

Character Interviews Found at the back of the drawer...

Question for TLOS and Beyond Ginny: Are you going to actually wait until October, just in case? Or will you be researching new potions and Contrceptive charms? ;)

GMW: Of all the nerve, WHAT I DO WITH HARRY AND WHEN IS NOBODY'S BUSINESS BUT OUR OWN! Uh, sorry, I just had to get that out of my system. I never planned on marrying early like Mum and Dad, but this whole bond thing has kind of put a new spin on things. It is of absolutely no help that Tk'lch will point out from time to time ways that we could seal the deal, but then again, he also points out women pushing prams and nursing their bambinos. He seems particularly fascinated with nursing, the ultimate mammal thing. I do have a plan, it's quite simple really. I haven't talked to Harry about it yet, as he's had a lot on his mind, and to be fair, it's not as burning of an issue as it used to be, now that I'm curled up on his pillow every night. He does get teased about the short red hairs that end up on his clothes though.

Question for TLOS Hermione: Don't ask how, but I was privy to your conversation with Luna earlier this year, when you mentioned that you never had the opportunity to 'choose' between Harry and Ron. You seemed particularly pensive - and thoughtful - in your discourse with her on this topic.

Do you ever regret not having had a chance with Harry? Exploring to see if, in fact, the two of you may have been attracted to each other on romantic grounds? Angry that he eliminated you from his 'list' out of a negative emotion - fear that your friendship might suffer? Maybe even feel that such reasoning was a trifle cowardly? I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, but it seemed to me that you'd thought in some depth about this.

(I won't offend you by asking what, in particular, you see in Ron, although I'd dearly love to ...)

HJG : There are a lot of problems growing up as a prodigy – you learn that some people hate you just because you're different, and you also learn that just because you're good at some things, you're not guaranteed success with others. Some things never came to me – we had Physical Education all the years that I was at Belhaven Montessori. With effort I could do basic tumbling, but I was hopeless at any form of gymnastics where my feet were off the ground. I also learned that no matter how clever I was, I couldn't make people like me – they either did or they didn't. I had high hopes when I came to Hogwarts, thinking that because I was like all these people that I could make friends easier than I did in the non-magical world. I never planned on having Harry and Ron as friends, but when we fell into friendship, I decided that I was not going to let go easily.

On to romance – I found that both of my friends were attractive, for different reasons. I dismissed the empty-headed girls who asked me what it was like to be “Harry's girl” thinking that if they couldn't figure out the difference between romance and friendship that I wasn't going to be able to enlighten them. That being said I did start to wonder what it would be like to be “Harry's girl,” if only for an idle afternoon or two. When the Yule ball came up in fourth year, I desperately wanted Ron to ask me to the ball, but I wouldn't have said no if Harry had asked me, but he had his heart set on a curvy, athletic Ravenclaw a year ahead of us. By then I knew what made Harry tick, and several times girls would ask me why I wasn't using my obvious influence to turn things my way. I never answered those questions, but I knew the answer in my heart. When Harry said that he didn't want to risk romance for the chance that it would destroy our friendship, he was echoing things that I'd been thinking already.

I never took the initiative with either boy for fear of spoiling the magic of falling in love. I knew that I was no good at this sort of thing, notwithstanding reading tonnes of books and magazine articles on every conceivable topic related to boys, sex, romance and dating. If love was ever going to come into my life, it was because the boy in question was going to make the first move. By the summer after fifth year, I'd resigned myself to semi-spinsterhood, notwithstanding what I'd told Mum about my feelings for Ron. Dolohov had left me with permanent curse scars on my chest, nearly cutting my left breast in half. I felt hideous. No one would want me now.

When Harry shared the prophecy with all of us that night on his birthday I was astonished, but that night when Ron accompanied me home, I was truly surprised. I'd always hoped that my feelings for him were reciprocated, but that night I learned that he truly fancied me. Ron asked Dad for permission to date me and then played that ridiculous set of twenty one games of table tennis until he finally bested Dad in a match. It was silly, but it was a romantic gesture, in a way that was uniquely Ron.

