

down but not out

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down but not out

by [everydaymagic](#)

Summary

Ginny gets injured and causes a commotion, but what else is new?

Chapter 1

It was a tough game. Ginny had pitched three solid innings with no runs scored, but it was a close one every time. The Padres had only scored two. And now it was Ginny's turn to bat.

She could feel the sweat dripping down between her breasts, felt it crawl down her spine. It was a warm day, and getting warmer by the minute. The air was hot, heavy, made heavier by the tension in the stadium. She tried to ignore it all, tried to just focus on the pitcher. Giorgianno liked his fastballs. Ginny saw him wind up for it, knew what was coming.

She was still too slow.

"Dammit," she swore, lowering the bat after her swing. She had been too slow. The ball had sailed straight into the catcher's glove.

Standing up straight, she stretched a bit, rocked her neck from side to side to get the kinks out. She tried to release some of the tension she was feeling before getting back into her batting stance.

She scuffed her cleats against the ground before digging in. Knees bent, she cocked her elbows, waited for the pitch. Another fastball, and this time she caught it, but just barely. It went foul to a chorus of groans from her fans, and the dugout.

She looked back at the bench. Al and Buck just gestured to her to pay attention, get back in the game.

Lawson, leaning on the fence, met her gaze and nodded. She nodded back.

With a deep breath, she turned back to face the mound. This time would be different.

Well, she was right in a way.

The ball hit her in the side with a noise that had shrieks and gasps going up around the stadium. Ginny dropped the bat, doubled over in pain, a roaring in her ears that she noticed was actually coming half from her teammates who had stormed the field.

One hand clutched her side, the other pressed urgently against her thigh as Ginny tried to keep herself upright.

"Baker! Baker!" It was Al, shoving his face in her field of vision. He and the team medics were surrounding her. She could see that Al was distracted, looking away from her every few seconds and then back at her, meeting her gaze to keep her with him. "Stay with me, focus on me."

"I'm fine, Skip," Ginny replied, her voice sounding distant even to her own ears. She turned her head, out of it, not really paying attention to what the medics were doing as they poked at

her, asked her questions that went in one ear and out the other.

The two teams had clashed together at the pitcher's mound. Ginny frowned, trying to make out what was going on. She was distracted when someone's fingers managed to get her in just the right spot.

"Arghhh!" Ginny screamed, caught by surprise and unable to keep it in. When she opened her eyes again—she didn't even remember closing them—it was Amelia's face in front of her now. Amelia was crouching in the dirt in her white pants, hands hovering in front of Ginny as if she wanted to touch her but wasn't sure she could.

"Amelia—" Ginny panted, "You're going to get dirty."

Amelia let out a laugh that was almost like a sob before she caught herself, pressing the back of her hand to her mouth. Her other hand came to cup Ginny's cheek, smoothing away tears that Ginny didn't even know she was crying. "I think I can handle a little dirt, Ginny," she smirked.

"It-it hurts, Amelia," Ginny half whispered, half whimpered. Time seemed to be going so slowly. And it seemed hotter than before.

Amelia frowned at Ginny. "Come on, Baker," she glared. "Toughen up. You've had worse than this. I can't think of any right now, but that's just because you scared the fucking daylights out of me."

Ginny tried to laugh but it hurt to do that too.

Amelia frowned again, this time not in play, not to make Ginny feel better. Her concern was showing. "Can we get the damn stretcher out here already?" she hissed to the medics. "Clearly she needs to go to the hospital."

Ginny's eyes opened wide and she shook her head. "No, Amelia, no."

Amelia looked back to Ginny in confusion. Ginny was distracted for a moment by the sun flashing in Amelia's hair before she remembered she was scared.

"Gin, you gotta go to the hospital," Amelia said.

Ginny shook her head, gritting her teeth against the dizziness. She hated hospitals. The hospital hadn't saved her father. They couldn't have. And they had made her stay in one for days after the accident. Her physical injuries had been minimal, but her emotional and mental ones....Ginny was still dealing with the after effects of the accident to this day. She didn't want to go back there. She was afraid they'd find out how much she had been hiding, how her emotional state was not always perfect. She was afraid that they'd keep her there again. "You can't let them take me away," Ginny said urgently, gripping Amelia's hands. "You can't let them keep me there." She would regret this behaviour later, when her head was clear, but in the moment, Ginny was loopy from pain and sudden panic.

