she had to let her dad step in and try to fix things.

After Rufus Scrimgeour left, she got to see what Professor Dumbledore left them. She had to agree with Hermione. They didn't make any sense at all. Ron got a Deluminator, which looked like a really rare, one-of-a-kind magical device. It would probably cost Galleons and Galleons. But why would Ron need it? All it did was snatch lights away and put them back. Were they going to have to go someplace dark? They had wands and the lumos spell for that. Were they going to have to go somewhere well-lit? It was easy to put out lights too. Maybe she just wasn't as smart as Albus Dumbledore, so she couldn't see it.

Hermione got a book. Naturally. But it was a book everyone had! Well, everyone in the Wizarding world had a copy of "The Tales of Beedle the Bard" to read to their children. She had an old family copy on her shelf in her room. It once belonged to her dad's grandmother. And Ron probably still had Uncle Fabian's old copy up in his room. Why would Professor Dumbledore leave Hermione a book? A book that everybody had? Was there a secret code in it so complicated that the entire Ministry couldn't figure it out in a month, but Hermione could?

All right, Hermione could probably figure out anything. Even a secret message so clever a team of Ministry wizards couldn't figure it out in a month. But still, if there was a secret message in it, why would the Ministry let Hermione have it at all? It wasn't like they wouldn't try every possible way to reveal a secret message, even if it was invisible.

And Harry was given his first Snitch. Ginny couldn't see the point of that one, either. Not until Harry and Hermione explained about the 'flesh memory' of a real Snitch, so the Snitch would 'know' who touched it first in case of a dispute. And this was the Snitch Harry had caught in his mouth. Harry touched it to his lips, and words formed on it... I open at the close. What was that supposed to mean?

Hermione pointed out, "It has to be important if Professor Dumbledore went to all the trouble of putting a spell like that on it. He had to really want to make sure no one but Harry saw the message."

Ron complained, "Then why couldn't he make the bloody message so we'd understand it?"

"That's a very good question, Ron," Hermione muttered as she thought it over. "Maybe... maybe it's something we're not supposed to see until we get more information, or we learn more later on. Maybe it's like the quest for the Holy Grail."

"The what?" Ron checked.

Hermione rolled her eyes and sighed. "You know all about Merlin, but you don't know anything about King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. Do you?"

What? Ginny looked at Ron in confusion. It was pretty obvious he had no idea either. Even Harry didn't, and he'd been raised by Muggles. But Hermione patiently explained about the knights and the quest. It still didn't really explain why the message had to be more complicated than making Polyjuice Potion. Maybe the problem was that Dumbledore and Hermione were so much smarter than everyone else that it looked easy to them.

Harry explained why he thought Dumbledore had tried to leave him the sword of Godric Gryffindor, even if it wasn't Dumbledore's to give away. The sword was enchanted to absorb the powers of those it vanquished. So now it would be able to destroy Horcruxes as effectively as the venom of the basilisk it had slain. She still didn't like thinking about that cursed diary from her second year really being a Horcrux, but it explained how the thing was so intelligent and diabolical: it had a piece of Voldemort's soul in it.

Hermione nodded and said, "That makes sense. There are very few things magically powerful enough to destroy a Horcrux, and the things that are magically destructive enough to work are too dangerous to carry around with us. Basilisk venom and Fiendfyre are the two I've been able to find that are the least risky, and they're really dangerous."

"Fiendfyre?" Harry wondered.

Hermione said, "Yes. Fiendfyre. It's very dark magic. It's like a living inferno. It's horribly

dangerous, and it's terribly hard to control, and it's terribly hard to stop once it gets started. I don't want to attempt it unless we absolutely have no other choice, because we could end up burning down the whole country before enough wizards could get together to put it out."

Ginny winced, "That's the least risky?"

Ron groaned, "Ugh, that's a cure that sounds worse than the disease."

"Basilisk venom isn't exactly safe, considering where it comes from, you know," Hermione reminded him. "And the venom off the fangs will gradually eat through pretty much anything you use to capture it, even magical containers, and then it will poison anyone carrying it."

Ron said, "But we could get some basilisk venom if we need it. All we have to do is sneak..." Ron began to look like it wasn't such a good idea after all. "Into the school... past all the wards... and the teachers... and any Aurors they have guarding the place..." He started to look like it was a really bad idea. "And get Harry to open up the bathroom sink so we can get down into the tunnel... and hope the tunnel isn't completely blocked now... and hope Dumbledore and the teachers didn't open the Chamber of Secrets and clean it up... and then we could get some basilisk venom." By the end, he was looking like he'd rather try switching over to Slytherin House.

Hermione just said, "If we have to, we'll give it a go. I'm still hoping we can find another way to destroy these things. I still have about a dozen more books to study."

Then the conversation moved back to Hermione's inheritance. At first, Ginny was surprised that Harry and Hermione hadn't heard of something as well known and beloved as "The Tales of Beedle the Bard". But then she found out there were tons of Muggle children's stories she had never heard of. She smiled fondly, "I always loved 'The Fountain of Fair Fortune' the best."

Ron groaned, "Yeah, and she'd throw a right little temper tantrum if mum read us anything else."

"It was not a temper tantrum! I just... fussed. Some. Maybe a lot." She could feel her face burning with embarrassment as she thought about it. Maybe she really had thrown temper tantrums. Stupid Ron. He didn't really have to tell about her tantrums when they were right in front of Harry!

She complained about it to Hermione the whole time they were getting ready for bed that night.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 01 Feb 2012 08:21:35 GMT

Chapter 30 A Deep Sleep to Fall Upon

She was dancing with Harry under a big white tent. He looked so handsome in dress robes she just wanted to kiss him, even if they were in the middle of everybody. They danced past her mum and dad, who were dancing together and looking way too much like they were really enjoying dancing together, and there was no way she wanted to think about that. They danced past Ron and Hermione who were dancing a little but mainly staring into each other's eyes. Ginny looked into Harry's eyes and started to say something.

But suddenly Kingsley Shacklebolt apparated in, right next to Harry. Everyone started screaming so loudly that Ginny had to cover her ears. He yelled at them. The only words she could pick out were 'Ministry' and 'fallen'. And then Death Eaters were apparating in and firing curses at Harry...

She sat up in her bed, gasping.

Hermione groaned from the bed only feet away. "What? What? You all right?"

Gabrielle rolled over and moaned, "Fleur, arrêtez!"

She took a breath. "I... I had another..." She glanced at Gabrielle's form and paused. "... another of those dreams. I think... I think the Ministry is going to fall to the Death Eaters during the wedding reception."

Hermione gasped in horror. Gabrielle sat up abruptly and asked, "Deed you say you had a... a seer's dream?"

She nodded uncomfortably and said, "I've been having them for months, and they keep being correct. It's how I got an Outstanding in my O.W.L. for Divination." She started telling Hermione and Gabrielle everything she could remember about the dream.

Hermione put her hands together, and started thinking out loud. "Write down everything you can remember, while it's still fresh. We have to tell your parents first thing in the morning. Then we need to have your dad alert the Order. Then we need to warn everyone who is coming to the wedding, and make sure they can disapparate to somewhere safe, or else they can pair up with someone who can take them. We'll need to be fully packed and ready to go before the wedding. We need to decide where we'll go. You have to finish your preparations. And then..."

Hermione made sure the three of them were up early enough to catch her mum and dad in the kitchen before they had breakfast. Ginny needed to tell her parents. Hermione wanted to make sure everything went as she planned it. Ginny briefly wondered if Albus Dumbledore was like Hermione back when he was a teenager.

And Gabrielle was still trying to figure out what was going on. Ginny knew the part-veela wasn't stupid. Gabrielle knew there was something peculiar going on. And she picked up right away that Ginny had been dancing with Harry in the dream. Gabrielle hadn't said anything, but Ginny knew what that expression meant. Now they just had to see if Gabrielle was going to leave Harry to Ginny, or if she was going to try to take Harry for herself. Maybe she'd challenge Ginny to a duel and Ginny would get a chance to let her have it. Even if veelas had the ability to hurl fire. Slayers might be tough and fast, but they weren't fireproof.

Ginny had to focus. Hermione had finished getting her parents all worried. Ginny said, "I had another of those... prophetic dreams last night." Her mum whimpered. That scared her like nothing in the dream had.

Gabrielle asked, "I have seen seers wiz ze dreams before, but why eez thees so eemportant?"

Hermione said, "The last time Ginny had a dream like this, Alastor Moody died, George had his ear blasted off, and Harry was nearly killed by Voldemort."

Ginny thought about it for a moment and said, "I still haven't had one nice seer dream. They're always bad things."

Her dad asked, "So... what did you see?"

Ginny admitted, "It was the reception after the wedding. Someone apparated in the middle of the dancers and started yelling. I think he was saying the Ministry had just fallen."

"Oh Merlin," her mum gasped.

"Goodness gracious," her dad choked.

She went on, "And then Death Eaters were apparating in and attacking everyone."

Hermione said, "So I think Mister Weasley needs to speak to certain... friends of his, like in the Ministry. And then we need to warn all the guests that they need to be prepared to disapparate to a safe place during the wedding reception. And if they can't apparate easily, they need to have a partner who can take them to safety."

"And Ginny... you're sure about this?" her dad asked worriedly.

She sighed, "Dad! It's divination! I can't be sure about anything. But I believe it. The dream about Harry and his house and the Death Eaters..." She shuddered. "That was too accurate."

She watched as her parents stared at each other and did that wordless communication thing they did sometimes. Her dad's eyebrows went up. Her mum pursed her lips. Her dad's eyes twitched. Her mum frowned and then rolled her eyes.

Her dad smiled and tried to sound casual as he said, "I think that a few people we know will be quite interested in your dream. I'll just send a few... messages today."

Then her mum said, "And I think I'm going to need to use the fireplace to have a few chats with people on the wedding list. Even Great-Aunt Muriel. I hope we have enough floo powder."

Ginny managed not to wince at that, even if she would rather stick her face into a real fire than have to give Great-Aunt Muriel news like this.

Hermione said, "If there's something we can do to help with the chats..."

Ginny watched her mum think it over. Finally, her mum said, "That's a good point. I'll have Fleur and Apolline floo their side of the wedding using the living room fireplace, and I'll floo our side with the kitchen fireplace. I don't think there's anyone I need you two to contact directly."

Her dad said, "I... umm... I think I'll go up to our bedroom to contact the people I need to talk to."

Ginny didn't get that, since there was no fireplace in her parents' bedroom, and no one could disappear from inside the house. But Hermione looked at her and mouthed 'talking Patronus'. Oh. That made sense. They were at least as fast as apparition, and no one could intercept one like with owl post.

Her mum sighed, "At least this isn't a huge wedding. The Black-Malfoy wedding must have had two thousand guests. We would never be able to contact everyone in time for a wedding that size."

Hermione said, "Before everyone arrives for the wedding, we need to meet back here and check over the guest list, just so we can make sure we contacted everybody."

"Oh good thought, dear," nodded mum.

Hermione hastily dragged Ginny upstairs to their room, and started working through an enormous checklist Hermione had prepared, so they could make sure they had everything packed and ready

for their exit. Ginny had to rush up to Ron's room a couple times to grab clothes that Ron and Harry hadn't gotten packed yet. It was just a good thing Hermione had made sure everything was getting laundered, because Ginny didn't want to have to haul around a pile of Ron's stinking unwashed clothes.

Gabrielle came in twice to grab clothes, but she was busy rushing around doing last-minute tasks with Fleur, so she was mostly out of their hair. The second time Gabrielle dashed in, Hermione waited patiently until Gabrielle found the lingerie she was seeking, and then locked the door once Gabrielle left.

"Now then. I have something for you to wear, and I think you'd better have it on during the wedding, just in case."

She pulled out something that looked like an Auror's holster for Ginny's left forearm, except that it was only two inches wide and looked more like a leather bracelet. It had little openings on the top and bottom. Ginny slid her hand into the bottom opening, and felt a small piece of wood. Her wand.

Hermione said, "Both openings have Undetectable Extension Charms on them. The bottom opening has your wand, and any backup wands you have lying around." Ginny still had Bellatrix Lestrange's wand in her desk, so she slid that into the holster too.

Hermione went on, "The top opening has a box of stakes, a crossbow, one of the school brooms, a broadsword, several enchanted silver and cold iron daggers, a large battleaxe, and a huge quiver of bolts for the crossbow."

Ginny's jaw dropped open. "Where did you get all this?"

Hermione looked slightly embarrassed as she said, "I asked some of the suits of armor back at Hogwarts to loan it all to me."

Ginny had to wonder just how long Hermione had been preparing for this adventure. Months, at the very least.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 05 Feb 2012 05:44:17 GMT  
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

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Chapter 31 Made He a Woman

Hermione took Ginny's old hand-me-down copy of "The Tales of Beedle the Bard" off her shelf and tucked it into her pouch too. She said, "Last night I compared my copy page by page with yours. They're both seventh edition." She pulled out her copy from the pouch. "They're identical. Except for... this." And at the top of one page was a little symbol. A vertical line inside a symmetric triangle inside a circle.

It was the first page of "The Tale of the Three Brothers". Ginny knew that one. Well, she knew all of them by heart, after so many years of mum reading them to her at bedtime. The story was of three brothers who cheated death using magic to cross a dangerous river, and so Death appeared before them and offered each of them one prize. The oldest brother asked for a wand so powerful that it would always win a duel; he used it and bragged about it until a thief killed him in his sleep and stole the wand. The second brother asked for something that would let him recall others from death; the stone he got let him recall the girl who he had loved before her death, only she was so cold and distant that finally he killed himself to truly be with her. The third brother asked for something that would let him walk away without anyone, even Death, being able to follow; Death reluctantly gave him his cloak of invisibility and that brother successfully hid from Death until he was a very old man and ready to meet Death and go with him gladly.

Okay, so what was the point of marking that page? And why that little symbol? Ginny wondered if all of Harry's dealings with Dumbledore had been this frustrating.

She looked at her clock and said, "I think we'd better hurry before mum finishes flooing everyone." She asked, "Do we need to get some of your Polyjuice Potion for Harry? I mean, I don't want to, but..."

Hermione pursed her lips in thought. "I don't think so. Fleur's already planning on Harry looking like himself. And it's not going to make much difference if Death Eaters are already going to be attacking during the reception. I do have a flask for your mum. All the rest of the potions are all bottled up and stored away."

Ginny nodded. She knew Hermione had been brewing potions ever since school let out. She had no idea how much Hermione had in that pouch, but she had seen several dozen bottles one time when Hermione was re-arranging that pouch.

Once Ginny was sure they had everything packed, and Hermione had gone through her checklists to make sure they had everything of Ron and Harry's packed, Hermione checked that she had the pouch and Ginny had the wrist bracelet. Ginny noticed that Hermione had a wrist bracelet as well, and she wondered what Hermione had hidden in hers.

They walked down to the kitchen table and found Ginny's parents sitting there with Apolline Delacour and Gabrielle.

Hermione instantly launched into her agenda. "Was everyone able to contact everybody?"

Apolline nodded and smiled, "Fortunately, everyone coming from France is not as upset about... You-Know-Who and is apparating in already, or using portkeys."

Ginny's mum said, "We did have two people who decided they had better stay home. And Great-Aunt Muriel was... umm... difficult about things. And we'll have to warn the Lovegoods when they get here, because I couldn't reach them. But you know what Xeno is like."

Ginny certainly knew what Luna was like, and Luna's dad seemed even odder.

Her dad waffled and said, "I was able to get messages off to everyone else. I'm just not sure if it will do any good."

Apolline took her daughters off to the living room fireplace to confer with some other Delacours, so Ginny's folks quickly gathered all the Weasleys in the house. Ginny noticed that Hermione rounded up Harry too.

Her dad looked around the table and then stared at Ginny. "I think we need to talk about how you think you can go off with Harry. There's the Trace, and Hogwarts will be expecting you..."

Hermione quickly explained again about the Trace and how Ginny's broke months ago. Then she gave Ginny a look.

Ginny smiled wickedly, "Hermione figured it out. Ron has spattergroit, and you're worried I'm contagious too. And Hermione brewed up some Polyjuice Potion it's in the blue bottle on my dresser and I left a couple dozen of my hairs with you, so Fred or George can apparate home and pose as me whenever someone comes by."

George stared at her in shock and gasped, "What?"

Fred frantically said, "No way!"

Her mum almost laughed, for the first time Ginny had seen in days. Ginny smirked, "And I'll leave a couple of my cutest dresses and nighties for you."

"We will definitely-"

"-get you for this one-"

"little sis," they growled.

She stuck her tongue out at them. She didn't point out that she might not live long enough for that.

While Fred and George complained about Hermione's plan, Fleur whisked through the kitchen and herded Ginny and Hermione up the stairs. She wanted her bridesmaids and helpers to start on her schedule. Makeovers for herself and Gabrielle and Ginny, hairstyling charms, then bridesmaid's dresses, then her dress.

Apolline smiled as they took over Ginny's room. "Zis is perfect, if we simply had not so many beds, and pairhaps a settee."

Hermione took out her wand and quickly removed the two beds Ginny's mum had made with geminio spells. Then she waved her wand again, and three comfortable chairs appeared. Another wave of her wand, and a brocade loveseat appeared by the closet.

"Most impressive," Gabrielle said.

Ginny looked at Hermione and mouthed, 'where did they come from?' She knew the pieces weren't from other rooms in the house. Hermione just smiled and pointed at her pouch.

Fleur smiled warmly, "Thank you so much. I am very glad you too could be here for my wedding."

Apolline explained, "In our family, it is traditional for the bridesmaids to help the bride get ready, but it is also traditional for someone close to help the bridesmaids prepare. I asked Gabrielle if she wanted her leetle friend Jeanne to help, but she asked me instead. I was... most touched. And we knew you would not know of this custom, so we decided that your friend Hermione would be a good choice for you."

Ginny grinned, "Hermione is perfect."

"No. This is perfect," Hermione gasped as she looked at what Fleur's mother was holding up.

Ginny gasped too. She knew her mum had done a couple Measurement Spells and Form Matching Spells at the start of the summer and sent the magical tape measures off to the Delacours using Pigwidgeon instead of Errol. So she knew the bridesmaid's dress would fit. But she thought bridesmaid's dresses were supposed to be ugly. She had figured it would be a color that would look fabulous on Gabrielle and hideous on a pale redhead.

She was so, so wrong. Her dress was a shimmering, burnished gold color. Somehow, Fleur had managed to find a color that went with both bridesmaids' coloring. And it was beautiful. She had seen bridesmaids before, but this was the first bridesmaid's dress she ever looked at and thought

'I want that'. It had long sleeves and the hem would nearly touch the floor once Ginny put on the matching heels. It had a cute kickpleat at the back so she could dance in it. It didn't have an empire waist, which wouldn't have worked on anyone with a bust bigger than Gabrielle's. No, it looked perfect. And it had a pretty ballet neckline that would let her show off her assets without being really naughty.

She could hardly wait to put it on. She hated to admit it, but Gabrielle looked gorgeous in her dress, and a lot more mature. And Harry would probably have to dance with Gabrielle at least once, just because the Delacours would expect him to.

Apolline turned out to be excellent with hairdressing charms, something Ginny's mum never bothered much about. But Ginny figured if you came from a family of veela and part-veela, you had to learn about hairdressing charms and cosmetic charms and all those kinds of things. She made a mental note to ask Hermione, who had probably memorized a dozen of them already. And she made sure the long sleeves covered up her leather 'bracelet' on her wrist. She wasn't taking that off, even for the wedding. If it showed, she would just ask Hermione to use a spell that would make it hard to notice.

Once they were all ready and Apolline had taken care of Fleur's hair, they helped Fleur with her wedding gown. It looked simple, but Ginny could tell it was carefully crafted and fit so that it looked that way. It was really a very sophisticated bit of dressmaking that probably would have taxed even Madam Malkin. Not that any of the guys would notice. They would think it was Fleur making a simple dress look good. It was really Fleur and a dress making the other look even better.

So, since things couldn't go just right, her Great-Aunt Muriel had to barge in. She was rude to Fleur about how to wear the tiara, although when she was done the dress and tiara combined with Fleur's natural beauty to look utterly gorgeous. Fleur literally glowed.

And then Great-Aunt Muriel had to alienate everyone. "Ginevra! That dress is horrible on you. The veelas must have picked it out just to make you look bad. You know how they are! And a girl your age shouldn't be wearing a dress with a neckline that low. It's a disgrace!"

Then she had to say awful things about Gabrielle's dress, and Hermione, and even the room! By the time Muriel left, Ginny was sure her face was as red as her hair. She apologized for about three straight minutes.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 08 Feb 2012 07:16:39 GMT

## Chapter 32 The Man and His Wife

Once they all got away from Great-Aunt Muriel, the wedding was absolutely beautiful. Seeing Bill and Fleur together was magical. Seeing how Fleur looked at Bill made Ginny understand. Veelas were always pursued by men. They already knew outer beauty wasn't the most important thing. People like Apolline and Fleur and Gabrielle wanted men who loved them for what was inside. And they chose men because of what was inside the man, not what was outside. That was why Fleur's father wasn't another Cedric Diggory or Gilderoy Lockhart. Because Fleur's mother was smarter than that. And Fleur loved Bill no matter how he looked. Knowing that made the wedding so much more wonderful.

All right, Fred and George kept trying to top each other about being around the pretty veela in-laws. Luna and her dad came, and both in bright yellow robes, with Xenophilius wearing the strangest pendant. She didn't get a good look at it then.

And Great-Aunt Muriel continued to be her usual self. She gave Ron a hard time and claimed he had made up those stories about knowing The Boy Who Lived. Then Harry went over to defend Ron, and Great-Aunt Muriel lit into him. "Potter. Just as thoughtless as your father. Now there was a problem child! I was hoping you'd have more sense than to show up at a wedding in times like these." Then she had the nerve to tell Ron that 'the Muggleborn' had bad posture and skinny ankles and was a know-it-all, and her hair was too frizzy. She did pretty much everything except call Hermione a mudblood.

Ginny definitely heard Ron muttering angrily under his breath at that, but she was pretty sure no one else heard it.

After all that, the wedding itself went perfectly. Fleur was so pretty she was radiant. Ginny couldn't help being a little jealous that Fleur could look so wonderful when Ginny knew she would never look that pretty as a bride. Assuming she lived long enough that Harry or anyone else ever had the chance to propose to her. And even if she survived, being the Vampire Slayer was probably about as risky for your loved ones as being The Boy Who Lived.

They had to group together for pictures after the wedding, and then they got to move to the reception, under that lovely white tent her mum had rented. This was what she had been waiting for. She had wanted to dance with Harry ever since third year and the Yule Ball. No, she had wanted to dance with Harry ever since she first met him, before she ever went to Hogwarts.

But first Harry had to dance with Gabrielle while Ginny danced with Bill's groomsmen. And then Harry had to dance with Fleur. When it finally looked like it would be Ginny's turn, Harry had to rush over and take care of a problem. Ginny was stuck dancing with Mister Delacour, but she

could still hear all of the arguing.

It was Viktor Krum, of all people. Krum was claiming that Xenophilius Lovegood was wearing the sign of Gellert Grindelwald, and he would challenge him to a duel if this wasn't a wedding. It took Harry two more songs to calm Viktor down and direct him elsewhere.

When Harry finally came to dance with her, he wanted to talk instead of hold her and dance with her. She was frustrated for three seconds. As soon as Harry spoke, she forgot all about being in his arms and dancing.

"Krum tapped his wand, and I remembered! Back in fourth year. He told me Gregorovitch made his wand! Voldemort is after another wandmaker!"

Ginny whispered, "Like Ollivander? But why?"

"We have to ask Hermione," Harry muttered. "She'll probably have a theory. But it's got to be the wands. Voldemort kidnapped Ollivander. He tortured him for information about wands. He changed wands when he went after me at the Dursleys'. Now he's after another famous wandmaker. It has to be something about wands, but what?"

So she didn't get to dance more with Harry, because he wanted to go over and interrupt Hermione while she was dancing with Ron and obviously didn't want to be interrupted either. But then Harry got interrupted in turn, because Elphias Doge wanted to talk with him about Albus Dumbledore.

Ginny would have gone over and joined the chat, but Great-Aunt Muriel stuck her nose in. So Ginny just stood there for long seconds, trying to decide what to do. The foolhardy thing to do would be to sit down next to Muriel and try not to get upset by what the old witch said. The smart thing to do? Maybe ask Hermione for a distraction to rescue Harry.

While she was standing there, Lee Jordan came over, and she found herself being waltzed about. She should have made Lee stop dancing and gone over and just butted in, but she really didn't want to face Auntie Muriel again. Not so soon. It wasn't brave of her, she knew it, but she promised she'd stick her nose in once the music stopped. She just made sure Lee was dancing with her close enough that she could use her Slayer hearing to eavesdrop.

And then Doge and Muriel were arguing about... Albus Dumbledore's childhood? What? Dumbledore's mother Kendra and his siblings Aberforth and Ariana, and his father going to Azkaban for attacking Muggles? What the...? So Doge knew Dumbledore and pretty much worshipped at his feet, while Muriel got all of her information from... Rita Skeeter's new book?

"Ouch!" Lee complained.

"Sorry, Lee. I'm really sorry." Ginny realized that she had squeezed his hand too hard while feeling furious over Rita Skeeter. That woman deserved to get eaten by frogs while she was in her beetle form. Ginny had never forgiven her for the hateful, evil things she had written about Harry during the TriWizard Tournament.

She let Lee dance her about some more, even if she subtly steered him so they moved closer to Harry's table. She listened in more closely, while pretending to listen to Lee's story about Fred and George and a school vanishing cabinet.

And that was how Ginny found out that Skeeter got the dirt on Albus Dumbledore from Bathilda Bagshot. The Bagshots lived next door to the Dumbledores in Godric's Hollow? Ginny gulped. They must have lived really close to the Potters. Were there magical families in Godric's Hollow they could talk to about the Potters? Or would anyone still alive there be one of Voldemort's supporters? She was sure Harry would want to find out, no matter how risky it might be.

It wasn't until Great-Aunt Muriel finally let Harry be that Ginny breathed a sigh of relief. She commandeered Harry for another dance, while she watched several Weasley men arguing over who would get stuck with taking Great-Aunt Muriel home.

They didn't even get all the way through one dance.

They had only started dancing. Harry hadn't even had a chance to ask her how much she had overheard. There was a silvery streak, and a lynx patronus appeared only a few feet away from them.

It started talking in Kingsley Shacklebolt's rich bass tones. "The Min-"

Ginny grabbed Harry by the wrist and looked across the room for Hermione.

"-istry has fallen."

Hermione and Ron looked at each other, and Hermione grabbed Ron's wrist.

"Scrimgeour is dead."

Ginny checked with Harry, and he nodded fiercely.

"They are coming."

Harry muttered, "Here we go." She hung onto his arm, making sure she didn't squeeze too tightly.

Harry spirited her away. As they disappeared, Ginny could hear Great-Aunt Muriel yelling, "Get

your hands off me, I'm perfectly capable of a little thing like apparating home!"

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 12 Feb 2012 07:35:57 GMT  
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### Chapter 33 The Serpent Was More Crafty

Ginny had no idea where they were apparating to. It was a famous Muggle church that Harry and Hermione knew. The idea of going to a Muggle place was so alien that she was sure no Death Eater would ever think to look for them there. She just hoped they didn't apparate right in front of a hundred surprised Muggles.

She and Harry apparated into a cavernous room. She could see rows of old wooden pews, and all kinds of fancy architecture she hadn't realized Muggles could do.

Harry whispered, "It's St. Paul's Cathedral, in London."

She noticed someone at the far end of the long axis of the cathedral, waving their way. It was Hermione and Ron. She gave Harry a tap on the shoulder and pointed at them.

Harry said, "Good. We need to get out of these dress robes before someone sees us. We don't look like Muggles in these things."

Ginny blushed, "I think you look really handsome like that."

Harry blushed in turn. "You're probably just... Confunded or something. I'm not handsome."

She would have kissed him right there in a church, except Hermione rushed up and hurried them off to the side. "We have to get out of sight before someone sees us dressed like this!" She chivvied them into a little alcove off to the side and said, "Now we need to change clothes. I've got everybody's things in here. Then we need to go sit down somewhere and figure out our next steps."

Ginny said, "I thought you figured it all out already."

Hermione said, "Ron and I were just arguing about it."

Ron said, "She didn't figure it out with me."

Hermione pulled out a set of clothes for Ron, and Harry's cloak of invisibility. She shoved it all in Ron's hands and said, "Change under the cloak. Quick."

Ron stepped to the wall and vanished under the cloak. But they still could hear him muttering and struggling to get changed.

Hermione said, "We can't go to Harry's cousin's place. With the wards broken, the Death Eaters have to have it under surveillance. We can't go to one of my relatives either, because the only thing keeping magic from finding them is a lack of magical tracks to follow. And... and they don't know they have a daughter anymore." She struggled not to sob out loud. "But we have some more options-"

Ron pulled the cloak off himself, revealing him in Muggle clothes: a green jumper and tight jeans and old trainers. He handed the cloak and the dress robes to Hermione, who stuffed everything except the cloak into her pouch. Hermione handed the cloak and a set of Muggle clothes to Harry, who slipped over to the side and disappeared under the cloak to change.

Ron frowned and said, "I don't want to go into hiding for months. I want to go right over to the Leaky Cauldron and find out what people have to say! If Voldemort just took over the Ministry, someone has to have something to say, and after half a dozen Firewhiskeys they won't be too particular about who they talk to!"

Hermione insisted, "We already know what's going on! And it's too dangerous to go there and nose around. Anyone working for..." She pulled Ron over to the side and ducked behind him.

Ginny heard the men coming up the main aisle toward them, even though they were behind her. She figured Hermione had seen them enter the church. Ginny was still in a gold bridesmaid's dress, and that had to be abnormal in Muggle London, so she silently ducked behind a large curtain.

She peered from behind the curtain. It was just two Muggle workmen. She'd seen men dressed like that working on telephone poles and things like that in Ottery St. Catchpole.

Wait. Weren't people supposed to dress nice when they went into Muggle churches? She needed to ask Hermione.

The younger workman reached into his sleeve, and Ginny instinctively did the same. As soon as she saw the wand coming out of the man's sleeve, she moved at her top speed. Stupefy! Stupefy! Two similar spells blasted out of the corner where Harry was under his cloak.

The workmen fell over before either could get off a spell. Hermione elbowed Ron, who dashed

over and made sure no one had noticed the aborted battle. Ron whispered, "Levicorpus" and floated the two Stupefied men over to their alcove.

Harry yanked the cloak off, revealing he was in a t-shirt, jeans, and a loose jacket. He stepped over to the two men. "I recognize this one. It's Dolohov. I've seen his face on enough wanted posters."

Ron looked at the other and groaned, "It's Crabbe's father. Bloody..."

Hermione frantically grabbed his shoulder. "Never mind who they are! How'd they find us? What are we going to do?"

Ron turned and held Hermione while she struggled to overcome her near-panic. He asked Harry, "Do we have to kill 'em? They were probably going to have a go at us right then."

Harry said, "No. We'll obliviate them. Let them think it was a false alarm from some Muggles speaking French and talking about the stained glass windows."

Hermione frowned, "There's nothing about flights and death in these windows."

Harry grinned mirthlessly. "They won't know that. They don't know anything about Muggles."

Ginny tugged on Harry's sleeve, since he seemed to be the calmest one. "How did they find us? It's not the Trace."

Hermione nodded. "Right. It can't be that. We all had our Traces broken. Harry's went on his birthday. I checked." She fished more clothes out of her pouch and handed them to Ginny with the cloak. "Get changed. Quick."

Ginny stepped into the corner, tossed the cloak over herself, and then tried to change out of her dress and heels under it. She found it was harder than it sounded. She was surprised Ron and Harry hadn't made a huge noise while they changed.

Ron asked, "Could a Death Eater have snuck it back on one of us? Maybe at the wedding?"

Hermione hastily pulled out her wand and checked each of them. She sighed in relief. "No. None of us has the Trace, or even a tracking spell on us." She wrinkled her forehead in thought. "So how did they..." She gasped, "Oh! It's the Taboo Curse! He's got it in place again! Ron said V... You-Know-Who's name. Just a minute ago. The Taboo is probably blanketing the whole country now. And we all know the only people who still call him by name, now that Professor Dumbledore is dead." She stared at Harry and Ron.

Ginny stepped out from under the cloak and handed it to Hermione, who already had clothes in her hands. Along with the blouse and khakis and trainers, Hermione had given her a baseball cap to hide her distinctive red hair. Hermione vanished under the cloak and began struggling out of her formal dress. Ginny whispered that she could help if Hermione needed a hand.

Harry grumbled, "There's no way I'm calling him He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named."

Ron complained, "And there's no way I'm calling him the Dark Lord! That's what Snape calls him!"

Harry thought for a second and said, "Riddle. If we can't call him... the V-word, we can still call him Riddle. He'd really hate that. Professor Dumbledore called him that in their duel, and he really got furious about it."

Hermione smiled, "Ooh, right, it's also his Muggle father's name, and he hates Muggles."

Harry said, "He really really hates his family. He murdered them all the first chance he got."

Ron smirked, "I vote for calling him 'Tom' too. Maybe 'Tommy' or something like that. Maybe... Ickle Tommikins."

"Ron!" Hermione scowled. "It's not a laughing matter!"

Ginny asked, "So where now?"

Hermione sighed. "I suppose we could check Number 12 Grimmauld Place and see if Snape has let Death Eaters in. But it could be incredibly risky."

Ron grumbled, "It's not so safe there even without Death Eaters." He thought of the clothes that had tried to smother him, and he repressed a shudder.

Harry said, "I think we should try it. We can apparate onto the front step and slip in before anyone knows we're there. If anything goes wrong, we get out and we all apparate back here."

"And then what?" Ron asked.

Hermione said, "We have several other options. I have a Wizard tent in my pouch, so we can camp out comfortably. We can do what Professor Slughorn did and find some empty Muggle houses and stay there until they come back from vacation. I have plenty of Muggle money, so one of us can use some Polyjuice Potion to look like someone older, then we apparate to a hotel somewhere and get a room for a few days. No Death Eater is ever going to think to look for us in a Muggle hotel."

Ron just looked at her. "And how do we manage to look like someone else? We need some hair or something from them."

Hermione gave him a triumphant smirk and pulled from her pouch what looked like thirty sealed test tubes in a long wooden rack. Ginny realized with a start that every test tube was labeled. Hermione had hair from both her parents, a number of names Ginny didn't know so they were probably Muggles, Millicent Bulstrode and Pansy Parkinson and Crabbe and Goyle, and...

"Dolores Umbridge? You have hair from Dolores Umbridge?" Ginny choked.

Hermione looked slightly abashed. "Yes, well, last year when she was in the hospital wing after the centaurs, it occurred to me that she might be a problem later on. So I... snipped some of her hair and started brewing up a batch of Polyjuice Potion just in case. I've been brewing up a new batch every couple months, just to have fresh potion on hand. Getting the boomslang skin without stealing it from Professor Snape was expensive, but not unreasonable."

Harry took a closer look at the labels. "Rita Skeeter! How did you get Skeeter's hair?"

"Cutting Charm. When she was interviewing you fifth year. We were right next to her, and she was concentrating on you. It was easy."

Ron took a look too. "You're sure there aren't any cat hairs or anything like that?"

Hermione glared at him. They all remembered what had happened back in second year, when Hermione had accidentally used a cat hair in her dose of Polyjuice Potion. "I checked for non-human hair." She looked around at their faces. "Twice!"

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 15 Feb 2012 08:50:48 GMT  
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Chapter 34 He Said to the Woman

Ginny watched as Hermione obliviated the two Death Eaters and then used mobilicorpus to move them so they were sitting in a pew like they were just looking around and talking. Ginny shook her head. Was there any spell Hermione couldn't do well?

Harry said, "We'll move to Grimmauld Square in twos. Ginny and me first. You two wait thirty seconds. We'll go into the park under the trees and look for Death Eaters watching the place.

Then we'll apparate right onto the front step. They won't be able to see us there if Snape can't tell anyone the secret. We'll open the door and look inside. You two apparate right onto the doorstep and follow us in. If you hear a battle, apparate back into the park so you have time to figure out whether you should join in the fight or come back here."

Ron said, "I don't like this."

"Got a better idea?" Harry asked.

Ron shrugged. "No. I wanted to go to the Leaky Cauldron and snoop around, but if Death Eaters are apparating all over London, that's not going to work."

Hermione said, "We can consider it, once we figure out how we should do it. We've got Harry's cloak, and Polyjuice Potion, and I can do Disillusionment Charms, and... Oh!"

She stopped and rushed over to the two men. She took snips of their hair and put the hair into two more test tubes. "Waste not, want not," she smiled.

"Let's get out of here before the stunners wear off," Harry said. He took Ginny's arm and disappeared.

Ginny hung onto Harry's arm as they apparated behind a sad, decrepit tree in the little square before the house. Ginny quickly looked around in the darkness, while Harry did a detection spell. She didn't know whether the lack of Death Eaters outside the house was a good sign or a bad sign. Maybe the Death Eaters were already inside the house. Maybe they couldn't find the house because of the Fidelius Charm. Maybe they knew where the house was, but they didn't dare lurk in the bushes outside the house because of the vampires Voldemort Riddle might be rounding up in the area. She couldn't tell, and she didn't know any way to tell.

Harry whispered, "Ready?" She nodded.

He disappeared, and they reappeared on the front step. No one who hadn't been told the secret by a Secret Keeper would be able to see them anymore. He tapped the front door carefully, and she heard the sound of locks unlocking and bolts unbolting inside.

He swung the door open and carefully stepped inside, his wand still in his hand. She had her wand out as well. She stepped in front of him and held him back. They both knew she could take a curse that he couldn't. And she could hear things he couldn't.

She listened. It was hard to block out the city sounds rushing and honking behind her, but she tried.

The house was almost silent. There was something scuttling behind a wall. Something not human. There was a grandfather clock ticking away far down the hall and in another room. There was a fire going in the kitchen downstairs. She could just barely make out Kreacher groaning and mumbling to himself downstairs.

She waved Harry in, and he stepped behind her. A couple seconds later, Hermione and Ron apparated right onto the top step.

Ginny whispered, "I don't hear anything. I think the place is empty. Except for Kreacher. And some things we didn't find before."

Hermione and Ron stepped in too, and closed the door behind them. Hermione whispered, "Ron, don't lock the door yet." She pointed at the troll's foot umbrella stand, which was tipped over as if Tonks had been through the hall recently. "Someone may have already been through here."

Ginny whispered, "If they're here, I can't hear them."

"Maybe a muffliato," Ron suggested.

"If they did that, I could hear the buzz," Ginny pointed out.

"Oh Merlin, you mean I can't even do a muffliato to keep you from hearing when I don't want you to?" Ron grouched.

She just gave him a smug smirk, and stepped forward.

Mad-Eye Moody's voice whispered out of the darkness, "Severus Snape?"

"We're not Snape!" Harry insisted.

But Harry had hardly finished speaking when something some sort of curse whooshed down the hall and blew past Ginny like a cold breeze. She heard Harry choke and Ron retch and Hermione gag. Hermione needed long seconds to choke out that it had to be a Tongue Tying Curse.

Ginny took another step forward, while waving everyone else to stay back. She saw in the darkness as a thing arose from the carpet. It was the height of a tall man, but it was dust. It was dust-colored, and dusty, and smelled like old dust to Ginny's enhanced senses.

Behind her, Hermione screamed in terror as the dust became Albus Dumbledore, long dead and grave-rotted. It glided at them, picking up speed, staring at them with those empty eye sockets. Ginny pulled out a stake and dove at it.

She went right through it and landed clumsily on the carpet. Behind her, Mrs. Black was screaming, and Harry was yelling at the dust monster. "It wasn't us! We didn't kill y-

With a poof, the dust-figure exploded, sending dust everywhere. It drifted down onto Ginny and seeped back into the carpet. Ginny sneezed as she got back to her feet. She looked behind her and saw Harry dealing with Mrs. Black's portrait, while a white-faced Ron was holding a panicked Hermione who was crouched on the floor with her face buried in Ron's jumper.

Ron looked up at Ginny and breathed out. "Whew. That was a bit nastier than I figured. Even after a vampire nest." Hermione didn't say anything, but she still had her arms wrapped tightly around Ron's chest, and Ginny could tell her heartrate was really fast.

Harry led them into the sitting room. Ron and Hermione squeezed together into a big wingback chair. Hermione didn't seem to want to let go of Ron. Ginny held Harry while they sat on the couch.

Harry said, "I'm guessing from the curses in the front hall that Death Eaters haven't been in and out of here a lot."

Hermione did a *hominem Revello* spell to check for any people in the building. Ginny didn't say that she'd already listened for intruders, because Hermione definitely needed something to do, her hands were still shaking. Hermione said, "Let's go up" and let Ginny lead the way to the first floor drawing room.

They hardly got settled in the drawing room when Harry suddenly grabbed his forehead and nearly keeled over in pain. Ginny knew it was another vision. Harry gasped, "V- V- Riddle. He's really angry."

Ron had the same worry she did. That maybe Voldemort was attacking the Burrow. That maybe their parents were under attack. But Harry couldn't tell. And Hermione was still scared enough to yell at Harry about not closing off his connection to Riddle.

Ginny hugged Harry and snapped without thinking, "We need to know about this stuff! Just like with my dreams!"

Hermione tearfully insisted, "We can't let You-Know-Who into Harry's head! Not while we're hunting his Horcruxes!"

Ron stepped in between Ginny and Hermione. "Harry? Mate? You okay?"

Hermione screamed again. Ginny already had her wand out at the silvery streak. It turned into a silver weasel Patronus and spoke in her dad's voice. "We're all safe. Don't reply. We're being

watched. Your mum has already sent for a medi-witch for Ron's spattergroit."

Ron breathed out a moan of relief and sank onto the couch. She felt the same way. She watched as Hermione gripped Ron tightly and murmured words of encouragement. Ginny started to say something to them, but another streak of silver interrupted her.

Two streaks of silver. Each turned into a wolf cub, and the twin wolf cubs stared at each other before talking. It was Fred and George.

Mum called for a medi-witch to check both of you-

-but it's someone mum trusts-

-so the Death Eaters will be sure you're both home-

-and mum picked out Ginny's pink Holyhead Harpies nightie for George to wear-

-shut it!

Ginny just gritted her teeth as the pair of wolf cubs faded away. She fumed, "I didn't leave that there for them to wear! If they ruin that nightie..."

Ron muttered unhappily, "And there's no way we're ever going to get pictures of them as you."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 19 Feb 2012 07:42:09 GMT  
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Chapter 35 You Shall Not Eat

Hermione started to say something about using the sleeping bags and sleeping in one room, but Harry was staggering off to the bathroom. Ginny grabbed his arm and helped him to the sink. She held him up as he grabbed his forehead and screamed in pain. He shuddered for long seconds, and she began to be afraid he'd have a convulsion or something. If she hadn't been there for him, would he have collapsed and cracked his head on the tub or the floor?

She whispered, "Harry?"

He stammered, "Y-yeah. I'm all right." Like she believed that when he was still white as a sheet

and his heart was hammering far too fast. "It's... Riddle. I need to tell all of you."

She let him sit down and drink some water before she helped him back into the drawing room. He collapsed limply onto the settee and she sat next to him, holding him up.

He groaned, "Hear me out first, okay Hermione? It was... Riddle. In a long, dark room. Fireplaces. He was torturing Dolohov and Crabbe for calling him back for nothing. That it was just a false alarm and they didn't have my unconscious body for him. And... he made Malfoy torture them or be tortured. Draco looked... awful. Scared and sick and... I never thought I'd feel sorry for him."

Ron growled, "Sorry for that bleeding..."

"Ron!" Hermione squeaked. "He couldn't kill Dumbledore when he had an easy chance. Maybe he's... not as horrible as we thought."

Ron fumed, "He did an Imperius Curse on Rosmerta. He nearly killed me! And Katie! And he spent months trying to get Death Eaters into Hogwarts and if we hadn't had that felix felicis we'd all be dead now! He deserves everything he gets!"

Hermione hung onto Ron's arm and said, "Can we not argue about Draco Malfoy? We have bigger problems. Like Harry's link to... Riddle."

Ron frowned, "Well this time it's a bloody relief. We know Tommy's busy off somewhere else and doesn't even want to be around here."

Harry said, "It has to be this thing with Ollivander and Gregorovitch and wands, but I don't know what it all means."

Hermione said, "But this link Harry has... It's really dangerous! What if V... Riddle uses it against Harry again?"

Harry snapped, "You think I don't worry about that?"

Ron looked up and stared at Harry. "Look mate, you do know when Tommy's trying to send you a message and when it's like this one, don't you?"

Harry sighed heavily. "Yeah. Visions like this one? I don't think he even knows I'm getting them. He's so angry, or happy, or whatever... It just comes through. The dream he was sending me? That was completely different. It was calm... and, well, focused. And it was the same dream over and over, until I finally got the memo."

Ginny asked, "Can he get into your mind?"

Harry muttered, "No. He's tried, and it hurts him too much. It can't be my mum's blood protection, because he got that when he used my blood to get his body back."

Hermione said, "Harry, it's the power he knows not. He couldn't take over your body in the Ministry without suffering terrible pain. Remember?"

Harry winced. "Wasn't any fun for me, either."

Hermione went on, "All he knows is hatred and anger and evil. He can't take over a body that's nothing like those emotions."

Ginny said, "If he could get into Harry's mind, he would have seen Ron. Or you and me. He would have known where Harry was right away, and we would have had an army of Death Eaters attacking the Burrow already. He can't get into Harry's head."

Ron asked, "You mean Harry can look into his head some of the time and he can't ever look into Harry's? That's..."

Hermione said, "If it's right, it's an advantage we shouldn't give up. Even if it hurts Harry a lot." She looked up. "But Harry, if you ever even think he might be getting a peek inside your head, we have to find a way to shut it down. So maybe we could work on ways of doing Occlumency and just not use them until we have to."

Harry groaned, "As long as it's not Snape's way." Ginny hugged him tighter, but not too tightly.

Hermione cringed a little. "I think what Snape was doing actually made things a lot worse instead of better. I still can't believe Professor Dumbledore had him of all people teaching you Occlumency. Professor Flitwick would have been a much better choice. Or Professor McGonagall. Or Professor Vector."

Harry quietly said, "But Snape is really, really good at it."

Ginny pointed out, "And he hates you, and you hate him. So how's that whole 'being calm and rational' thing supposed to work there?"

Ron muttered, "Like I said before. Dumbledore's brilliant. But a complete nutter."

Hermione rolled her eyes but said, "Maybe you're right. Maybe he trusted Snape so much and believed in him so much it just never dawned on him that Snape and Harry couldn't stop hating each other for even one hour."

Harry said, "Well, I accidentally learned some Legilimency from him, anyway."

Hermione perked up, "Ooh! Can you teach me? I was reading about it, but the material in the books is too vague and doesn't really teaching you how to learn it, just what you can do with it and what you're not supposed to do with it."

Ron smiled a little. "Wait, you mean there's something Hermione can't do? Harry, I think you ought to keep this one a secret, just so there's one thing Hermione isn't able to... Oof!" He rubbed his side where Hermione had just elbowed him.

Hermione glared at him and said, "There's tons of things I can't do. I'm terrible on a broomstick, and I could never play Keeper and have people throwing those balls at me... I'd never have learned how to do a Patronus if Harry hadn't taught us. I still can't defeat a boggart. I can't beat you at chess and I spent weeks one summer reading three chessbooks I bought. I-"

Ron put a finger over her lips and smiled, "It's okay. I was just teasing. We all know you can do everything on earth."

Harry said, "Even Dumbledore said there were things Riddle could do that he couldn't."

Hermione frowned, "I think he meant that he couldn't bring himself to do things that horrible, not that he couldn't do them if he really wanted to."

After they argued some more about Harry's link to Voldemort's mind and learning Occlumency, Ginny talked Harry into walking downstairs with her. He was a lot more stable, and she didn't have to hold onto him. She just kept a hand ready to grab him if he started falling while they were on the stairs. She knew she didn't need to. The stairs had a Catching Charm so if anyone fell they wouldn't tumble to the bottom and get hurt. She knew that because last year, Fred and George had tossed Ron down the upstairs staircase three or four times before their mum caught them. The first time, Ron had nearly panicked before the charm caught him, and then he had chased the twins all over the house.

She led Harry into the kitchen. The kitchen fire was still going strong. She called out, "Kreacher?"

Kreacher popped into being right in front of them, bowing obsequiously and muttering nastily. "Oh it's the blood traitor and the halfblood, oh poor me, what would mistress say to see her house taken over by-"

Harry snapped, "Silence!"

Kreacher stopped talking, but was obviously mouthing more insults.

Ginny knew what to do, she just didn't want to. She said, "Harry, you can tell him to do anything and he'll have to do it. Great-Aunt Muriel made her house elf call dad 'armadillo-face' for years until mum found out. Mum told me all about it. You can order him to call us by our proper names."

Harry sighed, "I didn't want to make him have to do anything. I didn't even want him as a house elf." He cleared his throat and said, "Kreacher. You may not use the words 'blood traitor' or 'halfblood' or 'mudblood' or muggleborn'. You will call Hermione 'Miss Hermione'. You will call Ginny 'Miss Ginny'. You will call Ron 'Mister Ron'. You will call me 'Harry'. You will not complain out loud about what your mistress liked or wanted or would think about the state of things now." He paused for a second and added, "And you will call Fred and George 'Mister Weirdprank'." Ginny tried really hard not to laugh out loud.

Kreacher writhed miserably, but finally spoke in his deep voice. "Yes... Harry."

Harry added, "And you will obey Ron and Ginny and Hermione as if it was me."

"Yes... Harry."

"Great," Harry said sarcastically.

Ginny looked at Harry and said to Kreacher, "Is there anything to eat in the house? Anything for wizards, that is."

Kreacher struggled to ignore her, but he finally said, "There are vegetables and fruits in the pantry and cold cellar. There is preserved beef and chicken and goose too. There are canned fruits and vegetables and jellies and conserves and the like in the pantry. And there is one loaf of bread that has not molded."

Ginny said, "Can you have a hearty beef and vegetable soup ready in less than an hour?"

"Yes... Miss Ginny."

"Good. Then I'll let you get started on that. We'll have the soup with the bread, and any butter if there is some. And after dinner, you can show me what food stores we have."

Harry led her back upstairs. "How do you know to do that?"

She shrugged, "I've been helping mum cook for the whole family for years. Why?"

Harry said, "Aunt Petunia taught me how to fry up eggs and bacon and sausages and make

sandwiches and some things like that, but I never learned about what goes into making things, or making soup, or about ingredients." He rolled his eyes. "Like Dudley and Uncle Vernon would eat soup or a salad, unless it was just the first course of dinner and they knew there was a big dessert at the end."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 22 Feb 2012 08:00:32 GMT  
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## Chapter 36 We May Eat of the Fruit

Ginny woke up feeling happy and smug. Harry was still holding her hand. It would have been really romantic if they weren't in a dingy room, surrounded by dark magics, with Death Eaters hunting for them.

They all had slept in the sleeping bags Hermione had in her pouch, but they had camped out in the room Ginny and Hermione had used last summer. There was enough room on each bed for two sleeping bags, and she had slept on her bed next to Harry. She wasn't ready to do more than that. Yet. But she was sure having some fantasies about being married to Harry.

Assuming they both lived that long. She had to figure the expiration dates on a Vampire Slayer and a Chosen One made fresh milk look long-lasting.

She had worked with Kreacher last night to make sure he did remember how to cook, and to make sure he didn't poison them. He wasn't doing a good job as a cook, but he could boil water and chop vegetables. If she was lucky, there wouldn't be a lot of preparation left for her to do before breakfast was ready.

Then she reminded herself not to say 'if I'm lucky' anymore. She hated thinking about the idea that maybe the Golden Slayer died some horrible death because Ginny had needed some luck that night. She still shuddered about it.

With the Slayer in her not needing that much sleep, she was the first one awake. She slipped out of Harry's grasp and went to shower before she walked down to the kitchen to see what Kreacher was working on. He wasn't calling her names anymore, but he wasn't talking at all. She let him cook up some oatmeal for breakfast, and bake some bread for lunch and dinner. She took the opportunity to walk through the huge pantry and the cold cellar, and figure out what groceries they needed to buy. She had no intention of letting Kreacher out of the house. She was just going to let Hermione go to the nearest Muggle grocery store and buy groceries with Muggle money. No

pureblood would ever think of something that unusual.

She certainly wouldn't have, if she hadn't become friends with Hermione and some of the other girls who weren't purebloods. But Hermione had taught her how to 'think outside the pureblood box' a bit more. She caught herself planning on cooking breakfast using her wand, just like her mum did, and she reminded herself that maybe she wasn't really thinking outside that particular box as much as she needed to.

She smiled to herself when she heard Harry get up. Her in the kitchen, Harry upstairs rummaging around... She was wondering if life could be like this. If they could both survive, and be happy together, and be, well, like her mum and dad. She didn't really believe they could, not with the way things had turned out, but she could pretend. And maybe she could pretend a little harder while they were here.

She listened as Harry finished cleaning up and then went wandering around the house. It sounded like he was up on one of the top floors. She kept an ear out for him while she planned what they'd have for lunch and dinner.

It wasn't until she had the grocery list all written up for Hermione that she heard Ron and Hermione stirring. It sounded like Hermione wasn't letting Ron sleep in. It sounded like she was upset.

Ginny rushed up the steps to the landing and spotted a frantic-looking Hermione rushing out of their bedroom in nothing but pajamas. Hermione was gasping, "Where are they? Where can they be?"

Ginny almost yelled up the stairs, but that would have awakened Mrs. Black. That was never a good thing. She ran up the stairs and caught Hermione as she ran down the hall with her wand pointed ahead of her.

Ginny caught Hermione by the arms and said, "I was just taking care of breakfast."

Hermione gasped, "Where's Harry? You were both gone, and I didn't know where you went!"

Ginny realized Hermione was a lot more shaken than Ginny had thought. What would she have done if she'd woken up and Ron and Hermione were just gone? She probably would have turned into an angry Slayer and choked Kreacher until he told her where they were. That wouldn't be good. She said, "I think he's looking around. Maybe upstairs. I heard him get ready this morning."

Ron took Hermione's hands and said, "It's all right. We've got a Vampire Slayer guarding us at night, you know."

But Hermione was still breathing shakily, and her heart was beating really fast. Ginny said, "Kreacher's got things under control downstairs, and breakfast will be ready before long. Why don't we go find Harry? And you can remind him it's not really safe to be walking around by yourself in some of the rooms in this house."

Ron yawned and said, "Can we get dressed first? I'm in my pajamas here!"

Hermione finally relented when Ginny volunteered to go find Harry. So Ron and Hermione went to shower and get dressed, while Ginny walked upstairs.

"Harry?" He was up in Sirius' room. She wasn't really surprised. And she wasn't really surprised at some of the naughty posters of half-naked women Sirius had up on his walls. And they were Muggle pictures! She was only surprised Mrs. Black hadn't blasted the walls apart to get rid of the things.

Harry grinned, "Oh! Hi! I found a letter from my mum! Well, part of one. And part of a picture. But someone's ransacked the room."

They looked for a few more minutes, until Ginny could hear Hermione and Ron coming out of their old rooms. She hadn't thought Ron would be smart enough to go shower elsewhere and dress in the room he and Harry used before. Really, she'd been figuring she'd hear Hermione yelling at Ron not to walk in on her while she was showering, or while she was changing clothes. Maybe Ron was wising up. Some.

She called both of them up. Once they were in the room too, Harry started explaining everything, even if Hermione was still pretty upset at him. The torn picture of him as a baby. The letter from his mum with the missing page. They all took turns reading the letter and watching baby Harry zoom around on his toy broom in the damaged photo. He was so cute as a baby.

While Ginny was concentrating on how cute Harry was on his itty bitty toy broomstick, Hermione latched onto the important points. Someone had ransacked the room and taken some things that only Harry and Sirius would care about, yet nothing that could be used magically against Harry. And also, Bathilda Bagshot was a close friend and neighbor of the Potters. And then Professor Dumbledore had James Potter's invisibility cloak even though he didn't need an invisibility cloak to go about unseen. And other rooms in the house might have been searched.

Ginny wondered, "So who could've done it?"

"Snape," Ron said immediately. "Got to be Snape."

Hermione disagreed, "Now Snape has to be considered a prime suspect, but he can't be the only

person who could have been in here. Mundungus Fletcher does have a tendency to..."

"Steal anything that doesn't have a Permanent Sticking Charm on it?" Harry said caustically. "Sure, but he wouldn't bother with half a photo or page two of a letter. He'd be taking more of the goblin-made silver."

Ron said, "We know from what Harry saw in Snape's head that he hated Harry's dad and Sirius. He was probably nosing around looking for something for V- I mean Riddle, and he saw a picture with Harry and his dad in it, and he ripped it up and burned the other part. Probably the same with the letter. Maybe Harry's mum wrote something about how wonderful his dad was, or Sirius, and Snape just burned it."

Ginny wondered, "But if Snape can come in here and wander around and look through everything, why hasn't he brought a pack of Death Eaters in here?"

Hermione slowly said, "We've been assuming all along Snape was working for Voldemort, or else he was working for Dumbledore. What if he was working for someone else? Or working for himself?"

Ron muttered, "That I could believe. Take out Dumbledore, get a big promotion in Riddle's bunch. Then take out Riddle and take the whole thing over. I can see him trying that."

Harry said, "That could even make sense. And maybe he knows the prophecy too, so he wants me to kill Riddle for him. So he wouldn't tell Riddle about this place."

Hermione frowned, "But that means he might want to use it for his army! It could be really dangerous staying here!"

Harry coldly said, "We have a Slayer. We'll know he's coming before he gets inside. And half the balconies would give us easy shots at anyone walking in that front door. And we can make Kreacher take us out of here, so we can't get trapped."

Hermione still winced. "There has to be somewhere safer than this! We can take the tent anywhere, and cast spells so no one outside the tent can see us or hear us."

Ron took her hand and said, "Why don't you get us ready for that, and we'll go with the tent as soon as this place looks dodgy?"

Ginny said, "In the meantime, we should have breakfast ready any minute now."

It still took a couple minutes to talk everyone into eating first before searching the house to see which other rooms had been ransacked. And she got to make eggs and sausage for Harry. But

Ron started wolfing down his food so he could go search the house, and Ginny knew Hermione wasn't going to slow him down. So she had to stop cooking and hurry through her breakfast too. At least Harry made Ron wait until she finished all her sausages and oatmeal.

Hermione didn't eat any sausage or bacon, but she had a second bowl of oatmeal. And when she got it, she said, "Please sir, may I have some more?" Ginny didn't get the joke, but Harry and Ron didn't either. Hermione made Ron sit at the table and wait while she told them they needed to read some famous Muggle literature. Somebody named Dick Charlesens or something.

The search was quick, until they were back near Sirius' room. Harry spotted the sign on the door, and Hermione instantly recognized what it meant. Ginny needed a second, as did Ron. But 'Regulus Arcturus Black' had the initials R.A.B. And they already knew he was a Death Eater who repented and was killed. They had found the man who stole the real locket and left that note for Voldemort!

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 26 Feb 2012 09:52:34 GMT  
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Chapter 37 Nor Shall You Touch It

They had found the man who stole the real locket and left that note for Voldemort!

She reminded herself once again to call him Riddle, even in her head, so she didn't slip up like Ron did.

They unlocked Regulus Black's room and searched for the locket. They searched magically, and they searched by hand, and they still didn't find it. It was Hermione who remembered the locket from the drawing room cabinet.

Ginny groaned, "We threw that out. I remember mum chucking it along with that creepy music box."

Harry said, "Kreacher. He nicked loads of things back from us." They all remembered the stash of Black things that Kreacher had stuffed into his little space in the cupboard.

Harry raced down the stairs. Ginny used her Slayer strength to jump the stair railing and land on the next flight down. She was already sprinting into the kitchen while the others were pounding past Mrs. Black's portrait and waking up the old harridan once more.

Ginny yanked open the cupboard door and found... nothing but smelly old blankets and an old book. She stared in shock as the others raced into the kitchen and caught up with her.

"Blimey, where's all that junk?" Ron groaned.

Harry insisted, "It's not over yet." And he called out, "Kreacher!"

Kreacher appeared with a loud crack. Ginny watched as Harry forced Kreacher to tell the truth.

It was awful. Ginny didn't like the way Kreacher had hurt Harry, and she didn't like how Kreacher acted when Hermione tried to hug him when he was so miserable, but she couldn't remember feeling sorrier for someone in a long time.

Regulus had loaned Kreacher to Voldemort, and Voldemort had used Kreacher the way those Muggle scientists supposedly used rats in laboratories. Kreacher had been tortured by the potion and left to die horribly at the hands of Inferi, only to be saved by the power of house elf magic. But then Regulus had insisted on Kreacher taking him back there, and he had done what no true Death Eater Ginny knew of would ever have done: he drank the potion himself and had Kreacher take the locket away to destroy it. Poor Kreacher. He had tried and tried, but nothing short of basilisk venom or Fiendfyre would destroy a Horcrux, and Kreacher had no access to such things, nor the awareness that dangerous toxins like that were needed. Kreacher had driven himself mad because he couldn't fulfill the last order of his beloved Regulus, and he couldn't tell Mrs. Black what had happened to Regulus. Then, when it looked like things couldn't get any worse, Kreacher hadn't been able to keep Mundungus Fletcher from stealing the locket along with everything else that wasn't charmed in place.

By the end of his story, Ginny could hardly see for the tears filling her eyes.

Ron said, "The power he knows not. Looks like there's a lot of powers Riddle knows not. And Kreacher's another one."

While Harry and Hermione argued about house elves and Sirius's treatment of Kreacher, Ginny got a kitchen towel. She wiped her eyes and stepped onto the stairs to blow her nose so Harry wouldn't hear her being so gross.

When she came back, Harry was gently urging Kreacher to go on a mission for him. One Regulus Black would have approved of. And Harry did a brilliant bit: he pulled out the Black locket that Regulus had left, and gave it to Kreacher to keep. Ginny was shocked again. Kreacher was so overwhelmed at being given a Black family heirloom of his very own that it was half an hour before he could even stop crying and stand up properly.

When Kreacher disappeared to go find Mundungus, Harry suddenly started acting like Kreacher would be back any minute now. No matter what Ginny or Hermione, or even Ron, said, Harry just paced back and forth, certain that the next time he turned around, there would be a loud crack and Kreacher would be there with the thief.

After a couple hours, Ginny didn't think she could stand it. Every time Harry stormed up or down the stairs, the portrait of Mrs. Black started shrieking again. Finally, Ginny had taken all she could. She stormed into the entryway and started pulling at the portrait.

"You can't get that off the wall. It's got a Permanent Sticking Charm on it. I've tried," Hermione lectured.

"Don't... care!" Ginny hissed as she strained.

It took a couple moments to get the portrait pulled far enough forward that Ginny could get any sort of grip. By then, Mrs. Black was screaming for her to stop. Ginny didn't. She punched her fingers through the plaster of the wall and pulled until she thought her shoulders would tear loose. She still didn't stop.

The groans and snaps in the wall were her first hint that she was making a difference. The sound of splintering laths and breaking plaster was next. Once there was an opening big enough for her to get her hands in, she had even better leverage. She planted her feet on the wall and pulled so hard her shoes started cracking the plaster under them.

With a frantic, terrified scream from the portrait, the wall finally failed. Plaster and laths and even most of the studs behind the wall came free in a crash that sent the portrait flying to smash against the opposite wall. Ginny fell to the floor and found herself covered in wood fragments and plaster chips. Mrs. Black was screaming her lungs out in terror, and was nearly face-down on the floor.

Hermione humphed and said, "Just look at that wall!"

Ginny brushed plaster-dusted hair out of her face and saw what Hermione meant. Where there had been a wall with a big painting, there was now an empty space with some broken wooden studs and an assortment of nasty things. Old spiderwebs, some long-dead puffskeins, and several amulets mounted on the back side of the space.

Hermione looked at the amulets and just said, "Probably charms against intruders and such. I'll have to research them." She waved her wand in a brisk reparo charm, and the studs reassembled themselves. Then a couple quick cleaning charms took care of the spiderwebs and dead creatures, along with the plaster and lath and wood splinters all over the entryway floor.

Ginny went to take another shower, while Hermione briskly directed the boys about. By the time Ginny was clean and dry and dressed again, the entryway looked as good as it ever had, although there was no longer a painting there. Instead, Ron was using his wand to rough in a pair of set-in cabinets.

She asked, "Where's the portrait?"

Ron said, "She made me take it up to the attics. She's giving Kreacher one of the backmost rooms up there, and he can have the portrait up there with him. He'll probably wet himself with excitement. Harry's scavenging some decent wood from the attic, so we can turn this into something useful. We can put our boots and caps and cloaks and scarves in here. Hermione wants coathooks on this side here, and shelves on that side there, and maybe we can get rid of that stupid umbrella stand."

She looked down at the hollowed-out troll's foot. Even the Slayer in her didn't like the thing. "Maybe Kreacher would like it."

He grinned wickedly. "Get rid of everything we don't like and pretend it's another gift? Pretty sneaky there."

She scowled at him, "That wasn't what I meant!"

"Oh suuuuuure," he muttered. Then he went back to work, trying to remember the woodworking charms their dad had showed him years ago.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 29 Feb 2012 08:37:28 GMT  
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Chapter 38 Your Eyes Will Be Opened

But Harry didn't stop pacing around. Ginny finally got tired of watching him. And hearing him. She gave Hermione her grocery list, and she planned to go for a walk through the neighborhood to try and spot that vampire nest.

Hermione stopped her. "Hold on a second. You can't go walking around with that Weasley hair and expect no one's going to notice it."

"What are you going to do?" Harry asked.

Hermione calmly said, "You do know Aurors have to learn how to do Disguising Charms, right?"

Ron said, "Can't all be Tonks, that's for sure."

Harry said, "Okay, let's see."

So Hermione tried a simple Disguising Charm. It didn't work. Then she tried an illusion about Ginny. Suddenly, Ginny's hair looked chestnut brown and her skin looked tan, so no one was likely to spot her. Especially if she was in ordinary Muggle clothes.

Ron said, "Can you do a Disguising Charm to Fred and George so we can pretend they're not part of the family when we want?" Harry snickered into his hand.

Hermione frowned, "I don't think that's going to work, because I think they must have learned these kinds of spells already. Some of their toys and jokes have to use these as the base spells. So they would know how to dispel them."

Ron patted her on the shoulder. "I was only joking."

Hermione made sure she and Ginny were both dressed like normal Muggle teenagers, and then she gave Ginny her instructions. "We'll stand on the front step and apparate in the middle of that sad little clump of bushes at the far corner of the square. No one who hasn't been told the secret of the house by a Secret Keeper can even see us when we're on the top step or in the doorway. Once we're in the bushes, we'll just check for people looking our way, and then we'll walk off on our business. Now you can apparate back to the front step all right?"

Ginny nodded and teased, "Yes, mum."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Really, if you don't think you can do it, just wait until no one is looking and then walk up to the front door."

Ron stood behind Hermione and mouthed 'yes mum'. Ginny had to bite the inside of her mouth to keep from bursting out in giggles.

Ginny lifted her wand and stepped in a slight turn. She disappeared cleanly and apparated in the middle of the bushes with a noise that she hoped no one heard. She stepped out of the bushes, and Hermione apparated into their midst.

Ginny whispered "All clear" to Hermione before casually strolling off. She hoped she looked casual. She knew she looked unarmed, since she had her wand and her weapons tucked away in her leather wrist bracelet.

Hermione stepped out and walked off to find a nearby grocery store. Ginny watched until Hermione rounded a corner, just to make sure no one was following her. Then Ginny wandered off, doing her best to look like she was walking aimlessly.

She strolled around the square, trying to get a hint of vampire or giant or anything. The only thing she got was a feeling that two tough boys in black leather jackets were eyeing her. She pretended she didn't notice them. She took a side street and moved a block further out. She walked in another simple square, still trying to find even the merest hint of vampires or demons. When that failed, she tried moving another block further out. Still nothing on her Slayer senses, just the feeling that someone was watching her.

She turned around and found those two toughs following her. She didn't think they would be much help. 'Oh hello, seen any undead creatures of the night eating people around here?' She also didn't want to hit them with a quick Stupefy and possibly alert the Ministry there was magic going on in the area, not to mention that using a hex like that would count as attacking a Muggle and could get her in serious trouble.

Still, she was a skilled witch. And the Vampire Slayer. If these two boys thought they would just grab her and have a little fun, she would show them the error of their ways.

She stood there and let the lads walk up to her. One of them leered, "Hello luv, you look bored. Fancy a bit of fun?"

She smiled at them. "Sure. I am so bored. This must be the most boring place on earth. Anything happening around here? Maybe after dark? Parties? Anything?"

"I'm Jess. This is Cam."

"Yeah, there's nothin' around here, but we can show you some hot places."

"Great," Ginny lied. "Can we meet back here after dark? I ought to be able to get loose from my dad's house by ten tonight."

"Works for me."

"Same here."

She patted Jess on the shoulder and strode off. She could hear they weren't following her. No, she could hear they were arguing about who got to have sex with her first. She shuddered inwardly. If either of those jerks put a paw on her, she was going to break it. Maybe she'd break it off.

She wondered if she had been anywhere near this angry and aggressive before she became the Vampire Slayer. Some part of her wanted to say that she had been a nice, normal, sweet-natured witch. Another part of her made her quite uncomfortable by reminding her of all the things she had done to her big brothers, and the number of times her mother had grounded her.

On her way back to the square, she put that out of her mind by considering the big problem: where were those vampires? She hated to admit it, but there was no reason for the vampires to have their base within a few feet of the square. This was London. They could have their base miles away, and get here by car or truck. One closed lorry full of vampires could dump an army of the bloodsuckers on her doorstep at any moment. Vampires didn't need to breathe, and they didn't have to worry about the heat inside a closed metal box. They couldn't be crushed just by piling half a dozen vampires on top. A master vampire could probably pack over a hundred vampires in a large lorry and not have to worry about any damage to the contents. She remembered the fight in the basement of the factory, and she cringed inwardly at the thought of over a hundred vampires leaping out of a truck and swarming all over her. Not even a Slayer could cope with that.

Well, she knew she couldn't.

She decided that she would patrol the area tonight. If the vampires were just putting scouts in the area at night so they could hunt for Harry's hideout, then there might be some threats prowling the streets sniffing around for witches and wizards coming here.

Ginny stepped into the clump of bushes and made sure no one was watching her. Then she apparated to the top step. She didn't do it cleanly, so only her Slayer reflexes and balance kept her from falling down the steps onto the sidewalk. She decided she just wouldn't mention that to Hermione. Or Harry.

She slipped inside. She was frankly surprised by the amount of work Ron had gotten done. It already looked like wood cabinets built into the wall.

Ron said, "Harry got the wood in the attic from a broken bookcase, and he found the coathooks in one of the upstairs bedrooms. He's been stomping all over the house."

Ginny said, "It looks nice."

"Thanks." Ron sighed, "It's not as good as it ought to be. Dad showed me the charms, but I didn't spend enough time working with them that I really got all of them down, and I didn't practice the tricky ones enough to be able to make it look really good. If dad showed Hermione those charms, she could probably make the things look like it was done by the best craftswizards at Dowling and Bannister."

"Well, at least we don't have Mrs. Black screaming at us day and night, and we don't have a gaping hole full of dead puffskeins."

Ron put his wand away and said, "Okay, I'll give you that much."

Ginny heard a crack outside on the steps, and said, "It must be Hermione."

She opened the door... and gaped.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 04 Mar 2012 08:19:03 GMT  
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Chapter 39 A Delight to the Eyes

A chubby old lady stood there in a frumpy dress and the ugly kind of shoes old Muggle ladies wore. She held a big bag of groceries in each arm.

"Hermione?" Ginny checked.

"Bloody hell," Ron muttered.

The old lady stepped in and handed the bags to Ron. "Go put these on the kitchen table, Ron."

"Hermione?" Ginny asked again.

"What?" the old lady said. She looked at her wristwatch and said, "Ooh, I cut it pretty close even with the apparating. The Polyjuice Potion is going to wear off any second now."

"Polyjuice Potion? You did this with Polyjuice Potion?" Ginny gaped.

Hermione said, "I used a hair from Mrs. Nichols, a nice little old lady who lives down the street from mum and dad. No one in the wizarding world is ever going to recognize her."

Ron was back already. "And you shopped like that, and you paid with Muggle money, and you just walked out?"

Hermione nodded, "Right. I just walked until I could find a nice, secluded..." The potion wore off,

and she slowly changed back to a Hermione wearing baggy clothes that looked like they belonged to someone six sizes larger and sixty years older. "...spot, and then I apparated here." She took out her wand and transfigured her clothes back to the jeans and blouse she was wearing that morning.

Ron said, "It's got to be easier just using Harry's cloak and walking right up to the door here."

Hermione shrugged. "Maybe, but it was pretty crowded in the store, and someone would have bumped into you. What would you do then?"

Ginny said, "That reminds me." And she pointed at her no-longer red hair. Hermione waved her wand and undid the illusion.

Ron asked, "Just how much disguise can you do with those charms anyway?"

Hermione looked pensive. "I don't know. But you should be able to look like someone who obviously couldn't be a Weasley, and especially not Ron Weasley."

Ron asked, "So then why weren't Slytherins using charms like that all the time, just to get Harry in trouble, or frame someone else for bad deeds, or getting out of assignments?"

Hermione pursed her lips. "Well, according to Hogwarts, a History the whole school has a series of spells on it. You know you can't apparate within the school grounds-

"The house elves can get around that one," Ron pointed out.

"-and you can't maintain certain other types of spells on the school grounds. Disguising Charms are one of them. And Polyjuice Potion is not only hard to brew, but takes a long time. It is a N.E.W.T. level potion to brew."

"And you made it when you were only a second year," Ron pointed out. "In the girls' toilet. With Moaning Myrtle looming over your shoulder all the time."

Hermione blushed and looked down at her feet. "I had help."

Ron rolled his eyes. "Help? What help were we? We made a distraction so Snape wouldn't be looking your way when you snitched some ingredients. We dropped in and asked you if you were sure you wanted to go through with your plan. We were about as much help as Snape was."

Ginny could see this was an argument Ron and Hermione had gone through before. So she interrupted, "What I want to know is where are those stupid vampires?"

"You didn't find them?" Hermione asked.

"I figured you'd already wiped them out," Ron said at the same time.

"There was nothing," Ginny complained in frustration. "Not even a hint."

Hermione said, "Well, there's no reason they need to be based right here on Grimmauld Place. I doubt there's a free building anywhere on the place, anyway. I did check on Muggle real estate when Dumbledore told me about this place, and there haven't been any real estate listings for anything really near here for years. So there's probably no place for them to make a nest."

Ginny growled to herself. It would have been nice if Hermione had bothered to tell her about that first. She said, "I guess I need to stake out the square at night and see if any vampires are prowling around looking for the house. Or looking for witches and wizards going to the house."

Hermione pursed her lips. "I hope you find some, because otherwise that could mean we guessed wrong and they're building up a vampire force to attack someplace we haven't even thought about yet. That would be very bad. On the other hand, if you find any, you can't stake them all. We have to find the nest."

"I know that from the last time," Ginny complained.

"AND we can't wipe out the nest yet, because we don't want the Death Eaters to realize there are people using this house!"

Ginny frowned, "We can't leave a pack of vampires loose in London! We have to kill them!"

Hermione insisted, "We can't tip off V- Riddle's forces. They'd be bound to try to trap us in here if they can't break the Fidelius and attack us in the house. They could surround the house with anti-apparation hexes and then pen us in with shield charms so we couldn't sneak out under Harry's cloak or something like that."

"Not a problem," Ron shrugged. "Kreacher could disapparate out of the house and take us with him. Remember? The power he knows not? Seems like Tommy has a lot of holes in his knowledge."

Hermione sniffed, "Well, he has deliberately assumed a lot of pureblood attitudes, and so he has overlooked a lot of areas of research. However..."

Ginny let Hermione lecture Ron about magical fields of study Voldemort. Hermione was very careful to call him 'Riddle' would be an expert in, and those he had probably completely ignored. Meanwhile, Ginny walked down to the kitchen and put away groceries, since Kreacher wasn't

back yet. Then she fixed some sandwiches with the bread Kreacher had baked and some of the meat Hermione had bought. When she called everyone to dinner, Hermione was still going on about it. Ginny could tell Ron was just pretending to listen. Pretending to listen to a lecture was a valuable skill that every Hogwarts student learned in History of Magic classes.

Harry was still pacing about and hoping Kreacher would turn up at any moment. Hermione took Ginny and Ron aside. "While Harry's distracted, I think you need a lot of practice. We can do apparition within the house, but we can't apparate into the house or out of it because of the wards. So I think you should practice apparating around the house, and a lot of voiceless spells."

Ron wanted to fiddle a bit more with the shelves in the entryway, and Ginny wanted to go out and hunt some more. But Hermione was determined. So after lunch and after Ginny stalled a while cleaning up in the kitchen they went to the front parlor and practiced non-verbal spells for a couple hours.