Perspective changes with experience; I don't know that Ron's the one I'm going to end up with for the rest of my life, but right now I don't care, which is something that I can attribute to being with Ron. He's forever pulling me out of the future so I can savour the moment. Ron makes me laugh, he's proud of me, but he doesn't take me too seriously, which is a good thing because I can get overbearing at times.

One afternoon towards the end of the summer, after the adventure in Gringotts, Ginny spent the afternoon at my house, soaking in our hot tub. We'd spent the afternoon lolling in the sun, drinking gallons of lemonade and soaking in the tub until our fingers got pruned. I guess we never heard the Floo call that Molly made, calling Ginny to come home, so Ron came through the Floo to fetch her back. I'd climbed out of the tub and had my bathrobe loosely over my shoulders when Ron surprised me in the kitchen. I tried to cover my chest with the bathrobe, but Ron stopped me.

"It's not like I haven't seen them before," he said impishly. "I was there when Madam Pomphrey was putting you back together, you know."

"You were?" I gasped.

"Yeah, I figured it might be the only chance I'd ever get to see your breasts," he said, grinning his unique sideways smile. That's when he surprised me again. Bending as if to kiss me, he bent lower still and kissed the portion of scar that was exposed on my chest. "It's nothing to be ashamed of," he murmured as he straightened up to kiss me properly.

Sweet Circe! If his sister hadn't been outside not twenty feet away I might have shucked off my swimsuit then and there, but I didn't. Why do I love Ron? Lots of reasons – the least of which is that he makes me feel beautiful.

Question for TLOS Harry: I've already asked a question of Hermione, so I'll understand if you're too busy to reply. Hermione mentioned her 'astonishment' at your revelation of the prophecy at your 16th birthday party. Certainly that event has to be, in my opinion, one of the best uses of the prophecy as a dramatic climax that I've come across.

I'm wondering if you've come to regret 'broadcasting' it to all and sundry that day?

It seems to me that there's been no evidence of any greater solidarity amongst the students (other than with your close friends) and, instead, you recently had Zacharias Smith hit you with guilt over the latest Death Eater attack. I think I remember Abelard and Dumbledore both being a bit doubtful as to the wisdom of your action that day. I believe your principal reason was to make sure your friends knew what they would be getting into, staying in close proximity to you? I can't help but feel that the same ends could have been met by telling the other five (which you did anyway, some days afterwards, giving them the full details) and maybe the Order. Instead you divulged information that must have been relayed back to He Who Must Not Be Named by now, and I can't help but feel it's only increased the pressure on you; both through overt gestures like Smith's, and probably increasing tension overall with your peers continually looking at you as the "Chosen One".

Any second thoughts over your disclosure?

HJP: Funny you should ask that question; it's something that Harry and I discussed when I took the Portal from the other Burrow. Uh, you know, Harry-M. Do you have any idea how odd it is to talk with a different version of yourself and compare notes on your respective lives? The first thing we did after getting to the Burrow was an impromptu snog with our respective Ginnys. Then, after peeling her off, Harry-M and I went for a walk. Things haven't been all that different between his version of my life and my version. Our lives have taken different paths since the end of fifth year, but all in all we've ended up in the same place, more or less.

I don't have any regrets about the summer after fifth year, none at all. I had a number of reasons for sharing part of the prophecy with my small circle of friends and acquaintances; first and foremost, I was striking my own path. Dumbledore controlled the truth; doling it out in dribs and drabs for fear that he would lose control. While I've forgiven him, I've not forgotten how he's screwed me over time and again. We talked about it about a week before he died, Dumbledore I mean, not Harry-M. Well that's it for now, Ginny's finished with her assignment, and now we're going out for a walk.