“Ginny, they have to check you out,” Amelia explained, her attention focused on Ginny. Her eyes searched the younger girl’s, trying to figure out what was up.

“I don’t want to go!” Ginny cried. “I’m fine! I just need to—” but Ginny didn’t finish her sentence. In her haste to prove that she was fine, she had stood up straight...and crumpled to the ground, unconscious at the flash of pain.

When Ginny came to, she was lying on a stretcher, straps across her chest and legs. Immediately, she began to thrash, heedless of the pain that it caused her side. “Let me off this thing!” she cried, panicked. “Someone come let me go!”

“Hey, hey, Rookie, settle down. What do I always say about the medics? Let them do their jobs.” The familiar voice that pierced through Ginny’s panic was Lawson’s. His face came into view as he hurried to her side, grasped her hand.

“Where’s Amelia?” she asked, eyes darting around.

“Went to see what’s taking the EMT’s so fucking long,” Mike said. “She probably went to hijack an ambulance herself.”

His amused tone stopped her eyes darting, his voice calming her. His appearance distracted her, at the same time that it soothed. Mike wouldn’t let anything bad happen to her.

“What-what happened to you?” Ginny reached up to gently touch Mike’s split lip.

Mike let her, his eyes watching her, though her gaze was running across the bruise blooming on his cheek, and across his lips. “Aw, you know, just defending your honour and all that.”

“Told you that having a girl on the team would be more trouble than it was worth,” Tommy Miller grinned, sauntering up. He had scraped knuckles and a scratch on his neck. “Even put my pitching hand at risk for her.”

“She makes people do crazy things like that,” Blip agreed, stopping on Ginny’s other side. He took her hand, squeezed it. “Gets in to trouble and then pulls everyone else in with her.”

Ginny blinked at the sudden tears in her eyes. She knew that the guys were just ribbing her to make her feel better about her own ribs. And it was their way of letting her know they cared. They were all gathered around, watching her, checking on her.

“Skip’s off yelling at the umps and Cincinnati’s coach,” Lawson said, his voice low.

“And the game?” Ginny asked urgently.

“We’re just waiting for you to get your lazy ass off the field,” Miller quipped, causing the rest of the guys to chuckle, and Ginny to wince as the hint of her laugh hurt her.

Lawson frowned and shook his head. His hand tightened over Ginny’s, making her realize only then that she had clasped onto him after her examination of his split lip. “Give her some

space, guys,” he ordered. “They’ll take her off soon.”

The team obeyed with cheerful comments directed at Ginny as they headed back to watch the show currently being put on by the two teams’ coaches. The shouting match would be replayed on ESPN several times over the next few days, as would the hit that took Ginny Baker down.

“I don’t even want to go look at my phone,” Blip said before he left. “Evelyn’s probably left 20 texts and six voicemails already. Be prepared for worse.”

Ginny smiled at Blip, knowing that it was true. Evelyn was tough, but she had the tendency to freak out sometimes. Frankly Ginny was half surprised that Evelyn had not stormed the field to take on the pitcher herself.

“Guess you were just too much for them, Baker,” Lawson said, bringing her attention back to him. He was chewing his gum, looking down thoughtfully at her.

“What do you mean?” she asked, frowning. And then frowned again. She had turned her head to look at Mike, and was dizzy, but a different kind of dizzy than before. “Did they give me something?” she cried, outraged.

Mike chuckled. “I was wondering when that was going to kick in.”

“They fucking drugged me?” Ginny exclaimed, not willing to admit that the pounding that was her left side was starting to lessen. And she could hardly hear her heartbeat in her head anymore.

“Don’t act so upset, Baker. You got the good stuff,” Lawson reassured her, patting her hand.

“I didn’t want any stuff,” Ginny moaned. “And they’re going to take me to the hospital.”

“Uh, yeah, Baker, they are,” Lawson said, confirming the obvious. “That’s what happens when you get hit with a 90mph pitch and then faint.”

“I didn’t faint,” Ginny grumbled, glaring up at Mike. She had to squint, though, since her eyes weren’t quite focusing. They wanted to close too. “I passed out. There’s a difference.”

“Sure there is, Rookie,” Mike agreed, clearly placating her.

Ginny glared at him, or tried to, but she was starting to feel warm and sleepy.