It was frustrating. Ginny had to practice and practice to get even the simplest spells to work, while Hermione made it look easy. She had to admit that even Ron was fairly good at it. And no matter how many times Hermione talked about this being something really hard to do, Ginny still felt like she ought to be able to do it as easy as staking a vampire.

Hermione finally let them take a break in the middle of the afternoon. They had a little tea, and dragged Harry down to the kitchen so he would eat too. Hermione lectured him, "Now Harry, I know you're impatient, but I really need you to be doing the teaching on this. You're the best at Defense Against the Dark Arts, and you know it. And that's the kind of spells we need to work at doing without speaking. Shields and hexes and curses and jinxes and counter-curses."

"And dropping podiums on vampires," Ginny added. Ron snorted with laughter.

Hermione just went on, like Ginny was serious. "Yes. Mobilicorpus and levicorpus and wingardium leviosa are all quite effective ways of neutralizing the strength and speed of vampires. We can't forget those."

Harry said, "And accio. No point in letting vampires shoot us or hit us with pickaxes if we can take the things away first."

Hermione nodded, like she was writing everything down on a mental list.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 07 Mar 2012 19:44:39 GMT  
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## Chapter 40 The Eyes of Both Were Opened

The afternoon's lessons really went pretty well. For some reason, Ginny learned better when Harry was teaching her. Maybe Hermione focused too much on the theory, which seemed to be what helped her learn all this stuff. Maybe Harry was just a better teacher. Or maybe Ginny just wanted to impress Harry a lot more than she wanted to impress Hermione, so she just tried that much harder for him.

Still, she was the worst at voiceless spells, and the worst at apparation. By a long shot. Hermione insisted she was doing really well when the others all had a whole year of preparation and study, but that didn't make her feel any better. Hermione also said Ginny was better than Ron was at the start of sixth year, which really made Ron grouchy at Hermione for most of the afternoon.

Hermione was already working on more N.E.W.T. level spells. She was also making Harry and Ron learn new material and then be responsible for teaching it to the rest of the group. Hermione was showing them seventh-year Transfiguration and Charms, while she was making Harry responsible for DADA and Ron responsible for Care of Magical Creatures.

Ginny had a sneaking suspicion that Hermione would soon add in Potions and Herbology, and would be teaching them the entire seventh year curriculum. Not counting Hermione's own classes on Arithmancy and Ancient Runes. Ginny had to wonder if Hermione was already assuming this quest for the Horcruxes might take the whole school year. Or maybe a lot longer. Well, as long as Hermione didn't ask Ginny to be responsible for teaching Divination or History of Magic.

Hermione clapped her hands and smiled, "I think that's a good stopping spot for us. Maybe tonight Harry can read up on finite incantatem and what sorts of spells it won't end. That's probably valuable for us. And Ron can research vampires, and find out what sorts of magical creatures they might have around them." She pulled textbooks out of her pouch and handed them to the boys.

Ron said, "Ugh. I'm doing it, but under protest! Doing schoolwork outside of school is just wrong, and doing it now seems..."

"Relevant?" Hermione pretended to ask. "We need to learn this stuff, even if we're not in a classroom. And one of the things you should be learning is how to learn new things, and how to research subjects." She turned her head. "Oh, and Ginny? I have some History of Magic textbooks, and I'd like you to look up the oldest giant wars and any treaties with demons. Maybe you could tell us what might be important for you as the Vampire Slayer tomorrow when Ron and Harry are giving their reports."

She frowned, but accepted the books. And just when she thought she was getting out of any assignments. Fine, she'd do these. But she was definitely not doing any divination research.

"Oh, and I have a book on prophetic dreams. Could you read through it and see if there's anything related to your Slayer dreams?"

She sighed unhappily. "All right." But that was it! If Hermione gave her anything else, like Potions, she was saying no!

"And there's a potions workroom downstairs. Maybe tomorrow morning, you could help me clean out the stores in there and see what's still usable," Hermione said, almost as if she was using Legilimency on everyone.

Ginny put her foot down. "No. We have too much else to do, and I have patrolling to do tonight. If you want that dungeon room cleared out, wait until Kreacher's back, and have him do the cleaning first."

"Kreacher's not our slave," Hermione insisted angrily.

Ginny said, "No, but he has a job. And if you don't give him work to do, and then let him do it well, he'll go crazy."

"CraziER," Ron said.

"Ron!" Hermione said sharply.

So Ginny got out of any more assignments, and all it cost was listening to Hermione read Ron the riot act for fifteen minutes as she lectured about being kind to Kreacher and enslavement of house elves.

Dinner was simple, because Ginny turned it all over to Hermione and Ron. Ginny stood in the front parlor staring out the window as the sun set. She didn't know how long it would be before anyone came to watch the house, but if vampires were coming, then she was going to have to be alert. And the easiest way to watch for them was from the window. They couldn't see her or hear her. She could see the entire square. She stayed there and ate a couple sandwiches that Harry brought up to her. She wasn't going to leave the window.

About thirty minutes after the sun was gone, she saw the first movements in the darkness. Three figures ghosted in from the back side of the park, off to her left, and took up positions in the darkest part of the square. Then they stopped moving. They were like statues in the dark. Vampires didn't have to breathe, or blink, or even worry about getting a cramp in the leg. She worried that they were pretty much invisible to any Muggles walking by. There was no telling how

many people might die if she didn't do something.

"Got anything?" whispered Ron from the back of the room. "And could it be any darker in here? I nearly fell over a chair!"

"Hush," said Hermione. "And you don't have to whisper. The Fidelius Charm blocks sounds from the house too. And yes, it needs to be darker in here than outside, so she can see out."

Ginny said, "Three vampires in the middle of the square, under one of the trees."

Hermione said, "You can't apparate behind them and stake them. They'll hear you."

Ron said, "She could apparate a couple blocks over and then sneak up on them."

Ginny said, "They still might hear me apparate, but they probably wouldn't be able to tell it's me apparating, instead of some random city noise."

Hermione said, "Remember to leave at least one, so we can follow them back to their nest."

"Hermione! You already told her that about a thousand times," Ron complained.

"She is called the Vampire Slayer, not the Vampire Rescuer," Hermione said primly.

Ron grimaced, "Yeah, I had noticed that bit."

Ginny stood there for another couple hours. At least it felt like it. When Harry came to check on her, she asked, "How long's it been?"

"Since Ron came up?"

She didn't nod, because she didn't want to lose sight of her prey. "Yeah. It seems like half the night."

"It's been about thirty minutes."

She wanted to turn and glare at him. She didn't. "Very funny."

Harry insisted, "I'm not joking. Ask Hermione. It's only been thirty minutes. Maybe thirty-five."

Ginny groaned, "I'll never last until morning."

He said, "Why bother? Go to the front step. Apparate about five blocks over. Sneak back here."

I'll wait in the doorway where they can't see me. Take one out with that crossbow you've got. When they all turn around and look at you, I'll pick one off with a hex. If the last one doesn't run then, put a crossbow bolt in his arm. Just follow him back to the nest, then apparate home."

She tried not to smile that Harry had said 'home' but she was thinking that anyplace with Harry would be a home for her. Maybe he was thinking that way too, deep down. She just said, "Good idea. Let's try it."

She grabbed her gloves with the Hardening Charm, and a dark jacket. She put her hair up in a French twist to keep it out of her face and out of the reach of any attackers. They walked down to the ground floor and opened the front door. She stepped onto the top step and disappeared.

She apparated with a loud crack in a narrow alleyway between a store and a set of flats. Hermione had pointed it out to her already as a good spot to apparate to, since it was always dark in there, and no one was going to see her appear or vanish. She did scare a cat, who yowled frantically and took off deeper into the alley.

She hid her wand so Muggles wouldn't notice it, and she strolled off toward Grimmauld Place. She didn't make an effort to be silent until she was within a block of the square. Then she tucked her wand away when she began to feel the presence of the vampires. She pulled out her crossbow and loaded it, before she began sneaking up on the three vampires.

She slipped between some parked cars and took careful aim. Her first shot caught the middle vampire dead in the heart, and he turned to dust as his partners jumped in shock.

The two vampires wheeled around looking for their attacker. Harry caught one with a fast *sectumsempra* and he dusted as well.

Ginny had her crossbow loaded again by then, and she aimed at the third vampire's leg. She didn't want to accidentally catch him in the heart.

She wasn't expecting two vampires to leap on her back, smashing her to the pavement and breaking the crossbow to pieces.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 11 Mar 2012 08:16:07 GMT  
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Chapter 41 Hid Themselves

She wasn't expecting two vampires to leap on her back, smashing her to the pavement and breaking the crossbow to pieces.

Ginny just barely managed to catch herself with one hand and keep from having her face smashed into the tarmac.

The only thing that kept her from having a vampire's teeth sunk in her neck was the cramped conditions. She was in between two parked cars, and she fell in between the bumpers. There was room for her, but not for two large men. Or rather, two large male vampires who crashed into each other and wedged themselves in between the trunk of one car and the bonnet of the other.

She broke the grip of one vampire while he was punching the other vampire and yelling at him to get out of his way. She used the moment of respite to slide under the rear of the first car.

One vampire dropped to the pavement and reached for her. She had no idea where the other one was, but she doubted it would be doing something good for her. By then she had a stake pulled out of her wristband. The vampire grabbed her with both hands and pulled her toward him. As he opened his mouth, she stabbed him in the heart with her stake.

He exploded into dust just after she complained, "Whew, you need a breath mint."

The car suddenly lurched, and the car alarm went off, deafening her. The car lurched again, and was shoved a couple yards forward. The vampire took his hands off the rear of the car and leered down at her. "Not so fancy now, are you?"

She held her stake ready. He looked at it and growled, "Little b-"

A violet hex caught him at the neck, and he burst into dust before he could finish cursing at her.

She looked over, and Harry was sprinting across the square toward her. She almost gasped out loud, because there could be more vampires around, and he could get hurt. Or killed. She scrambled to her feet and looked around frantically.

There was a small van parked just five cars further back, and its doors were wide open. Merlin's beard! They must have come out of there. She hadn't noticed the vampires in the van while she was so busy concentrating on the vampires in the square. Her vampire-detecting sense didn't tell her how many there were, and she had walked right past two monsters.

She was incredibly lucky she wasn't dead.

Harry hugged her worriedly. "Are you all right? When I saw those two jump on you..."

But the car alarm was still blaring. She hurried him off into the darkness of the square and asked, "Where's the rest of them?"

"What?"

"Where... Oh never mind." She led him back to the manor, where Ron and Hermione were standing in the open doorway.

"Harry? What's going on?" Ron wondered.

"If you two killed every vampire, we're going to have to deal with-" Hermione began.

Ginny pushed everybody inside and slammed the door. The awful blare of the car alarm dropped to something bearable. She said, "They had more vampires in a car just around the corner. They almost got me."

She still had to listen to Hermione lecture her for another five minutes, even after she admitted that Harry killed most of the vampires. It was like being yelled at by her mum, except she didn't get food served to her, and she didn't get any punishments. Unless you counted the study assignments she already had.

Come to think about it, it really was a lot like being yelled at by her mum.

They watched from the front parlor window for several hours. The Muggle police came and took a statement from some angry Muggle who was standing on the sidewalk across the square, waving her arms and complaining loudly about hooligans and car alarms and not letting a poor woman get a decent night's sleep. Someone came out and turned off their car alarm, then talked to the police about what Ginny guessed was a lot of damage to the back end of the car. Having a vampire shove it hard enough to move it a dozen feet even with the brake on could do that. Then more police came and studied the van with the open doors. Hermione just said, "It's probably stolen." A towtruck came and hauled it off. Then several people showed up and just picked up things and put them in little bags.

Once everyone was gone, Hermione said, "Now we can go take a look."

Ginny didn't know what Hermione had in mind, but they walked over to where the broken crossbow had been. The police had picked it up, probably thinking it might be evidence. It wasn't fair. She had hardly gotten a chance to try it out.

Hermione muttered, "It's a good thing you were wearing gloves, or the police would have your fingerprints all over the crossbow."

"What are you going to tell the suit of armor?" Ron asked her.

Hermione frowned, "I suppose I'll have to tell it the truth."

Harry said darkly, "Assuming we ever get to go back to Hogwarts."

Ginny pouted, "I really liked that crossbow, and I only got to fire one lousy bolt."

Hermione grimaced, "It's not as if that many of the Hogwarts suits of armor even have crossbows. They're all carrying polearms or swords or maces." She looked up. "The vampire dust is either all blown away, or else the police gathered it up for forensics."

"Four-hen-sicks?" Ron wondered out loud.

"Forensics, Ron. Forensics," Hermione automatically corrected him. "It's a Muggle method of analyzing what they find at crime scenes to figure out who did the crime and how it happened."

Harry said, "There's entire programmes on the telly all about it. I'll have to show you one sometime."

Hermione continued, "So I need to see where the other vampires died."

Harry and Ginny showed her the area under the tree, but even with a lumos spell, Hermione couldn't find anything worth salvaging. She finally huffed, "We'll just have to work with something less effective."

She led them back into the house, and into the rear parlor. She cleared the table there and laid out a map of London. "Now. We're here." She pointed at a small square she had marked in black ink on the map.

Ginny looked over the map. It was a Muggle map, so it didn't have Diagon Alley marked on it. In fact, it looked like there couldn't possibly be room for Diagon Alley. She had no idea how that worked, but she assumed the magics on the place just distorted all the Muggle mapmaking and such. She asked, "So if there's something important hidden in Knockturn Alley, we won't be able to find it with this, will we?"

Hermione nodded firmly. "Right. St. Mungo's and the Ministry won't show up on this either, and any hidden manors like the Black house here won't show up. If our vampires are hiding out in a magically protected place, this won't work."

"And just what is 'this', if you don't mind sharing?" Ron asked.

"I'm going to use the vampire dust I collected to try to find every vampire in London. If we had vampire dust from those guys out there, I think we could have targeted just their lair, but we'll have to make do with what we have."

"So how does this work?" Harry asked.

"We brew a special potion-"

"Which you already have," Ron interrupted.

She ignored him. "-and put the sample into it, then we perform a Linking Spell with the map, once we have the right runes along the edges."

"Which you already did," Ron guessed.

"Is this how the Marauders' Map works?" Harry asked.

"In principle," Hermione said. "They used the wards of Hogwarts to replace the part with the potion and the sample. And they modified the Linking Spell too. It's really a very clever piece of spellwork. It's just a shame they couldn't do something a little more productive with that much research and effort."

Ginny assumed that meant Hermione could now make her own Marauders' Map if she wanted to. She was sort of surprised Hermione hadn't, even if it was just to keep track of what Harry and Ron were getting up to. Or what Malfoy and his cronies were doing. Or what Snape was doing.

Hermione took out of the pouch a bottle of a shimmering green potion. Then she fished out a plastic envelope full of dust. Vampire dust. She poured the dust into the potion, and it slowly changed from a bright green to an eerie black. Then she waved the tip of her wand over the open bottle, whispered a few spellwords, and snapped the wand at the center of the map.

Black fumes rose out of the bottle. Everyone took a couple steps back, just in case. The fumes swirled over the map and then splattered into glimmering points of green light.

Ginny stepped forward again. She looked over the map. "This can't be right!" she insisted. Because there were green dots all over the map.

Hermione was obviously counting under her breath. "Forty-five, forty-six, forty-seven... Forty-eight vampires loose in London right this second? Oh, that's not good."

Ginny looked over the map. "And some of these might be groups of vampires? Maybe even

nests?"

Ron looked horrified. "You mean there's hundreds of the bastards loose in London? We can't clean up hundreds of vampires spread all over the city! Ginny just nearly died again, and there were only, what? Five?"

Hermione pursed her lips. "Maybe it's only one nest. Or a couple. And they're just spread out over London for the night."

Harry said grimly, "Looking for food all over town, so it's not obvious there's a problem around the nests. This isn't good."

Hermione said, "Tomorrow, we'll search for some of the vampire dust. In daylight. Then we can perform a better Linking Spell."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 14 Mar 2012 07:02:02 GMT  
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Chapter 42 | Heard the Sound

Ginny woke up early again. At least she got to shower and dress before anyone else wanted to use the nice bathroom. There were other bathrooms in the house, but the en suite for Mrs. Black's bedroom was on the other side of Mrs. Black's bedroom. And her room looked like Kreacher had been raising a zoo full of dark creatures in there.

Come to think of it, he probably had. On Mrs. Black's orders. The painting had probably been telling Kreacher all kinds of disturbing things to do for years and years.

At any rate, they hadn't cleaned it out yet. They had opened the door the other day, and Ron had slammed it again as soon as three big spiders scuttled out from under the bed. Ginny would have slammed the door shut if Ron hadn't. Those spiders were the size of Crookshanks, and there was no telling how many more of them might be under that bed. Hermione had just put a Sealing Charm on the door so nothing could get out through the cracks around the door. Ginny didn't want to think about what the bathroom might be like.

She went downstairs to the kitchen. Kreacher still wasn't back. She hoped that was a good sign. She was pretty sure that when Harry gave Kreacher that locket, he had earned Kreacher's loyalty in a way that only a few dead Blacks had managed. Still, she had no idea where Kreacher was,

or what he was doing, or even if he had left England to track down Mundungus.

She started fixing breakfast when she heard the others start stirring. She wasn't too surprised that Hermione insisted on Ron and Harry getting up once Hermione was showered and dressed. Ginny didn't think Hermione would be too comfortable with this house for a very long time.

Harry and Ron tromped down the stairs and got ready for breakfast. Hermione asked, "Is there anything I can do to help?"

Ginny nodded. "Sure. Get out the plates and flatware so the boys can set the table. Then slice up one of the loaves in the pantry. There ought to be three left from the other day. I hate to admit it, but Kreacher's a better baker than I am now. Ever since I got strong, I keep overworking the dough.

Hermione shrugged, "I'm terrible at baking. Mum tried to teach me a couple times, but I always let myself get sidetracked with school projects."

Ginny grinned. "Mum always said if you could get a good grade in Potions, you could make a perfect stew or bake a perfect cake."

Hermione sighed. "I suppose I just need to study it like it's a chemistry problem."

Ginny asked, "Do you think Snape can bake?"

Hermione frowned, "I have no idea. He certainly doesn't cook at Hogwarts, and I don't know where his house is. I mean, I know it's in Spinner's End. Somewhere within walking distance of Harry's mum's old house. But the house is Unplottable now, and it's masked in some other ways."

Ginny asked, "Has anyone ever told you you'd make a good general?"

Hermione blushed and said, "Umm, no, but thanks for saying something. Sometimes I'm not sure the boys even appreciate all my hard work."

Ginny patted her on the shoulder and said, "I think a lot of the time, they're just kind of overwhelmed and don't know what to say. After all, they're boys." They smiled at each other in understanding. Sometimes Ginny thought Hermione was absolutely right when she said Ron had the emotional depth of a teaspoon. It was just that Hermione hadn't said it about pretty much every boy they knew. Ginny just hoped she had the chance someday to talk to her mum about it.

After breakfast, Hermione and Harry went to the front door to check in the square, just in case there was any vampire dust Hermione could salvage.

As soon as Harry opened the front door, Ginny was hit with a nasty, twisting feeling in her gut. It felt almost like she had just walked up to a dozen vampires. She pushed past him and slammed the door shut.

"Ginny! What in Merlin's name..."

Ginny took a deep breath. The feeling was gone as soon as she shut the door. "I... I don't know. There's something out there. Something not human. It felt like a ton of vampires, but it wasn't."

Hermione rushed them up to the front parlor, where they could look out the windows and study the square.

"There's a car there," Harry pointed out.

"It wasn't there last night," Hermione said.

Ginny took a look. It was an ordinary Ford. She could see through the side windows that there was a man in front in the driver's seat, and two men in back. Or maybe they were man-like things, because they were the only things around that could have set off her Vampire Slayer senses like that. She couldn't tell, because all of them were wearing big coats and hats.

Ginny said, "They can't be vampires. Not in this sunlight."

Hermione said, "Then they're not human either."

Harry asked, "How do you know?"

She pursed her lips. "How many people do you know who can sit in a hot car right in the sun in the middle of August, and be all bundled up like that? Their car isn't running, so they can't have air conditioning. And they have all the windows rolled all the way up."

Ron came up behind them. "Well, they're not Death Eaters. A bunch of purebloods wouldn't be caught dead in Muggle clothes in a Muggle car acting like Muggles. And I kind of doubt V... I mean Riddle would be hiring Muggles to do his dirty work for him."

Hermione said, "There mere fact that there aren't Death Eaters in robes standing in the square looking for our house is a good hint that whoever is in the car is doing Riddle's work. But there are dark creatures other than vampires. They could be some sort of demons that look mostly human. Or maybe they're Muggle werewolves that Fenrir Greyback knows. Or..."

She took out her wand and pointed at the car. "Hominem revello." Nothing happened. "They're not human. And that includes werewolves."

Ron asked, "Hermione, how do you know *hominem revello* works the same with werewolves as it does on humans? Unless... Lupin?"

"Yes, I tried it on Professor Lupin when I first suspected he was a werewolf. But werewolves are just people with a certain type of curse, so the spell doesn't differentiate." Hermione stopped and did an Illusion Piercing Charm without finding anything. Then she tried an Aura Revealing Charm which only revealed that the things had no aura she could see from the window. Finally she performed a couple Measurement Spells.

"Are you planning on fitting them for some nice robes?" Ron asked sarcastically as she did the Measurement Spells.

"No," Hermione said archly. "But I wanted to find out what I could without alerting them. The two in the back seat are both over seven feet tall and close to three hundred pounds. And the one in the front seat has horns under his hat. They're demons."

Harry groaned, "Oh great. Riddle finds out we have a Vampire Slayer, so he pulls out every dark creature in Britain."

Ron said, "He probably already had them around. He is a 'Dark Lord', right? And he doesn't care what he does to his soul? Probably has demons on retainer."

Hermione stared at the car for a long while. "All right. I'll take Harry's invisibility cloak and apparate to somewhere around the corner, then come back to the square and check for vampire dust. Then I'll go back around the corner and apparate back here to the top step."

Ginny said, "Go about a street or two out. Even with their windows rolled up, they might still be able to hear you apparate."

Harry said, "And we'll be in the doorway in case they spot you. I don't know if demons can see through invisibility cloaks or not. Ginny, we use spells first. You don't go beat them up unless we have to, because the neighbors could see that."

Hermione said, "Don't worry. If I see any of them even open a car door, I'll disappear so fast it'll make your eyes water."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 18 Mar 2012 07:41:19 GMT

## Chapter 43 The Woman Said

Ginny stood in the doorway and watched. She didn't like it. The things in the car just felt wrong, and she wanted to sprint down the steps and hack them to pieces with a sword. Hermione was out there under an invisibility cloak and Ginny couldn't protect her. Riddle was getting monsters to look for Harry and to threaten every suspected Order hideout.

She wasn't good at standing still. She hadn't been a patient girl before, and now she just had this urge to get moving.

She couldn't hear what the demons in the car were saying. There was too much noise from cars and lorries and everything else on the surrounding streets. There was a police siren blaring some streets away as a police car rushed through the city streets. There was a bus roaring through traffic. How was she supposed to use her hearing when everyone was making too much noise?

There. A couple branches moved on that bush over there. It had to be Hermione. There wasn't any breeze in the square now. But anyone could have seen those branches move like that. You had to be more careful than that when you were walking around, even if you had a cloak of invisibility.

There were blades of grass getting swept aside. Why couldn't Hermione be more careful? Why couldn't she hurry up? "How long has she been out there?"

Ron whispered, "Just a minute or two. Why?"

"Seems like she's been out there forever."

"Says the girl who can have a huge fight with a master vampire all over a room in just seven seconds."

"Shut up, Ron," Ginny hissed.

Harry muttered, "Both of you behave, or I'll tell the twins you both were laughing it up over their Quidditch bruises."

Ron said, "We were laughing it up over their Quidditch bruises. Especially the time Ginny scored a goal with a ricochet off Fred's bum."

Ginny said, "But we don't want them to know. All we need is being stuck for a month colored green from head to toe."

Ron frowned, "And they'd do it, too. How'd they get so good at Potions and do so bad in class?"

Ginny told him, "I heard mum and dad talking about it. Dad thinks they got hold of one of his uncles' potions books that had lots of potions for pranks."

"And they didn't share it with me?" Ron fumed. "Those gits!"

Harry said, "We really could have used that. Mostly on Malfoy." Ron snorted in amusement.

Ginny caught a hint of motion out of the corner of her eye. A shrub at the far side of the square rustled slightly. "I think she's leaving."

She waited impatiently, and about two minutes later Hermione apparated onto the top step with a crack.

Hermione bustled inside, letting Harry close the door behind her. "Ooh, I couldn't find anything that wasn't mostly dirt. Why did you have to kill all those vampires? We needed to track some of them!"

Harry said, "They had a van. How were we going to follow that? I don't want to use broomsticks in plain sight in Muggle London, especially with Death Eaters running the Ministry now."

Hermione made a little noise that sounded like 'hmpf' but maybe wasn't meant for anyone else to hear. She said, "Fine. We still have vampire dust, so we can try the map again."

"Good," Ron said. "And maybe this time they're all camped out in just one spot."

Hermione just said, "That's not very likely, you know."

"I know, but I can hope, can't I?" Ron said.

Hermione got out her potion bottle and her map, and tried the Linking Spell again. The map changed, and the green dots sped around to end up in two clusters and another half dozen separate spots.

She said, "Oh dear, it looks like there are dozens here in this nest. It's a lot bigger, and it's only about a mile or two away. That has to be our target. This nest only has a few vampires, and these other spots look like just one or two vampires apiece."

As they watched the map, one of the dots fizzled and winked out of existence.

"What the..." Ron muttered.

Hermione said, "Either the map is failing..."

"I doubt that," Ron said.

"...or that vampire went into some sort of magically screened area, or else he just died. Got turned to dust."

Harry said, "Well, there have to be ordinary people hunting vampires and demons, or else one Slayer in the whole world wouldn't be enough to stop much of anything."

Hermione said, "You're probably right. We should check that spot out. And we should take care of some of these other lone vampires before they become a serious threat."

Ginny said, "I want to take out that nest. They're the real danger. To everybody."

Hermione reluctantly nodded. "You're probably right. But we have other vampire nests we need to track down. And if we take this one out, Riddle's forces will probably concentrate on us here, and we'll have to move."

Harry tried to intercede. "Maybe we could check it out now, and clear it out right before we move out of here. That way, it's safer for everybody else, and we get Riddle's forces looking in the wrong place for a while."

Ron said, "Well, they have to know this place could be where you're hiding. Sirius left it to you in his will, and half the Ministry probably knows that."

Hermione reminded everyone, "But no one else can find the house as long as anyone still holds that Fidelius Charm intact."

Harry said, "They don't need to find it. There have to be plenty of Death Eaters who knew the Black family and know roughly where this place is."

Ginny said, "They probably put that vampire nest as close as they could."

Hermione said, "I think the vampires last night and the demons today are evidence that the Death Eaters know the house is right around here. They just can't see it."

Ron groaned, "How can they not know where it is, if Snape knows and he's a Secret Keeper? Even if he can't say the words, he can take Death Eaters here!"

Hermione primly said, "Ron, there must be something we don't know about Snape."

Ron grumbled, "Yeah, like Dumbledore yanked all his Order memories out of his head and dumped them in a Pensieve."

Hermione looked up at the ceiling and thought for a moment. "We have to consider that's a real possibility."

Harry winced. "And Dumbledore's Pensieve is at the school, where Snape can get at it pretty much any time. So we need to be ready to get out of here pretty fast if we get attacked."

Hermione said, "I'm keeping everything packed and ready to go. And I put a lot of the food in the pantry into my pouch too. So... Does everyone have their book reports ready?"

Three people groaned.

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Chapter 44 Among All Wild Creatures

Ginny didn't like giving her report on the giant wars and demon treaties there wasn't anything else on giant wars that was useful to her in the whole history book, and she couldn't find anything about treaties with demons but she really didn't like the low grade Hermione gave her on her report.

Harry got a much better grade out of Hermione for his report on finite incantatem, and Ron got an acceptable grade on his report. It turned out vampires sometimes worked with demons, and some master vampires even had demon minions, and some dangerous demons had vampire minions. There was some really icky history Ron found on the Order of Aurelius and the way they made demons do their bidding when they needed more brute force.

Then Hermione made everyone do schoolwork. She taught them two new charms and some Transfigurations. Then, after lunch, Ron did a little lesson on kneazel crossbreeds and crup crossbreeds. And Harry taught them a Shield Charm that created a bubble all around you, so you couldn't be attacked from behind or above either. After that, Hermione talked about brewing Polyjuice Potion and the Draught of Living Death. Ginny thought Hermione was a far better teacher than Snape, but not as good as Professor McGonagall or Professor Flitwick. And Ron

was definitely better than Hagrid at teaching Care of Magical Creatures. And Harry was great as a DADA professor, but they all knew that from the Year of Umbridge.

After that, Hermione gave everyone even Ginny more research assignments, and then went into the Black family library to study. Ginny went into 'her' bedroom to work on the History and Divination assignments Hermione had given her, while the boys went off to the bedroom they had used a couple summers ago. Ginny heard them grumbling most of the way there.

Ginny could hear the boys talking instead of studying, so she was planning on sneaking down to the kitchen to start on dinner. But Hermione came by and dragged Ginny off. To the kitchen. She had Ginny practice apparating around the kitchen and pantry, and doing silent wandwork while cooking. It was a lot harder than cooking while saying the kitchen spells. But it also meant that Hermione was learning cooking spells, which no one really taught at Hogwarts and Hermione certainly couldn't learn at home.

Come to think of it, that was really unfair. Purebloods and halfbloods with witch mothers would learn all this stuff just by being home with their mothers. Except for the ones rich enough to have house elf help, in which case they didn't need to learn kitchen spells or cleaning spells. Plus, the more Ginny taught Hermione about kitchen spells and cleaning spells, the less work there was for her to do by herself while Kreacher was still gone. And it really was a lot more fun to do the cooking with a friend. Ginny wondered if Harry would be willing to do more work in the kitchen if it was with her.

That evening, after dinner, Ginny heard the front door unlock and someone walk in. They rushed downstairs to find Remus Lupin calmly dealing with the hexes in the front hall.

Ginny was ready to rush down the stairs to greet him, but Harry waved her back. He walked down the steps, his wand pointing at Remus, and made Remus prove he really was Professor Lupin. Ginny just knew it was Remus. She could feel the wolfy part of the man. But Remus thought what Harry was doing was a good thing.

Unfortunately, Remus had really bad news. Lots and lots of really bad news. Harry was wanted by the Ministry for 'questioning' in the death of Albus Dumbledore. Over a dozen Order homes and safe houses had been invaded in an effort to find Harry, and it was all legal because Harry was officially a wanted man. Riddle didn't bother to take over the Ministry himself, because Death Eaters had the Minister, Pius Thicknesse, under an Imperius Curse. Even the Ministry workers who didn't support Voldemort were being forced to follow orders and were constantly being watched. And the Ministry had a massive initiative, investigating Muggle-born witches and wizards and punishing them for 'stealing' magic from purebloods. Hogwarts was mandatory for purebloods and 'the right sort' of halfbloods, and no Muggleborns would be allowed to attend. Even worse, Snape would be the new headmaster.

When they were done yelling and complaining about the news, Lupin told Harry that he wanted to go with Harry to help, on whatever task Dumbledore had given him. Harry wouldn't tell Lupin what the task was. Ginny thought Harry ought to be telling more people, just in case, but Harry was sticking with Dumbledore's rule, and Ginny had promised to go along with Harry on it.

Instead, Harry insisted to Lupin, "You aren't needed. We have something even more powerful than a Defense Against the Dark Arts expert. Even one who's a werewolf. We have the Vampire Slayer."

Remus shook his head sadly. "Harry, that's an unconfirmed myth. I even said so in class. I seem to recall you didn't do the extra-credit reading on that."

Hermione jumped in, "The Slayer is real, and is already helping us. She was the one who knew the wedding would be attacked, because she has Divination abilities."

Professor Lupin calmly said, "Perhaps I should talk to the Slayer, then."

Ginny looked at him and asked, "Aren't you afraid she might just Slay you on the spot? You are a werewolf, you know."

He smiled, "I'm sure she's quite impressive, but what is a Muggle even a strong Muggle going to do against a fully-trained wizard?"

Ron laughed out loud. It was a great big 'you are so stupid and you have no idea how hard you are going to get crushed' laugh that made her want to rush over and give him a hug, just for believing in her that much.

Hermione smiled back, in that smug way she had when she knew she was right and you weren't. "It turns out this Vampire Slayer is a bit more than a strong Muggle."

Harry smirked. "You're sure you won't hold it against us after she beats you up?"

Lupin nodded.

Ginny stepped forward. "Then let me introduce you to the new Vampire Slayer. Me."

Lupin shook his head slightly. "I think this joke has gone far enough."

Ron said, "Ginny?" He tossed one of the fireplace pokers at her.

She didn't bother to turn around. She just snagged it out of the air. "One real fireplace poker." She twisted it into a pretzel and then tossed it to him.

He strained to untie it, without success. He finally waved his wand over it and straightened it out magically. Then he waved his wand again, and the poker leapt back to its niche beside the fireplace. "Ginny, please listen to me. You can't be the Vampire Slayer. There hasn't been a witch Slayer in recorded history."

Hermione said, "The Ministry has always known it could happen. They have a contract with the Watchers Council on what to do if a witch ever becomes a Slayer. It... isn't nice."

Lupin asked, "And are you ignoring this agreement?"

Hermione said, "The council and its office was blown up last year. There's no Council we know of to talk to, and no way to contact them."

Lupin asked, "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named?"

Hermione said, "Our information is that it was a Muggle terrorist bombing."

Ron added, "Not Ickle Tommikins and his merry men."

Lupin warned, "Ron, calling him names is a very dangerous business."

Harry said, "It can't be any more dangerous than what we're already facing."

Lupin asked, "And aren't all of you worried about your families? They could suffer for your rashness."

Ron smirked, "Ginny and I are home. I've got a nasty case of spattergroit. The medi-witches have already been out to check on me, and I can't go to Hogwarts in case it's contagious. And Ginny's home in case she comes down with it."

Hermione said, "And I found a spell to break all magical links with my family, so there's no way for the Ministry or Death Eaters to find my parents."

Lupin paused. "That's quite... impressive. But isn't that rather dark magic?"

Hermione nodded. "It's blood magic. It's impossible to do, unless you have the blood of a Vampire Slayer. One ounce."

"Ahh," Lupin said in understanding. "Very ingenious. But what about Ginny's Trace?"

Hermione said, "It broke the moment she became the Vampire Slayer. We have a false Trace in

an amulet back at the Burrow, so anyone who checks will find Ginny at home."

Ginny asked, "Still want to challenge the Vampire Slayer?"

Lupin pursed his lips. "Naturally. No wizard I've ever heard of has ever been able to test himself against the Vampire Slayer, or to evaluate how dangerous the Vampire Slayer really is."

Hermione took out her wand and cleared the kitchen, vanishing the kitchen table and chairs, then the throw rugs. She cast a couple protective spells over the china cabinet and some other breakables. Then she stepped back. "Go on, Professor."

Lupin took out his wand and stood in dueling position. "Ginny, aren't you going to take your wand out?"

"Oh no," she said. "I want you to have every advantage. I'll take it out in bit. But first, I want you to see what I can do."

"Very well... stupefy."

Ginny was impressed. Lupin was fast, and he didn't give anything away. She just barely dodged the hex. And he had four more Stunning Hexes winging their way at her as soon as he realized he was going to miss with the first one. She had to move fast to dodge all of them. Not that she needed to dodge them, but she was saving that surprise for later.

But Lupin was trickier than the wizards she'd fought before. He was keeping his spells silent, and he was trying things to deal with a really fast threat. She dodged a couple Incarcerous spells, skated across the floor where he coated it with ice, and leapt out of a circle of fire he tried to trap her in.

He cast a Patronus at her, and she dealt with it like it was any dark creature. She leapt forward and punched it, knocking it against the wall. He animated the fireplace pokers to attack her from behind while he fired off more hexes.

She snagged the pokers out of the air and hurled them at him, forcing him to cast shields. Then she closed in on him and punched his latest shield as hard as she could. Her fist went through it and it burst, the explosion knocking him back against the wall.

But he still wasn't down. He rolled across the floor to dodge anything she might be casting at him, and he cast a spell that blasted out in every direction at once. Ginny turned sideways and let the spell crash past her, and then she kicked his wand out of his hand.

He stood there in shock. "How..."

Hermione said, "No one knew it, but the Vampire Slayer is resistant to magic."

"Our magic," Ginny corrected her. "There's other kinds of magic that can hurt me."

"How do you know that?" Lupin asked as he retrieved his wand and rubbed his wrist where she had kicked him.

"Divination," she admitted. "I have prophetic dreams now. And at first I had a lot of dreams about... well, I'm pretty sure I've seen about fifty different Vampire Slayers die, and none of them were pleasant." She wasn't going to tell him, but one of her dreams was of a warlock calling on some kind of demon or god, and the Vampire Slayer stopped him, but the ritual killed everyone and everything in the area. Sometimes she wondered if that was how she would die, trying to stop Riddle.

Harry firmly said, "I know you're a really powerful wizard, but you can't go with us. You need to be with Tonks."

And that was when it all came out. Professor Lupin, the man who never showed his pain at being a werewolf and being mistreated by most of the Wizarding world, broke down and wept as he explained how he had ruined Tonks' life. Because she was going to have his baby, and he was afraid his child would be tainted from his lycanthropy. Ginny just wanted to rush over and hug him, but Hermione made her stay still. Harry talked to Remus for a while until the poor man was ready to go back home.

And then Hermione said, "Professor, there is something you can do for us that no one else can. Tonks can look like anyone she wants, say... a down on her luck female werewolf. Maybe you couldn't infiltrate the werewolf packs before, because you were too well known as one of Professor Dumbledore's men, but you could use your 'pregnant werewolf girlfriend' as an excuse to 'go over to the other side'. You two could infiltrate and find out who's supporting Fenrir Greyback and who isn't. Maybe you could even get some people to turn away from Greyback. It would be dangerous, but you and Tonks can do it, and I don't know anyone else who could."

Lupin stared at her with his mouth hanging open. He finally said, "That is... That's bloody brilliant, Hermione. Even Dumbledore never suggested that."

They showed Remus out the front door, and locked it behind him. But only seconds after he left, Hermione suddenly gasped. "Oh no! Snape as headmaster? We're in so much trouble!" And she sprinted up the stairs.

Chapter 45 All the Days of Your Life

Hermione rushed into Harry and Ron's bedroom, or at least the room they had slept in a couple summers ago. "Quick! Help me get this painting off the wall!"

They wrestled the painting of Phineas Nigellus Black off the wall and into Hermione's pouch. Once it was completely inside the pouch, Hermione closed the pouch and said, "All we need is him going and telling Snape we're here and everything we said." She glared at the boys. "You didn't say anything important in front of him, did you?"

Ron muttered, "He wasn't even around."

Hermione insisted, "That doesn't mean he wasn't lurking around and listening!"

Harry said, "We only used the room for studying that one time."

Ron said, "We didn't say much of anything... except you're a worse taskmaster than McGonagall."

"Ron!" Hermione squawked.

Ginny didn't say anything, but she thought Ron was probably right.

Hermione threw her hands into the air. "Fine! Don't learn anything! Don't do any research! Go into every new situation completely blind, and get in so much trouble you can't get out again. Just don't come crawling to me when it happens!"

Ron said, "If I can't get out of the trouble, I certainly can't crawl to where you are."

"Ron!" Hermione exploded. "You know what I mean!"

Ron and Hermione still weren't speaking to each other a couple hours later, when there was a loud crack in the kitchen. They all rushed in to find Kreacher there, wrestling Mundungus Fletcher to the ground even though Mundungus had to outweigh him by over a hundred pounds.

And, just because they hadn't heard enough bad news, Mundungus admitted stealing the locket. And losing it to a Ministry official. A short, ugly, toad-faced Ministry woman.

Dolores Umbridge had the locket.

Harry reluctantly had Hermione obliviate Mundungus, so he wouldn't remember seeing them or even knowing the locket was important. Then, once Kreacher took Mundungus back to whatever hole he had been hiding in, Harry told Kreacher he had done well.

Ginny thought Kreacher would burst into tears again.

When Harry took Kreacher up to the attic to show him the room he would have, and Kreacher saw that the painting of Mrs. Black was there waiting for him, he couldn't stop crying for almost an hour.

In the morning, Ginny woke up early and started breakfast. She noticed that the kitchen looked a lot cleaner and brighter. And she had hardly gotten started when Kreacher showed up and took over. Only this time, Kreacher was wearing a clean tea towel and seemed to want to cook. He was baking bread and a pie. And his sausages were really good. She must have eaten ten of them.

After breakfast, they went into the front parlor and plotted. Hermione said, "We have to find Umbridge, and find out where she has that locket."

Harry said, "Does she know it's valuable?"

Hermione said, "It is a valuable antique. She has to know that much, even if she has no idea what's really inside it."

Ron said, "Then she'll want to show it off. Look at me, I'm so important I own this! I can see her now, the frog-faced cow."

Harry said, "So she might wear it a lot. Or have it in a big display in her office at the Ministry."

Hermione said, "So we have to watch the Ministry and find out when she enters and leaves. If we can follow her home, we can look for it there."

Ron winced, "Hermione, she's an important Ministry official. Her house is bound to have a ton of wards and alarms on it. We probably can't get in without having Aurors all over us in a matter of seconds."

Harry said, "And if it's in her office, we'll have to get into the Ministry itself."

"Ugh. Why don't you just have us break into Gringotts while you're at it?" Ron complained.

Harry said, "So first we have to watch the known entrances to the Ministry and see if Umbridge comes or goes from any of them."

Hermione said, "And we'll need to check the nice restaurants in Diagon Alley in case she has lunches there with anyone else important."

Ron said, "She probably just eats in the special rooms the Ministry cafeteria has. It's where the Minister always eats. Dad knows."

Ginny asked, "How are we going to watch? They have Aurors who check on stuff like that. Dad told mum about it once."

Hermione said, "They'll be looking for Harry Potter. Or me. They won't be looking for a little old Muggle lady. Or a sign painter. We have Polyjuice Potion. And I can teach all of you Disguising Charms well, not Ginny. And we have Harry's cloak."

Ginny said, "Okay, so we can take turns watching every morning, and every lunchtime, and every evening at quitting time."

Hermione nodded. "But I want everyone clear on this part. It's going to be dull. Really, really dull. It's standing still and watching something for an hour, and probably nothing useful happens. It's not like police shows on the telly where the bad lady shows up seconds after the police start their stakeout."

Ginny looked at Ron, who looked just as confused as she did. She knew what 'police' were. Muggle people who had jobs like Aurors. But a 'stake out'? What did stakes have to do with police? Or watching for Umbridge? Granted, Ginny thought Umbridge was about as close to a dark creature as you could get without being Lord Voldemort himself. Voldemort had given Harry that lightning scar completely by accident. The scars on the back of Harry's hand were deliberate. Ginny wondered if Umbridge still had a soul.

So Hermione took some Polyjuice Potion and walked around in Diagon Alley during lunch. She came back really hungry, but without sighting Umbridge. Then Harry wore his cloak while Ron went out under a Disguising Charm, and they staked out the places where some of the Ministry people left at night. Still nothing.

Over dinner that night, they talked some more. Ginny had to admit that Kreacher's French onion soup was even better than her mum's.

Hermione said, "If she's using the floo network, we'll never see her. I tried to locate her using one of the hairs I have, and her house must be warded."

Ron said, "Or else she's still in the Ministry. Working late like a good little minion."

Ginny said, "Or maybe she's using one of the special rooms."

"What?" Harry asked.

Ginny explained, "The Ministry has a few rooms that the Minister and deputy ministers can use if they're at work really late, or they need to stay overnight for some reason."

Ron said, "Dad told Bill and Charlie that one of the Ministers back before Fudge used to sleep over in one of the special rooms all the time."

Ginny said, "Mum said that was because the Minister was having an affair with one of the under-secretaries and he didn't want to let his wife find out."

Ron muttered, "I can only pray that isn't what Umbridge is doing."

Hermione primly said, "Thank you very much, Ron. Now I'll be stuck with that hideous image in my head forever."

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Chapter 46 Dust You Shall Eat

After over two weeks of watching the Ministry, they hadn't seen Umbridge even once. Hermione had a chart of people who regularly came in and out by the entrances they could monitor, and she was working on alternate plans.

During that time, Ginny and Hermione had apparated over to Hogsmeade twice while it was the boys' turns to watch the Ministry. Both times, Hermione had taken them right into the Shrieking Shack, which was perfect as long as there were no dark creatures waiting for them.

The first time, Hermione had performed the Linking Spell with a map of Hogsmeade and Hogwarts, and had found two vampire nests. One was up in the mountains behind the village, and one was on the far side of the Forbidden Forest.

The second time, Hermione had detailed maps of the hills surrounding Hogsmeade and of the Forbidden Forest. So she located both vampire nests really accurately.

The next day at breakfast, she said, "We're not going to watch the Ministry today. We're going to go take care of another problem."

"More vampires?" Ron groused.

Hermione nodded. "But we don't need to interrogate them this time, and we won't let any of them sneak up on Ginny either. We have a cave in the foothills to clear out, and a building on the other side of the Forbidden Forest."

"A cave like Sirius hid in?" Ron asked.

"Probably a lot larger than that," Hermione said. "There may be forty or fifty vampires in there. Sirius only needed enough room for him and Buckbeak."

Harry asked, "Same as last time? Fly in with brooms, clear anything out with silent spells?"

Ginny said, "But no stupid fighting. That master vampire was scary. I thought I was ready for fighting vampires, but he was good."

Hermione said, "And he knew some sort of martial art. I tried looking up a number of different martial arts, and I couldn't get enough information to tell which style he was using. But it looked like some of the Muggle styles from China or Japan."

Ron said, "Vampires remember the skills and knowledge they had when they were alive, so a vampire who used to be a scholar can still translate languages or whatever he used to research." Everyone stared at him. "What? I'm the one who had to do all the reading on vampires, remember? There were lots of examples about it. Like Drusilla the Seer, who was a seer in a Muggle family who thought she was evil because she could do divination. Idiots. So a vampire turned her and she still could do divination. Only that made her a vampire you couldn't sneak up on."

"Eww," said Ginny. She didn't want to think about how dangerous a vampire like that would be. If the vampire always knew when you were coming after her, could you ever find her? If the vampire knew you were going to use spells, would she get a warlock or a demon to fight you? It would be bad.

Hermione said, "Anyway, the books say Drusilla was killed in Prague five or six years ago. So we don't have to worry about her. But there are plenty of really dangerous vampires out there, so we can't be careless. We'll fly into the cave and take out all the guards as we go. If they're human,

we use Stunners. Otherwise, behead them. We don't want to use too much fire inside a cave where it might burn up all our oxygen."

Ron said, "Yeah, because we'll be the only ones who need the air."

They apparated to the cave Sirius had used back when he was on the run from the Ministry. Hermione gave them all brooms. Then she did Disillusionment Charms on Ron, Harry, and herself. Ginny once again got Harry's cloak. They followed Hermione's broom as they flew along the hillsides, until the broom stopped in mid-air a couple hundred yards from the mouth of a large cave.

Ginny could feel there were vampires in there, but she couldn't tell how many.

Ron whispered, "Can't we just seal it off and not have to go in after them?"

Hermione said, "That won't even stop a Death Eater from apparating in to help them. And they're strong. They can unbury the opening easier than we could."

Ron said, "Fine. But let's do this really carefully. Ginny? Up front. If you sense one that's close, point. Stick your hand out of the cloak first, and point."

Ginny rolled her eyes. She wasn't stupid. Naturally she'd stick her hand out of the invisibility cloak.

Ron went on, "If there's less than five, we take them left to right, Ginny then Harry then Hermione then me. Diffindo, Reducto, or Sectumsempra. If there's five or more, we'll have to go with fire, and we'll need to do Bubblehead Charms for all of us so we don't run out of safe air."

"Good idea," Hermione said.

Ron muttered grumpily, "Had to do 'em enough to deal with Fred and George's dungbombs."

There were three guard vampires fifty feet inside the cave, where the sunlight couldn't reach them. But they weren't paying much attention. As soon as Ginny beheaded the one on the left, two more spells took out the other two.

Ginny looked around. There was more light than she had expected. There were old-fashioned oil lamps hanging on the walls as far down into the cave as she could see.

They flew further into the cave. Ginny stopped when the cave branched off on both sides. She flew to the left tunnel. Ooh. She could sense vampires down there. She flew to the right tunnel. More vampires. She flew ahead. Even more vampires. This wasn't good. Whichever tunnel they

took, they were going to be risking having vampires coming up from behind and attacking them.

Hermione's broom moved to the left tunnel, and she whispered as she did a Shield Charm to block the tunnel. Then she did the same thing to the right tunnel. Ginny realized Hermione had whispered so she would know what was going on, but some of the vampires might have heard too.

They flew forward. The cave opened up into a large circular area with dozens of vampires, most of them sleeping. The area was really well lit, with lamps and torches all around. Ginny felt it as a Bubblehead Charm surrounded her head, and then fire was flooding the cavern. Vampires were screaming as they tried to find cover. A lot of them just stood there as they burst into flames and turned to dust. It only took about a minute to wipe out all the vampires, but by the time they were done, Ginny could see that a lot of the fires were dying out by themselves, probably from lack of oxygen.

They moved back to the spot where the tunnel branched. There were angry vampires beating on both shields.

Hermione said, "Those Shield Charms won't last forever. Harry and Ginny? Take the left tunnel. Ron and I will stay here and guard this one."

Harry said, "Still got your bubble?"

"Yeah."

"Then let's go." He took down the Shield Charm with a quick hex, and four vampires who had been beating on the shield fell onto their faces. Ginny did a fast incendio and took care of them. She and Harry flew into the tunnel.

There were four more vampires, and a heavy steel gate. Behind the gate there were people. Humans, lying on the floor in filthy clothes that looked like they hadn't had a bath or a change of clothing in weeks. Humans who had obviously been bitten over and over, until they hardly had the strength to move.

The vampires were keeping these humans penned up like animals in a slaughterhouse. Ginny angrily beheaded two vampires while Harry got the other two. Then she carefully checked. No more vampires, except back behind her in that other tunnel.

She pulled Harry away from the steel gate and rushed back to Hermione and Ron. They quickly took down the other Shield Charm and cleared out the remaining vampires.

Ginny whipped the cloak off and said, "We found their pantry. There's about two dozen people

down there, locked in. We have to help them, but we can't let them see anybody but Harry."

Hermione said, "They can see me. I'm sure the Ministry knows by now that I'm helping Harry. They probably knew as soon as my family vanished off their school documents."

Ron asked, "But what are we going to do? We can't just unlock the door and leave. They don't have any way out of here."

Harry said, "And if they're not witches and wizards, the Ministry isn't going to help them."

Hermione said, "There's a Muggle village or two only a few miles west of here. I'll apparate there, leave a note for the local police with a map, and apparate back here."

Ron said, "No, apparate back to the Shrieking Shack. We'll meet up there."

Harry said, "I'll unlock the gate and open it, then apparate to the shack too."

Ron said, "I was going to suggest we find the house the other nest has and burn it to the ground from outside. But if they have more victims in there, we can't do that."

Hermione said, "We'll stay outside. We'll shatter every window and tear down the draperies inside before we go in."

Ron nodded. "Okay. Let's move." He took Ginny's hand and disappeared.

A/N: Buffy season 2: Drusilla was believed killed in Prague, but was rescued by Spike (William the Bloody) and brought to Sunnydale to heal. Unfortunately, she got better. A lot better. Hermione's books are wrong on this point.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 01 Apr 2012 07:08:59 GMT  
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Chapter 47 Enmity Between

Ginny and Ron apparated into the ground floor of the Shrieking Shack. Ron pointed, "That's where the secret passage into the Hogwarts grounds is. This place is creepy, but it's not nearly as creepy as it is at night."

Ginny remembered the stories Hermione had told her about Peter Pettigrew's escape and facing down Snape in the bedroom upstairs. She thought the place even looked like it could be the most haunted house in Britain. It made the house on Grimmauld Place look like a showplace.

They only had to wait a couple minutes before Harry apparated. "That was grim. I opened the door, and even the ones who could move were too scared to leave. I told them help would be on its way, but I don't think any of them believed me."

Ron said, "The next time, we need to bring jugs of water and lots of food, just so we can feed any other victims we find."

Ginny just said, "I really hate vampires."

Harry asked, "What do you think the Muggle police will say when they find them?"

Ron shrugged. "Probably blame it on crazy people who wanted to pretend they were vampires. They're not going to believe it really was vampires."

Ginny asked, "So where would the crazy killers be now?"

Ron shook his head. "They'll probably make up something. Crazy killers might have decided to go do something crazy somewhere else. They'll probably decide they burned their own stuff up in the big area at the end of the tunnel to confuse the Muggle four-hen-sicks."

It was several more minutes before Hermione apparated into the room. She complained, "That was annoying. I called from a phonebox while I was still Disillusioned. They didn't want to believe me. Even after I left them the map. I had to tell them my crazy relatives had been keeping the people in the cave and torturing them, and I was too afraid of being arrested to come forward. Good thing I disguised my voice with a charm so I sounded like someone else."

"Who?" Ron asked.

Hermione blushed. "Pansy Parkinson."

Ron laughed so hard he fell over.

Harry said, "We still have time to clear the other nest."

Hermione looked at her watch and said, "It's noon. The sun's overhead, so we won't get much sunlight in the rooms. Even the south-facing rooms won't get that much direct sunlight. But we can still make it a lot easier for us to see."

They let Hermione perform Disillusionment Charms again, while Ginny made sure she was wrapped in Harry's cloak. Then they apparated to the Forbidden Forest and followed Hermione's broomstick. It took a good ten minutes of flying to reach the far side of the forest where the nest was.

Ginny looked over the house. She could tell it would be a headache to clear. It was a large two-story house with an adjoining garage. Every window was boarded up. Even the windows of the garage. Even the small garret windows at the roof.

Hermione whispered, "Maybe breaking the windows won't be enough."

Ron said, "We have to isolate the garage first. If they have cars or trucks with covered windows, they could make a break for it when we start."

Harry asked, "Why not just blow it up? If there's no garage standing, they don't have anywhere to run."

Ron said, "Good plan. We'll line up on one side of it and hit it until we blow the roof off and knock the sides out. Then we'll clear the cars. After that, we'll start on the house."

Ron lined them all up and said, "On three... One. Two. Three!"

Four silent reducto spells turned the south wall of the garage into splinters and blasted the roof off the garage. Two vampires lounging around in the garage shrieked as they turned to dust in the cruel sunlight.

There were four vehicles crammed into the garage. Hermione pointed at the white panel van with the red cross on it and gulped. "If they have a Red Cross van, they might have bags and bags of donated blood. And a couple Red Cross volunteers as prisoners."

Ron said, "Or as new recruits."

Ginny said, "I can feel there aren't any vampires inside the cars. Still, let's be careful. But they have to know we're here already."

Ron said, "Right." He undid his Disillusionment Charm while Ginny packed Harry's cloak into her wrist bracelet. Harry undid his Disillusionment Charm quickly, but Hermione had to be persuaded.

Finally, Ron said, "I would feel a lot safer if I could see where you were once we start having to split up to check all the rooms."

Harry said, "Well, let's start by taking down the entire south side of the house. Windows, walls,

everything except the framing holding the house up."

Hermione said, "We can do that." She pointed her wand at the house and said, "Accio siding!" A large strip of siding peeled off the face of the house and flew toward her. Then the rest of them joined in.

"Accio plywood!"

"Accio window!"

"Accio drapery!"

"Accio plaster!"

"Accio door!"

It only took a few minutes to completely strip the south side of the house until it was nothing but wooden framing. Harry stripped the shingles off the roof, while several vampires yelled and scrambled for the stairs to the lower levels. Once the attic was completely exposed to sunlight, they concentrated on the first floor right underneath it.

Ginny and Harry flew through the framing into the south-facing rooms. Vampires were fleeing into the north-facing rooms or down the stairs to the ground floor.

"Reducto! Reducto!" Harry quickly turned the inner walls into gaping holes.

"Accio siding! Accio plywood! Accio plaster!" Ginny could hear Ron taking the north side of the building apart while Hermione hovered outside where she could make sure nothing snuck up on Harry.

Ginny could sense the vampires, but she could only tell there were a lot of them. She watched the stairs to the ground floor while Ron and Harry opened up the entire first floor to the outdoors.

"Okay! Ground floor next!" Ron called out.

Harry joined Ron in peeling the north side of the house off, while Ginny worked with Hermione. There was a porch on the north side that the boys quickly demolished. By the time Hermione finished peeling all the plaster off the inside of the south-facing rooms, the boys had the north outside wall clear and were already blasting holes in the inner walls.

Hermione said, "All clear on the ground floor. But there's a cellar."

"Of course there is," complained Ron. "It's a vampire tradition, right?"

Ginny flew into the ruined building and hovered by the door into the cellar. "There's a lot of vampires down there."

Harry whispered, "But are there any people?"

Ginny just shrugged.

Hermione snorted. "Hominem revello." Then she gulped. "There are still some live people down there. We have to save them."

Ron muttered, "So much for just roasting the whole cellar."

"Ron!"

Harry asked, "Can we pull the rest of the house apart? Go floor by floor until there's nothing but the part over the cellar and then peel that off?"

Ron said, "Should be easy. Let's see if we can just accio the roof rafters. If that works, then we can pull off the attic floor and work our way down."

It only took the four of them about ten tiring minutes to pull away the rafters, then the attic flooring. Then the beams over the first floor, followed by the framing of the first floor. Then the beams over the ground floor, followed by the framing for the ground floor.

Finally there was nothing left but the plywood and linoleum over the cellar, and piles of debris all around what used to be a house.

"Hold it right there!" yelled a voice from the cellar. "Start pulling our ceiling off, and we'll have to kill every living soul down here."

Ginny yelled down the opening into the cellar, "You're going to kill them anyway. Your only hope of surviving this is to let all of them go. Then let us apparate you over to France." Hermione gave her a worried look.

"The Dark Lord is going to be pretty pissed at you!" yelled another vampire.

Ginny grinned. "The Dark Lord is already really pissed at me. And I'm not particularly bothered. If he's so scared of a seventeen year old boy, I'm not impressed with him."

"How many of us get to live?" yelled another vampire.

Ginny lied, "Up to six. That's how many wizards we have up here."

"Forget it! We have a lot more than that, and I think you're bluffing. You're not going to risk these hostages."

Ginny pointed at the others and where she wanted them to be. Then she held up one finger. Two fingers. Three.

Four voices called out, "Accio flooring!"

Almost all of the plywood came soaring up into the air, and Ginny had a momentary view of what had to be forty vampires packed together in the cellar before the sunlight turned them all into dust.

And then there were five people collapsing now that they no longer had vampires holding them up.

Ron said, "We've got to get help for them too."

Hermione said, "This is the worst part. The innocent victims."

One of the victims groaned, "I'm hallucinating. I'm seeing no roof and people flying around on brooms."

Harry groaned quietly, "Great, more memory charms." Ginny still heard him.

It took them nearly an hour to get another village policeman from a different village out to check on the five injured people. And Hermione had to perform memory charms on all five.

Then, just to top off an already exhausting day, Ginny had to go stand outside the Ministry of Magic's secret phonebox while she was under Harry's cloak, and watch to see who left work that way. Still no sign of Umbridge. Ginny was beginning to wonder if Umbridge was even working at the Ministry.

At least Kreacher had a really good dinner for them. And Hermione didn't assign Ginny any more research before bedtime.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Thu, 05 Apr 2012 00:06:06 GMT

## Chapter 48 You Will Strike

Ginny opened her eyes. A harsh sun blazed down on her. She was on her back, lying on blazing hot sands. It felt like she was back in Egypt, the summer they won that contest and went to visit Bill. The summer after the diary. The summer before they found out that Percy and Ron's pet was really a Death Eater who had betrayed Harry's parents.

She was lying on a sand dune. She got up carefully, brushing herself off. She hated getting sand in her hair, it took forever to brush it all out. She looked around, and saw nothing but sand and scrub. That brush all over the place wasn't a part of any area of Egypt she had seen. And there was nothing else. No pyramids. No sphinx. No Cairo. Nothing. Not even some distant huts or a camel.

She checked herself. No wrist bracelet. She was dressed in white sandals and a white summer robe, just like what she wore most of the time she was in Egypt. She hoped this robe was spelled to keep her cool. She wondered if she had Sun Blocking Potion on. She and her mum had gone through five or six bottles of the stuff while they were in Egypt. The twins had teased her over and over about it, so she had just laughed when they got ferocious sunburns. Well, she also made sure to slap them on the arm and the neck, and everywhere else they were burned. Even after her mum told her to stop.

Ginny quickly stepped up to the top of the sand dune, and looked all around her. She was in the middle of nowhere, with no one and nothing in sight. She wondered if she could apparate back home from wherever she was.

She turned around once more, and gasped in shock. A woman was suddenly standing there, not thirty feet away, when there hadn't been anyone for miles around before, and there hadn't been the crack of someone apparating in. The woman was young, maybe early twenties. She was curvier than Pansy Parkinson. She was dressed in odd Muggle clothes - a long peasant skirt and a soft blouse - and her long dark-blond hair draped down over part of her face.

Ginny asked, "Who are you?"

The woman smiled gently. "A-a friend."

Ginny tried again. "This is a dream, isn't it?"

The woman frowned a little. "Yes... and no."

Wow, that was helpful. She opened her mouth to make a biting comment, and something leapt

onto the sand in front of her. Ginny jumped backward into a fighting stance before she realized it was a girl. An Aborigine from Australia, or something like that. A girl with skin like charcoal, and mud daubed on her. A girl who moved like she was part animal. A girl who looked like she had never washed her hair in her life. The tangle-haired girl growled and hissed.

The blonde softly said, "Y-you know more than you think you do."

Ginny pointed at the Aborigine and asked, "What... is that?"

The primitive woman growled and hissed again.

The blonde looked at the primitive and said, "She is Sineya. She is... you. She is what you were. What you will be. She is-"

And the knowledge hit Ginny like a bludger in the head. "She's a Slayer."

"She's the first Slayer. She is the spirit of the Slayer. She is all Slayers."

Ginny looked at the feral thing and gasped, "That's not me! I can't be like that!"

The blonde calmly said, "The first Slayer was just a girl. A girl who was strong and fast. The Shadow Men took her and bound her, and forced a demon spirit into her to make her strong enough and fast enough to fight demons. And when she died, the spirit found her successor. And when she died, the spirit found her successor. And on and on, until..."

"Until me," said a chipper voice off to her right.

Ginny whirled to the side to see another blonde. A petite, cute blonde in Muggle clothes. An expensive top, leather pants, and high-heeled peep-toes. It was the girl who had fallen in the pond and drowned. The girl who had fought the big vampire in that swordfight. The girl who had done the swan dive into that portal. The girl who had taken the sword in the guts while fighting those monstrous vampire things in that cave. Ginny gasped, "I saw you die! I saw you die a... a bunch of times! You're dead!"

"I get that a lot lately," the little blonde smirked.

Ginny scowled, "I really hate divination."

The little blonde said, "Hey, at least your Slayer dreams make a lot more sense than mine."

Ginny gasped yet again. "These dreams are... normal?"

The little blonde nodded. "Same with the monster sense-y gut and the heal-iness."

Was that supposed to be English the blonde was speaking? The first Slayer huffed and growled at their feet.

The petite blonde looked at the Aborigine and then at Ginny. She smirked, "Sineya says you're not paying attention."

"Huh?" Ginny wondered what that was supposed to mean.

The bigger blonde quietly said, "You already know what you seek."

Ginny frowned, "What are you talking about?"

The petite blonde grinned, "Hey, these dreams are supposed to be of the cryptic. That's the whole dealie. The Powers That Be probably think making us work to figure out their little puzzles makes things better somehow. I think they're just being jerks."

The bigger blonde gently said, "Y-you do need to pay attention more."

The petite blonde said, "Like your brunette friend does."

The primal Slayer drew in the sand with one finger. An equilateral triangle. A vertical line down the middle of the triangle. A circle around the triangle. It was... the symbol. The symbol Mister Lovegood was wearing. The symbol Professor Dumbledore drew on the page about the Deadly Hallows.

The petite blonde grinned, "And now for the big hint!" She held up a large picture. It was the symbol. The view pulled back, and Ginny could see the symbol was on a round black stone. The view pulled back some more, and she could see the stone was set in a ring. The view pulled back even farther, and Ginny could see the ring was on the index finger of Dumbledore's horribly blackened hand.

Ginny asked, "The stone. What is it? Why does it have the symbol on it?"

The little blonde said, "Because it has to. Because it had to."

Ginny fumed, "And you say you don't like the cryptic stuff?"

The petite blonde grinned, "The real me doesn't. But I'm not quite what you think I am. The world is always more complicated than you realize. And the world changes. Sometimes the changes are so slow you can't see them except looking back over years of experience. Sometimes the

changes are so fast you can't keep up with them."

"And how does that help me?" Ginny complained.

The little blonde tilted her head and smirked, "It's not supposed to. It's supposed to get you to threaten to tear out my ribcage and wear it like a hat."

Ginny frowned, "What?"

The bigger blonde said, "You do not yet know what you are. What you will become."

Ginny insisted, "I know I'm the Vampire Slayer."

The woman tilted her head in thought and said, "That's... true, and yet not true. But you will learn."

Ginny frowned, "What's that supposed to mean-"

The First Slayer suddenly leapt at her.

Ginny woke up with a start. She hastily sat up in bed. "Ugh! I hate these Slayer dreams! Why can't they make sense?"

A/N: The blonde with the stutter is the late Tara Maclay. The perky blonde is, of course, Buffy Summers, who is literally the point at which the usual Slayer succession broke, once by causing two Slayers to be, and then by Willow's spell at the end of Season 7. The landscape of the dream and the appearance of the first Slayer are \*canon\*.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 08 Apr 2012 07:01:09 GMT  
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Chapter 49 To the Woman He Said

"Ugh! I hate these Slayer dreams! Why can't they make sense?"

Harry groaned from his sleeping bag. "Wha?"

Hermione sat up on her bed and said, "Quick! Write everything down while you still remember it!"

Ron mumbled something and rolled over in his sleeping bag, burying his head under his pillow.

Ginny reluctantly got up and went into the front parlor. She sat down with a Quick Quotes Quill and tried to say everything that happened. Even the little blonde's weird way of talking.

She was sure she forgot most of it before she had it written down.

When she was done, she went back to her sleeping bag, and she didn't have another dream that night. At least, not any that she remembered the next day.

After a delicious breakfast on a newly waxed kitchen table, they adjourned to the back parlor. Kreacher had obviously scrubbed the room to within an inch of its life, because Ginny had never seen it so bright and clean. Even the doxies were gone from the drapes, and the windows were so clean they almost looked like they had been taken out of their frames.

Hermione said, "Harry, you need to be sure to tell Kreacher he's doing a great job and you want him to keep it up."

Ron said, "Right, mate. And if you have anything else around here you don't want, give it to Kreacher as another present. The last one worked wonders."

"Ron!" This time, Ginny managed to start yelling his name before Hermione, but Hermione yelled too.

Ron was undeterred. "What's the problem? Kreacher really likes these things. They mean a lot to him. And it doesn't hurt Harry any to give him one now and then as a reward. Maybe if we ever get a chance to steal back some of that Black family silver Harry hates so much, Kreacher can have it. Just as long as Mundungus gets in trouble for it."

Harry grumbled, "I could go for the last bit."

Hermione primly pointed out, "We don't dare do anything that would get Mundungus in trouble with the current Ministry, because he could sell out the Order as a trade to get himself out of trouble."

Ron frowned, "And he'd do it. In a second. The only one who ever kept that git in line was Dumbledore, and he's gone."

Hermione said, "After Ron and I watch the Ministry entries and get back, we'll do some work. First

I want us to talk about Ginny's Slayer dream. Then I want to go over some Transfigurations and Charms, and we'll see if we have time for Ron or Harry's work before lunchtime."

Ron said, "And we really don't need to spend an hour and a half wandering around Diagon Alley looking for Toad-face. Just show up at the end of lunchtime, check the good restaurants, and follow her back if she doesn't disappearate."

Ginny said, "I think it's my turn." Hermione nodded in agreement.

So Harry worked with Ginny on silent spellwork for over an hour, while Ron and Hermione were on monitoring duty. Harry was a really good teacher, too. She already had Expelliarmus and Reducto and Stunners down, but he helped here with some spells she was still working on, and she had Sectumsempra and Diffindo and two Shield Charms down reasonably well by the time Ron and Hermione got back.

"Nothing," Hermione reported.

"And even more nothing," Ron added. "I made a list of everyone using the entrance, just like you asked, but I don't see the point."

Hermione said, "It's all contingency planning, in case we can't find Umbridge." She took Ron's notes and added them, along with her own, into a notebook she was keeping.

She clapped her hands together lightly. "Now today, first I want to go over the first week of sixth year Transfigurations for Ginny-

"The first week?" Ginny squawked. "I can't learn an entire week's worth in an hour!"

Ron said, "You probably can, if all of us help you. The one-on-one lessons are way better. I got more out of a few minutes with Hermione helping me than I got out of a month with Snape."

"Well, that's Snape," Ginny said.

Ron went on, "And look at how much you learned in a few minutes here and there in DA."

Hermione said, "Let's just try it, instead of talking about it. Now there are several tricky parts that all show up at the same time. That's what makes sixth year Transfigurations so hard. There's the nonverbal spellwork, the extra theory involved, and the complications involved in the more difficult transfigurations themselves. Now today I want you to work on changing this bat into a badger."

Ginny looked down at the Beater's bat and wondered how she was supposed to pull this off. After Hermione's first instructions, she failed abysmally. The bat changed color and got a little fur. That

was it. But before she could yell that there was no way she could do it, Hermione started explaining the theory involved, and why it mattered, and how it could help. Once again, Ginny was surprised by just how smart Hermione was.

Even Ron said something. "Blimey, that was what McGonagall was getting at? Wish I'd known that last year."

Then Harry helped her with the nonverbal spell. He was really good as a teacher. Or at least, as a tutor for her. And finally, Ron stepped in. He showed her the part that the big brains like McGonagall and Hermione overlooked: the focus you needed, and what to concentrate on first, and how to visualize the whole change. That was the level she really needed. Even if she didn't want to admit that Ron was any help, or that she wasn't really any smarter than he was. But before the end of the hour, there was a real badger on the table, complete with a proper tail and nicely colored fur.

Ron grinned, "Nice one! Took me about a week to get that far. Course, I didn't have Harry helping me with the spell, and what McGonagall was saying only made sense after Hermione explained it all to me. About a dozen times."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Three times. Ron's exaggerating again." She casually waved her wand, and the badger turned back into a Beater's bat. "Now let's try Charms. Oh, and for tomorrow, I want you to write a three foot essay on how the theory relates to the spellwork. I've got two textbooks here that have everything you need in them."

"Aaugh!" Ginny groaned.

The Charms work went pretty much the same way. The spell was really advanced, not saying the spell out loud made it a dozen times harder, and the combined Harry-Hermione-Ron tutoring was exactly what she needed. And also Hermione gave her more homework.

Ron complained, "Come on, Hermione! When's Ginny supposed to get time to do all this work?"

Hermione pursed her lips and said, "Ron, if you had been paying attention, you'd know by now that Ginny only sleeps three or four hours a night. If she doesn't go out hunting vampires, she has four or five more hours tonight than you do."

"Speaking of which, what are we going to do about the things outside?" Harry asked.

Hermione said, "I did some research. While Ginny's on duty at lunchtime, you two can help me with some spells so we can figure out what those things are."

"Demons," Ginny said tersely. "They can't be vampires. And they don't feel quite right for

vampires."

Hermione said, "There are several other dark creatures they might be, and even if they are demons, we don't know what kind."

Ron asked, "Why do we have to know what kind they are?"

Hermione said, "Because we'll probably have to fight them when we take care of the vampire nest here. Vampires we know how to kill. These demons? Some require beheading. Some require specific binding spells. Some require a special potion to kill them or make them vulnerable. Some require special ways of killing them, like stabbing them through both hearts with a silver dagger, or sticking a cold iron rod into their brain."

"Eww," Ginny complained.

Ron groaned, "And I suppose this is my assignment?" Hermione just pulled a huge, thick, ancient book out of her pouch and slapped it into Ron's hands. Ron said, "Nacht and Sturm's Demonography?" He opened the book and looked inside. "Ugh. Good news? Lots of pictures. Bad news? Pictures."

He showed Ginny the picture. It was a massive demon, probably eight or nine feet tall, holding a man in its four arms. Something was coming out of the demon's mouth. It looked like the tentacles of three or four squid all overlapping. And whatever it was, it was ripping into the man's chest while the man screamed and flailed. Ginny was extremely glad it was a Muggle woodcut, and not a Wizard picture that would be moving while she watched. That would be really awful.

She just said, "I hope I don't have to fight one of those."

Ron looked at the page and said, "K'vor'nek demons are extremely rare and may be extinct. They have traditionally only been encountered in the presence of warlocks communing with the Great Old Ones. They require a binding spell using a holy object in order to keep them from moving or extending their feeding tentacles. Once this has been done, they must be beheaded, the head separated from the body, and the two burned separately. Yuck."

Ginny muttered, "No wonder Vampire Slayers keep getting killed off."

Hermione said, "I'm sure these 'Watchers' provide the research and backup to help them." But she didn't sound all that confident.

Ginny used some Polyjuice Potion so she looked like a middle-aged woman, and she tossed on a lightweight summer robe. Then she apparated to Diagon Alley and checked out the nicer restaurants. She went into each of them and asked if there was a reservation for seven, in the

name of Greengrass. Each time, the answer was no. Things might have gotten uncomfortable if the answer ever turned out to be 'yes'. But it gave her time to look around and check that Umbridge wasn't eating lunch there, unless she was back in one of the private rooms. At the end of the lunch break, Ginny strolled up and down the street keeping an eye out for Ministry employees on their way back to work.

When she apparated back to the top step of the manor and slipped inside, she still looked like a middle-aged woman. But at least it was quiet walking into the house now. She was just glad that ripping the painting off the wall and cleaning the amulets out of the cavity behind it had broken whatever enchantments Mad-Eye Moody had placed on the hallway. Those spells were nasty, and they had terrified Hermione.

She ate a quick lunch while she told the others what she had seen. The sandwiches were quite good, with bread Kreacher had baked, and cold cuts that Hermione had bought in a Muggle grocery.

After lunch, Ron gave them a lesson on magical creatures, this time on succubi and incubi. Then Harry taught them two binding spells for dark creatures. And Hermione talked about the uses of dragon's blood in potions. It was really more of a lecture than just a talk.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 11 Apr 2012 07:28:44 GMT  
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Chapter 50 And to the Man He Said

Finally, they got around to Ginny's dream. She was really glad Hermione made her write everything down last night, because most of it was pretty murky by then.

She went through everything, since she didn't know what was important and what wasn't. Even the weird way the little blonde talked.

Ron laughed, "And she really said 'the monster sense-y gut and the heal-iness'? Really?"

Ginny nodded angrily. "Yes! Why would I make up something so weird?"

Hermione asked, "Do you think... maybe English isn't her native language?"

Ginny said, "I think American is. She sounded just like the California 'Valley Girls' on those

programmes Martha showed us."

Ron groaned, "You mean the television thing that dad tried to take apart? That was a disaster."

Ginny said, "I meant before dad wrecked their telly and we had to leave. Martha had these recorded programmes, and one of them had these teenaged girls who really looked about twenty or twenty-five if you ask me and they sounded exactly like her."

Hermione said, "And she really looked exactly like the Slayer you saw dying?"

"Yes," Ginny said for about the tenth time.

Hermione said, "You may have gotten to speak to the ghost of the Golden Slayer."

Ginny said, "The dream girl said she wasn't the real thing. And she said she wasn't what I thought she was. So maybe she wasn't the ghost of the Golden Slayer, she was just taking that shape."

"The way a boggart takes the shape of something that scares you?" asked Ron.

Hermione said, "Something like that. Perhaps taking the shape of something that made sense, instead of what it really was."

Harry said, "Or taking a shape she'd believe. Like what Riddle pulled on me a year and a half ago."

Hermione nodded. "That's the other thing. We have to decide how much of this we want to believe."

Ginny threw her hand in the air. "There isn't anything there to believe or not! They wouldn't even say yes or no when I said I was the Vampire Slayer!"

Ron said, "But they showed you the symbol. The one Mister Lovegood was wearing."

Harry muttered, "The one Krum wanted to duel him over, because he said it was the symbol of Grindelwald."

Ginny checked, "The Grindelwald that Dumbledore defeated?"

Harry nodded. "Right. But it's the symbol in Hermione's book."

Ron said, "On the page about 'The Tale of the Three Brothers'. So what's the connection?"