Question to TLOS!Mrs Molly Weasley: One of the few moments that haven't been disclosed other than in passing by Remus was your reaction to the Dragon!Harry marking Dragon!Ginny. It seemed to me to have been a very mild reaction to a very dramatic event, would you mind terribly to tell us more of your reaction and your thoughts on this?

Molly: Actually, I think you're asking the wrong person this question. Arthur was the one who was concerned that Ginny would get hurt if she got close to Harry. I was the one arguing that but for Harry's actions in the past, Ginny would be immured in the Chamber of Secrets.

Charlie and Remus explained a bit of what went on when Harry and Ginny were transformed into Snow Dragons, and the significance of the marking. It's one thing to think of that with beasts the size of a house, and it's another to see a chunk the size of a saucer sliced out of your only daughter's back.

I really should have been out of my mind with rage and worry, but I think I was just confident that it would work out for the best, which was certainly the case, notwithstanding the kerfluffle with the Healer at St. Mungo's.

In choosing Harry, Ginny has chosen a most dangerous path, but she's of the age when I can't protect her any more, and I have to rely upon the notion that everything I tried to pour into her when she was little is now helping steer her course.

But still, I worry - but that's my job.

Dear Maskirovka!Molly: What was your thoughts as Harry and Gabrielle's went hot and heavy on the dance-floor and then disappeared to somewhere unknown during the wedding, considering what you knew of Ginny' and Harry's breakup (Harry breaking up with Ginny)?

Molly: Ginny wrote during the last months of the school year that she thought that Harry was finally warming towards her, then there was a lengthy gushing letter about the end of the Quidditch season. Although I expected her to be hit hard by Dumbledore's death, I didn't expect to have my daughter collapse against me on the platform at King's Cross, sobbing "It's over, Mum, it's over with Harry."

Given what I've learned from my duties in the Order, I have some measure of insight into the burdens that Harry is carrying. I intended to speak to him after things sorted out, but once Gabbi arrived, Ginny seemed to pull out of her funk and I got distracted in the whirlwind of details surrounding the wedding.

I expected, in my heart, that Harry and Ginny would take one dance at the wedding and then another and whatever caused their breakup, they would find their way together. So, needless to say, when I saw that Harry danced one dance with Ginny and then spent the remainder of the night with

Babbette's daughter, I felt betrayed. I began to fume at myself, muttering "this is not how I raised him to behave" when it struck me that no matter how close I felt to Harry in my heart, I hadn't raised him, and perhaps I didn't know him as well as I thought I did after six years.

I wrote a very very bitter Howler, denouncing him. Ginny came up to my room before she went to bed that night, begging me not to send it until a day or so had passed. In hindsight, I am glad that I raised a wise daughter.

Although I've not been privy to everything that's transpired between Harry and Ginny, it seems to be where it needs to be right now, so I'm leaving well enough alone.

Thanks for asking.

MPW

Maskirova Hermione: When you kissed Ron, you had rehearsed that moment in your head before. Were these "rehearsals" based only on your experience with Viktor Krum (if there was any) or did you read books on how to start a kiss or did you ask anyone for advice (Monica or Ginny maybe) OR did you just act impulsively? I hope this is not too intimate...

HJG: It's a fair question, I think. I live in my head – a lot. There are a thousand things that I've rehearsed in my head that I never manage to say because when the time comes, because in real life, I'm never as smooth as when I'm standing on the stage that comprises the theatre of my mind. Enough of those scenes do come trickling out that I look somewhat intelligent, which, combined with a lot of hard work, leaves me with my swotty grind reputation.

When Victor asked me to the Yule Ball, I hadn't given the thought of kissing - or at least kissing Victor a lot of thought. As the days to the Ball dwindled down into the single digits, I remembered every scene from every girly movie I'd ever watched with mum at the cinema – and a lot of them involved kissing. I wasn't about to go to Lavender or Parvati, so I did what closet Ravenclaws always do – I tried to find a book, and when that failed, I asked Padma. Padma wasn't a fountain of useful information, but at least she validated my notion that I might get kissed, and that it wouldn't be a bad notion at all.