He laughed at the expressions crossing her face. Leaning in, he gently brushed her hair from her face and pressed a kiss to her forehead, beard brushing her skin.

She turned her face towards him, into the crook of his neck, which made him pause for a moment to collect himself at the sucker punch of emotion her movement caused him, before straightening up. Her eyes had closed, even though she had been fighting the drugs. It was good, because the EMTs were finally here to take her.

He saluted them and made to move away, but a sudden hand on his arm stopped him. Baker had a surprisingly firm grip for a woman who was supposed to be drugged and asleep.

“Don’t let them keep me in there, Mike,” she begged, voice higher than normal.

Mike nodded, seeing something in her eyes that he didn’t like. Fear.

“I’ll spring you out as soon as possible,” he promised. “Well, as soon as I can get around to it. You know, I do have a busy schedule, Baker.”

Ginny’s face relaxed into a more normal smile. “Jerk.” She gave him a gentle push with the hand that had moments ago been clutching at him so tightly.

He smiled down at her, relieved that the disturbing expression had left her face. He brushed a hand to her cheek as the EMT’s lifted her onto the ambulance that had been driven right onto the field.

“Later, Rookie,” he said softly.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

So this was supposed to only be a one-shot as part of my Later Rookie series, but this fic has developed well beyond that. Hope you guys are still interested because HERE IT IS. (Also, it's a little long, sorry).

Ginny came back into consciousness all at once. Well, her mind did at least. Her body was slow to follow which made her swear internally. She hated taking medication. It made her sluggish. It threw her off her game. She groaned. She had a feeling she would not be 'in the game' for quite a while now. Fucking Giorgianno. She hoped that someone socked him good for her.

Forcing her eyes open, Ginny blinked blearily at the sunlight streaming through her window. Inhaling deeply, she tried to sit up. Both were big mistakes. Her left side protested greatly when she tried to breathe in that much, and definitely had something to say about her trying to sit up. "Fuck," Ginny moaned, starting to feel a little panicked. She wanted to know what was going on. How could she get answers if she couldn't even sit up?

A rustling next to Ginny alerted her to the fact that she was not alone. Turning her head, her eyes widened to see Amelia asleep in the chair next to her bed. She was still wearing her white pantsuit, the knees and legs now stained by the dust from the field from when she knelt in front of Ginny to calm her. Ginny smiled a little to see that Amelia's phone was still clutched in one hand. Even in sleep, Amelia couldn't stop.

As if she could sense Ginny's gaze on her, Amelia started to stir. She had to pry her eyes open a bit—her mascara'd lashes stuck together. When she saw Ginny looking at her, Amelia's eyes opened all the way. "Gin!" she cried, jumping from her chair. She grabbed Ginny's hand. "You okay?"

Ginny grimaced. "I dunno, am I?"

Amelia smiled at her. "Well the doctor said that your ribs didn't puncture anything. I told her we should wait to fully treat you until you were awake. You would have freaked if you woke up all bandaged like a mummy."

Ginny smiled wryly at that. She *would* have freaked. She was grateful Amelia had surmised that much. She hated that she had revealed her fear of hospitals, but she supposed that was inevitable. All ball players ended up in the hospital at some point. It would have come out.

"I'll go get the doctor," Amelia offered, getting to her feet with a bit of a grimace.

"Don't tell me you're turning in to Lawson," Ginny remarked cheekily.

Amelia threw Ginny a look. “Don’t insult me like that. You try sleeping in one of these chairs and then tell me how good you feel.”

Both women smiled at each other, glad to be teasing again. As Amelia left the room, Ginny heard her say, “She’s awake now,” and then the scraping of chairs.

Her head turned towards the door, confusion furrowing her brow as she tried to figure out who would be waiting out there for her.

A relative stampede entered Ginny’s room, causing her eyes to widen in shock and her breath to hitch. Both Al and Buck were first in, followed by Oscar, and then Lawson, Blip, Miller, Stubbs, Shrek, Sunny, Davis... was the whole goddamn team here? Most showed signs of their dust up with Cincinnati, from split lips, to bruises on their faces and scrapes on their knuckles. They were all still in their uniforms too—they hadn’t even stopped to shower or change before coming to the hospital. The part of Ginny that could still be amused wondered whether they had taken the team bus over here. And they all stopped to look at Ginny.

Ginny swallowed nervously and tried a small smile. “Um, hi guys.”