Hermione said, "If there is a connection, and it's not a distraction to get us haring off in the wrong direction."

Harry said, "But if it isn't a trick, then it makes sense. It's something Dumbledore was interested in, or he wouldn't have marked that page and given you the book. Right?"

Hermione reluctantly agreed. "Well..."

Harry went on, "And we know from my mum's note that Dumbledore was so interested in dad's invisibility cloak that they didn't have it with them when Vol- I mean Riddle attacked them. That's one. Then there's the stone in the Ring of Slytherin that Dumbledore put on his finger. He had to know it was probably cursed. A lot. But he still put it on his finger. Maybe it was because he knew the symbol on the stone and he knew what that meant."

Hermione asked, "And did that stone have that particular symbol on it?"

Harry stopped for a moment. "I don't know. It had something carved on it, but by the time I saw it the stone was hacked in half by... I guess the Sword of Gryffindor, since it was a Horcrux. So what's left? The most powerful wand in the world. And what's V- Riddle after right now? A wand. Or information about a wand."

Hermione frowned, "There are legends about that kind of wand. The Deathstick. The Elder Wand. There are plenty of stories like that. But legends don't make it real."

Harry insisted, "Well, why else would Albus Dumbledore have gone to all the trouble to point us at that one story?"

Hermione insisted, "It's just a children's story!"

Harry shook his head no. He insisted, "If Ginny had a Slayer dream about it, and Riddle's after it, it has to be real. And... and it would explain why Riddle attacked a little old German wandmaker."

Ron added, "And it would sure explain why Dumbledore drew that symbol on the story of the Deathly Hallows before he bequeathed it to you."

Hermione looked at him and asked, "Wouldn't that mean that he knew he was going to die? Before he could just give things to us at school?"

Harry frowned, "He should have just given us the stuff instead of taking all the time he needed to write out a will and make it official. He could've told us what it all means!"

Ron muttered, "Who can figure out why nutters do the stuff they do? I still want to know why he

didn't teach Harry the most powerful spells he knew, or tons of little dueling tricks, or any of the other stuff he knew. The Horcruxes? Fine. Important. Got it. But think about it. He could have taught Harry everything he knew about the Horcruxes in one weekend and then spent the rest of the year teaching him some really powerful stuff. Why didn't he?"

Hermione just said, "I'm sure he had a very good reason. And just because we can't think of it doesn't mean he made a mistake. It may just mean we're not smart enough to figure it out, or we don't have enough information."

Ron wasn't going to let it go. "So? It was his job to teach Harry all the bits of information he might need! You're teaching Ginny how to be a really good Vampire Slayer, right?" He ignored the fake look of shock on Hermione's face. "Are you going to skip over some really important bits just because you're much smarter and you have secret plans? No!"

Ginny suddenly remembered the day after she was Called. She said, "There was something Hermione didn't want me to know. I found out anyway. It made me feel really awful. Maybe it's something like that?"

Hermione instantly latched onto the idea. "Maybe Dumbledore was trying to protect Harry from something? Something he doesn't know yet?"

Harry muttered, "If it's any worse than what I already had to find out, maybe I don't want to know it."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 15 Apr 2012 06:56:28 GMT  
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Chapter 51 To Dust You Shall Return

Ginny kept working on apparition and nonverbal casting and all the research assignments Hermione kept assigning her. She knew she needed lots of help, but it was still frustrating to be so far behind everybody else. Still, research and schoolwork were the only things they had to do when they weren't watching the Ministry or tracking those vampires.

And being assigned Divination and also History of Magic wasn't nearly as bad as Harry's assignments. Or the day she spent with Hermione going through everything in the Potions chamber after Kreacher had cleaned it. That was tedious. And half the potion ingredients needed to be thrown out and replaced. Some things, like the dried boomslang skin, were just fine.

Actually, the boomslang skin in the sealed jar looked like one of the Blacks had cleaned it and dried it himself, because the pieces were much larger than what Hermione had purchased. However, the newt eyes were disgustingly shriveled, and all the herbs that weren't supposed to be dried had gone bad years ago.

The next morning, after she and Ron had watched the Ministry for over an hour, they came back and found Hermione preparing for another task.

"All right, I re-did the London map, and I think today is the day we hunt down as many vampires as we can. Except for the big nest, which we need to leave a little longer. Frankly, I'm hoping every Death Eater in Britain is searching the Hogsmeade area now, after we cleaned out those nests. But as soon as we take out that nest near here, they'll be swarming around Grimmauld Place looking for us."

Ron asked, "So. How many vampires?"

Hermione said, "We have eight lairs which are probably only one or two vampires. Then we have this one here..." She pointed to her map again. "... which could have anything from a couple up to... Oh I don't know. Let's say between two and thirty."

Harry winced, "That's a lot of leeway there."

Hermione glared at him. "It's all the information we have! Once we take care of these small spots, we can go find out more."

Ginny asked, "Have you thought about how we're going to handle those little nests?"

Hermione nodded. "Yes. They're probably ordinary flats or houses or deserted stores. We can just apparate in, do a couple quick spells on the vampires, and leave."

Harry said, "But they're fast. Really, really fast. As soon as they hear the crack when we apparate in, they'll be moving, even if they don't know what the noise is."

Hermione said, "And that's why Ginny will be one of the two who apparate in. Ginny and some backup. We'll get as close as we can, apparate inside the flat or house, and let Ginny find our targets. Then a quick nonverbal spell, and we're done."

Ron said, "Good, because peeling that house apart was hard work."

Harry said, "And if two of us apparate in together, we do it back to back, so nothing catches us by surprise."

"Good idea," Hermione said.

Ron asked, "So how do we get around? We don't have a car. And what about disguises?"

Hermione frowned at him like he'd asked something really annoying.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Why do I have this disguise?" Ron asked for maybe the tenth time.

Hermione just made a little 'hmp' noise and kept walking. Ginny was under Harry's cloak, so she couldn't say anything. But she thought Hermione was being kind of petty, just because Ron had asked the question she wasn't ready for. They ended up walking all around London and apparating only when no one could see them. Hermione looked like a middle-aged Muggle lady, and Harry looked like he could be her husband. But Ron looked like a teenaged girl. Not a really pretty one, but still Ginny knew it wasn't really fair. She just stayed close behind Harry and Hermione so no one on the streets had a chance to bump into her and realize there was an invisible girl there.

They found the next spot on the map. It was a block of flats. Harry walked up to it and opened the door, thanks to a silent *alohomora* from Hermione. It looked to Ginny like he had used a key, so it should fool anyone else. Then they walked upstairs until Ginny got the feeling. It was a small flat on the third floor.

They looked to make sure that no one else was looking, and that there were no security cameras. She and Harry apparated into the apartment.

She had her wand out, and she hastily looked for an attack. They were in a living room that looked like it hadn't been cleaned in a month. There was a small but filthy kitchen on her right. Ahead of her were two doors, probably the bedroom and bathroom. She couldn't tell which door had the vampire behind it.

She glanced at Harry, and he nodded. They waved their wands and both cast *aparto*. The two doors swung open.

A vampire leapt out of each room. A female vampire jumped out of the bathroom in just a towel, and a male vampire leapt out of the bedroom in just boxers. She cast a silent *reducto* and beheaded the girl, while a silent jet of purple from Harry's wand beheaded the guy.

She sighed inwardly as the unpleasant feeling in her gut faded away. She whispered, "That's it."

Harry still stepped forward and peeked into the bedroom. "Merlin! There's three bodies over on

the other side of the room."

She peeked too. Three dead guys, all dressed like they went out clubbing and met the wrong girl. It had to be so easy to be a female vampire. Just dress like a slag, go to a club, and pick up a guy. The guy would even want to come home with her.

"Let's get out of here," she said. They apparated back into the hall.

\* \* \* \* \*

All eight lairs were like that. One or two vampires in a flat or a basement room, preying on club kids or runaways or prostitutes. One vampire had the bodies of five or six homeless men piled in his closet. Ginny felt sick that she hadn't taken care of these monsters as soon as Hermione did that map.

The last post had the most vampires. They strolled past it, and Ginny could feel the vampires inside. It was a deserted shop with boarded-up windows and a padlocked door. They walked around the building and found the alley to the back door, which looked like it was locked. The store looked like it had another story on top, or maybe a flat where the owner could live. The windows were all barred and covered with heavy drapes on the inside. There was a steep, steel stairway up to a first floor door that looked solidly shut.

Ginny followed as Harry led them a street away, well out of hearing range. He murmured, "So how do we find out what's in there?"

Ginny whispered from under the cloak, "It felt like a lot, but I can't tell you any more than that. More than two or three."

Hermione said, "I don't want to leave them, but I don't want to risk jumping into something really dangerous."

Ron muttered, "Well, don't ask me to play the damsel in distress."

Hermione said, "Hush. At least I didn't change your jeans into a dress."

"Hah bloody hah. From now on, I'm doing my own disguising Charms."

Hermione just said, "You'll have to learn the spells."

Ron muttered, "Consider me motivated."

Harry said, "We could come back here at sunset. We stake out the back doors. Then we behead

anything that leaves, once it's far enough away the rest don't notice."

Hermione said, "One of at each end of the alley would do. On broomsticks and Disillusioned so we're safe."

Harry nodded. "Then, once enough of them leave, the other two of us go in. Me and Ginny, I think. They have to leave the doors unlocked, don't they?"

Hermione said, "If they don't we can still open them or just apparate in."

Ron said, "So can we go back home now and take off this stupid disguise?"

They apparated back in pairs.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 18 Apr 2012 06:36:56 GMT  
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Chapter 52 For the Man and for His Wife

It was still just barely light out when they apparated to the top of the building behind the deserted shop. They had broomsticks ready so Ron and Hermione could block the alley at each end. They were all under Disillusionment Charms except Ginny, who was under Harry's cloak again.

Ginny heard footsteps, and she peered over the edge of the roof. A nervous man in a suit and hat stealthily slipped down the alley. And he was a man, not a vampire. She could feel he wasn't a vampire. And he was walking through the last of the sunlight. He knocked on the door and waited until someone inside opened a peephole. He whispered, "Hepzibah sent me."

A man inside said, "Password?"

"Umm, blood drive."

And the door opened. The man hurriedly slipped inside.

Once Ginny told the others what she had just heard, Ron said, "Merlin's baggy Y-fronts! What's that all about?"

Harry said, "I guess we're going to have to find out."

Ron muttered, "Crazy Muggles. Do vampires have delivery takeout now?"

Hermione asked, "How do you know about take-out and delivery?"

Ron said, "Fred and George keep going on about this place near their flat that brings them Chinese food. They just have to keep Muggle money around. I don't get why some general named Tso makes chicken for them, but they probably made that up."

Hermione started to lecture, "Ron, General Tso's Chicken is..."

Ginny hushed them. She whispered, "More footsteps."

This time it was two ugly, tough-looking twenty-somethings in leather jackets. But they were human, not vampires. They said the same words and the same password, and were let in.

About ten minutes later, it was a dumpy woman in a business suit that hung badly on her.

"What is going on here?" hissed Hermione.

Harry asked, "Ginny, are these vampires? Or demons?"

"No," she quickly replied. "I'm not feeling anything off them. I don't know what's going on. But there are still vampires inside."

Ron said, "And not a lot of screaming in panic."

Ginny heard something coming from the lower floor. It sounded like... "Oh Merlin."

"What?" Hermione asked.

"I can hear from that room down there," she pointed. "It sounds like..." She sighed, "Like the time I accidentally caught Blaise Zabini and Morag MacDougall..."

"Kissing?" Ron asked.

"No."

Hermione sighed, "Having sex? Where?"

Ginny admitted, "In the downstairs Divination classroom. And she was... really enjoying it. And loud."

Harry choked, "They're over there having sex with vampires? Are they crazy?"

The door opened, and the man in the business suit slipped out. He looked exhausted but in one piece.

Ron said, "This may not be the most disturbing thing I ever heard of, but it's close. Maybe top three."

As they stood there, another man snuck down the alley and went in.

Harry said, "What are we going to do?"

Ginny growled, "They're vampires."

Hermione hissed, "They're prostitutes!"

Ron said, "But if they're prostitutes, then they won't kill anyone. Right? Can't get any repeat business without live customers."

The dumpy woman slipped out the door. She looked exhausted. And she was smiling like she'd just won a lottery. She tottered down the alley and disappeared around the corner. Shortly after that, the two guys in leather jackets walked out, kidding each other about visiting a 'suckhouse'.

Ginny groaned, "Oh Merlin, there's a name for places like this. How many are there if there's a name for places like this?"

Ron said, "What did they call it? I couldn't hear."

"A suckhouse," Ginny admitted.

"Eww," Hermione whispered.

Ron finally asked, "What do we do?"

Hermione whined, "They're vampires. But they're not killing people. And... and... I don't know!"

So Harry took charge. "Back to the house. We'll talk it over there. I don't know what else to do."

Hermione removed the Disillusionment Charms, and they apparated back to the house.

They went to the front parlor and plopped down in seats. Ginny popped right back up. "No one

told me what to do about this! I mean, no Slayer dreams, no secret messages, nothing!"

Hermione said, "There's nothing about this sort of thing in the textbooks."

Ron snorted. "They never put that sort of thing in the textbooks. Remember what it said about veelas?"

"Oh. Right," Hermione pouted.

Ginny remembered what their book said about veelas in third year. But there wasn't anything about the sexual aspect of veelas. That probably wasn't considered acceptable for 'young impressionable minds' to see.

Harry stood up and started pacing. "Okay. Do you kill werewolves?"

Ginny thought about Professor Lupin and said, "Not unless I really, really have to. Like Fenrir Greyback. But I'd rather take Greyback alive and let him get put in Azkaban for a zillion years."

He nodded. "What about the types of demons who don't hurt people?"

Ginny said, "Of course not."

He said, "What about vampires like Sanguini, the one we met at Slughorn's party?"

Ginny said, "He's supposed to not be dangerous to humans. But I'd want to keep an eye on him to make sure."

Harry asked, "So, as the Vampire Slayer, what do you do about the vampires in that shop?"

Ginny gritted her teeth. "I don't know! I just wanted to run in there and stake every single one of them. But... they're not killing anyone..."

"As far as we know," said Hermione. "How many customers die of anemia later on? How many customers end up being dead? Or get vampire venereal diseases, if there even are any?"

Ron said, "I'm changing my mind. This is the most disturbing thing I've ever seen."

Harry asked, "What's number two on your list?"

Ron just said, "You don't want to know. I mean it. You really don't want to know. It's one of those things you can never get out of your head once you find out. And it's a couple of our schoolmates."

Hermione said, "I don't want to hear about it."

Ron just said, "Good. Because it's gross. Being a prefect and patrolling the halls at night? You see stuff."

Harry said, "So, what's the Vampire Slayer going to do about that place?"

Ginny let out a deep breath. "I think the Vampire Slayer needs to pay them a visit and warn them I'm keeping an eye on them so they better not have any 'accidents' with customers."

Hermione said, "There's a new sheriff in town..."

Harry snorted in amusement, but Ginny had no idea what Hermione meant. Sometimes Ginny thought Hermione needed to write a new book for Muggle Studies, just so all the purebloods would know what these references were.

Ron said, "Take Harry for backup."

Hermione asked, "What? You don't want to go see the vampire hookers?"

Ron said, "I thought I'd stay here with you and we could do research together."

Hermione hugged him. Ron gave Harry a wink over Hermione's shoulder.

Ginny grabbed Harry's hand and said, "Can you apparate right to the back door?"

Harry said, "Sure... Sheriff."

They stepped through the front door onto the top step, and disappeared.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 22 Apr 2012 06:39:34 GMT  
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Chapter 53 Become Like One of Us

Ginny and Harry apparated right in front of the door into the back of the shop. She quickly checked that there was no one else in the alley. Then she took one step to the door and knocked.

Hard.

The door rang like it was a solid steel door and someone had just hit it with a sledgehammer.

The peephole snapped open, and an angry yellow eye glared from the other side. "What the hell do you think you're doing?"

Ginny tried to give the eye her fiercest glare. "I could say 'Hepzibah sent me' but we both know that's a lie. Let me try something else. The Golden Slayer sent me."

"Oh crap."

She pressed her luck. "We can do this the easy way, or the hard way. But the hard way ends with me standing over some piles of dust."

"What's the easy way?"

She said, "You let me in. No fighting. I talk to whoever is in charge. If I'm happy, I leave. If you're lucky, you never get another visit again."

"I'd like to go with the easy way. I'm just gonna go tell the boss you want to see her, and then I'll take you upstairs to her. All right?"

She said, "Me and my watcher."

"Right. Got it. Can you just wait there a minute?"

She said, "Yes. You have two minutes, and if you're not back and opening the door by then, it's opening without you."

He grumbled, "Slayers. Always gotta be the tough guy." But he left the peephole open and hurried off.

Harry whispered, "Pretty tough talk there... sheriff."

"Shut up. Watcher."

He snickered to himself. She was fairly sure that at least a couple vampires could hear. She could certainly hear that there were a couple guys inside who were really enjoying themselves. Ick. She sometimes thought about taking things farther with Harry, but that didn't mean she wanted to listen to complete strangers having sex. Or whatever they were really doing. With vampires. Extra ick.

Seriously. How could people have sex with a cold, dead corpse that might rip their throat out at any second? Or was something else going on here? The word 'suckhouse' might mean people went to have vampires suck their blood. But why would anyone do that? And how would that make them have orgasms? Because Ginny wasn't really worldly, but she did know what that noise was. Not every student at Hogwarts was still a virgin, especially if they ever dated Blaise Zabini. According to Lavender, Blaise made it pretty clear on date number one that if you weren't going to have sex with him, there was never going to be a date number two. And there were plenty of girls at Hogwarts who had more than one date with him.

The vampire came back to the door and opened it. "Follow me. We're going upstairs."

She followed, but she had her wand out. And she knew Harry had his wand out. She didn't have to look behind her to know that.

The door opened into a small entryway which had another steel door on the other side. So they were trying to keep something in. Or keep something out. That opened into a narrow hallway that had lots of doors opening off of both sides. She could feel vampires on both sides of the hallway, and the moaning and other gross noises were coming from those rooms.

At the end of the hallway they were all the way at the front of the empty shop. The front wall was painted white, but she could tell the white paint was over concrete blocks. And the paint was new enough that she could still smell it. They had blocked off the front windows and door with concrete, and they had done it recently. Just what were they worried about?

There was a narrow, steep stairway there. The vampire leapt straight up to the upper story, and Ginny did the same. She ended up in another hallway. This one had a massive steel door that could be shut over the stairwell opening and locked in place. It seemed like they were preparing to defend themselves against an army.

Harry clambered up the steep stairway and pulled his wand back out once he was standing beside Ginny. They followed the vampire past several open doors to what looked like bedrooms, a drawing room, and a kitchen. At the end of the hall was one more door, this one also solid steel. The vampire knocked softly, and a woman's voice inside said "Come."

The vampire opened the door and let Ginny and Harry walk in. Then he left. Ginny heard him hurry down the hall and jump down to the floor below.

In front of her was a big desk that reminded her of Professor Dumbledore's desk. Sitting behind the desk was a woman who in no way reminded her of Albus Dumbledore.

The woman was a striking brunette with jet black hair that draped down her back. The woman

looked about twenty-five, and was beautiful. If Ginny hadn't been in a veela's wedding recently, she probably would have been intimidated. The woman had large, dark eyes and full lips and a perfect straight nose. The woman had large breasts that were bulging out of a lowcut Muggle dress. A really, really lowcut Muggle dress. The woman was expertly made up by someone who knew how to use cosmetics to really emphasize her high cheekbones and luscious lips. That someone was also emphasizing the fact that the woman was a vampire, including using some blood red lipstick.

Ginny hoped it was lipstick.

No, it didn't smell like fresh blood. The woman didn't smell like fresh blood, for that matter.

"What can I do for you, Slayer?"

Ginny said, "I just want to make sure you're not hurting any humans. If this place is safe, I have bigger problems in London to deal with."

The woman smiled, showing off a set of sparkling white teeth. "So you know about Marius and his sudden decision to build a small army."

Ginny guessed, "Vampires and demons."

The woman smiled again. "So you do know quite a bit. Marius is very bad for business. And make no mistake about it, this is a business. We have had to increase our defenses just to protect ourselves from his minions who want us to... enlist in his army."

"What kind of business is a suckhouse anyway?" Ginny complained.

The woman smirked. "So you disapprove? You and the boy who has your scent all over him? He is obviously too young to be a Watcher."

Ginny said, "What my boyfriend and I do is none of your business. And he's old enough to know how to be my backup."

The woman said, "And yet he stands there with nothing but a tiny stake that would break with the first attempt to use it."

Ginny said, "Harry? Demonstrate please."

A vase soared off the desk and hovered in mid-air. Then it shattered. Then it assembled itself again and settled back onto the desk.

The woman blinked several times, and then plastered her smile back on her face. "Very impressive. You have a mage. One of the wand users. We have several clients like that. Their blood is most... energizing."

Harry asked, "How does this place work? How can you keep the humans safe and keep your... staff cooperative?"

The woman gave him a leer. "Interested in finding out, are we?"

"Not personally," Harry said. "Just professionally."

The woman gave him a tiny nod. "Six of us live here. You already met Ralphie. He is not the most handsome of men, but some women prefer the rugged look. We also have Derek, who is most attractive. He gets a lot more... business. Then we have myself and three other women. There are a surprising number of men and women who come here for oral sex, and quite enjoy the 'lovebites' they receive. We never take too much. We have to be extremely careful about that. And we make sure they drink fluids before they leave."

"Fluids?" Ginny asked suspiciously.

"Yes. Milk, orange juice, Gatorade... Nothing alcoholic."

Ginny had no idea what 'gator ade' was, but she wasn't going to say so. She knew what lemonade and limeade were, but she doubted it was possible to get juice out of an alligator. She figured she would wait and ask Hermione. It was probably a Muggle thing.

The woman went on, "And we have some clients who just want to be bitten. I do not understand the psychology of such people, but I am not going to turn away people who feed us and pay us to feed. Some of them are part of the 'goth' crowds and perhaps find vampires mysterious and sexy, like those abysmal books and movies."

Ginny said, "So the downstairs rooms are for business, and the upstairs rooms are where you live?"

The woman nodded. "I now own the building and the buildings on either side. I collect enough in rent from the open stores that I can pay the taxes and the utility bills. What more do I need? My food comes to me and begs to be devoured, and even pays me to do so."

Ginny checked, "So you make sure none of your people ever hurts your... customers, and in turn your customers keep coming back and paying you for the privilege. And you need the local vampires to keep a low profile so you don't have to deal with the Vampire Slayer or any demon hunters."

"Yes, exactly," said the woman. "So any information I acquire about Marius and his forces would stand me in your good graces?"

Ginny nodded. "Yes. I now know where he is based. But I don't know how many people he has, or the types of demons, or the numbers of demons. And I have no details about the humans in his employ."

The woman said, "All I know so far is that he has made some sort of connection with someone who supplied him with a couple truckloads of blood. But none of the local hospitals or blood donation centers has made any noise about thefts or break-ins, so I don't know how the blood was obtained. He is feeding his army and not attracting the attention of the authorities. Yet. I just don't know why he needs an army, or where it will fight."

Ginny knew the answers to those questions, but she had no intention of telling a vampire. She said, "I may come back and check to find out if you have any more information."

The woman nodded. "If you can avoid attracting attention to my little establishment when doing so, I would appreciate it."

Ginny said, "I can manage that." She took Harry's hand, and they disappeared. She only wished she could have stayed around to see the look on the woman's face when they vanished.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 25 Apr 2012 06:38:41 GMT  
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Chapter 54 Knowing Good and Evil

They watched out the window of the front parlor and talked. Ginny could see four vampires lurking in the darkness of the square, and she was forcing herself to leave them alone.

She really wanted to apparate a couple streets behind them, sneak up on them, find their backup and stake them first, then come up behind them and beat them to a pulp before staking them in turn. She didn't know why she had this need to pound vampires into the dirt before staking them, but she did. Maybe the centaurs were right, and she really was some sort of feral monster. Maybe her dream was right, and there really was a primitive spirit inside her now.

Just as long as she didn't start walking like an ape and grunting. Or talking like that little Valley

Girl. Monster sensy gut? Healiness? What kind of talk was that?

Hermione interrupted her thoughts when she said, "So it really is a house of ill repute?"

Harry said, "With fangs. But everyone we saw leave was... really happy. I suppose if a vampire has ten clients a night, she wouldn't need much blood from any one of them."

Ron shuddered. "Too much information, mate. I am so glad I didn't go."

Hermione smiled proudly, "Ron got a lot of studying done while you were gone."

Ginny said, "And they really don't like this master vampire Marius causing trouble for them."

Hermione said, "I'll check the tax rolls tomorrow."

Harry said, "So we have the lone threats taken care of, and we're going to keep an eye on Marius and his army, and we're going to leave the suckhouse alone. For now."

Ginny said, "Right."

Hermione said, "Good. Because we have a lot of studying to do tonight, and those vampires out there aren't going anywhere."

Three teenagers groaned. Ginny was sure Ron was louder than she was.

But doing homework next to Harry was different. They would look up at the same time and give each other little smiles. And they would bump arms and just sort of not stop touching. And Harry would let his knee drift over and bump her knee, which was a lot better than it sounded. She was thinking about slipping off one shoe and sort of rubbing her foot on his ankle when Hermione cleared her throat and pointed at the reading Ginny really wasn't doing.

Harry gave her a little smile, and they went back to work. She stayed up and did some more practice on apparating and silent wandwork after Harry went to bed. She really felt that she needed a tonne of practice on both. It wasn't until she was getting ready for bed that it occurred to her she was probably far ahead of the other sixth years. It was just too bad that she was probably not going to live long enough to attend Hogwarts again.

The next day was more of the same. They took turns staking out the Ministry in the morning and evening, and one of them searched the Diagon Alley restaurants during lunchtime. Hermione went off to do some Muggle-style investigating, while Ginny apparated over to the riverside.

Since the Disguising Charm still wasn't working on her, she was resorting to Muggle disguise tricks. She was wearing a dirty blonde wig, a really ugly pair of glasses, and a baggy windbreaker. Anyone who knew her really well and saw her face would probably recognize her, but otherwise she was probably safe. Still, the glasses were annoying and the wig was wretched. It was hot and uncomfortable, and it itched.

It took her almost an hour to track down the vampire nest using Hermione's map and an occasional locator spell. It would have been a lot faster if she could have used a broomstick or apparated about, but the area was clogged with Muggles working and sightseeing and going from place to place.

The place was another warehouse. Something inside her was telling her 'it's always the abandoned warehouses' for some reason. Maybe it was her experience with that first vampire nest. Or maybe not. Maybe it was something from one of her dreams.

The warehouse looked like every other warehouse. This one even had two big lorries parked outside in front of closed loading doors, and several guys in security uniforms patrolling around the building. Her gut told her that only about half of them of them were 'guys'. They were walking around in the daylight, so some of them were human and the rest were whatever types of demons could pass as human in daylight. Great, demons and humans watching the building during the daytime, and probably more of them inside too. She was really looking forward to punching this Marius right in the face. Over and over.

She walked on, trying to look like she was lost. She had to make a couple turns to get completely out of sight of the warehouse and out of sight of any passersby. Then she apparated to the roof of a neighboring warehouse and took a better look.

The windows looked normal. At first. When she took the time to study them, she realized they were painted over on the inside. Someone did a good job. You had to really look hard to notice they weren't plain windows looking into a dark interior. Whoever did the paint job had even painted white venetian blinds on most of the windows.

She checked the whole warehouse. The loading docks on the street side, the solid brick wall on the south side, and the two doors on the far side that led to a gravel parking area. There were a dozen cars and vans parked there. She wondered how many of them were stolen, and how many belonged to people who were now vampires.

One of them was the car that had been parked all day yesterday in Grimmauld Place. That told her this was the place. The vampires and demons staking out Harry's house were coming from here, and if they figured out how to get inside the house, they would overrun it in a tidal wave of menace. And the demons probably didn't need a person's invitation to get inside. If the Fidelius

Charm broke completely, the demons would be a problem as soon as they could get to the front windows.

She apparated back to the top step of the house and slipped inside. The demons in the panel truck out in the square made her want to rush over and rip the doors off and chop them into pieces. But she went inside and closed the front door instead.

They went to the front parlor to chat. There was no good news, though. She told them what she had found out about the warehouse. She heard that there was no new information about the Ministry. And Hermione had her own report.

Hermione said, "I went over and checked the tax rolls. A Hepzibah Mason has owned those buildings for at least sixty years. That 'boss lady' you talked to might be a really old master vampire in her own right."

Harry said, "So she could be a lot more of a threat than she showed us."

Ginny grimaced. Why did vampire slaying have to get so complicated?

Hermione went on, "Then I used some Polyjuice Potion and I went over to the Wizarding museum I told you about. The Ravenclaw antique they have there is genuine, as far as I can tell, but it's not a Horcrux."

Ron complained, "Great, so what did Riddle grab and use for a Horcrux?"

Hermione said, "I'll see about sending Susan Bones an owl and maybe she can get us a look at the Ravenclaw antique they're supposed to have at Bones Manor."

Ron asked, "And just how are you going to do that? We don't have an owl we can use."

Ginny saw Harry wince slightly, but she didn't say anything. Ron was without his owl for as long as they were on their mission, and she was sure Ron hadn't said it to make Harry feel bad. It was just Ron didn't usually think things through before he spoke.

Hermione said, "I'll do it at lunch. A little Polyjuice Potion, and I can check on Umbridge, then hire a rental owl from that place over by Flourish and Blotts."

Harry asked, "And how are you going to get a return message?"

Hermione said, "I think I'll just ask Susan to write to a pseudonym to be left at the owl post office, and I'll check it every few days, every time it's my turn to do the lunch stakeout."

The afternoon lessons went really well. Sixth year Transfiguration lessons were hard, but the combination of Hermione and Harry and Ron was exactly what Ginny needed. Hermione understood the theory so well she could be writing the textbooks. Harry was so good with the nonverbal spells and the wandwork. And Ron knew the 'Transfigurations for Dummies' part that she always needed after hearing Hermione's really complicated lecture. Once Ginny got enough help from Ron, Hermione went over her lecture again, and the second time it made a little more sense.

Then Ginny got to work along with Ron and Harry while Hermione taught them some seventh year lessons. That wasn't so easy. She really needed Harry and Ron to be able to help her, or else she was struggling. She didn't feel so bad about it when she saw Ron was struggling too, and Harry was having a hard time.

At least Harry's Defense Against the Dark Arts lesson was easier, even if Ginny was still struggling with the silent wandwork. Even Ron was doing better than her, and Hermione was making it look dead easy. Then Ron's lecture on demons the vampires might have around didn't require any wandwork at all. And Hermione let her use a Quick Quotes Quill so she didn't have to take notes herself. Still, she wondered if Ron was deliberately picking out the most disgusting things he could find. Did Fyarl demons really have paralyzing snot? Eww.

Then Hermione took them down to the Potions room and they worked on Polyjuice Potion and the potion for Hermione's Map Binding Spell. Hermione insisted she needed more of each.

While Ginny gave her talk on divination and Slayer dreams to Ron and Harry, Hermione used a Disguising Charm on herself and went off to the Muggle grocery to pick up some more provisions for Kreacher, who wanted to make bouillabaisse for them the next night.

But Ginny wasn't even finished with her talk when Hermione was back, slamming open the front door and rushing upstairs to find them.

Hermione was so upset she forgot to undo her Disguising Charm. She was waving a Muggle newspaper and looking horrified. She pulled it open and showed the headline to them.

## GRAVEROBBERERS IN ALCESTER

Ginny winced. Ron said, "Bloody hell! Is that what I think it is?"

Hermione fumed, "It's what we all know it is! Listen to this drivell! 'Five of the six victims of the recent barbecue fork murder spree were dug up from their graves last night. Three different cemeteries were disturbed in what police described as a shocking breach of mores.' Idiots! How can they not know it's vampires!"

Ginny said, "So five more vampires rose last night?"

Hermione nodded. "And it's getting worse."

Ginny stood up. "I guess we know what we need to do tonight."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 29 Apr 2012 07:12:21 GMT  
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Chapter 55 Sent Him Forth

Harry frowned. "Alcester? How do we get there? I've never been near the area."

Hermione pursed her lips in thought. "Once it gets dark, I'll side-along apparate you there. Then we both come back here and side-along apparate Ron and Ginny. Then we start searching. I've got a map of the area ready to use."

"Of course you do," Ron said.

Ginny said, "Fine. We need to eat first, and we need to make sure we have everything ready."

Hermione said, "Everyone needs Muggle clothing, but we may need our robes too."

Ron asked, "Do you have our brooms?" Hermione just glared at him. "Sorry! Sorry! Just asking!"

Ginny didn't get a chance to do much kitchen work, because Kreacher was already preparing a hearty beef stew and a fruit salad. So she just ate with the others. So far, Kreacher hadn't said anything about her eating at least as much as Ron and Hermione put together.

Once they were done and dressed in Muggle clothing with dark coats, Hermione led them to the entryway. She stepped onto the top step outside, took Harry by the arm, and disappeared.

Ginny looked at Ron and said, "I wish I was old enough to do this legally."

Ron frowned, "With the Ministry the way it is, I doubt they'd ever give you a license."

She frowned back at him. "But we're purebloods. They'd have to treat us like the others."

Wouldn't they?"

He shook his head. "I don't think so. We're blood traitors. We're the family who backed Harry Potter. We're the enemy to pretty much every Death Eater and probably most of the Ministry now. I'm just surprised they haven't fired dad yet."

She said, "Maybe they'll decide to fire Percy instead!"

He laughed and said, "Doubt we'll get that lucky. Percy 'Mister Anti-Potter Suck-up-to-the-Minister' Weasley? They'll probably make him the official Head of the Weasleys one of these days."

Harry popped back onto the top step. He hastily stepped inside, and Hermione apparated onto the top step. She looked at Ron and asked, "Ready?" He just stepped forward. She took his arm, and they disappeared.

Harry led Ginny out onto the top step and took the time to lock the front door. Then they apparated to Alcester.

Ginny tried to ignore the pressure and discomfort of side-along apparation, and instead she tried to concentrate on Harry's hand.

They apparated only a few feet from Ron and Hermione. They were standing in the darkness on a small village green not far from some brightly lit shops and restaurants. Plenty of Muggles were going into the restaurants and walking about.

Ron said, "For a place with lots of 'gang violence' it seems pretty safe."

Ginny closed her eyes and tried to sense anything unusual. "No vampires close by, anyway."

Hermione tossed Harry's cloak over herself as she knelt down. She hissed, "Just give me time to do the spell."

Harry was standing casually, like he belonged there. Ginny tried to do the same thing. Ron was looking about like he had seldom seen anything like it. She knew they didn't get out in the Muggle world all that much, but the least he could do was to try to act like a Muggle.

It took Hermione about five minutes. Ginny ignored Ron's complaints that the place was 'pitch black' since she could see just fine. Hermione stood up and handed Ginny the cloak. Then she said, "There aren't any vampires in town right now, which seems extremely odd to me. There's a cluster north of here at what might be an old Muggle manor. The map isn't detailed enough for me to tell. Then there's a lot of vampires southeast of the town and all moving in the same

direction. East down a road. So something's going on, but I don't know what."

Ron asked, "Cluster holding still, or cluster on the move?"

Hermione said, "The still one. That might be their stronghold, but right now there are a lot fewer vampires there. And if we take out their stronghold, we have them when they come back just before dawn. We keep them out of the building, and they turn to dust when the morning sun hits them."

Ginny said, "Okay. I still want to know where the other group is going."

Hermione said, "We can make someone at the stronghold tell us."

Ron said, "Works for me. Let's get moving while there's only two groups of them to deal with."

Hermione performed three Disillusionment Charms while Ginny got the cloak in place. Then they mounted their brooms and headed north.

It took about half an hour to fly to the area and spot the manor. Ginny noticed the old roads and wondered how long it would have taken in a Muggle car. But she could see a decrepit old manor rotting away in the midst of a rundown estate that probably hadn't been mowed in months. She could see several lights on in some of the ground floor rooms, and when they got close she could feel there were vampires in there.

"Any idea how many?" Hermione whispered.

"More than a few," Ginny said. She wished she could tell more, but the Slayer senses weren't a Muggle computer.

Hermione whispered, "Okay, Ginny and Harry. Quick sweep around the house for guards. Behead everything you see."

Ginny led, since she was the one with the vampire and demon senses. There were two guards on each side of the house: a vampire with a rifle and a demon with a sword. She and Harry silently took care of each pair with swift, silent sectumsempra curses aimed at the necks.

When they got back to the front of the manor, Hermione was doing another spell. She finally said, "I think there aren't any more vampires except down in the cellar. That's the only direction I can get with a locator spell."

Ginny said, "Let's go in and see."

Hermione said, "We stay on broomsticks so we're quiet." She waved her wand at the front door in a silent alohomora, and they flew inside.

Once inside, Ginny could feel the vampires below her. There wasn't any feeling like that above her or off to the sides. So she was going to assume Hermione was right. They flew slowly through the ground floor until they found the open door leading to the cellar.

Ginny pulled off the cloak and handed it to Hermione, who stuffed it into her pouch. Then Ginny flew stealthily down the stairs.

There was a large room filled with cots and bunk beds and hammocks and a bunch of mattresses spread on the floor. It looked like there was room for maybe sixty people to sleep if they didn't mind the really crowded quarters. But the room was empty.

They flew across the room to a pair of closed doors. One door was barred on the outside, obviously to keep someone inside. The other door looked like a normal door. She could feel there were no vampires behind the barred door. There were definitely some vampires and maybe a demon behind the second door. She handed her broom to Hermione and swung it open.

Four vampires and two demons were standing around a table that had a map and little figures laid out on it, like a diorama in a museum. All six monsters whirled to face her.

One demon sniffed the air and growled, "Slayer!"

She raised her wand and did a perfect silent diffindo that decapitated it. It tipped over backward and fell to the floor with a crash. "Slayee," she said. She had no idea where that came from, but it seemed the right thing to say.

She was about to threaten the others to make them talk, but all five leapt at her.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
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Chapter 56 To Guard the Way

Ginny managed another hasty diffindo that turned the middle vampire to dust, but the room was small and they were moving at her really quickly. They were virtually on top of her before she could even fish out a stake for hand-to-claw combat. She was about to jump back out of the room

when three hexes came firing past her. One beheaded the remaining demon. One blasted a vampire apart. The third was a gout of flame that incinerated all the other vampires before they could dive for cover.

Hermione fussed, "Ron! Now we don't have anybody to interrogate!" She cast a quick aguamenti, and water gushed over the fires in the room.

Ron snapped, "I wasn't going to let another vampire jump on Ginny's neck! After the other times, I'm surprised I don't have grey hair!"

Harry said, "Let's look at the map." The table had been on fire, and the water had done at least as much damage as the flames. "Or not."

Ginny was glad Ron had blasted everything in sight. After all, it was her neck on the line in a cramped room with five super-strong monsters. She said, "Let's check in the other room. Maybe there are some victims who'll talk to us."

Hermione grumbled, "I hope so."

Harry said, "We have to protect Ginny first."

Hermione nodded unhappily. "But she's the Vampire Slayer. She's supposed to be able to handle this kind of thing. And now we don't know where the other vampires are going."

Ron said, "Let's take a look at your map, while Harry and Ginny check the other room."

Ginny stepped over to the barred door and slid the bars off, then unlocked the door. She gestured for Harry to step back and be ready. He moved back a couple yards and held his wand out.

She swung the door open and prepared to leap back out of the way, or attack, whichever she needed to do.

Nothing moved.

She flipped on a light and winced. There were six dead bodies completely drained of blood, with horrific bitemarks all over their necks and arms and legs. All of them also had chunks bitten out of them by inhuman mouths. Ginny guessed the demons did that. There was one middle-aged man who was moving feebly. The bites on his neck and wrists looked fresh. And very painful.

The man whimpered, "Please... Please... No more... I won't tell you anything... Just let me die..."

Ginny closed her eyes and checked. She couldn't feel any other vampires or demons around. She called out, "Hermione! Are there any more vampires here, according to your map?"

Hermione said, "Let me get it laid out and refresh the spell... Okay. No, the house is clean. Although my spell doesn't pick up demons."

Ginny asked, "Are the other vampires still moving?"

"It looks like they stopped, or else they're moving really slowly. But it's in the middle of nowhere. It's like they're... They're after something not on the map." Hermione gasped, "They're after Bones Manor!"

The man groaned, "No! I won't tell you how to get past the wards! You can kill me, but I won't!"

Ginny patted him on the shoulder. "The vampires are gone. We'll get you to a medi-witch. It'll be okay."

But the man didn't look cheered up. "They're gone? They're going to attack the manor now? You have to stop them! They have Master Edward in thrall, and he'll let them all in! And they have a Death Eater to attack the wards so they can get to the house! Miss Amelia is there, and little Miss Susan. It's my job to protect the manor, and I have failed!"

Ginny pulled Harry into the room. "You know who this is?"

The old man feebly shook his head no.

Ginny pushed, "Look at his forehead."

"You can't be... The Boy Who Lived? Here?"

Ginny insisted, "Yes. It's Harry Potter. You haven't failed. You held on until The Boy Who Lived could rescue you, and now he'll save them. Then he'll get you help."

"The Boy... Who... Lived..." The man's eyes rolled back in his head, and he passed out.

"Ginny, you know I hate that stuff," Harry complained.

She said, "I know. But he needed to, well, believe. And you're what plenty of people believe in."

"But I'm not-"

She cut him off by covering his mouth with three fingertips. "I know," she murmured softly. "But

you have to face facts. Maybe it was your mum and not you that let you live when you were a baby, but it was you when you were a firstie. And when you saved me. And when you fought off a hundred dementors by yourself. And when you won the Tri-Wizard Cup-

"I had lots of help," he blushed.

"-not as much help as Krum did, or Fleur, you know. But then you dueled Voldemort and lived. And everything else you've done. You are special. And the fact that you don't believe it just makes you not a complete prat."

"Like Malfoy," Ron added.

Ginny blushed bright red, because she didn't want anyone else to hear what she was saying to Harry.

Ron looked at the man and said, "We'll get a medi-witch out here as soon as we can, but Hermione's ready to go to Bones Manor."

Ginny frowned, "And how are we supposed to get there? Can any of us apparate there? No, we don't know where it is. And it'll take an hour to fly there on our broomsticks."

"Not mine," Harry pointed out.

Hermione stepped over. "I'm ready. Now here's what we'll do. I'll apparate as close to the house as I can with Harry. Then we'll come back for you two."

Ginny said, "No. I want to go first. It's what I'm supposed to do."

Harry said, "I don't want Ginny going in there without backup."

"Me either," insisted Ron.

Ginny said, "You'll only be a few seconds behind me."

"Not a chance," said Ron.

Harry frowned, "I don't like it. A few seconds is all your fights take. You could be dead by the time we get there."

Ginny said, "I have to go first, because I'm the one who'll know if there are threats around us when we apparate in!" She thought for a second and added, "And where they are, too."

"Ooh. Good point," Harry reluctantly admitted.

Ron asked Ginny, "How about you and Hermione apparate there and come back, then the two of you take us?"

Hermione checked, "Ginny? Do you think you can apparate well enough to side-along someone safely?"

Ginny winced. She made herself admit, "No. I wish I was better, but I'm not nearly good enough. I'm barely good enough on my own."

Hermione said, "We're out of time." She grabbed Ginny's arm and disappeared.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 06 May 2012 06:47:25 GMT  
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Chapter 57 A Keeper of Sheep

Ginny apparated along with Hermione at the side of a Muggle road. There was a field on either side of the road, and Ginny could see a convoy of cars and small trucks pulled far off the road and parked in the field on her right. In the darkness, the vehicles would be invisible to any Muggle passing by. Hermione pointed off at a wooded area on the other side of the vehicles and said, "That way."

Ginny nodded and took a moment to try to sense any vampires. There was nothing nearby. They had all left the cars behind, wherever they were going. She said, "They're a way off. I can't sense them from here."

Hermione nodded. "So I'll bring Harry to the edge of the woods."

Ginny said, "Tell him to use his Firebolt." She pulled out her broom and took off in the direction Hermione had pointed.

She pushed her broomstick as fast as she could, and it tore across the grassy field at about fifteen feet above the ground. She didn't want to be too easy to see, but she also didn't want to run into a fence in the dark. Or a ward. Or a demon.

She reached the edge of the forest and tilted her broom upward so she could race up to the

treetops. Then she headed over the forest, hoping to find the vampires before they could attack.

It took her less than a minute of fast flying before she felt the ugly, gut-wrenching sensation that told her she had found her prey.

And suddenly she was over a clearing. A large circle in the middle of an untouched forest. She could see a large manor house at the center of the clearing, with lavish gardens and grounds all around it.

And she could see a crowd of vampires streaming toward an open front door.

Even worse, there were probably demons around here, and she was guessing the Death Eater would stick around to be able to report back to Riddle. That meant that if she attacked the vampires directly, she was risking getting blindsided by whatever the demons and the wizard could throw her way.

She didn't feel like she had a choice. She couldn't let those vampires kill Susan and her family.

Suddenly, she heard Harry yell from behind her. "Go! I got your back!"

She leaned forward and jetted toward the vampires.

She wasn't fast enough. She could see a dozen vampires crowding through the front door. Her heart sank as she thought about what she would find when she got inside.

Suddenly the room on the other side of the door lit up, and a tongue of fire lashed out through the doorway to incinerate anything directly in front of the door. The fire shot out twenty feet past the doorstep. Thirty feet. Forty feet.

Ginny watched as maybe another twenty vampires were quickly flamed and turned to dust, while about a dozen dove off to each side of the doorway, and two managed to stay far enough back to avoid the fire. She silently cast an incendio that swept through the vampires to her left, and she traded hands long enough to pull a battleaxe out of her wristband.

The two vampires retreating from the fire never saw her coming. She swept behind them and beheaded both of them in one long broom-assisted swing of the axe.

The fire vanished, and Amelia Bones strode to her doorstep, looking furious. About a dozen surviving vampires and three demons roared at her and attacked. She stood there implacably and began hurling hexes and curses as fast as... well, as fast as Harry could manage.

Ginny flew off to the side, where she would hopefully be out of the line of fire, and started picking

off every vampire that managed to dodge one of Madame Bones' curses.

Harry came charging in on his Firebolt, with Ron and Hermione behind him. Harry beheaded the last demon, and then he landed carefully on the scorched grass in front of the door into Bones Manor.

He carefully called out, "Madame Bones! May I approach?"

Ginny thought he was right to be cautious, because just seconds ago Madame Bones was hurling hexes around like Albus Dumbledore.

Amelia Bones flicked her wand upward, and suddenly the entire front lawn was illuminated by a dozen yellow balls of light spread out around the area and hovering thirty feet in the air. Ginny had seen illumination spells like that before. They were usually set in place when the house was charmed, but typically it was only done at great manors like Parkinson Manor.

Madame Bones firmly said, "Mister Potter, I assume? And Miss Granger. Thank you. Susan received your talking patronus only minutes ago. I was rather skeptical, until the wards failed a few seconds later. So I believe you have some Death Eaters out there unaccounted for."

Harry said, "I believe the lone Death Eater is accounted for. Your retainer is still alive, but in need of a medi-witch."

Hermione landed beside Harry. She said, "I couldn't give him a Blood Restoring Potion because he's passed out."

Madame Bones looked around and said, "I see you have two Weasleys assisting you, but who is monitoring that Death Eater?"

Harry said, "He's dead. It's Antonin Dolohov. He has maybe eight separate vampire bites, and they're all fresh. And he certainly couldn't have taken down the wards if he was dead."

Madame Bones said, "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named must have chosen him for punishment."

Harry nodded. "He's failed to stop me a couple times now. Riddle isn't the most understanding leader."

Madame Bones raised an eyebrow at Harry's name for He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. "And is there a reason why four at least four underage wizards are running around loose raiding vampire nests? Particularly when one of them is wanted for questioning by the Ministry?"

Hermione hurried over and stood with Harry. "Because Riddle is using dark creatures now. This

isn't the only master vampire his Death Eaters have recruited to form an army and attack one of the suspected hideouts of the Order of the Phoenix.

Madame Bones glared, "Are you accusing me of participating in Albus Dumbledore's technically illegal organization?"

Harry said, "No, we're not. But that's not the same as Riddle thinking you're not."

Susan Bones and an elderly wizard came to the doorway. Susan asked, "Aunt Amelia, is it safe? Oh, hi Harry! Hi, Hermione. Thanks for the patronus." She looked around and waved at Ginny and Ron.

Madame Bones pointed at the elderly wizard. "Dogsbody, please go with Miss Granger immediately, check over Cartswell, and take him to St. Mungo's." Hermione took the man by the arm and disappeared.

Harry asked, "What about 'Master Edward'? One of the vampires had him in thrall."

Madame Bones sniffed. "As soon as we received the patronus and I realized it was correct, I put Edward to sleep and Dogsbody took him right over to St. Mungo's. Given that the manor wards were down, that was not a problem."

Hermione apparated back to the spot she had stood before. "Is everyone all right?"

Madame Bones said, "Yes. The lawn will have to be tended tomorrow, and the wards will have to be re-built, but the people are all safe. Thanks to you. Even if I should be calling the Aurors to take half of you in, and calling Arthur and Molly on the other half."

"Are you going to have us taken in?" Hermione asked nervously.

Harry said, "You do realize that would be the same as just killing us yourself, don't you?"

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 09 May 2012 06:23:04 GMT  
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Chapter 58 A Tiller of the Ground

Ginny watched carefully as Madame Bones stared into space for several seconds. The woman

was clearly arguing with herself about what to do.

Madame Bones finally said, "I should. But..." She looked around at Susan, who would be vampire food or worse if not for Harry and the others. She finally added, "I won't. I will be doing a great many Obfuscation Spells though. And I'll be asking Susan not to discuss any of this when she goes back to school."

"Can't you tutor her at home?" Hermione asked.

Amelia Bones shook her head slowly. "No. It's compulsory for purebloods, just as it's forbidden for Muggleborns. If I wanted to take everyone and flee to America, I might be able to get her enrolled in the Salem Institute. But that would mean leaving the Ministry to His supporters, and abandoning most of the Bones properties."

Susan insisted, "And if I can't go back to Hogwarts, I can't support my friends. Hardly anyone else in Hufflepuff learned DADA from Harry."

The older woman's eyebrows rose suspiciously. "And what exactly did Mister Potter teach you?"

Susan stood her ground. "Oh let me see... A really good Expelliarmus. Two different Shield Charms, and a host of defensive spells, including the Patronus Charm, and-"

"Susan! You can do a Patronus Charm?" Susan nodded. "With a corporeal Patronus?" Susan nodded again. "And Mister Potter taught you this... last year?"

Susan said, "Two years ago. Fifth year."

Amelia Bones frowned, "And would this be why there was such a gap between the grades of the better students and the poorer students in Defense Against the Dark Arts when you took your O.W.L.s?"

Susan frowned, "If it wasn't for Harry, I would have gotten a 'T'."

Hermione said, "He taught the entire group. Defensive spells, counter-jinxes, offensive spells... He's a really good teacher. The only people who did well on their Defense Against the Dark Arts O.W.L.s that year were the students Harry taught, and some of the purebloods like Draco Malfoy who probably had outside tutoring."

Ron complained, "No one could've learned anything from Umbridge. The woman went out of her way to make sure no one learned anything in her class."

Madame Bones muttered something under her breath that only Ginny could make out. "The only

thing that woman is good at is interfering."

Hermione said, "We really must be going, but before we leave could we... take a quick look at Ravenclaw's Belt? Just for a second?"

Madame Bones stared at her. "Why in Merlin's name would you want to look at a valuable antique? And why now?"

Susan said, "Auntie, you remember I asked if we could get it out to show someone?"

"And you just... neglected to mention it was to show to someone wanted by the Ministry," Madame Bones said frostily.

Susan stood her ground. "Yes ma'am. Because Hermione wouldn't ask if it wasn't something important. Really important. I don't know what, but I do believe that. And she's my friend."

Madame Bones looked at Hermione and asked, "And precisely why do you want to view the Belt of Rowena Ravenclaw?"

Hermione carefully said, "I don't believe it would be in anyone's best interests for us to tell you that. But all we need to do is look at it. And I need to perform a complicated spell. That's it."

"Aunt Amelia? Please?" Susan begged.

Madame Bones sighed. "Very well. Susan, as a direct descendant of Rowena Ravenclaw, does have the right. Susan? Would you care to show your friends down to the museum vault?"

"Thank you, Auntie!" Susan grinned. She hugged Madame Bones, who hugged her back, even though she looked embarrassed to be hugging someone in front of strangers.

They followed Susan through the mansion. They walked down three flights of stairs and down a long stone corridor. As they entered the corridor, bright balls of light burst into radiance on the ceiling, illuminating and warming the entire hallway.

Ron muttered, "Don't know why they can't do this at Hogwarts."

Harry said, "It's not creepy and clammy enough for Snape."

Hermione pursed her lips and said, "There's no reason you can't do a Warming Charm on your clothes before you walk down into the dungeons."

Ron grumbled under his breath, "Except then I have to put up with all the Slytherins calling me a

sissy because I need a bloody Warming Charm just to go sit in Potions."

They passed several rooms with closed doors before they reached a massive metal door next to a small alcove.

Susan said, "Hold on one second. I have to step into the alcove and pop into the vault." She stepped into the alcove and vanished.

Hermione said, "I'm sure it's a very effective anti-burglar system. No one can get in unless they're supposed to go in, and you can't hold her hostage when she has to step into the alcove alone to pass through whatever wards are in place."

The metal door swung open smoothly, with nary a creak or groan. Susan was standing there holding a metal belt. Ginny noticed that one side of the belt had an attachment that was probably to hold the scabbard of a sword, and the other side had a square pouch with four gems at the corners. She had no idea what that was for.

Hermione took out her wand, waved it carefully several times, and waited. Nothing happened. She finally said, "Thank you, Susan. That's all we needed to do. I hope you're not going to be in trouble with your aunt over this."

Susan said, "I don't think so. Aunt Amelia is very concerned about being fair to everyone. And you did just save all our lives. I'm sure she'll be quite upset with herself for days, but I don't think she'll be mad at me. Or cousin Eddie."

Ron said, "It's definitely not Eddie's fault. Some master vampires can enthrall you. Doesn't matter who you are. Maybe Dumbledore could stand up to it. Or Harry. But not you or me or Eddie."

Susan blushed a little. "Thanks. I'll remind auntie about that."

Hermione said, "Well, we really must be going before anyone else shows up. And we've got a long flight on broomsticks left." Ron looked at Ginny with an expression that said 'what flight?' but Ginny didn't have an answer.

They followed Susan back to the main hall and said their goodbyes to Madame Bones. Hermione added, "If you're going to tell Mister and Mrs. Weasley about Ron and Ginny, please be very careful how you do it. They're being watched by Death Eaters, who think Ron and Ginny are still at the Burrow."

They walked out onto the front lawn of Bones Manor and Hermione gathered up the brooms that had been left there. She passed them out, and they flew off over the forest.

Once they landed near the abandoned cars, Ron asked, "What long flight?"

"Oh Ron!" Hermione said. "There's no flight. I just didn't want Amelia Bones to find out we have two unlicensed apparators."

Harry asked, "And what are you doing now?"

Hermione said, "I know Ron can drive a car, so I thought it might be handy to have one for emergencies." She cast a *reducio* on a beat-up Ford, and it shrank to the size of a loaf of bread. Then she shoved it into her pouch. "Now let's get back to Grimmauld Place."

Harry took Ginny's arm and disappeared. She found herself on the top step of the house once more, and she waited until Harry unlocked the door before stepping inside. Ron and Hermione appeared with a crack a few seconds later.

Hermione led them to the back sitting room. She groaned, "Well, the belt wasn't a Horcrux either. We're not doing very well on our search."

Harry fumed, "We should have known. It has to be something Riddle had to steal to do the spells and put the Horcrux in it. It wouldn't be a family heirloom that hasn't ever been out of the manor."

Ron complained, "Oh great, so it's something lost or stolen, like Hufflepuff's cup?"

Ginny frowned, "If it really is Ravenclaw's Lost Diadem, we'll never find it."

Ron looked at her and said, "There is a reason it's called Ravenclaw's LOST Diadem, you know."

Hermione said, "It's been lost for centuries. So there has to be a way that V- I mean Riddle could trace it. And if he could track it down, we can too."

Harry said, "I'm exhausted. Can we wait to argue about this until tomorrow? I'd like to get at least a little sleep tonight."

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Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 13 May 2012 07:00:43 GMT  
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Chapter 59 Lurking at the Door

Ginny looked around. She wasn't in any place she had ever been before. It was an immense room. It looked as big as the Muggle cathedral they had gone to. Maybe bigger. It was definitely bigger than the entry room of the Ministry of Magic. It was bigger than the Great Hall at Hogwarts. Where was she?

She looked around, and there was an ordinary door behind her. In front of her, the room went on and on. High windows let in massive shafts of sparkling sunshine that illuminated everything. There were walls before her. Really tall walls, made of... junk? It looked like the walls she could see were old furniture and broken tables and unused wardrobes. Chinks in the walls were packed with books. Torn books, damaged books, and books that felt disturbing to her Slayer senses. There were banned toys all over the place, too. She could see several Fanged Frisbees on the wall ahead of her.

There were clothes strewn around in the piles and walls and stacks. Some were torn, and some were probably missing. One pair of pink shoes with little radish-like things sewn to the uppers was maybe one of the pairs of shoes Luna had lost over the years. There were bottles of potions. There were old weapons. There was a smashed suit of armor. She stopped and picked up the battleaxe that she saw, even though it was covered in blood. Old blood, but blood. Her Slayer senses didn't react, so she figured it wasn't demon blood. She wondered if it was human blood but too old for her to smell anymore.

She moved forward. Who on earth would have a stuffed troll, and why would it end up in here? On some impulse, she turned right. She didn't know why, but her Slayer sense was directing her. She walked past several more alleys, and saw a Vanishing Cabinet. It had obviously been broken once, and now looked mostly repaired.

"Malfoy," she hissed.

She knew about that bloody Vanishing Cabinet. The broken one was the one that let all those Death Eaters into Hogwarts.

She was in the Room of Requirement. At Hogwarts. Somehow. This had to be what the room gave you, if you needed a place to hide stuff. Like the Potions book Harry hid from Snape.

She took a left. She didn't know why, except something in her gut was telling her to. She stepped into another alley, and she knew why.

There, on top of an old, acid-splashed cupboard, was Voldemort. He looked like he was made of smoke and slime. He crouched there, hugging an old chipped bust, and looking around blindly.

She hurled the battleaxe at his neck. The axe passed through his smoky form without touching

him. And he reacted. He leapt at her with a hair-raising howl.

She stood her ground and grabbed a broken table, snapping the leg off it so she had a sharp wooden stake.

The smoke-like thing attacked. She slashed at it fruitlessly, and it ignored her efforts. It wrapped itself around her as she futilely fought against it. And then it started pouring itself down her throat...

Ginny woke up with a small gasp. She was still in her sleeping bag on her bed, back in Number 12 Grimmauld Place. She was still holding Harry's hand.

"I really hate these Slayer dreams," she whispered. She slipped out of the bed and put on her nightgown. Then she went into the back parlor and started dictating everything she could remember about the dream to her Quick Quotes Quill.

Once she was finally done dictating, she didn't feel like she could go back to sleep. So she showered and dressed, and then watched the vampires in the square until they took off shortly before dawn.

When she heard Harry stirring, she walked down to the kitchen and supervised Kreacher as he prepared breakfast. Then she waited until the rest of them came trooping down the stairs to eat.

After everyone was full and before Ron and Harry had to rush off to watch the entrances to the Ministry, she spoke up. "I had another Slayer dream last night." She handed over copies of her dictation. "I'm pretty sure it's the Room of Requirement."

Harry said, "No question. I even remember the stuffed troll and the Vanishing Cabinet, and that cupboard with the acid splashed on it is where I hid Snape's Potions book. But the broken bust? I put it on top of the cupboard, with some other junk. A dirty wig and a tarnished old tiara-"

"Harry!" Hermione gasped. "An old tiara? That Ginny's dream just connected with V- I mean Riddle? You were holding the lost Diadem of Rowena Ravenclaw!"

Harry looked utterly gobsmacked.

Ron said, "Well, that solves one problem. At least we don't have to go traipsing all over Europe looking for the bloody thing."

Hermione said, "So when Riddle went to Dumbledore and asked to be the new teacher, he was

probably just there to hide the diadem."

Ron wondered, "What kind of loony does he have to be if he was hiding a Horcrux in a room full of millions of pieces of old junk stuck there by thousands and thousands of students and house elves and whoever, and he thought no one else knew about the place?"

Harry said, "We know where it is, but we can't get to it. Not when Hogwarts is a Death Eater stronghold now."

Ginny thought for a couple seconds and said, "I can get it. All I have to do is go to Hogwarts like everyone else."

Harry gasped, "You can't go!"

She snapped, "Well, you sure can't! And Hermione can't! Ron's supposed to be home sick. I'm the only one who can go. And I'm a pureblood, so Ron and I are the only two who would be safe there."

Ron choked, "Ginny, you Stupefied two Death Eaters and put two others in St. Mungo's. Maybe they don't know you did the Carrows and Rowle, but they have to know you busted up Bellatrix Lestrange. There's no telling what they might do to you to get even."

She reminded him, "And what are they gonna do? Remember, spells pretty much bounce off me. And anyway, how is this any less dangerous than the rest of you breaking into the Ministry?"

Harry said, "She's got a point there."

Hermione primly said, "Well, I do have several plans for that."

Ginny said, "And I have a plan for this. It's a simple plan. And I figure I can endure anything for a day or so. That ought to be plenty of time to get into the Room of Requirement and find that thing, now that I know where it is."

Hermione worried, "But if your dream isn't exactly right, it might take months to find the Horcrux in that huge room. Even if you have more Slayer dreams to guide you."

Ginny went on, "So I find the diadem. Then I just take one of the secret tunnels until I'm outside the wards, and I apparate back here."

Hermione said, "And what if we run into trouble? What if the house isn't safe when you get back?"

Ron said, "We can put a ribbon on the front doorknob. No one could see it but us, and the other

Secret Keepers. It can be green, and Hermione charms it so it's red for danger, and maybe white if we're caught by surprise. Then you'd know whether to come on in, or go meet us at some secret rendezvous, or what."

Hermione frowned, "I think I want several more emergency options than that."

Harry said, "Then we can use your fake Galleons like in fifth year. We all carry one. You charm yours to tell us which rendezvous to go to at what time."

Hermione also insisted, "And we'll need to send a talking Patronus to Molly and Arthur to warn them where you're going, so they can break that 'trace' charm, and they'll know not to call Fred or George to come impersonate you if Death Eaters come checking up on you."

Ginny didn't want to worry her mum and dad, but even she agreed that it had to be done.

Harry checked, "And you think you're ready to try apparating that far?"

She nodded, "Yeah. I can do it." She was sure she could.

All right, she was fairly sure she could. But she wasn't as good at it as Hermione. Or her mum. She just needed some more practice.

They spent the day preparing for the two 'missions' as Ron kept calling them. Hermione spent an hour using geminio spells to give Ginny a set of clothes to pack, just in case she ended up leaving the clothes behind. Ginny looked through the attic areas and found a school trunk. Harry had Kreacher clean it and put a few protective spells on it. Then Ginny packed the specially prepared clothes in the trunk, along with schoolbooks. Hermione just duplicated a stack of books from her pouch and pulled out some potions ingredients and cauldrons and such from the room downstairs she was using as her potions workroom. Harry made sure Ginny had four bezoars, in case someone poisoned her. Ron gave her a stack of parchment that had his notes on the first month of sixth year classes. She rolled up the parchment and hid the roll and the bezoars in her wrist bracelet. Harry made sure she had the Marauders' Map hidden away in there too.

Then Hermione spent half an hour performing spells on the wrist bracelet so people wouldn't notice it, and they wouldn't see it if they looked at her arm, and they wouldn't find it if they did Detection Spells.

The trunk said R.A.B. on the front, but Kreacher bespelled it to read G.M.W. instead. Harry asked, "M?"

She smiled a little. "My middle name is Molly."

He kissed her and asked, "How did I not know that?"

She smiled a little more. "I have no idea, Harry James Potter. Maybe you need to pay more attention to what's going on around you."

He smiled back. "Maybe I just need more lessons from you on what girls are thinking, because I still have no idea."

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Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 16 May 2012 06:11:17 GMT  
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Chapter 60 Let Us Go out to the Field

Ginny kissed Harry goodbye. Ron hugged her fiercely and told her she'd better not get hurt, or else. Hermione hugged her and told her good luck.

Then she apparated right into the ladies' lavatory in King's Cross Station. At least, it was the only one she knew in the station. She had used it plenty of times before, when she was getting ready to go to the train. She just hoped she was ready for this version of Hogwarts. She slipped on a plain black robe over her Muggle clothes and walked out, wheeling her trunk behind her.

There were fewer people than she was used to. A lot fewer. But maybe that was because she was used to being surrounded by her family. She ignored a couple Muggles and walked right through the barrier between platforms 9 and 10.

And there was the Hogwarts Express. Somehow, even the bright red of the engine seemed darker and more threatening. She walked down the platform, looking for friends. There were fewer parents and not as many younger kids along. There were no Muggleborns, and a lot fewer halfbloods.

There were too many Slytherins. Pansy Parkinson and Millicent Bulstrode were striding around like they owned the whole school. They both had prefect badges. Parkinson and Bulstrode? Bulstrode had the brains of a concussed kappa, and Parkinson's classwork made Ron look like the next Albus Dumbledore.

Crabbe and Goyle and Zabini were striding around with prefect badges too. And Nott. She had a feeling that you had to have a Death Eater father to get a prefect's badge. She managed not to shudder. At least she hadn't seen Malfoy. Yet. She was really hoping that after what Harry had

seen, Draco wouldn't be coming back to Hogwarts at all.

She was expecting every one of them to rush over and start finding things to take house points for. But they all seemed to be watching the halfbloods and looking for someone dangerous to come through the archway. She wondered if they really thought Harry and Hermione would show up and just climb on the train to go to Hogwarts. Or if some unfortunate Muggleborns like the Creevey brothers would give it a try.

She lifted her trunk onto the train, making sure to act like she was having to work at it. It wouldn't do to just lift the trunk and carry it like it was weightless. She found an empty compartment, took the travel bag out of her trunk, and put the trunk away while no one was watching her.

She didn't know what was in the travel bag. It just looked like a big Muggle purse, down to the shoulder strap. And Hermione had packed it without letting Ginny see what was in it.

She checked the door again, and peeked in the bag. There were six beef sandwiches, all with lettuce and tomatoes on them. She was guessing they all had Kreacher's special sandwich dressing, which she had to admit was really tasty. And the glow of the wrappers made her suspect Hermione had put a Food Preserving Charm on them. Along with the sandwiches were half a dozen apples, a pot of what looked like potato salad with a cover and another Food Preserving Charm, and several pastries.

In addition to all the food, there were two books. Hermione giving books? What a surprise. She peeked at them without pulling them out of the bag, just in case. Wow. Where did Hermione find a copy of Curses Moste Potente or Creatures of Darkest Hew? Ginny hoped they weren't taken out of the forbidden section of the Hogwarts library. Then it dawned on her that Hermione might have found the books in the Black family libraries.

Neville came in. "Can I sit in here with you?"

"Oh sure," she said with a smile.

Luna slid the compartment door open and said in her usual dreamy manner, "Oh, I told them it wasn't spattergroit, Ron just had an infestation of ferlmargles in his hair."

Neville looked at Ginny and raised his eyebrows. She said, "Ron has spattergroit. He's home sick, and they don't know when he can come back to school. They're afraid he's really contagious. It was so bad they almost didn't let me leave the house either, until two different medi-witches came out and said I was safe."

Luna dreamily said, "Frankly, I thought Ron looked like a transfigured ghoul."

Ginny clenched her teeth to keep from reacting. Sometimes Luna's leaps of intuition were somewhere well past unnerving. She said, "I thought he looked like a transfigured compost heap."

Luna giggled and then said, "Poor Ron. Did you know he and Harry were the only two boys in the upper classes who were nice to me?" She looked over and said, "And Neville too, but he's known me for years, like you."

Neville looked around and then cast a privacy spell. "Do you know if Harry and Hermione are going to... come to Hogwarts this year?"

She lied, "No idea. But they didn't get on the train, so maybe not."

Neville sighed, "It's going to be a long year with no one else in my dorm room."

She said, "I expect my room's going to be more than half-empty."

Luna looked at Ginny and said, "Most of our year won't be here."

Neville said, "The only house that won't be drastically short is Slytherin."

Luna calmly said, "Not everyone in Slytherin is a pureblood." She didn't have to say that not every pureblood was a Death Eater. All three of them were proof of that.

Romilda Vane came by later, looking for Harry. A couple Slytherins came by after that, also checking for Harry. They went to the trouble of firing Stunners at every spot that didn't have someone sitting in it, as well as up in the luggage racks and in the spaces under the seats. Ginny knew exactly why they were doing it, but didn't say anything.

Luna did say something. "Why would you think Harry's in here and invisible? Wouldn't it be much more likely he's hiding where he can listen in on your friends?"

The Slytherins stared at each other in shock, then sprinted back for the front of the train. It took Ginny about half a minute to stop laughing.

Neville finally said, "That's gonna cause problems later."

"Oh yes," Luna said dreamily. "I think that prefects are going to be searching the train, and checking the carriages, and inspecting the grounds, and searching the halls all day and night. It ought to be exhausting work. And if someone sees something lifting up by itself, they might report it and then even more searching would have to be done... Who knows how long it all might go on..."

Ginny just stared in surprise. "I never realized how evil you are. That's brilliant!"

Luna just gave her a serene smile.

Neville frowned, "If we're going to be up against it, we need to start doing some planning. Without Harry and Hermione and Ron, I don't know who else to look to, except you two. Ernie and Susan ought to be some help, even if Ernie isn't going to want to break any rules unless he has to."

Ginny said, "I think Susan ought to be a great help." She didn't say any more, and she just hoped Luna didn't make another one of her leaps of intuition in front of Neville.

Luna said, "I can think of a few Ravenclaws who know some very interesting things."

Ginny didn't think they ought to involve too many people, because she still remembered the disaster with Marietta Edgecombe. She said, "I know how to do the spell Hermione did on the fake Galleons. But some of the Slytherins probably know about those Galleons, so we'd need something else."

Neville gasped, "How did you learn that? Isn't it supposed to be a N.E.W.T.-level spell?" Ginny just stared at him until he figured it out. "Oh. Right."

Ginny said, "There are some things we don't want to be talking about where someone might hear us."

Luna serenely said, "Like the way Cornelius Fudge is using heliopaths to re-take the Ministry?"

"Umm, yeah. That too," Neville finally said.

The train ride seemed to take forever. Susan Bones and some of her friends dropped by. Ernie Macmillan did too. And a number of younger kids. It seemed like everyone everyone except the Slytherins was hoping to find Harry Potter on the train, as if seeing him would make everything all right.

Crabbe and Goyle dropped by later. They slammed open the compartment door and stared in nervously, their wands out and pointing at empty air. They looked like they were expecting Harry Potter to whip off his cloak of invisibility and attack them in the next second.

Luna serenely said, "I'm so glad you came by. There's an outbreak of ferlmargles on the train. I saw a box floating down the corridor past us, and there was no one lifting it, so it has to be ferlmargles, since I can see thestrals and they wouldn't fit on the train anyway. And why would thestrals want a box?"

"What kind of box?" Goyle growled anxiously.

"Oh, maybe the kind of box you store Quidditch balls in," she replied dreamily. "Or it could have a baby heliopath in it. Ferlmargles are supposed to love baby heliopaths, even if no one knows why."

The two Slytherins looked at each other, nodded, and ran off in the direction Luna had pointed.

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#### Chapter 61 When They Were in the Field

Once they reached the station and got out of the train, they crowded into the thestral-drawn carriages. The ride in the carriages was just as tense as the ride on the train. Even the thestrals were nervous. That wasn't a good sign.

They clambered out and walked into the Great Hall. The teachers' table at the front of the room looked like usual, except for the people sitting in the seats. The usual house pennants were gone. Instead of four long tables as far apart as possible, there were only two of the long tables, running almost next to each other. Ginny wasn't surprised that half the tables were missing. With no Muggleborns and not all the halfbloods, there were a lot fewer students. Her general impression was that at least a third of the students last year were Muggleborns.

The spells that turned the ordinary black school robes into house robes had been altered. Everyone's robe was black, and the house robes she had seen a few people wearing were turning back to their original solid black color.

The whole room seemed darker and more threatening. It felt like she was going to school in a prison of some sort. She could see the worry and fear on the faces of her schoolmates. She could smell the fear on a lot of them.

Snape stood up in his usual threatening way. Being headmaster after all those years of being told he couldn't have the DADA job? This must be his best day ever.

He growled with his usual sneer, "Good evening, children. Welcome to Hogwarts. We shall dispense with the gratuitous fripperies and get straight to the heart of the matter. There are no more houses. Everyone except prefects will share the same quarters. Two rooms for each level,

with boys and girls well separated. Each room will have private alcoves for beds and closets, with a communal bathroom for the people in the room. Prefects will have private rooms nearby. There will be no house points or house rivalries or house Quidditch teams. Classes will not be segregated by houses either. Each class will be for the entire year's pupils.

"We have thirteen new students: nine purebloods and four others. At the end of my remarks, Deputy Headmaster Amycus Carrow will introduce them and they will take their seats among the rest of you.

"Without house point penalties, you will find we have new punishments for bad behavior. The Cruciatus Curse will be used for misbehavior." There was a general gasp of horror across the entire room. Ginny felt sick to her stomach at the thought.

"The list of improprieties is posted in your common room and on the bulletin board outside. It includes use of magic in the hallways, having banned toys, setting foot anywhere near the Forbidden Forest unless you are part of a Care of Magical Creatures class, and talking back to your teachers.

"We have several new teachers. Professor Amycus Carrow will be teaching Dark Arts, Professor Alecko Carrow will be teaching Muggle Studies, and Professor Grubbly-Plank is back teaching Care of Magical Creatures. I trust that you will accord them the respect you do the rest of our staff.

"I wish that all of you could put aside old disagreements and work hard at becoming the best witches and wizards you can be. However, I expect it will take several punishments for some of you to decide that following the rules is less painful than being disobedient.

"And finally, we have reason to believe that this castle may be attacked or invaded. I request that if you see anything suspicious, you come to a prefect or a teacher at once. Thank you. And now Professor Carrow, if you will?"

Amycus Carrow rose and carefully read the names of the thirteen new children, who looked quite small and frightened. Ginny recognized all the last names of the purebloods and two of the names of the halfbloods. She guessed that their fathers were the purebloods. The firsties took seats either with older children they already knew, or else at the foot of the table with several Hufflepuffs that is, former Hufflepuffs who Ginny knew would be kind to them.

At least the food was as good as always. And Ginny knew that downstairs there was at least one house elf she could call on in case of emergency. Dobby would do anything for her if he knew it was to help Harry.

She didn't eat as much as she wanted, because she didn't want everyone around her to see how

much she was eating these days. And she still had some food in her bag, for later.

At the end of the meal, when everyone was properly sleepy, the headmaster ordered everyone to follow the prefects to their new quarters. It was only along the hall and down two flights of stairs. Ginny was sure this was where the Hufflepuff dormitories used to be, but now it was a somewhat enlarged area for most of the school. Even though the student body appeared to be less than half the size that it was before.

Still, there was a doorway which no longer had a painting guarding it. There was no one to keep out of it. So there was just an ordinary door that opened when you put your hand on the panel in the middle.

Inside was a massive common room. It looked like it was three times the size of the Gryffindor common room, with a huge fireplace on each side wall. There were study tables ringed with chairs, and they were all around the outer part of the room. In the middle of the room there was a wide aisle for walking from the entry to the bedrooms, and there were clusters of couches and squasy armchairs for chatting or even studying if you wanted to. On the far wall there were two doorways, one on the left for the boys and one on the right for the girls.

Pansy Parkinson led her and Luna and six other sixth year girls through the right-hand doorway and into a short hall. There were doors for the first- and second-year students, and stairs for the others. Pansy led them up the farthest staircase on the right, and they walked up the stairs to a room labeled, unsurprisingly, 'SIXTH YEAR GIRLS'.

Ginny looked around. The room was large enough to have eight nice alcoves, each one with a simple curtain for privacy. Ginny had no intention of making do with nothing but a curtain. She was going to cast a Shield Charm across the front of the alcove before she went to bed. Not that a little charm like that would stop a determined attacker, but she only needed long enough to wake up.

Her plan was to wait until everyone was asleep, then check the Marauders' Map and slip out to the Room of Requirement when the way was clear. With any luck, she would be able to find the diadem fairly quickly.

But that was before Taira Bleakley, one of the ex-Hufflepuffs, wanted to get to know all her roommates. Taira was very sweet and tried to get along with everyone, but Ginny didn't want to participate when she had a task to complete. She was hoping the ex-Slytherins would refuse, and then everyone would go their separate ways.

