

Kisses

Epilogue

Kisses

She sat at the secretary, letter open on one side of the desk, ancient diaries from her school years open on the other, pen and paper sitting ready in-between. Nibbling gently on the pen, she composed the first paragraph in her head before putting ink to paper.

9 September 2017

Dear Alba,

Please forgive my delay in replying to your last owl. Although I did manage to get the last of my children off to school, there were numerous details at home and at work that needed my attention and I am just now catching up on this most important of correspondence from my favourite goddaughter. I will not bore you with the details of arranging harvests in the orchard whilst my husband is meeting in the Orient with new customers, nor the fact that a number of babies decided to all get born on the same evening, resulting in my being pressed into labour (literally) at St. Mungo's when I received barely a passing grade on my obstetrics rotation, which, I might add, was not all that long after you were born.

You asked about first kisses.

There are first kisses and then there are first kisses. I don't remember there ever being a time when I wasn't kissed by my Mum and Dad, but you have adequate experience in that arena, so I won't dawdle on stories that shed no light on the topic at hand. When I was in nursery school (Mum did put me in nursery school part time before concluding that I should be home-schooled along with the rest of the Weasley brood), I remember kissing one of the boys at the nursery school on a dare. He burst into tears, if I recall correctly, wounding my brazen spirit to the core. My first boyfriend was Michael Corner (yes, *that* Michael Corner) and over the year that we dated, we packed in a lot of kissing, but at this point, though I remember that we did kiss, I don't remember much about any of them.

The second serious love in my life, of course, was your godfather. Depending upon how one defines the event, there were several kisses that could qualify.

When we were first courting, he couldn't kiss me because we had all sorts of issues with the unintended Legilimency that accompanied physical touch. Add to this the fact that we were continually being chaperoned by your mother, your father, other Aurors or my Mum or Dad, *and* the fact that Harry is at his core a very shy person, and you can guess that my first kiss came quite a bit later than I had hoped. We did work out the technical issues after a while. Just before we went off to school, Mum buttonholed Harry in the kitchen and pretty much told

him that it was okay to kiss me. Being a concrete and literal bloke, he kissed me on the cheek and then disappeared up the stairs. Harry didn't care for an audience. He still doesn't care for an audience. At the time I didn't appreciate being "cheeked" and let him know that.

If I thought we had no time and no privacy at the Burrow, it was in some ways worse once we got back to school. It was my fifth year, and then, as now, the pressure started the first week to terrorize us with the O.W.L.s. Beyond this normal insanity add the fact that I was playing Chaser on the house Quidditch team and helping Harry with the still-somewhat-underground D.A. lessons, you can see that it was a bit of a strain to fit in being Harry Potter's girlfriend along with everything else. My brother Ron was Captain of the house team that year, and on the first day of practice, assigned the equipment clean-up detail to two of the oldest members of the team, which happened to be me and your godfather. We put all the balls and pads and robes away, secured the equipment and then walked back to the Castle, discreetly holding hands. Harry stopped suddenly and kissed me. It was a typical, awkward first kiss – our noses bumped, I smeared his glasses quite thoroughly with the tip of my nose, and if memory serves me correctly, I actually bruised my lip, but it was wonderful, nonetheless, because he'd *finally* taken the initiative.