Kissing Victor was like trying to ski in front of an avalanche, but that's another story entirely.

What I learned from Victor is that if you don't turn your head just a bit, you get the end of the bloke's nose in your eye, which is a bit awkward, and the whole being shorter thing is not that pleasant, insofar as you can get a wicked crick in your neck. Kissing Victor gave me the grist for a lot more thinking – thinking about the lad I really wanted to kiss, and how it would happen. There was the declaration of undying love in the library scene, the winning the Quidditch Cup kiss of victory scene (which, truth be told, Ginny did ever so much better than I ever could hope to do), the walk by the lake at sunset scene, etc.

Every time I thought that one of these scenes would start to play out in my life, reality would come stomping across the stage in particularly mucky Wellingtons, leaving a trail of grime that I had to clean up. Having had so many false starts in my relationship with Ron, when he finally said something clearly and unequivocally, I had to respond. The little director that shouts advice to me from the back of my brain was yelling "kiss him, you fool, before something else comes in to muck this up!"

The Reality was so much better than the little drama on the stage of my mind, but that's another story too.

TLOS Hermione: Hermione, were you ever jealous of Harry or Ginny for the special tuition and abilities they were given over the summer before your sixth year? I understand there were extraordinary reasons why they were given such attention - your best friend is targeted by Voldemort, and Ginny was threatened by dream hounds - but still ... your ardour for acquiring knowledge, learning new things, is well known, and I can't help but feel that you would have greedily and easily absorbed much of what Harry and Ginny learned.

I don't mean to be petty, and I know you wouldn't deny your friends anything that would help protect them, but while they were learning wandless magic, apparation, advanced fighting techniques, the lesser wrath and the like, as far as I can see, you ... learnt how to drive. Bit anticlimatic for the cleverest witch of her generation.

HJG: Honestly, Brad, it sounds like you've been reading Rita Skeeter. My relationship with Harry is a bit odd and quite complex, but of the many things I've felt for Harry, jealousy is not on the list.

My summer after 5th year was, as holidays go, brilliant. Memory is always subjective, but here's the highlights as I remember them:

- I reconnected with Mum and Dad after spending two years tiptoeing about the fact that a war was brewing in the Wizarding world.
- We took a lovely mini-trip to Milan, which was beyond words.
- Learning to drive – all I can say about that is that I'm glad that's over. I can drive now, but the whole process was a bit unnerving.
- I watched Mr. Lupin and Bill Weasley put up a very clever series of wards around Mum and Dad's house and then learned how a Floo connection works when Laurel came by.
- Harry's birthday party – while it was eventful, it was nothing compared to what came afterwards.
- In August, I learned scads of useful Charms from Mrs. Weasley, who tried to catch me up to speed with the day-to-day things that Magicborn witches just know through immersion.
- I also met with Professor McGonagall, outlining what I was going to be doing with her as a special project in my N.E.W.T. Transfiguration class – unlike Ginny, I didn't have a natural aptitude for Animagus transformation, but I began a course of independent study in the area under her direction,

which was most illuminating.

• Can you say applied research in lip-gloss?

When Harry and then Ginny resumed their tutoring in August, I'd pick their brains on what they'd learned on their off days at The Burrow. Towards the end of August, Ron and I joined them for a picnic at Abelard's, which was my one and only meeting with him that summer. I had a tour of the villa, which was impressive, and fell in love with Abelard's library. He gave me a signed copy of his book on Probability Theory and Divination, which is the only book on the subject I've ever kept in my permanent library. Am I jealous of Harry's tutoring over the summer? Not particularly. The bits that I was interested in, he taught me second hand, which was more than adequate.