But these were the Slytherin girls whose parents weren't Death Eaters and who didn't get picked as prefects. Astoria Greengrass and Jocelind Selwyn were from old pureblood families, but not every pureblood family was full of rabid Voldemort supporters, as Ginny knew better than

anybody. Even the most annoying members of her family didn't do that. Granted, the Greengrass family had ties to the Malfoys and the Blacks, but really, what pureblood didn't have ties to the Blacks? Ginny was related to the Blacks on both sides of her family. Her dad's mother had been a Black before being cast out of the family for marrying a Weasley.

So she ended up grabbing a blanket and a pillow, and sitting with the other girls in the middle of the room, playing 'Spell or Spill'. She knew from talking with Hermione that there was a similar Muggle game called 'Truth or Dare' but that sounded a lot riskier. At least with 'Spell or Spill' you could only be stuck showing your friends a new spell. That other game? You could be dared to do pretty much anything. Kissing the giant squid on a tentacle. Licking the floor in one of the boys' bathrooms. Running around the castle starkers. No, 'Spell or Spill' was just a better game all the way around. Sometimes Ginny thought some Muggles had to be crazy.

So, along with Luna and Taira and Astoria and Jocelind, she was sitting with Melinda and Vicki and Violet. Melinda Bobbin was an ex-Hufflepuff from a rich family that had made its money relatively recently in a chain of apothecaries. Vicki Frobisher was an ex-Gryffindor who liked Quidditch. And Violet was an ex-Ravenclaw who was more of a bookworm than Hermione.

Astoria and Jocelind or Tori and Joyce as they preferred to be called were really a lot nicer than Ginny was expecting. She really only knew them from classes, and they weren't the Slytherins who made trouble or sneered at everyone else, so she probably should have expected they weren't little Draco Malfoys or Pansy Parkinsons. Ginny's only complaint about Tori was that she thought Draco Malfoy was really handsome. Eww. Ginny couldn't get past the whole 'Death Eater who tried to kill Harry and nearly killed Ron' part. Getting Violet to participate was a lot harder than getting anyone else to join in, but once they let Vi show off some spells she knew, she started joining in wholeheartedly. That, and it was hard to keep her from arguing with Luna about magical creatures, since Vi had pretty much memorized the complete works of Newt Scamander. Melinda was nice, and rather embarrassed about being an heiress to a fortune.

They sat on the floor and chatted for hours. Ginny even called Dobby and asked for snacks a couple times. Ginny had to lie to the group several times about Harry and Hermione, but that wasn't hard.

"So... what's it like dating The Boy Who Lived?"

Ginny said, "Well, there really hasn't been a lot of dating. After school ended he went off with his relatives. He lives in some special warded places with Muggle relatives so Death Eaters can't attack him, and they're not very nice to him because they know he's a Wizard and they're scared of magic. He did come out to the Burrow for Fleur Delacour's wedding to my big brother, and I got to dance with him a couple times, but Death Eaters broke up the reception and he had to run off."

"Was Hermione Granger there too?"

Ginny nodded, "She came out for the wedding, and so did Viktor Krum."

Luna said in her usual tones, "Fred and George were quite taken with Fleur's relatives."

Ginny said, "All the part-veela ones, anyway. If they were between about sixteen and twenty-five."

Luna said serenely, "George danced with me and said I was quite as pretty as any of Fleur's relatives, but I think he said that to everyone."

Ginny said, "Probably not to Great-Aunt Muriel."

Luna smiled, "I love your aunt Muriel. She's so honest. We had the most wonderful talk about Crumple-Horned Snorkacks."

Ginny cringed. She didn't want to think about what Great-Aunt Muriel had really said to Luna. It was probably spectacularly rude. At least she hadn't had too much to drink first, at which point her utterances were not only rude, but naughty enough to make a troll blush. Ginny still remembered the dinner where her mum had clapped her hands over Ginny's ears and hauled her out of the room when Great-Aunt Muriel had too much to drink and started loudly comparing the Minister of Magic to parts of a chimera.

Then they started talking about embarrassing relatives, and none of them realized how late it had grown until Dobby appeared in the room and told them he was there to do the morning cleaning, because it was already after four in the morning. Everyone scrambled into bed, but Ginny was the only one who got anywhere near enough sleep. There were some quite good things about being the Vampire Slayer.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 23 May 2012 06:47:09 GMT  
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Chapter 62 Rose up and Killed Him

In the morning, when her dressing mirror began ordering her to get up, she rushed through a shower and then started around the room in her bathrobe, making sure everyone else was rising. She tried not to think about how she had wasted the nighttime hours being a good roommate instead of doing what she needed to do. She had to get to the Room of Requirement tonight, no matter how late she had to wait.

Instead of walking down flights and flights of stairs from the Gryffindor common room, she walked up two flights of stone steps with Luna and the rest of the girls.

Luna casually waited until Millicent Bulstrode was slipping up behind her and then said, "It's the oddest thing, but I could have sworn last night after dinner while we were all leaving, a couple slices of tart floated up off the table and just... disappeared."

Millicent Bulstrode reacted like she'd been shot. She twitched nervously and ran off down the hall. Ginny had to bite the inside of her mouth to keep from laughing.

During breakfast, Ginny saw most of the teachers walking about handing out schedules and checking with sixth years. Professor Slughorn came over to where she was sitting with Luna and Taira and Astoria. He beamed, "Excellent, excellent, all of you getting along together. Now Miss Lovegood, I see you're signed up for Potions, Charms, Herbology, Care of Magical Creatures, Defense Against the Dark Arts, and Divination. You did quite well in all of them, so you're ready for classes."

He handed her schedule, and Luna carefully tucked it into her bookbag.

He nodded, "Now Miss Weasley..."

She listened as he went over her schedule. She had Slughorn for Potions, McGonagall for Transfiguration, Flitwick for Charms, Sprout for Herbology, Vector for Arithmancy... and Carrow for Defense Against the Dark Arts. With Carrow teaching it, the course was more likely to be Dark Arts with no 'Defense'. Oh Merlin, she was glad she hadn't opted for Muggle Studies, because the other Carrow was teaching it, and would undoubtedly be teaching it the pureblood way.

Professor Slughorn tried to talk her into adding Divination to her schedule, but she just insisted that she didn't think she had the time. He finally said, "Ah well, Professor Trelawney will be most disappointed that one of her two Outstandings won't be in her class."

And then she was off to Defense Against the Dark Arts or was that simply Dark Arts now? As taught by a Death Eater she had personally attacked. She couldn't see this ending well. Even if no one knew precisely who had stunned the Carrows, people had to know that the only ones not Death Eaters who were outside when it happened were Hagrid, Harry, and her. Herself, her boyfriend, and her friend.

The class was small. All of the sixth year together, including a couple who were prefects, would still have been less than twenty. But not all the year were taking the course. She figured a number of people knew ahead of time what it meant to have Amycus Carrow teaching, and they had already had their children drop the course.

Looking around the room, she thought those people had to be right. The room was gloomier than Snape's room had been last year. Even the grim paintings Snape had put on the walls were gone.

She sat next to Luna, who had a copy of the Quibbler open on her desk, turned to an article on... Ginny looked over. The title of the article was "Favorite Dark Hexes of Former Ministers".

Luna looked up and said, "Did you know that Cornelius Fudge is very fond of the Entrail Expelling Curse?"

Ginny said, "Maybe you should put that away before class starts."

Luna said, "But it's important for this course."

Amycus Carrow walked out of the office door at the front of the classroom. He looked just as stunted and abnormal as she remembered. He looked around the room at his small class and nodded abruptly.

He began speaking in his eerie voice. "The Dark Arts are powerful. Rich. Complex. There are so many areas to study, and you have such a short time. We will need to start with the hardest bit and have you work on it throughout the year, while we study a host of areas. I will post a list of topics, and you will be responsible for signing up for two of them, one to present this fall, and one to present in the spring. If someone has chosen the topics you would prefer, you will choose others. If you do not sign up by the end of this week, I will assign topics myself, and you will probably be unhappy with what I pick. Too bad.

"Now what you will need the most work on is silent spells. So we will start on that this very morning. It's not just a matter of knowing the spell and knowing the wrist movement. You must have the raw power, and you must have the raw concentration. Lots of wizards simply can't do it. Who knows why it's important?"

Ginny slowly raised her hand, while half a dozen other students shoved their hands skyward like they were trying to beat out Hermione Granger.

"Miss Greengrass?"

Tori said, "Non-verbal spells give you an advantage over your opponent because he won't know which spell you are casting."

Carrow nodded. He meant it to look sagely, but it came off more spastic because of his neck. "Correct. Anyone else?"

Ginny kept her hand up. She didn't really believe Tori's answer was right, because she could usually tell from Hermione and Harry's wrist movements what spell they were about to cast. But she knew that was what it said in the textbook. She couldn't overlook the bit about her eyesight and reactions being so much better than normal that she might be able to see what normal witches couldn't.

"Miss Lovegood?"

Luna smiled dreamily and said, "The silence of the spells means you can perform spells without frightening nearby nargle nests or garden gnomes."

Carrow glared at her for long seconds before deciding she wasn't being a smart-aleck. He finally said, "That wasn't an answer I was looking for."

Ginny wasn't sure it was a good idea, but she kept her hand up.

"Miss Weasley?"

"Non-verbal spells can be done a lot faster, if you have a spell with a lot of syllables, like wingardium leviosa. And if you're under a Disillusionment Charm, they can be done without alerting your opponents where you are."

Carrow stared at her intensely. "Miss Weasley, Disillusionment Charms are a N.E.W.T.-level spell that usually does not come up until seventh year or post-graduate training. Are you able to cast one?"

She nodded. "Yes sir." Then she lied, "I learned last year."

She could see he was dying to ask a question. Probably 'who taught you?' even though everyone in the castle would be certain the answer would either be Harry Potter or Hermione Granger.

He clenched his teeth and said, "Now we need to prepare our minds. You will divide up in pairs. We will see who has the necessary concentration and mental power."

He lined them up in two rows facing each other. She wanted to partner up with Tori, who she suspected would be the best in the class at this point in non-verbal casting. After her, anyway. But Carrow partnered her with Geoffrey Hooper.

"Now. Those of you on this side..." He pointed at Ginny's row. "...attempt to jinx your partner without speaking. Those of you on the other side, attempt to repel the jinx also without speaking. Focus on the spell, the wand movements, and then concentrate on the essence of the spell itself.

Begin!"

She stood there and did the wand movement for expelliarmus several times, while the rest of the room struggled to perform their first silent spell. She didn't want to reveal that she was well ahead of her classmates, because she couldn't admit she had been practicing this with Harry and Ron and Hermione for weeks.

After about ten excruciating minutes, she finally gave in and cast expelliarmus, flipping Geoffrey's wand through the air and then catching it as it flew over her head.

"Nicely executed, Miss Weasley, but not a good choice despite what some people would have you believe," Carrow said.

Oh Merlin, why had she done Harry's favorite spell? All right, she knew why. She knew she could do it silently, and she was sure Geoffrey couldn't block it, and she didn't want to hurt him.

She cautiously said, "Excuse me professor, but I didn't want to hurt anyone if I managed to succeed. If I had cast incendio or diffindo, it would have been awful."

Carrow said, "You didn't have any such qualms when you were facing Bellatrix Lestrange last spring."

Uh-oh. She said, "Yes, professor. I put cousin Bella in the hospital. Since she hit me with a couple Cruciatu Curses first, I think I had every right to fight back."

He smiled malevolently, "That's right, you are related to the Blacks."

She tried for the annoyingly superior look that Parkinson and Nott always wore. "And the Malfoys and the Lestranges and pretty much all of the pureblood families."

He said, "Yes, but there's a point I wish to make clear." Her stomach tightened horribly.

He snapped out his wand and called out, "Crucio!"  
She fell to the floor screaming.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 27 May 2012 06:49:15 GMT  
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Chapter 63 My Brother's Keeper

She took the Cruciatus Curse in the side and fell to the floor screaming loudly. It didn't really hurt that much, but she had to pretend that it did. She watched through squinted eyes until he finally lifted the wand, and only then did she stop screaming and writhing about.

She lay still, her cheek against the polished wood, and pretended to be incapacitated by the pain. She wasn't, but she didn't dare reveal that. She really felt more like she had been punched in the ribs.

Carrow stormed around the room. "Take this as a warning, all of you! There are no more house points. No more detentions. The Cruciatus Curse will be used as a punishment instead. If you are so stupid that you can't learn from this, then you certainly deserve what you get! Class dismissed."

She didn't move. She remembered how awful she felt after the first Cruciatus from Bellatrix Lestrange, but she had no idea how long the feeling would last, or how long she should be unable to walk. She knew Harry had managed to get back up only seconds after taking a couple Cruciatus Curses from Voldemort, but that was Harry.

She did feel quite sick to her stomach. She knew how excruciating a Cruciatus was, and she couldn't imagine being given punishments like that for ordinary misbehavior around the school. Were frightened firsties who couldn't find their way to class going to be tortured like this? She wished there was something she could do to stop it.

Really, the only thing she could do was complete her task and meet up with the others. If they could dispose of the diadem and the locket, they would only need to find the cup and the snake before Harry faced Voldemort for the last time. She had no idea how they would deal with Hogwarts or the Ministry even if Harry could stop Voldemort for good, but it all came back to the Horcruxes and Voldemort first.

Finally, Luna and Taira knelt beside her and helped her to her feet. She pretended to be too shaky to stand up easily. She didn't like faking like that, but she couldn't just act like she was suddenly fine after that curse. She made sure to lean heavily on both of them and stagger slightly as she moved out into the hallway.

Luna calmly said, "Taira, don't you have to go to Ancient Runes?"

Taira nodded and asked, "But... what about Ginny?"

Ginny said, "I'm doing better. Really. You can go on, and we just have to get to Charms." She waited until Taira was out of sight.

Before she could straighten up, Luna whispered, "You can't stand up straight and walk to Charms. Too many people will see." So she pretended to be unsteady as she and Luna moved to the Charms classroom.

Joyce was waiting in the doorway. She winced, "Oh Merlin, are you all right?"

Ginny nodded, "I'm doing a lot better. Really."

Joyce said, "Tori told me what happened."

Ginny pretended to wobble as she walked in and took a seat next to Luna. This class wasn't large, either.

Professor Flitwick hopped off his step behind his podium and walked over to Ginny. "Miss Weasley? Are you all right? If you need to go to see Madam Pomfrey..."

Ginny shook her head. "No professor, I'm all right."

Tori said from her table where she was sitting with Joyce, "Professor Carrow used a Cruciatus on her."

Professor Flitwick winced a little and said, "Did he say why?"

Ginny nodded. "Because I put Bellatrix Lestrange in the hospital back in the spring."

Luna dreamily said, "Ginny was the first student to perform a jinx successfully without speaking, but she used expelliarmus instead of something more dangerous. I don't think he liked that. He may have an infestation of ferlmargles in his hair. Madam Pomfrey should look into that."

Ginny could feel the odd sensation in her stomach that was probably from Professor Flitwick's part-goblin ancestry. She tried to ignore it. She said, "I'll be all right, sir. Really. I don't want to miss any classes, especially not the really important ones at the beginning of the year."

He nodded and went back to his podium. Then he began talking about the difficult charms they would be learning in sixth year in preparation for their N.E.W.T.s, and the complication of learning to use non-verbal spells for their charms. Then he started them off with non-verbal spells using charms they were supposed to have learned for their O.W.L.s.

Ginny had to hold herself back again. She had a solid month of working on this with Hermione teaching her and Harry helping her with her wandwork and Ron helping her with her concentration. So she waited until she was bored with waving her wand, and then she did the

wingardium leviosa charm.

"Oh, very good, Miss Weasley, very good indeed!" smiled Professor Flitwick. "Do you have any advice for your fellow students?"

She lied, "Well, I've been watching my big brothers all summer long, and my mum told me the theory is really, really important, but it makes more sense after you get the spell working for you. And Fred and George showed me how to do a couple non-verbal spells so I would help them play a prank on Ron, but then Ron got really sick and I wouldn't help them. But it's the concentration. I focus on the spell, from the wand movements all the way through the final result."

"That's very good," nodded Professor Flitwick. "I believe that approach will stand you in good stead in Transfiguration too."

It was a small class, so Professor Flitwick was able to provide more one-to-one teaching, while Ginny tried to talk Luna and Tori and Joyce through it. She found it really irritating that Ron had been able to get her through much harder spells, and she was having so much trouble getting her roommates through this one.

But by the end of the class, everyone had gotten at least some movement out of their feather, if not an actual floating feather, and Professor Flitwick had moved them on to Cheering Charms with a nonverbal spell. As a result, two prefects left the room still giggling. She wondered if she could secretly hit them with Cheering Charms later and keep them overly cheered for the entire afternoon.

Lunch took a while. She got to a seat in the Great Hall as early as she could. Then she ate with Luna and Taira and Vi. Then she sat there for another ten minutes with a book and waited for more company. She ate another plate of food with Vicki and Melinda. Then she slipped some desserts into her bookbag to eat later. She hoped that was enough to keep people from realizing that she was eating a lot more than was normal.

After lunch, she tried to get all her homework done. Since she had done so well in Charms, she was the only student who didn't have three feet to write on using non-verbal spells on first-year charms. The DADA homework was pretty simple, since she could do the spells silently, and she had Curses Moste Potente hidden in her wrist bracelet as a reference for the Cruciatus Curse. She didn't say anything, but she was a little worried that Luna was using that Quibbler article as a reference.

After the break, they walked down to the dungeons for their Potions lesson. She was a little surprised that there were only six of them there. She sat at one table with Luna and Vi, while Tori sat at the other table with two Slytherin boys.

Professor Slughorn had a long table along one side wall, with five cauldrons bubbling away. Ginny knew what most of them were. She had taken Polyjuice Potion and Felix Felicis, and she had heard about some of the others from Harry. She could smell all kinds of odd fragrances and off-odors from the cauldrons, just as she could hear the glooping noise in the cauldron of Polyjuice Potion and the bubbling in some of the others.

Professor Slughorn checked that everyone had a textbook and a proper set of potion-making ingredients. Then he started talking about the potions. "Now then, these are five potions that are considered N.E.W.T.-level potions. I would expect all of you to be able to make them by the time you pass your N.E.W.T.s. So let's take a look at them and give you an idea of some of the trickier potions you might be doing later this year or next year."

He walked over to the long table and beckoned the class to come with him. "Come on, come on, we're a small class this year and we can all work together. Who knows what this first po-

Vi already had her hand up, so Ginny raised hers too. Slughorn nodded at Vi, and she said, "It's Polyjuice Potion. There were a lot of Ministry leaflets... last year..." Her voice trailed off.

Slughorn asked, "Does anyone know how it is used?"

Ginny kept her hand up.

"Miss Weasley?"

She answered, "You take a cupful of the brewed potion and add a bit of the person you want to impersonate. Some hair, a fingernail, or like that. Then you drink it, and you have about one hour before you revert to your original form."

"Very good!" Professor Slughorn beamed. "And how did you learn that?"

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Chapter 64 What Have You Done?

"And how did you learn that?"

There was no way she was going to admit the truth in front of the boys sitting at Tori's table. She

lied, "Hermione Granger lectured some of us on it after Barty Crouch Jr. was found impersonating Mad-Eye Moody. She said you have to keep drinking more of it every hour or you'll change back, and the fake Moody was probably stealing supplies out of Professor Snape's potions cupboards all year long." She remembered that Snape had been certain it was Harry stealing the supplies, and no one had made the connection at the time.

Professor Slughorn nodded, "Ah yes, Miss Granger. A whiz at potions, I was quite disappointed not to have her and Mister Potter in my seventh year class, but such is life." He bowed his head slightly, and then went on, "Now who knows what else I have here?"

Ginny let the rest of the class answer for the Amortentia, which even from where she was standing smelled like her home, and a finely-polished broomstick, and... Harry. She had no idea about the Veritaserum, which could have been boiling water as far as she could tell, except for the odd vapors coming off the cauldron which she wasn't even sure the others could see. The Sluicing Serum she had no idea about, but Vi and Tori knew.

And then they were looking at the last cauldron. Golden liquid with goldfish-like gobbets splashing about in it without getting even the tiniest bit outside the cauldron. The hairs rose on the back of her neck at the thought of taking it again.

Professor Slughorn grinned, "And who knows what this potion is called?"

She raised her hand. She wasn't the only one.

"Miss Lovegood?"

Luna said serenely, "It's Felix Felicis. It's liquid luck. It's extremely delicate, and requires a very skilled potioneer. Even slight errors can render it poisonous or it can even explode in the cauldron. My mother once told me you have to be a Mistress of Potions, or else you need to take some Felix Felicis just before you try to brew it."

Professor Slughorn laughed out loud. Then he abruptly grew sad. "Ahh, your mother, Miss Lovegood. It was a sad day in the potionering world when we lost her."

"Thank you, professor," Luna said in her usual tones, as if she was talking about nargles or heliopathes. "But you never really lose someone as long as you remember her."

Professor Slughorn nodded gently. "And we will certainly remember her and her inventions for many, many years." He sighed and looked around the room. "Who knows anything else about Felix Felicis?"

Ginny put up her hand. "You only need about a tablespoon of it, and the effects last for hours and

hours. But your good luck might very well be someone else's bad luck. Taking it might be good for you, but disastrously unlucky for someone else. Maybe even someone you know."

Professor Slughorn stopped and stared at her. He held his chin in his right hand and tapped thoughtfully with the index finger. "Perhaps you would come to my office sometime this week and tell me about this. Most people never notice the consequences of their own good luck on the people around them."

"Yes sir," she said quietly. She just hoped she was gone before he tried to get her story.

After that, Professor Slughorn had the class attempting to brew the Draught of Living Death. Ginny remembered Harry and Hermione arguing about how Harry had won the Felix Felicis from Professor Slughorn by not following the directions in the book but taking the advice of the 'half-blood prince' that was scribbled all over the pages. But all she remembered was Harry had smashed his bean with Hermione's silver knife instead of chopping it up like he was supposed to. There was something complicated he had done with the stirring, but she couldn't recall anything about that. Mainly, she remembered being so angry at Harry for taking orders from a book, when all he was doing was reading scribbled notes.

It suddenly occurred to her that she should rescue that potions book when she found the diadem. If it could help Hermione brew the potions they needed, it could be a lifesaver. And they needed to look through the castle for Snape's other potions books. If he left that book in the cupboard of the potions classroom, there might be all manner of treasures in there.

And how big of a git did Snape have to be if he knew the directions for potion after potion were lacking in a host of places, and he never bothered to tell any of his students? No, he just attacked them for not getting perfect results. Or for having James Potter's looks. The oily snake.

Luna used her Self-Stirring Spoon that her mother had given her, and sang to it as she usually did in class. Ginny had never had a Potions class with the Ravenclaws, so she had never seen this, just heard about it from friends. So she knew that normally, Snape came over and snarled at her when Luna used the spoon, but that didn't stop her. This time, Slughorn came over, asked her a few questions about the provenance of the spoon, and congratulated her on owning and taking care of a fine piece of potions equipment.

When Luna sang to the spoon, it did an odd thing. It stirred in time with the song, and paid attention to her song. Every word she sang that could mean 'stop' caused the spoon to pause for at least a beat, and every word she sang that meant 'go back' or 'reverse' made the spoon stir in the opposite direction at least once. So she was singing what sounded like a lullaby, but made the spoon stir seven times counterclockwise then once in the other direction, seven times counterclockwise then once in the other direction, seven times counterclockwise then once in the other direction...

Ginny tried to copy her, because Luna's potion was turning a pale pink, so pale it was hardly noticeable against the metal cauldron.

"Stop! Everyone, stirring spoons out, even you Miss Lovegood!" Slughorn smiled.

Ginny knew that Slughorn was self-centered, and ambitious in an odd way, but he was a much better teacher than Snape. And much nicer.

Professor Slughorn pointed out Luna as the best potion-maker for the day. Ginny wasn't surprised. Luna was supposed to be the best potioneer in their year, even better than Astoria Greengrass.

Luna carefully cleaned her cauldron and stirring spoon and knife, first with spells, and then with an embroidered cloth that Ginny assumed was a Peipre Towel, a special cleaning cloth invented by the famous potioneer Jean-Pierre Peipre. They were supposed to be dreadfully expensive, but Luna might have gotten hers from her late mother. Then Luna carefully packed her potion ingredients and scales and other equipment into her cauldron and covered the cauldron with a protective wrapper. Ginny wondered why Hermione didn't go to this much effort. Maybe no one had ever shown her how.

As they left the classroom and walked up the stone steps toward their room, Ginny took Luna aside. She murmured, "I'm going to need your help after dinner."

Luna glanced around and calmly said, "For Harry?"

Merlin, sometimes it was uncomfortable how Luna leapt to conclusions. Ginny just nodded.

"What do you want me to do?" Luna asked.

"I may need a distraction so I can go... run an errand. Or I may need you to say I'm studying with you while I'm gone. Or if something comes up, I may need you to get everyone to go to bed so I can sneak out later."

Luna asked, "Is it the Room of Requirement?"

Ginny managed not to choke. "Yes. We've only seen the training room, but it has other rooms it can let you into."

Luna nodded. "I was thinking that if things get worse here, it would be a very nice place to hide out. I could ask for a room with sunlight for growing food, and a stream for fresh water, and maybe areas of oxalis or Norwegian Nurseberry to sleep on."

Ginny wished she could tell Luna that something like that wouldn't ever be needed, but lying to Luna was a waste of time. Luna nearly always knew, even if she didn't bother to say so until some later date when it was even more embarrassing to bring up.

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Chapter 65 Listen

Ginny was hoping she could get all her Potions homework done, so she could have time to slip upstairs to the Room of Requirement. She figured that she could claim she was using that time to do homework, and if she was called on it, she could show the roll of parchment she had already done for Potions.

But she didn't get the time. When she walked into the common room, Millicent Bulstrode was waiting for her. "Weasley. The headmaster wants to talk to you. Now."

A year ago, she would have been intimidated by Millie's size and strength and general belligerence. Now she had to pretend to be cowed. There was no way someone like Bulstrode was going to intimidate the Vampire Slayer. Ginny had fought much scarier things. She had killed much scarier things with her bare hands and a stake.

They walked together to the headmaster's office. Ginny looked at the gargoyle blocking the entrance to the spiraling staircase. Next to the gargoyle was Crabbe. She couldn't decide which was uglier. The gargoyle seemed to be glaring unhappily at the prefect. Ginny wondered if the gargoyle felt like they didn't trust him to do his job anymore. Or maybe Crabbe was there in case an invisible Harry snuck in and said a secret password from Dumbledore to get in.

Crabbe saw them coming and whispered something to the gargoyle. It stepped aside sulkily. Ginny wondered if maybe Snape didn't trust everyone, and made one prefect stand guard with the password for the day, or perhaps only a few hours at a time.

Or maybe Snape didn't trust anyone. Ginny figured that she sure wouldn't trust either of the Carrows if she were in his spot, and she was sure he had to know that half the remaining leaders of the Order of the Phoenix were right here in this castle.

She walked past the gargoyle without looking at Crabbe. She stepped onto the moving staircase

and let it lift her up to the headmaster's office. She could hear little bits of conversation from the room above her.

"Now Severus, be patient. It is not yet time."

She gulped. That was Professor Dumbledore! It had to be Dumbledore's painting talking to Snape. But if Snape killed Dumbledore, why wasn't the painting upset with him?

"It's easy for you to be patient. The Dark Lord is growing stronger by the day, while I just sit here babysitting idiot children."

That was Snape. And he was worried about Voldemort? And he was conspiring with Dumbledore? This didn't make any sense at all!

"Now now, Severus, you know you have my complete confidence. You're the only one I would trust with this."

And Dumbledore was still plotting even after he was dead? With Snape? This was crazy.

She reached the top of the staircase and knocked. The conversation stopped.

"Come!" Snape called. She reminded herself to be polite and not call him 'Snape' while she was in there. Or 'greasy, vindictive thestral's arse'.

She opened the door and walked in. There was the portrait of Albus Dumbledore, behind the headmaster's desk. As she stared at it, the picture of Dumbledore turned to face her. And it winked.

She stepped forward until she was standing in front of the big desk. Snape glared at her from his chair.

He snapped, "Weasley. How unexpected to have yet another of your brood in here."

She stood and waited patiently for him to get past the insults and move to the important part of the conversation. She was guessing it was going to have something to do with Carrow using a Cruciatus Curse on her. She tried to sound dead calm as she asked, "Did you want to see me, headmaster? I was just about to send off an owl to my parents, and then work on homework."

Snape sneered at her. "Go ahead. Waste the valuable time of your parents on school matters they cannot affect in any way. Allow them to anger the people at the Ministry who are backing the Carrows. You can't see that your petty problems are nothing compared to what is going on around you."

She wasn't sure if he was baiting her or threatening her, because he actually sounded as if he wanted to make her understand something. She had taken classes from him for five years, she did know something about his moods, even if Harry and Ron seemed unable to recognize that he had more moods than 'I hate you and wish I could poison every one of you'.

She didn't know what to say, so she waited for him to say something else. In particular, she didn't want him to hit her with a Cruciatus Curse, because he was a lot sharper than Carrow, and he might figure out that the curse was bouncing off her, or she wasn't reacting the right way.

He focused those hard black eyes on hers, and she suddenly felt some sort of magic. She was fairly sure that her Slayer powers made her safe from Legilimency, because she was sure he was trying to get into her head like he did to Harry. Just in case, she focused on an image of her writing a note to her parents.

He growled, "Miss Weasley, I want you to stop being a problem child. You will not like the consequences."

"I haven't liked the consequences so far, and I have yet to break any rules," she insisted.

He sneered, "Ah, the typical Gryffindor. Just bear in mind that the consequences can fall upon your friends as well as yourself."

She definitely didn't want to have to watch Carrow hit Luna or Taira with a Cruciatus Curse. She carefully said, "I will remember that advice." In particular, she was going to remember that if she had to fight Snape some day, she was going to make sure he couldn't fire off curses at her friends in the middle of the battle.

"You may leave now, Miss Weasley," he said rudely.

She refused to take the bait and get upset. She knew his encounters with Harry seemed to run that way. If Harry didn't make him furious, he succeeded in making Harry furious. It occurred to her that making people angry was probably a good way to trick them into being unable to block his Legilimency.

She wondered how long he had been rummaging through the recollections of Hogwarts students. Probably since the day he was hired.

Wait, if that was true, then why hadn't he done anything about it? He would have had to learn all about the stuff Harry and Ron and Hermione got up to. And the twins. And Percy. And her. And probably Hagrid as well. Yet he hadn't ever seemed to use the information against them. There had to be something important there. She made a mental note to talk to Hermione about it.

She just said, "Yes sir." She turned and walked out, taking the moving staircase back down. Crabbe was still standing there doing guard duty. She was tempted to tell him she thought something invisible bumped against her as she came down, and see if he went into a panic. She didn't, since she didn't think any of the prefects would trust something coming from 'the girlfriend of Harry Potter'.

Millicent Bulstrode stepped around the corner and said, "Let's go, Weasley."

She just shrugged and followed. She waited until they were well away from Crabbe, and she asked, "Don't you have better things to do than herd me around? I mean, you've got the whole school to watch. And Luna said there are some weird things going on."

Millicent said, "He told me to take you there and take you back to the common room. You ought to know what happens to people who don't do what they're told."

She said, "I'm still doing what I'm told. I haven't disobeyed yet. Professor Carrow just wanted to attack me because of the thing in the spring."

Millicent stared at her for a second and then went back to walking. "Don't push your luck with the Carrows. Really."

Ginny thought about the spring, when she had hexed both Carrows. If they found that out before she was out of here, things would get really ugly. She wondered if she could sneak up on Amycus Carrow and take him out while she was sneaking around tonight. She was going to have the Marauders' Map, so she would be able to find him if he was patrolling the hallways.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 06 Jun 2012 07:13:49 GMT  
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Chapter 66 Your Brother's Blood

Millicent walked Ginny back into the common room, and then took off. Ginny headed to her bedroom. Luna was sitting at a table in the sixth year girls' room, writing on a long roll of parchment.

Ginny asked, "Got a second?"

Luna looked up at the ceiling and said, "I'm not sure. I think there are nargles in the common room, and some of the other students could have problems at any second."

Ginny led Luna into her alcove and did a hasty muffliato spell. "Okay, I wanted to go to the Room of Requirement before dinner, but I don't think we have time now. So we need to pretend we're going to the library after dinner. We'll go there and look something up, maybe for your Defense Against the Dark Arts assignment. Then we'll go to the Room of Requirement and find what I'm looking for. Then we go back here. Then tomorrow, I'm going to set things up so it looks like I was killed and dumped somewhere no one else can go."

"Oh. The secret chamber where Slytherin's Heir kept that basilisk?"

Sometimes, Luna was just eerie. Ginny said, "Yes. I don't need to get in, just make it look like I was dragged there. Then I'm going to take one of the secret passages out of here and disappear. I won't be back. Pretend you think someone killed me. But whatever you do, don't cause any problems. I don't want you to get hurt."

"Thank you for worrying about me, Ginny. What you're doing is a lot more dangerous. And when you see Harry and Hermione and Ron, tell them all I'm hoping they're all right."

Ginny wondered if she had done anything that would let an outsider figure that out. Sometimes Luna seemed more like a prognosticator than anything else.

Dinner was... food. She was tense enough that afterward she couldn't remember what she ate, or how much she ate, or if she ate too much, or if anyone noticed how much she ate. That wasn't good. Hermione would have lectured her for a good twenty minutes. Her mum would have yelled at her for longer. Letting anyone realize she was the Vampire Slayer could be a disaster. And not just for her, but for Harry too. And her whole family.

Once they were back in the common room, Luna walked over to her and clearly said, "Ginny, I need to go to the library. Will you go with me?"

Ginny paused and then said, "Oh, okay. It's not going to take too long, will it?"

Luna said, "You can bring your homework along."

Ginny grabbed her bookbag and followed Luna out of the room. They made their way to the library, passing plenty of students and several prefects as they made their way there. Ginny actually took the time to look for a copy of Curses Moste Potente but Madam Pince told her she would have to have a teacher's written permission first.

After twenty minutes, Ginny slipped out the Marauders' Map. She tapped it with her wand and

whispered, "I solemnly swear I am up to no good." She still didn't know how Fred and George had stumbled on that exact phrase.

The map blossomed into a diagram of the castle. She could see a prefect walking down the hall outside the library, and she could see a teacher patrolling near the stairs. She pretended to work some more, while Luna calmly wrote. After about five minutes, the hall was temporarily clear and the stairs were empty. She touched Luna on the wrist.

Luna tapped her homework parchment with her wand, slipped everything into her bookbag, and smiled at Ginny. They stood up and quietly left the library.

Ginny led Luna up the stairs, down a side corridor on the fourth floor to avoid a teacher, up more stairs, and down the hall to the Room of Requirement. They stopped before the tapestry of the trolls in ballet tutus. Ginny paced back and forth. "I need a place to hide something. I need a place to hide something. I need a place to hide something."

She looked, and there was a door. She hurried Luna through before someone else came down the hall, and she closed the door behind them.

It was the room from her dream. It was huge. It seemed to go on for miles. She wondered how anyone would ever find an unknown object in a room this size if they hadn't had her dream. She wondered if even Voldemort could find the diadem after all these years, especially if the room had grown since he was here.

Luna dreamily said, "I wonder if I could find some new shoes while we're in here."

Ginny said, "Some of your lost shoes may be in here."

Luna held up her wand and said, "Accio Luna's lost shoes!"

There was a whizzing in the air, and a distant crash. A pink tennis shoe flew through the air and landed at Luna's feet. Then a pair of blue leather half-boots. Then a pair of low heels in Ravenclaw colors. Then...

After about a minute, there was a pile of maybe forty or fifty shoes. Ginny was suddenly furious at the Ravenclaws who kept stealing Luna's shoes every year. It was probably Terry Boot, who was a big enough jerk to be in Slytherin, if you wanted her opinion. Terry Boot and his friends, since a boy probably couldn't get into Luna's dorm room.

Ginny said, "I don't know how many of these you can bring back at one time."

Luna calmly said, "Oh, most of them won't fit anymore. I'll have to perform a Resizing Charm on

them before I can wear them. I'll just take the blue half-boots and the puce flats for now."

Ginny nodded. "Okay, let's find what I'm here for."

She had handwritten notes from her dream, so she checked them. She didn't want to get lost in this labyrinth of junk. She walked forward, Luna patiently following along. She moved past the smashed suit of armor from her dream. She found the stuffed troll and took the first right after it.

The stacks of junk sometimes rose thirty or forty feet into the air. Broken furniture. Junked equipment. Old beds and dressers and desks. Even damaged pieces of floor and wall that might have been shoved in here by house elves who couldn't fix the damage.

And there was the Vanishing Cabinet. She had thought about escaping through the thing, but if the matching cabinet wasn't smashed to pieces to keep Aurors from re-tracing the Death Eaters' route, it was probably someplace warded and guarded.

She walked past it and took a left. There was a horrid, oily feeling in her gut. It was like she was walking toward dozens of vampires. It was making her want to vomit. She kept walking.

And there was the acid-splashed cupboard of her dream. Atop it was the chipped bust. The bust was wearing a hideous wig... and a diadem.

The closer she got to the diadem, the worse the feeling was in her stomach. She felt nauseous. She wanted to grab an axe and start chopping it to bits. She knew from Harry and Hermione that nothing like a Muggle axe would damage a Horcrux, but she still wanted to attack it. She had this driving need inside her to attack it and keep hacking at it until she couldn't lift her arms anymore.

Luna stepped forward and lifted the diadem off the bust. She calmly said, "It's... Is it the lost diadem of Rowena Ravenclaw? It looks exactly like the pictures, down to the family crest and the gems."

Ginny said, "Yeah. It's what I came for."

Luna said, "You ought to return it to Susan Bones when you're done with it. Bones House are some of the few legitimate heirs of Rowena Ravenclaw that we can trace. We know there are others, but the Grey Lady won't talk to us about her family."

Was Luna talking about the Ravenclaw ghost? "The Grey Lady is..."

Luna dreamily said, "She's the daughter of Rowena Ravenclaw. She was killed by the Bloody Baron, even though he was in love with her. It's why they're both still here."

Ginny cringed inwardly at the sudden notion that the ghostly blood all over the Bloody Baron might belong to someone else. To the Grey Lady.

She took the opportunity to open the cupboard and fish out Harry's Potions book. She shoved it into her wrist bracelet and tried to think what to do with the diadem. She had figured she would hide it in her wrist bracelet, but she couldn't bear to be within fifty feet of the thing. Having it on her wrist? She'd go insane in no time.

She let Luna carry it as they walked back toward the door out. She tried to think logically, even if the diadem was making her think crazy thoughts. She couldn't focus on anything except getting that bloodstained battleaxe and hacking the diadem to pieces. Even if the power of the Horcrux would protect the diadem from ordinary kinds of damage.

They got to the smashed suit of armor. Ginny tested the pieces of armor. The helmet opened easily. The chestplate unlatched without a lot of effort. The right leg refused to come apart. She used her full strength and forced it open. Then she hid the diadem in it and forced it closed again.

Luna asked, "Does that hurt?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

Luna calmly said, "Because you're bending solid metal in your bare hands. It's really interesting how strong you are."

Ginny didn't tell her that she usually tried not to think about it.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 10 Jun 2012 06:00:21 GMT  
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Chapter 67 Crying Out to Me

Okay, she found the Horcrux. Now she had to check that she could get out through the secret tunnel to Honeydukes. Then she had to be ready for tomorrow. She pulled out the Marauders' Map. Okay, the hall was clear, but there was a teacher walking up the stairs.

She said, "We have to wait a few minutes and..." She stopped when she saw that Luna had found a necklace. The clasp was broken, but Luna was doing a skilled reparo on it and then putting it around her neck. But the part that stopped Ginny cold was the pendant. It was that

straight vertical line inside the triangle inside the circle. It was the mark of Gellert Grindelwald that Mister Lovegood had worn at the wedding. It was the symbol from her dream. "...what's that?"

Luna looked slightly surprised. "You don't know? It's the sign of the Deathly Hallows. The straight line for the Elder Wand, the triangle for the One True Invisibility Cloak, and the circle for the Resurrection Stone. You know 'The Tale of the Three Brothers' don't you?"

Ginny felt like she needed to take a deep breath. The Deathly Hallows were the same as the three objects in the story, and they were the same as the symbol, and they were what Gellert Grindelwald wanted, and... they were what Voldemort was after. Voldemort was after the Elder Wand. He wanted the Deathstick to kill Harry with. It all made a horrible, creepy sense.

Luna dreamily said, "Gellert Grindelwald used the symbol because he wanted to get all three symbols and become the master of death. But that's silly. You don't master death; death is just another adventure after this one."

By then, the Marauders' Map showed that the way was clear. Ginny led Luna to the gargoyle that guarded the tunnel to the basement of Honeydukes... and she could see from the entrance that the tunnel was completely blocked. On purpose. Uh-oh. What choices did that leave her if all the secret tunnels were blocked? She didn't dare take the Vanishing Cabinet. If she had to, she could run out past the Hogwarts wards and disapparate before anyone could try to follow. But then the whole school would know someone breached the wards, and the teachers would find out it was her. That wouldn't be good. She needed to think about another escape route.

They slipped back down the corridor and to another flight of stairs. They got all the way to the ground floor before a prefect confronted them.

Pansy Parkinson said, "What are you two up to?"

Luna gave her a dreamy look and said, "Ginny was so nice and helped me with my homework in the library, but now it's time to get ready for bed. What are you doing, Pansy?"

Pansy glared at her the way so many people stared at Luna. "I'm doing my job, Loony. Go to your room."

Ginny said, "We're on our way." She turned to her friend. "Come on, let's see if Taira's there."

They walked through the common room and up to the sixth year girls' dorm. Taira was working at a table. Tori and Joyce were on the other side of the table, working on homework. Melinda was lying on her stomach on the floor, reading a couple textbooks and making notes. Vi was lying on her bed reading, and Vicki was sitting on her bed writing. It looked like Vi already had a big bookshelf loaded with books set up in her little alcove, with her bed scooted against the other wall

to give more room.

Once Ginny and Luna put their stuff away, Taira came over and talked Ginny into helping her with non-verbal spells. Ginny soon found herself surrounded by the entire room, even Vi. So she ended up spending the entire time until bedtime working with her classmates on non-verbal spells, and trying not to show that she had been working on them for a month.

She lay in bed for a long time, trying to figure out what she could do if all the tunnels out of Hogwarts were blocked. Snape undoubtedly knew all of them. She didn't dare try the Vanishing Cabinet. She knew that if the other one was broken, or even if this one wasn't fully working, she could end up trapped in between for weeks. Or months. Or forever. And even if both were working, there was no way to tell if carrying a Horcrux would affect them. She could try sneaking out in the middle of the night and hoping no one spotted her and the wards didn't alert the whole school that she was sneaking out.

There had to be something she could do. She didn't want to have to depend on getting to go to Hogsmeade in a month or two...

The next morning, she got up early so she could take a nice, long shower. She was dressed and ready for breakfast before anyone else was awake, so she did some reading for Charms and Transfiguration. She was already ahead, but she knew she might never come back to Hogwarts, and she might have to depend on learning her last two years of schooling from Hermione. She tucked the books she wanted to keep into her bracelet with the books from Hermione, and she made sure there was nothing she didn't want to leave behind. She didn't intend to come back.

She got to breakfast with the earliest people, and had a big plate of breakfast with Neville and Geoffrey. The boys didn't notice that she was eating more than they were, because they were too busy shoveling food into their faces. Neville seemed to be having another growth spurt. Then she sat there reading, and a while later she had a big plate of breakfast with Luna and Melinda and Vi. Then she sat there as long as she could before she would be late to class, so she could grab another half dozen sausages and wolf them down on her way to Transfiguration. She just had to do a couple quick cleaning charms to get the grease and stuff off her hand and her chin.

She walked into the classroom and found herself breaking into a smile. It was funny how much she had missed Professor McGonagall. The professor was gruff and firm, but she was something stable, and this new Hogwarts made Ginny uneasy. Ginny had no idea how everyone else was holding up.

Professor McGonagall looked pretty tense too. But she waited until the class was seated before she started talking. Just like everyone else, she was stressing non-verbal spells and the extra

complexity of N.E.W.T.-level work. She started lecturing, and Ginny realized that if Hermione and Harry and Ron hadn't worked and worked and worked with her, she would have been completely lost. She wasn't surprised that she was the only one in the class who managed to complete the transfiguration Professor McGonagall gave them, even though she could hear several students whispering their spells instead of doing it completely silently. But the transfiguration was almost exactly the one Hermione had started her with, and that had taken her a couple days of work to get right.

Ginny walked with some of her classmates to Arithmancy and took a seat next to Vi. She knew her practice with non-verbal skills wasn't going to help her in here, but Hermione had been teaching her some Arithmancy and Ancient Runes too.

Professor Vector started out talking about the more complicated mathematics that they would be learning, and the more complex arithmantic workings they would be doing as they prepared for N.E.W.T.s. Ginny figured she was going to be asking Hermione for lots of help on some of this.

But in the middle of class, Hermione's special Galleon got warm. Ginny had it hidden in her bra, so she could feel it if it changed and still not get caught if she had to turn out her pockets. But if the fake Galleon was getting warm, then they were moving to another base. That had to mean that something had gone wrong, and Number 12 Grimmauld Place was compromised. Was someone hurt? Or captured? Or killed? She had no way of telling. All she could do was do her job and then meet up with them at whatever spot the Galleon said.

All she could do was stew about it. What if it was Harry? What if it was Ron? Ron could be a prisoner of the Death Eaters, getting tortured for information. Or worse. All she could do was sit there and pretend she wasn't going mad with worry.

She didn't remember another thing that Professor Vector said. She didn't remember walking to lunch. She did remember Luna sitting down beside her and putting food on her plate and making her eat.

Ginny couldn't stop worrying. If only she hadn't sat with the girls and talked all night! She could have been back at the house in Grimmauld Square. She could have gone with them. She could have done something. She had no idea if any of them were hurt or dead or captured. All she could do was pretend nothing was wrong, and go on with her plan. She knew that if it worked right, she would be joining them at the new rendezvous before midnight.

She didn't dare think about what would happen if it didn't work. She was supposed to work on homework during her break before Herbology, but she couldn't concentrate at all. She stared at her book and her quill for over an hour and didn't get a single word down. She had to focus. If she couldn't concentrate, she wasn't going to be able to make the next part of her plan work. And she had to pick the right prefects, or it would be a disaster.

She left the common room and accidentally turned the wrong way. She ended up down by the kitchens. She suddenly had an idea. She called out, "Dobby?"

Dobby appeared with a loud pop. He was wearing a Hogwarts tea towel, mismatched socks, and five of Hermione's badly-knitted hats in a stack on his head. He asked excitedly, "Whats does Harry Potter's friend wants from Dobby?"

She pulled out one of her crossbow bolts and asked, "Can you get me two or three crossbows that this will fit?"

Dobby bounced up and down happily. "Yes! Dobby knows where crossbows is!" He vanished with a loud pop. Ginny was just starting to worry about how long this might take when Dobby reappeared holding three identical crossbows. "Is this what Miss Ginny Weasley wants?"

She looked them over. They were even nicer and much newer than the one Hermione had gotten. She said, "Yes, they're perfect. Can I take them? I'll try to bring them back just like they are now, but I don't know how long it will be."

Dobby nodded madly. Two of the hats fell off the stack on his head. "Dobby can gives these out and not has to bring them right back!"

She took them and carefully tucked all three into her wrist bracelet. "Thank you very much, Dobby. I'll tell Harry how helpful you were." Dobby got so excited the rest of his five hats fell off his head. She turned around and found her way out to the greenhouses.

Even though the first Herbology lesson was really close to what their O.W.L. already covered, Ginny still had a hard time concentrating. She was just too worried about Harry and Ron and Hermione. The class went by in a blur. She went back to her dorm room and just sat on her bed pretending to read a textbook. She walked with Luna and Vi to dinner and ate something. She didn't remember what it was, and she couldn't remember if it had any taste at all. Pansy Parkinson could have snuck wallpaper paste onto her plate and she wouldn't have noticed.

Then it was time for the next step. She moved into an empty classroom and watched the Marauders' Map until Crabbe and Goyle were standing near some of the younger students, probably bullying them as usual.

She tucked the map away and hurried to find her prey. That's what it felt like as her inner Slayer tried to take over.

Chapter 68 From the Ground

She ran down the corridors, making almost no noise. And when she turned that last corner, there they were. The two of them were penning four firsties into an alcove and threatening them.

She kicked Crabbe in the back of the knee, dropping him onto his face. She waited for Goyle to react. After fighting vampires, it seemed almost as if these idiots moved like treacle. And they were so weak! She was having to pull her punches and kicks so she didn't break any bones. Or worse.

Goyle spun, his wand already out. She punched him in the forearm. His wand went flying. While he tried to watch where his wand was going, she punched him in the stomach. He folded over like a trick chair that had been bespelled by the twins.

Crabbe tried to roll over and bring his wand to bear. She kicked him in the hand, sending his wand flying in a different direction. He scrambled to his hands and knees, and she punched him in the kidney, dropping him back to the floor.

Goyle tried to grab her by the ankle. She let him get a good grip, and then she snapped her leg upward and behind him, so he nearly dislocated his own shoulder joint.

While both of them lay on the floor gasping in pain, she loomed over them. "Stop bullying the younger students. What kind of useless losers are you, anyway? You have to pick on firsties, and then the two of you get beaten up by a little girl? Malfoy must be ashamed to be near you! Is that why he left you here?"

Crabbe growled, "We'll get you for this, Weasel."

Goyle grunted, "Yeah. As soon as we tell Snape-"

She interrupted, "He'll laugh so hard he'll wet himself. And then the whole school will hear how the two big, tough bullies got knocked all over the corridor by a little girl. A girl with no wand out, no help, nothing. And who's going to believe that? And will these firsties tell what you want them to say, or what I want them to say?"

Crabbe muttered, "You better watch your back."

Goyle said, "Yeah."

She gave them her best Malfoy-like sneer. "Anytime."

She stood there and watched as they retrieved their wands and limped away. She didn't trust them not to take it out on the firsties. She didn't trust them not to fire off a few hexes at her back, and she couldn't afford to have anyone see curses bouncing off her. And they were prefects, so they could get away with either. But she was pretty sure they wouldn't report her for fighting them, because they wouldn't want to admit one little girl beat them both up.

She ducked into an empty classroom and pulled out the Marauders' Map again. Then she waited. After a couple hours, the castle was nearly still, except for a few prefects and teachers still making their rounds. She figured she needed to time this pretty carefully. She needed to have a minute around Moaning Myrtle's bathroom, followed by a clear path up to the Room of Requirement.

She was wearing the one original pair of shoes she had brought to Hogwarts. She took off one of the pair and performed a geminio spell so she had a duplicate. She wore the duplicate, in case anyone performed a finite incantatem on the evidence she was going to leave behind. After that, she ripped a piece out of the hem of her robe. Then she pulled out a silver knife and cut herself across the palm.

It bled like mad, which was what she wanted. She rushed over to the second floor girls' bathroom and dripped blood all over the floor in the hallway. Then she pressed her hand against the floor and slid it across the floor, into the bathroom, and over to the faucets. She made sure to leave quite a lot of blood, so no one would believe she could be all right.

She bandaged up her palm with another tear of fabric from her robe, and she carefully snagged the first bit of ripped material on the doorframe only inches above the floor. Then she slipped out again, silently working her way up to the Room of Requirement.

It only took seconds to get into the room and retrieve the diadem from inside the armor. She checked the map to make sure the hall was clear, and once Amycus Carrow had passed and was safely out of sight, she stepped out again.

She paced back and forth in the hallway. "I need a way out of Hogwarts. I need a way out of Hogwarts. I need a way out of Hogwarts."

She turned again, and there was a door. She hurried through and found herself in a small stone room that reminded her of one of the castle dungeons. There was a narrow hallway on the other side of the room. It was dark as pitch. Not that darkness was likely to bother her anymore.

She pulled out her wand and whispered, "Lumos." The hallway lit up, showing a long, long tunnel

leading straight ahead of her. She took off down the hallway, trying not to outrun the limited light she had, so she didn't trip over anything. The tunnel seemed to dip down, then level off for a long while, then slope back up. She finally came to a door.

Or rather, it looked like the back of a painting. She knew what the back of the Fat Lady's portrait looked like, and it looked like this. She listened carefully, and heard the sound of a man snoring heavily somewhere not too close by. She sniffed carefully and smelled... goat, beer, firewhiskey, goat, sawdust, and butterbeer. And goat. She turned out her light and waited a few seconds for her eyes to adjust.

She swung the picture open and found herself on the mantel of a large fireplace. She hopped down lightly, making almost no noise, and closed the picture behind her. She stepped through another doorway and recognized the place at once. She was looking into one of the Hogsmeade bars. The dirty one where Hermione had held the start of the D.A. meetings. The Hog's Head. She decided that given the smell, it ought to be named the Goat's Bottom. She didn't remember it smelling this bad the time she was here when Hermione talked Harry into starting the D.A. Maybe Slayer senses had serious drawbacks.

She checked her fake Galleon again. It still said the second meeting place. So she took out her wand and carefully disappeared.

She could hear a tiny echo of the crack from her apparation. She looked around quickly, trying to spot any threats. She was in the forest where they had walked from the campground to the Quidditch World Cup. She remembered it well. Too well. She still had dreams once in a while about the attacks and the Death Eaters and everything else.

There was nothing but silence. No light except from the moon and stars. No sounds except faint noises from a breeze ruffling the tops of the trees overhead. She couldn't sense any vampires or demons anywhere, although that could be the horrible creepiness of the diadem polluting her senses. She could hear that there were no humans trampling through the wood. She could hear a couple small woodland animals moving quietly through the branches of the trees.

There was the smell of wood smoke and cooking meat. She moved upwind, tracking it carefully. She had to move from side to side to stay downwind, since it was a faint, narrow band of smoke. Twice she had to move to the side to find the scent again after she accidentally walked out of the smoke trail.

And then she heard it. The ever-so-faint buzz of a muffliato. She had managed to track them down. Now she just had to get through whatever spells Hermione undoubtedly had around them to ward off any intruders.

She stopped when the buzz felt like it was right in front of her. "Hermione? Ron? Harry?" She

waited a second and still heard nothing. "Anybody?" she quavered.

Suddenly, Hermione came rushing out of what looked like nothing, and threw herself into Ginny's arms, bursting into tears as she ran. "Oh Ginny! It's all my fault! Ron's hurt, and I ruined everything! I'm so, so sorry!"

Harry reached an arm out through the spell and led them both inside. He led Ginny into the tent, which she recognized from their trip to watch the World Quidditch Cup. On one side was apparently the boys' half of the tent. Ron was lying on a cot with no shirt on and his shoulder covered in bloodstained bandages. The other cot was obviously Harry's, with an assortment of his junk dumped on it.

Ginny looked down at Ron and felt like bursting into tears herself.

Ron looked up and groaned, "Least you're all right. We picked up a couple presents for you."

Ginny checked, "A couple?"

Harry frowned, "That toad Umbridge had Mad-Eye's eye on her door so she could snoop on her underlings. I couldn't leave it there. But I set the alarms off."

Hermione said, "And Umbridge was wearing the locket, so we had quite a bit of a mess there."

Harry growled, "She was sicking Dementors on people who couldn't defend themselves, the ruddy cow."

Ron moaned, "And I had to go off and try to fix the weather in a couple Death Eater offices. Bloody awful. And the wizard I was impersonating? They had his family!"

Hermione whimpered, "We got the locket, but Elgin Yaxley caught me as I was side-along apparating Ron to the house and I used a Repulsion Charm and apparated here, but I... I splinched Ron!" She burst into tears again. "And I took Yaxley to the house, and we're all Secret Keepers, so he can go there anytime he wants now!"

Harry said, "And the place is likely to be overrun with vampires and demons by now."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 17 Jun 2012 06:58:52 GMT  
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## Chapter 69 Opened Its Mouth

Ginny asked, "Do you really think Yaxley would risk side-along apparating a vampire? Or a demon? I wouldn't."

Ron muttered, "Tommy may not give him a chance to say no."

Hermione looked at Ron and finally said, "You could be right."

Harry said, "Did you find yours?"

Ginny nodded and told them the whole story. She thought Ron would go spare when he heard children were being hit with the Cruciatus Curse for school infractions. Hermione winced a little when Ginny admitted she brought back Snape's book too. And Harry winced when Ginny admitted Luna had figured out she was going to meet up with him and the others.

Hermione finally said, "If Luna didn't believe everything her father stuck in the Quibbler, she'd be a lot more impressive."

Ginny said, "I thought she was pretty impressive already."

Ron groaned, "What're you gonna do about mum?"

Ginny slapped herself on the forehead with enough strength to stun a thestral. "Oh Merlin! Mum and dad!"

Hermione said, "Wait, I'll send them a talking patronus and explain. They need to know you're safe, but they need to act panicky when Hogwarts finally gets around to telling them their daughter's been murdered and dumped in the Chamber of Secrets. Again."

Ginny watched as Hermione carefully did the Modified Patronus Charm and explained it all in a whisper: Ginny is safe. She faked an attack on herself. When Hogwarts tells you, act frantic.

Hermione sent off her Patronus and changed the subject. "Now that we're out of the house and Death Eaters are going to be getting in, we need to take care of that warehouse full of vampires and demons."

Ginny said, "It's going to be a nightmare. An absolute nightmare. They have humans and demons working for them. I don't know if the humans are under their thrall or not."

Harry asked, "Like with Eddie?"

Ron said, "Yeah. Like an imperio but it's a power some master vampires have."

Harry nodded, "Good thing Hermione made you do all that research."

Ron rolled his eyes. "Like she didn't have an ulterior motive there." Hermione blushed, but Ron patted her hand with his good arm and said, "A good motive."

Ginny said, "They have windows painted over so they look like regular windows, but it's probably pitch dark on the inside."

Harry said, "Shatter the windows. It worked a treat before."

Ginny went on, "And it's in a public area so people would see it if we attacked the building like that. We'd have Aurors all over us before we could take care of the problems. And there's more problems. The humans and demons won't care about the sunlight."

Hermione asked, "How do we find out if the humans are enthralled or just being paid to be guards? Or maybe they're just really evil humans who know they're working for vampires and don't care?"

Harry said, "Veritaserum. Three drops in a cup of tea, and they'll tell the truth."

Ron groaned from his cot, "If they never leave the site, they're probably enthralled. They probably live in something as bad as those poor sods near Bones Manor. They just don't have to be locked in, because they won't leave without being told to by the master vampire."

Hermione frowned, "Ron, that's awful! Is there a way to break the thrall?"

He rubbed his shoulder carefully and said, "Stuff I read didn't say. Maybe if you kill the master vampire, the thrall breaks. Maybe you have to kill every vampire who ever ordered the poor bloke around. Maybe nobody knows."

Hermione said, "I asked, because if it's magic, there ought to be a way to interrupt it or reverse it. Maybe finite incantatem or one of the Reversing Charms. If it's hypnosis, I'm not sure how to stop it. And if it's some other form of magic, I have no idea what to do."

Harry said, "Well, I don't want to kill anyone human."

"Neither do I!" Ginny fussed.

Hermione said, "All right. We have to plan this assault on the warehouse, and we need to do it

soon. Ginny, is there anything else? Oh, and we still have some stew in the kitchen. It's the best I could do, but it isn't anywhere as good as Kreacher's. Or yours."

Ginny sighed. "There is something else. I need to get away from the Horcruxes. They make me feel sick."

"You're a Horcrux detector!" Ron smiled.

"It's not funny," Ginny grouched. "They make me feel sick and horrible. It's like something nasty is writhing away inside my stomach. Can we bury them somewhere nearby for the night? I haven't felt all right since I got that diadem."

Hermione frowned, "I... I didn't want to let any of them out of our sight until we could destroy them. But I suppose we could bury them where we could keep watch on them during the night."

Ginny smiled for the first time in what felt like hours. "I can keep watch most of the night. I don't need as much sleep."

Hermione said, "I'll bury these right out from the front of the tent, so you can sit in the tent opening and keep an eye out. And when you get tired, come wake me up, and I'll take a shift."

Ron groaned, "Sign me up too. Ginny can carry my cot over to the doorway. All I have to do is lie there and watch, right?"

"Not a chance, mate," Harry said firmly. "Hermione, you take a two or three hour shift, and then wake me up."

Hermione led Ginny out of the tent. "Now you stand right here at the edge of the spell circle, with your head through it so I can hear you. I'll walk that way." She pointed away from the tent. "You tell me when I have the Horcruxes far enough away from you."

Ginny stood and watched. When Hermione was about fifty feet away, the awful feeling in her gut was completely gone. "There," she called out.

Hermione walked another fifty or sixty feet out just to be sure. She used an Excavating Charm to move dirt out of the ground. Then she wrapped the two Horcruxes in a charmed towel and dropped them into the hole. Another charm replaced the dirt, and then Hermione put half a dozen alarm charms on the spot.

Hermione walked back to where she could see Ginny. She took Ginny's arm and walked carefully through the protective charms so she could go into the tent again.

Ginny walked into the kitchen and found the pot of stew under a Food Preserving Charm so it was still piping hot even though the stove was now turned off. She helped herself to the largest bowl she found in the cupboard and filled it with stew. Then she took it into the boys' section of the tent and sat on Harry's bed so they could talk and Ron could participate.

Hermione carefully said, "Ginny, that's a serving bowl."

Ginny stopped eating for a second before she said, "Well, I was really hungry." And she was. She used to think Ron and the twins were bottomless pits, but she seemed to have a hollow leg now. She could eat a huge meal, and want more just a couple hours later. In the last few days at Hogwarts, she had been eating about three or four times as much food as the other girls in her year, and she didn't seem to be gaining an ounce.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Thu, 21 Jun 2012 17:20:15 GMT  
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Chapter 70 You Will Be a Fugitive

Harry said, "Last night I had another dream about Riddle. He found Gregorovitch and was torturing him about something that was stolen from him a long time ago. He did some Occlumency and I saw a young man stealing something from Gregorovitch and jumping out a window. But I don't know what it was."

Ginny swallowed a big bite of stew and said, "Maybe it has to do with 'The Tale of the Three Brothers'. You know that symbol Mister Lovegood wore at Fleur's wedding that Krum was so furious about?" Everyone nodded. She said, "Luna said it was the symbol of the Deathly Hallows. The wand and the cloak and the stone are supposed to be real, and they're known as the Deathly Hallows."

Harry nodded. "So the things from the story are the Deathly Hallows and they're what Dumbledore told us to look for. And they're what Gellert Grindelwald must have been hunting back when he was in power."

Ginny added, "Luna said Grindelwald was after the three things so he could become master of death."

Harry grimaced. "That would get Riddle's interest. He's obsessed with not dying."

Ron said, "And other nutter stuff. As we found out first year."

Ginny said, "It's the wand. Riddle's after the Deathstick so he can have a wand that can defeat you."

Hermione said, "He has tried twice against you and failed both times, but these things don't really exist. They're just from a children's story. And we all know Mister Lovegood believes in all kinds of crackpot ideas."

Ron asked, "So if they're not real, why is Tommy so focused on them? And why go after Ollivander and then Gregorovitch if he's not after the Elder Wand so he can kill Harry?"

Hermione snorted in derision. "All right, I can show you there's no connection between Riddle's search and Grindelwald." She pulled a book out of her pouch.

Harry snapped, "You have a copy of Skeeter's book?"

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Naturally. How else am I going to find out what she's saying about Dumbledore? And maybe you? I mean, you know she's going to take shots at you if she can. You're even more famous than Dumbledore!"

She snapped open the book and turned to a series of pictures in the middle. "Here. This is what Gellert Grindelwald looked like back when Dumbledore knew him."

Ron choked, "WHAT? Albus Dumbledore and Gellert Grindelwald were mates? That's crazy!"

Hermione primly said, "I don't think we can believe the motives that Rita Skeeter attributes to everyone, but the facts are simple. Grindelwald was related to Bathilda Bagshot and came to Godric's Hollow for a while. He and Dumbledore were mates. It ended in a battle that killed Dumbledore's little sister Ariana, and Grindelwald fled back to the continent. At the funeral, Dumbledore's brother Aberforth punched Albus in the face and broke his nose. Albus Dumbledore never got his nose properly fixed, which sounds to me like the mark of a guilty man. Dumbledore let Grindelwald flee, and didn't try to stop him until Grindelwald had amassed a veritable army. Then they had their famous duel, which Dumbledore won."

She handed Harry the book. "THAT is what Grindelwald looked like."

Harry made a choking noise and just stared in shock.

"Harry?" Ginny worried.

"Harry!" Ron called out. "What's wrong?"

Harry winced, "It's him. Gellert Grindelwald is the boy I saw stealing something from Gregorovitch."

Ron moaned, "Gregorovitch had the bloody Deathstick and Grindelwald stole it? No wonder Dumbledore didn't want to duel him."

Hermione pointed out, "Ron, Dumbledore won their duel."

Harry said, "But Dumbledore was a really great wizard."

Ginny said, "Still, it has to mean you're not unbeatable just because you get the wand."

Hermione said, "According to the legends, you have to defeat the wielder and take the wand in order to get its power."

Ginny asked, "Do you have to kill the owner and take it? That's what happened in the story."

Hermione shrugged, "I don't know."

Harry said, "Dumbledore beat Grindelwald, but didn't kill him."

Hermione suddenly said, "Then it's possible Dumbledore has been wielding the Elder Wand all these years and nobody knew! And if that's true then you don't have to kill your opponent to get the wand's power!"

Ron asked, "But if you're right, then is Snape the rightful owner now? He killed Dumbledore."

Harry said slowly, "If Hermione's right, then... maybe not."

Ginny wasn't sure what Harry meant, so she swallowed the last of the stew and asked, "Why not?"

Harry replied, "Because Snape wasn't the person who disarmed Dumbledore."

Ron choked, "Malfoy? You're telling me Malfoy is the rightful owner of the Deathstick now? That's even worse!"

Hermione carefully said, "Ron, we're just guessing that it even is the Elder Wand. And we're guessing that Dumbledore was the rightful owner at that point. And we're guessing that you don't have to kill the owner, just beat them in a duel. It may be that no one is the rightful owner now."

Harry said, "But if someone today could be, it would have to be Draco."

Ginny added, "And if we're right, then we know where the Elder Wand is. It's the wand they buried with Dumbledore."

Ron said, "The old nutter was trying to get rid of the Elder Wand for keeps, wasn't he? If it was buried with him and no one knew, then it would be gone for good."

Hermione said, "But all this is based on conjecture and guesswork. We need to talk to a real expert on wands, and we'd need to... well... test whether Draco Malfoy is the proper owner of that wand."

Ron groaned, "Oh, right, that's a good idea. 'Here Malfoy, take a crack at Harry and see if this new wand is completely unbeatable.' I don't think so."

Hermione glared at him and was about to give him a scathing retort when suddenly she froze and nearly burst into tears again. She hurried out. It sounded to Ginny like she went outside the tent. Ginny said, "I'd better go make sure she's all right."

She found Hermione huddled on the ground just outside the tent, sobbing quietly into her jumper. Ginny did something she never would have considered before she became the Vampire Slayer. She sat down next to Hermione, picked her up like a toddler, and set Hermione in her lap so Hermione could cry into Ginny's shoulder.

Hermione sobbed, "I'm a bad girlfriend, and I'm a horrible, horrible person! It's all my fault Ron's hurt, and he's laid up, and I'm scared to try some of the riskier healing charms, and just now I almost yelled really awful things at him!"

Ginny hugged her and let her cry it all out. It took a while, because Hermione was upset about so many things. Losing her family and her Muggle connections, maybe forever. Not being able to figure out where the other Horcruxes were. Not being able to keep Ron from getting horribly hurt. Not being able to figure out what Albus Dumbledore really wanted her to do...

The list was even longer than Ginny expected, because Hermione was really smart, and had figured out lots of things that could be done if only she could figure out how to make things work like that.

Once Hermione stopped sobbing, she said, "And... and I still haven't figured out how to handle a whole warehouse of vampires and demons when we've got those humans there too."

Ginny nodded a little, "And we're running out of time. If they aren't attacking Grimmauld Place tonight, they'll probably be doing it tomorrow night or the night after."

Hermione sniffled, "Well, they haven't done it yet. I have an alarm charm on the door, so I'll know when anybody finally gets around to opening it up and going in. And I have an alarm charm on the entryway, so I'll know when the first vampire or demon sets foot inside. I'm guessing they'll have to make Kreacher invite the vampires in, or else do a spell to make one of the Death Eaters appear to be one of the residents of the house, so he can invite them all in. Then they'll search the entire house for us. I just hope they don't hurt Kreacher."

Ginny said, "I really don't want to be there when they load all their vampires and demons into those two lorries and dump them all out in the square in a big avalanche." A thought ran through her head. The little blonde who might be the Golden Slayer would have called it 'an avalanche-y thing of mucho badness'. She had no idea why she was so sure about that.

Hermione suddenly sat up straight and stared at her. "That's it! You're a genius! That's exactly how we'll take out the warehouse!"

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 24 Jun 2012 07:13:40 GMT  
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Chapter 71 A Wanderer on the Earth

Ginny didn't feel like a genius. No, she felt like a moron. She knew just what they had said, and she wasn't seeing the big plan. She wasn't seeing any part of a plan. No, Hermione was the genius.

Hermione quickly explained the whole idea, while Ginny nodded and hummed in all the right places.

Once Hermione finished, Ginny said, "I think we need more help. You're not going to want to spend your nights watching the warehouse when Ron's here and still hurt, and Harry needs sleep. I can watch all night, but then I'll need to sleep a lot during the days when you want to be teaching us classwork."

Hermione said, "I'll enlist Fred and George. They're probably itching to get involved and cause trouble for V- I mean Riddle."

Ginny said, "Send them a Patronus right now with a place to meet me in a couple minutes. Then I can take them to where we'll set up the watches."

"Where?" Hermione asked. "On top of that other warehouse?"

Ginny said, "Yes. It's perfect. We can see the warehouse, and we're too far away for them to spot us."

Hermione said, "Be sure to perform a colloportus on every door and hatch and window that can open onto that roof, so you don't have something nasty sneaking up on you. Or the twins."

Ginny frowned, "Good point. I'd sense them coming. Fred and George can't."

Hermione reached into her pouch and pulled out an almanac. She riffled through the pages and said, "Dawn will be around 6:19. You'll need monitoring until then."

Ginny nodded. The vampires weren't going to be walking across the loading dock in daylight, and they wouldn't be climbing out of the lorries at Grimmauld Place in sunlight either. And whether things went their way or not, in a couple hours they might want to be able to ride back to the warehouse where they could safely avoid daylight and any angry authorities like the Aurors. The whole operation would have to start after dark and wrap up well before sunrise. That meant they probably couldn't wait too long after sunset to begin.

Hermione finally stopped sniffing, and burrowed her head against Ginny's chest. After a couple more minutes, Hermione was sound asleep, and she had forgotten to send the talking Patronus.

Ginny picked Hermione up in her arms and walked back into the tent. Harry and Ron looked up. Ginny whispered, "She's asleep. Let's get her settled next to Ron so she'll stay asleep. She's really worried."

Harry gathered up his stuff and quietly put it on the floor. Then he scooted his cot against Ron's and unzipped the sleeping bag on it. Ginny slid Hermione's sleeping form in, not bothering to do more than take off her shoes.

Ron took Hermione's hand with his good arm and whispered, "Thanks, Ginny."

Ginny nodded and whispered, "We'll talk in the morning. Hermione has a plan."

Ron grinned. "When does she not?"

Harry took Ginny's hand and led her back to the kitchen. He asked, "Do you need anything else?"

She nodded, "Can you send a talking Patronus to Fred and George? I need to meet them somewhere safe where we all know how to get to, like... umm..."

Harry said, "King's Cross Station, by platform 10. No one's going to be watching it now that everyone's in school. The gateway to platform 9 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  is all sealed up until the next school holiday. For all I know, at this time of night, the whole building might be already closed up."

"Good idea," she smiled. She gave him a kiss for being so smart.

She watched Harry send off the Patronus, and she told herself she needed to learn that spell right away.

She apparated into the ladies' toilet at King's Cross Station, which was lit by several lights that she hadn't noticed in her daytime visits. She silently slid out into the station. It was obviously in use, but there were far fewer passengers walking through the place than she normally saw.

After only a couple minutes, redheaded twins in bright jackets came strolling along. She ran over and hugged them both, putting enough strength into it that there wouldn't be any doubt it was really her.

George started, "So, little sis-

"- what's up?" Fred finished.

She led them out of the station and into an alley around the corner. "I need your help watching a warehouse full of vampires. They're probably going to launch a huge assault on Number 12 Grimmauld Place. Oh Merlin, I hope Hermione has warned everyone in the Order to keep away. It's not protected from all the Death Eaters anymore."

"You were saying?" they smirked simultaneously.

She went on, "I need to side-along apparate you, one at a time, to our vantage point. Then you'll know how to get there. We'll have three shifts. Fred will take sunset to ten at night. I'll take ten until four in the morning. George will take four until sunrise."

She took Fred by the arm and concentrated hard. She apparated onto the roof where they could see the warehouse just down the street. "Wait here," she said.

She apparated back to the alley, grabbed George, and apparated back to the roof. She said, "Wait here just a minute."

Then she stalked across the warehouse roof checking for exits. There were no windows that opened onto the roof, but there were four hatches. She sealed each of them with a quick colloportus. There was a ladder down one side of the building that led to a door twenty feet

below. She sealed that too. Then she made sure there were no windows that a vampire could open and climb out and clamber up the side of the building to catch someone unawares.

She walked back to the twins. She pointed at the warehouse. "That's our target. They have humans and demons patrolling the outside during the day, and maybe vampires too at night. So just getting to the building and not having something dangerous lurking behind you is a problem. We don't know how many vampires are in there, but it's a lot. So we're going to wait until they start loading the trucks with vampires. We'll take turns watching, and make sure you have a broom with you. Whoever sees them start the loading will have to fire off a Patronus to us, and to you also. Then we'll go with Hermione's plan..."

It was late enough that she let both of them apparate home. She knew George would show up around four and let her get a little sleep. Then she pulled a camping chair out of her wrist bracelet and settled in to keep watch on the warehouse.

It was dull. Deadly dull. Patrols of two walked around the building, even in the middle of the night. She counted four different patrols, which meant there was someone guarding every side all the time. One of each pair had a rifle, and the other had something for melee battles: a sword or a mace. Relief teams came out at midnight, and again at four in the morning. But no one made any attempt to load people into the lorries.

George apparated with a crack, and she left the camping chair for him. She explained what she had noticed, and asked him to let her know if any of the humans drove away while he was on duty. Then she apparated back to the tent. It took her a minute to find the horrid-feeling spot where the Horcruxes were buried. Then she had no trouble marching in a straight line right into the mouth of the tent.

Harry was sitting there just inside the tent, guarding everyone, so she sat down next to him. They held each other until he fell asleep.

About a quarter to five, Hermione dragged herself out of bed and took over the guard duty. Ginny carried Harry to his sleeping bag, slipped off his trainers, and tucked him in. Then she laid down in the cot next to him and fell into a sound sleep.

Ginny woke up when she smelled breakfast being cooked. She sniffed at the hint of burnt bacon. She really needed to teach Hermione more cooking charms. For some reason, she had been expecting another Slayer dream, but she hadn't had any. At least, none that she remembered.

Hermione looked exhausted, and she still looked like she had been crying. Ginny wondered how they were going to manage if they needed to tend to Ron and keep guards all night and also

watch that warehouse from dusk to dawn. She talked Hermione into getting some more sleep until Ron woke up.

She fixed enough breakfast for all of them, and ate her portion of it, keeping the rest of it under Warming Charms and Food Preserving Charms. Then she snuggled into her sleeping bag until Harry woke up an hour or two later.

She helped Ron eat while Harry and Hermione had a late breakfast. Hermione wanted to pack up and move to a new spot, just in case someone was able to trace their apparation yesterday from Grimmauld Place. Ginny thought that was silly, but she didn't say so. Hermione had a better idea what you could do with some spells than Ginny did, so it made sense to trust the expert.

Ron wasn't doing too well, but he managed to sponge himself off and get dressed. Ginny showered and put on clean clothes. She checked the cut on her palm, and it looked like it was already healing nicely.

Hermione had a little lakeside destination in mind, so they undid the charms on their campsite and let Hermione side-along apparate Harry to the site. They both came back. Harry took Ginny, and Hermione gingerly took Ron.

Ron complained a bit at how Hermione was treating him. "Come on, I'm hurt, not a piece of china!"

The new place was beautiful. It was a wooded campsite beside a quiet lake. Ginny thought it was lovely, right up until Hermione came back with the two Horcruxes.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 27 Jun 2012 07:02:29 GMT  
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Chapter 72 Greater Than I Can Bear

Ginny could feel it the moment Hermione brought the Horcruxes near her. She had that twisting, churning awful feeling in her guts, and she just wanted to throw up.