“How are you feeling, Baker?” Al asked roughly.

“Like I got hit by a 90mph fast ball,” Ginny grumbled, trying to sit up. “Oh wait.”

The guys chuckled.

Luckily, Blip saw her struggle and came forward to fix her pillows and help her into a sitting position. She squeezed his hand gratefully when it came to rest on her shoulder.

“Evelyn had to be home with the boys but I’m supposed to call her to let her know you’re awake. We’re going to switch later. Which is good because she’s been driving me crazy with all these text messages.”

There was a bit of commotion by the door of the room as someone tried to squeeze through. It was the doctor, followed by Amelia.

“Guys, I didn’t mean for you all to come in at once and take up all the air in the room,” Amelia glared at them all. “Get out while the doctor checks her over and then come back in, *a few at a time*,” she stressed.

The guys grumbled, looking a little embarrassed, but listened to Amelia and shuffled back out. Amelia and the doctor exchanged amused glances. Ginny watched them go, not sure whether to laugh or cry at the amazing show of support she had just gotten. Lawson caught her eye as he exited, and Ginny swore she forgot to breathe.

“Well, now that they’re all gone, let’s see about you, shall we?” the doctor said, drawing Ginny’s attention to herself.

“Ginny, my name is Doctor Cho. How are you feeling?”

Ginny knew better than to play it brave for doctors. They always found out the truth anyway.

“My side is really hurting,” she said. “I couldn’t even sit up on my own, and it hurts every time I try to breathe deeply.”

Doctor Cho nodded rather than looking worried, which Ginny took as a good sign. “That’s to be expected,” she explained to Ginny. “You have two broken ribs. Luckily, they didn’t puncture your lung and cause any damage there. Unfortunately, ribs take a long time to recover, at least 6-8 weeks.”

“Six to eight weeks?” Ginny cried in dismay. She looked to Amelia who just had a sympathetic expression on her face. Clearly the doctor had told her all of this already.

“At least,” the doctor cautioned. “I know you athletic types like to try to push yourselves earlier, but you really shouldn’t with your ribs. They’re going to hurt the whole time as it is.”

Ginny nodded, though the news was hitting her hard. 6-8 weeks in recovery time, at the minimum? And sore ribs the entire time? She was going to lose her edge! She wouldn’t be able to work out like this, not when she couldn’t even take a deep breath without wincing.

Doctor Cho could see she was losing Ginny to her own thoughts, so she hurried on. “We’re going to splint your chest and tape your ribs as best we can for now. We’re also going to secure your left arm to your chest to restrict movement as much as possible. Do you have a lot of pain now? I can get you some more pain killers.”

Ginny shook her head vehemently at the thought. “No thanks.” She thought about asking for a shower, and then realized that she had been put in a hospital gown. And was clean. She preferred not to think about being given a sponge bath by some unknown nurse.

“All right, well I’ll take care of the taping and then see about letting your visitors come in.”

Ginny nodded and zoned out as the doctor and Amelia worked together to lift Ginny’s gown to appropriately tape her up. She hated the restricting feeling across her chest and side, the tugging of the tape on her back. And she really hated having her arm secured to her chest by a tight sling. Of course she couldn’t just be trusted not to move it.

When they were done, Amelia helped Ginny—who was now feeling stiff—to lie back down.

“I’ll come check on you a little later today,” Doctor Cho said, laying a kind hand on Ginny’s shoulder.

Ginny nodded, not looking at her. “Thanks,” she muttered.

Amelia knew that Ginny was feeling tired, sore, and upset. “Should I tell your fan club out there to just come back later?”

Ginny shook her head. “It’s fine,” she said, raising her right arm to swipe impatiently at her wet eyes. “They’ve been waiting. Might as well let them in.”

Amelia thought about arguing, saying Ginny was clearly tired and needed her rest, but she bit her tongue. Ginny would not take kindly to being coddled. It was going to be a tough few months.

Unsurprisingly, it was Al and Oscar and Buck who were the first through the door.

“Look, kid, you caught a tough break,” Al said, with Buck nodding sympathetically behind him. “But we’re all just glad you’re okay.”

Ginny nodded. Okay was a relative term. She wasn’t going to be playing ball for months. That was far from okay.