I love Harry, but I have no interest in living his life. He did what he had to do that summer, and in some ways he got short-changed, losing a bit of his teen-aged years because he had to take on adult responsibilities. Me? I finally fell in love that summer and dabbled with bits of magic I'd always wanted to play with while preparing for the next skirmishes in the 2nd War. No, I'm not jealous at all – he had his wonderful summer, and I had mine.

TLOS Professor McGonagall : As a Transfigurations professor and a Registered Animagus your expertise in this field is highly sought. We know later that only Ginny has Animagus qualities and Harry doesn't after the event in Gringotts. Question(s): When you found out that Harry and Ginny transfigured into dragons in Gringotts, what was going through your mind? Also, do you know if Harry would be able to develop Animagus qualities later in life since he can change into a dragon?

MMM: Albus was out of the country, that sunny day in August of 1996 when Gringotts was invaded. As Albus was abroad, I was both acting Headmistress of the school, and the duty officer of the day for the Order of the Phoenix. I was shopping in Muggle London, of all things, when I received Nymphadora's Patronus message. I made my way to a changing room in Harrods, from which I Apparated to a spot about a block from Gringotts, where I tried to find Miss Tonks. As to what I was thinking – I was thinking that two of my students had been transfigured into dragons, of all things, and I had to figure out how to transfigure them back. To say that I was shocked when I found out that they were no ordinary dragons, but instead were Snow Dragons, you could have tipped me over with a feather. Transfiguration of something that weighs five stone into something that weighs five thousand stone is no trifling feat. The amount of magical energy involved is enormous. All bets are off, however, when the transfigured object is a Snow Dragon, as the magical being (I dare not call it a beast) is not corporeal as we understand the term – Snow Dragons have flesh and blood, but not much of it – just enough to bind their magic together – a Snow Dragon is almost entirely magical in composition. Fortunately the Pyr'g residing within Harry's transfigured form was able to communicate with Remus through a form of touch telepathy and guide us through the process. It was after we'd transformed Harry back into human form that I'd noticed that the white dragon was wounded, a very symbolic bite mark right between her wings. I'd known that he'd fancied her, but I didn't think he'd have the nerve.

As to Harry's potential – I cannot say for sure – Harry keeps his own counsel on a number of topics. Having done the transfiguration once, he certainly could do the transfiguration again, but I would point out, if asked, that it required the magic of two dragons – or rather dragon Pyr'gs to accomplish the feat. That which has happened can happen, so I would not rule it out, however ill advised it may be. As to Animagus potential, the Revealer works to show the inner animal that guides the potential Animagus in his or her transformation. All the Animagi I've known and studied have been normal, non-magical animals: badgers and horses and cats, rather than Thestrals or Phoenixes or Dragons. If Harry's Animagus form was a Snow Dragon, I'm not entirely certain today that it would show up in the Revealer, as Snow Dragons have the power to make themselves invisible to normal vision. Harry has proven himself to be surprisingly resourceful when he is in a sticky situation. Is it likely that he's an Animagus? No, I think not. Would I rule it out entirely? No, I would not.

Now, as to your own preparations for the upcoming N.E.W.T. examinations – was there anything you wished to discuss?

TLOS Ginny: Ginny, a really trivial question - as Tick-tock, can you talk to fellow felines? Do cats talk their own language like snakes talk parseltongue? Can you converse with Mrs. Norris and Crookshanks?

If you can communicate with other cats when you're Tick-tock ... do you lose this ability once you're back in your human form?

I'm just wondering whether parseltongue is as big a deal in the wizarding world as it's made out to be, if anyone who is an animagus can likewise talk to other segments of the animal kingdom. Maybe parseltongues are the only ones who can do it while human? Or it might be just the stigmata of association with dark wizards which makes the talent so notorious?

Just curious ... I've never had the chance to talk to an animagus before! Maybe you can consult with your house mistress on this question, I'd welcome any tidbits she might have in her experience as a cat animagus.