The second kiss was actually quite embarrassing. I made the mistake of telling your mother about it once, and she's used it as a running gag for years. When we could spend time together that year, Harry and I would go for walks. When no one was looking, we'd hold hands, but for the most part we'd walk with our arms linked, as you've seen us do many times. Sometimes we'd walk and chat, and other times we'd just walk, grateful for the time together. We were walking along the top floor of the west wing of the castle, when we stopped in a windowless corridor, lined with tapestries. We stopped talking and both fell in on each other with lips and tongues and teeth. It was bloody marvellous; in fact it was too marvellous. He started with his hands on my waist, and then moved them to the small of my back. Unfortunately, my shirt-tail was hanging out of my waistband, which meant that both of his marvellous hands were under my shirt. To this day, I'm not entirely certain what happened, apart from the fact that one moment he's kissing me, the next moment I could feel his hands on the small of my back, and the moment after that, I opened my eyes and saw that the tapestries on either side of us were now on fire. Linen and wool burned together has a very distinctive funky smell – it's not pleasant in the least. We weren't completely oblivious to our surroundings; we let go of each other long enough to extinguish the tapestries before the smoke alarm gong started sounding. We ran out of that corridor, hoping fervently not to get caught by MacAlister's predecessor, Mr. Filch, who was the caretaker at the time. By the time we made it back to the Tower, we were both out of breath. He kissed me again before the portrait hole, a bit more restrained this time, and without the accompanying skin-on-skin contact that had triggered my accidental magic. I remember writing in my diary that night "Note to self: tuck shirttail in and use a sticking charm." Your Mum needled me for years that whenever she needed a fire, all she had to do was rub my back. (There was more truth to that statement than she knew, but I never told her *those* stories.)

It was, however, the third (or fourth, depending upon your counting methodology) kiss that was truly memorable.

We had an early cold snap that year and by the end of September, we had snow on the ground. By the end of the week, it was halfway up to my knees. Thursday was Harry's long day, double Potions followed by double Transfiguration, a break for lunch and his tutorial. In light of his

destiny, Harry had begun special intensive training – Thursday was his training day. He'd spend the afternoon working with Dumbledore, any one of a number of Aurors, or his least favourite instructor, Professor Severus Snape. The times with Professor Snape were usually spent duelling, as Harry had made quite clear at the beginning of that term that he was no longer interested in learning anything Professor Snape had to teach on the art of Occlumency. It was not too unusual to see Harry for breakfast on Thursday and then not see him again until a few minutes before curfew. Curfew in those days was at 10:00 Sunday through Thursday and midnight on Friday and Saturday. At 9:30, Harry came dragging through the portrait hole. He gave me the briefest of kisses on the cheek and then went stomping up the stairs to his dormitory. A few minutes later he came down the stairs, capturing me with his stare. "I'm going out," he said quietly so that only I could hear him. "I wouldn't mind company," he concluded with the next breath. He was walking like a stiff old man with a few magically healed cuts visible on his cheek and the backs of his hands. I shoved my books and parchments into my bag, flew up the stairs to my dormitory and made the world's fastest wardrobe change into suitable cold weather gear, shirttail tucked in securely.

Once outside of the Common Room, he swept me up in an embrace. I felt the pain and tension of the day drain away from him. When he broke away from me I didn't need to ask what he'd been doing that afternoon; although his flesh was warm, his heart was cold.

We walked in silence through the halls of the castle. Judicious use of Farsight and a bootlegged copy of the Prefects patrol schedule allowed us to avoid anyone in the hallways. By that time of year we'd grown comfortable in the notion that with a bit of caution we could go anywhere in the castle at any time with near impunity.

By the time we reached a spot overlooking the lake, it was close to 10:00 p.m. Harry had come here in the past; it was one of his favourite brooding spots. Four months prior I'd seen him spend an entire day here when he was first mourning the death of Sirius Black. Even then, that afternoon seemed like it had happened in a prior lifetime.

He leaned up against a tree, knocking his heels against the trunk of the tree to shake the snow off of his boots. He pulled my back to his chest and we watched the moonlight from the almost full moon play across the surface of the lake. We stayed like that for quite a while. I was content to be nestled in his arms; when he wanted to speak he would do so.

He took a couple of deep breaths and turned me around to face him, angling me so that the moonlight hit me full in the face. He brushed the wisps of hair from my face and pushed my scarf back, studying my face as if he were attempting to memorize every freckle. He kissed my temple, my forehead, and then each eyelid. Each kiss, taken alone, was very tame, modest, and even chaste; but I could tell where he was going. We spent the next two hours kissing, one or the other of us leaning up against the tree. We were both bundled up for cold weather; there wasn't much of an opportunity to do much beyond kissing, although if asked, I would have shed several layers of clothing and taken my chances with hypothermia.