Oscar exchanged a look with Amelia before stepping closer. “I think your position with the team is pretty secure still,” he told her. Although Oscar did sometimes try to be diplomatic, he usually told her things as it was, which she appreciated. “The whole city is in an uproar about your hit. You’ve already started getting gift baskets and get well cards. Management wouldn’t dare mess with you. The worst that might happen is you get ‘sent down’ to the minors for your recovery and then brought back up when you’re cleared to play again. But I think you’re just gonna be placed on the Injured List and leave it at that.”

The others in the room were nodding, so Ginny nodded too. There wasn’t really anything else she could do about it.

“Well, I guess that’s all for now,” Al said, hands in his pockets, rocking back on his heels. “We’ll see you later, Baker.”

“Yeah, thanks Skip,” Ginny said, her voice maybe a little rougher than usual. “Thanks Oscar, thanks Buck.”

The men nodded again and filed out of the room.

Ginny cleared her throat, trying not to think about what the doctor and Oscar had said. If she did, she’d lose it completely, and she still had the rest of her visitors. “Send in the next bunch, I guess.”

Several more groups of guys came in to wish Ginny well. She was glad they mostly kept it short, glad that there were still more groups behind that kept it all moving. Ginny didn’t need to prolong their viewing of the poor injured pitcher.

Blip came back in again with the second group to say goodbye before going to get Evelyn. When he hugged her, Ginny had to force herself not to cry. He seemed to understand, because he shielded her from the view of the guys that extra moment. “Chin up, bubble butt,” he smiled.

Ginny pushed at him with her good arm. “Go bother your wife.”

As the guys kept passing through, Ginny had to ignore the feeling of anxiety growing in her stomach. Lawson hadn’t come back in to see her yet. And, if she was being honest, he was

the one she most wanted to see. He had been able to calm her when no one else could, and frankly, she wanted him to come and reassure her again that it was all going to be fine.

Miller came in the last group. He was holding his hat in his hands, and she could see that his knuckles had scrapes on them. "I didn't want to win back the mound like this, Baker," he said softly, head down.

Ginny reached out for him, grabbing his hand. She squeezed, made him look up at her. "You didn't hit me, Miller, much as you might have wanted to."

He smiled at that, ran his free hand through his already messy hair. "I just wanted you to know that I don't mind, you know, sharing the mound—with you."

Ginny bit her lip against the wide smile that threatened to break out over her face. She swallowed the sentimental lump in her throat. "Thanks, Tommy."

He nodded and filed out with the rest of the guys.

Lawson still hadn't been in to see her.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

A noise in the doorway showed that she still had more visitors. Turning her head—there he was.

“Amelia, can you give us a minute?” he asked.

Amelia looked at Ginny, saw the expression on her face. She hid a smile and then turned back to Lawson, nodded. “She needs her rest,” she cautioned him as she passed him on her way out.

Ginny stuck her tongue out at Amelia’s back in defiance, even though she knew she was right.

Lawson smiled a little at the motion, but still seemed to hover in the doorway. He looked uncomfortable.

“Are you coming in or out, Lawson?” Ginny finally asked, in a lighter tone than she was currently feeling.

Mike exhaled heavily and came the rest of the way into the room. Grabbing the chair beside her bed, he lowered himself into it before slouching down, splaying out. “Sleeping in these things is not comfortable,” he informed her.

Ginny frowned, and looked out the window at the streaming sunlight. “What do you mean? What time is it? Why were you sleeping in the chairs?”

“You’ve been out for nearly a day, Baker,” Mike informed her, causing Ginny’s eyes to widen.

“What? A day? And you guys—” she stopped, shocked and amazed that the team, going by their appearances, had apparently not left the hospital in all that time. “Why would you stick around here all that time? You should have gone and showered and eaten and changed! If not for your sakes, then for mine,” she added, trying to make a joke, “You lot stunk up my room.”

Mike smiled a rueful smile and rubbed the back of his neck. “We could have. Maybe should have,” he agreed. “But we wanted to be here when you woke up.” He looked up at Ginny and met her gaze.

She swallowed again, feeling the lump of emotion rising in her throat. “That’s—that’s really nice of you all, Lawson,” she said quietly.

Mike nodded shrugged, looking as uncomfortable with the sentimentality as Ginny felt. “Oscar let us order pizza in anyway. We had a party with all the nurses and some of the

patients. You have some hot nurses on this floor, Baker. I'm sure you'll get lots of visitors from the guys."