GMW: We had cats at The Burrow when I was growing up, but at Mum's insistence, they never came into the house and they didn't have names. "What's the use of giving it a name if it doesn't come when you call it?" Mum used to ask rhetorically.

Can I talk to Mrs Norris and Crookshanks? Sure – Mrs. Norris doesn't have a lot to say, but she's a really good mouser. The only reason she helps Filch at night is that she thinks finding out-of-bounds students is as much fun as catching mice. Crookshanks, on the other hand, is one of the sharpest cats I've met that wasn't an Animagus.

I remember the first time I met Professor McGonagall when she was in her feline form – she scent marked me with abandon, which is what cats do when they brush their face against a human ankle or against another cat's whiskers. Scent marking is more or less the equivalent of a human hug or kiss. McGonagall has scent marked me a number of times when she's a cat, but never hugged me when she's a human; go figure. Cats communicate a lot by their posture, by how they carry their tails, by rubbing and leaping, and last of all, by vocalizations. Now that I'm an Animagus, I understand a lot more about what's being said. The only thing that I have to guess at when I'm in human form is the vocalizations, but I'm pretty accurate there.

Parseltongue just sounds nasty, and it's usually Dark Wizards that practice it, which is why it gets such a bad reputation. I can't speak it as well as Harry can, but I still understand it when it's spoken. For me it's one of those talents that I don't acknowledge in public because doing so is more

trouble than it's worth.

For Maskirova's Gabrielle: Was the maskirova that you participated in with Harry anything like what you expected? What about the experience surprised you? Also, how do you think you would have felt about Ginny if you hadn't had a vested interest in befriending her? Did that make the deception easier or harder?

GLD: Was it anything like I expected? In a word, no. I've fancied Harry Potter for years in the way that many teen-aged girls fancy famous men whom they will most likely never meet. (For what it's worth, I've also fancied Britain's Prince William, but that's never touched my life the way that Harry's touched my life, past, present and future.) I have a notebook upstairs in my room that contains pictures and clippings from articles featuring Harry, something that I started collecting after he saved my life during the Triwizard tournament. It's one thing to see Harry from afar; it's another thing to meet him in person. He's so human and so transparent and so decent that it's unnerving. Once I learned to read him, my assigned role was terrible. He doesn't fancy me, although he thinks I'm pretty enough. He's terribly in love with Ginny; which brings up Ginny.

I love Ginny – I really do. If ever I had a chance to swap Fleur for Ginny as a sister, I'd do it so fast it would make Fleur's perfect hair frizz. She's smart, she's funny, and she has a wicked sense of humour and an amazing ability to take things lightly. She is the athlete that I've always wanted to be. Knowing that she was such a nice girl, who wanted nothing more than to get back together with the stupid noble boy she's loved for ages, and knowing that I was going to betray her in public made the job all the harder.

If I didn't care about Harry, or about Ginny, it would have been a much easier task – as it was, it was almost impossible to carry off – which is why I relied upon my Veela power the night we pulled off the maskirova. The problem with that is that I got deceived by the deception and at the end I couldn't pull out – I was convinced that I wanted Harry and he wanted me. Fortunately for all involved, Harry didn't have his head stuck in his own hormones and was able to call me to reason.

I would do it again, if I had to. I owe Harry – I still do.

Harry wrote me a nice, if short, note thanking me for all my efforts.

Ginny wrote me a nice letter letting me know that she's worked things out with Harry. She also told me that she trusts me - with Harry that is, and that if I need to continue my role, I can do so with her blessing.

I'm going to be seeing Harry again this weekend – he's got some business in France. I'm going to be playing the role again – picking up my beau from the train station. This time I'm not going to rely on my magic. I'm also adopting Hermione's rule: no tongues – there's only so much a girl's heart can take, don't you know.

Look at my eyes when I'm talking to you. This interview is over.