If ever I doubted that he loved me, desired me, cherished me, those doubts were demolished that night. I found out later that he'd spent the afternoon duelling with Snape and a tame Dementor; I guess that feeling my face with his fingers and lips was some sort of antidote. I'd spent enough time with boys by that point to learn that long bouts of kissing most often led to groping sessions, but like all generalizations, there are exceptions. The night of the long kiss was one of those exceptions for sure. He broke off a particularly delightful kiss where he was employing his teeth and tongue together in a most interesting way, coming up for air

before he gave me one last kiss on the lips. “We need to go in,” he whispered, speaking for the first time since we’d left the castle.

Harry rarely bosses me around, but there are times when I know that further discussion wasn’t going anywhere – this was one of those times. He swiped my left glove so I could hold his hand on the way back to the castle, which I still consider to be a fair trade.

The next day Professor McGonagall hauled me out of Charms class, asking me to accompany her outside the castle. We walked silently. I was trying to figure out what I’d done to merit this escort, and what explanation I could give for any number of transgressions and infractions that I could bring to mind. Understanding dawned on me when we reached the spot where I’d been kissing my lips off the night before. While the lake was now skinned over with a thin layer of ice and the grounds were nicely covered with a thick layer of snow, the grass surrounding the tree we’d been leaning against was a bright verdant green; the tree was in bud and crocuses and snow-drops were blooming.

Hagrid, the groundskeeper and instructor for the Care of Magical Creatures class had brought the unseasonable patch to the attention of the deputy Headmistress, suspecting some magical cause. She impaled me with one of her trademark glares, saying, “Well, Miss Weasley?”

“Well what?” I replied sweetly.

“Do you know why Winter has not come to this particular patch of the Hogwarts grounds?” she asked.

I started to giggle, which was infectious. Soon we were both sniggering with abandon.

“Because I was kissing my boyfriend here last night?” I told her once I got the laughter under control.

“Just kissing?” she asked me.

“Yes, Ma’am,” I replied. “It was *quite* cold last night.”

She nodded wisely and walked me back to class. Evidently that was a sufficient explanation for the moment. She never brought the subject up again, keeping it in the treasury of secrets that were locked behind her forbidding mien.

I don’t know if I can distil any lessons from these kisses, but I’ll give it a go. Harry took the initiative on the first kiss, which was good – I so wanted *him* to take that first step. The second kiss took me by surprise, triggering accidental magic, which reinforced just how powerful our feelings (and our magics) were at the beginning of our relationship. As awkward as the first kiss was, he *did* learn quickly, which is always a good thing. That third kiss was a diary-able moment. He learned how much he needed my love to rebuild him when he was worn down; I learned how much he cherished and desired me without pushing me for more.

Well, I must draw this letter to a close if I’m to get the buns in the oven on time; he’s coming home tonight. I’m going to take the quilt down from the entryway wall; it wouldn’t do to scorch it when he comes through the door. ;-)

Your loving godmother,
Ginny Potter

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Kokopelli20878@Yahoo.com – write me, I write back

Author's note: this is obviously set in the TLOS universe, several years after the conclusion of TLOS. Remus Lupin and Nymphadora Tonks married at the end of 1996 and several years later their only child, a daughter, Alba, was born. Ginny was Alba's baptismal sponsor (godmother) and confidant through her teen years. This story is taken from their extensive correspondence.

Technical points: in the fall of 1996, Harry and Ginny were pulling pranks at Hogwarts, in part, because they could, and in part as a bit of practical training, hence the use of Farsight to sneak around the castle instead of relying upon the Marauder's Map. The Dementor used in Duelling was one of the few that did not go over to Voldemort's side when Azkaban emptied out. The Dementor was used to make the duelling environment more realistic – rather much like a live-fire exercise in the military.