"Hermione? Can we move those... things away from us? They're making me feel bad. Again."

Hermione tucked them away in the back of the tent, and led Ginny out into the sunlight. But Ginny could still feel the awful things in the back of her mind. In the pit of her stomach. She couldn't

concentrate while Hermione tried to teach her a new charm. She completely missed what Harry had to say about Defense Against the Dark Arts.

She finally stopped them. "I've got to get rid of those things!"

Hermione patiently said, "We can't. We don't have anything that can destroy them."

Ginny looked out at the lake and said, "Fiendfyre! You said Fiendfyre would do it. We take them out in the middle of the lake and attack them with Fiendfyre out there and then extinguish it."

Ron was lying on a sleeping bag listening to the lesson. He said, "Hey! Good idea!"

Hermione shook her head no. "Fiendfyre isn't stopped by water. In fact, it can cause water to separate into hydrogen and oxygen, and then explode. You might as well unleash Fiendfyre in a gas tank."

Harry cautiously asked, "Does that mean you know how to create Fiendfyre?"

Hermione stared at the ground. "Yes. I found out how to create it. But I haven't found a spell to stop it. And I certainly don't want to create it and try finite incantatem and then find out it doesn't stop the spell."

Harry said, "It would be a lot easier if Scrimgeour had just let us have the Sword of Gryffindor. The basilisk venom I got on it will kill a Horcrux, so the sword should be able to kill Horcruxes now."

Hermione tried to continue the lessons, but Ginny just couldn't stand being that close to the Horcruxes and not doing anything about them. She stormed into the tent, dug out the locket, and marched out to a tree stump.

"Ginny! Ginny, what are you doing?" Hermione called out.

Ron said, "Somebody get up and stop her!"

But she wasn't going to wait. She pulled out a massive battleaxe from her wristband and swung it as hard as she could.

The battleaxe hit dead center on the locket and bounced back like she'd tried to cut through some sort of shield charm. She managed to keep the axe from hitting her on the rebound, and she took another swing at it. The second swing didn't do anything either.

She growled angrily. She actually growled at it. She began chopping and hacking it, trying

furiously to destroy it. But the locket resisted everything she tried. She wound up and swung as hard as she could.

There was a blast of blackness, and she lost consciousness.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Ginny! Ginny, say something!"

She groaned. It felt like a troll had hit her in the face with a club and then someone had set her blouse on fire. She opened her eyes to find Harry and Hermione and even Ron all looming over her with worried expressions.

Oh. Right. She had been attacking a Horcrux like a madwoman. "Did I destroy it?" she asked.

Harry sadly shook his head no.

Hermione looked rather embarrassed as she said, "I didn't know they were... upsetting you that much. I moved both of them a bit away while you were unconscious."

"How... how long was I out?" she asked.

Ron said, "Long enough to scare me out of ten years' growth."

Harry said, "About two minutes. We had time to put out the fire on your clothes. Hermione already put a burn potion on your hands and face and chest."

Hermione said, "But I don't know if it will work on you."

Ginny started to sit up, but she stopped with a groan. "Ugh. My head."

Hermione handed her a blue bottle full of a shimmering potion. "Here. It's a headache potion. And I have a potion to encourage your healing, and a potion for general aches and pains."

Ron muttered, "At least we learned one thing. They all have deadly curses all over them, the bloody..." He tailed off, but he kept cursing colorfully under his breath.

Hermione said, "We already knew that, because of the ring that nearly killed Professor Dumbledore."

Ron muttered, "Why did he put a cursed ring on? Complete nutter, I tell you."

Harry said, "If it really was the Resurrection Stone, maybe he knew it and he couldn't stop himself. The Mirror of Erised. I asked him what he saw when he looked in it, and he said himself holding a pair of socks."

Ron said, "Nutter. Like I said."

Hermione said, "He might have just thought your question was too personal. You were only a first year."

Ron argued, "But you said he talked about your greatest desire, and mine, and what other people did... So why not him?"

Harry slowly said, "If his greatest desire was about someone dead... Someone the Resurrection Stone could bring back so he could talk to them..."

Hermione suddenly said, "His sister. Or his mother. Or maybe his father."

Ginny wondered if Hermione was right.

Harry cut off the conversation, "There's no point in guessing, because we're never going to find out."

Hermione said, "In that case, while we're taking a break in the lesson plan, maybe you could do the part you were talking about."

"Right," said Harry. He took a step away from them and clearly called out, "Kreacher!"

A couple seconds later, there was a loud pop and Kreacher appeared, bowing low and talking in his ancient, rusty voice. "What does Harry wish of Kreacher?"

Harry said, "First, I wanted to make sure you were all right. Did the Death Eaters get in?"

Kreacher said, "No. Kreacher hears the fight on the doorstep, and Kreacher barricades the door to keep enemies of the Noble and Ancient House of Black out. The enemy tried door unlocking charms, and some hexes, but the manor is more powerful than that. So the enemy left and came back hours later and tried again, but Kreacher kept them out."

Hermione said, "That's really good, Kreacher. Some time in the next couple nights they're going to attack the manor with dark creatures. Vampires and demons. We want the manor to stay secure, but we don't want you to get hurt."

"The... the..." Kreacher mentally wrestled with himself for several seconds over what to call

Hermione before he managed to say, "Miss Hermione does not understand. Without the manor and the House of Black, there is no life for a house elf."

Harry said, "Kreacher, you are now part of the House of Potter as well. Even without the manor, there are the Potter estates."

Kreacher's jaw dropped open in astonishment, and then he began to cry. He bowed so low his nose scuffed the ground, and he vanished with a pop.

Ron said, "Think he's going to listen to you?"

Ginny guessed, "I think he's going to do a 'last stand' thing if we can't stop those vampires first. It sounds like he can keep the Death Eaters out otherwise."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 01 Jul 2012 06:39:14 GMT  
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Chapter 73 Anyone Who Meets Me

Ginny spent the rest of the day healing up. Her burns were all really light. Hermione said the burns were only first degree burns. It looked like they would be completely healed in a day or two. The shirt was ruined, though. Even a couple efforts with reparo weren't enough.

Once Ginny's headache was gone, Hermione made everyone get back to lessons. Hermione's lesson in transfiguration made no sense at all to Ginny, until Ron explained what he got out of Professor McGonagall's class. Then about half of it made sense, and the rest was still really confusing. But Harry managed to walk her through doing a decent job of transfiguring the buttons, and then she managed to do almost as well with a silent spell.

She had no idea how she was going to manage if she ever got to go back to Hogwarts, because this stuff was hard and she really needed Hermione and Harry and Ron's help to get through even the first couple weeks of this material. She wondered how everyone else managed. Then she remembered that everyone else had been depending on her to help them with their lessons.

They stopped for lunch. Hermione had the kitchen of the tent well-stocked, but at the rate Ginny went through food they were going to run out of things in under a week. So they needed to start thinking about re-supply. Ginny thought about swooping in and robbing some Death Eaters, but that would be really risky, and really illegal, and really immoral. Even if she was smiling at the

idea of stealing Draco Malfoy's dinner out from under his nose.

Ginny showed Hermione a Peeling Charm and a Roasting Charm and a Stirring Charm. That last one helped Hermione a lot on keeping bits of the sliced chicken from getting overdone.

Over lunch at a wooden bench beside the lake, Hermione brought up the idea of keeping the Horcruxes safe by wearing them on chains around their necks. Ginny literally shuddered. She snapped, "Fine, but only if I'm not within a hundred feet of you. They're making me crazy!"

Hermione glared at her. "Then what are we going to do? Burying them every time is just asking for them to get stolen. We can't afford to let Riddle and his people get them back!"

Ginny looked out over the lake and said, "I have an idea."

"What?" Ron asked from around a huge mouthful of chicken salad.

Ginny said, "I'll dive down a hundred feet and hide them under a rock. No one's going to find them there."

Hermione frowned, "What if V- I mean, Riddle sends some merpeople or something worse to get the Horcruxes back?"

Ron pointed out, "He can't. First he'd have to figure out they were gone, and second he'd have to figure out where they were."

Harry added, "He can't get merpeople or a giant squid into a nice, closed lake like this. Maybe a selkie, though. Or a kappa."

Hermione said, "Or just a Death Eater using a Bubblehead Charm."

Harry said, "I still think it's a good idea, and it's a lot better than hiding them in a hole in the ground."

Ron said, "Plus, you can put a hundred alarm charms and things on them so no one can get them without alerting us."

Hermione finally sighed, then grumbled, then gave in. "Fine. But I'm not getting in the water without my swimming suit."

Ron gawked, "You brought a swimming suit along when we're hunting Horcruxes?"

Hermione said, "Naturally. And swim fins. And a book on learning to speak Mermish. And a

trident. Just in case we had to go retrieve it from the bottom of Loch Ness or something like that." She looked over and said, "Ginny, I brought a suit for you, too."

The first thing Ginny thought was 'I hope it's a good color for me'. But she didn't say that. She said, "Thank you. That was very thoughtful of you. Did you get one for Ron and Harry?"

Hermione said, "Umm, no. I got one for you because you're the Vampire Slayer. You can swim harder for longer than the rest of us, and you can probably dive a lot deeper than us before the pressure's too much for you, and you can dive deeper and still see without using your wand."

Ginny followed Hermione into the tent and back into 'their' bedroom. Hermione pulled out a tiny navy maillot and an equally tiny white one.

Ginny looked at them and said, "Did you put a Shrinking Charm on them?"

Hermione said, "Oh no, they're seventy percent spandex. This is how they're supposed to look before we put them on."

Ginny undressed and tugged hers on the same way Hermione was putting hers on. "And Muggles really wear swimming suits this tiny?"

Hermione pulled a magazine out of her pouch. "Here's a catalog you can order from. Take a look at page seventeen."

Ginny found there were pages of swimwear in the catalog, and some of the swimsuits were so tiny she couldn't figure out how the models weren't just falling out of them. She complained, "I have brassieres bigger than that! No wait, I don't have a single one that's anywhere near that tiny!"

Hermione said, "And if you think those are small, wait until you see what some Muggle women wear on beaches in southern France."

Ginny winced and said, "I want my school robe to wear down to the lake."

Hermione pulled out the robes and said, "I have sandals for both of us, too."

They slipped out of the tent while Ron and Harry were gathering up all the equipment Hermione had made them haul outside of the tent for the lessons. The blackboard and chalk, the desks and the table, the potions equipment they hadn't used yet, and all the assorted books, parchment, and quills.

Ginny followed Hermione down to the lake and draped her robe over the branch of a tree. Then she left her sandals there and walked into the water. It was cold, but not as cold as she had

expected. Or maybe she wasn't noticing the cold as much because Hermione had those Horcruxes.

Hermione said, "Bubblehead Charms before we go under, and hang onto your wand."

Ginny tucked her wand into her wrist bracelet and let Hermione cast the charm on her. Then they dove under the water.

The water was somewhat murky, but Hermione pulled out her wand and did a spell Ginny couldn't hear. Suddenly, the water appeared to be easier to see through.

They swam down the sloping shelf of land, past some discarded bottles and cans, over a small rowboat that had sunk, and into the deeper water. About a hundred feet down, they found a nice big rock sticking half out of the mud. Hermione pulled out her wand, lifted the rock out of the mud, and buried the Horcruxes under it. Then she cast half a dozen alarm charms on the rock, and they swam back to the surface.

Once they were far enough away, the awful feeling from being near the Horcruxes faded away, and Ginny felt much better. She pulled out her wand, took a deep breath, and ended the Bubblehead Charm so she could feel the cool water on her face. Hermione waited until she was closer to the surface before she did the same.

Ginny's head broke the surface, and she saw she was still a good sixty feet from the shore. Harry was keeping an eye on Ron, as Ron carefully made his way down to the shoreline and settled in on a large rock.

Ron called out, "Oi! Everything okay?"

Hermione called back, "Yes! And the water's lovely."

Ron said, "I'll have to take your word for it right now."

Ginny's feet touched the bottom. She stood up and walked out of the water.

Ron squawked, "Ginny! Put some clothes on!" Harry just stood there and stared.

Hermione smoothed her wet hair back over her head and rose up beside Ginny.

Ron's jaw dropped open. "H- H- I... Wuh..."

Hermione looked at Ron's utterly gobsmacked expression and whispered to Ginny, "You know, I think I do like this suit."

## Chapter 74 A Mark on Cain

Ron was completely unable to make an intelligible sound until after Hermione used a Drying charm on herself and put on her robe. Hermione fussed at him for gawping, but Ginny could tell Hermione rather liked Ron's reaction.

They skittered back into their room to change back into their regular clothes. Hermione whispered, "The way Ron was looking at me, I felt like I was a veela." She couldn't keep from smiling.

Ginny had to admit she rather liked the way Harry had been looking at her, so she understood Hermione's feelings completely.

After they changed clothes and hung the suits to finish drying, Hermione insisted on more lessons. Ron managed to talk her into doing them in the living room of the tent, where all the desks and chairs were now sitting. So Ginny took notes while Ron was lying on his cot listening and Hermione was lecturing about the intricacies of brewing Blood Replenishing Potions. That grew rather interesting when Harry pointed out that Snape's personal copy of the potions book disagreed quite strongly with the directions from Arsenius Jigger in two places. Hermione and Harry had a disagreement about stirring directions that reminded Ginny of Luna's Stirring Spoon, and when Ginny told them about Luna's Self-Stirring Spoon, Hermione groaned and pulled out yet another book, which had rhymes and poems for potioners. The song for Blood Replenishing Potions which also worked for another twenty or thirty potions that were listed in the book made it clear that Snape's version was right, and you really did have to stop for a three count after every sixth clockwise stir, and then stir in the other direction five times before starting over again.

They ended up trying it both ways, and Snape's version came out much better. It was obviously a brilliant carmine red with sparkles floating up from the bottom, so it looked like the perfect Blood Replenishing Potion, while the best Hermione could do from Arsenius Jigger's precise directions looked close, but it lacked the shimmering clarity and the sparkles didn't move. Hermione had some very grumpy things to say about textbook authors who weren't qualified to write texts, and teachers who knew there were problems with the text but didn't tell anyone and didn't bother to help the students learn the proper way.

They ate dinner around six thirty, so they had time to clean up and put things away before sunset. Ginny was glad to see the wolf cub Patronus at 7:30 letting her know Fred was already in position. That reminded her, and she spent nearly an hour learning the talking Patronus spell from Hermione, just in case.

She paced back and forth, wondering how long it would be before she could rush off and stake vampires. Hermione stuck her nose in the Severus Snape copy of the sixth year potions book, making incessant notes about details like stirring directions and potion poems. Harry played Ron several games of wizard chess, even though Ron crushed him every time. Ginny tried to read from the Divination textbook, but the words just swam before her eyes.

Shortly after nine, another wolf cub Patronus appeared. "They're opening up the rolling doors and the backs of the lorries. This looks like it. Oh Merlin, that's a lot of vampires!"

Ginny looked at Harry and quickly apparated to the rooftop. Harry and Hermione appeared after her with loud cracking noises. Fred and George were already standing there with their brooms, doing Disillusionment Charms on each other. Hermione and Harry followed suit, while Ginny wrapped herself in Harry's invisibility cloak.

Ginny whispered, "Let's go." She took off to a position two hundred feet above the roof of the vampire warehouse, right over the loading dock. She could see dozens of vampires walking into the two lorries. She was glad she wasn't going to have to fight all of them with nothing but a stake.

When it looked like the last vampires were crowding into the lorries and figures were climbing into the two cabs to drive the trucks away, Ginny said, "Now."

Harry dove. He plummeted toward the loading dock as he pulled out his wand. Just before it looked like he would crash into the dock, he pulled up the front of his Firebolt and hurtled at breakneck speed behind the lorries. The demons who were about to close the rear gates of the lorries never saw him coming.

Two silent incendio spells turned the inside of each lorry into a big fireball. Harry pulled up and moved toward the roof.

George flew right behind him and cast a sectumsempra at every demon still standing on the loading dock.

Ginny flew down behind George and stopped over the loading dock above the roofs of the lorries. She could feel that there was some sort of live threat in the second one. The drivers had already jumped out of the lorries and were running away from the warehouse.

Hermione and Fred came flying around the west side of the warehouse at about thirty feet up and dropped the drivers. Fred hit everyone with a petrificus totalis, and if the spell bounced off and they didn't fall over frozen in place, they weren't human. Hermione followed up and beheaded all the non-humans with swift, silent sectumsempra hexes. Ginny knew that if Hermione and Fred

were already all the way around the warehouse, they had already completed their first part of the mission: taking out all four guard teams the same way, and blocking all the other exits.

Harry flew back along the loading dock and put out the fires inside the lorries. Ginny flew to the opening in back of the second one and swiftly beheaded the demon still lurking in there with a reducto. Then she fired off a spray of sparkles from her wand, letting everyone know it was time to re-group.

This was going to be the hard part. They might have cleared out almost all the vampires, but there were still demons and probably more vampires inside the warehouse. She couldn't tell which. She could just tell from the twisting ugliness in her guts that there were plenty of monsters in there.

There were probably more humans, too, so they couldn't just behead anything that moved. But the humans might well be working for the master vampire in there. Marius. Whoever he was. And the humans outside had been patrolling with rifles, so she also had to worry about her friends getting shot with Muggle weapons. And she still didn't know what kinds of demons might be in there.

Hermione made sure everyone cast a shield charm. Then they flew to a spot just inside the rolling doors of the loading dock. Fred and George began casting some of their fireworks into the air. These were all white lights about the size of a bludger. Ginny and Harry cast wingardium leviosa on each of them so they floated up to the ceiling.

With over a dozen shining lights, they could see the warehouse interior. It was a huge, high-ceilinged room with a concrete floor and steel girders sticking up thirty feet to the ceiling. On the wall to their left was a row of closed offices. In front of them was a maze of boxes and stacks and loaded pallets that could conceal dozens of threats.

Hermione said, "According to the blueprints I was able to find, there's a small basement area under those offices, with a stairwell somewhere toward the back left corner. And there's a freight elevator and stairs by the offices that lead up to two ordinary-height floors above this. There's also an emergency exit on the other side of the warehouse on the outside, but we sealed up those doors already."

There was the sharp bark of a handgun, and something pinged off Hermione's shield. More gunfire echoed about in the warehouse as maybe half a dozen opponents fired on them.

Hermione said, "I think we need to skip sealing up the upper floors and the basement until we take care of this nuisance."

Ginny thought that was a bit of an understatement, but she didn't say anything.

Hermione led them all over to an area ten feet above the row of closed offices. Ginny said, "There's some vampires or demons in the offices right under us, too."

Hermione said, "Let's clear the floor first." Then she pointed her wand at the middle of the warehouse floor and said, "Accio crate!"

A massive wooden crate came flying their way, and Hermione abruptly ended the spell, letting the crate smash against the wall underneath her and crash down on the plywood 'roof' of the offices under them. In moments, everyone was copying her.

"Accio crate."

"Accio pallet."

"Accio stack."

"Accio crate."

The gunfire stopped as opponents had to scramble farther back into the warehouse to avoid being exposed. Or, as was the case with one vampire, being dragged through the air along with the crate he was atop, and then being staked with a hundred wood fragments when the crate hit the wall below them.

It didn't take long to clear so much of the warehouse that the weight of debris crushed the little offices below them. Ginny felt a couple vampires turn to dust as they were crushed by the collapsing rooms and the wood construction jabbed through them, but she thought there were still a couple things alive in the mess. She was going to have to deal with them before she left the warehouse.

Fred and George were enjoying themselves a bit too much, and soon crates and pallets of goods were also flying out the rolling doors to crash on the loading docks, and flying out the black-painted windows, and crashing onto the open metal staircase that led to the upper floors, and piling up around the stairwell into the basement.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 11 Jul 2012 07:03:09 GMT  
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Chapter 75 Who Came Upon Him Would Kill Him

It didn't take much longer before they had the opponents trapped in a small corner at the far end of the warehouse. Harry began flying about, hitting everything he spotted with a petrificus totalis hex, while Ginny zoomed along after him, trying to behead everything that couldn't be petrified. Meanwhile, Hermione and the twins kept summoning crates and stacks of crates, hurling them to the other end of the warehouse.

As they worked across the warehouse, they discovered three empty Red Cross trucks that had presumably once been stocked with blood. They also found a large walk-in refrigerator that still had boxes packed with plastic bags of blood, all of it marked as contaminated or suspect, and intended for disposal. Ginny figured that you could keep quite a lot of vampires fed with all the donated blood in London that was rejected for carrying one of the many Muggle diseases the bloodbanks checked for.

By the time they pinned down the last few opponents in the back corner, there were five petrified humans still holding rifles, and several more piles of dust. Ginny swooped in on the last three demons to distract them, and as they turned to face her, Hermione and the twins beheaded all of them.

Hermione said, "Next, let's get all our petrified guards from outside in here so no one sees them and calls the Muggle police."

"Or the Aurors, which would be worse," Fred muttered.

While Hermione and the twins did that, Harry cast shield charms to block off the freight elevator and staircase. Ginny blocked the basement stairwell with a shield charm, and then took care of the two demons still alive under the rubble of the collapsed offices.

Once the still-petrified men were all dumped inside near the loading dock, Hermione said, "Next we need to clear out the upstairs. There are two floors, and there's another staircase connecting them at the far end of the warehouse."

Harry said, "So we just block the elevator and these stairs on both levels, and then clear one floor and use the far stairs to go clear the other floor."

Ginny was expecting a horrible battle through crowded rooms, but when they got to the first level, they found all the walls and everything had been stripped out to make room for rows and rows of cots. They flew through the open area, spotting a couple vampires who were scrambling for the safety of the far stairs.

Ginny stopped everyone at the staircase. "I can feel them. They're waiting right there to pounce

on us when we go up after them."

George pointed his wand up the stairs and said, "Incendio."

There was a sudden burst of shrieks, yells, and cursing, followed by the whoosh of a couple vampires turning to dust, followed by yelling and running as others sprinted for the far side of the floor.

Ginny jetted up the stairs with her wand out, but every opponent was already at the far end of the floor, battering away at the shield charm to get away. It only took a few seconds to dust the half dozen vampires and behead the lone remaining demon.

Hermione said, "Only the basement level left, but that may be the hardest to-"

She didn't get to finish her sentence before there was the sound of a small explosion below them, followed by the crash of crates. Harry hastily ended his shield charm, and they flew down the staircase to see what was going on.

Something had blasted through the shield charm over the basement stairwell. A huge, ugly demon was lumbering toward the far end of the warehouse, while a well-dressed vampire with a retinue of five followers was making a break for the loading dock. Only the pile of debris from Fred and George's mischief was keeping the vampires in the building. Ginny recognized the demon from Ron's lessons. It was a K'vor'nek. That wasn't good.

Hermione said, "Fred, on me. We have the demon. Everyone else, back Ginny and take the vampires." And she was off.

Ginny distinctly remembered what Ron had told them. K'vor'nek demons required a binding spell using a holy object in order to keep them from moving or extending their feeding tentacles. Then they had to be beheaded, the head separated from the body, and the two burned separately. If it had been anyone but Hermione, Ginny would have worried that they didn't know what they were getting into. But Hermione would remember.

Ginny flew at the vampires, beheading one with a quick diffindo as she descended. Harry and George beheaded two others right after her. By the time she reached the vampires, there was only the master vampire and two minions.

The vampire made a gesture, and the two minions quickly stepped behind him. Harry sent a sectumsempra at him, but the vampire whipped out a wand and blocked it with a rapid Shield Charm.

Ginny waved Harry back. This was as bad as she had feared. A full-grown, trained wizard who

was now a vampire. He would be as fast as a vampire when casting spells, and as resistant as any dark creature to most hexes. He could dodge almost as fast as she could. And if he got close enough to grab Harry or George...

The vampire said, "I am Marius, of the line of Aurelius. Witch, you would probably know me by my old name, Achernar Black."

Ginny maintained aim with her wand, waiting for him to make a move. "So you think you can invite your vampires into Number 12 Grimmauld Place because it's your ancestral manor."

He nodded. "And if that doesn't work, I shall summon one of the house elves to invite my horde in. I will take over the manor and vanquish the forces who have stolen it for their own purposes. And there is nothing you can do to stop me. My cohort K'letha over there will devour your foolish compatriots while you watch."

Just then, there was a quickly extinguished shriek from the far side of the warehouse. Ginny glanced over and saw Hermione flying in at the demon. She was holding a wand in one hand and a cross in the other, and the demon seemed to be paralyzed. Obviously, Hermione had memorized what Harry had lectured about binding spells.

"No!" Marius gasped. "That's impossible!"

Hermione performed a skilled sectumsempra that beheaded the demon, then an accio that pulled the head toward her. Two incendio spells burned the head and the body separately.

Ginny seized the moment. There was no way Marius would expect her to move with the speed of a Vampire Slayer. She dove off the broomstick and punched Marius' shield hard enough to destroy it. Then she moved forward. When Marius leapt at her to sink his fangs in her neck, she thrust a stake into his heart.

As soon as he burst into dust, Harry and George beheaded the two remaining minions. Hermione flew back with Fred behind her and said, "I think we're done here."

Ginny said, "He might have been able to get the vampires into the house. He used to be one of the Black family."

Hermione said, "We don't have to worry about that now."

Fred and George looked over at the ash remains of the K'vor'nek demon and said in tandem, "Hermione, have we-

"-ever told you-

"-sometimes you're-

"-really scary?"

Hermione blushed a little and said, "The necessary binding spell requires a holy object. But my parents kept this from when I was christened. It was a present from the minister, so I was sure it would count as a holy object."

Harry said, "Let's get back and check on Ron."

Ginny flew over and gave each of the twins slightly awkward one-armed hugs. She said, "Thanks so much."

"Well, it's the least we could do for our favorite sister," they said.

Harry said, "We'll see if there's something else we can cook up for you soon."

They all landed, and the twins apparated home.

Harry asked, "And what do we do about the humans? What if some of them are wizards too? Or if some of them are just evil enough to work with vampires and demons?"

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 15 Jul 2012 07:26:38 GMT  
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Chapter 76 Settled in the Land of Nod

Hermione reached into her pouch and said, "Find one with his mouth at least partly open." As Harry walked over to the men, Hermione pulled from her pouch a vial of crystal-clear liquid. It could have been water, except Hermione wouldn't keep a little vial of pure water around unless it had special properties.

Ginny thought back to her potions lesson and said, "Veritaserum! You have Veritaserum! Where'd you get that?"

"I brewed some up before I came to the Burrow," Hermione explained. "It takes a really long time to make, even if you start at just the right point in the lunar cycle."

"Mobilicorpus," Harry said. He walked over to Hermione with one paralyzed man floating alongside him.

Hermione looked at the man's half-open mouth and said, "Excellent. Now let's get him ready." She carefully measured out three drops of the Veritaserum into the man's mouth and then waved her wand, "Incarcerous. Rennervate."

The man, now tied securely with ropes and still floating in the air, suddenly had his paralysis canceled. He choked on the drops and swallowed them. Then he started cursing up a storm. Ginny had only heard maybe a quarter of his cursing before, and he was really creative. She was thinking she needed to be taking notes so she had new things to yell at Fred and George the next time they pulled something.

Hermione asked, "What's your name?"

The man said, "Bert. Bert Gunton." He suddenly realized that he had given his name when he didn't want to. Ginny had to bite the inside of her mouth to keep from laughing out loud at the look of shock on his face. He growled, "Oi! You magicked me!" He started cursing Hermione left and right.

Hermione ignored him and asked, "Did you know Marius was evil when you went to work for him?"

"Course I did, ya bloody..." He went off on another string of curses while he struggled futilely against the ropes. "Money's the same whoever pays it."

Hermione asked, "Are all of you men willingly working for Marius?"

"Hell no, you..." The man launched into a few more strings of colorful profanity. "Me and Nate rounded the rest up 'n the Master did one of his magic things on 'em."

Ginny and Harry exchanged looks of shock, but Hermione acted like she was unimpressed. She found out from the swearing man which one was 'Nate', and then put him to sleep with a silent somnus spell.

She led Harry and Ginny well away from the paralyzed men. "What do we do now?"

Harry asked, "Can you break an Imperius Curse done by someone who's dead?"

Ginny added, "Especially if they were dead when they did the spell?"

Hermione said, "I don't really know. But I do know that we should be able to take over the spell. It's in Curses Moste Potente along with some really nasty business about Obliviating people."

Harry asked her, "So what do you want to do?"

Hermione frowned, "What I really want to do is to call in the Aurors and let the Ministry sort it all out, but we don't dare do that now."

Harry asked again, "So what are you planning on doing?"

Hermione really frowned then. "I think we have to Oblivate all of them. We don't want them to remember us, at the least. And we don't want the innocent men to remember being kidnapped and used as slaves by a magical vampire and then freed by a group of teenaged wizards and witches on broomsticks. And I really don't want to release Bert and Nate on an unsuspecting London, given they had no qualms about working for vampires and demons. Merlin only knows how many deaths they're responsible for just in the last month or two."

Harry said, "How about... you Oblivate the innocent ones so they remember being kidnapped by crazy cultists and tied up here and forced to work as slave labor until the cultists all ran off."

Ginny asked, "What about the two other guys?"

Hermione said slowly, "Maybe... just maybe... I could Oblivate them and make them forget they like to commit crimes. Tell them to remember that they want to go straight after being trapped in here by crazy people."

Ginny asked, "Is that really any different than using an Imperius Curse on them?"

Hermione winced, "It feels almost as bad. But I don't know what else to do! I can't make them go confess their crimes, because what they've been doing lately is committing horrible crimes for a master vampire and an eldritch demon."

Harry said, "We sure don't want the Aurors to get wind of it, because then the Death Eaters would find out, and they'd probably just kill every one of them."

Ginny said, "It's a lot easier just staking completely evil vampires. No suckhouses, no vampires who make friends with famous authors, no demons who don't do anything more than play kitten poker." Harry and Hermione stopped and stared at her. "Sorry, I have no idea where that last bit came from."

Hermione said, "Probably one of your Slayer dreams, somehow."

Harry looked at her and murmured, "Yeah, it was a little odd. Just a little."

Ginny gave him a smile. She knew it was really weird. She was worried enough that she had the spirit of Sineya inside her. She didn't want to have the spirit of that little Valley Girl blonde in her too.

Harry finally said to Hermione, "Do it. We can't protect these guys if you don't. And I don't know what else to do with Burt and Nate. What I'd like to do is put them in Azkaban for fifty years, but that's impossible the way things are."

So Ginny went to work clearing the broken crates and equipment from the loading dock exit. Harry flew a broomstick around the warehouse and undid the colloportus charms Hermione had put on some of the outside doors. Then he took down all the shield charms.

Hermione took almost half an hour to do all the magic she needed to do. For each man, she first performed a really complicated Obliviation. Then she magically redid the ropes on each of them, so the ropes looked like they had been tied by a Muggle. After that, she put each of them to sleep.

When Hermione was done, she looked exhausted. She said, "There's only one thing left to do."

Ginny said, "Call the Muggle police."

Hermione said, "I'll call the fire department and report the trucks are burning. It's pretty obvious they were on fire pretty recently."

Harry said, "We need to make sure to get rid of any demons who aren't already turning into goo."

Hermione looked pretty frustrated that she forgot something. She said, "Okay, we run a quick check on that. Ginny, take the upstairs. Harry, around here and in the basement. I'll take a tour around the outside, since I know where we dropped all the guard teams."

It only took a couple minutes, and Ginny only had to deal with one demon. She transfigured it into a desk and left it where it lay.

They met up again down near the loading dock. Hermione checked, "Everything ready?"

Harry said, "I think so. How long before the men wake up?"

Hermione said, "Probably not for hours, without some medical intervention. Now wait here just a second." She handed Ginny her broom and disappeared.

In under a minute, Hermione was back. "I called the fire department from one of the throwaway cell phones I bought back in June. I made the call from two blocks away. When the police check on the call, they'll find it has a view of the loading dock, but not a good one."

"Can we go now?" Ginny asked.

The three of them apparated back to the campsite. Ginny apparated between the tent and the lakeshore. She was glad to get home. Then she wondered when this place had become home to her. Maybe anyplace that had Harry would be her home.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 18 Jul 2012 07:11:34 GMT  
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#### Chapter 77 Those Who Live in Tents

Ginny woke up the next morning feeling refreshed, even though she had stayed up until three o'clock on guard duty. She figured it was the least she could do, since she didn't need as much sleep as the others. Harry had taken the three to six shift, and then gone back to bed. Hermione had gotten up at six, made breakfast for everyone, and then stayed up for the rest of the day. Ginny thought that Harry was still better at making breakfast than Hermione was, but she didn't want to hurt Hermione's feelings.

As they ate breakfast, they planned out the day. Hermione wanted to keep moving, but she was willing to make camp there for a few days while Ron healed.

After breakfast, Ginny watched as Harry called Kreacher and gave him the good news that the Death Eaters would have to start all over on their army of dark creatures. She watched as Hermione told Ron all about their assault. She watched as Ron was so pleased and amazed that Hermione had remembered what he had said about K'vor'nek demons. Did Ron usually expect that no one really paid attention to what he said?

Hermione worked with them on non-verbal spells for seventh year Transfiguration and Charms. Ginny hated to admit it, but Ron was better than her, even with his bandaged-up shoulder. Hermione pointed out that Ron had a full year more experience with N.E.W.T.-level spellwork and non-verbal spells, so Ginny shouldn't feel bad.

Then Harry talked about DADA, which was always Ginny's favorite part of their lessons. He went over some sixth year defensive hexes, then some seventh year ones, and finally some defensive

hexes out of his books that Hermione said were post-graduate work, like if you were studying to be an Auror. Ginny didn't bother to ask how Hermione knew that.

Hermione and Ron knew all the sixth year hexes already, and Hermione knew one of the seventh year ones. Not that Hermione had any trouble with the others. But Harry was a good teacher, and he had Ginny and Ron both doing some of the really advanced spells by the end of his talk.

Then Ron sat in a chair Hermione had bespelled to tilt back like a lounge chair, and he gave his Care of Magical Creatures talk. This one was on more demons that Ginny might run into. Only Ron was talking about types of demons who probably weren't dangerous at all, and generally tried to blend in with humans. There were these demons called Brachen demons who could usually pass as human, and often took humans as mates, and their kids might not even know they were part-Brachen until they hit puberty or ran into something that caused their Brachen traits to appear. The pictures Ron had in the books were weird. One picture was completely normal, just a smiling guy with brown hair and cute eyes. The other picture was clearly the same guy, but his skin was green, he had little blue spines sticking out of his face, and his irises were red. He still didn't look like a demon. He looked like a guy going to a Halloween party as a demon... and not doing a very convincing job of it.

Then there were these things called Loose-Skinned Demons. Now that guy didn't look human. He looked like he was part Shar-Pei dog. But they didn't eat people. They ate powerful emotions. So they were likely to do weird stuff. According to Ron's book, there was one family of them that used to live in Wales a hundred years ago, and would walk around naked on the beaches just so people would feel incredibly embarrassed and then they could eat the emotions the people were radiating. But it was suspected the family was also eating kittens and puppies, and so a wizard from the Ministry had to go convince them to emigrate somewhere.

Hermione asked, "Where did they go?"

Ron shrugged, and winced in pain. "Dunno. The book doesn't say. Australia? America? India? Isn't like they're going to blend in anywhere they headed."

So Ron had come up with about two dozen species of demons that Ginny could probably ignore if she ever ran into them. It looked like his next couple lessons were going to be on them.

After that, it was Ginny's turn. She had used her hours of really boring guard duty last night to get in a lot of reading, so she was ready. So she talked about the Wizard-Goblin Accords of 1713 and 1478, and how some of the later clauses of the 1478 Accords might have been related to attacks on goblins by a Slayer. It certainly wasn't from a wizard, because the attacker was described as a girl with an axe, not a grown man in robes with a wand.

Then Hermione did a potions class in the tent's kitchen. Ginny noticed that the kitchen had a

Venti-Later over the stove and oven areas. She knew that could be useful. If there was an accident with the potions, the Venti-Later would suck up all the smoke and fumes, and then store it until the tent was collapsed, at which point it would dump the smoke outside the tent.

Naturally, since Hermione was doing the lesson, the potions went off perfectly. Once again, Harry and Hermione were both doing the same potion. This time, Hermione was following Snape's directions for the healing potion, while Harry followed the directions right out of the textbook. Once again, Snape's directions worked better, even though the textbook instructions came out okay.

Once the potion cooled, Hermione used her version on Ron's shoulder. Ron spent the whole time she was painting potion on his injury trying to talk her into swimming out and checking on the Horcruxes. Even Harry knew Ron just wanted Hermione to put on that tiny swimsuit and get it soaking wet and then walk around where Ron could watch.

Everyone worked on their assigned homework until Ginny fixed dinner. Then, over dinner, they talked about what they needed to do next.

Hermione said, "Well obviously, we need to keep studying and researching. And we need to keep checking for another build-up of vampires. V- I mean, Riddle isn't going to stop just because the Vampire slayer made a hash of his first plan."

Harry said, "We can camp as long as the weather isn't too awful, but we need to be doing something more useful than hiding. The diary and the ring are dead. We have the diadem and the locket. But we have to find the cup. It could be anywhere. Then we need to track down Riddle. He probably has the snake with him, so we'll have to plan for fighting off his Death Eaters and killing his snake and me getting a shot at dueling against him."

Ron said, "And there's one other thing. If we have all the Horcruxes, we don't have to destroy them right away. I know they make Ginny sick, but what if the snake's dead or locked up, and we have the cup and the locket and the diadem? When Harry stops Tommy, he won't be dead. But he won't be alive either. And we know what he'd do to come back like he did. We'd have as much time as we need to get the sword, or find somebody who can handle Fiendfyre, and then we could destroy the Horcruxes when we were ready. That'd polish him off while he's still a ghost."

"Less than a ghost," Harry said. "That's what he claimed."

Ginny said, "Ghosts are souls that haven't gone on. He was... what? A seventh of a soul? That's got to be worse. So if we can't find the cup, we can still go after Riddle and the snake. If we have to."

Hermione frowned, "But that's terribly risky! If we can find the cup, we really need to get it. And

we need to find a way to destroy Horcruxes!"

Ron said, "Hermione, I'm not saying you're wrong, but how are we going to find it? Dumbledore found the ring and where the locket was supposed to be, because he knew all about Riddle's early life. We know Tommy stole the cup after he was working for Borgin and Burkes for a while. He could have hidden it anywhere."

Hermione said, "He's been hiding them in places that have meaning for him. The ring was where his ancestors lived. His magical ancestors, anyway. His link to Salazar Slytherin. The locket was where he first did something really horrible to Muggles. The diary was with an old Pureblood family that he trusted. The diadem was in Hogwarts, which meant a lot to him. The snake is with him. The cup has to be somewhere that means magic and power to him. The manor of another really old Pureblood family. Hogsmeade. Diagon Alley or Knockturn Alley. Maybe even somewhere in the Ministry."

"I'm not going in there again," muttered Ron.

Harry said, "Maybe the cup could be hidden where he tried to triumph over a prophecy."

Hermione winced, "Your parents' house in Godric's Hollow? Oh, I don't know, Harry. Professor Dumbledore had to have looked through there."

Ron said, "Maybe. But we'll never know, because the old nutter never told Harry where he'd already searched. For all we know, that cup is in a castle in eastern Europe, or wherever Riddle spent all that time turning himself into Lord Vo-

"Ron!" squeaked Hermione fearfully.

Ron scowled. "I wasn't going to say the whole thing. I'm not stupid, you know."

"Oh Ron, I'm sorry, but... but I thought you were going to, and... and... I was worried." Hermione stopped talking and stared down at her plate.

Ginny could hear Hermione's heartbeat, and she knew Hermione had been frightened.

Ginny said, "Maybe we need to keep doing what we're doing. Hermione can keep doing research. I can try to have another Slayer dream. And Harry can see if he gets another vision from Riddle."

Harry muttered, "I'd rather get a kick in the face."

Hermione said to Ginny, "Maybe you should read chapters seven and eight in the Divination textbook, and then try the crystal ball I brought."

Ron looked gobsmacked. "Hermione? YOU brought a crystal ball along? I thought you thought Divination was rubbish!"

Hermione looked distinctly uncomfortable. "Well, I still think Trelawney is a right old fraud. Almost all the time. But Ginny had a real vision when she used a crystal ball in her O.W.L. tests. It was about Slayer things, but she's been getting Slayer dreams about Riddle and the Horcruxes too, so it's worth a try."

A/N: These demons are canon in the Buffyverse. Doyle was a Brachen demon (half-Brachen on his father's side, human on his mother's side) and Clem was a Loose-Skinned Demon.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 08:15:33 GMT  
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Chapter 78 Those Who Play the Lyre

A/N: Quotes are taken directly from chapter 33 of "Harry Potter and the Deadly Hallows" for reasons which should be pretty obvious once you've read them.

Ginny listened carefully. There was nothing unusual outside of the tent. The darkness held only local animals. Inside the tent, Ron was snuffling in his sleep while Hermione held his hand and whimpered in some sort of bad dream. Harry was snoring softly in his sleeping bag, making a sound Ginny found cute.

She sat just inside the tent, looking out through the tent flap and through Hermione's protective spellwork. She had been reading the chapters in the Divination textbook, and she thought maybe she was ready to try a crystal ball again. The last time had been... startling. And amazing. And horrible.

She focused again on the crystal ball before her. It seemed like fog was swirling heavily within the ball. She looked deeper into the crystal ball.

Suddenly it seemed as if she was falling into the thing, just like before.

She was standing in sight of Hogwarts. There was no one around. She turned around to check. And then she turned around again, just because she remembered what had happened in her big Slayer dream set in the desert.

The second time she turned, there was a guy sitting on a stool. He was playing an acoustic guitar. He looked like he was shorter than she was, and his hair was in a weird Muggle punker cut. Plus it was dyed a bright blue. And he was wearing a 'Weird Sisters' t-shirt.

He was a werewolf. She recognized the feeling from being around Remus Lupin. It was sunny here in her vision, but she knew it was really night back where her body was sitting, so she didn't know if he could change into a werewolf or not. She decided to keep a close watch on him, just in case.

He looked up from his guitar and said in a calm, American voice, "Good idea. These things can be... tense." He closed his eyes contentedly and played a little piece on his guitar. Dun-dun deedle-dun dee-dee-dah dun-dun deedle-dun dee-dah... She'd never heard it before, but it was melodic and moving. She wondered if it was a Muggle musical number that Hermione might know.

He looked up again and tersely said, "Tara couldn't make it. And we need to book." He held out his hand, and she took it, even though she didn't understand his words.

The world shifted. They were in a small city park. The blue-haired guitarist didn't say a word. He just pointed at the children over by the bushes. A stringy-haired, sallow-skinned boy with a hook nose and a wizard's robe that was far too big for him sat and talked with a pretty, green-eyed redhead while a horse-faced brunette angrily stood nearby. Ginny knew instantly who the boy was, and then it hit her who the two girls had to be.

And that was impossible. Snape as a boy, talking with Harry's mum as a little girl? Harry's mean old aunt watching a witch and a wizard? She turned to ask the blue-haired werewolf if this was real.

Instantly, they were somewhere else. A rocky mountainside. Snape faced Dumbledore. Ginny had never seen Snape look so desperate. "Please, you have to save her! The Dark Lord thinks the prophecy's about her and her baby, and he's going to kill her too! I did everything I could, but he wouldn't listen to me!"

Dumbledore's voice rang with disgust. "You don't care about the deaths of the husband and the child? They can die, as long as you get what you want?"

Snape looked like he was in agony. "Hide them all, then. Keep her - them - safe. Please!"

Dumbledore asked, "And what will you give me in return?"

"In return?" Snape finally said, "Anything. Absolutely anything you want."

The guitarist took her hand again, and the scenery jumped. They were in the headmaster's office, looking at the same two men. Snape looked like he just wished he could die. Dumbledore looked deadly serious.

Dumbledore said, "The Dark Lord will return, and when he does, Harry Potter will be in terrible danger. He will need protection."

Snape slowly regained control of himself. The anguish still rolled off of him. "I'll do it. But never tell. I couldn't bear it if... especially Potter's son..."

Dumbledore sighed, "My word that I'll never reveal the best of you? If you insist..."

The guitarist took her hand once more, and the world blurred, only to reform in the same room, with the same two men, both older.

After Snape ranted about the new boy while Dumbledore pretended to devote himself to reading a journal, Dumbledore looked up and said, "Keep an eye on Quirrell, won't you?"

She was expecting the guitarist to take her hand again, so she wasn't surprised when the world blurred around her. They were in the entrance hall of Hogwarts, and the Yule Ball was closing down all around them.

Snape muttered, "Karkaroff's mark is becoming darker too. He intends to flee if the Mark burns."

Dumbledore asked, "And are you tempted to join him?"

Snape said, "No, I am not such a coward."

Dumbledore agreed, "No, you are a braver man by far than Igor Karkaroff. You know, I sometimes think we Sort too soon..."

He walked off, leaving Snape looking horrified.

Ginny instinctively put her hand out just as the guitarist reached for it. And everything blurred once more, returning them to the headmaster's office.

Dumbledore looked horrible, and he was looking at his blackened, ruined hand. He casually asked, "You have done very well. How long do you think I have?"

Snape finally said, "I cannot tell. Maybe a year. At most. There is no halting such a curse forever."

Dumbledore smiled, as if Snape had told him something that didn't matter. "I am fortunate, extremely fortunate, that I have you, Severus. This makes matters so much more straightforward. I refer, of course, to Lord Voldemort's plan to have the poor Malfoy boy murder me."

Snape sat down and scowled. "The Dark Lord does not expect Draco to succeed. This is merely punishment for Lucius' recent failures."

The scene seemed to jump ahead, like a Muggle VCR on fast forward.

Dumbledore said, "If the school does fall into his grasp, I have your word that you will do all in your power to protect the students of Hogwarts?" Snape nodded stiffly. "Good. Now there is only one thing to be done to save Draco from Lord Voldemort's wrath."

Snape asked sardonically, "Are you intending to let him kill you?"

Dumbledore smiled smugly. "Certainly not. You must kill me. Draco's soul is not so damaged that I would have it ripped apart on my account."

"And my soul, Dumbledore?"

Dumbledore said, "You alone know whether it will harm your soul to save a young man and help an old one avoid pain and humiliation."

Ginny reached out as the guitarist moved, and they clasped hands. Everything blurred, and they were in the headmaster's office, only one with a portrait of Dumbledore on the wall and Snape talking to it.

The portrait insisted, "You will have to give Voldemort the correct date of Harry's departure from his aunt and uncle's house. Not to do so will raise suspicion when Voldemort believes you so well informed. However, you must plant the idea of decoys within the Order. That, I think, will ensure Harry's safety. Confund Mundungus Fletcher. And Severus, if you are forced to take part in the chase, be sure to act your part convincingly. I am counting on you to remain in Lord Voldemort's good books as long as possible, or Hogwarts will be left to the mercy of the Carrows."

The guitarist clasped her hand, and everything blurred. Things kept blurring, as they were flying through the air right behind Snape on a broomstick. Everything was confusion, with Death Eaters

and Order members flying insanely all around. Ahead was Lupin on a broom, with a Harry who was really George Weasley.

A Death Eater swooped through the air to pass in front of Snape. The hooded man pointed his wand directly at Lupin's back.

"Sectumsempra!" shouted Snape.

But the Death Eater swerved, as did Lupin, and the curse missed the Death Eater's hand to catch the fake Harry in the side of the head.

Everything blurred again, and then Ginny instantly recognized that they were in Sirius' old bedroom.

Snape was reading the letter from Lily. Tears were streaming down his face and dripping from his nose. He took the second page of the letter the part that plainly said 'Lots of love, Lily' and tucked it inside his robes over his heart. Then he took the photo and ripped off the side with Lily's laughing face. He dropped the rest of the picture and left.

The guitarist took her hand once again, and they were back to the beginning, outside Hogwarts. The young man was playing his guitar again. He was back to the same haunting melody. He really was good.

He looked up at her and said, "Stop. Hammertime." Whatever that was supposed to mean.

She blinked, and she was sitting in the tent, staring into the crystal ball. She scrambled for her Quick Quotes Quill.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 17:41:36 GMT  
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Chapter 79 All Kinds of Bronze

Ginny insisted on making breakfast, and she insisted on everyone eating at the kitchen table. Ron insisted he was well enough to do it, even if he could only use one arm to eat with.

While they ate, Ginny went over everything she had seen in her vision. Snape allying himself with Dumbledore to save his childhood friend Lily. Snape insisting on Dumbledore never revealing that he was going to protect Harry. Snape swearing to protect the students of Hogwarts if Voldemort took over. Snape killing Dumbledore on Dumbledore's own orders. Snape hitting George by accident. All of it that she could remember.

Ron fumed at her, "Snape? Trying to save George? You have gone mental."

Hermione patiently insisted, "Ron, she wouldn't have a Slayer dream about it unless it was real, and it was important."

Ron replied, "I said that about the Deathstick and the invisibility cloak and the stone, and you said I was barking."

"Sorry."

Ron bulled on, "So what's so important about that oily git?"

Harry gritted his teeth and said, "If Ginny's Slayer dream is right, then Snape is still working for Dumbledore, and is out to get Riddle. So he's never going to let them into Grimmauld Place. Or tell them anything he knows if it will really help them."

Ginny said, "I told you what I heard when I was going up to the headmaster's office, right?" She received three nods. "So... maybe Snape was trying to help me. Maybe he was trying to keep me out of trouble. Maybe he knew I was going to go back to Harry."

Hermione said, "Dumbledore would certainly expect it, and if Snape has Dumbledore's portrait as an advisor, then he might have a good idea you're not lost in the Chamber of Secrets."

Ginny said, "What I want to know is what 'stop hammer time' is supposed to mean."

Hermione said, "I don't know, but maybe we should move to a new hideout, just to be safe. Maybe it was a warning of some kind."

Ron groaned, "Well, I think I'm good. Moving to a new campsite won't be that much."

Hermione said, "And we'll need to take the Horcruxes." Ginny winced. "I know you hate being around them, but it's just for a little bit. And we can keep them as far away from you as we can."

Ron said, "Tell you what. Hermione and Harry can swim down to get the things, and you can give me a hand folding up the tent. Then Hermione can apparate to the new place with Harry and the Horcruxes, then Harry comes back for us while Hermione buries the things well away from you."

Ginny nodded.

Hermione pursed her lips and said, "And so I end up walking around in that swimsuit with no place to change until we get the tent set back up, I suppose."

Ron looked dreamily at the ceiling. "Ooh, I like that idea..."

Hermione smacked him on his good arm. She turned back to Harry and said, "I've been thinking..."

Ron couldn't rub where Hermione hit him, so he said, "Well, that's a surprise."

Hermione pretended to ignore him. She said, "Ginny's vision explains most everything. Why Dumbledore trusted Snape. Why Snape hasn't led Death Eaters into Number 12 Grimmauld Place. Why V- I mean, Riddle still trusts Snape enough to make him headmaster. Why Snape saved Dumbledore at the start of last year, and killed him at the end, because that was the part that never made any sense at all to me. If Snape was a spy for Riddle, why didn't he just let Dumbledore die from the curse on the ring? That would have been so much easier and simpler, and would have solved most of V- I mean Riddle's problems right there."

Ron said, "So this is another power the Dim Lord knows not? He couldn't figure out that Snape cared enough for Harry's mum that he might be pissed if Riddle snuffed her?"

Harry said, "I think it's more this is something he just doesn't care about. He doesn't even know what love is. He's never had anybody love him. He's never loved anybody. He's never spent time with people who really love each other. The only thing he did with his dad and his dad's family was kill them. All he cares about is himself and living forever."

"And power. And getting to hurt people," Ron added. "If all he cared about was living forever, he'd be off in a castle somewhere studying, like Nicholas Flamel."

Hermione nodded. "If I was obsessed about immortality, I'd want to be young forever, not a monstrosity like Riddle is now. I would have gone and studied under Monsieur Flamel. Dumbledore worked with him, you know."

"Yeah, but that's Dumbledore," Ron argued. "You'd be smart enough to work with Nicholas Flamel. But maybe Riddle wasn't. Or he was too crazy."

Harry said, "No, Riddle was really smooth. He could have talked Flamel into it if he really wanted. No one back then knew he was a complete lunatic. Dumbledore was the only one who ever was suspicious, and that might have been from being the one who had to deal with Riddle at the

orphanage. The headmaster back then loved Riddle. Made him Head Boy. Slughorn thought he was hot stuff. Riddle just wanted to hurt people instead of spending time learning about the Philosopher's Stone."

Hermione put the dishes in the sink and cast a Washing Charm. Then she said, "I'll go get the Horcruxes. With Harry, so Ginny doesn't have to be near them. Then I'll bury them far enough away they won't bother Ginny. Then I'll get dressed and then we'll collapse the tent and move."

Ron said, "You don't have to get dressed on my account." But he moved to the side so she couldn't reach over and smack him.

"Hmph!" Hermione snapped as she marched off to the girls' bedroom to change.

Harry ducked into the boys' bedroom and came out a minute later in a pair of trousers, with a robe wrapped around him. Ginny thought he looked just fine without the robe. Hermione came out of her room a couple minutes later, covered with her robe and wearing her sandals. Ginny could tell that Hermione spent a couple extra minutes on her hair.

They walked down to the lake's edge. Harry gave his robe to Ginny, and Hermione slowly peeled her robe off to hand it to Ron. Ron stopped being able to speak. He gaped at Hermione and moved his jaw, but no sounds came out.

Hermione and Harry stepped into the lake, and once the water was up to their shoulders they both did Bubblehead Charms and swam under the water.

The two of them were only gone a few minutes before they surfaced again. As Hermione slowly walked out of the lake, the water dripping off her swimsuit, Ron began gurgling again. Ginny wasn't paying a lot of attention to Ron, because, well, Harry.

Then the ugliness of the Horcruxes hit her, and she had to retreat. She handed Harry's robe to Ron, and she moved back toward the tent. Once the Horcruxes came toward the tent, Ginny moved a hundred feet away in the woods.

It only took Hermione ten minutes to dry off and change clothes. It took her half that to pack up the tent and collapse it. It took her ten seconds to slide the entire collapsed tent into her pouch. She announced, "I'll take Harry. We'll both come back to get you two. Harry will take Ginny to a spot a good hundred feet away, and then we'll take care of the Horcruxes before we set up the tent and cast the protective spells. That ought to make Ginny feel better."

With that, she took Harry by the arm and disappeared.

## Chapter 80 And Iron Tools

It all worked just as smoothly as Hermione said. Harry apparated back with a crack, took Ginny by the arm, and apparated to the new campsite. By the time they got there, Hermione had Ron by the arm, and was pacing off about a hundred feet to bury the Horcruxes.

Hermione and Ron walked over to where Hermione wanted to set up camp. Harry and Ginny joined them. As Hermione pulled the tent out of the pouch, Ginny asked, "Where are we?"

Hermione smiled a little. "The Forest of Dean. My mum and dad took me camping here a couple times. This was our favorite camping spot in the whole forest. But we had to do it the Muggle way. We walked in with all our gear, we set up a tiny tent that was as small on the inside as the outside, we made a fire on the ground to cook with, and if you got wet, there wasn't an easy way to dry off again."

Ron looked at the tent as Hermione magically put it up. He asked in amazement, "The three of you? In something that tiny? Could you even get three sleeping bags inside it?"

Hermione admitted, "It was really cramped. And a lot more primitive than what we're doing now."

Ron winced at the idea. "You mean... sleeping in sleeping bags on the ground? In the rain? And cooking over a fire with no magic? And Muggles do that for fun?"

Harry said, "Some Muggles. My aunt and uncle wouldn't camp out like that if you threatened to turn Dudley into a pig."

Hermione pouted a little. "I thought it was fun. And I got to spend lots of time with my parents. And mum taught me all kinds of things about botany."

"Isn't that Muggle herbology?" Ginny asked.

Hermione nodded and started setting up all the protective spells around the tent area. While Hermione did that, Harry and Ginny did a short patrol in a circle around the campsite, just to see if there was anything dangerous out there. Ginny didn't get even the faintest hint of a dark creature, except when they passed by the spot where the Horcruxes were buried. They did have a lovely walk together through the forest, listening to the birds and looking at the little ponds and streams that were nearby. And Ginny did get the faint scent of some little animals who were probably trying hard to get away from her.

Harry said, "Imagine having to haul the water from the stream here back to the camp, then boil it so it's safe to drink, then cook with it over a campfire you had to build by hand, then sleep in an overcrowded tent you had to haul in on your back."

Ginny cringed. "And why is this fun?"

He shrugged. "I don't know. I never got to try it the Muggle way. And it's great getting to spend time with you, but knowing we might get attacked by Death Eaters at any second kind of takes a lot of the fun out of it."

Ginny wondered what it would be like to camp with an eight year old Hermione. She would probably be very well behaved, but she would probably be asking questions non-stop. Why are all the plants green? Why do the trees have bark on the bottom parts? How do plant roots work? Why do mushrooms grow in the shade? How do birds know how to build nests?

At least with the Weasleys the questions had been simpler. Mum, can you make Fred stop it? Mum, can you make George stop it? Mum, can you make Fred and George stop it? Mum, why did Fred and George put all that mud down Percy's shirt?

She held Harry's hand and forgot all about that stuff for a while.

Once everyone was happy about how things were arranged inside the tent, Hermione wanted to hold lessons. Charms was all about household spells, which Ginny was the best at by a mile. Ron didn't know much about the cleaning spells except the two he had learned so he could do his part of the chores around the Burrow. Lunch was all about cooking spells, which was also Ginny's strong suit. Even Hermione didn't know a ton of cooking spells. Ginny just got in a lot of practice at doing the spells silently. Then Ron did his talk about demons while they ate lunch, and Harry did his talk about DADA while Hermione and Ginny cleaned up and put food away. After lunch, Hermione did a Potions lesson while they were still in the kitchen area.

They ended up doing the Transfiguration lesson at the kitchen table too. It was a combined sixth year and seventh year lesson. And it was immensely frustrating for Ginny. Even Ron could do half of it. By the end of the lesson, Ginny was just beginning to get the sixth year part, while Harry had even the advanced part done and Ron had the seventh year lesson partly complete. She talked Harry into staying with her at the table and working on the transfiguration for another few hours.

By the time they stopped, it was nearly time to start on dinner. And Ron was doing better. Hermione had gotten up the nerve to try a really powerful healing spell along with the potion she had brewed up, and Ron was moving his arm about. He still had a hideous scar on his left shoulder, but it was a big improvement over hardly being able to move his left arm at all. Ginny

even gave him a hug. She gave Hermione a hug too and thanked her.

After dark, Hermione insisted they take watches as usual. Harry took the first watch, which was going to last until Ginny took over at ten, followed by short watches by Ron and then Hermione, which would get them through the morning dawn.

Ginny was lying on her cot reading a really boring book about early European giant wars. How could a book with wars between wizards and giants be boring? It ought to be full of adventure and bravery and battles and scheming. No, it was as dull as if Professor Binns wrote it.

She could hear Ron trying to talk Hermione into next going somewhere Hermione could wear that swimsuit a lot, like the southern coast of France. She could hear Harry standing up and walking out of the tent.

Then suddenly Harry's huge stag Patronus was barging into the bedroom. "Ginny, there's a doe patronus out here! I'm going to follow it. But it may be a trap."

"Of course it's a trap!" she squawked. The Patronus vanished, leaving her talking to the walls.

She sprinted out of the bedroom and yelled into Ron's room, "Emergency! Harry's out chasing after a doe Patronus!"

Ron and Hermione scrambled after her, but she was already out of the tent and running. Well off to her left, far into the trees, was a tiny light. Harry's lumos spell, unless this was a trap specifically for her. But it would have to be set by someone who knew she was the Vampire Slayer, because it was too faint for a normal person to see at night, especially after running out of a well-lit tent.

She sprinted almost silently through the trees. She reached a small clearing just in time to see Harry nearly naked and jumping into a small pond. What on earth was he doing? Was he Confunded?

He vanished under the water, and suddenly the surface of the pond froze over. Harry was trapped under a layer of ice. She looked around, but there was no one nearby. She couldn't hear or smell anyone hiding under an invisibility cloak or lurking behind a Disillusionment Charm. Maybe it was a carefully-laid trap and the person was long gone.

She pulled out a battleaxe and leapt into the air. She came down blade first and shattered all the ice within three feet of the impact. She hit some unbroken ice with her shins and tipped face-first into the water.

Harry was down there, a Bubblehead Charm over his head, his wand glowing in his right hand...

and the Sword of Godric Gryffindor in his left hand.

He shoved the tip of the sword through the ice and cut into the broken area she had just created. Then he gestured for her to go up first. She would have said no, but she was under water. With hardly any air, since she hadn't taken a deep breath before she attacked the ice. And she was the one without the Bubblehead Charm.

She clambered onto the breaking ice and pulled herself and her axe over to the edge. Harry came up out of the water, and she reached behind her to pull him out of the hole in the ice.

They stepped onto dry land just as Hermione and Ron came running up.

Harry looked at her and asked, "Ginny! What were you thinking?"

She fumed, "I was thinking you were trapped under a layer of ice and drowning! IN A TRAP!"

Ron ran up and stopped dead. "Blimey, the Sword of Gryffindor? Is it the real thing?"

Hermione ran up and stopped next to Ron. "Harry! How did you get it?"

Harry explained, "The doe Patronus walked around, so I followed it."

Ginny interrupted, "Why would you follow a doe Patronus?"

Hermione said, "The only doe Patronus we know about was Lily Potter's."

"Oh."

Harry went on, "It led me to the pond. I could see the sword on the bottom there, glowing. I figured it might not be so easy to get it, because normally Gryffindors have to be doing something risky to get it, so I took off my shirt and trousers and shoes and socks, did the Bubblehead Charm just in case, and went in after it. It was stuck to the bottom, so I had to do a silent finite incantatem to release it. And while I was doing that, some kind of spell hit the pond and the top froze over. And then Ginny leapt in with an axe, screaming like a banshee."

"I wasn't screaming!" Ginny insisted angrily.

"You were screaming 'Harry' and it was pretty loud," Ron said.

"I heard you too, and I was way behind Ron," agreed Hermione.

Ginny tried not to sulk as she admitted that maybe - just maybe - they were right.

As she and Harry did Drying Charms on each other and Harry got dressed, Hermione asked, "But how did anyone know where we were? No one but me even knew where we were heading until after I brought Harry here. And I've been checking to make sure we don't have any Tracing Charms on us." She took a deep breath and said, "We have a mole among us."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 01 Aug 2012 06:55:46 GMT  
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Chapter 81 Listen to What I Say

"We have a mole among us."

"Not a chance," insisted Ron.

Hermione sighed, "We do. And it's my fault. I had the pouch open when I told Ginny where we were. Phineas Nigellus Black could have heard me."

Harry said, "And he has a portrait in the headmaster's office."

Ron said, "So he could have told Snape."

Ginny asked, "But the doe Patronus?"

Hermione stopped and thought for a second. "Remember when Tonks fell in love with Remus and she was so miserable, and her Patronus changed to match his?"

Harry gasped in horror. "Snape? Snape's Patronus changed to match my mum's? I think I'm going to be sick."

Hermione said, "I think so. Phineas Nigellus Black couldn't have told anybody else except Snape. Or one of the other portraits. And we know Snape's still working for Dumbledore. And we know Dumbledore wanted to give you the sword. And we know the doe Patronus couldn't be anyone else in the Order, because we know everyone else's."

Ginny pointed out, "Anyone in the Order could have just showed up and given Harry the sword. Snape's the only one Harry would be likely to attack on sight."

Ron muttered darkly, "Not counting Mundungus Fletcher."

Hermione said, "Mundungus can't cast a Patronus, anyway. I found out before fifth year when Harry was attacked by the two dementors and everyone at Number 12 Grimmauld Place was talking about defending the Order of the Phoenix."

Ron said, "Okay. So Snape is still helping Dumbledore. And Harry. Even if he's an oily git who holds a grudge like nobody's business. What's next, Bellatrix Lestrange is really a Muggle superhero?"

Harry put his hand on Ginny's shoulder and grinned, "I think we know who the superhero is around here."

The next morning, Hermione wanted to delay classwork to do something more important. Ginny grinned excitedly, because she knew exactly what Hermione was going to want to do. After a quick breakfast, Hermione performed a few spells on the sword to verify it was the real sword. Then she dug up the two Horcruxes.

Harry offered Ginny the Sword of Gryffindor, but Ginny hastily waved her hands no. "I don't want to be anywhere near those things! You kill them."

So Harry offered the sword to Ron. Hermione put the locket on a tree stump, and Ron stepped forward.

Harry made a hair-raising snake-like noise that was part hiss and part snarl and part spit. The locket snapped open.

Ginny was maybe eighty feet away, facing Ron, but she could hear the locket hiss. "Ronald Bilius Weasley. Least loved always by the mother who craved a daughter... Least loved now by the girl who prefers your friend... Second best always, eternally overshadowed..."

"Ron, stab it!" yelled Harry.

"KILL IT!" screamed Ginny.

Darkness exploded out of the locket and two shimmering figures stepped forth. A glimmering Harry and a glacially gorgeous Hermione. They looked down on Ron. The perfect, beautiful locket-Hermione spoke in a sneer. "Who would ever look at you beside the great Harry Potter? What are you, compared to The Boy Who Lived? What woman would want you, you are nothing, nothing compared to him." And then the locket-Hermione was kissing the locket-Harry, and they

were groping each other, and...

"KILL IT!" screamed Ginny.

"Don't listen to it!" yelled Hermione.

"Stab it! Ron, stab it now!" hollered Harry.

Ginny watched in horror as scarlet began to bloom in Ron's eyes.

Ron stabbed down with the sword, and the tip plunged right into the center of the locket. There was a horrible scream from the thing, and then the illusions were gone as if they had never been there. Ron sank to his knees and looked like he was only holding himself up by gripping the pommel of the sword.

Hermione burst into tears. "Ron! How could you? I... You... How could you not trust me?"

Ron pushed himself off the ground and stormed off. Harry was standing there horror-struck, and Hermione was kneeling on the grass sobbing with her face in her hands. Ginny figured she had better go keep an eye on her brother.

Sure, he was an annoying git a lot of the time, but didn't Hermione know how much it stunk being the last kids in a big family? You were always compared against the older kids. "Oh Ron isn't as good at Quidditch as Charlie." "Oh Ron isn't as smart or as studious as Percy." "Oh Ron isn't as handsome and outgoing as Bill." "Oh Ron isn't as funny or as entertaining or as popular as the twins." She'd heard all of that, and more. She'd dodged a lot of it by being the only daughter, but she'd had to fight against it for her whole life as well. She'd gone through plenty of it at Hogwarts. "Oh, you're Percy's little sister." "Oh, you're Fred and George's little sister." Ugh. At least she was her own person, and the best in her class at something. But Ron had to end up with two people who once again completely overshadowed him: The Boy Who Lived and the smartest witch in decades. And then Harry turned out to be the best Seeker in ages, and a hero who was powerful enough to win the Tri-Wizard Cup and duel Lord Voldemort. How could you possibly compare to that? And Ron had the Weasley temper, too. Well, the Prewett temper, since they all knew it came from mum.

She followed along in the direction he had run, and she finally picked up his scent. He was covered in sweat. She slipped up on Ron where he sat on a log by a creek.

After ten seconds or so, he groaned, "You can come on out, you don't need to follow the loser around to make sure he doesn't get eaten by pixies or something."

She stepped forward, "How did you know I was there?" She was sure she had been too quiet for

him to hear.

"I didn't. I just figured Harry would send you after me to keep an eye on me. And if you weren't there, no one would know I was talking to thin air."

She said, "He didn't. Hermione didn't. I just... did it."

He didn't look up. He just muttered, "Well, you can tell them I'm fine. I'm a bad friend, and a bad boyfriend, and I've got all the maturity of a four year old, and... All I ever wanted was to stand out. Not to be just one more bloody rugrat in the family. To be better at something than... somebody. The bloody thing knew just where to hit me."

She sat down next to him. She admitted, "You know, I'm the same way. You show it by being all jealous. I show it by being a brat. I don't deserve him."

Ron rubbed his face with his hands. "You do. I mean, I hate seeing you dating guys and kissing them and... stuff. I know, it's stupid, you're sixteen, you'll be seventeen in no time, but dad always told me to look out for you, and I can't shake it. And I've never seen Harry so happy. You're the one who makes him happy, so you do deserve him."

She sighed. "For a long time, I had the worst crush ever on him."

He smirked a little, "Yeah, the whole house knew. It was all mum could do to keep Fred and George from singing the song they wrote about it right in front of Harry."

She covered her face and groaned. "Those two. They're just lucky I couldn't throw them across the garden back then."

Ron said, "Sometimes I'd like to strangle them. They went out of their way to pick on me my whole life, and then I find out they've been teaching you spells, and showing you how to pick a lock, and all the other things I would have given my right arm for them to do with me."

She said, "So I talked with Hermione when I was a firstie, and she told me I should date other boys until I could talk to Harry without turning into a drooling idiot. It took me about three years to figure out she tricked me. She's been guarding Harry from the Romilda Vanes of the school for six years now. Did you know Daphne Greengrass was plotting to get Harry drunk and have sex with him and blackmail him into marriage?"

"Bloody hell!" Ron yelled. "How the..."

"Girls talk too, Ron." She said, "Maybe they talk more than guys do, just differently. You have no idea how many girls at school have talked about getting with The Boy Who Lived. Some of them

just wanted to be able to say they dated him. Or slept with him. Plenty of girls were just crushing on him, like he was one of those Muggle movie stars. Don't tell anyone, but the Creeveys have a huge sideline in photos of Harry. And then there are the girls who know he's the head of the House of Potter now he's seventeen, and they just want some of that treasure. There's supposed to be a lot of galleons in some Potter family vaults, and several estates in the family, even if Death Eaters blew up most of the family houses."

"Bleeding..." He sighed, "I must be incredibly stupid too, because when I think about it, Harry always had pocket money after he got to Gringotts, and I never even thought about that."

A/N: On Sunday, it's the diadem. And it's Hermione's turn.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 05 Aug 2012 07:16:36 GMT  
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Chapter 82 I have Killed a Man

Ginny rubbed Ron's shoulder. "No, it's because you're a good friend. Most of the time. I think if you weren't Hermione would have found a way to keep you away from Harry too, instead of always trying to get you two back together after you had an argument."

"Always?" he frowned. "Really, just the one big one in fourth year. I was so mad at him. Hermione thinks maybe Moody - I mean Crouch - was doing spells on her and me, to keep Harry isolated so he could work on him easier. I really wish I could believe that, because I was a complete arse about it. It wasn't until the first test, when I saw how scared Harry was, and how much he wished he didn't have to go through with it, that I finally got that he really hadn't done it. Me? All I ever wanted was fame and being Mister Important. All Harry ever wanted was to be normal and not famous and not burdened with all this shite. I couldn't see past my own feelings. I really suck as a friend."

"Ron, I think you're allowed one big argument in six years," she teased.

He sighed, "And look at me and Hermione. I don't deserve her. She's incredibly pretty, and really motivated, and the smartest person I ever met, and she could do so much better than me. She could have any guy she wants."

Ginny said, "I know you see her like that, but she's not perfect. That... that vision of her from the

Horcrux. That's really how you see her, isn't it?" He just nodded miserably. "Then why don't you tell her?"

"And have her laugh in my face? Or scream at me about how stupid I am? Again? No thanks."

She hugged her brother, even though she wasn't sure that he didn't need a good smack on the head instead.

When Ron finally felt up to walking back to the campsite, she found Harry and Hermione staring intently at the diadem, which was now on the stump. The ruined locket was on the ground, its inner lining still burnt and smoking.

Hermione nervously said, "I'm going to do it this time."

Ron cringed, "Well, we all found out I'm a lousy choice."

"It's not that," Harry said loyally. "We talked it over, and Hermione thinks I have even more areas the Horcrux could attack. And we already know Ginny tends to go... sort of feral around them."

"You mean I turned into a mad cavewoman," Ginny frowned.

"That's not what he said," Hermione insisted. "Besides, we all know what the boggart turned into when I faced it third year."

Ginny knew that one. Her second year, when Professor Lupin was teaching Defense Against the Dark Arts. Most of Gryffindor House knew that Hermione had done really well on the final until she had to face the boggart. It had turned into Professor McGonagall and told her she failed all her courses. Nobody else in the whole school found that scary.

Hermione raised the sword and stepped up to the stump.

The diadem reacted. "Hermione Jane Granger. I know what you are. What you want." Black smoke poured out of the center of the diadem, and out of the smoke stepped... Hermione Granger. Hermione as an ugly first-year with horrid bushy hair and big buck teeth.

And suddenly Ginny remembered all the stories. The girl who had no friends, and who, when she overheard Ron saying so, went and hid in the girls' toilet for hours. The girl who only gained Ron and Harry as friends because they saved her from a mountain troll and she lied to protect them. The girl who even teachers thought was a pushy know-it-all. Ginny screamed, "KILL IT! QUICK!"

"You are exactly like me. You want power. You want knowledge. You know you'll never have real friends or loved ones. You know you're ugly and bossy and pushy. You know you're far

smarter than everyone around you, and they all resent you for it."

"Don't listen to it!" Ron shrieked.

The locket-Hermione pointed at the real Hermione. "You know you're wrong about this quest. You know you're not going to be smart enough to figure out everything you need to figure out. You know you'll never find the last Horcrux. You know your arrogance and stupidity are going to get all your friends killed. Horribly killed."

"Stab it!" Harry yelled. "Just stab it!"

The locket-Hermione said, "You know the truth. You're too smug and self-righteous and intellectual to keep any friends, except the two boys who need your brains to stay alive. You know they'll drop you if you succeed. You know they'll be dead if you fail. So you have no hope of having anyone once this is over."

"Hermione!" screamed Ron.

The locket-Hermione said, "All you can do is... take up the Horcrux. Bond with me. Work with me. Take what you want. What you know you deserve. There is no right and wrong, only those powerful enough to take what they want, and those who aren't."

Hermione suddenly screamed, "SHUT UP!" and hacked at it madly. The first blow missed the diadem. The second blow sliced cleanly through one side, destroying the image and making the smoke vanish. Hermione kept hacking at it. The third and fourth blows destroyed the diadem. The fifth blow missed the treasure and buried the tip of the sword so deeply in the stump that all of Hermione's struggles couldn't free it.

Hermione lost her grip on the sword and sank to her knees sobbing. Ron ran over and knelt beside her. He just held her for a long time, while she cried helplessly.

Harry walked over and asked Ginny, "Are you all right?"

She let him hug her, and she rested her head on his shoulder. "Mostly. Poor Ron. And poor Hermione. Are all the Horcruxes going to be this awful to kill?"

Harry sighed and nodded his head against hers. "Yeah. Probably. The diary nearly got both of us, remember? The ring got Dumbledore. And he had the sword with him, and knew what to do. And the snake's going to be deadly even without a Horcrux in it."

She hugged him and said, "But this time you have a Vampire Slayer along to fight monsters. I can kill a snake. Even a big snake."

Harry said, "We need to check and see if there are big demon snakes. That may be what Nagini is."

"Ooh, more research for Ron. He'll be so excited," teased Ginny.

Harry said, "And we still have to figure out where the cup is. Or else I have to see Riddle going for it."

Ginny said, "Maybe I'll get another Slayer dream. It worked for the diadem."

"Maybe."

She said, "I think we need to give the two of them some time together."

"That's a good idea," he agreed. "I think I'm going to insist I need to go check around Godric's Hollow."

She smiled at his attempt at being sneaky. He really wasn't very good at it. She knew he'd wanted to go there for months. She said, "And I'll need to go with you. For protection. And for hunting any Horcruxes."

He gave her hand a squeeze. Then he led her back to where Hermione was now sitting in Ron's lap weeping with her face buried in Ron's shirt, and trying not to hiccup.

Harry said, "I think this is a good time for a daytrip. It will give you two a chance to talk in private. I'll take Ginny so you don't have to worry about Slayer hearing." Ginny slapped him on the arm, maybe a little harder than she meant to. "Ouch! Anyway, I'm going to go to Godric's Hollow. Ginny can spot a Horcrux if there's one in the Potter house, or anywhere else we check."

Red-eyed and sniffing, Hermione looked up from Ron's shirt. "Y-you need to go in disguise. A-and be careful."

Ron said, "We'll have a chat here, and we'll be waiting for you when you get back. Maybe you could take Ginny to lunch at a nice Muggle restaurant, see the sights, that sort of thing. Just remember there's probably Death Eaters watching your mum and dad's old house, and maybe the Dumbledores' old house, and anyplace that would make sense for you to go hunt through."

Ginny said, "We'll leave the sword here. I've got plenty of weapons on me. And I think we should try to kill these things all of us together, instead of one at a time, because they're dangerous."

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## Chapter 83 Avenged Sevenfold

Harry did a Disguising Charm on his glasses, then one on himself. When he was done, he looked like a young London businessman in a suit and tie. He looked like he had short light-brown hair and brown eyes behind Muggle spectacles. He looked like one more Muggle. It was a really nice bit of magic.