TLOS-SFSY Hermione: You told Luna that you had not chosen between Harry and Ron; you had been chosen. Would you rather have exercised the choice? How has that choice affected your relationship with Harry? What thoughts would you share with us -- as a kind of thought experiment -- about what might have been had you wound up romantically involved with Harry?

HJG: You have no idea how many times I've answered this question already – why Ron, why not Harry? Would I really have preferred to be the one making the choice? Not really.

There are a lot of problems growing up as a prodigy – you learn that some people hate you just because you're different, and you also learn that just because you're good at some things, you're not guaranteed success with others. Some things never came to me – we had Physical Education all the years that I was at Belhaven Montessori. With effort I could do basic tumbling, but I was hopeless at any form of gymnastics where my feet were off the ground. I also learned that no matter how clever I was, I couldn't make people like me – they either did or they didn't. I had high hopes when I came to Hogwarts, thinking that because I was like all these people that I could make friends easier than I did in the non-magical world. I never planned on having Harry and Ron as friends, but when we fell into friendship, I decided that I was not going to let go easily.

On to romance – I found that both of my friends were attractive, for different reasons. I dismissed the empty-headed girls who asked me what it was like to be "Harry's girl" thinking that if they couldn't figure out the difference between romance and friendship that I wasn't going to be the one who could enlighten them. That being said I did start to wonder what it would be like to be "Harry's girl," if only for an idle afternoon or two. When the Yule ball came up in fourth year, I desperately wanted Ron to ask me to the ball, but I wouldn't have said no if Harry had asked me, but he had his heart set on Cho. By then I knew what made Harry tick, and several times girls would ask me why I wasn't using my obvious influence to turn things my way. I never answered those questions, but I knew the answer in my heart. When Harry said that he didn't want to risk romance for the chance that it would destroy our friendship, he was echoing things that I'd been thinking already.

I'd have to change a lot to make things work with Harry – I plot and plan, he acts and improvises. I implicitly trust authority, he's been betrayed by every adult in his life. I've always known that I was loved – at least by Mum and Dad. Harry believes that every one who gets to know him will eventually leave him. It's hard to bridge that kind of gap in world views.

I never took the initiative with either boy for fear of spoiling the magic of falling in love. A magic I desperately wanted to believe in. I knew that I was no good at this sort of thing, notwithstanding reading tonnes of books and magazine articles on every conceivable topic related to boys, sex, romance and dating. If love was ever going to come into my life, it was because the boy in question was going to make the first move. By the summer after fifth year, I'd resigned myself to semi-spinsterhood, notwithstanding what I'd told Mum about my feelings for Ron. Dolohov had left me with permanent curse scars on my chest, nearly cutting my left breast in half. I felt hideous. No one would want me now, especially someone who had a choice.

When Harry shared the prophecy with all of us that night on his birthday I was astonished, but that night when Ron accompanied me home, I was truly surprised. I'd always hoped that my feelings for him were reciprocated, but that night I learned that he truly fancied me. Ron asked Dad for permission to date me and then played that ridiculous set of twenty one games of table tennis until he finally bested Dad in a match. It was silly, but

It was a romantic gesture, in a way that was uniquely Ron. Ron could have any of a number of girls, girls without scars, but he chose me.

Perspective changes with experience; I don't know that Ron's the one I'm going to end up with for the rest of my life, but right now I don't care, which is something that I can attribute to being with Ron. He's forever pulling me out of the future so I can savour the moment. Ron makes me laugh, he's proud of me, but he doesn't take me too seriously, which is a good thing because I can get overbearing at times.

One afternoon towards the end of the summer, after the adventure in Gringotts, Ginny spent the afternoon at my house, soaking in our hot tub. We'd spent the afternoon lolling in the sun, drinking gallons of lemonade and soaking in the tub until our fingers got prune. I guess we never heard the Floo call that Molly made, calling Ginny to come home, so Ron came through the Floo to fetch her back. I'd climbed out of the tub and had my bathrobe loosely over my shoulders when Ron surprised me in the kitchen. I tried to cover my chest with the bathrobe, but Ron stopped me.