Ginny said, "I'd never spot you in a million years!"

He smiled, "I just concentrated on one of our neighbors back in Little Whinging. I can probably act like him too if I make an effort. Uncle Vernon called him 'the swotty little ponce' when Aunt Petunia wasn't around."

So Ginny, with a lot of help from Harry, transfigured her clothes into a cute business suit with a skirt and low heels, so she matched Harry's appearance. Then she had to deal with the part she couldn't transfigure: herself. She put on the blonde wig and let Hermione do a Styling Charm so it looked nice. She put on too much makeup, so she looked nothing like Ginny Weasley. And she added a pair of thick-rimmed fake glasses. Hermione also had a handbag for her that looked like a briefcase.

In his poshest tones, Harry looked at her and said, "You look charming, my dear. Shall we?"

She took his arm. He tossed his invisibility cloak over the two of them, and they both crouched down enough that their lower legs weren't showing. Then they disappeared.

As soon as they apparated onto a side street of Godric's Hollow, they looked around for anyone who might have heard them. Or seen them, since the cloak was really only big enough for one adult, and their feet were probably showing.

When Harry was sure they were alone, he whipped off the cloak and let Ginny stuff it into her wrist bracelet. Then he looked Ginny over while she checked him to see if he had anything out of place. She thought he looked rather nice, even if he looked quite unlike Harry. He whispered, "You look quite nice. Even if I prefer redheads." She was seriously tempted to give him a kiss, even if she was wearing too much lipstick.

They made sure their wands were put away but at the ready, and they strolled down the street.

"Picking up anything?" he whispered.

She stopped like she wanted to look in a shop window. "No," she murmured quietly. "Nothing dark, no suspicious noises. But it's a little too quiet for a village this size, in the middle of a weekday."

Harry said, "Maybe dementors. They'd keep a lot of people off the streets and feeling uneasy, even if the Muggles wouldn't know why."

She said, "Or charms. There have to be a lot of protective spells on the town if it's part Muggle and part wizard, otherwise the Muggles would have to spot what was going on. We have to be careful when we go into Ottery St. Catchpole, and we're just one family."

"Your dad's really bad at dressing like a Muggle. How do they not notice?"

She explained, "Dad never goes. Normally, it's just mum and me. And mum... Well, there are Muggle women who dress worse. There are a couple women around mum's age who walk around in housecoats and curlers. And there's this one really fat woman who wears what she calls a moo-moo I think, and it makes mum's robe look fine in comparison. I wear jeans and trainers, or a skirt, and I look pretty much like all the other girls in the village. Fred and George are really good at passing as Muggles when they want to. I think they like to chat up the village girls."

They strolled through the town. It was pretty obvious that there were acres of spells all over the town. There were Muggle shops, and then there were magical shops scattered about too. But the Muggles they saw seemed unable to see the doors into the non-Muggle shops. There was a Muggle apothecary, and a Muggle bank. Right in between them was a Bobbin's Magical Apothecary. Ginny watched as two Muggle women walked past the bank, and into the Muggle apothecary. Their eyes seemed to jump from the bank to the Muggle apothecary without seeing the magical shop.

There was a large Muggle graveyard in the south part of the town, but there was a small Wizard graveyard in the middle of the town, down a magically screened lane past an old church. The Muggles seemed unable to see it, either. And there were houses. It was so easy to spot the Wizard houses from among the usual Muggle homes. They even found one tiny lane that led to several Wizard houses, and the lane itself seemed to be protected from Muggle view.

At the end of a row of houses, they spotted it. A ruined Wizard house, in an unkempt yard, surrounded by a decrepit fence. The house Harry was born in. The house his parents died in.

Ginny whispered out of the side of her mouth, "We can't stop and look. Just pretend you can't see

it."

They stopped and looked at each other like they were being romantic. Harry whispered, "That's it. The upper floor? You can see where Riddle's spell blew up."

Ginny could see. And she could see the magical sign that told anyone magical that this damaged cottage was a memorial to the Potters and a commemoration to Harry Potter in particular. She could even see that people had written notes all over the sign. Words of encouragement. Statements of support. Phrases of belief. She was really, really surprised Riddle hadn't had the sign destroyed. The sign and the cottage both. Maybe the cup was hidden in there?

She led Harry away, even though he really wanted to stand there and stare at the house, and read everything on the sign. She took him into a narrow alley and whispered, "Stay here and keep watch."

Then she transfigured her pumps back into a pair of trainers, and she covered herself in the invisibility cloak. "This should only take a minute." He nodded stiffly.

She slipped silently back to the Potter house and looked around for anyone watching the place. When she didn't find anyone, she leapt the fence and moved through the tall grass to the house. She walked around to the back of the house, and then left as quietly as she came.

Harry was still waiting for her when she returned. She took off the cloak and transfigured her trainers into the low-heeled pumps once more. Then she did a couple cleaning charms to get the grass stains and dirt off her shoes and legs. She said, "No Horcrux. I didn't spot anyone watching the house, but it would be too easy to put some alarm spells on it and sit back and just wait for Harry Potter supporters to show up and gawk a bit."

Harry said, "I want to take the cloak and go look for myself. I won't go over the fence. I just want to... look."

Ginny said, "Oh, all right. I'll go check out the Wizard cemetery and meet you back here in, what? A quarter of an hour?"

"Sounds good. Be careful." He gave her hand a squeeze and disappeared under the cloak. She could hear him walking off toward the Potter house. He really wasn't as quiet as she was.

The cemetery was near the center of the town, down what was probably a magically screened lane alongside a small church. She walked through the kissing gate and looked around at the many tombstones there. Some of them were really, really old. She walked down a carefully maintained row toward the back tombstones. She walked past an Abbott and a Potter and a Bagshot and a Jigger. She walked past the tombstones of another half dozen Wizard names she

recognized. She walked past the tombstones of Albus Dumbledore's mother and sister. And there at the back, in the oldest section, was what she thought she had seen from the front. The sign of the Deathly Hallows. It was on three tombstones side by side. The Peverell brothers. She knew the name. It was one of many old, old Wizarding names that had gone extinct. And it was a name from Harry's story about the memory Dumbledore had shown him of Marvolo Gaunt. Maybe the Peverell brothers were the brothers of the fairy tale.

No, that was silly. There was no way that could be true. Except for the symbols on each of the gravestones. Maybe the fairy tale was made up after the Peverell brothers invented some truly magical items that astounded even their fellow Wizards? She looked about and found another Peverell tombstone, and one Marilka Peverell Peautre. She followed the tombstones and traced the lineage. Peautre became Peauter, which became... Potter.

She gasped. Harry was a descendant of the three Peverell brothers. His cloak, passed down from father to son, could have come from one of the Peverells. Just as Marvolo Gaunt's ring was handed down from the Peverell line. She was now surer than ever that the Deathly Hallows were real, and were out there, and were what Dumbledore wanted Harry to track down. Harry already had the cloak. If Hermione was right, the Resurrection Stone was in that snitch, waiting for the right time to be used, even if Ginny didn't see why. So the Deathstick was out there, and Riddle thought it would solve all his problems. She decided Ron was right: Riddle was madder than whatsisname, the wizard who tried to teach mountain trolls to do ballet.

A whisp of silver headed for her, and she whipped out her wand. Harry's stag Patronus appeared before her, gently stepping just above the grass and the graves. "Ginny! I found Bathilda Bagshot! I mean, she found me. She's quite frail, but I'm going with her back to her cottage. She has something for me!"

She groaned. He hadn't told her how to find Bathilda Bagshot's cottage. She hurried out of the graveyard and then walked at what she hoped was a seemly pace toward the area where the Potter house was. Harry said Bathilda was quite frail, so surely they couldn't move too quickly.

Ginny got to the end of the row of houses and looked about. There was nothing to see. Could they be inside one of these houses? About half of them were Wizard cottages. Ginny could hardly go door to door knocking at cottages she wasn't supposed to be able to see, asking for Bathilda Bagshot. Or could she?

And what was that smell? There was something dead and... and bad. It reminded her of some of the demons they had killed at the warehouse of Marius the Wizard vampire. She took several more steps down the lane.

She heard the crash, and Harry's scream.

Chapter 84 Appointed for Me

Ginny sprinted toward the Wizard cottage three doors down and on her right. She was sure that was where the noise came from. Now she could hear the sounds of things breaking, and Harry yelling out hexes.

She leapt the fence and cast *alohomora* at the front door. It didn't move.

She kicked the door hard, and it flew off its hinges, crashing to the floor of a dingy hallway and sliding until it hit a staircase. She charged in, trying to ignore the acrid, awful smell that was nearly unbearable in this closed, dank place. Trying to ignore the sickening feeling in her gut that meant there was a Horcrux here.

She charged up the stairs. Now she was close enough to hear the hissing, and the slithering of a massive snake. There was a crash, and the head of Nagini came ripping through the wall just ahead of her. She had a silver dagger out of her wrist bracelet and thrown into the snake's head before it could retreat and pursue Harry once more.

She had heard that Nagini was big, but she had assumed it was ten or twelve feet long. This wasn't a snake, it was a monster. It had to be at least twenty or thirty feet long, and its head was about as big as hers was.

She could hear Harry casting hex after hex, while the snake smashed the upper floor apart in its attempts to sink its fangs into him. She kicked open the door into what she hoped was the right room, and she found Harry trapped in a corner, trying to fend off Nagini with his wand and a rickety chair.

She leapt into the room. She had the crossbow out before she landed. As the snake whirled to face her, she fired. Her aim was beautiful. A crossbow bolt plunged through its closer eye into its head, and it screamed in fury.

Harry shouted, "Gin-"

She was already moving. The snake reared back and opened its mouth wide, baring its huge, poison-filled fangs as it lunged at her. She dodged to the side as she pulled out a battleaxe and slashed downward to meet its charge. She swung with all the strength and speed of a Vampire Slayer.

The battleaxe sliced through Nagini's neck, severing its head before it even realized the danger. A curse disintegrated the head of the battleaxe and blasted Ginny into the wall. Another curse exploded about her, and it felt like she was being stabbed by a thousand needles. Another curse erupted, and everything went black...

She opened her eyes to see some blond guy in a suit leaning over her. Oh yeah. Harry in disguise.

He gasped, "Ginny!" And he hugged her fiercely. "Don't ever do that again! I thought I'd lost you!"

She tried to sit up, but she felt like she'd had a cottage dropped on her. Oh wait, maybe it had. "Are... are we safe? I mean..."

"We're safe. For the moment. The curses on Nagini blew the house apart, and I was getting visions from Riddle. He was seeing what the snake was seeing, so he knows we killed it. He was on his way here, I could tell, so I grabbed you as the house exploded, and I apparated here."

She looked around. They were in a ruined room that hadn't been swept in ages.

"It's my old house. They don't know we're here, but Riddle was around somewhere for a while, and he had a lot of Death Eaters with him. I'm pretty sure they were looking for signs of apparations, so I figured I'd better lay low until you woke up. If you woke up. I was pretty scared there, for a while."

"How long was I out?" she asked.

"About half an hour. Considering those curses should have killed you about a dozen times over, I guess we're pretty lucky."

She said, "We were even luckier that I could kill Nagini with that battleaxe."

He nodded. "Maybe there were spells on the battleaxe we didn't know about. But my guess is you just killed Nagini, and that broke the tie between it and the Horcrux. I think maybe Riddle messed up by making something living one of his Horcruxes."

"And what about Bathilda Bagshot?" she wondered.

"Dead. Long dead." He shook his head, "I didn't realize it until it was too late, but 'Bathilda' must have been speaking Parseltongue to me. This had to be a trap specially made just for me."

Because it wasn't Bathilda. Just her skin. The snake was inside her body, waiting for me. They must have figured I'd come back here, so they killed her and prepared her corpse just to set this trap."

"Eww."

"Yeah," he agreed. "And just before you came to, I had another vision of Riddle. He's getting frantic now that he's lost Nagini. He's trying that much harder to find the Elder Wand. He's determined to get it and kill me in a duel. And he's pulling together armies of demons and vampires, because someone keeps defeating his best wizards, like Bellatrix and Rowle and the Carrows and Dolohov. And he's torturing Draco, and Mrs. Malfoy too."

Ginny said, "We need to get that wand out of Dumbledore's tomb, just in case."

Harry said, "Yeah, but we'll need Hermione and Ron for that. It's Dumbledore's tomb. It's bound to have all kinds of protections on it, even if it's just to keep the Carrows from walking over and ruining it in between classes."

Ginny said, "So we get the wand. Then there's nothing left but finding the cup, and then facing Riddle."

Harry said dryly, "Yeah, piece of cake."

They looked at each other and laughed uneasily.

Ginny needed a good hour before she felt up to standing up and walking around. Whatever those curses were, they were nasty. Once she felt well enough to walk around in those low heels, she told Harry, "We should get going. But keep your disguise until we're well away from here. Riddle knew you'd come here, and he probably has more traps."

Harry opened his mouth to say something, when a wisp of silver zoomed into the room and resolved into Ron's Patronus. "Run!" it squawked in Ron's voice before disappearing.

Harry and Ginny looked at each other. They both knew something awful must have happened, and they were both determined to help. Harry said, "We go like we look right now. If there's a threat there, they won't know who we are."

Ginny nodded, "Or what we are." She pulled out her wand.

Harry took her by the arm and disappeared.

They apparated to a spot nearly at the pond where Harry had retrieved the sword, just behind some large trees.

"Hey! I think I heard a crack! Check over that way! Someone may've apparated in to help the Granger Mudblood!"

"Roight! And remember, no killin' cuz they want 'em alive along wi' the first two!"

Maybe a dozen different men yelled out agreements.

Ginny yanked Harry's invisibility cloak out of her wrist bracelet and quickly tossed it over the two of them. Then she pulled Harry down in a crouch so not even their feet would be visible. They heard a slew of men trampling through the wood searching for them.

"What do we do?" Ginny asked in a whisper. "I could take the cloak and stalk them all one by one, but if they already took Hermione and Ron..."

Harry pressed his lips together and thought it over for long seconds. "We let them catch us. We're not Harry and Ginny. We're... Muggleborns that Hermione is enlisting in her battle against Riddle. I'm... Justin Finch-Fletchley."

Ginny nodded. "And I'm your girlfriend Marcia Cattermole."

"Who?"

Ginny whispered, "Fifth year Hufflepuff. You need to get out and talk to more people."

Harry handed her his wand. She slipped it and her wand into her wrist bracelet. Then he pulled out a backup wand. He saw her staring at it, and he said, "Hermione grabbed a handful while we were in the Ministry." He handed her another backup wand. "Let's get taken prisoner. You're the scared girl who talks too much. I'm the grumpy boyfriend who thinks he's tough."

She nodded. She yanked the cloak off and quickly stuffed it into her wrist bracelet. Then Harry stood up and deliberately stepped on a dry stick.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller

## Chapter 85 People Began

In seconds they were surrounded by gruff men wielding wands. Ginny knew they were Snatchers. Creeps who weren't good enough to be Death Eaters but would do any filthy Wizard task for enough money.

She pretended to be scared. What she really wanted to do was to attack them and beat every one of them senseless. She didn't. She dropped the backup wand and shrieked, "Don't hurt me!"

"Drop your wand too, kid!"

Harry dropped his wand and pretended to be scared too.

"What are you two doing here?"

Harry growled, "None of your business." One of the Snatchers stepped forward and punched him in the face. Harry fell to the ground.

Ginny squealed, "Oh! Don't hurt him! It's not his fault! Hermione Granger asked us to meet her here, she said she had something for us to do, she said she was organizing all the Muggleborn witches and wizards all across the country!"

"Shut up, Marcia!" snapped Harry. "We're not supposed to talk about it!"

Ginny whimpered. "But they'll hurt us!"

One of the snatchers leered at her. "We'll hurt you anyway, blondie." She wrapped her arms around herself and pretended to sob.

"Who are you, kid?"

Harry sullenly said, "Justin Finch-Fletchley."

"And you?" Another Snatcher poked her with his wand.

She squeaked like she was frightened and said, "M-marcia. Marcia Cattermole."

"We got 'em on our lists?"

"Hang on, hang on, lemme look... Yeah! Both of 'em. Muggleborns. A seventh year and a fifth year."

"Cor, I like 'em young and blonde like 'at."

Ginny pretended to whimper and shiver. But she knew she could rip the man apart if he tried to do anything to her.

"Hands off. You know what'll happen if you cross 'im. Remember Jackie?"

"Okay, okay, ya made yer point. So... we take 'em too? They promised us a right tidy sum for the Granger bit, maybe if we show 'em what she's up to, they'll give us somethin' more?"

"Roight. We'll give it a go."

Someone else did a couple quick Incarcerous Charms, and Ginny stood there like she was completely helpless. She knew that Harry certainly couldn't get out of his ropes without some help. But she had her hands together behind her back.

Rough hands slapped a blindfold on her. She suddenly realized she had no idea whether her wig would stay on. That could be a big problem. Someone grabbed her, and they disappeared with her along for the ride.

She landed roughly, and only her Slayer grace kept her from falling over. She heard someone apparate beside her, and she heard Harry groan in pain. Someone was asking for a bruising.

A clanging, rattling, inhuman voice demanded, "State your purpose!"

One of the snatchers called out, "We caught two of Granger's minions! She's rounding up Muggleborns! We've got two, and they'll talk!"

Ginny could hear the sounds of gates swinging open. Then she was marched a long way up a gravel drive. The whispers of tall hedges on either side told her she was on her way to one of the big Pureblood manors. Maybe even Malfoy Manor. She had been to Parkinson Manor once when she was younger, and she was sure this wasn't it.

The blindfold was yanked off, and Giny felt her wig slip a little. There was nothing she could do about it. But she decided she was running out of time. She flexed her wrists and tested the ropes holding her arms together. She didn't think she had the leverage to rip the ropes apart. That wasn't good.

A massive door opened at the top of broad flagstone steps. "Who are these?" Ginny recognized Narcissa Malfoy at once. So it probably was Malfoy Manor.

One of the Snatchers stepped forward. "We caught some more! Justin Finch-Fletchley and Marcia Cattermole. They was on their way to meet up with Granger and do her bidding!"

"Bring them," Narcissa said.

They walked down a long hallway lined with portraits of Malfoys. Ginny felt the eyes of the portraits follow her. They passed into a drawing room.

Lucius Malfoy was sitting there. He asked what the interruption was, and Narcissa said, "Dear, they claim that the Granger girl was gathering minions to do some jobs for her. These two, at a minimum."

Lucius said, "School age. Ask Draco if he recognizes them." Unconcerned with their fates, he strolled off.

Ginny suddenly felt a shiver of real fear. Draco would know they weren't Justin and Marcia. If only there weren't two Snatchers standing right behind her...

Draco strolled insolently into the room. "Yes, mother?"

Narcissa asked, "Are these..." She turned her head ever so slightly. "Who did you say?"

"Justin Finch-Fletchley and Marcia Cattermole! Mudbloods. And we got their wands."

Draco looked at her, and his eyes widened as he recognized her.

She slid two fingers into her wrist bracelet. If she had to, she was going to pull out a dagger, slash as much of her ropes as she could in two swipes, and attack anyone who moved. She could not let anyone identify her here.

Draco reached forward and touched her hair.

He gently tugged her wig back into place when he was sure no one was looking.

He turned and said, "Cattermole. I can't believe she had the nerve to go when Granger called. The girl's the biggest crybaby in fifth year. Finch-Fletchley's utterly useless too. Still, they're probably the best Granger could scrounge up."

Narcissa Malfoy lifted her head. "Pettigrew!"

After a few seconds, a dirty, rat-like man shambled in. Narcissa sniffed unpleasantly and ordered him, "Take them downstairs."

Ginny could hear in another room the unmistakable tones of Bellatrix Lestrange. "Where did you get this sword!?!"

And she could hear Hermione sobbing. "I told you, I told you!"

"How did you get this out of my Gringotts vault, Mudblood!?! " Bellatrix screeched frantically.

"I didn't. I swear I didn't," Hermione cried.

"Then where did it come from?!" Bellatrix screamed.

Peter Pettigrew shoved her and said, "Move it, Mudblood." He pushed Ginny and Harry into another hallway, and down a long flight of stairs.

She could hear Ron from down in the darkness. Ron was yelling over and over, "Hermione!"

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 19 Aug 2012 06:54:00 GMT  
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Chapter 86 Invoke the Name of the Lord

Ginny waited until Pettigrew was concentrating on Harry. She silently pulled a dagger from her wrist bracelet and sliced through the ropes on her wrists. Then she bent her arm and sliced through the ropes holding her arms behind her back.

Pettigrew shoved the two of them against a stone wall and used his wand to unlock the heavily barred door. Someone who was undoubtedly Ron tried to rush out, but Pettigrew snapped off a hex and sent the guy flying backward into the darkness.

Harry whispered, "Now."

Ginny strained, and the last of the ropes about her arms and torso simply snapped and broke. Pettigrew turned quickly, but not quickly enough. She chopped at his forearm with the side of her

hand, and Pettigrew's wand went flying as a bone snapped in his forearm.

But he didn't scream. He wheeled around and attacked her with a hand that looked like silver metal. She grabbed it. The hand was supernaturally strong. But the arm it was attached to was not.

She brought up one knee, and caught Pettigrew squarely in the crotch. The man made a tiny squeak like a scared mouse, and keeled over. She pulled out her wand and quickly cast a Stunning Hex and an Incarcerous Charm.

Then she sliced Harry's ropes off and hauled Pettigrew into the dark room.

Harry pulled out his wand and whispered, "Lumos."

The room was suddenly lit well enough to see the three captives. Ginny gasped, "Ron!"

Harry gasped, "Mister Ollivander! Griphook!"

Ron looked... completely unlike Ron. His hair was brown. His face was horribly swollen and contorted. She wondered how he could see through the slits that were his eyes. And if that wasn't bad enough, someone had been using a Punching Hex on him.

Mister Ollivander looked like he had been locked up in Azkaban for a decade. His clothes were worn and torn. He looked too thin and desperately unhealthy. Griphook looked like someone had been using him as a punching bag for days.

Harry rushed over and helped Ron to his feet. "It's us, mate."

"You've got to save Hermione. She said his name and they surrounded us and brought us here. That bitch has been torturing her ever since she saw the sword."

"Why?" Ginny asked.

"Dunno. Maybe she's mental."

Harry stood stiffly and called out, "Kreacher? Dobby?"

In a couple seconds there were twin pops. The two house elves glared at each other hostilely.

Harry said, "You two. No fighting or arguing. Kreacher, take Griphook, Mister Ollivander, and Ron to..."

Ron said, "To Shell Cottage. Bill and Fleur's place. It's just outside Tinworth, on the beach."

Harry said, "Right. Take them now. Dobby will take us in a few minutes, after we rescue Hermione."

Ron said, "No! I'm staying to help!"

Harry insisted, "You're in no condition. You can hardly see! Go on ahead and get the place ready. Hermione may need medical help when we get there."

"Bloody..." Ron didn't get to finish his swearwords before Kreacher popped them away.

Harry said, "Okay Dobby, there are a lot of bad men upstairs, including the Malfoys. I'm not asking you to do anything that's against your rules, but any help would be... umm, helpful."

Dobby nodded eagerly, flapping his long ears.

Harry looked at Ginny and said, "As fast and as hard as you can. I'll go for Bellatrix, and you clear the way. We can't fail on this."

Ginny pulled out her wand and transfigured her pumps back to trainers. Then she pulled a sword out of her wrist bracelet for her off hand. She nodded and silently sprinted up the stairs.

She could hear Lucius Malfoy icily telling the group of Snatchers to settle for what he had already given them. She ran for that room. She couldn't leave all of them to come up behind Harry.

She burst into the room and hit Mister Malfoy and the lead Snatcher with silent Stunning Spells before anyone else knew there was a threat. She sprinted at her top speed for the six remaining men. Only two managed to get their wands out before she was too close to attack with a wand.

She reversed the sword and punched the first one in the jaw with the hilt. There was a crunch that she could feel, telling her she had just shattered his jaw. She kicked the next one in the crotch. Maybe she kicked him harder than she meant to, because he flew about four feet into the air. The others were still trying to get weapons out. She gave the next one an elbow to the face and used the follow-up from that to punch the fourth in the solar plexus. She spun around and kicked the fifth in the face, sending him flying across the room. The sixth one had a knife out by then and slashed at her face. She easily ducked under the awkward slice and punched him in the armpit, then smashed his nose flat with the heel of her hand.

She took a breath. No one besides her was moving. She did some quick Stunning Spells to make sure, and she raced out of the room.

By the time she got to Hermione, Harry was helping Hermione to her feet. Bellatrix was lying face-down with blood oozing from her face. Hermione was whimpering, "Ron. We have to rescue Ron."

Harry said, "I already told you. We got Ron out already. We need to rescue you now, and-"

"Crucio!" screeched Narcissa Malfoy from the doorway.

Ginny just barely dodged the attack. It caught her on her sword arm, making her drop the sword. But she still had the wand. She cast two silent Stunners at Narcissa. Both hit a Shield Charm.

Draco leapt into the room and fired off a reducto at Harry. But Harry had his own Shield Charm in place, and the curse bounced off.

Narcissa stepped in front of Draco, casting another Shield Charm so Draco could have a free shot at one of them.

Ginny jumped in front of Harry as she fired a reducto at the ceiling. Draco's spell hit her and deflected off into one of the walls. Her reducto was a lot more effective. The explosion of plaster and timber made Narcissa duck and forced Draco to cast a Shield Charm over his head to block the falling debris.

Harry cast expelliarmus, and Draco's wand flew off into the hallway somewhere.

Narcissa scrambled up off the floor and tried to aim a hex at Harry. Ginny grabbed a marble table with her off hand and hurled it. Narcissa cast a reducto at the table just in time to keep it from smashing her flat. The table exploded in shards of marble and wood.

Harry caught Narcissa with a Stunner, and the woman collapsed to the floor.

Ginny ducked down and took a peek in the hallway. Draco was scrambling for his wand. She nailed him in the back with another Stunner and let him collapse to the floor.

Harry grinned, "Nice teamwork." He looked around and said, "Dobby, take us out of here."

Dobby popped into being between Harry and Hermione. Hermione was struggling to get to her feet with the Sword of Godric Gryffindor. Ginny stepped over so Dobby could whisk her out of the manor as well. Just as Dobby was turning to take all of them away, Bellatrix rolled over.

Blood streamed down her deranged face, and she screamed, "No!" She reached into her hair and pulled out a dagger. She hurled it at them.

Ginny reached over Dobby's tiny form and snatched the dagger out of the air. They vanished from Malfoy Manor while Bellatrix screamed in impotent rage.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 22 Aug 2012 07:20:07 GMT  
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Chapter 87 This Is the List

They popped into being on a sunny beach. Harry looked down and saw that Ginny was holding the dagger only inches from where it would have plunged right into Dobby's tiny chest. He whistled, "Whew, that was a close one."

Dobby nodded happily. "Dobby has saved the great Harry Potter! Dobby is making saving again!"

Harry shook Dobby's hand. "Definitely, Dobby. Thank you. And this time, I wasn't beaten to a pulp by a bludger, either."

"Dobby is very sorry about that, Harry Potter, sir."

Ginny scooped Hermione up and carried her toward where Ron was waving his arms.

Hermione gasped, "This is important. I have to tell you. Bellatrix. She was scared. Scared out of her mind. That I got the real sword out of the Lestrangle vault at Gringotts. Snape gave her a fake. Good enough to fool her, anyway. She was scared I got into her vault. Maybe the cup is in there. In the Lestrangle vault."

Harry groaned, "Oh Merlin. As if breaking into the Ministry and Hogwarts weren't bad enough, now Gringotts?"

"It makes a lot of sense," Ginny said. "This is just what we talked about. Riddle would want the cup somewhere meaningful. Like in the protection of a Pureblood family. He gave Lucius Malfoy the diary. Who else does he have as a most trusted minion? The Lestranges, Snape, the Carrows... But which of them are solid Purebloods with a lineage back to the Hogwarts founders? Only the Lestranges. And Bellatrix is a Black too. He gave her the cup, and she hid it in her vault."

Hermione nodded with exhaustion. "Gringotts. We have to break into Gringotts and get into the

Lestrangle vault and destroy the cup. With the sword."

Ginny frowned, "And we have to do it right this second, before Bellatrix can get herself over there and move it out of the vault."

Harry said, "That's impossible. How are we supposed to do that?"

Ginny shifted Hermione's bulk so she had Hermione sitting in one arm. Then she held up the other arm. The arm with Bellatrix's dagger. "Look."

Harry looked at the dagger. There were two long black hairs caught just where the blade merged into the hilt. "Hairs from Bellatrix. The Polyjuice Potion!"

Hermione said, "We'll need Griphook's help to get through all the protections and get into the vault. The really old Pureblood families are supposed to have really incredible protections on their vaults."

Harry groaned, "Oh, right, a Gringotts goblin is just going to agree to bank robbery."

Ginny said, "We have to try. And we have to try right now. Before Bellatrix goes and checks, and does Merlin only knows what with it." She looked up and saw Ron waving at them. "And why is Ron standing in the middle of nothing waving us toward him?"

Hermione pushed against Ginny's grasp, with no success. Ginny carefully lowered her to the sand. Hermione took a ragged step and said, "It's Shell Cottage. There's bound to be a Fidelius Charm on it, so no one but Secret Keepers and house elves are going to be able to see it, much less get to it."

Ginny checked, "Are you sure you can walk?"

Hermione nodded. "Yeah. Just a lot of Cruciatus Curses. She was going to start cutting me up with a cursed athame, but Harry got to me just in the nick of time. I'll be all right in no time."

Harry said, "We should start a club. Everyone who's been tortured with a crucio."

Hermione frowned, "That's not funny."

Ginny added, "That club? There may be a hundred Hogwarts students in it by the time we stop Riddle."

Hermione muttered, "I'm never saying the V-word again. It's all my fault."

Harry asked, "Did you have to hit Ron in the face with a Stinging Hex?"

Hermione winced, "I panicked, all right? I'm really sorry. But I was so scared, and then I botched the Disguising Charm and I only got his hair color and his freckles changed. The Snatchers were all around us, and someone already had an anti-apparation charm on the area, and I had no time, and I just did the first thing that came into my head!"

Ginny said, "We're not the person you need to say 'sorry' to."

Hermione cringed. "I... I can't! I messed up so much, and I hurt him again, and they hit him, I know they did! It's all my fault!" Tears began streaming down her face.

Harry said, "I think he understands. It's not like any of us are perfect."

Ginny said, "You really need to talk to him. For you, mostly." Because Ron was a guy, and she knew if Hermione just kissed him he'd give in without her even saying 'sorry I accidentally called down a dozen Snatchers on us and then I panicked and messed up the charm I was going to do and I panicked more and hit you in the face with a Stinging Hex'. Honestly, what on earth had Hermione been thinking? Ginny got that Hermione was incredibly embarrassed at what she did, and ashamed at panicking and making everything worse. But it wasn't like all of them hadn't messed up royally a slew of times. Even Albus Dumbledore had messed up plenty of times. And the four of them knew that Riddle had messed up at least once a year, if not half a dozen times every year, since Harry had started at Hogwarts. But Hermione was intent on being perfect every time, no matter how ridiculous that sounded.

They walked up to Ron, although Hermione sort of hid behind Harry and Ginny. Ginny thought Hermione would have tried hiding behind Dobby too, except Dobby was only two feet high. Including his ears.

Ron was still standing on an empty beach waving them closer. But Ginny could see he looked a lot better. The Stinging Hex had been countered, and the Disguising Charm had been ended. She figured Bill or Fleur did the work. Bill was really good at countering curses, and Fleur's family was supposed to be pretty good at Potions.

They walked up to Ron, who was waiting impatiently. When he saw Hermione moving shakily, he rushed over and slipped an arm around her waist. She carefully put one arm over his shoulders and whispered, "Thank you, Ron."

He pointed at the empty space and said, "Welcome to Shell Cottage, the home of Bill and Fleur Weasley. I, Ronald Weasley, one of their Secret Keepers, invite you in."

And the air shimmered behind him. A quaint two-story cottage appeared up on the low cliff. It

faced the ocean, and its steep roof showed three gorgeous stone chimneys. It was beautifully whitewashed, and Ginny could see from where she was that the walls were decorated with seashells. Ginny wondered if she could come here someday with Harry and watch a storm roll in off the ocean, driving powerful waves before it. She wondered if she could live long enough to do something fun like that.

Harry asked, "How long have you been a Secret Keeper for them?"

Ron's ears got a little pink. "Umm, about ten seconds. They were busy taking care of Mister Ollivander and Griphook, so Bill cast the spell so I could do it too."

Dobby perked up. "Dobby wants to go help!"

Harry grinned and said, "You go right ahead."

Dobby hopped happily and then disappeared with a loud pop.

Hermione said, "All right. Let's go through our checklist. The diary and the ring are done. We killed the diadem and the locket. So we--"

Ginny interrupted, "We didn't have a chance to tell you, but I got Nagini! Riddle laid a trap for Harry, but it didn't quite work. I got there in time. And it cost him another Horcrux."

Harry growled, "And it nearly cost us Ginny."

Hermione looked worriedly at Ginny, who whispered, "I'm fine."

Hermione said, "-so we only need to destroy the cup. And we know where it is right now."

Harry nodded and said grimly, "Right. And then I've got to face Riddle."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 26 Aug 2012 06:40:24 GMT  
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Chapter 88 Descendants of Adam

Hermione frowned, "We just can't get at the cup. It'll take months of planning. It's impossible to

break into a Gringotts vault, especially one of the really high security ones."

Harry said, "It's not. Quirrell pulled it off, even if what he was after was already gone. And we know he didn't get caught, or even identified."

Hermione snapped, "Harry! You're talking about an experienced Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher! Who had V- I mean, Riddle helping him!"

Harry said, "And we have someone a lot smarter than Quirrell." Hermione blushed brightly. "Plus the Vampire Slayer, plus a Gringotts goblin for advice, and a professional cursebreaker."

Ginny said, "There's no way you're going to get a Gringotts goblin to help you."

Ron said, "You and Harry did just save his scrawny little neck."

Ginny said, "Anyway, I don't like goblins. They make my inner Slayer feel sort of weird. I mean, I could even feel it with Professor Flitwick, and he's really nice."

"And he's only part-goblin," Hermione added.

They walked into the kitchen of the cottage to find Fleur standing at a counter glaring at several knives which were chopping vegetables. She looked at them and said, "We put Meester Ollivander and the goblin in the downstairs bedrooms. But I do not like zee goblin. He has bin talking to your Kreacher and now he talks to your Dobby. I do not like zis."

Ginny gave Fleur a hug and said, "We're sorry to be such a problem."

"Rescuing Ron and Hermione and zee others from a Death Eater stronghold? Zat eez not a problem, eet eez merveillieux."

Bill came back into the kitchen. "We thought both of them were in too bad a shape to be going up and down the stairs for meals and things, so we figured the downstairs bedrooms would have to do." He looked at Fleur and said, "They've both had the healing potions, but I don't know how well they'll work on goblins."

Then he looked at Harry. "Griphook's asking to talk to The Boy Who Lived. I don't know what Kreacher and Dobby were telling him."

Harry grimaced a little. "It's okay. I've got a pretty good idea what both of them would say."

Bill nodded uncomfortably. "Look Harry, whatever you do, don't make an agreement with Griphook without talking with me first. I've worked with goblins for years now, and even if I know

more about them than any other wizard I know, I still don't know them. They don't see eye-to-eye with wizards about much, which is why there have been so many wars and conflicts and arguments between them and wizards. They don't have the same ideas about house elves, or about property, or about treasure, or about learning, or owning wands, or about much of anything."

Harry swallowed hard. Ginny could hear it. He said, "I'll keep that in mind."

She said, "You go on in there. I'm gonna stand just outside and listen."

He stepped into the goblin's little room. Griphook was lying down on the bed and looking even smaller than usual. The potions he had swallowed looked like they had already worked. Now he looked slightly roughed up, not punched to a bloody pulp.

Harry closed the door and said, "You wanted to see me?"

Ginny listened as Griphook said, "Yes, Harry Potter. You are a most unusual wizard."

Ginny assumed Harry was shrugging as he said, "I don't know about that."

Griphook said, "I remember when we first met."

Harry said, "At Gringotts. Hagrid took me to get wizard money. You took us in the cart."

Griphook said, "We knew then who you were, but reputations are earned, not bestowed."

Harry said, "We agree on that. I'm really tired of being The Boy Who Lived because of something my mother did."

Griphook said, "But it was not your mother who defeated Dumbledore's trials-

"I had help."

"-or defeated Quirrell or rescued a girl from Slytherin's Heir-

"Dumbledore's phoenix."

"-or drove off an army of dementors as a thirteen year old or won the Tri-Wizard Tournament-

"Crouch Junior helped me a lot."

"-and then dueled He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named or fought Death Eaters in the Ministry-

"I really messed up and got a lot of people hurt."

"-or battled Death Eaters for control of Hogwarts."

"I didn't do that much."

"And now the Ministry hunts you, and you hunt... what? A way to finally end that which once was Tom Marvolo Riddle?"

Harry just said, "I'm surprised you know about Riddle's real name."

Griphook said, "Just because we are goblins does not make us stupid."

Harry said, "No, I meant hardly any wizards know that. I wouldn't have known, but he took the time to tell me his real name just before he tried to kill me with a basilisk."

Griphook said, "I have talked with your house elf Kreacher, and with Dobby. They seem remarkably loyal to you, given that neither is of the House of Potter."

Harry said, "I inherited Kreacher, and I freed Dobby."

Griphook said, "No, that is not it. I have seen many house elves. I have never before seen one who would risk terrible punishments to save a wizard who was not even of his house. I have very seldom seen one who feels that a wizard has earned his loyalty. You are... different."

Harry said, "I think it's just because I grew up with Muggles. I didn't learn anything about the wizarding world before I met Hagrid."

"And Hagrid is not like most wizards," said Griphook. "You know he is half-giant? And yet you still call him friend."

Harry said, "He's not like the giants you hear about. He's the nicest guy I know."

Griphook said, "The mere thought that you think of him as a 'guy' instead of as a magical creature is all I need to know." He took a deep breath. "Harry Potter, do you have the true Sword of Godric Gryffindor?"

Harry asked, "Is that why you were at Malfoy Manor? Did they summon a Gringotts goblin as soon as Bellatrix Lestrange saw the sword?"

Griphook said, "Yes. I was the goblin who placed the sword in the Lestrange vault. I knew it was

not the true sword, but I said nothing then because of the treatment of goblins by the Lestrangle family. When Bellatrix Lestrangle asked me if Hermione Granger's sword was the one she had put in her vault, I told the truth. It is not. I merely neglected to tell her that your friend was bearing the true sword. The sword that was made for Godric Gryffindor and never returned, not even by his heirs. The lost goblin treasure."

Harry asked, "If it really belongs to the goblins, then why does it answer the call of a true Gryffindor in need?"

Griphook said, "That is part of the magic inherent in the sword. It does not make the sword yours. It only means you may borrow it without paying for it in any way."

Harry said, "May I step out and talk to my friends?"

Griphook said, "Yes. I expected as much."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 29 Aug 2012 07:07:14 GMT  
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Chapter 89 - He Made Them

Harry stepped out of the room and Ginny gave him a quick hug as they walked back to the kitchen.

Bill asked, "What did he want to know? What are you up to?"

Harry shook his head in a refusal. "I can't tell you. It's important, and we need to know about goblins and wizards and ownership."

Bill ran a hand over his chin. "It's complicated. Both sides think the other side are a bunch of crooks. A goblin makes a special treasure for a wizard, and the wizard thinks it's his forever. But goblins don't believe that. They believe that the object belongs to the maker and is only on loan to the wizard."

"That's crazy," muttered Ron.

"Yeah," agreed Ginny.

Hermione said, "So both sides see it in terms of whatever's best for them."

Harry said, "So lost treasures like, umm, Ravenclaw's lost diadem?"

Bill said, "The goblins think wizards stole it and are hiding it from them. Wizards think it belongs to a descendant of Rowena Ravenclaw, to be determined if it ever turns up by the Wizengamot."

Ron jumped the gun and asked, "But what would it take to get Griphook to sneak us into Gringotts to get at something? He does kind of owe us, right?"

Hermione swatted him on the arm, but was careful to stay away from his bad shoulder.

Bill shook his head. "There's nothing you're going to be able to offer a Gringotts goblin to make him do something like that. And if you try, the most you'll get is him leading you into a trap."

Ginny said, "We can work with that."

Bill said, "Even if you wanted to, you're not going to get past the front desk. It looks like just a desk and a goblin, but they have charms in place, and more security measures than you can see. And even if they let you through into the tunnels, that doesn't mean they're not leading you into a trap with a host of anti-illusion and anti-apparation charms so you can't get away."

Ginny and Hermione looked at each other. There were still a couple things the goblins probably couldn't plan on, and they weren't going to talk about any of them, not even to Bill.

They stepped outside to confer among the four of them.

Hermione said, "Look Harry, he's a Gringotts goblin. Even if he agrees, you have to figure he'll doublecross you the first chance he gets."

Ron said, "Well, how about we let him have the sword when we're done? We use it to kill the cup and then we just give it to him! After all, it'll still come to the next Gryffindor who really needs it, right?"

Ginny thought that was one of the smartest things she'd heard Ron say.

Hermione said, "I don't think Griphook will agree to that."

Ron tried, "Okay, we let him hold it and he stabs the cup, and he can keep it afterward."

Hermione primly said, "There is no way a Gringotts goblin is going to destroy a classic goblin antiquity, much less let you do it."

Harry said, "I have an idea about that..."

Harry returned to the goblin's room, while Ginny again listened from outside.

Griphook asked, "Harry Potter, let me ask you once more. Do you have the true Sword of Gryffindor, as the wizards call it?"

Harry stalled a little, "What do you call it?"

Griphook said, "By its proper name, naturally. It was made for Gryffindor, but he never returned it, and his scions never honored the pact with the Goblins to return it when he was done. But a powerful wizard who steals from the goblins is regarded as a hero among your kind."

Harry said, "I have the sword. The real sword. And you can have it back if you get us into Gringotts and into the Lestrangle vault. We don't want to steal anything, but there is something in there that we need to deal with."

"And that 'something' would be?"

Harry said, "We think it's in there, and we think it is... Hufflepuff's cup."

Ginny couldn't hear anything from the other side of the door except breathing, but she imagined Griphook's eyes lit up. After long seconds, Griphook whispered, "The true cup of Helga Hufflepuff, as you wizards call it?"

Harry said, "We believe so. We think Tom Riddle murdered the witch who had it, and framed her house elf for the death. We think he gave it to Bellatrix Lestrangle for safekeeping, and we think the reason Bellatrix was so loony today was because it's hidden in her vault and she was afraid Hermione got into the vault to retrieve the sword. But she can go back to her vault as soon as she's healthy, and take it somewhere else. Somewhere we'll never find it. It has... a sort of spell on it, and we need Gryffindor's Sword to break the spell. But after that, we don't need either treasure. We would be willing to give them both to you at that point, if you help us."

Griphook sternly said, "And you would want me to help you break into the Lestrangle vault, deep in the heart of Gringotts?"

Harry said, "No, I want the help of the goblins - not just the Gringotts goblins - to stop Tom Riddle and the Death Eaters. If that includes the Gringotts goblins rescuing one or more lost treasures, I would think that would be an added incentive."

Griphook growled. "You do not understand us, Harry Potter. Just as we do not understand

wizardkind. Not even Bill Weasley who works for us and who is now allowing me to stay in one of his bedrooms. Not even his wife, who would be marked by your Ministry as just as much a 'magical creature' as I."

Harry said, "It's not my Ministry. I just broke into the place a few days ago and nearly got killed. And I don't agree with any of the 'magical creatures' regulations. They treat Hagrid like some sort of monster, and they keep Remus Lupin from getting a job to support his family, and they would have hacked Buckbeak's head off on the word of a lying, sniveling, little creep whose daddy happens to have lots of money and connections."

Griphook paused and then said, "So it really is true. You risked your life to save a hippogriff. And you risked your life and winning the Tri-Wizard Cup to save a part-veela."

Harry muttered, "I was just stupid. I didn't know she wouldn't really be in danger. Fleur didn't either. Hermione figured it out, though."

Griphook was silent for long seconds, and then he said, "Dobby has told me of your friend Hermione Granger's efforts to rescue the house elves. Kreacher told me of her actions when he revealed what Riddle had done to him and to his master Regulus Black, even though he treated her with great disrespect."

"Hermione's just like that. She cares. Even if S.P.E.W. is a terrible name."

Griphook said, "It is not the name which matters here, it is the intention. Now tell me how you think you can get into the vault of the Lestrangle family. There are many safeguards in and around Gringotts. A wizard cannot apparate in or out of Gringotts, nor can he use the Floo network or portkeys or a house elf's magics. You would have to get past the guards at the entrance. You would have to persuade one of the Goblins in charge to let one of us take you down to the vault. The Lestrangle vault has a dragon protecting it, and requires a special means of getting in and out of the vault. Then you would have to get back out again. None of this would be simple."

Ginny opened the door and stepped in. "Sounds like it's my turn." She looked at Griphook and tried to ignore the feeling in her gut from his goblin nature. "It really is simple. Bellatrix Lestrangle will walk into Gringotts and demand to be taken to her vault. If you go with her, you get the sword and the cup when she's done, and she leaves with nothing."

Griphook said, "There are charms at the entrance and at the desks to thwart illusions and love potions, as well as magically disguised and transfigured people. We can also identify people under the Imperius Curse."

Chapter 90 And Named Them

"We can also identify people under the Imperius Curse."

Harry muttered, "Wish the wizards had known about that sixteen years ago."

Griphook turned to him. "They do know. They do not trust it because it is not their wand magic."

Harry groaned, "Well, that's stupid."

Ginny asked, "Could someone like Hermione learn that kind of magic?"

Griphook shrugged in a nearly-human manner. "I do not know. It is generally believed that wizards are incapable of our type of magic, which is why they have forbidden us wands, so we cannot learn their type of magic and gain any advantage over them."

Ginny said, "We're not going to use any of those spells, anyway."

Griphook rolled his eyes. "Please, do not try to tell me that you have some of Bellatrix Lestrange's hair or nails. A witch of her caliber would never allow such a thing. And Polyjuice Potion is a most difficult, time-consuming potion to brew."

Ginny smiled, "Perhaps you could let us worry about that. Now suppose Bellatrix did walk into Gringotts and get past the detection charms. What would happen when she demanded to go see her vault?"

Griphook said, "If there was no reason to be suspicious, and none of the detection spells had sounded an alarm, the goblin at the desk might still insist on some verification."

"Like what?" asked Harry.

"Her wand," said Griphook. "Even someone using Polyjuice Potion would not be able to falsify her wand."

Ginny said, "What if we had that taken care of too?"

Griphook said, "On the ride down, she might still have to go through one or more of the special security measures we have for the more important vaults. I have no intention of telling you about

them, no matter what you do to me."

Ginny said, "We're not going to do anything to you, even if you don't want to help us. We just won't give you the sword. Or the cup." She could tell he really wanted both treasures. She could hear how his heart raced every time she brought up the topic.

Griphook said, "Very well. Then, assuming she did reach the area where her vault is located, she would require a Gringotts goblin to move the dragon guarding the vault, and she would require a Gringotts goblin to open the vault." He didn't say how, but Ginny had a good idea. It wasn't like she had never been in Gringotts before. "And she would have to get back out of Gringotts through the miles and miles of tunnels, if any of the alarms were triggered."

Ginny just nodded.

Hermione slipped into the room with Ron right behind her. She said, "I've been thinking about this, and I figure if all five of us work on this together, we'll be ready to go in three to six weeks, and-

Ginny cut her off. Maybe it was the Slayer in her, but she wasn't about to sit still for six weeks! She'd go mad! She glared at Hermione and said, "We don't need months of planning. Griphook and I go. Right now. He walks in ahead of me and gets to a spot where he can help me. I go in as Bellatrix and demand to go to 'my' vault. He goes with me. He opens the vault. I take care of the cup. I give him the sword and Hufflepuff's Cup. Then I don't take anything out with me."

Griphook suspiciously asked, "And what will you do with these Goblin treasures?"

Ginny said, "We can't tell you that, but we only need a couple seconds with the cup, and then you can have both of them."

Ron insisted, "Yeah, returning two lost treasures has got to be worth a lot to you. And we're not going to take anything out of Gringotts."

Griphook looked downright evil as he thought out loud. "The sword AND the cup... And you would leave both with me?"

"Yes."

"Sure."

"We won't need either afterward."

Harry looked at Ginny and asked, "And you're sure you can handle the cup?"

Ginny gave him her most stubborn look and said, "Yeah." But that was a lie. She was worried. She knew what the locket did to Ron, and what the diadem did to Hermione. She knew the ring nearly killed Professor Dumbledore, and the diary nearly killed Harry and her both. The snake hadn't been a lot of fun, either. And just being near the cup would feel so awful. But she had to try. And she was sure Griphook would double-cross her the first chance he got.

Plus, she had an idea that only the Vampire Slayer could make work, and that meant she had to go alone. She didn't like that idea, but it didn't matter. Being the Vampire Slayer was all about being alone and in danger. And dying in horrible ways, even if she didn't think any other Vampire Slayer had ever died because of a giant fire-breathing dragon. At least, not that she knew of.

She said, "Griphook goes back to Gringotts now. He waits for Bellatrix to show up, and escorts her to her vault, like the last time-

"I want the sword. As a token of good faith," Griphook insisted.

Ginny stubbornly said, "I want to hang on to the sword as a token of your good faith."

"That is not acceptable," snapped Griphook.

"How about a compromise?" suggested Hermione. "We hang on to the sword until the middle of the cart ride, and then Griphook hangs on to the sword. Once we use it in the Lestrangle vault, he gets to keep it. And the cup. And any other lost treasures the Lestranges have in there." She turned slightly pink as she said the last sentence.

"That is... workable," said Griphook.

"Okay," said Ginny. She figured that once she was alone with Griphook in the bowels of Gringotts, she could knock him unconscious the moment he tried anything, even if he tried something in an area warded against wizard spellwork. She was guessing he would try to double-cross her in a place where a wizard or witch would be helpless or at least at a major disadvantage. She was counting on him underestimating her, even when she looked like Bellatrix Lestrangle.

Oh Merlin, she was going to have to act like cousin Bella. Could she do that? Could she act like an insane, bigoted psycho? Maybe she could call on her inner Slayer to be fierce enough and threatening enough. Creepy enough? Insane enough? She wasn't sure she could manage that part. She knew she was a much better actor than Hermione, who couldn't fool a kneazle. Or Harry, who was far too honest. Or Ron.

She made an effort not to laugh at her sudden mental image of Ron, looking like Bellatrix, and

constantly asking, "Are we done yet?" and "Can I change out of this dress?"

Ginny knew she was a better actor than Ron. Or Percy. Or Charlie. Maybe not the twins, though. That was where she learned how to fib and act like she was completely innocent. The twins were good enough that they could fool their mum some of the time, which was hard.

Ginny waited until Harry had Kreacher transport Griphook back to Gringotts. Then she took Hermione aside. "I have the hair from Bellatrix. I just need some of your Polyjuice Potion. And then I'll need your help transfiguring my clothes and doing my hair and makeup to look right. Then I'll just apparate right to the steps of Gringotts and stomp right in."

Hermione winced a little. "All this sounds really dangerous."

Ginny said, "It could be. That's why I'm going to want another flask of Polyjuice Potion, and fifty or a hundred feet of rope with a weight on the end-"

Hermione interrupted, "I've got that already. In a Muggle storage bag. And something special for the weight."

Ginny went on, "-and an envelope of Peruvian Darkness Powder-"

"I hate that stuff," Hermione shuddered.

"-and a change of clothes just in case..." Ginny told her the rest of what she wanted to have along, even if she wasn't sure she would need any of it, or even if all of it, plus everything she had in her bracelet, would be enough to get her out of Gringotts.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 05 Sep 2012 18:33:05 GMT  
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Chapter 91 In His Likeness

Ginny swallowed the Polyjuice Potion, gagging the entire time. This wasn't the first time she had taken the stuff, but she had never tasted anything so nasty. Bellatrix's hair made the potion taste like poisonous bugs. Like horror and insanity and evil. If Ginny never had to taste that stuff again, it would still be too soon.

And the transformation was more painful. It felt like her skin was ripping apart, and her bones

were twisting inside her. It felt like her heart was writhing angrily, objecting to being turned into a monster like Bellatrix Lestrange. It was all she could do not to scream.

She found that she was on her hands and knees. She had taken off her clothes and slipped into her Hogwarts robe, since Bellatrix was bigger than Ginny Weasley. But even the robe felt too small.

Long black hair was everywhere. She brushed it out of her face and stood up. She turned to look at Hermione, who was white-faced and panicky.

Hermione swallowed hard. "I... I... I didn't think it would be this awful to be near Bellatrix so... soon. I could never do this."

Ginny said, "Now I need your help with some quick hairdressing and cosmetic charms. You learned everything Fleur and her mum did at the wedding, right?"

"Right," Hermione gulped nervously.

Ginny carefully sat down and gently said, "It's still me. Ginny."

Hermione swallowed hard. "It... You... You look like her. And you sound like her."

Ginny said, "Hermione, you're the only one who can do these spells. And I have only one hour now."

Hermione mentally shook herself and said, "Right. Yes." But her hand was shaking as she lifted her wand. It took her three tries to get the hair right, and two tries to get the cosmetics right.

When Hermione was done, Ginny looked in the mirror. "Oh, Merlin!" She really looked like Bellatrix. It was uncanny. It was creepy. No wonder Hermione was about to faint. She pushed away the revulsion and said, "Now we need to transfigure my clothes into something she'd wear."

That was easier for Hermione, since she didn't have to look at Ginny, just perform a couple Fitting Charms. It wasn't easier for Ginny, because Bellatrix dressed like some sort of insane magical slag. Hermione buttoned up the back of the dress, and Ginny stared into the mirror. Merlin, she looked... She looked like Bellatrix. The cleavage of the dressrobe was like something Celestina Warburton's celebrity guests would wear. If they were well-endowed and about twenty-five. Ginny had to admit that Bellatrix was well-preserved for someone in her late forties.

And she had breasts. Ginny wasn't flat-chested or anything, but she wasn't over-endowed. Bellatrix had much bigger breasts, and they were bulging up and into the cleavage of the dress. She checked, "Are you sure this dress isn't too small?"

Hermione said, "This is just what she was wearing a couple hours ago. Including the cleavage. Sorry."

"No, don't be sorry," Ginny said. "You did a great job. Incredible." She stepped into the black leather boots that had been transfigured from her trainers. They had heavy soles and two inch heels, so she was even taller and more threatening than before.

Hermione uncomfortably asked, "And you have her wand from the spring?"

Ginny nodded. "And my supplies, in my wrist bracelet. So I'm ready to go."

Hermione timidly said, "Good luck. Ginny."

Ginny thought that Hermione would have hugged her, except that there was no way Hermione Granger was going to hug Bellatrix Lestrange.

Ginny strode out of the room and through the cottage. She needed to get far enough from Shell Cottage that the Fidelius Charm would let her disappearate. She strode past Ron.

"Merlin's baggy Y-fronts!" Ron turned nearly as pale as Hermione, although he was a lot paler to start with.

Ginny just said, "Don't let Harry see me like this."

Ron gulped and said, "Oh. Right." He rushed off in the direction of the kitchen to head off Harry if he was coming this way.

Ginny strode out the front door of the cottage and walked until she was sure she was clear of the Fidelius Charm's protections. She held Bellatrix's wand in her hand and carefully turned. She smoothly disappeared.

She apparated into the middle of Diagon Alley, not forty feet from the steps to Gringotts. She hadn't expected she would do that well when she was using someone else's wand. Or maybe this wand would work better for her while she was in this form. Not that she knew for sure. She should have checked before she left Shell Cottage.

But it was too late now. She was scared, but she was going into Gringotts anyway. Some part of her probably the part that was the First Slayer wanted to charge in there and slay anything that got in her way. Some other part of her wanted to make a flippant comment and act ditzy, so the goblins would underestimate her. But Bellatrix Lestrange would do neither of those things.

Ginny stepped forward. She couldn't walk carefully. She had to walk forcefully. Dramatically. Powerfully. Threateningly.

She could do most of that. All she had to do was let the Slayer out. Be the dominant predator of the area. Be something more dangerous than the people around her could really understand.

There were posters up and down Diagon Alley with Harry's face on them, all of them announcing that he was wanted for questioning by the Ministry. Had the Ministry ever done anything helpful for Harry? She couldn't think of a single thing, other than that one time when Harry accidentally turned his Aunt Marge into a balloon and Minister Fudge let Harry off because everyone was worried about Sirius Black. Maybe this wasn't all that different than the way things were before Riddle and his people took over. That was really discouraging.

There were panhandlers in doorways who saw her and fearfully turned away. She felt sick to her stomach as she considered what the Death Eaters and the Ministry had probably done to these poor unfortunates just in the last month or two. But she couldn't say so. She had to act like she hated every one of them. She scowled at them and strode onward.

Someone saw her and changed direction to intercept her. It was one of the Death Eaters from their trip to the Department of Mysteries!

She nearly whipped out her wand and attacked him before she remembered she wasn't supposed to be Ginny Weasley. She was supposed to be Bellatrix Lestrange, and she was supposed to know him. He had been working with Bellatrix and Lucius Malfoy that night. Uh-oh, if she couldn't think of his name, he would know something was up!

She stopped and looked at him. He stepped over to her and bowed slightly. "Madame Lestrange, how nice to see you."

Macnair! It was Walden Macnair! The Death Eater whose mask Harry knocked off. The Ministry 'official' who wanted to kill Buckbeak. She coolly replied, "Macnair. Tracking down a few angry kneazles for the Ministry?"

He looked a little surprised she wasn't friendlier. He said, "I was going to meet your brother-in-law for dinner."

She cursed inwardly. Could this get any more awkward? She tried, "I'm really not interested in family matters. I have a small crisis that the Dark Lord would not want to leave unattended."

"Well then, by all means, don't let me delay you," he said hastily. "I-"

"MURDERER!" a voice behind her screamed.

She whirled and fired off a silent stunner just as one of the panhandlers leapt into the air to attack her with a carving knife. He fell unconscious at her feet.

Macnair asked, "Did you just stun it?"

Oh Merlin, Bellatrix wouldn't use a stunner when she could wield something more horrible. She lied, "Why would I do that? It's a new spell from Snape. A very clever modification of the Entrail Expelling Curse. It ties the victim's bowels in knots so he dies in slow agony over the course of a week or so."

She couldn't believe the Death Eaters would call people 'it'. What monsters. Oh Merlin, she was going to have to do that too.

Macnair finally looked impressed. "I'll have to talk to Severus about that one."

Ginny said archly, "I don't trust him, but he is a very creative man." She turned to face Gringotts and said, "I really must be going. Please leave it there in the street so it won't receive proper medical attention."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 09 Sep 2012 07:10:46 GMT  
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Chapter 92 According to His Image

Ginny strode up the steps of Gringotts, hoping she wasn't sweating. She certainly felt like sweating. She still wasn't sure she had gotten away with it, but all she could do was walk up the steps with her back to Macnair. If he chose to curse her... if anyone chose to hurl a hex at the dreaded Bellatrix Lestrange... her plan could be ruined before she even got started. If they hurled the right hex, it wasn't just her plan that would be dead.

Goblins in armor stood on either side of the doors into Gringotts. She could feel their non-human nature. The twisting in her guts was only going to get worse as she moved into the goblins' domain. She hoped she could stand it. She hoped she could control her Slayer impulses.

She strode across the marble floor toward the old goblin at the far end of the room. The one at the desk for the special clients. The oldest, richest, most powerful wizards who had the most money and valuables in the biggest, best-guarded vaults.

"I would like to visit my vault. Immediately," she glared.

The goblin looked at her calmly. She probably couldn't hurl hexes at the goblins in here. She probably couldn't hurl hexes at all in here.

"Madame Lestrage. How unusual to see you here, when you just summoned one of our bank officers just this afternoon."

She snapped, "It is precisely because I had to summon that little worm that I need to check my vault. At once."

"Are you accusing Gringotts of failing in its obligations to safeguard the Lestrage family treasure?"

She growled at him. "I am telling you right now that if you do not cooperate with me, or if I find anything missing from my vault, I will be informing someone who you do not want to come visiting you!"

"Very well," he said, still apparently calm. Ginny could hear his heart racing in fear. "May I see the usual identification?"

She handed over Bellatrix's wand. He rolled it between his long fingers. He finally said, "Yes. But this is not the wand you have been using since summer."

She snapped, "Thank Merlin! I finally had the good fortune to be able to have a little chat with the urchins who robbed me, and I gave them... a timeout. A nice, permanent one, at that." She grinned fiendishly at the goblin.

"Very well, Madame Lestrage. Let me summon a goblin to take you to your vault. Goldforb?"

"No!" she insisted. "I want Griphook. Griphook was the one who put a certain treasure in there, and he is the one who will go with me to make sure it is still there. And if it is not, then he is the one who will pay the penalty."

Griphook stepped out. "Silberhob, it is all right. Madame Lestrage is upset about nothing. I will be fine."

"Very well," the older goblin said in tones that clearly meant things were not well.

Ginny tossed her hair to the side and stormed off right past Griphook, forcing him to hurry more than he wanted to.

Once they were in the cart and rolling down the tracks, Griphook said, "Was that really necessary, Madame Lestrangle?"

She just said, "I wouldn't have done it if I weren't concerned that it was. Now, we're not at the halfway point yet, but I think it is fair to give you the sword now." She pulled it out of her wrist bracelet.

He smiled hungrily as he studied the sword. "Yes. The true sword." He then said something in the goblin language that Ginny couldn't begin to interpret. He looked at her expression and said, "It is the true name of the sword, as bestowed upon it by its maker and owner, Ragnuk the First. In your language it would mean something akin to 'The Last and Greatest Battlesword Designed by Ragnuk the Kingmaker'.

They rushed on through tunnels and corridors, going deeper and deeper underground. Ginny was glad she had Slayer powers, because it was getting colder, and she had nothing covering Bellatrix's cleavage.

After several more bracing minutes tearing through the icy air, she heard what sounded like rushing water. She had never heard that sound in Gringotts before, and she didn't know whether it was unusual or if it was simply a sound she would not have been able to hear before.

They zoomed around another corner, and Ginny saw the source of the noise. There was a waterfall pouring down over the tracks and into the depths below.

Griphook moaned, "Oh no, it's the Thief's Downfall! It will magically wash away all enchantments and magics. Silberhob must have suspected something!"

Ginny hastily performed an *impervius* on her wrist bracelet and hoped that was enough to preserve the spells on it. She wasn't worried about holding her breath for long enough to get through the waterfall. Not when she was the Vampire Slayer. She also wasn't worried about getting pounded on by hundreds or even thousands of gallons of water. She wasn't even worried about losing the Bellatrix Lestrangle appearance. But she was worried about losing her wrist bracelet and everything she had stored in it.

At the last moment, she had another idea. She hastily yanked the rope out of her wrist bracelet. It was in a completely clear Muggle thing that Hermione called a 'plastic bag'. And it was supposed to be completely waterproof.

Ginny shoved her arm into the bag up to her elbow, and held the bag tightly closed with her other hand. She tilted her forearm upward, so water couldn't leak in and get to the bracelet.

Then they were deluged with a flood of water. It pounded down on them and obscured their sight. It kept them from breathing, and it soaked their already cold skins in iciness. Ginny held her breath and tried to ignore the pounding force of the water. She couldn't ignore the weird feeling as her transfigured clothing reverted while she was still wearing it, or the painful sensations as the Polyjuice Potion's effects were undone.

The cart shot out the back side of the waterfall and flew off the tracks. Ginny could see that they were going to fall about fifteen feet and crash in the middle of a large open area in a cavern-like area. She pulled out her wand as she somersaulted in the air. She landed on both feet and one arm, while she used her wand hand to perform a silent levicorpus and catch Griphook before he crashed onto the rocky floor.

She stood up as she lowered Griphook to the rocky surface. If she was an ordinary witch, she would have been battered and bruised by the rough landing. Maybe worse. Maybe broken bones and horrible cuts. She was so glad she hadn't let Hermione or Ron or Harry come along.

She quickly shoved the plastic bag with the rope back into her wrist bracelet. She sighed in relief when she found that the bracelet still had its Undetectable Extension Charm. She wondered if she would need the rope at all, but she was glad she had it. The rope was a hundred feet of quarter-inch rope which was strong enough to hold several times Ginny's weight. The rubber ball secured to the end had a Sticking Charm cast on it. She could hurl the ball against something like a ceiling and haul herself up out of sight of any goblin forces. She just had to remember to keep refreshing the charm, or she would end up throwing it and having it bounce off her target instead of sticking cleanly.

She watched out of the corner of her eye as Griphook looked around, calculating distances. She was sure he didn't know that her peripheral vision and night vision was far better than normal. So she could tell that he was trying to figure if he could run off with the sword before she could blast him with her wand.

He sighed quietly - not quietly enough to evade her Slayer hearing, but quietly - and walked over to her. "Thank you. I did not expect that a witch would take the time to save a goblin while she was falling onto a rock floor."

She said, "That's because the only witches you know are like Bellatrix Lestrange, not like me. Or Hermione Granger. Or Luna Lovegood. There was no way I was going to let you smash onto solid rock. Especially when you're holding that sword like that. You could've been really badly injured."

He nodded and said, "Let us proceed. You no longer look like Madame Lestrange, so we need to avoid running into any patrols before we retrieve the cup."

She glanced down at herself. She was back to Ginny Weasley, and her clothes were back to Ginny Weasley's jeans and trainers. Personally, she preferred not looking like Bellatrix, but not looking like Madame LeStrange could cause some serious problems at the vault.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 12 Sep 2012 07:02:20 GMT  
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## Chapter 93 Other Sons and Daughters

It was about a twenty minute walk to the tunnel where the LeStrange vault was located. Ginny never would have found it without a goblin to lead her. There were two trolls armed with clubs at the mouth of the tunnel, and there was a massive dragon breathing slowly about halfway down the tunnel, well in front of the vault door.

The dragon exhaled, and the burst of flame gave off more than enough light for Ginny to see a lot more detail. The dragon was bleached white from a lifetime underground, and it was blind. It had hideous scars on its face and around its legs. One of its legs had a massive metal cuff chaining it to the rear wall of the tunnel, so it couldn't try to escape. She wasn't fanatical about dragons like Charlie was, but this was just cruel.

She walked beside Griphook into the tunnel. Her inner Slayer writhed angrily at the trolls, who ignored her as long as she was with a Gringotts goblin. But she had no doubt that Griphook could summon them in the blink of an eye. Perhaps without even moving. And they were big. Massive, smelly trolls who were nine feet tall and as wide as she was tall. It was all she could do not to yank some cloth out of her bracelet and slap it over her nose. Having Slayer senses wasn't always a good thing.

There was a wooden box filled with chains and metal pieces. She had no idea what it was, but it wouldn't have been sitting there unless there was a need for it. And it had to be far enough away from the dragon to avoid being blasted no matter how far the dragon could go, or the wood of the box would have been incinerated long ago. She looked along the walls, and even in the near-darkness of the corridor she could see where the burnmarks stopped. That might turn out to be really important, if she had to fight the dragon and the trolls to get out of here. She was fairly certain from stories she'd heard from her dad and her brother Bill that no one could disapparate down here, and Disillusionment Charms and Disguising Charms wouldn't work either. She had no idea which defensive and offensive spells would work, and she didn't want to try one in an emergency and find out the hard way that she had chosen poorly.

Well, that was all part of her plan, as wobbly as it was now that the goblins had to know something was up. And she couldn't trust Griphook, even though she needed him. And she was depending on her Slayer skills to get her out of anything her magic couldn't. And she had a couple surprises from Hermione that she was hoping the goblins were really not expecting.

Griphook picked up the metal stuff from the box. He smirked, "These are clackers. The dragon knows to back up when he hears them. He has been trained."

And Ginny could guess how the goblins had trained the dragon. After watching Harry in the first task of the Tri-Wizard Tournament, Ginny had never thought she would ever feel sorry for a dragon. But she knew they had tortured the poor thing. Probably every scar she could see was part of this hideous 'training' so they could make it move forward and backward to guard these vaults.

Griphook let the clackers clatter and clang. The dragon roared, but backed up as quickly as it could manage. When it was at the far end of the tunnel, Griphook stepped up to one particular vault door and placed his palm on it.

The door simply dissolved at his touch. Ginny knew the door would magically re-form in a matter of seconds, so she was going to have to get Griphook to go into the vault with her, or else she would be trapped in the vault, maybe forever. She knew the Weasley family vault didn't have magical safeguards like this one. But she also knew they couldn't afford a vault like this. The Weasley family vault usually was nearly empty, even now that Bill was married and Charlie lived in Romania and Percy lived in his own flat in Diagon Alley and the twins had their own place as well. Ginny just hoped that when she and Ron no longer lived at home assuming she was even alive by then and not one more dead Slayer her mum and dad could afford some of the things they had sacrificed for so long to take care of all of them.

But Ginny did know about vaults like this. The Blacks had several, and her dad's mum had been a Black before being cast out of the family for having the sheer nerve to marry a poor Weasley. The Prewetts had one, and her great-aunt Muriel had taken her to it several years ago to talk to her about what family heirlooms the only girl of the Weasleys would probably end up with. That goblin-made tiara that Fleur had worn at the wedding, for one. When great-aunt Muriel passed away, almost everything she had would go to either Ginny, her mum, or two distant cousins who didn't speak to the Weasleys and hadn't even come to Bill and Fleur's wedding. She wondered how they would act if she really did have a chance to marry Harry. She might be a nobody, but every witch and wizard on earth would eat Hagrid's rock cakes morning noon and night to get a chance to go to the wedding of The Boy Who Lived.

Not that she really thought that would happen. No, she was the Vampire Slayer, and they had life expectancies so short they made Harry's look like a millennium. She was figuring that some

higher power had made her the Vampire Slayer so she could give her life to protect Harry. She didn't like to think about Harry going on after she was dead, but it was better than thinking about him getting murdered by Riddle. And it wasn't like there weren't a thousand girls who would give their wand hand to marry The Boy who Lived, starting with Gabrielle Delacour. And Romilda Vane. And maybe a quarter of the girls at Hogwarts, even if you didn't count a couple Slytherin girls who maybe had a thing for Harry but maybe were just being scheming snakes. She knew she could trust Hermione and Ron to protect Harry after she was dead, as long as she did whatever it took to keep them alive too.

As soon as the door dissolved in front of her, she was hit by the nearness of the Horcrux. She was nearly overwhelmed with a writhing nausea caused by the sudden exposure to the awful thing. She staggered a little, and grabbed her stomach to try to stop the roiling, twisting sensations inside her.

Griphook moved like lightning as soon as he saw his opportunity. He sprinted as fast as he could run with the sword, and he hurled the clackers to the open end of the tunnel. The dragon lurched forward at the distant noise, thinking it was safe again. It stomped forward and belched a long, vicious gout of fire.

Ginny dropped to the floor to avoid being roasted, even though she knew Griphook would get away. She might be a Slayer, but she couldn't run through a hallway full of dragonflame, and she was struggling too hard to control her reaction to the Horcrux to do more than put up a small Shield Charm.

Griphook ran screaming down the tunnel, "Thief! Thief! Thief in the tunnels! Call the patrols!"

She knew that if she ran into the vault, the door would re-form behind her and trap her inside. She knew that if she just stood outside the vault, the dragon would blast her with flame, and she would lose any chance at the cup even if she didn't get roasted into a cinder. She had to do something!

She yanked out of her wrist bracelet the rope with its sticky rubber weight, and she stepped into the doorway of the vault. The ugly sensations from the Horcrux directed her like a flashing sign. There it was, on the far wall of the vault, on a high, inaccessible shelf.

Well, it was inaccessible for a normal witch. She hurled the rubber ball with the Sticking Charm, and her aim was perfect. The ball smacked into the side of the cup, and she yanked on the rope. The cup came flying out of the vault fast enough that it would have been a danger to anyone other than a Slayer. She snatched it out of the air, cast a quick spell to let the Sticking Charm fail for a second, and shoved the cup into her bracelet.

The dragon was nearly on top of her. It bellowed angrily and opened its mouth to try and bite

whatever it could find by sound.

She was the Vampire Slayer, but she didn't think she could beat up a sixty-foot dragon. No way.

She dove under its head and rolled between its two massive front feet. The dragon snapped at empty air, and then turned its head in a vain attempt to find where the new noises were coming from.

But she wasn't going to hold still for long enough that the dragon could find her, or even track her. She ducked under its massive belly, came up behind its left front leg, and leapt up high enough that she could get a hand on a spine jutting out from its back.

The dragon roared angrily, but couldn't seem to find her. She looked down the tunnel and saw the two trolls lumbering toward her, their clubs in attack position. Each club outweighed her, probably by a lot. And they had spotted her as she hung from the side of the dragon.

She threw the rope weight again. It went flying high up toward the vaulted roof of the tunnel, and stuck on the wall about forty feet up. She grabbed the rope and leapt, pulling herself upward into the air with her arms at the same time.

A regular girl could swing on a rope, although one this thin would probably slide right through her hands, giving her a nasty case of ropeburn before she crashed hard onto the rock floor. A Vampire Slayer? Completely different. Ginny soared fifteen feet above the dragon's back and swung through the air like... like... What was that Muggle movie Martha showed her years ago? Tarzan. That was it. She was swinging through the air like Tarzan with those vines.

She swung in an arc downward and toward those massive trolls. Did she have time to fight them? Did she dare leave them behind her? If she fought those trolls right at the place where she would swing into them, would the dragon roast the three of them as it lumbered forward? She had a fraction of a second to decide what to do.

Her inner Slayer knew what it wanted to do. It wanted to pull out the biggest battleaxe she had in her wrist bracelet and hack those trolls into pieces. And it wanted to hack the dragon to pieces too. Ginny didn't think it would be a good idea to stick around that long, because Griphook would be back any second now with a small army of angry goblins.

She swung right at the trolls, who were still stomping their way toward her. And she let go of the rope.

## Chapter 94 Out of the Ground

She had the crossbow out and fired before she landed. The lefthand troll had a crossbow bolt into his eye and out the back of his head, but he was still moving forward. His body just hadn't realized yet that he was dead.

She threw the crossbow straight up into the air, and the righthand troll followed it with his eyes for just a moment. But a moment was all the time a Vampire Slayer needed. She had a battleaxe out of the bracelet and, with a ruthless backhand throw, flashing across the space between her and her foe.

The battleaxe sliced wickedly through the troll's neck, and the troll began to fall just a fraction of a second after the first one.

She leapt over them and caught the crossbow as it came back down. The bodies of the two trolls hit the ground hard. The battleaxe smacked against the wall about forty feet down the tunnel. The dragon roared.

She moved as fast as she could, sprinting past the corpses of the trolls and shoving the crossbow into her bracelet before the dragon could fill the hallway with more fire. She released the Sticking Charm and pulled the rope behind her. She scooped up the battleaxe as she ran past. She was at the end of the tunnel.

A massive blast of flame filled the tunnel and turned the corpses into troll flambÃ©. She ducked around the corner and ran silently for half a dozen seconds before she heard a storm of goblins rushing her way. She couldn't tell how many of them were coming, but her inner Slayer told her it was a lot more than a handful. And she could hear armor clanking furiously as the goblins charged toward the Lestrangle vault.

She threw the rubber weight high up on the wall of the open area, and it stuck about seventy feet up. She clambered up the rope, coiling the trailing end up after her. She climbed easily, only stopping when she was about five feet below the rubber ball. She had thought about bringing the rope, but it took a brain like Hermione's to think up how to combine a magical spell and a Muggle toy to make a tool for a Slayer.

She watched silently as a small army of heavily armed goblins ran beneath her, their armor clanking loudly to her ears. She wondered if the armor was bespelled to block wand-based magics. That's what she would do if she could. She didn't know enough about goblin magics to

know if they could do that, but she knew it was possible to put a spell on clothing to give it an automatic protection like a Shield Charm. The twins were already selling things like that.

She remained still, even though the closeness of the Horcrux was making her feel sick and belligerent. If only she had gotten ten seconds with the sword before Griphook betrayed her. If only she hadn't been overwhelmed by the evil of the Horcrux when the vault door dissolved. If only...

The goblin brigade stopped just short of the tunnel opening, while another brigade took up position on the other side of the tunnel. A third brigade marched in, with Griphook and some others in suits following carefully behind the armed forces.

Ginny slid a couple feet down the rope until she found an outcropping with a good handhold. She made sure she had a good grip with her left hand, and she used her wand to unstick the rubber weight. Then she tucked the wand away and stuffed all the rope into her bracelet.

She reached out for another small outcropping and moved to her left, away from the armored brigades. She was guessing that they still thought she was inside the Lestrage vault. As soon as they found the dead goblins, they would probably figure she had escaped, maybe with help. An axe strike and a crossbow bolt weren't very witch-like, so maybe they would figure she had brought some help. If she was lucky, they might assume she had help from some other Gringotts goblins, which would really muck things up.

She carefully used every handhold and toehold and fingergrasp she could find. A couple times, she even considered taking off her shoes and socks, so she could really use her toes. But she worked across the rock wall a foot or two at a time, being careful to be absolutely silent. Silent and cautious. The last thing she wanted was to move in front of a distant torch or something and become visible.

She worked her way a hundred feet further to the left and fifty feet further up, until she moved around a curve in the rock and was out of sight of the goblin brigades. She could still hear as one brigade backed the dragon up and charged into the tunnel. She figured she only had seconds before they found the trolls, and she had no idea if they would be able to tell from the burnt remains how they died.

She pulled out the rope and weight again, and threw it high into the air. The weight just fell short of the tracks for another cart, so she clambered up twenty feet and tried again. Once the rubber weight stuck to the bottom of one of the tracks, she pulled herself up as quickly as she could. Then she clambered over the tracks and onto the rock surface of another level.

Now all she needed was a cart. Or something. She started running along the tracks at the best speed she could manage while not falling between the sleepers. She figured she was running at

a bit more than half her best speed, which was still a lot faster than the goblins could expect any witch or wizard could possibly manage. If she was managing twenty or twenty-five miles an hour, then she could run all the way back out in less than half an hour. Unless she got lost, or she had really underestimated how fast the cart was moving, or one of a dozen other things.

She figured she ran for fifteen solid minutes before she heard anything. It sounded like it was a cart, coming her way. She hopped off the tracks and stepped into the shadows of an alcove. It was a good thing she was the Vampire Slayer, or she would have been a sweating, panting, exhausted mess by then. Instead, she had no trouble being completely silent and still.

And she finally had a bit of luck. The cart stopped not two hundred yards from where she lurked, and a middle-aged woman got out with a Gringotts goblin. She even knew the woman. Garvin Maringo worked in a department down the hall from Arthur Weasley, and her dad had introduced her to the Maringo family before. This was his wife Agatha. Their two boys had to be in their twenties now. Probably good little Ministry lackeys like their dad.

Ginny figured she had only a few minutes to do what she needed to do, and then hustle over to Mrs. Maringo's cart before the woman completed her business in what was most likely the Maringo family vault.

Agatha Maringo made sure she had enough Galleons in her purse before she let the goblin close the vault door. Garvin was quite unhappy about unnecessary trips away from their home while Death Eaters were swarming unchecked about the countryside. She stepped back and nodded to the goblin, who slammed the vault door and locked it with her key. She reached out for the key.

"Ahem, ahem," called out a syrupy-sweet voice she couldn't mistake.

Agatha dropped the key. She hurried to find it and pick it back up, and then she turned to face one of the last Ministry people she wanted to face. She forced a smile onto her face. "Madame Umbridge! How... how nice to see you again!" She didn't know what the old bat was doing, but she was already praying it had nothing to do with Garvin's work. Or the boys' jobs.

Dolores Umbridge waddled forward in a pink Ministry robe, with a matching pink bow in her hair. She glared at the goblin beside Agatha. "I prefer 'Deputy Minister Umbridge', thank you. I do hope you're ready to return to the surface."

"Why yes, I am," Agatha said, managing not to stutter.

Deputy Minister Umbridge fumed, "I needed to visit one of the family vaults to look for some ancient documents, and the goblin I was issued decided that he needed to rush off on some wild

goose chase. As if anyone would consider breaking into Gringotts! And he simply expected me to wait idly until he could return for me! This is unacceptable! I shall be having words with Minister Thicknesse as soon as possible!"

Agatha managed, "Umm, that is... umm... shocking. Very shocking."

Umbridge glared at the goblin and then said, "And so, Mrs. Maringo, is it not? I would like to take your cart back to the surface and get out of this goblin-ridden pit as soon as I can."

"Oh yes, naturally, I mean, would you consider sharing with me? I'm sure there is room for the three of us."

"Ahem. Very well..."

And so, not ten minutes later, Dolores Umbridge stormed out of Gringotts, angrily telling any goblin who would listen that they would regret their rudeness. No one was unhappy to see her waddle down the white steps of Gringotts and disappear.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 19 Sep 2012 07:27:14 GMT  
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Chapter 95 The Lord Has Cursed

Ginny apparated to a spot near Shell Cottage that was not far from where she had left. She had left looking like Bellatrix Lestrange, and she was returning looking like Dolores Umbridge. Not really an improvement in any way.

The worst part of it was that she had to undress before using the Polyjuice Potion with Dolores Umbridge's hair. Umbridge was too wide to wear Ginny's things, and Ginny was too tall to wear Umbridge's things. Ginny was just glad she had an extra set of clothes, so she could take out a robe and change it to a pink monstrosity the right size for Umbridge. She had also needed to transfigure a cap into a pink hairbow, and transfigure a pair of shoes into pink heels of the right size, to complete the usual hideous Dolores Umbridge look.

Hermione and Ron came running out of the cottage when they saw her.

Hermione ran up and muttered, "Ugh, I still don't know why you had to pick her." She handed Ginny a flask of Polyjuice Potion that Ginny quickly downed.

Ginny said, "That didn't taste so bad."

Hermione said, "It shouldn't, it's your own hair."

Ginny stepped out of the shoes and took off the hairbow. Then she gritted her teeth at the painful transformation. But in under a minute, she was herself again. She quickly transfigured the robe to a black one that fit her properly. Then she transfigured her shoes back to normal and put them on again.

"Thank Merlin for that! I'd rather look at Bellatrix than that frog-faced creep!"

Hermione squawked, "Ron!"

Ron fussed, "Well, it's true! Bellatrix is a bleeding psycho, but Umbridge? Pure evil."

Ginny didn't say anything, but she was certainly glad Hermione was a hundred times smarter than Umbridge. Hermione had outsmarted Old Frogface about a dozen times in Ginny's fourth year. It was a shame Harry and the twins couldn't control their tempers around Umbridge, but Ginny was sure the old bat would have trumped up charges against Harry sooner or later anyway. Anyone evil enough to sick dementors on a fifteen year old boy wouldn't stop at faking evidence or just plain lying to get Harry booted out of Hogwarts.

Ron asked impatiently, "Well, did you find it? Did you hack it to pieces? Did you have to knock Griphook out and take the sword away from him?"

Ginny grimaced. "I got the cup. Griphook ran off with the sword while I was standing there feeling sick from the Horcrux. So we've got it and we can't destroy it, and it's making me want to puke."

"Well, hand it over." Hermione held her hand out sternly.

Ginny handed her the cup and watched as Hermione paced off fifty steps before using an Excavating Charm to bury it in the sandy soil.

When Hermione walked back, Ron said, "Okay, we're down to one Horcrux. So when Harry takes care of Ickle Tommykins, we've got him trapped. We'll have time to find someone or something that can destroy the cup. Maybe Harry can go down to the Chamber of Secrets and snag us a basilisk fang, or we can get somebody like Flitwick to conjure up some Fiendfyre for a few seconds."

Hermione frowned, "Ron, you don't really think it'll be that easy, do you?"

He blushed, his ears turning pink. "Well... No. But we're doing great so far, and maybe when we get in trouble again, one of us could, you know, summon the sword, and we could use it on the cup."

Hermione pursed her lips. "I don't think the sword of Gryffindor works like a house elf. You can't just call it when you feel like it."

Ginny said to Hermione, "I'm sorry I messed up. I guess you were right, and we needed to plan things out for a month or two."

Hermione said, "No, I think you were right after all. As soon as Bellatrix can get up and get herself cleaned up, she's going to go to her vault and retrieve that cup and the sword. And as soon as she find out that sword's a fake, she'll never trust that cup there again. This was probably our only chance to find it."

Ron grinned, "And your plan worked! You got into Gringotts and stole a lost goblin treasure and got away with it. I bet Griphook's in huge trouble right now, the little blighter."

Ginny heard the door of the cottage open behind her, and she turned to see who it was. Bill was helping a white-faced Harry stagger toward them

"Uh-oh," Ron muttered anxiously.

Harry struggled to walk up to where they stood. "It's bad. Really bad," he gasped.

Hermione interrupted, "Bill's here. Do we need to..."

Harry shook his head in exhaustion. "Don't think it matters anymore. Riddle knows we're hunting his Horcruxes."

Ginny gasped. Everyone gasped. Ron said something that would have gotten his mouth washed out if they'd been home.

Bill said, "What?"

Hermione said, "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is Tom Riddle. Head Boy at Hogwarts around fifty years ago. He found out how to make himself immortal. Horcruxes. They're a very dark magic where you commit murder and use how that act damages your soul to tear a chunk of your soul off and seal it in a magical container. He split his soul into seven pieces, and Dumbledore figured it out. He sent Harry on a quest to find all of them and destroy them, so Harry could stop Riddle

once and for all. We've found all of them and destroyed all but one. But if Riddle knows what we're up to, he can make more and beat us."

Ron said, "We had to break into the Ministry."

Ginny added, "And sneak into Hogwarts."

Hermione said, "And break into Gringotts."

Bill looked ashen. "And... you've managed to do all these things? And get away with them?" He received four tired nods.

Bill looked at Ron. "I guess I've really been taking you for granted. That's... astounding."

Ron shook his head slowly. "No, you haven't. I'm just the sidekick."

"No, you're not!" Hermione insisted angrily.

Harry said, "Look, I've got to tell you what I saw. He was really, really angry. I mean, he was blowing up most of a wing of Malfoy Manor while everyone else ran for their lives. He was torturing the Malfoys for letting Hermione get away, and he was torturing all the Lestranges for letting us steal the cup out of their vault, and he killed Macnair for not recognizing it wasn't the real Bellatrix when he met Ginny at Gringotts. They think it was Hermione."

Hermione said, "Oh Merlin! As soon as they grab Griphook and hurt him a bit, he'll tell them it was Ginny. We need to warn Mr. and Mrs. Weasley!"

Bill said, "I can handle that part."

Harry said, "Riddle knows we have - had - the real sword of Gryffindor, and he figured out what that means. He thinks we used it on Nagini. So he's heading after the Deathstick. Right now. He's pulling together an army to take it."

Bill said, "The Deathstick? That's a legend."

Hermione said, "That's what I thought. It's not. It's one of the three Deadly Hallows, and Riddle wants the Deathstick to fight Harry, because Harry's wand beat his when they dueled."

Bill guessed, "That's why we have Mister Ollivander here now?"

Hermione explained, "Harry's wand - the wand that picked him when he was eleven - it's the brother wand to Riddle's. When Harry and Riddle dueled, the wands... linked."

Harry said, "When that happened, it stopped being a duel of magical skill and started being a duel of... I guess... determination. I won, and I got away, but we figured Riddle's been obsessed ever since with figuring out what happened, and how to beat my wand."

Bill said, "But no one knows where the Deathstick could be, or even if it's real."

Harry said, "We do." Bill's jaw dropped open.

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Chapter 96 This One

Harry added, "We know exactly where it is."

Hermione said, "Gregorovitch, the old European wandmaker, had it for study. Gellert Grindelwald stole it. Dumbledore took it when he defeated Grindelwald. He just didn't tell anybody that he's been wielding The Elder Wand for half a century. It's in Dumbledore's tomb with him."

Bill said, "You four figured all this out? And no one else on earth has done that?"

Hermione blushed and said, "We had help. And we know Riddle's figured it out too. Mostly."

Bill pointed out, "And that tomb's on Hogwarts grounds, and protected by Merlin only knows how many spells... You're going to need a cursebreaker to get to it."

Harry looked at Bill and said to the others, "There's no point in keeping any of this a secret anymore. Riddle's found out."

Ginny said, "So we have to move now, and move fast."

Bill just stared at her. "When did you get so determined?"

Hermione looked at Ginny and got a quick nod back. "Bill, your little sister is the latest Vampire Slayer."

"That's a myth."

Ron laughed, "I knew you'd say that." He grew serious. "Mum and dad said the same thing. Mum went spare when Ginny went out in the middle of the night and killed three vampires with a stake and came back all beat up."

Ginny looked at Bill's disbelieving expression. "Merlin! Come on Bill, just hit me with a spell. A stunner or something."

Bill whipped out his wand and struck. Ginny didn't bother to move. The spell just bounced off. She said, "That kind of stung."

Harry said, "There's a prophecy. It was made before I was born. It's why Riddle went after me and my parents in person. It says one of us has to kill the other. That's what Dumbledore's been aiming for this whole time. I've got to destroy all the Horcruxes, and I've got to face Riddle and kill him. And Riddle knows half the prophecy, so he knows I'm the threat he's got to deal with, so there's nowhere I can run to get away from him. Either I meet him on my terms, or I meet him on his terms."

Bill said, "I'll have Fleur send a Patronus to mum and dad, and I'll grab my gear. Give me a minute. Do you need to put together anything?"

Hermione said, "We're ready to go right now." But Ginny knew that was a small fib.

As soon as Bill ran into the cottage, Hermione said, "All right, Ron and I grab the cup and apparate to the quidditch field. That's outside the school wards. You two tell Bill where to meet us, and you apparate there. We'll be far enough from you that Ginny won't feel the Horcrux. And we'll go through the wards to Dumbledore's tomb. Students can pass through the wards on foot. I think we're still officially students. Ginny certainly is, and Ron should be. I don't know if Bill will count."

Ron said, "And it's not like Snape's going to bother to really keep Harry out."

Ginny said, "Everyone like the Carrows at school was afraid Harry was sneaking around under his cloak, so they have to know he can walk right in through the wards if he wants to."

Harry said, "We'll have to be fast. He's been putting together his army for months now, and I don't know how long it'll take him to get it all in one spot, but it can't be all that long, when he's got an army of Death Eaters who can apparate wherever he wants."

Hermione grabbed Ron and rushed over to dig up the cup. Then they disappeared with a crack.

Bill came running out with a belt slung about his waist and a small backpack. "Okay. Where to?"

Harry said, "Middle of the Hogwarts quidditch pitch. We don't know if non-students like you will be able to get through the wards without a pass from the headmaster. Which is Snape."

Bill groaned, "You guys like to live dangerously, don't you?"

Ginny said, "We'd just like to live, thank you."

Bill said, "Right. Let's see if I can get through the wards. If not, I'll loan you some of my gear and head back here."

Ginny didn't bother to take Harry's arm. She knew she could apparate to Hogwarts. She'd apparated from there to Hermione's hideout with no trouble.

She took out her wand and disappeared.

She blinked and saw she was dead in the middle of the quidditch pitch. The place looked gloomy and in need of some painting spells. She figured there couldn't be house teams, so she didn't know if the pitch was getting any use at all. Considering that James Potter had been a quidditch star at Hogwarts, Snape was probably getting immense pleasure out of squashing all the dreams the students had of playing quidditch and being popular for it.

Hermione and Ron hurried over to her. Harry and Bill apparated nearby and walked toward her. Hermione stopped about forty feet away, although that was close enough that Ginny could tell Hermione had Hufflepuff's Cup.

Bill asked, "Why's Hermione over there?"

Ginny said, "One of the downsides of being the Vampire Slayer. I can sense evil. Being near the Horcruxes makes me sick. We've got the last one and Hermione's carrying it."

Ron said angrily, "The diary that just about killed Ginny and Harry? Horcrux."

Bill asked, "So you weren't the Vampire Slayer then? When did you get the power?"

Ginny frowned, "The night Dumbledore died. While Bellatrix Lestrange was torturing me to death. When the Sunnydale Hellmouth collapsed in California."

Hermione said, "It saved her life. And she saved Harry right afterward."

Bill said, "Sounds like you were really lucky." He noticed that everybody else winced. "What?"

Harry said, "They were incredibly lucky that night, because I made them take some felix felicis first."

Ginny growled, "And I'm never doing that again. Really great luck? Means someone else is having the worst luck ever. The Vampire Slayer before me? She died just because I needed some luck right then. And from what we've found out, she was the greatest Vampire Slayer in years and years."

Hermione herded them all toward the Hogwarts wards, while she kept at least fifty feet from Ginny all the time. Hermione and Ron walked through the wards without any trouble. Harry walked through easily. Ginny did too.

Bill bounced back like he had just walked into a brick wall.

Ron groaned, "Just when it looked like we were getting a break."

Bill pulled out his wand and tapped it against the wards. Once. Twice. Thrice. On the third tap, a small red disk appeared. Bill studied the shimmering disk and frowned, "Okay, I can't get through wards like these. Maybe if I had all my stuff here, and a couple weeks to work on the structure of the spellwork..."

Hermione said, "You stay here. I'll do a sonitransit from the tomb, so you can give me advice."

Bill said, "Do you want some of my gear? I have Hermetio's Cracks, Crevices, and Creepers and Runstrong's Arithmantic Countercharming. And I've got an Eye of Ankhmun, and two vials of ground bezoar to handle any poisons or potions."

Hermione said, "I've got both books, and several bezoars. Can I borrow the Eye?"

"Sure." He tossed it to her through the wards, and she carefully draped it around her neck. She turned and hurried off to Dumbledore's tomb.

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Chapter 97 Shall Bring Us Relief

Ginny watched as Hermione worked on the complicated wards over Dumbledore's tomb. Ron was pacing back and forth, while Harry walked around the area, far enough away to be hard to see in the deepening gloom if you weren't a Slayer. But she knew exactly where Harry was. She would have known even if he wasn't walking around carrying Hufflepuff's Cup. But it would soon be night, and she had a feeling Riddle was waiting for nightfall to launch his attack.

Hermione spoke into her end of the sonitransit spell. "Okay, that took care of the trap spells. Now all we have left are the Violation Hex and... something my diagnostics aren't seeing."

Bill's voice came clearly through the spell. "You can break Violation Hexes in one of three ways. Look in Runestrong's book. I think it's chapter 11 or thereabouts."

"Oh wait, I know this!" Hermione squeaked. "Chapter 12! Give me a minute..."

Ron worried, "Hurry up, Hermione, Riddle's bound to be on his way here!"

Hermione hissed, "Ron! I'm going as fast as I can. I can't go any faster and not risk making a drastic mistake."

"Fine," Ron grumbled. "But if he gets here before we're done, I'm going to say I told you so."

"Ooh! I got it!" Hermione said happily.

"Okay, check your diagnostic spells again," said Bill's voice.

Hermione waved her wand... and waited. "It's like there's a dead spot now. I mean, I can feel the magic if I put my hand on the stone, but the spell isn't seeing it."

Bill's voice groaned. "It's an anti-magic trap. Think of it like a giant siphon. Anything you throw at it gets sucked down into wherever. Usually a massive reservoir that can handle it."

Hermione gulped. "Dumbledore knew he was going to die sometime in the next year or less. He could have tied it into the Hogwarts wards."

Bill's voice groaned. "Oh no. If he used the Hogwarts wards as his reservoir, we won't be able to break in magically without breaking the wards on the entire school."

Hermione winced. "We can't do that! We have to keep them up for when Riddle attacks!"

Bill said, "In the pyramids, we hit one of these a few years ago. Wergleheimer and Moritz ended up having to spend four months digging through the rock by hand, like Muggles. It was brutal."

Hermione suddenly grinned. "So all we need is an army of people to lift the capstone off the tomb, right?"

"Right."

"We've got it covered." Hermione looked at Ginny and said, "Can you lift it by yourself?"

Ginny shrugged. "I can try." She cracked her neck and strode forward. It was a massive slab of marble probably heavy enough to thwart someone like Hagrid. She hadn't ever tested just how much she could lift, but now was a good time.

Getting a good grip wasn't the problem. Someone had carved elegant fluting all around the capstone, and her fingers were small enough to be able to use that as handholds. She shifted position and got her feet under her. Then she lifted with her legs. She lifted with everything she had.

The groaning sound of marble grating across marble echoed across the open field. She had to shift her position, but then she pushed sideways until the interior was visible. And there it was. The decaying body of Albus Dumbledore, in a still-white robe, with his wand positioned in his right hand over his chest. She reached in and pulled it from his unmoving fingers.

Suddenly there was a bright flash of light all around the tomb. "What was that?" she asked hastily.

"I thought I got all the curses and hexes and charms!" Hermione complained.

And Harry came staggering toward them out of the gloaming, one hand holding the cup and the other hand clutching at his scar. "Alarm spell! You set off an alarm spell. He knows. I can feel it. He knows we have it, and he's really angry. Here. He's coming. Now. With his whole army!"

Hermione frowned, "I didn't think to check the ground around the tomb for an external alarm spell. Snape or the Carrows must have put it there."

Ginny turned to him, but he was already sinking to his knees with the pain. He groaned, "I... I can see it. Through his eyes. He's so angry! At me... at us. He's got an army of Death Eaters. And three... no, four... no, five full giants. In battle armor! And he has... maybe four dozen werewolves... and that's Fenrir Greyback... as soon as it gets dark and the moon comes out they'll all change... And there are dozens of demons. And over a hundred vampires. And... oh Merlin... there's hundreds and hundreds of dementors! He must have every dementor in Britain here!"

Ginny saw in the distance as someone came rushing out of the castle. It was the two Carrows on broomsticks. And Snape, who was flying like a giant bat, just like Riddle could.

Hermione snapped into the sonitransit spell, "Bill! Get out of here now! Riddle's on his way here with an army, and you're out in the open!"

Bill voice called out, "I'll find some help and we'll come for you!" The spell abruptly ended with a crackling sizzle.

Hermione said, "The moon will be out in..." She checked her watch. "...twenty four minutes. The werewolves will change. Riddle will probably wait until then, and attack us right after." She swallowed hard. "We have twenty-four minutes."

Harry said, "There's no way we can fight off everything Riddle has coming our way. Not even Ginny can kill a giant."

Ginny admitted, "A giant? There's no way I can fight off a dozen vampires all at once. Face it, without help we're doomed."

Harry reached into his pouch and pulled out the snitch. He said, "I get it. I get it now. I open at the close." He held the snitch up to his mouth and said, "I'm going to be killed soon. We're all going to die."

Ginny watched as the snitch smoothly opened, revealing a rounded stone that had obviously been cut in half and repaired. The cut sliced cleanly through the symbol of the Deathly Hallows.

Harry gently lifted the stone out of the snitch and whispered, "The Resurrection Stone. It really is. We were right."

White mist formed on either side of Harry, and slowly coalesced... into Lily and James Potter's ghostly forms.

James Potter smiled, "Harry, my boy. You've done so much. Worked so hard. I'm so proud of you."

"We're so proud of you," Lily insisted. "And of your friends. And of your girlfriend."

Harry was struck speechless, but Hermione stepped forward. "We've done what we can, but we can't destroy the last Horcrux, and Riddle is coming with an army of dark creatures and Death Eaters. If we take a stand here, we'll be overrun. If we try to take a stand at the castle, we'll be risking the lives of everyone we know in there."

Lily smiled gently and said, "I know someone who can help."

Ron asked, "Who? Merlin? Because even Ginny can't stop this lot."

A third ghostly figure formed. A young woman with long light-colored hair, in Muggle clothing. A soft blouse and a long peasant skirt. The woman ducked her head, almost as if she was hiding her face behind her hair. She said, "G-ginny, I didn't think we'd ever g-get to meet like this."

Ginny gasped, "You! You're the one from my dream!"

"M-my name is Tara. Tara M-maclay. And I know just what to do. W-wait here." She abruptly vanished.

James Potter said, "Son, I wish we could be with you, but we can't. Not for real. We're no more than ghosts, and we never can be more. But you can save the stone for later."

Lily Potter looked like she wanted to hug Harry, but she only said, "Good luck, Harry."

Harry nodded tearfully at his parents and slipped the stone back into his pouch. The ghostly figures vanished.

Ron looked around. "What are we going to do now?"

Hermione looked at him and cringed. "A lot of people are going to get killed if we have to fight off an army of Death Eaters and vampires and giants and werewolves and Merlin only knows what!"

"That's when you know you need the helpiness," said a smug female Valley Girl voice from right behind them.

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Chapter 98 From Our Work

They jumped in shock. There was no one behind them a moment ago! Ginny whirled at Slayer speed as she whipped out her wand. And she froze when she saw the three young women there. A blonde, a redhead, and a brunette. She stared at the blonde and gasped, "You! I saw you in my dreams! I thought you were dead!"

The smug little blonde said, "Buffy Summers. Pleased to meet you. I take it you're our vanishing

and re-appearing Slayer. Tara's ghost showed up and said you needed some help pronto if not sooner. So we made with the help-age."

Ginny realized she was feeling something from the blonde. Buffy. What kind of a mother names their daughter Buffy? Well, maybe it was some sort of family name, like Ginevra. But the power coming off Buffy was... It was her power. Buffy was alive, and still a Slayer. She had to be 'Summers'. The Golden Slayer. The Slayer those vampires were so afraid of. But she was so little!

Beside the blonde, the redhead said, "Tara was right. She's the one, Buff. And she's got some cool magic working for her."

Ginny gasped, "I saw you in a vision! You... did the spell."

"Wicked place ya got here, Witchy," said the brunette, who was casually wielding a massive war hammer that looked like it was a lot heavier than she was.

Wait, did the brunette have the same Slayer feel that Buffy did? How was that possible? Wait, hadn't that one vampire said there were two Slayers? She suddenly remembered. He'd said, "And the brunette's a bleedin' psycho." Was that who she was facing now? A psycho Slayer with a giant war hammer?

She realized in frustration that Tara - the dream Tara - had told her the truth. The exact truth. When Ginny had said she was 'the' Vampire Slayer, Tara had said that was true and not true. This was why. She wasn't 'the' Vampire Slayer. She was one of three Vampire Slayers! It had to be the redheaded witch's spell.

"My name's Ginny," she said angrily. "And you don't want to be here. We're about to have a battle to the death against everything Lord Voldemort can round up. He's after this." She held up the wand. "And Harry." She pointed at her boyfriend.

The brunette smirked, "Hmm, didn't know ol' Voldywart swung that way."

"Faith!" the redhead squeaked.

"Honestly, we can't take you anywhere!" said Buffy as she rolled her eyes.

"What, it ain't something with superpowered witches, they go gay?" she leered at the redhead.

The redhead turned beet red and whined, "Faith!"

Buffy said, "I'm totally telling Xander and Dawn you said that."

Ginny and Hermione looked at each other. It looked like their new allies weren't taking this very seriously. Hermione said, "Tom Riddle is the most dangerous dark wizard in decades. Maybe centuries."

The brunette shrugged and said, "Doubt it."

Hermione hastily explained about Riddle and the war, and what was coming their way.

The three young women looked at each other. Buffy said, "About what we figured. I'm giving it a 2 on the scale. Maybe a 2.1."

"The scale?" Ron asked.

The redhead smiled, "Yeah. We have this rating system for apocalypses."

Hermione choked, "How many apocalypses do you have if you have a rating system?"

Ron gasped, "How many apocalypses do you have if you even have a plural?"

Buffy shrugged carelessly. "Maybe two or three a year."

Harry asked, "So that '2' is high on the scale?"

The brunette - Faith - shook her head, her full hair shaking sexily. "Nah. Scale goes from 1 at the bottom, up to 10. This loser isn't even trying to destroy the world, or create hell on earth. Even if he was scary, I wouldn't give him more than a 3, tops."

Hermione argued, "What do you mean he's not scary?!"

Ginny asked, "What's the worst you've faced?"

Buffy said, "9.5. Back in May."

Ginny gulped, as she realized what Buffy was talking about. The collapse of the Sunnydale Hellmouth and the fight against that army of vampire-like monsters she had seen in her Divination exam.

Buffy then pointed at the redhead and said, "Willow once managed an 8.5 all by herself." Willow blushed a deep red.

Faith teased her, "We can't give you a full 9, since Xander stopped you."

The redhead - Willow - whined, "You guys!"

Ginny suddenly realized why her testers were worried about the Red Witch. If she had the power to cause a major apocalypse all by herself - one far worse than what Voldemort planned - then she was a lot more dangerous than she looked.

Not that looks would reveal what was inside. Never judge a wand by its polish, as her mum said. Summers - Buffy - looked like a tiny Valley Girl who would shop in Muggle stores and worry about her manicure. Ginny knew differently, because she had had those Slayer dreams, and had seen just how deadly - and how dedicated - Buffy could be. And Faith, the brunette, looked like some slag off the streets of the East End of London, but she was obviously not. Willow looked like... like Hermione. Earnest and introverted, and probably a bookworm. Well, come to think of it, Hermione was probably the most dangerous witch in Britain. Maybe she wasn't as brilliant a duelist as Harry, but she was smart enough to win a fight well before it started.

Ron looked past her toward the castle, and groaned, "Uh-oh."

She turned her head and checked. It was Professor McGonagall and Professor Flitwick, hurrying toward them with wands drawn.

Hermione quickly cast a Lighting Charm so a ball of white light glowed brightly over them. She called out, "Professors! It's us!"

McGonagall strode up, her wand still out. "Miss Granger," she said frostily. "I doubt you are the ones who disrupted the wards just now."

"That would be us with the disruptage," Buffy announced, calmly stepping forward like she had done this a hundred times before.

Ginny had to admit, Professor McGonagall might be intimidating to schoolchildren, but to a Vampire Slayer who had fought armies of vampire-like monsters? Probably not.

Buffy strode forward, extending her hand. "Hi. Buffy Summers. The Vampire Slayer. Or rather, a Vampire Slayer. Nice castle you got out here. We heard you've got a supernatural crisis, and that's like our raisin deter."

"Raison d'etre, she means," said Willow helpfully.

"Yeah. That," Buffy smiled. "I've been working on Italian and Latin, and my high school French is totally gone." She took a breath. "So anyways, the magical school? Awesome. You got one in America? And does it take everybody who does magic?"

Willow tried again. "She's asking, because we just found out about this, and we knew a whole lot of witches and wizards back in Sunnydale, and no one ever came and invited us to go learn magic."

Professor McGonagall looked like someone had slapped her. Professor Flitwick actually cringed. Professor McGonagall asked uncomfortably, "You grew up performing magic on a Hellmouth? How is that possible?"

Professor Flitwick volunteered, "The Salem Academy takes witches and wizards from all over the United States, but there's no way to detect a new magic user in the middle of a Hellmouth. American wizards are asked to stay clear of Cleveland and Sunnydale."

Buffy muttered, "Probably why Amy's mom and Rack went right for Sunnydale. Dodging the authorities."

Hermione said, "Professor, He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is coming here. With an army of Death Eaters and dark magical creatures."

Professor Flitwick said, "Yes, we found that out when Severus and the Carrows fled the castle. We're trying to prepare the castle and move the students to safety, but there's only so much we can do. You need to get inside before they get here."

Buffy said, "Bzzzt! Wrong! But thank you for playing our game. We're out here because we're gonna stop your little buddy Moldyshorts from getting to the castle."

Hermione asked, "Umm, professor, could you take Harry inside? And let him go down to the Chamber of Secrets so he can get a couple basilisk fangs?"

"What in Merlin's name would you need a basilisk fang for, Miss Granger?" snapped Professor McGonagall.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 03 Oct 2012 06:52:08 GMT  
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Chapter 99 And from the Toil of Our Hands

Hermione looked over at Harry, who gave her an unhappy nod. Ginny agreed with him. Now that Riddle knew, there was no point in not telling everybody. Hermione said, "Riddle discovered how to make himself immortal, so he didn't die when his curse at Harry backfired. He made Horcruxes. Pieces of his soul, torn off by black magic and hidden in places like this." She pulled out the cup. "Hufflepuff's cup. And Tom Riddle's diary. Professor Dumbledore figured it out and sent Harry off to destroy all of them before Riddle realized what Harry was doing. We got the last one a couple hours ago, and that was when Riddle figured out what Harry's been up to."

Minerva McGonagall carefully said, "And so you need something as deadly as basilisk venom to destroy these Horcruxes?"

Hermione nodded. "Nothing else will do."

Willow abruptly said, "Hand me the cup."

"What?"

"Hand me that cup! I can tell from here it's got a chunk of anima or part of a soul in it. I guess this is what you were talking about Voldemort doing. Boy, what a pretentious name. The guy must be a real dork. Do all these evil overlords take correspondence courses from the same place about how to be a Big Bad? Wow, it's got some nasty curses on it too."

Professor McGonagall warned, "Young lady, that cup is bound to be extremely dangerous."

Hermione said to Willow, "Right. That's a Horcrux. You can't destroy it without really dangerous magics, like basilisk venom or Fiendfyre."

Professor McGonagall harrumphed, "And Miss Granger, how precisely do you know so much about these very dark arts?"

Hermione blushed, "I've been studying ever since Professor Dumbledore told Harry about the Horcruxes, and Harry told us."

Professor McGonagall pursed her lips angrily, "And just where did you even get books on these subj..." She stopped and turned to Willow. "Young lady! What do you think you're doing?"

Willow put her hand over the cup and concentrated for several seconds. She whispered something powerful, and ripped something invisible off of it. The curse sizzled and erupted viciously in midair. Willow just nodded and said, "One lethal curse down, four to go..."

Ginny watched in shock. It took Willow under a minute to strip away all the curses and destroy the Horcrux without using a wand or anything like the sword of Gryffindor. In the middle of the

effort, a smoky form started to emerge from the cup. It looked like Willow, but with black hair and black eyes and horrid black veins all over her face. Willow simply muttered under her breath, waved her hand, and the form disintegrated. Finally, Willow made a pulling gesture, and a ball of writhing blackness was yanked out of the cup. She captured the sphere in her right hand, whispered words that made the air waver, and squeezed. The Horcrux collapsed like a soap bubble.

Willow finally looked up. "This was a really powerful artifact before, but I pretty much wrecked it. Sorry." She handed the cup to Professor McGonagall, who looked utterly shocked.

Then she studied Harry for long seconds. "So that's what that is. Eww, you've got a chunk of Voldy in you too, that's nasty. I bet you can feel each other's emotions and stuff."

Harry turned white. "W-what?"

"It's right there. Behind your scar," Willow continued calmly, pointing at Harry's forehead.

Harry choked, "It can't be. I mean..."

Ginny jumped in, "It can't be. I would've felt it if he was a Horcrux!"

Willow insisted, "No, it would be completely masked by his basic nature. You'd have to be able to read his aura to see it."

Hermione gasped, "Of course! That's it! That's what Dumbledore knew that he wouldn't tell Harry! That's why Harry's been able to feel what Riddle was feeling, and why he was able to see through Nagini's eyes when Riddle possessed it, and why he had those headaches any time Riddle got near him!"

Ron asked, "Then how come Riddle was so dumb he never figured it out? I mean, he gave Harry that scar!"

Hermione said, "That's probably just what happened. When Riddle tried an Avada Kedavra on Harry and Harry's mum's spell kicked in, what was left of Riddle's soul was blasted out of his body. But his soul was already so damaged by all the times making Horcruxes that a chunk of it split off without him wanting it to. He had no idea it happened. And the only living thing left in that house was Harry, so the slice of soul lodged in him and made him an accidental Horcrux."

Willow stepped forward. "Harry? Let me get that out of you."

Harry nodded feverishly. "Yeah! As fast as you can! I don't want a chunk of Riddle in me!"

Ginny stepped in front of Harry. "Are you sure you can get it out without hurting him?"

Willow thought for a second. "Oh, I can definitely get it out without killing him or injuring him, but it's probably gonna hurt no matter what I do, because you said it's been living in him since he was a baby, so his body's gotten used to it."

Buffy whispered to Ginny, "Willow-babble. Get used to it."

Harry said, "I don't care if it hurts getting it out. Dumbledore would've taken it out if he could. So I figure that means no one else can get it out without killing me."

Hermione suddenly gasped, "Oh, that's it! I should have known!"

Willow stepped forward and put her small hands on Harry's forehead. She said, "Just think about a blank room, all white everywhere..."

Ginny watched as Willow concentrated. Black tendrils started creeping from Harry's forehead onto Willow's fingers, then across the backs of her hands. The tendrils started getting thicker and wider. They started pulsing horrifically. They began to slide up Willow's forearms.

Ginny watched in horror as Willow's hair began to turn black. Willow's green eyes became pools of solid blackness. Black veins began writhing across her face. Her skin began getting paler. She began looking like the horror that the Horcrux had shown only a minute ago.

"Gotcha!" Willow yanked her hand off Harry's forehead, capturing a pulsing blackness in her fingers. The black hair and black eyes and black veins vanished as if they had never been there. And Ginny realized they hadn't been there. It had been an illusion.

Willow held the blackness up to her face and grinned, "Fooled you! Loser!" She squeezed, and the blackness exploded into tiny motes of gray light.

"Nice work, Will," said Buffy.

Faith said, "Way ta go, Red. Ya prob'ly scared the crap outta our pals. You okay now?"

Willow and Harry both sank to their knees. Willow looked up at Faith and gasped, "Five by five, F. Five by five." Faith just laughed.

Ginny grabbed Harry, who looked like he was about to pass out. She asked, "Are you all right?"

He nodded shakily. "Anything's... better... than... having... that... in my... head."

Hermione said, "Harry, that's it! That's the prophecy. You being a Horcrux is the prophecy! And either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives. You couldn't kill him for good when a chunk of him was in you. He couldn't kill you without maybe killing himself. And Professor Dumbledore figured it out."

Ron growled, "You mean Dumbledore sent Harry out to get killed by Riddle so Riddle would kill himself when he did it? And I liked that old nutter!"

Buffy muttered, "Wow, and I thought Travers was an asshole."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 07 Oct 2012 06:41:20 GMT  
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Chapter 100 Noah Became the Father

Hermione insisted, "Dumbledore wouldn't do that! He must have realized there was no way to get the piece of Riddle's soul out of Harry without killing him, unless Riddle did it. Because... because... ooh, that's it! Riddle remade his body using Harry's blood! So Dumbledore knew something Riddle didn't about that spell."

Willow said, "Oh, don't tell me Moldywart used the 'blood of my enemy' dealie to make himself a new body, and then thought there wouldn't be any consequences trying to magically attack someone who was magically the same as him by blood? That guy is crazier than we thought."

Hermione said, "That's it. That's exactly it."

Harry said, "I did wonder why Dumbledore got so excited fourth year when I told him about the spell Riddle used to come back. He must have known then."

Hermione said, "Right. He probably realized back then that he had to get rid of all the Horcruxes except you, and you had to duel Riddle, and Riddle had to try to kill you, so the spell would kill him instead."

"Or 'also'," Ron grumbled.

Buffy said, "Sounds like your pal Dumb-door was banking a heck of a lot on some magical theory."

Hermione said, "But after Harry's duel with Riddle in our fourth year, when their wands locked together, Professor Dumbledore must have known what it really meant. And so when Riddle would hit Harry with the Killing Curse, it would kill the piece of Riddle's soul and kill Riddle too."

Faith gave her a hip-tilt. "Sorta depending on Moldywart ta use that one curse, aren't ya?"

Ron said, "It's his favorite. It's his signature move, just like Harry and expelliarmus."

Hermione said, "But what's important Harry, with that out of you, you've fulfilled the prophecy."

Harry just frowned. "I still have to face him. He still has to be stopped."

Buffy nodded, "Oh yeah. No question. But you've got dibs, so we'll just back you up."

Faith leered, "And when we back up, we put the up into backup." She gave Harry a bouncing thrust of her chest that had Ginny wanting to step over and punch her in the mouth.

Buffy said, "We need the professors to get back to the castle and get ready for a siege. We'll take care of the battlefield out here."

Professor McGonagall gave Buffy her sternest look. "Young lady, I don't know who you think you are, but you are no match for everything He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is going to use tonight. And furthermore, we are trained combat wi-

Buffy moved. Even to Ginny's Slayer vision, Buffy was moving like lightning. Suddenly Buffy was spinning to face the Forbidden Forest and yanking a deadly-looking axe-stake-polearm thing out of nowhere. "We have incoming," she snapped in the voice of an apex predator.

Ginny felt the impacts through her trainers, and she saw Grawp lumbering their way with Hagrid running next to him. She said, "It's okay. They're on our side."

Willow checked, "You sure? Because some of the damage we heard about in Britain sure sounded like a couple giants."

Harry said, "Yeah. We know Riddle has five of 'em. In battle armor. And they're here. We'll need Grawp and Hagrid."

"Grawp?"

"Hagrid?"

Hagrid trotted up and gave them all a big grin. "That'd be me. Rubeus Hagrid, Keeper of Keys and Grounds here at Hogwarts. And this is my brother Grawp."

Faith stared up at Grawp. "Isn't he kinda... short for a giant? The one I hadda handle was way bigger."

Ginny just gaped at her. Faith had already beaten a giant? How? And she looked like she hadn't ever been injured. Maybe it was the Slayer healing.

Hagrid said sadly, "Well, that's why I had ta rescue him, he was the smallest one there and they was all pickin' on him."

Professor McGonagall just said, "Hagrid? We are going to have to have a little talk about your... brother when this is all over."

Hagrid looked like a kid caught with his hand in the cookie jar, an expression Ginny had seen on the twins' faces far too many times.

"Ooh! Someone's in trouble!" Faith sing-songed.

"Faith!" complained Willow and Buffy simultaneously.

Hagrid just gave her a big grin. "Oh, Professor McGonagall's a fair woman. Don't you worry about me." Hagrid then stepped over to Harry and gave him a pat on the back that nearly knocked him onto his face. "There you are, Harry. The centaurs came over all worked up and warned me about You-Know-Who comin' so I grabbed Grawp and rushed right over ta help."

Harry righted himself and said, "Thanks Hagrid. These people are here to help too." Willow gave Hagrid a big smile and a wave, while Faith gave him a heavy-lidded gaze that would have melted a lesser man.

Buffy said, "Keeper of grounds, huh? You know what's in the forest there they might run at us?"

"Natcher'ly," said Hagrid. "The centaurs 're roundin' up the unicorns and thestrals and gettin' 'em ta safety. 'pparently there were a bunch a' vampires back in there who all got dusted, 'n Professor Lupin came through 'n moved all the werewolves out. Grawp's taken care a' the trolls 'n such fer me. But there's still all a' Aragog's family, 'n a couple manticores somewhere in there."

"Aragog?" Buffy wondered.

Ron growled, "His pet spider."

"Acromantula, Ron," insisted Hermione.

Harry explained, "Hagrid raised Aragog from an egg back when he was a student here. Then he found Aragog a mate. Now there's hundreds, maybe thousands, of Aragog's descendants. Huge, man-eating spiders that nearly ate me and Ron back in second year."

Hagrid moaned, "I still can't believe Aragog would let his kids do a thing like that."

Buffy looked around. "I think we need to introduce ourselves properly, so your teachers will give us some slack. I'm Buffy Summers, the longest living Vampire Slayer in a couple centuries." She shook MacGonagall and Flitwick's hands. Both of them looked somewhat stunned.

Willow piped up, "Maybe, ever. We're still researching."

"Faith. Maybe you heard of me too. The Dark Slayer. Demons talk, y'know."

"And I'm Willow Rosenberg. I'm a witch too, but I don't use a wand." She looked at McGonagall's face and admitted, "And you probably heard about me already. I'm the one they call the Dark Witch, after last year, but I kind of prefer 'Red Witch' but I'm having trouble getting it to catch on now, and Xander says I ought to call myself the Scarlet Pimpernel, but that's just stupid."

"You're babblin' again, Red," Faith said with a smile.

Ginny watched as Professor McGonagall stared at Willow with a mixture of awe and horror. Ginny had known about Willow ever since her Divination exam in O.W.L.s, but it had to be a shock to run into the dreaded Dark Witch. Especially after they had seen that Willow could shred Voldemort's most powerful curses like they were some first year's charms, without even lifting a wand.

Faith smirked, "And we brought friends. You got an army coming? We got just the thing." She whistled crudely, and over a dozen girls came out of the darkness.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 10 Oct 2012 06:01:55 GMT  
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Chapter 101 People Began to Multiply

Ginny could feel the strength the energy in them all. "You... you're all Slayers!"

Hermione looked shocked. She insisted, "That's impossible, according to the books."

Buffy just smirked, "I'm not really a book kind of girl."

Faith said, "Yeah, B and Red here pretty much took the Slayer manual and tossed it into a chipper-shredder."

Ginny watched as the professors stared at each other in complete confusion.

Buffy rolled her eyes and explained in her own way. "We had to fight off an army of uber-vamps, so Will did this spell using the Slayer Scythe. We turned all the Potentials around the world into Slayers. So Ginny, you're just one of the girls now, even if you are the only witch-slash-Slayer. As far as we know. Oh, and that whole deal with the Ministry and the Council and that old contract? Forget it. You get to lead your own life, and Slay if you choose to. And no going out by yourself Slaying, either. We're all about the teams and not dying these days."

Ginny muttered to herself, "Not dying would be good." She noticed that the other Slayers heard her. Several of them nodded at her, and one gave her a thumbs-up.

Buffy said, "Okay, you teachers. Get back into the castle."

"Young lady, I have no intention of abandoning these grounds-

Buffy just kept going, as if Professor McGonagall wasn't protesting. "Will, I need you to find our Big Bad and his minions, so we know where they'll be coming in. Then we can organize our ground forces. After that, you know what you need to do. Faith, you've got the troll hammer, so you and I are the two big guns when the giants show up. Vi, you've got the tranquilizer rifles. Dole 'em out so we can take care of our furry friends. Kennedy, keep an eye on Will and work out the lines of battle. Trish, take two girls over to the forest and keep everything dark from getting out of there. Amelie, make sure squad two knows the Death Eaters are humans, so no killing them, but breaking their fingers on their wand hand is okey-dokey."

"Miss Summers!" Professor McGonagall snapped. "You can't send three teenaged girls into the Forbidden Forest! That forest is full of Acromantulas... and worse!"

Buffy shrugged like she wasn't worried a bit. "The big talking spiders you told us about? Seen 'em before. Piece of cake. They look scary, but they're not that fast. You chop off a couple legs, and they're totally out of the fight. If that's all you've got in there, maybe I'll only send two of the girls over."

Professor McGonagall suddenly looked like she was going to have a stroke.

Ron muttered, "The more of 'em you chop up, the better, if you ask me."

Hermione rubbed her hands together nervously. She said to Buffy, "Before you break everyone's hands or whatever, there's something I need to tell you. Some of the Death Eaters... aren't. Like Stan Shunpike. They've been Imperius'ed, we think."

Buffy groaned and rolled her eyes. "Mind control, memory rearrangement, splitting out their evil side, possession by something evil, or controlled by a love spell?"

Hermione blinked at Buffy and said, "What? You've seen all of those?" She mentally shook herself off and said, "I mean, it's mind control."

Buffy asked, "Willow? You done on the locator spells?"

Willow was sitting on the ground with a map and an array of herbs and candles. "Yup! Got 'em. We're in the right spot, probably because Ol' Voldy wanted to go after the tomb first."

Buffy nodded. "Okay, Kennedy, take the map and plot out attack paths and counterattacks. Then coordinate with Vi and Amelie."

"Gotcha."

Buffy said to Willow, "We may have a way to reduce their cannon fodder."

Hermione explained about Stan Shunpike and the Imperius Curse again, until Willow held up a hand and said, "Show me an Imperius Curse."

Professor McGonagall said, "Young lady, that's very dark magic, and I hope Miss Granger is still unable to cast such a spell."

Willow looked at her and said, "Fine. Then would you do one, so I can see it?"

Hermione said to Professor McGonagall, "You can do it on Ginny."

"Oi!" Ron squawked.

Hermione went on, "It'll bounce off. She's a Vampire Slayer."

Ron said, "Maybe. But we know Harry can shake off even a powerful Imperius Curse, so she could do it on him instead."

Professor McGonagall gave Hermione a firm glare. "Miss Granger, I do not remember any such fact about the Vampire Slayer. Even accepting that Miss Weasley - and all these other young ladies - qualify."

Hermione sighed, "I'm sorry professor, but it's not as if the textbooks have any reliable information on the subject. Our Defense Against the Dark Arts text said they were probably a myth!" She turned to face Ginny. "Imperio!"

"Miss Granger, if we both survive this battle we are going to have a chat about the magical studies you have been doing since you left the castle," Professor McGonagall said crisply.

Hermione looked abashed, but said, "Yes, professor."

"And who has been assisting Miss Weasley in her studies this year?"

"Yes, professor."

Ginny said, "But she was right! The Imperius didn't work on me!"

Willow pursed her lips and said, "That was good. I got it."

"What do you mean 'you got it'?" asked Professor McGonagall suspiciously.

Willow calmly looked at her and said, "I felt the spell, and I saw how it was supposed to work. Really nasty stuff there."

Professor McGonagall said stiffly, "That is precisely why that spell is one of the three Unforgivables, and the use of that spell usually carries a life sentence in Azkaban!"

"Well, good," Willow said. "Messing with people's minds? Bad. I vote no on the mind-messing spells."

Ginny tried not to gape, because she had no idea they all talked so weird. Maybe it was just too much time spent hanging around Buffy.

Willow asked, "Amelie? Could you bring my satchel?"

One of the other Slayers ran over with a leather 'purse' the size of a big suitcase. Ginny had no idea what was in it, but 'Amelie' was carrying it like it was full of styrofoam. She knew from personal experience that didn't mean much about its weight. Amelie set it down and popped open the top like the lid of a cardboard box.

Willow waved her hand over the opening, and a variety of things floated up out of it. A compass. A sheet of fabric with a big pentagram painted on it. Candles. Packets of herbs and flowers.

Willow gently swirled her hands about, and her spellworks floated down to the grass. The square of fabric stretched itself out. The compass landed on it and made it twist until one side pointed toward magnetic north. The five candles set down at the points of the pentagram and lit themselves. The five packets of herbs and flowers arranged themselves in between the candles. Willow smiled, "There we go. All ready."

Professor McGonagall asked, "Young lady, is this going to be an Earth magic spell? That's going to be extremely difficult to perform inside our wards."

Ginny had no idea how Professor McGonagall knew about all this stuff. She'd never even heard of 'earth magic' before.

Willow gave the professor a shy smile. "Well, it would be, but I sort of made friends with the wards when we teleported in."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 14 Oct 2012 06:47:40 GMT  
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Chapter 102 On the Face of the Ground

Professor McGonagall blinked and then said, "I have no idea what a 'telly-ported' is, but apparating through the wards is not possible, and would certainly not make the wards cooperate with you."

Willow's eyes got bigger. "Ooh! You call that transporter thing you do 'apparating'? That's so cool. But that's not what I did. I just found a k-dimensional hyperplane that co-located our headquarters where we were with the spot where Tara told us we needed to go, and then I opened a small space-time anomaly so I could use that hyperplane as a transportable subspace."

Ginny was amazed. Not only were both professors stymied, but even Hermione looked gobsmacked. She wasn't surprised. She figured she'd only understood maybe half the words Willow used, and that was counting the words like 'the' or 'and'.

Willow knelt down in front of the pentagram and began a chant. As she crumpled bits of the herbs and things into the candle flames one by one, Ginny could feel a sort of pulsing in the air, like a shaky shield charm was bumping against her. Willow invoked some goddess or something that Ginny didn't think she'd ever heard of, and then the pulsing got thicker. The wavering feeling in the air suddenly expanded outward from Willow and just sort of kept going.

Willow blew out a breath and brushed a long red hair off her face. She looked up and smiled, "Done."

Hermione just stared at her, "What do you mean, 'done'?"

Willow casually looked over at her. "Oh, I just broke every Imperius Curse within three or four miles. I'm not sure of the range, but I'd need a much more powerful invocation and an artifact with some major mojo to get all of England."

Ginny's jaw dropped open. Then she saw that everybody's mouth was agape. Even Hermione and Professor McGonagall had that look. Only Buffy and Faith weren't stunned at the raw power this young woman had just wielded so casually. Buffy looked like she saw this kind of thing from Willow all the time, and Faith had this sort of 'take that' smirk on her face.

Harry finally managed to say, "Umm, it turns out the goblins have a goblin-magic way of breaking an Imperius Curse too, but I think you probably have to be right there for it. And the Ministry knows about it, but they won't use it because it's not our kind of magic."

Professor McGonagall fumed, "And isn't that just like the Ministry! They haven't bothered to tell anyone else about it, either!"

Buffy said, "Sounds pretty much like the dorks who used to be Giles' bosses."

Hermione said, "Not to put a rush on things, but the werewolves are going to be transforming any minute now, and then Riddle's probably going to run them right at us."

Buffy shrugged carelessly. "Werewolves? No prob. He got anything else? Were-bears? Were-cheetahs? Were-tigers?"

"Are there such things?" Hermione asked suspiciously.

"I take it that's a big no," said Willow.

Buffy just said, "Were-bears? Major pain to fight without weapons. I totally ruined a new blouse and one of my favorite pairs of ankle boots."

Ginny just gulped. She had seen werewolves before, and she didn't want to have to fight one of them. A were-bear? That would be a dozen times worse. And Buffy was only complaining about ruining her blouse? If it was Ginny tackling a were-bear, she'd be a bleeding, hacked-apart mess. Or dead.

Hermione said, "No, there aren't other types of lycanthropes. That we know of."

Ron said, "Forget the dark creatures! Riddle's likely to be stabbing us in the back first chance he gets. Maybe getting Death Eaters apparating in behind us, or using the Floo Network in the castle, or portkeys into the grounds. There's no telling what Snape and the Carrows set up for him."

Hermione put her hand on Ron's arm and smiled at him. "That's really good thinking, Ron." He gave her a huge smile, like he couldn't believe she'd say out loud he had a better idea than she did.

Professor McGonagall said, "It is possible to set up special areas within the castle and grounds for apparation. A Portus Charm properly performed in the castle could let anyone create a portkey to get through the wards. And I have no idea if any of the castle fireplaces have been hooked up to the Floo Network, even though only the headmaster's fireplace is supposed to be hooked up now."

Professor Flitwick said, in his high voice, "Oh dear, we had better address that at once."

Professor McGonagall gave him a malevolent smile. "I already left a small present in the headmaster's office, just in case someone considered trying it."

Faith grinned, "Way ta go, Teach!" She turned to Buffy and asked, "How come we don't have cool teachers like her ta keep the baby Slays in line?"

Ron burst into laughter. Then he sobered up quickly and said, "Sorry, Professor."

Professor McGonagall pursed her lips, but said, "Under the circumstances, it is quite all right, Mister Weasley."

Willow said, "I guess I better put up some wards of my own."

Professor Flitwick said, "You may be able to touch the Hogwarts wards, but you're not going to be able to stop all portkeys over an area this wide."

Buffy slapped the big axe-like thing into Willow's outstretched hand. Ginny realized she had seen Willow with this thing before. In that vision during her Divination exam. And she remembered

what she saw then. She took an involuntary step backward.

A wind began to blow around Willow. It was a wind that no one else could feel. Willow's red hair turned a pure white. Then her entire body began to glow. She smiled at Professor Flitwick and said in an unearthly voice, "Maybe you can't."

Buffy grinned at Ginny, "It's the Slayer Scythe. She's mystically attuned to it, and it's got a few really nifty powers she's figured out. So far. We didn't exactly get the owner's manual for it."

The glow around Willow grew and intensified, until it was hard to look at. Then it expanded in a burst that went mostly straight up, even if it spread out like a Muggle spotlight. It hit something high overhead. Ginny realized it had to be the school wards and then flared out to the sides, flashing in a massive hemisphere that covered the castle and the grounds.

The light dissipated, and Willow sank to her knees. She gasped, "Wow, those are some wards."

Buffy made a quick hand gesture, and Kennedy ran over to catch Willow by the shoulders. She scooped Willow up in her arms like Willow was a ragdoll.

Willow gasped, "Okay. Wards done. No Flooing without my permission, and no portkeys either."

Harry stepped forward. "That's... amazing. But Riddle? He has a flying spell."

Kennedy looked up from where she was gazing at Willow's face. "Big effing deal. Willow can do that too."

Harry said, "Snape can do it too. We saw him. And there's brooms."

Kennedy laughed, "Oh come on, you're telling me you guys fly around on brooms? Like in cartoons?" She looked down at Willow. "Hey Will, you're going to have to apologize to Xander for all those times you gave him the 'witch stereotypes' speech." She looked at Ginny. "Next you'll be telling me you wear pointy hats."

Professor McGonagall cleared her throat menacingly. "And robes."

Willow patted Kennedy on the shoulder. "Shush, honey." She turned to Harry. "Can you show me one of your flying brooms?"

Harry looked at Ginny, who pulled one out of her wrist bracelet.

Kennedy looked at the bracelet and said, "Now that's a spell we could use."

Ginny said, "I've got a battleaxe, some swords, a couple crossbows, a quiver of bolts, and a box of stakes in here too."

Kennedy said, "Ooh!" She looked at Willow and said, "Please make one of those things for me? Please? Pretty please with sugar on top?"

Willow tiredly said, "I think I need to find out how to make them for all the Slayers. But first, help me stand up."

Ginny held out her hand and let the broom fly up into it. Then she let it float at waist height and walked it over to where Willow was standing with Kennedy's help.

Buffy? Willow? Kennedy? Why did all these people have such weird names?

Willow smiled at her. "Thanks, Ginny. Umm, you don't need this back, do you?"

Ginny looked at the broom again, just to make sure. "Well, it's not mine. It's a school broom. Hermione borrowed it."

"Okay." Willow held onto Kennedy with one hand and ran her other hand along the handle of the broom. "Ooh! That's really clever!" She turned to Kennedy. "Honey, we should talk to them about their brooms too. They have dozens of spells and protections on these things. Hover spells, and flight spells, and control spells, and padding spells, and defensive spells, and... Well, a lot of spells."

Hermione said, "You can't do anything to them. Flying brooms have a ton of protective spells to keep people from hexing other people's brooms, especially when they play Quidditch."

Willow gave Hermione a merciless smile. "I think I only need to adjust one of the flight control spells." She hung onto Kennedy's shoulder and gripped the middle of the broom's handle with her other hand. She began chanting softly under her breath. The broom quivered. It shook. And then it fell lifelessly to the ground. Willow sounded exhausted as she said, "Thanks. That was all I needed to know. Oh, and sorry, but I ruined the broom."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 21 Oct 2012 07:16:25 GMT  
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Chapter 103 And Daughters Were Born

Professor McGonagall stared at the broom and asked nervously, "You ruined it?"

Willow looked pretty wobbly. It looked like Kennedy was having to hold her up. And she sounded really tired as she said, "Yeah. I kind of busted the protective charms to get a look at the functional charms on it, and some of them got wrecked too. It's really not safe to fly anymore. If you've got repair people, you should take it to them. Otherwise, you ought to junk it."

Ginny and Hermione just stared at each other. Hermione and Ron had told Ginny all about the thing with Quirrell jinxing Harry's broom, and how hard it was, and how Quirrell had to keep concentrating on the broom. And Willow had wrecked this broom in seconds. Quirrell, even with Voldemort on the back of his head, hadn't been able to do that. And Willow was already exhausted before she started. Ginny had a feeling Willow was a lot more dangerous than even Professor McGonagall realized.

Buffy interrupted. "Kennedy, keep Willow under your wing until she's okay again."

Kennedy murmured to Willow, "You notice she didn't say 'normal'."

"Oh hush, you," Willow whispered back.

Ginny tried not to laugh out loud. Willow and Kennedy were so definitely a couple. That would have made her a lot more uncomfortable if she hadn't seen other girls who obviously liked girls more than boys. You could hardly live in dormitories for years and not find that out about a girl here and there. And she had to admit it: Willow and Kennedy made a really cute couple. At least, she thought so.

Buffy turned to Professor Flitwick and Professor McGonagall. "Okay, I need you two to head back to the castle and shore up the fortifications there."

Professor Flitwick said, "I am an extremely good duelist. I believe you could use my help out here instead."

Professor McGonagall said, "Young lady, perhaps you do not realize the sheer size of the threats that are about to be coming this way-"

Buffy cut her off. "Look, MacGoggle, was it? I need you two off the field of battle. Maybe you're hotshot combat mages, but neither of you is up in Willow's weight class. And I have all the resources I need already. What I need is to know the people in the castle are safe, because we all know that Big Bads like to cheat. Ol' Moldyshorts is gonna get worried when we kick the asses of his assault waves, and he'll try something of the sneaky. Maybe trying to get some of his Death

Munchers into the castle to hold a bunch of schoolchildren hostage. Big Bads really love the 'drop your gun or I'll shoot this baby' routine. So I need someone reliable and powerful protecting the castle from anyone sneaking past us."

When Professor McGonagall still wouldn't budge, Buffy took her aside and spent about two minutes explaining how she was organizing their forces, and how Riddle was probably going to launch his various attacks.

Hermione fumed the entire time. "Honestly! Look at the time! We don't have any time to spare now. Riddle is bound to be sending the werewolves at us any second now!"

Ginny looked up as the moon appeared. She knew the werewolves were changing from men like Fenrir Greyback into nightmarish monstrosities that could kill with ease, or even worse, turn ordinary witches and wizards into more werewolves.

Professor McGonagall finally looked up at the moon and gave in. "We're going back to the castle, but let me say we're doing it under protest. Even if you do know how to organize a battle against supernatural threats."

Buffy shrugged uncomfortably. "Yeah, well, I learned the hard way, by screwing up a bunch of times and getting some people killed. I don't recommend it as a teaching method."

Professor McGonagall started to speak, and then stopped. "We must talk later. But not now. Filius? Let's make haste. I hope Pomona and Horace have finished everything I asked of them."

Buffy watched them go. She quietly asked, "Will?"

Willow said, "Just now. Someone pretty powerful just used a weird wand magic / earth magic combo to shake up the wards enough to get a bunch of nastiness through. They're gonna be on their way any second now, but we're good to go. And I need to stop talking."

Buffy then walked over to Ginny. "Okay, Ginny. Your turn."

"I'm not leaving!" she insisted.

"No, you're not. You're a Slayer. You have an assignment. I expect you to protect Harry. And your friends." Buffy gave her a hard look. "At all costs. You know what I mean, right?"

Ginny thought about the dreams she'd had. Buffy dying to save the world. Slayers dying time and time again trying to stop evil. She squared up her shoulders and looked into Buffy's eyes. "Yeah. I know what you mean." She didn't have to think about it. If she died to keep Harry alive, it would be worth it.

Buffy patted her on the shoulder and said, "Good g..." She stopped and looked out into the darkness. "Oh well. Time to get a move on."

Ginny turned and looked in the same direction. Whatever it was, Buffy's senses were better than hers.

Faith called out from somewhere out in the gloom, "Giants and werewolves! Five big, maybe fifty furry!"

Buffy looked out into the moonlit darkness. "Okay. The fast attack wave. No sweat." She looked over and called out, "Vi?"

Hermione said, "You can't possible hope to hit a fast-moving werewolf with a tranquilizer dart at this range-"

Faith trotted over and cut her off. "Watch and learn, Curls. Watch and learn."

Vi ignored both of them. "Ready? Front five, left to right. Take 'em. Lather, rinse repeat."

All five girls fired. Ginny could see through the gathering darkness that every one of the girls had hit their target, because five werewolves twitched like they had just been hit with something powerful. The five Slayers quickly reloaded and fired again. Still no misses. Before Hermione could complain again, the Slayers had already reloaded and fired three more times.

Hermione gawked, "But... That's... It's impossible!"

By then, the Slayers had fired ten volleys. Ginny had counted. She didn't think any of the five Slayers had missed more than once.

Buffy casually said, "Nice shooting, ladies. Your next assignment is rounding the weres up, hauling 'em all over here, giving them a timeout in Willow's playpen, and slapping the special shackles on 'em so they stay down."

By the time Buffy finished talking, the werewolves were already staggering and keeling over.

Hermione stared into the darkness and choked, "That's... that's impossible!"

Ginny could feel the earth trembling as the five armored giants stomped forward in the wake of the once-speedy werewolves.

Buffy called out, "Faith! We're up!"

Faith yelled back, "On it, B!"

And two petite girls charged five armored giants. Ginny couldn't decide whether she couldn't bear to watch, or if she needed to watch just to learn what a real Slayer could do.

Faith ran forward at the leading giant. Ginny had thought she was fast, but Faith was running even faster, sprinting with that massive hammer in one hand like it was made of parchment instead.

The first giant tried to stomp her into the ground. Faith dodged to one side, and the enormous armored shoe smashed an enormous dent in the soil, missing her by a good yard. Faith twisted to the side and brought down her troll hammer with a vicious yell.

The giant roared in pain as Faith's blow smashed through the armor of the shoe and crushed at least one of its toes. It staggered in pain and nearly fell. Faith didn't give it the chance to recover. She cut between its legs and swung the hammer over her head. The head of the hammer caught the giant in the back of the knee.

With yet another roar of pain, the giant fell forward. It managed to catch itself with both massive hands. Faith leapt onto the back of its thigh and ran up its back like she was running up a staircase. Before the giant even realized she was on its back, she was swinging the hammer again. She struck it in the back of the head with such force that its massive metal helmet went flying into the air.

The giant collapsed face-first into the ground and didn't move. Even from where Ginny stood, she could tell it was dead. It wasn't breathing or anything any longer, and the ugly twisting sensation in her gut was no longer warning her about that particular giant.

What Buffy did was even worse.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 28 Oct 2012 06:35:56 GMT  
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Chapter 104 They Were Fair

Buffy sprinted with astonishing speed at the second giant. She carried the massive Slayer Scythe

like it was a wand.

The giant spotted her coming and tried to stomp her into the ground. Buffy just kept running straight at her massive opponent. The massive foot rose up into the air. Buffy kept running in a straight line. The foot suddenly smashed downward.

Buffy simply wasn't there. She darted off to the side so quickly that the giant had no chance to recover. His foot smashed into the ground, making him stagger slightly.

Buffy gave him no chance to regain his balance or anything. She stepped just behind his heel and slashed viciously with the Slayer Scythe. The massive, armored boot of the giant should have been proof against nearly anything short of a powerful reducto. And even a reducto would have bounced off the giant's magically tough skin. The Scythe slashed through the heavy iron of the armor and through the back of the giant's ankle.

The giant roared in pain and struggled to step forward, but that leg was no longer working. The giant fell forward, shoving out his arms to catch himself before he planted his face in the sod.

But Buffy was already moving again, and aiming at the giant's other leg. She ran up the back of the giant's injured calf and leapt through the air, slashing at the back of the giant's other leg.

The Scythe slashed through the giant's hamstring like it was cutting through a wall of butter. The giant screamed in pain and collapsed onto his stomach. He only just managed to hold his upper body off the ground with his arms.

But Buffy was still moving. She sprinted up the giant's back and made one more massive slash with the Slayer Scythe. Ginny cringed as the giant's head nearly rolled away. It wasn't completely severed, but it was no more attached to its body than Nearly Headless Nick's head was. In the time it took for a giant to fall over, Buffy had killed it. Ginny realized that maybe that German farmgirl wasn't so impressive for a Slayer.

Meanwhile, the third giant had reached the battlefield. Ginny wondered if the giants realized that charging as a group would have served them better. She also wondered if the word 'teamwork' was even in the giant vocabulary. She rather doubted it.

Grawp came out of nowhere and hit the giant with a full-body tackle right in the ribs. They went down in a massive pile, and the two of them began rolling across the lawn, pummeling each other with blows that would crush a house.

Faith sprinted for Grawp and the third giant, while Buffy took off for the last two giants. Ginny refused to wince, even if she couldn't see how Faith could do anything to help Grawp, and if she couldn't see how one tiny Slayer could fight two giants at the same time.

The armored giant punched Grawp in the face as they rolled over. Grawp elbowed the other giant, but the armored figure ignored the blow. For every punch or kick Grawp managed to get in, his armored foe managed two or three strikes. And most of Grawp's blows were landing on protective armor, so they did far less damage than was being doled out to him. Ginny couldn't see how Grawp could last much longer.

Buffy was well past Grawp's battle, and was apparently going to take on the last two giants simultaneously. The giants were running toward her about a hundred feet apart. Buffy cut sharply to her right and used the Slayer Scythe to slice into the blond giant's right shoe. The giant roared in pain and nearly dropped his massive sword. She cut back to her left as the brunet giant tried to turn fast enough to smash her from behind.

The second giant wasn't anywhere near fast enough, even if he was wielding a mace the size of a caber. He slammed his mace into the ground, missing Buffy by several yards. While he yanked his mace out of the sod, Buffy ran over his left foot and slashed across his ankle with the Scythe. She was gone again before he finished yelling in pain.

The blond giant limped to his right and slashed at Buffy with his sword. He missed by ten or twenty feet and buried the tip of his sword in the ground. Buffy darted past the sword and slashed into the giant's heel. Ginny watched in amazement. It was impossible, but one tiny woman was forcing armored giants to try to fight as a team, which they obviously had never tried to do before.

The brunet giant struggled to get his mace up and in position before Buffy returned. Buffy darted toward him, looked at the mace, and jumped back. He slammed the mace down, trying to crush her.

The mace came down precisely where Buffy was heading. Right on top of the blond giant's left foot. Buffy smoothly sidestepped and darted back toward the brunet giant, while the blond one roared in pain.

Ginny glanced over at the other battle. Grawp was getting beaten pretty badly by the armored giant, and Ginny didn't see how Faith thought she could possibly get anywhere near the two of them without having twenty tons of giant rolling right over her. But Faith bided her time until Grawp managed to roll his foe over once more. As the armored giant's head hit the ground with a resounding crash, Faith darted in and hammered the giant on the top of his helmet. The troll hammer smashed in the top of the helmet, and the giant suddenly went limp. Grawp roared through his bleeding mouth and punched the downed giant in the face hard enough that they could probably hear the breaking bones over at the castle.

She glanced back at the Golden Slayer. Buffy was darting back and forth between the two giants,

who were slashing and smashing mindlessly in their desperate attempts to stop her. As the mace-wielder dropped to his knees in pain, Buffy ran up his thigh and jumped. The blond giant stabbed forward with his massive sword, but Buffy wasn't there any longer. She had already kicked off the brunet giant's chest and was flying through the air toward her other opponent.

The massive sword plunged through the brunet giant's armor and deep into his chest. Buffy landed on the blond giant's sword and sprinted up the weapon while the blond giant tried to pull it loose.

Buffy didn't give him time. She slashed through the inside of the giant's wrist and leapt. She hit the giant's thigh and slashed deeply into the armor and muscle before doing a back somersault to land out of the giant's reach.

The brunet giant collapsed unmoving to the ground, the massive sword still embedded in his chest. The blond giant collapsed to his knees, grabbing his injured wrist with his left hand. Buffy sprinted up the body of the brunet giant, made an impossible leap into the air, and reached out to slash once more with the Slayer Scythe. The Scythe cut through the front half of the giant's neck like it was tissue paper. Buffy landed hard on the ground and rolled back to her feet. The giant slowly toppled over and crashed to the ground.

Ginny just stood there beside Harry, wondering how any of what she'd just seen was possible. She was a Slayer, and still she knew there was no way she could do anything like that.

The rest of the Slayers seemed far more blas  about it. Most of them were hauling unconscious werewolves over to where an exhausted Willow was slowly creating a magical cell for them.

Two girls walked past Ginny. One had two werewolves stacked on each shoulder. Every one of the werewolves was bigger than her. Clawed hands were dragging limply behind her. She turned to the other Slayer and complained, "Well that was boring."

The other Slayer was carrying a stack of five unconscious werewolves in her arms like they were pillows. She agreed, "I was hoping for a real workout."

The first one said, "Well, maybe we'll get some demons next."

"Ooh, that'd be totally excellent!"

Ginny kept her mouth shut, but she wasn't looking forward to fighting hordes of vampires and demons, even with all these other Slayers for support. She looked next to her, and Harry was staring at the girls with an expression that she had seen people wearing when they ran into Harry

right after he had just done one of his feats. It was one of those 'oh Merlin are they insane' looks.

Faith and Buffy came strolling back like they did this every day. Ginny was sort of worried that they did. She didn't think she could ever be good enough to do what they had done so easily, and if you had to be that good to survive as a Slayer, she didn't think she had a hope.

Buffy walked over to where Willow was sitting on the lawn and asked, "How're our furry friends?"

Willow sounded exhausted as she said, "Well, they'll be out for hours, and then they'll be stuck in our were-jail even after they change back. We have about a dozen of the special wristcuffs so they can't change back to a werewolf under the full moon, so we'll put 'em on Fenrir Greyback and whoever else are the worst offenders, and we'll have to let the Aurors handle the rest because you know they'll be all cranky if we want to take 'em without asking first, and you know how that ends up, and-"

Kennedy patted Willow gently on the shoulder. "Stop and breathe, honey."

"Oh, sorry," Willow winced. "So the werewolves are down, but if Moldyshorts takes this part of the grounds, he can probably bust the containment spell in under a minute." She turned her head and asked Kennedy, "How's the map look?"

Kennedy checked the map that had Willow's locator spells glowing on it. Ginny could see from where she stood that there was a thick line of red and orange dots sweeping toward the castle.

Kennedy called out, "Ladies! Second wave!"

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 04 Nov 2012 06:57:42 GMT  
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Chapter 105 All That They Chose

"Whadda we got?" yelled someone in the darkness.

Kennedy studied the map some more. "Looks like demons and vamps only!"

Ginny distinctly heard one of the girls yell, "Now this is more like it!" Another couple girls pumped their arms with excitement.

Ginny felt it too. She could feel the twisting in her gut as hordes of monsters came toward her. She could feel the urge to rush into the night and find the monsters, and then hack and slash until nothing else was left alive or she finally fell in battle.

She didn't. She had a task. And she didn't want to have to face the Golden Slayer and tell her she ignored orders. She herded Harry and Ron and Hermione over to where Kennedy was guarding Willow.

Kennedy asked, "Buffy kick you out of the fighting too?"

Ginny said, "What's important is keeping Harry alive for when Riddle comes for him." Even though she could feel the driving urge to go chop those vampires up into pieces.

"Incoming!" someone shouted unnecessarily, unless they were letting Hermione and Harry and Ron know.

Ginny watched as the supposedly unstoppable flood of vampires and demons hit an immovable barrier: less than a dozen Slayers. Suddenly, the Slayers were moving so fast they were probably a blur to Harry and Ron and Hermione. Vampires were bursting into clouds of dust so fast that the demons in their midst couldn't see what was going on. Ginny concentrated on the battle, in case anything made its way toward her and Kennedy. But Kennedy looked completely relaxed.

Kennedy casually asked, "So, you're one of these witches. You probably know. What's this Riddle loser got against his real name?"

Harry laughed. "Tom Marvolo Riddle? He's named for his non-magical father, Tom Riddle. Who dumped his mother as soon as the love potion wore off, and never came looking for little Tommykins in the orphanage. The first thing Riddle probably did once he turned seventeen and wasn't magically tracked anymore was go murder his dad and his grandparents."

Kennedy smirked, "And then he threw himself on the mercy of the court because he was an orphan?"

Hermione sniffed, "The wizard courts never bothered to notice some dead Muggles, and the regular courts couldn't figure out how it was done. He got off scot free. Never even suspected, until Dumbledore worked it out. We don't know how many people he's murdered, but there's a whole lakeful of them he's turned into Inferi."

"Sounds like a real sweetheart," said Kennedy. "But I gotta tell you, there are heroes we know with bigger deathcounts than this dork."

Willow grinned tiredly, "The dork lard. Shame he isn't fat too. We could really make fun of him."

Kennedy asked, "Are Inperi more like zombies or more like vampires? And can you kill 'em with a stake in the heart?"

Harry frowned, "More like zombies. And I don't think a stake would do anything. Fire works a treat, though. Ask Hermione. She can probably quote the textbook on 'em."

Willow smiled at Hermione, "Don't mind the teasing. It means they like you."

Hermione squeezed Ron's hand and said, "I know. But Harry's right. I am kind of the researcher part of the team."

"Ooh!" Willow perked up. "Have you ever thought about working with Ginny and helping her fight badness?"

Hermione smiled, "You mean, be her Watcher?"

Willow nodded eagerly. "Yeah. You don't have to be a guy to be a Watcher. Faith's first Watcher was an old lady. Diana Dormer. Faith really, really liked her."

Ron said, "Kind of noticed the past tense there."

Kennedy said, "Yeah, regular non-magical Watchers get killed, same as regular non-magical Slayers. No brooms to fly away on, or magical teleporter spells, or magical Molotov cocktails to throw. Faith and her Watcher got targeted by one of the oldest, most powerful vampires on earth. Diana got tortured to death, and Faith had to run away and leave her, which really messed her up. It took Buffy and Faith together to kill him."

"With the world's biggest stake!" Willow added.

"How big is 'biggest'?" Ginny wondered.

Willow stretched out her hands to demonstrate. "Oh, about six feet long, over a foot around."

"Whew," Ron muttered.

Willow said, "But you wouldn't have to stake him. One good incendio and he would've been dust. A Watcher who's a really good combat mage would be pretty awesome."

Hermione asked, "Do you think you could teach me some of that earth magic, like what you did?"

Willow asked, "How were your grades before you came to Hogwarts?"

Hermione proudly said, "I was top of my class! I was going to skip a year. And even after I started at Hogwarts, I took a couple distance learning courses during the summers, so I could go to university someday. I mean, it's great being a witch, but there's more to life than arithmancy."

Willow said, "Excellent. Then I'm pretty sure we can teach you some earth magic. How much is going to depend on some things we're still studying, like how your magical core will interact with spells that don't use any internal quintessence."

Hermione said, "That's sounds fascinating! I mean, if we could study-"

"Heads up!" someone yelled.

Ginny had already spotted the seven-foot-tall green demon as it lumbered toward Harry. Or maybe Willow.