"It's not like I haven't seen them before," he said impishly. "I got a peek at them when Madam Pomfrey was putting you back together, you know."

"You did?" I gasped.

"Yeah, I figured it might be the only chance I'd ever get to see your breasts," he said, grinning his unique sideways smile. That's when he surprised me again. Bending as if to kiss me, he bent lower still and kissed the portion of scar that was exposed on my chest. "It's nothing to be ashamed of," he murmured as he straightened up to kiss me properly.

Sweet Circe! If his sister hadn't been outside not twenty feet away I might have shucked off my swimsuit then and there, but I didn't. Why do I love Ron? Lots of reasons – the least of which is that he makes me feel beautiful.

I will always be a part of Harry's life if he'll have me and I know that he'll always be a part of mine; but as friends, not as lovers.

I'm okay with that.

TLOS Harry: Harry, since someone has already asked Hermione "Why not Harry?", and I'm fairly certain your answer to the "Why not Hermione?" question is pretty similar, so I'm going to ask something a little different. Why Ginny? (As opposed to any other girl.)

HJP: What is it with you people and Hermione? Hermione-is-my-friend. I love Hermione, but as attractive as she is, I think the proverbial snowball in Hell has better chances than I'd have in a long-term relationship with that girl. She's bossy, she doesn't know when to quit, she's obsessed with academics and can't fly without putting her blood-pressure through the ceiling. So why not Hermione? It's not physical attraction, that's for sure. Hermione has been a part of my life so long, it's hard to remember what life was like before we became friends, but there's this underlying tension between us that if we crossed the boundary between friends and lovers, I think we'd drive each other crazy. Hold me to this – the day I kill Voldemort, she's going to visit me in the hospital and make sure that I'm caught up in my homework, or that I've filled out all my job applications, or bring me the latest version of the Inland Revenue forms to fill out concerning taxation on the dividends from the Twins' shop. So, let me be very Hermioneish and write up a list:

WHY NOT HERMIONE?

1. My best mate fancied, fancies and will continue to fancy Hermione – if I poached his girl, he'd never forgive me.
2. Hermione's pretty, but she's not the girl I've been dreaming about since I got over Cho.
3. Hermione has moral reservations about using force against people who are attempting to kill her.
4. Hermione's been my best friend forever – why screw that up?
5. Deep down, she wants to be in charge – all the time.
6. She pretends to hate sports the way some people pretend to hate books.
7. She doesn't like to fly.
8. She doesn't understand what it's like to fight for everything – she thinks that life is supposed to be fair.
9. Killing Voldemort is not one of her life ambitions.
10. Although she loves me (and I know she does) she pities me too.

Hermione is loyal, steadfast, scarily brilliant, kind and fair. I'm really lucky to have a friend like her, and I'd certainly have flunked and failed without her help thus far. She's going to make someone a terrific girlfriend and eventually wife and mum, but unless I change a whole lot over the next few years, it's not going to be with me.

TLOS Harry: Erm, Harry? You must have missed the last part of my question. The question wasn't "why not Hermione?". The question was. "Why Ginny?"

HJP: Whoops! Hermione always says I need to read the question better before answering. Here's what I told Ginny when she asked this question:

"Who else can I talk to about how annoying it is to have a dragon in my head without lots of tiresome explanations? Why you? Because you're not afraid of me; or in awe of me; you're not impressed that I'm the Boy Who Lived. Because you can knock me down a peg or two when I'm being insufferable; because you know when to talk and when to just let me be. Because you're pretty, and smart, and brave, because you believe that anything is possible if you just have enough nerve. Because you're not eight inches taller than I am; because your laughter sounds like music;

because you know what it's like to be me and you aren't horrified and you don't pity me," he said softly.