Kennedy calmly said, "You want it? It's a Polgara. They're pretty boring. Heart and brain are the easiest target, but it does have a yard-long spike it can extend out of its arm."

Hermione asked, "May I?"

Willow said, "Yeah, go ahead. You do know a lot of wand magic will just bounce off, right?"

Hermione nodded. She stepped forward, held out her wand, and announced, "Sectumsempra!" A flash of purple jetted from the wand and sliced through the demon's neck. It toppled to the ground.

"Nice work!" Willow cheered.

Ron proudly said, "That's nothing. She killed a K'vor'nek demon all by herself."

Kennedy whistled. "Wow. That's badass. A Watcher who can kill a K'vor'nek by herself? You'd have baby Slayers all over the world begging you to be their Watcher."

Ginny said, "She worked up a Map Binding Spell and found every vampire in London."

Willow looked impressed. "Cool. Maybe you could show me after this mess is over." Then she looked alarmed. "Oh no, you didn't go stake Hepzibah, did you? We sort of promised her we'd leave her alone as long as she was a good girl and kept her... employees under control."

Hermione glowered. "You mean that suckhouse? That's disgusting!"

Kennedy said, "If you think that's disgusting, you should see the cathouse Hepzibah owns that has fake vampires and stuff like that. There's some seriously weird crap there. And guys pay huge money for it. I was the one who had to go through the place and make sure there weren't any of Hepzi's supernatural pals there, because Vi just about had a meltdown at the idea of even peeking inside."

"I HEARD THAT!" yelled someone off in the darkness.

Kennedy gave Willow an evil grin and raised her voice slightly. "Yeah, Vi's a major pansy about a bunch of that stuff."

"OOH! YOU!" A pale redhead came running over, casually bearing a sword that looked like it had a seven foot blade. She pointed at Kennedy with her off hand and said, "Fine! Make fun of me! Just remember that, the next time you want me to... to... help you with one of your term papers!" She turned and stomped off. "And I am finding all your Warcraft characters and THEY ARE DEAD!"

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 11 Nov 2012 07:37:20 GMT  
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Chapter 106 The Nephilim Were on the Earth

Willow grinned and sing-songed, "You're in trouble now..."

Kennedy said, "It was totally worth it. I've got a warrior and a paladin, but she's a serious WoW geek. She's got like a level 80 druid and a level 75 rogue and a level 70 death knight. And now she's playing Dragon Age too."

Ginny looked at Hermione, who recognized her confusion and mouthed, 'I'll explain later'.

Buffy had everyone regroup around Willow. Ginny noticed that several of the other Slayers had slashes and bruises from the fight. They all looked like they were having the time of their lives.

Buffy said, "Good work, everyone. Score: Slayers a couple hundred, Lord Moldyparts zero. Everybody find your battle buddy and do standard post-fight checks." Most of the Slayers groaned at that. Vi perked up and grinned.

Amelie trudged over to Kennedy and growled, "I hate post-fight checks."

Kennedy said, "Hey! I didn't even get to do anything! One stinking Polgara made it through your picket line, and I didn't even get near it. So shut up and let me check."

Amelie took off her leather jacket and held out her arms. Then she turned around slowly.

Ginny managed not to wince. There was a vicious triple slash diagonally across Amelie's back. It looked like a three-clawed hand had raked her.

Kennedy said, "Bad news, Ames." Ginny waited to hear what Kennedy would say. "Your jacket? Wrecked."

Ginny said, "I can fix that." She took out her wand and did a swift reparo. Then a couple Cleaning Charms to get the blood and demon goo out, along with the stain.

Amelie ignored the bleeding cuts on her back. "You fixed my coat! You are so great!" She turned and yelled, "HEY! Everybody! Super-important news! These guys can fix rips in clothes and they can get stains out!"

Willow grinned at Hermione, "Now you're definitely going to be the most sought-after Watcher in the world."

Within a second, the entire group of Slayers was crowding around, all begging for clothing repairs and stain removal. Ginny got about a pint of giant blood off Buffy's boots, which turned out to be some really pretty leather ankle boots that Buffy said she got in Rome at a Muggle store.

Hermione insisted on applying medi-tape to everyone's cuts before she would fix the damaged clothing over the injuries. Most of the Slayers acted like Hermione was being a huge downer.

"Oh come on, you're harshing my vibe!"

"I don't need magic tape. I need my new halter top fixed!"

"I get enough of this from my mom. Can't you just fix my pants and let the leg thing go?"

"No!" Hermione insisted. "Medi-tape on the wound first, a scourgify to get the blood and goo off next, and then the reparo, and then the tergeo, or else you'll ruin your clothes once I repair them."

"This stupid stuff probably doesn't work on Slayers anyway..."

Ginny replied, "Hermione's been patching me up for months now. She knows more about which potions work on Slayers and which ones don't than anyone on earth!"

"Except Willow," Kennedy said loyally.

Willow patted her on the leg and said, "Probably including me, honey. Their potions are mainly earth magic, but they have libraries of potion information going back for centuries. I have a couple books I scrounged up, and my notebooks."

Hermione said, "Oh, I can help with that! I've got the Potions textbooks for all seven years, plus the sixth-year book with Professor Snape's corrections, and-

"I hate to interrupt," Buffy said in the tones of someone who was eager to interrupt. "But we're going to have the third wave coming soon. It'll be Riddle's Death Lickers. They'll have to be assuming we're all tenderized by now by the big, scary monsters."

Willow nodded in agreement, "Yeah, I'm feeling something in the school wards. Somebody just busted his chops to weaken the wards some more."

Ron looked over the eager Slayers and said, "But they're all human. Okay, they're real creeps who deserve to have someone beat the snot out of them..."

"Don't worry, Freckles," said Faith. "We're five by five."

Ginny had no idea what that meant, but she could guess from Faith's tone of voice that she thought they had things covered.

Buffy said, "Willow. Check on our forest team. Then try to locate all our Death Suckers, if you can. If they show up like regular wizards on your map, don't sweat it."

Hermione said, "All official Death Eaters have a Dark Mark on their right forearm so they're connected to... Riddle. And he can summon them using the mark."

Willow said, "Thanks. Maybe I can track 'em by their connection. That's got to be some really dark magic, and that ought to leave a few traces."

Buffy said, "Forest team first, tracking spells second." Willow nodded tiredly.

Hermione said, "There are lots of Riddle supporters who don't have the mark, but we think all of his most important followers have it."

Faith said, "That's pretty stupid. Why don't you make all your wizards walk around with their right

sleeve up to their elbow, so anyone can see?"

Hermione said, "First, it doesn't show if Riddle doesn't want it to. We think. And second, Riddle's people have been able to manipulate the Ministry for years, and now they control it completely. And third, you could hide it with any of a dozen illusion or disinterest spells."

Buffy said, "Rounding up idiots with bad tattoos is second. Fighting this battle is first. They're still holding back those Cementers for something, right?"

"Dementors," Hermione corrected.

"They're B'Oorthis demons," Willow added.

Buffy nodded. "Okay. So the Death Lickers will have to move separately, because they're susceptible to the B'Oorthis demons' effects too. So no prob." She snapped her head up and looked out into the darkness. "Here they come. And they're not trying to be quiet, so expect sneak attacks all around the grounds. Will, alert our forest team."

"On it," Willow nodded.

Ginny was just starting to be able to hear something coming from the edge of the wards.

Buffy said, "All right teams, spread out as battle buddy pairs. Some of their nastier spells work on us, so stay within sight of your wingman. I want a really loose Delta Spread. These losers aren't going to pose much of a threat if they don't see you coming. Knock 'em out, take their wands or break 'em, and break their metacarpals if you have enough time, because some of 'em may have backup wands."

Ginny had no idea what a 'delta spread' was, but it was obvious that all the Slayers did. They paired up and ran off into the darkness.

Faith gave Buffy a leer. "Wanna be my... battle buddy?"

Buffy laughed and said, "Take a fast sweep all the way around the castle. I'd bet they're trying to run some silent teams in on the castle while they pull this noisy stuff out here."

Faith grinned, "No bet. These guys are about as original as Gorak the Invincible." She took off toward the castle at a speed Ginny didn't think she could come close to matching.

Hermione uncomfortably asked, "Gorak the Invincible?"

Buffy shrugged blithely. "Yeah. This big demon Faith's team had to deal with in Malaysia last

month. Totally embarrassing. Playbook straight out of a James Bond movie. Faith decided she wanted to play along, just because she was bored. So she saw it all. The evil lair, the death trap, the big monologue, the whole schmeer. Said it was all she could do not to laugh at the big lug a couple times. Oh, and that whole 'invincible' part? Not so's you'd notice. Faith totally squished him and his whole evil plan as soon as she stopped laughing. That guy was LAME!"

Ron asked, "But... 'Invincible'?"

Buffy waved that aside. "Totally not. Whenever you run into guys who call themselves Gorak the Invincible, or H'Tauk the Unstoppable? Totally compensating, for something, if you know what I mean."

Ginny almost laughed, but she managed to turn it into a sort of cough. By then, she could hear the yelling horde charging across the Hogwarts grounds. Some of the yells seemed to be coming from up in the air and maybe a lot closer, so she was guessing Death Eaters on brooms.

Buffy said, "Will, you're up in... let's say ten."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 18 Nov 2012 07:26:06 GMT  
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Chapter 107 The Daughters of Humans

Willow looked exhausted as she said, "Got it set already. All I have to do is trigger the spell."

And ten seconds later, Willow snapped her fingers. There was a flash of yellow light around her hand, and then the wards flashed yellow too. There was an immense flash of muted yellow light in a vast dome across the entire grounds.

Ginny could tell that the bold yells overhead were abruptly turning into terrified screams.

Kennedy started singing a song Ginny had never heard before. "It's raining men, every specimen, tall, blond, dark and lean, rough and tough and strong and mean..."

Ginny could see two brooms come searing downward toward them through the darkness. The brooms planted themselves handle-first in the ground not fifty feet from their position. And the riders were screaming all the way down, until they were planted face-first in the sod.

Harry winced. Ron muttered, "That's gonna leave a bruise."

Every broom zoomed in point-first, planting its rider into the ground. Willow said, "I think we have a couple who aren't completely unconscious. I left the padding spells and guarding spells in place so the crashes wouldn't kill them."

Harry said, "Ouch. Remind me not to invite Willow to my next Quidditch match."

Buffy pointed at Kennedy and Ginny. "You two. Stay put." She threw the Scythe through the air, and Kennedy snatched it like they had been practicing for weeks. Then Buffy sprinted off to check each broom-wielder. Ginny heard the sound of a fist hitting flesh. It happened four times.

And then Buffy was sprinting back with a handful of wands. "Well, that was easy. Got a few broken bones out there we'll have to set later, but nothing all that serious, except for one guy who may not be fathering any more little witches anymore."

Ron cringed. Harry instinctively locked his knees together.

Kennedy complained, "Okay, you got the fun part, but it's boring back here."

Buffy shrugged, "You wanted the magical girl, you get the consequences. Just like with Sailor Moon. Except Will doesn't have meatballs in her hair. And you're not the one who gets kidnapped. And she's not a whiny crybaby. And... You know, that metaphor sounded a lot better in my head."

By then, Ginny could hear that some of the Death Eaters had gotten through the line of Slayers. There were a lot fewer yells than before, but it sounded like there were still maybe sixty to a hundred angry voices charging toward them.

Then they were close enough for Ginny to see them, even if they were black cloaks with black hoods running toward her in the blackness. There was hardly a visible sign of the people inside the robes. Ginny instinctively stepped forward so she was between Harry and the threats. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Kennedy moving to protect Willow the same way.

Buffy put an arm up, and Kennedy threw the Scythe. Buffy snatched it out of the air without looking. And she didn't step forward. She flowed. She stalked forward like a tiger. Or a lion. Or something that was not only more deadly than anything else, but perfectly aware of that difference. Ginny didn't see how the Death Eaters running toward her couldn't see the threat in that small body. She was surprised that most of the Death Eaters weren't fleeing in terror. Or peeing themselves.

A dozen deadly curses came searing through the air at Buffy. The Scythe came up, and she waved her arm in a blur of motion. Every curse reflected off the blade of the Scythe or else was absorbed by the magic of the weapon. The curses that reflected off the blade all went back into the string of Death Eaters, probably hitting exactly who Buffy wanted to target.

The Death Eaters didn't slow down as half a dozen of their corps fell. But it didn't matter. Their best speed was like a toddler's wobble compared to the raw speed of the Slayers descending on them from behind.

Ten Death Eaters were down. Twenty. Thirty. It was happening so fast that the Death Eaters in front had no idea their numbers were dropping. They began to fire off curses at everyone, not just Buffy. Ginny had a shield up, as did Hermione and Ron and Harry. Ginny didn't know what Willow was doing, but the spells just sort of shattered like glass when they got within a few feet of her.

Then the battle was close enough that Ginyn could see it clearly in the darkness. Slayers rushed up behind unsuspecting Death Eaters and knocked each one out with a single strike. Once all the Death eaters were down, the Slayers gathered up the wands and hauled the limp bodies over.

"These guys were pansies," one said.

"Like yeah," agreed another. "I was hoping for some fun."

"That wave of vamps was over in no time," complained a third.

Buffy announced, "Everyone who has not complained can grab a drink out of the cooler and watch the complainers do all the body moving."

A chorus of whines went up. "Awww!" "So not fair!" "How come I get stuck picking up loser wizards?"

Ginny turned to Kennedy and asked, "Are they really that skilled?"

Kennedy shrugged a little. "Maybe. You gotta remember Buffy grabbed the 'A' teams for this one. Tara? She's pretty important to the Scoobies."

Willow hugged Kennedy. "It's okay, honey." She looked at Ginny and said, "Tara was my girlfriend before Kennedy."

Kennedy said, "Tara was shot to death right in front of Willow. Will kind of... lost it."

Willow said, "She means I nearly destroyed all life on earth. If Xander hadn't talked me down, it

would've been... bad."

Kennedy hugged Willow, easily picking her up off the ground. "If someone killed me, I'd want you to get medieval on their ass. And their friends' asses. And their bosses' asses. And maybe their whole dimension, depending where they came from."

Willow admitted, "After Tara died, I was in a bad place for a while. I wasn't even thinking about dating again, until Kennedy and a bunch of other Potentials showed up needing help, and she sorta swept me off my feet."

Ginny saw Willow suddenly look up. Buffy turned too.

Faith came sprinting out of the darkness, a huge grin on her face. "Hey Red! That broom sabotage spell? Totally rocks. Over half a dozen Death Suckers came in on brooms on the far side of the grounds, and got their asses handed to 'em. You shoulda seen their faces! And the four guys tryin' ta be stealthy comin' in behind 'em on foot? Not that quiet, compared to me. So there's eleven more ta be picked up on the flip side. And nothin' made it outta the forest. I really wanted ta try the troll hammer on one a' those big-ass spiders. The big guy was standin' on watch there at his hut, keepin' an eye on our girls. So how do you get a name like Rubeus?"

"It's Latin," said Willow.

"Hell, even dumbshits like me know that much," Faith scowled. "But who the hell names their kid Rubeus?"

Ginny said, "I think it's a family name on his father's side."

Faith shrugged, ignoring the enormous weight of the troll hammer in her hand. "I got stuck with 'Faith' so I guess that makes a little sense. Coulda been worse. My mom mighta named me 'Buffy' or something."

"Hey!" yelled out a petite blonde who - as it turned out - wasn't out of hearing range.

Faith gave Willow a big wink and went off to help the other Slayers.

Kennedy asked, "So what's left?"

Willow studied her map and said, "Looks like the Dork Lard and maybe a handful of his lieutenants. Plus all those B'Oorthis demons."

Kennedy asked Hermione, "Hey, why do you guys call them Dementors?"

Hermione said, "According to a book in the library, they were named Dementors way back hundreds of years ago. It's because they cause dementia in their victims, unless they get close enough to suck out your soul and render you an empty husk." She glanced at Harry. "And they're attracted to people with more pain in their past, because they make you relive your worst memories."

Willow said, "I can't believe you guys let B'Oorthis demons breed. That's so not a good idea."

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 21 Nov 2012 07:26:41 GMT  
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Chapter 108 Heroes That Were of Old

Hermione insisted, "We didn't let them! They were only supposed to be guards at Azkaban our wizard prison but the Ministry lost all control over them when Riddle made his big move and basically hired them away. And they can be driven away by a Patronus Charm, but they're impossible to kill."

Willow smiled smugly. "Maybe they're tough when all you have is a wand, but they're susceptible to the right earth magic spells."

Hermione perked up at that. "Really? We could use your help then, because there are hundreds of them out there now, all over the country, and things are really getting... unpleasant for everyone. Not just us. The non-magical people too."

Kennedy smiled proudly. "Then you're talking to the right person. Willow is the best on this. Probably the most powerful earth mage in this hemisphere."

Even in the darkness, Ginny could see Willow blushing. "I wish you guys would stop saying that!"

"Oh come on," Kennedy insisted. "You could take most of the Devon Coven all at once."

"But they just don't believe in battle magics," Willow said. "They're way better on nature magics and potion-brewing and important stuff like that."

"Pffft," Kennedy snorted. "Like any of 'em could stop a horde of V'Kelm demons."

Hermione said, "We still have all the Dementors to deal with, but one really powerful Patronus Charm can drive away an army of them. And we have a problem with the Elder Wand. Riddle is after it. He thinks killing the owner makes you the new owner, so he's going to kill Professor Snape and then try to get his hands on it to use it against Harry."

Willow rolled her eyes. "Well that's wrong too. Who has it?" She struggled to stand up on her own, so Ginny guessed she was just about ready to pass out.

Ginny pulled it out of her wrist bracelet and let Willow hold it. Willow did something so it floated between her hands and said, "Well, it's obviously attuned to Harry, not your Snape guy. Mister Run-away-from-death is even dumber than we thought."

Ginny didn't understand how Willow could tell, but she already knew Willow could do magics Ginny didn't even know about. And maybe Willow could tell just by looking at Harry's aura.

Harry said, "Yeah, we figured this out. I disarmed Draco Malfoy earlier today, so it's attuned to me now. When you defeat the current owner, the wand changes its allegiance. So if you steal the wand from the owner, or beat the owner in a duel, it becomes yours. You don't have to kill anyone. But Riddle only thinks in terms of killing people."

"Which means you should treat the Dark Lord with more respect, Potter," growled a surly voice from the darkness. A tall, sallow wizard with long, stringy black hair and a big nose strode forward. He added, "Your bodyguards are remarkably good. I had to add several spells on top of a Disillusionment Charm to get past them."

He strode toward Willow and said, "I'll take that. The Dark Lord is awaiting it eagerly." Willow ignored him and let the wand continue to float in front of her.

Harry stepped between them. He insisted, "Professor! You can't! He'll kill you to try and become the new owner!"

Snape glared at him and coldly said, "I've been a dead man for longer than you've been potty-trained, Potter."

Buffy stepped forward and said, "Look, Tall Dark and In Need Of Some Pantene, that isn't the way this works."

Faith stepped beside her. "You don't get atonement by getting yourself killed. You get it by fighting the bad guys and staying alive to fight some more."

Snape hardly deigned to look at her. "And how would you know, little girl?"

Faith got right up in his face. "I know. Maybe I know better'n you do. You're older, but that doesn't mean you've been more evil. You got no idea of the things I did. I know all about the atonement deal."

Harry softly said, "Professor, I know what you did, and I know what you've been doing. Ginny had some prophetic dreams about you. You don't need to get yourself killed to make up for the bad part."

Ron glanced at Harry, gritted his teeth, and finally said, "Yeah. If you get killed, who's going to keep us in line in Defense Against the Dark Arts?"

Hermione stepped forward so she was beside Ron. "Excuse me Professor Snape, but what you're proposing... It's suspiciously like what a Gryffindor would suggest."

Snape looked like he'd been slapped. He glared furiously at her for long seconds. Then he said, "Ah, that would be what the Muggles call 'reverse psychology', wouldn't it? Isn't that rather Slytherin of you?"

Hermione didn't react. She said, "I never told you, but the Sorting Hat thought I would also be at home in Slytherin. Or Ravenclaw."

"Miss Granger, if you had been placed in Slytherin, you would have earned thousands of points from me in class. All by yourself, you could have won a house cup."

He turned back to face Harry. "Dumbledore's portrait finally told me what he sent you to do. It won't do you any good. The Dark Lord realized this evening that you were hunting down his Horcruxes. He has made two more Horcruxes already. I believe he used some priceless artifacts out of Lucius and Narcissa's mansion. Narcissa was quite put out." He smiled nastily. Then his smile vanished. "The Dark Lord killed several Muggleborn wizards to do it. And he is quite willing to kill as many Muggleborns as it takes to stay ahead of you on your little... quest. So just hand over the wand."

Buffy said, "Not a chance, Captain Emo. This isn't a hostage trade. He doesn't get new playtoys just because he's throwing a temper tantrum."

Snape growled, "Potter, get your little floozies out of my face."

Harry calmly said, "Professor, I wouldn't get them mad at you if I were you."

Snape ignored Harry. He snapped his wand briskly and called out, "Accio wand!" The Elder Wand went flying through the air toward him.

"Accio fist!" Buffy yelled out as she leapt forward even faster than the wand was moving. She punched Snape in the jaw, and he went flying backward. She reached up above her head and snagged the wand out of the air without looking. Snape went sprawling about fifteen feet through the air and hit the ground hard. He landed on his back, and the force of the blow rolled him up onto his head, so his robes tangled around him as he kept rolling over and he collapsed onto his front.

"YES!" Ron shouted gleefully. He did a quick celebratory jig before he saw that Hermione was glaring at him.

Buffy said, "Don't sweat it, Herm. I just tapped him, so he still has a face. I didn't even break his jaw. Although he is gonna have a couple loose teeth when he wakes up."

Ron said, "Oh, no problem. Madame Pomfrey can fix something like that easy."

"Ron, thank you for your caring attitude," Hermione said sarcastically.

"Hey, at least I didn't tell 'em that if they took a bone out of his arm, he'd have to drink Skele-Gro and have it regrow overnight. That stuff's really grim," Ron persisted.

"Tastes worse than Polyjuice Potion flavored with Goyle's hair," Harry complained, as he made a face like he was tasting it all over again.

Eww. Ginny grimaced too. Just thinking about the Polyjuice Potion with Bellatrix in it was making her mouth feel like that hideous stuff was still in there.

Hermione snapped, "We have something far worse to worry about than bad-tasting potions! If Riddle is making more Horcruxes, we're in terrible trouble. If we can't destroy all his Horcruxes, he's still technically immortal!"

Willow smiled. It wasn't a nice smile. In fact, Ginny was very, very glad Willow wasn't smiling that smile at her. Willow asked again, "Amelie? My satchel, please."

Amelie brought the large satchel over again and opened it up. Willow waved her hand over the opening, and a softly glowing orb rose out of the depths to settle in her hand. She pronounced, "An orb of Thessulah. Excellent for, among other things, a dark Gypsy spell to restore the soul to an evil demon who once had one. Or, in this case, to break these Horcruxes and restore all the pieces of soul to your pal Voldy."

A/N: I got this last idea from reading a Buffyverse / Anita Blake xover called "Don't Stand So Close

to Me". WillowXRichard works out pretty well, IMHO. It's one of my two favorite Buffyverse/Anitaverse crossovers, along with the unfinished "Ursa". Go read both of them while you wait for my next chapter.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 25 Nov 2012 07:23:40 GMT  
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Chapter 109 Warriors of Renown

Willow began chanting in an ancient language that made the hair stand up on the back of Ginny's neck. She had seen the power that Willow so casually wielded, but this was getting into the creepy part.

Willow's eyes went black. Her hair rose and fluttered in a wind that no one else could feel. Her voice went deeper. And scarier. The orb began to glow fiercely, and then there was a flash. Willow toppled over backward.

Ginny blinked, and it was all over. The orb looked like it had been singed. Willow looked back to normal, but completely exhausted. Had it worked?

Willow smiled up at Buffy and Kennedy. "Got 'em." She turned to Hermione and explained, "This was way easier than the first time I made the spell work. I didn't have as much Essence, and I didn't speak any dialects of Romany, and I was still in the hospital suffering from a concussion."

Hermione looked uncomfortably at the probably-ruined orb. "But... will Riddle know what you did?"

Willow thought it over for a few seconds. "No idea. You said he didn't seem to know about any of them except the snake, right? And he didn't figure it out until after you guys swiped the cup? So he might not know. He might only know that something happened, even if he might not be able to tell if it was connected to Harry or him. He might know exactly what happened. But if he does really know, it's too late to stop and make more Horcruxes. And if he knows someone can break all of his Horcruxes simultaneously, he knows there's no point in trying to make more. They won't provide any protection for him."

"So he's totally screwed either way," Faith grinned.

Ron contributed, "Like I said, he should've studied under Flamel and made himself a

Philosopher's Stone instead, but he was too busy being a psycho."

Buffy just said, "Kennedy, check Will's map, please."

Kennedy looked over and said, "Whoa, looks like that got 'em moving. I've got eight regular wizards coming our way, around one extra-faint dot. And the B'Oorthis demons are all in a big mass outside the wards, just standing around."

Buffy said, "Surprise attack, probably."

"No problemo," Faith said in a deep, robotic voice for no reason Ginny could figure out. "We just gotta let Moldyshorts sick his team on us and take 'em down so Harry can kick his ass mano a creepo."

Hermione warned, "These are going to be Riddle's most dangerous lieutenants. They're the ones who are the most dangerous in combat. They'll be throwing curses that might even hurt or kill a Slayer. And they'll be fast. And harder to sneak up on."

Buffy waved away her concerns. "We got this." She turned her head. "Vi? You know your assignment. Take Trish." She turned her head again. "Faith? I need another sweep around the grounds, checking for backstabby-ness. You don't need a battle buddy, do you?"

"Nah, I'm faster on my own." She picked up the troll hammer and took off.

Buffy said, "Kennedy and Ginny? Same assignments as before. If Moldy isn't dumb as a sack of hammers, he'll send someone after Willow. And they've got to be pissed at Harry's little pals. So expect you may get some action."

Kennedy said, "Moldy-wart's got to figure we'd do what he'd do. So he's bound to send some of his Death Snorters to keep Hermione and Ginny from backstabbing him."

"Good point," said Buffy.

"Hey, what am I, pumpkin stew?" complained Ron.

Willow smiled at him from where she was still lying on the grass. "Don't worry about it. Slayers always think about women being bigger threats than men."

"That's 'cause we are," asserted Amelie.

"Girls rule, guys drool!" called out another Slayer.

"More like 'girls rule, guys limp home with a broken arm and cracked ribs' if you ask me," smirked Kennedy.

Even in the darkness, Ginny could see that Ron's ears were turning pink with embarrassment and resentment. She was torn. It was really fun teasing Ron, and she'd been doing it pretty much since she could talk. But he was her person to tease, not anyone else's, and her brother on top of that. And if she had to play protector for him, he'd be even more embarrassed. Wait, but if she did the protector thing, then she'd be able to tease him about it for years! But Hermione was getting kind of mad about it too, and Ginny didn't want Hermione to be embarrassed.

Ginny finally gave in on the 'protect my brother' side and said, "Hermione's right. These Death Eaters like killing and maiming people. And they're good at it. Really good. They're fast for wizards, and their aim is good, and they know a lot of really vicious spells. You'd better figure that if one of their spells hits you, the least awful thing that'll happen is you vomit up your own intestines. Or you get sliced like with a battleaxe."

Buffy said a little more loudly, "Okay, you heard the experts. Do not let these losers hit you with a spell."

Willow said, "I've got to reinforce part of the wards. I think they broke some of my stuff. So I'm not gonna be much with the helping for a few minutes."

Kennedy helped Willow sit up and said, "No sweat, baby. You got two Slayers and four spell-slingers protecting you from... what? Some weirdos who hide behind funny masks?"

Willow giggled and gave Kennedy a little peck on the cheek before she went to work.

Hermione asked, "Are you going to re-do that blocking spell to keep out non-students?"

Willow shook her head slightly. "No way. We want 'em to come in and be all not with the suspecting. It's the best way to get them all together and finish 'em off once and for all. Especially your buddy Moldywarts. If you scare off the badguys and let 'em run to cover, you just have more problems later on. We've seen it."

Ginny watched as Willow floated the cloth back to the ground and let a compass magically align the pentagram on it. Then Willow levitated five crystals, which took up positions at the points of the pentagram. Ginny tried to keep an eye on the grounds, but she kept sneaking peeks at Willow's progress. After the crystals came sprigs of plants which bundled themselves into five clusters, then ground themselves into powder over the five crystals. And after that, Willow began to chant in some language Ginny had never heard before.

Hermione goggled, "Is that... Is she chanting in Sumerian?"

Kennedy just shrugged. "Could be. She reads about twenty ancient languages, and she can do spells in some languages she doesn't even read."

Ginny almost giggled at the expression on Hermione's face. It had to be hard to be 'the smartest one' for so long and then run into someone a lot smarter. Ginny wasn't at all upset about running into a crowd of girls who were all stronger and tougher and better trained. Not now. She was just thankful she wasn't in a battle to the death against five giants and fifty werewolves, because she would have lost. Horribly. She had a feeling that Riddle's eight Death Eaters were in for a very nasty surprise.

While Willow continued chanting, Buffy took Harry aside and started talking. Ginny wanted to go over and eavesdrop, but Kennedy gave her a look that said she needed to stay with Ron and Hermione. After all, it wasn't as if Buffy couldn't protect Harry from pretty much anything. But what was Buffy up to?

Kennedy called out, "They're moving in. Big V's moving right at us, so he's got someone in our group as a locator. His minions are doing the sneaky pincer movement routine."

Hermione said, "He probably used his own blood to do a locator spell to find Harry."

Buffy said, "Gotcha. Okay Harry, you're up. We're gonna go have a little chat with The Riddle-er. Just remember what I told you."

Harry nodded, and the two of them headed out toward Voldemort. Ginny couldn't help the tightness in her throat or the tears that threatened to leak from her eyes.

Kennedy glanced at Willow's map and said, "Okay. Pincer movements are ignoring Buffy and Harry, and curving in on us now. Everyone ready?"

Ron nodded. Hermione uncomfortably said, "I think so." Ginny just gave her fellow Slayer a quick glance of agreement.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 28 Nov 2012 07:07:22 GMT  
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Chapter 110 The Wickedness of Humankind

Hermione whispered, "Get your best Shield Charms up now."

Ginny said, "If you think they're about to throw an Avada Kedavra at you, disappearate."

Willow just kept chanting in that ancient language. Kennedy said, "I'll guard her. You just do your jobs." Ginny knew from the look on Kennedy's face that no one was going to hit Willow with an Avada Kedavra. If Kennedy didn't take them out first, she would dive in front of the curse to protect her girlfriend.

Ginny told herself she could do that. She could dive in front of a Killing Curse to save Hermione or Ron. Or even Willow, because they obviously needed Willow's powers a lot more than they needed Ginny. Ginny gave Kennedy a look. Kennedy gave her a tiny nod in return. They understood just what the other was thinking. This was what Slayers did. They stood between humanity and the monsters in the dark every night of their lives until they died.

In the distance off to her left, Ginny heard something. Maybe a smacking noise. Maybe the sound of a Slayer coming out of the darkness and punching a Death Eater unconscious. Ginny was sure it wasn't a Death Eater getting the best of a Slayer, because there was no sign of a hex lighting up the grounds.

Kennedy whispered to her, "One down."

She waited impatiently. It seemed like everything around her was slowing down as she geared up and the Slayer in her roared. Off to her right there were two more smacks, about five seconds apart. They were definitely getting closer.

One more on her left. After a stretch, another one. By then, the sounds were coming from so close they were almost in dueling range.

And then Kennedy tossed something up into the air. It soared up about a hundred feet and burst into bright, sunny-yellow light. Whatever it was, it didn't come back down. Ginny guessed it was some sort of bespelled device from Willow.

Ginny saw that there were three Death Eaters left. Bellatrix Lestrange and her husband on her right, and Lucius Malfoy on her left.

A couple years ago, she would have been terrified. Now, she just wanted to break something. Thinking about what Lucius Malfoy had done to her with that diary, she wanted to break his jaw. Thinking about what he had done to Harry over the years, with his evil machinations in the Ministry and his vicious scheming as a Hogwarts governor, she wanted to hit him and break something a lot lower down.

Malfoy was closest to Willow, so Ginny swiftly moved to face him. She felt more than saw as Ron and Hermione moved to face the Lestranges.

She smirked, "Lucius. Dobby says hi."

"Snot-nosed little..." He raised his wand menacingly.

She taunted him, "So you're the last piece of Moldywart's crack plan?"

"Do not defile the name of the Dark Lord!" he bellowed and hurled a vicious red hex at her.

She darted to the side before he even finished making the wand movements for the hex, and she hurled a silent petrificus totalis at him. His hex seared past her, missing by a good three feet. Her hex bounced off a Shield Charm but still made him stagger back a step. She had a Stunner flying at him before he got off his next hex.

Whatever Lucius did, it wasn't anything Ginny had seen before. His hex was like a blue explosion of force that just blasted out at everything in front of him. She dove to the side, but it still smacked her out of the air and sent her tumbling. She had no idea if she would have survived the force of the spell if she wasn't a Slayer. As it was, the spell hurt. A lot. More than crashing to the ground did.

She cast another Shield Charm before she even tried to roll to her feet. It was a good thing she did, because Lucius fired off two Cutting Hexes at her face. The hexes bounced off her shield, and she was jumping up to her feet before he had a chance to throw another one at her. That blast hex thing was pretty nasty, but she had been hit harder by a fledgling vampire. Okay, being punched full strength by a vampire would have killed any normal witch. But she wasn't normal, not even by wizard standards.

She fired off a Stunner as she leapt to her feet, and then another three before he had a chance to go on the offensive. He kept casting Shield Charms and Blocking Charms and other defensive spells, and she just didn't let up.

He waved his wand in a familiar pattern and did a half-turn... and nothing happened. Ginny grinned as she realized Willow had the anti-apparation wards working again.

She hurled two more Stunners as fast as she could, while she dodged to one side or another, making it that much harder for him to get a hex off at her.

He yanked a necklace off his neck and squeezed the globe dangling from it... and nothing happened again. Ginny wanted to laugh at the horrified expression on his face.

She hurled another Stunner, but he blocked it with a purple Shield Charm like nothing she had ever seen before. And he unleashed another of those blue explosion spells.

This time, she knew she couldn't dive out of the way. She hurled a Punching Hex at his face while she dove through the rolling blue blast like it was an ocean wave. His spell slammed her to the ground, but her hex caught him in the nose and sent him flying. She was up on her feet well before he was even trying to get to his knees.

It still took her three more Stunners to break through his last defense and nail him. The spell knocked him down, but she could see by the way it fragmented off his robes that the robes were also bespelled to protect him. So she hit him with another one right in the face before he could fire off a surprise at her.

Once she was sure he was down and out, she whirled around to help Ron and Hermione. Both were standing, while both of the Lestranges were down. Vi was standing behind Bellatrix's body, and a Slayer Ginny didn't know was behind Rodolphus.

Ginny disarmed Lucius and punched him in the face to make sure he would stay unconscious. All right, maybe it was her inner Slayer wanting some payback. She then ran over to check on her friends. Hermione had grass in her hair and dirt on her back, so something had knocked her down. Ron had grass and dirt on his side, and a bloody nose that Hermione was already fixing with an expert episkey.

"Everyone okay?" Ginny checked.

Hermione nodded tiredly. Ron pointed at the two Slayers and said, "I probably would've been in trouble if they hadn't been here. The Lestranges pulled a double team on Hermione and when I put up a Shield Charm to protect her, they both went after me."

Vi said, "He did great. He dove on the ground and dodged at least one of the hexes, and I had time to punch whats-his-face in the back of the neck and drop him."

The other Slayer said, "Skanky Brunette didn't like that, but I gave her a palmstrike to the back of the skull and dropped like her a rock."

Vi added, "And Ron hexed her with something red to make sure she stayed down."

Hermione walked over and hugged Ron hard. She looked at Ginny and said, "He saved me. He was great."

Ron blushed so hard his ears turned red.

Vi looked up at the light, which still hadn't floated down to earth. She said, "How do we get Willow's light down?"

Kennedy said, "Oh, we don't need to. She'll get it when she's ready."

Ginny glanced over and Willow was still chanting. There was an eerie white glow about her, and she was rocking back and forth in time with the chant. The glow pulsed weirdly as she rocked.

Kennedy said, "This looks like the nearly-done part. So maybe a minute or two."

Hermione said, "Well I want to go see what Buffy has Harry doing. If he's going to fight Riddle, we need to be there for him."

Ron said, "And not let Riddle cheat. Again."

Ginny said, "Like if Riddle sicks five hundred Dementors on Harry in the middle of their duel."

Ron gulped, "Oh Merlin! That's just what he'd do!" And he took off in the direction Buffy and Harry had gone.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 02 Dec 2012 07:58:13 GMT  
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Chapter 111 Thoughts of their Hearts

Ginny and Vi had no trouble keeping up with Ron, but Hermione rapidly fell behind. Ginny hoped that the other Slayer was sticking with Hermione, just in case Riddle had some other plans going on. She trusted him about as far as she could hex him. Maybe as far as she could hex that first armored giant.

She and Vi got to the scene a second ahead of Ron. Not that she was protecting him too much or anything, but she just didn't want to let Vi get there first. Was her inner Slayer going to make her be a lot more competitive? Or was she just going to be more competitive against other Slayers?

And there was Harry, with his wand out, facing Riddle. Ugh. Ginny's inner Slayer wanted to run right over and stake that snakey thing. How could you possibly want to live forever in a horrific

monstrosity of a body like that? Riddle was definitely playing with way too few Chocolate Frog cards in his deck.

Buffy was standing there with one hand on her chin, like she was critiquing Harry's form. Ginny had no idea what Buffy was doing.

Harry and Riddle were facing each other and stalking in a circle, like two wild animals preparing to show each other who was the alpha male. Ginny was thinking this was a lot hotter than it should have been.

Whatever Riddle had just said, Harry simply smirked and said, "Oh come on, Tommy."

"Don't call me that!" Riddle hissed.

Harry sneered, "Why not? Afraid I'll hurt your feelings?"

"You? Afraid of you?" Riddle hissed. "An infant only protected by his mother? A child only saved by his headmaster?"

Harry laughed at him. "How about you? A grown man too stupid to recognize blood protection spells when he sees them right in front of his face? A loser so desperate he puts his trust in guys like Quirrell and Pettigrew? Pathetic. And the fact that my friends are watching means even your best Death Lickers-

"Death EATERS!" Riddle insisted.

"Death Suckers," Harry taunted. "They couldn't beat some schoolkids. None of them even got near the castle."

"Ha!" Riddle retorted. "You have no idea how ingenious my plan really is! While you and your friends expended all your energies stopping my attack waves, my minions have unleashed the horrors of the Forbidden Forest onto the grounds, and my Death Eaters-

"Death Suckers."

"-Death EATERS have come up on your rear and have invaded the castle behind you!"

Harry rolled his eyes. "Oh yeah, I completely fear your brilliant planning abilities. The guy who was so stupid he listened to only half a prophecy and got himself killed. The guy who thought Horcruxes were a good idea, instead of going with much better alternatives. The guy who thought he knew everything about Horcruxes but was too stupid to figure out that he turned me into a Horcrux..." Riddle was so shocked he froze for a moment. "...even after we could get into each

other's heads, even after our brother wands started recognizing our enemies, even after you were able to possess me for a few seconds back in the Ministry. The guy who was so idiotic that he used my blood in a spell to build himself a new body when he didn't understand the consequences! Your buddy Albus knew without even stopping to think that you'd just completely screwed yourself over."

Riddle hissed, "You're the fool! The blood of my enemy made me stronger! It let me touch you without pain!"

Harry snorted in derision. "Like you ever needed to touch me after that. Tommy. You still couldn't possess me, or even stay in my mind for any length of time without hurting yourself. You completely screwed up on that spell. You should have used a magical ancestor for the bones. You should have used a better, more willing minion than Pettigrew. And you should have used pretty much anybody instead of me. Pretty much the whole wizarding world would have worked for 'the blood of my enemy'. If I hadn't gotten someone to kill the chunk of your soul that was in me, you would have killed yourself and your Horcrux when you hit me with a Killing Curse."

"Impossible! No one could have unmade that Horcrux if you're telling the truth!"

Harry laughed rudely. "Tommykins, please. You know the prophecy. I've got a power Lord Moldysorts knows not."

Riddle snapped, "Don't tell me Albus still has you convinced that love is a power?"

Harry grinned, "It doesn't have to be. It turns out I've got tons of powers you know not. You're pretty much a know-nothing when it comes to something other than the Dark Arts, and you're not so hot there either. How do you think I got out of Malfoy's manor past those anti-apparation wards? How do you think I took care of all those vampire nests? How do you think I stopped all your attack waves? How do you think I found all those Horcruxes? How do you think I even got a crack at the diary? How do you think I got through Albus's series of tests my first year here? You have screwed up so many times you have no idea how hosed you are."

"Me? ME? You dare doubt Lord Voldemort, the greatest dark wizard in centuries?"

Harry smirked, "Well, yeah. My friends wiped the forest with your Plan B, and they creamed your minions trying to sneak the back way into the castle. This whole attack plan was just one more stupid idea from the house of Riddle. And now I've got you trapped here, where you can't get away."

"YOU have ME trapped? You childish fool!" Riddle waved his wand skyward and a blast of greenish light flared upward like a spotlight. "Now you are DOOMED!"

Wave after wave of Dementors poured across the grounds, all of them aiming for Harry and Riddle.

Ron said, "There's three of us. We can each put up a Patronus and keep Harry's area clear. Otherwise, Riddle's going to wait until Harry folds, and then blindside him."

Hermione nervously asked, "Who's going to keep the Dementors off us while we have our Patronuses way over there?"

Ron frowned. "Does it matter? Harry's the one who has to pull through this."

Ginny suddenly remembered. Ron had been willing to get squashed by a giant stone chessman when he was just a first year. He had gone into a forest filled with giant spiders his second year. He had attacked a full grown man while he had a badly broken leg his third year. Ron had always been willing to make a sacrifice to let someone else win the game. Ron had been playing chess with himself as a pawn for over six years. Of course he would think in terms of sacrificing himself for Harry once more.

Vi said, "Don't worry. We got this."

Hermione asked, "How? Can you even see Dementors?"

Vi shrugged, "Well, we can't see 'em except Willow but we can sense 'em and tell where they are. That's all we need."

Hermione asked, "Can you kill them?"

Vi admitted, "Well, we can with the Slayer Scythe. But that's a pretty one-on-one deal, and not being able to see them does make it tougher."

Hermione was nothing if not persistent. "So... how are you going to stop hundreds of Dementors if you can't see them, and they're all crowded together, and you're not even holding that Scythe. Which is really not a scythe. It's more of a lochaber axe."

Vi said, "It's not really an axe either. If you look at the shape of the blade-"

Ron interrupted, "It really doesn't matter if it's a scythe or an axe. What matters is stopping a thousand Dementors!"

Vi said, "Right. We got that."

Just then, Kennedy came running up with Willow held in her arms like she was a twenty pound

toddler. Willow looked really tired.

Kennedy turned to Willow and said, "They're arguing about the scythe. And the demons."

Willow smiled, "It calls itself a scythe. We don't get to change its name. And the B'Oorthis demons? We got that."

Hermione fumed, "But how?"

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 05 Dec 2012 19:28:33 GMT  
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Chapter 112 Evil Continually

Willow said, "That whole big spell I was doing."

Hermione insisted, "That isn't an explanation!"

Willow let Kennedy set her down, and she stood shakily with one arm around Kennedy's waist. "So, how's our onslaught look?"

Ron groused, "It looks like every Dementor in Britain is descending on Harry right now."

Willow smiled wickedly. "Egggggcellent."

Vi and Kennedy snickered. Ginny looked at Ron, but he just shrugged.

Hermione whispered, "I'll explain later."

Willow tried for an old man's voice but failed. "Smithers, release the hounds!" She pulled out one of the crystals she had been using in her spell. It was now glowing with a pulsing, wavering, purple energy.

Kennedy took it in one hand and squeezed. The crystal shattered into a hundred pieces, and the purple light winked out.

Ginny blinked as the wards over the school momentarily flashed with the exact same color light.

Willow smirked, "Showtime."

Even as she spoke, Ginny could see every one of the Dementors begin to glow with that same purple color.

Willow said, "I did tell you B'Oorthis demons were susceptible to the right earth magic spells, didn't I?"

Every Dementor stopped. Were they panicking? As Ginny watched, the Dementors slowly began disintegrating. Their diaphanous black cloaks began coming apart, with streamers of black flying off them and fading into nothingness. The frightening visages took on looks of terror as they began fading into thin air. A cacophony of frightened wailing rent the air as the Dementors realized they were doomed. A few at the far edges tried to flee, but they too disintegrated into black dust and wavering ectoplasm.

In less than half a minute, every Dementor was gone.

Hermione turned to Willow and said, "I want to learn that!"

Willow smiled gently and said, "I think we can come to some sort of trade."

Ginny said, "That was awesome. I'd like to learn some of your kind of magic too."

Ron said, "Me too, but we've got to deal with Tommykins first."

Ginny looked at the face-off, and almost giggled despite the desperate nature of the scene. Riddle, even with a face that only a snake could love, was showing complete shock, and maybe even a little fear.

Harry smirked, "That's right, Tommy-boy. No more Dementors. No Imperius'ed lackeys. No Death Eaters left. No magical creatures. No Horcruxes. Decades of planning, and now you're all alone with no one to back you up. Meanwhile, I've got my friends, a small army of demon hunters, and everyone in the castle. Looks like one of the powers you know not is the power to let someone with an IQ above room temperature do your planning."

Riddle hissed, "Filthy halfblood! Once I've killed you, I'll leave here and make more Horcruxes. Build up my armies. Reassert my control over the Ministry."

Harry said, "Oh, I forgot to mention. Even if you do manage to kill me, there's a couple dozen people out here waiting their turn to crush you like a bug. You're surrounded. Friendless. Trapped. How's it feel to have the shoe on the other foot?"

Riddle snarled, "You're a fool." He swirled his wand in the classic movement for disappearing, and he did a small turn.

Nothing happened. He looked even more alarmed.

Harry said, "Oh, did I forget to tell you the school wards are back up? And better than ever?"

Riddle snatched an ornate pen out of his robes and squeezed it. Nothing happened. He began to look frantic.

Harry went on, "Like I said, school wards are back up, and better than ever. Including no portkeys working until the right person says so."

"You can't keep me here!" Riddle snapped.

Harry said, "Oh, you mean your 'fly like a bat' spell? Give it a try. I dare you. As soon as you're airborne, about two dozen archers will shred that robe and dump you face-first on the ground."

Riddle snatched a broomstick out of a hidden pocket of his robes where he probably had an Undetectable Extension Spell in place. He leapt onto the broom and flew about forty feet up at a steep angle.

The broom abruptly flipped so it was pointing nearly straight down, and it buried itself point first in the ground, smashing Riddle head-first into the grass.

Harry casually said, "Petrificus totalis."

The spell hit Riddle in the face and slammed him backward, only to fragment in a thousand tiny sparks when it touched his robes.

Hermione muttered under her breath, "I've got to figure out how to make clothes do that."

But Riddle was far too powerful to be stopped that easily. His bespelled robes had already taken most of the brunt of Harry's spell, and so Riddle had little trouble responding before Harry could fire off another spell. He hissed, "Imperio."

Harry froze in the middle of casting his next spell. Ginny watched in horror as Riddle sprang back to his feet, keeping his wand pointing at Harry the entire time. Harry gritted his teeth and strained for all he was worth, but he didn't seem to be able to throw off the Imperius Curse.

Ginny yanked a battleaxe out of her bracelet and prepared to hurl it right into Riddle's chest.

Suddenly a grip of iron caught her around the wrist. She looked over and saw Kennedy, still holding up Willow with her other hand.

Kennedy hissed, "Let him give it a shot!" Ginny glared at her. "Boyfriends need us to let 'em take some risks and do some stuff. And he's got that prophesy on him, so he needs to try."

"But..." Ginny fussed.

Harry moved. He fell to his knees and unleashed a Stunner at Riddle. Harry keeled over onto the grass, but he was moving on his own again.

Riddle easily blocked the Stunner and hurled a Cruciatu Curse at Harry. Harry was lying on his side on the grass, so Ginny knew he couldn't dive out of the way.

Harry did something she'd never seen him do before. He waved his wand in a jagged motion, and aimed it downward. The ground right in front of him twisted, and a layer of sod peeled loose from the ground. It only rose about a foot, but that was enough to block Riddle's spell while Harry was lying on his side.

The Cruciatu hit the sod with a vicious sound, and the grass burst into flame. Harry knelt behind the smoke of the burning grass and fired off a bluish hex Ginny didn't recognize.

Riddle blocked the hex with a Shield Charm and seized his opportunity. He yelled, "Avada ke-"

But Harry was already casting expelliarmus silently, so his spell jetted forward before Riddle finished speaking.

"-davra!"

The Killing Curse hit Harry's spell only inches in front of Riddle's wand, and the spells from brother wands interacted, just like before. Only this time, there was a massive explosion of green fire that blasted outward in a huge sphere that grew until it was fifteen or twenty feet across.

Harry was pushed backward by the blast, and he rolled over a couple times before he stopped and struggled to get back up on his feet.

When the fireball faded away, the burnt remains of Riddle's body lay there, shriveled and cadaverous, inside still-smoking black robes.

Ron called out, "Make sure he's really dead this time, mate."

Buffy strode forward with the Slayer Scythe in one hand. "That's my job, I think." She turned her

head to look at Harry. "You might not want to watch this part." She swung the Scythe and separated the skull from the burning corpse.

Willow staggered forward with Kennedy's help and said, "We better take care of one other thing too. You guys tend to come back as visible ghosts if you're too scared to move on, and if there's anything we know about this loser, it's that he's scared silly about dying."

Hermione gasped, "Oh Merlin, you mean we could have ended up with Lord Voldemort as one of the castle ghosts?"

Ron muttered unhappily, "And I thought the Bloody Baron was a pain."

Willow said, "Fortunately, it's pretty easy to exorcise a ghost, and it'll be even easier to exorcise, what, one eighth of a ghost?"

Willow pulled from a pocket what looked like a slim cardboard box. It said 'Kosher Salt' on it, but Ginny had no idea what the first word meant. She made a mental note to ask Hermione later. Willow made a gesture with her other hand, and salt flew out of the box to form a circle around Riddle's corpse. Then more salt outlined a pentagon around the circle, and more salt made a circle that just touched the outer points of the pentagon.

Willow walked around the outer circle, chanting something soft at each point of the pentagon, until a sad little silvery wisp floated up from Riddle's smoldering chest. It looked at Willow and pleaded, "No! Not that! Anything but th-"

And it was gone.

A/N: And now the four chapters of anticlimactic wrap-up, and we will be done.

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 09 Dec 2012 07:44:43 GMT  
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Chapter 113 Humankind on the Earth

Willow nodded to herself and said, "Step two. Get rid of evil creepiness Moldyshorts was lugging around in his pockets."

Ginny figured Willow was doing some sort of wandless Summoning Charm, because over a dozen necklaces, rings, trinkets, and bottles flew up from hidden pockets in the still-burning robes.

Ron said, "At least he's not carrying around any Peruvian Darkness Powder."

Willow turned and grinned. "Ooh! Do you know where I could get some? It's really fun to use on demons that hunt by sight."

Ron groaned, "Get some? I can get you a huge amount. My brothers own a wizard joke shop, and they sell it."

Willow smiled, "Awesome. We have to talk about that. Do they have a price list? Discounts for volume shoppers?"

Hermione said, "I have a price list on me. And I'm sure they'd give you a huge discount for helping Harry. They'd probably give Faith a much bigger discount if she just flirted with them first."

Kennedy said, "Well, that's gonna happen no matter what."

Vi strolled over. "Pretty much goes without saying." She held up a laptop computer and turned it so the screen faced Kennedy and Willow. "Oh, and Kennedy, your warrior? Dead! Buried under a ton of wyvern dung! The most humiliating death in the history of Warcraft! TAKE THAT!" She stormed off to wreak more computer havoc.

Ron muttered, "Merlin's beard, they're violent even when they're on a computer."

"And don't you forget it," Faith insisted as she strolled up with Professor McGonagall, who had just exited the castle. She looked at the corpse and calmly said, "Looks like I missed the fun."

Buffy shrugged, "Not really. Harry's doing okay on the trash-talking, but his quip-fu is really weak."

Faith said, "Well you only had... what, three minutes to train him? He'll get better in time."

Willow looked up from where she was drawing a pentagram around Riddle's gear. "Yeah, it's always important to be good at talking smack to the Big Bads."

Ginny looked at Ron, who shrugged in return. She wondered if all Californians talked like that.

Faith said, "We got the spiders hacked up or driven off. You were right. They're total losers as soon as you chop off a couple legs. But there's still a crapload of 'em in the forest."

Buffy said, "Don't bother. If they've been in there for fifty years, they're not gonna be more of a problem in one night. We'll help the school clean the place up later."

Faith said, "Fine. The chubby teacher in the corduroy robes said the venom was worth beaucoup bucks. I think. I figure we could do a little spider-wrangling, have some fun, and make a nice profit. But seriously, who's named Slug-Horn? What's wrong with these guys? Now McGonagall, that's a cool name."

"Thank you very much, young lady, but Professor Slughorn's family name has been handed down from generation to generation," said Professor McGonagall rather stiffly.

Faith wasn't cowed in the least. "Hey, handed down from generation to generation? Same for beady eyes and tiny dicks, but that don't make it a good thing. Now that Sprout chick, she's your plant expert? And her name is Sprout? That's worth a giggle. Do the kids all tease her about it? 'Cause I would."

There was a series of flashes in different colors, and a sharp, unpleasant smell. Ginny looked over, and Riddle's collection of equipment was a lump of molten metal and glass.

Willow looked up and said, "Nothing worth saving or even studying. That guy was one serious creepazoid. Even the healing potions were for snakes. Or snake-o-riffic guys. And the necklaces? Eww."

McGonagall questioned, "And is he really dead this time? Permanently? Not even returning as a ghost?"

Willow smiled up at her. "Good catch on the ghost thing. You must be one of the smart professors." She turned to face Buffy, opened her eyes and mouth as wide as she could, and then clapped her hands to her cheeks and held them there. Kennedy and Buffy began to giggle for some reason Ginny didn't get. "Oh no! I'm agreeing with Faith on something! This can't be good!"

"Shove it, Red," Faith said, but she gave Willow a big grin.

Professor McGonagall said crisply, "You may have stopped He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, but we need to get Aurors out here at once to deal with the werewolves and the Death Eaters and the sympathizers."

Buffy said, "Yep. And you need to get some magic cops and med-techs out to Voldy's base camp out there to help all the guys who were Imperio'ed. They probably tried to kick some ass when Willow broke their mind control, and that means they either fought or took off. Either way, they

were outnumbered, and probably got hammered. If they're not dead, they need medical help."

Willow said, "Send Amelie and her med kit. She's good at the non-magical treatment stuff, and she's learning the other. And they probably need triage more than they need a magical Gregory House."

Ginny looked at Hermione, who mouthed, 'I'll explain later'. Ginny figured what she really needed around this group was a dictionary of Muggle slang and pop culture references.

Buffy said, "You heard her. Amelie, grab your kit. Rachel, go with. And take a taser with you, along with that sword you're trying to hide behind your back. Anybody who gets up and tries to attack you may just be confused. Or concussed. Zap 'em. No punching in the face, no slashing them in the wand arm."

"Man! You're such a downer sometimes!"

Buffy turned her head. "Amelie? Rachel wants to carry your med kit too."

The two girls sprinted off into the darkness, but Ginny still heard Rachel yell from a distance, "Downer!"

Buffy clapped her hands together. "You heard her. And to prove how big a downer I am, I want everybody, including Faith and Kennedy, hauling our Death Sucker buddies over here. Will, I need another magical playpen."

Willow nodded, "I got it. And I figured something else out. Every Death Licker? Has those gross black magic tats on their arm? Moldyshorts tied it into their magical core so they couldn't get rid of it, and he could kill them if he wanted."

"So far, so gross," Buffy replied.

Willow grinned wickedly. "Well, I figured out something else you can do with their tat! So we get everyone in my magical pen, and I'll try this spell out."

Hermione hurried over. "This isn't going to affect every Death Eater everywhere, is it?"

Willow said, "No, just the ones in the big pentagram I'm going to draw, and... Okay, who do you know who has a Dark Mark who you don't want to get zapped?"

Ginny looked at Hermione and rushed over too. She whispered, "Professor Snape. The guy Buffy punched in the jaw. He has a Mark, but he's been a spy for Dumbledore ever since..."

Hermione confessed, "Ever since Riddle decided to kill Harry and his mom too."

Willow's eyes opened wide with surprise. "You mean... Tall, Dark, and Surly had the hots for Harry's mom? And he's been shafting the Dork Lard every chance he got, ever since?"

Hermione said, "And Riddle's famous for being a really amazing Legilimens, so what he was doing was really brave."

Ginny said, "He's a mean teacher, and he's really grouchy, but we don't want him to get hurt or anything."

Willow smiled malevolently. "Oh, I'm not going to hurt them."

Ginny watched as Willow waved her hand, and a ball of fire appeared in her palm. Willow whispered some words that weren't in any language Ginny had ever heard, and long, straight strings of fire leapt out of her hand to form a pentagon about a hundred feet on a side. Then more strings of fire leapt forth to connect the points of the pentagon, creating a pentagram within the pentagon. At the center of the pentagram was another pentagon, where Slayers were dumping unconscious and nearly-unconscious Death Eaters. Ginny noticed that the Slayers were being really careful not to step on any of the magically fiery lines.

Willow summoned candles and herbs out of the huge bag, and sent them off to the corners of the inner pentagon. Then she began chanting something in one of those weird languages, while the herbs dove into the lit candles and burned themselves up.

There was a brilliant flash, and for a split second it looked like jagged blue arcs leapt across the corners of the inner pentagon, trapping the piled-up Death Eaters under a fiery blue cage. Then the light was gone.

Willow sagged to her knees. She slowly dusted off her hands and turned to McGonagall. "Done! Now we don't have to worry about them."

Professor McGonagall gasped, "What did you do?"

Willow shrugged a little. "Since they wanted to have their magical cores tied into Moldyshorts's power through those tats, I just used the conduit that was already there and bound them. They can't access their magical cores until you guys ask me to undo the spell. But I can do it on a case by case basis, if you want."

Professor McGonagall looked like she was going to faint. "You- you turned them all into squibs?"

Ron laughed out loud. "Wow, that's like the coolest thing you could have possibly done to 'em!"

Not counting turning them into ferrets and dropping them down Riddle's pants."

Hermione said, "That is possibly the cruelest thing you could have done to them. Without their magic, they're nothing. Their entire sense of self-worth and superiority is tied into their Pureblood heritage and their power as wizards."

Willow said, "I never said I was a nice witch."

Harry said, "But that's it! Riddle's dead. His followers are finished... We've actually won! I never really thought we could win this... completely."

Hermione sagged to the ground. "It's over. Just like that, it's over."

Willow walked over and patted her on the shoulder. "Don't worry, you'll feel like this the first couple apocalypses you stop."

Hermione stared at Willow in horror. "The first COUPLE?"

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Wed, 12 Dec 2012 07:39:25 GMT  
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Chapter 114 People Together

Ginny asked, "Is that it?"

Buffy said, "Heck no. We have to get your Auroras-

"Aurors."

"-out here to pick up the trash. We have to get Whatsisname up to your clinic. We have to take care of the injured goodguys out at Voldy's base camp. We have to clean up the remaining Death Suckers all over the country. And-

A whisk of silver shot from the sky and turned into a mink. Ginny stepped in front of it before Buffy could slash it with the Slayer Scythe. Bill Weasley's voice spoke from it. "Hermione, hang on! I'm rounding up a small army to come help!"

Hermione sighed, "I knew I forgot something." She quickly performed a modified Patronus charm of her own. "Stop. We have already won thanks to outside help." Her Patronus vanished in a streak of silver.

Willow said, "That's pretty slick. We could use that spell too."

Faith asked, "How long before ya get an answer? I mean, is this like a cell phone, or is it like IM chat, or is it like email?"

Professor McGonagall had already conjured a magical gurney and magically lifted Snape onto it. But she stopped and asked, "What?"

Hermione said, "I'll explain all of it to you, professor."

Professor McGonagall said stiffly, "Very well. But I believe I should stay here, just in case." She waved her wand, and the magical gurney rushed off to the school hospital wing on its own.

In about a minute, another Patronus flew back in a stream of silver. "WHAT? We'll be there at the wards in no time!"

Willow smiled, "I take it your word isn't good enough?"

Professor McGonagall insisted sternly, "And it shouldn't be, when dealing with something this serious! I would certainly want to verify such a claim personally."

Willow pursed her lips and said, "Yeah, I guess I'd want to scry and make sure, if it wasn't handy to zip on over and check things out." She put her hand up and chanted something under her breath. A beam of lavender light shot upward from her hand and coruscated across the wards overhead. "Okay, now your friends ought to be able to walk in and check."

A few seconds later, there was a series of loud cracks in the distance, as Ginny heard about half a dozen people apparate in. Then two Slayers were running alongside Bill. Right behind him were Tonks, Kingsley Shacklebolt, and three more members of the Order, all of whom had their wands out."

Hermione cast a spell to put a nice white light overhead, so the new people knew where to run, and could see that there was no danger.

Ginny muttered, "Oh Merlin."

Ron stepped beside her and sighed, "At least it isn't mum. She's gonna yell at us for about three days straight."

Hermione said, "Umm, maybe I'd better teach you how to dispel a Howler."

Professor McGonagall insisted, "Miss Granger! You will do no such thing! However, I will personally contact Molly and make sure she does not send a Howler to any of you."

Kingsley faced Professor McGonagall and said, "Congratulations, Minerva. You managed something even Albus couldn't achieve."

But Professor McGonagall sternly said, "Kingsley, I did no such thing, and I would appreciate it if no one assumed such a thing. It was all Harry Potter. And Miss Granger, and the two Weasleys. And the friends they brought."

Bill looked worriedly at Harry. "Are you all right? Did you really pull off the prophecy?"

Tonks asked, "And did you ever figure out what Dumbledore was up to?"

Harry nodded tiredly. "We got Riddle. Voldemort. He's gone for good. Our friends rounded up all his werewolves, and all his Death Eaters, and used the Dark Mark to block them from their magical cores, so they can't attack us anymore."

Kingsley asked, in that deep, slow voice of his, "Is that even possible?"

Hermione said, "No. Not for us. It took a massive earth magic spell. Ri- Voldemort has been using earth magic and blood magic spells too, and Willow over there worked it all out. She just used his tactics against his followers."

Kingsley asked, "Are you all right? What can we do to help?"

Harry said, "We need Aurors trustworthy ones who aren't Voldemort supporters to round up all our captives and haul them off to Azkaban or wherever. And we need some help getting rid of the bodies of the giants and the demons our friends slew."

"Slayed!" called out one of the Slayers.

Another Slayer walked over and said, "Ooh, he's hot, even with the scars. Nobody told me some of these wizards were hot."

Ginny strode forward so she stood in the girl's face and snapped, "He's married. Hands off."

The Slayer Ginny still didn't know all their names rolled her eyes. "Oh, what's his wife gonna do, wave her little stick around?"

Ginny smirked meanly, "That, and hurl fireballs at you with her bare hands."

The girl groaned and threw her hands upward, "What is it with these wandheads?"

Harry led Bill's team over to Willow's magical 'playpens' to help keep watch over the Death Eaters and other followers. Ginny watched him go, but stayed where she could listen to Buffy and Faith.

Professor McGonagall said, "Hagrid can deal with the grounds. The castle is secure, and no students were attacked. However... Mister Potter, Mister Weasley, Miss Granger, you have a full week of school to make up. Miss Weasley, you have roughly half of a week to make up."

Faith chortled, "Sucks ta be you!"

Buffy snapped, "Knock it off, Faith."

Hermione suddenly looked frantic. She worried, "Have we missed any tests?"

Professor McGonagall pursed her lips and made an effort not to smile. "None that you need to take, Miss Granger. However, there will be a substantial amount of reading and work to do to catch up with your classes."

Hermione just shrugged at that. "Oh, well, I got all the textbooks a couple months ago and I'm already most of the way through all of them, because I remembered how much work O.W.L.s were."

Harry looked at Ron. "Why am I not surprised?"

Ron grinned, "Me neither... OW! Hermione!" He grimaced as he rubbed his arm.

Faith smirked, "Better get toughened up now, Ronnykins. Havin' a sister who's a Slayer means plenty of bruises and shit."

Professor Slughorn and Professor Sprout came out to join Professor McGonagall. Professor Slughorn said, "We have all the children in bed, or at least in their rooms, and I made it quite clear to my Slytherins that their positions as prefects were likely to end rather abruptly."

Buffy stepped over to Professor McGonagall. "If it's okay with you, we'd like to put a Slayer and one of our wandless witches on station here."

Professor McGonagall asked, "Why would you want to do that? The Watcher's Council has never shown any interest whatsoever in Hogwarts before."

Buffy said, "A bunch of reasons. I'm hoping our people can learn about you guys and your magic, so we can have some better alliances going on. Plus, I really want that forest cleaned up better, and a Slayer patrolling through there regularly ought to take care of that. And we want to teach Ginny our stuff, even though she's going to stay here and go to school. She's too young to be out Slaying unsupervised yet. And if Hermione wants to learn about the Watcher business, she'll want to be part of that too."

Professor McGonagall pursed her lips and said, "I would like to talk to you about a possible course in Earth magics and other non-wand magics. Perhaps as an optional course for our sixth and seventh years. It seems silly to ignore it, even if most of Wizarding Britain doesn't use it."

Buffy grinned. "Hey, you know what? I'll get Willow to sit down and chat with you about what you'd like in a course like that, and what kind of teacher you'd want, and all that jazz."

"Jazz?" Professor McGonagall asked in confusion.

Hermione said, "It's slang. Muggle slang. She means 'all that stuff'."

Professor McGonagall frowned, "Merlin's beard! Why couldn't she just say so... Oh dear, I used slang myself, didn't I? I retract my comment."

Professor Slughorn asked, "She did say 'a Slayer', did she not? And... excuse me, are you Buffy Summers, the legendary Golden Slayer?" He shook her hand with both of his. "This is quite an honor. Is there any chance I could get some time to talk to you about your adventures? I'm really most-"

Hermione said, "Professor, they're all Slayers."

He pulled out his wand and a small vial full of purple liquid. "There has always been only one Slayer, according to Ministry records, and yet... Hmm..." He poured the liquid into the air and performed an odd silent spell as he did so. A 'map' formed in mid-air, and the purple fluid rushed off in a dozen different directions on his map. "So I see. Once again Miss Granger, you are demonstrating a remarkable background knowledge. If you come back to Hogwarts, I will be sure to award you thirty house points for this."

He stared at his glowing mid-air map, and then turned to look at Ginny. "So... Miss Weasley, am I to take it that you too are a Slayer now? That's really quite remarkable. Have you noticed an increase in the power of your spells, by any chance? There are no records of a Slayer within the wizarding world, so this is quite the opportunity for research!"

Faith sidled over to Ginny and asked in a whisper, "Is Slug-dude always like this? Kinda smarmy

if ya ask me."

Ginny whispered back, "Merlin, yes. But it's harmless. Sometimes it's even helpful. I'll fill you in on the whole deal later." She looked at Professor Slughorn and said, "I haven't seen any increase in the power of my offensive spells, but I am getting a lot of other kinds of advantages."

Harry grinned, "Do you think anyone can stop you at Quidditch anymore?"

She grinned wickedly, thinking of getting to bounce a quaffle off some Slytherin's head for a goal.

Professor Slughorn frowned, "Miss Weasley, we have yet to determine if a Vampire Slayer will be allowed to play intramural Quidditch, as you possess several unfair advantages!"

Professor McGonagall snapped, "Horace, if you think I'm going to let you dismantle my Quidditch team before they even have tryouts, you have another think coming!"

He just shook his head. "Minerva, it won't be your team! You're the interim headmistress again."

Professor McGonagall suddenly looked horrified. "Oh no! You're right!"

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Subject: Re: Harry Potter and the Deadly Heller  
Posted by [Diane Castle](#) on Sun, 16 Dec 2012 07:50:23 GMT  
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Chapter 115 A Righteous Man

Professor McGonagall gasped, "I've got to contact every student who didn't come to Hogwarts, arrange for a new start of school, replace the teacher for Muggle Studies, and get a new head of Gryffindor House before Monday! And that's assuming Severus will be willing to teach Defense Against the Dark Arts and I can keep teaching Transfiguration until I find a replacement."

Willow suggested, "Our witch on station can fill in for your Muggle Studies teacher if you have any old syllabi to work from, and our Slayer can help with Defense Against the Dark Arts if you want."

Harry immediately said, "If Snape doesn't want to teach DADA, you can ask Remus. If I support him, I'm sure we can get people to let him teach."

Hermione pointed out, "Unless the Slayer wants to Slay him."

Buffy asked, "Why? Who's Remiss? Is he another vamp?"

Ron said, "Werewolf."

Buffy asked in her usual American way, "Good werewolf, or one of those hang-with-evil-guy-and-eat-babies guys?"

Harry insisted, "Good. And he's a friend of mine."

"Oh. Okay," Buffy shrugged blithely.

Willow smiled at him, "We like werewolves. I used to date one." Harry and Ginny just looked at each other, both wondering how these Americans could be so bizarre.

Ginny said, "I bet Luna can help me catch up on everything I missed. And you guys really didn't miss anything in DADA, since Carrow was teaching it as 'dark arts' with no 'defense' part."

Harry suddenly groaned, "And I think I'm probably going to be expected to play politician and try to straighten out the mess at the Ministry!"

Buffy just gave him a smirk. She pulled out her cell phone and said, "I'll just call Giles and get the New Council on that one for you."

Professor McGonagall calmly pointed out, "Your little fellytone won't work here."

Buffy grinned at her, "Willow's phones work everywhere." She flipped it to speakerphone so everyone could hear.

The phone buzzed, and Ginny could hear an older British voice say, "Yes Buffy? What is it?"

Buffy said, "Hey Giles, everything's done here. Big Bad beaten, minions munched, we got those giants you were worried about, and we found Willow's vanishing Slayer. You were right. She's been fighting Moldyshorts since she got her Slay on. But Voldy got his hooks in the whole Ministry of Magic, so she's got some clean-up problems. Can we get the Council on that?"

Giles calmly said, "We're already dealing with that particular crisis, although indirectly. With the information Willow gathered, the intelligence Faith acquired, and the information from some MI-5 deep cover agents, we had enough facts to persuade the Prime Minister to authorize a score of American and French Aurors to sweep through the Ministry and clean up the people who hadn't been handled at Hogwarts."

Harry leaned forward and said, "You need to make sure they get Dolores Umbridge. The woman's committed multiple crimes in front of several of us, on top of the crimes she committed at the Ministry. And Pius Thicknesse is probably under an Imperius Curse, so he may not be responsible for his actions."

Hermione asked, "How could you have possibly convinced anyone to come in and help like that?"

Giles admitted, "The New Council and MI-5 already had three agents working inside the Ministry of Magic, reporting on the internal crisis. Unfortunately, one of them is now in St. Mungo's after getting caught letting the foreign Aurors into the Ministry. A young man named, umm, Percival Weasley, I believe."

Ginny smacked her forehead in frustration. She didn't think about the fact that if she had hit anyone else that hard, she could have fractured their skull.

Ron muttered, "I'm gonna kill that jerk. Treating mum and dad and Harry like that just for some stupid spy thing?"

Hermione nudged him and said, "Ron, Percy's a hero. Think about it from his side. He's going to need your family a lot more, now."

Ron squeezed Hermione's hand and smiled, "I was thinking more like our family."

"Oh, Ron!" She kissed him warmly. They kept kissing. Faith made a lewd whistle, but they kept kissing.

Ginny had been waiting for ages for Ron to ask Hermione to marry him, but this was too much. She waited a while, and when they just didn't stop, she finally fussed, "Get a room!"

Ron barely lifted his lips off Hermione's to say, "Great idea."

"MISTER WEASLEY!" fumed Professor McGonagall. "You will do no such thing!"

Hermione hastily separated herself from Ron. Ron let her and grinned, "Professor, do you really think my future wife is going to let me get away with anything like that?"

Hermione kissed him on the cheek at that. Then she took him by the hand and said, "I'm taking you up to the hospital wing is where I'm taking you. We're going to have someone trained look at that shoulder."

Professor McGonagall watched the two of them, still holding hands, walk off toward the castle. She said, "I'm not sure that I trust Mister Weasley's instincts at the moment, but I do trust Miss

Granger to do what is appropriate."

Ginny asked, "You do know she's been trying to hook him for about three years now?"

Professor McGonagall gave her a smug smile and said, "Five years. At least five years." At Ginny's surprised look, she added, "It's not as if I ignore what my Gryffindors get up to. It's just that sometimes I turn a blind eye to certain kinds of activities." Ginny couldn't help turning and looking at Harry. Professor McGonagall looked at her and continued, "As long as the individuals follow all house rules and remain discreet."

Ginny managed not to wince.

Professor McGonagall turned her head. "Mister Potter, would you consider assisting in DADA, since you seem to have a knack for teaching the subject?"

Ginny didn't ask how Professor McGonagall knew that Harry had taught their friends all those spells in his fifth year.

He just groaned, "Yes, headmistress."

She looked at his face and had a good idea what he was thinking. After all, it wasn't as if he didn't have anything else to do with his time: seventh year was for N.E.W.T.s. And Harry would have to work with Snape for the class. Ugh.

Ginny was glad she had already fetched the half-blood prince's potions book. Harry was going to want it so he could stay on top of Potions. Teaching DADA had to be a lot more work than taking it.

Professor McGonagall and Professor Slughorn led everyone except the Slayers on guard duty back to the castle. Professor McGonagall led them into the Great Hall and said, "If anyone is hungry, we can get some food."

Ginny suddenly realized she was ravenous. And pretty much every Slayer in the room announced they were hungry too. Ginny said, "Umm, Professor McGonagall, you'd better set a table with food for sixty, because Slayers eat like you're about to perform an evanesco on the entire kitchen."

Willow looked up at the ceiling and said, "Ooh! What a cool illusion!"

Faith looked up and said, "Classy."

Buffy said, "Nice. Bet it's not so swell when you have lightning storms outside."

While half the Slayers were outside on 'guard duty', the other half were in with Ginny and her friends, staring at empty tables.

Faith plopped down next to Ginny and asked, "So how's this work? You have servants or somethin'? 'Cause I gotta tell you, gettin' Slayers ta cook and dish up and clean after is like tryin' ta get tigers ta brush their teeth and cut down on the between-meal snacks."

Hermione grumbled, "House elves. Hogwarts has the most house elves in Britain. And they're treated like slaves!"

Ginny said, "Sort of. They're loyal and they just want to work all the time, except Dobby, but all the other house elves think he's crazy."

Right then, the table transformed. Plates and bowls of food appeared all along its length. Sandwiches and cold meats and vegetable platters and desserts.

"Oooh!"

"Ahh!"

"Hey, I want those!"

Willow said, "Wow, that's a pretty impressive transposition. Is there a matching table directly underneath, or off in a side room?"

Hermione said, "That's exactly it. The kitchen is downstairs underneath us, and the house elves load up all the tables. Then they use their own magic to do the transposition, and afterward they reverse the effect and they do the clean-up. And they have no wages and no days off! They're slaves! And Wizarding Britain just lets it happen!"

While Willow and Hermione got into a deep discussion about house elf rights and then stuff about breaking the Watchers' Slayer-blood spell so Hermione could get her family back again, Ginny spotted Buffy stepping over to talk to Professor McGonagall. Ginny sort of listened in.

Buffy asked, "So you have these Squib guys who don't fit into your world, right?"

Professor McGonagall frowned, "Unfortunately, yes."

Buffy said, "Well, they know about magic and the supernatural already, and some of them are probably pretty smart. We could use some people like that as Watchers or Council staff. And Willow thinks maybe some of them might be able to learn earth or nature magic, which aren't like

your wand magic, but it would give them something. Maybe something really important to them."

Professor McGonagall pursed her lips and thought. She finally said, "I think we need to talk to families on an individual basis. But for people like Argus and Arabella, this could be a very good thing. Let me talk to some sympathetic people I know in the Ministry, and we can work on this."

Ginny kept eating, but Faith suddenly dropped her knife and fork and said, "Done. I gotta go."

Hermione asked, "Why? What's wrong?"

Faith said, "I got that down-low itch, ya know."

What? What on earth was Faith talking about? Half the other Slayers groaned, so Ginny guessed they all knew. She'd have to ask somebody after she was done eating.

Faith grabbed a couple tarts and dashed out of the hall.

Ginny watched her sprint between the tables and out the doors. "Where's she off to?"

Vi just groaned, "Don't ask. I mean, really. Don't ask."