Ginny rolled her eyes, but in amusement. She knew that for all their playboy attitudes, a lot of her teammates had good hearts. Sure, they played around a bit, but once in a relationship, most of them behaved themselves. She didn't expect many visitors anyway. "See anyone you like, old man?" Ginny asked, for some reason not really wanting to hear the answer.

"Oh there's always someone to ogle, Baker," Mike grinned, taking his hat off to run his hand through his hair. He winked at her, causing her to roll her eyes again. She didn't like to think that the only reason he might come to visit would be to flirt with her nurses.

"I'm not happy it's Miller's face I'm gonna be stuck staring at for the rest of the season, though," Mike griped, making Ginny smile again. "You're prettier."

That wasn't saying much. And his talking about her being out for the season stung at Ginny as it sunk in. She knew it was likely true, but it wasn't something she had managed to internalize yet. "Six to eight weeks, Mike," she said quietly, her right hand picking at her blanket. She knew it would be longer than that, though to get herself back in shape.

"Come on Rookie, just treat it like a vacation," Mike said, trying to cheer her up. "Since you can't play, and you can't work out—" he paused to look at her sternly, knowing her well enough to know that she would definitely try to get back into the gym before she was fully healed, "—you might as well have fun."

Ginny sighed, turned away from him to look out the window. "I've never really had a vacation," she admitted. Her dad was always too focused on her practice time, on her game. He had never wanted to take time off for something as frivolous as going to Disneyland or on a beach vacation. Her mom had never been able to talk him around.

Mike's eyebrows raised. "Never?" he asked. He had known that Ginny's dad had been pretty tough on her to get her into fighting form, but to never let her have a day off or go on vacation...? He wondered what else she had missed out on as a kid.

"There was never time," Ginny shrugged, looking back at Mike. "What?" she asked defensively. "It was fine."

"Sure it was, Baker," Mike hurried to agree. "But we're going to treat this like a vacation anyway. I'm gonna teach you to have fun." Getting to his feet, Mike appeared to have decided something internally. Brushing his hands off on his dirty uniform pants, he looked down at her, that cocky smile back on his face.

Ginny wasn't sure whether she should be excited or apprehensive.

"Get your rest, Rookie. I'll be back," he promised, and exited the room before Ginny could ask any other questions.

Thank you all for your comments and Kudos. As I'm sure everyone knows, it's the comments that keep the writers going :P <3

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Thank you for all the comments, guys! I'm so glad that you're enjoying this as much as I am!

Ginny got only one more visitor that day. Evelyn Sanders arrived just as they're serving dinner, and promptly sat her ass down in the chair by Ginny's bed and grabbed her jello. "We're gonna need another one," she told the nurse who rolled her eyes, but let her get away with it, bringing in another jello five minutes later.

"You didn't reply to my texts," Evelyn commented accusingly, poking Ginny's leg with the toe of her high heel.

"Which one?" Ginny pointed out as she examined what they had brought her. She wasn't sure about the meat, so she went for the mashed potatoes.

"Any of them. You know you can't do that to me, Gin. You can't get carted out on a stretcher and then not reply for a day!"

Ginny put the potatoes back on the tray and reached out her hand. She squeezed Evelyn's ankle gently, rocking it side to side. Despite the dramatics of Evelyn's words, Ginny knew that her friend had really been worried. "I'm sorry, Ev," Ginny replied, holding Evelyn's gaze.

Evelyn rolled her eyes and waved her spoon at Ginny, waving off the apology. "I'm just glad you're okay," she said.

"Define okay," Ginny grumbled, looking down at her arm held to her chest, and keenly aware of the tape holding her ribs in place.

Evelyn sighed. Blip had been on the Injured List a couple times and she knew how hard it was for him. He had been miserable to be around until Evelyn had shown him just how fun not having to workout or play ball was. "A break is a good thing now and again," she stated decisively.

"This isn't a break! This is a hiatus!" Ginny exclaimed. "Six to eight weeks just for the ribs to recover, Evelyn. That's not to mention however long it takes me to get back into shape again." She had worked so hard to get where she was, and to have it gone because of a single pitch...it stung. Well actually it hurt like hell, but that might have been her ribs talking.

"Look Ginny, you know I love you and all your baseball fanaticism," Evelyn began, leaning forward in her chair. "But you've been living and breathing baseball for so long...maybe it's

not a bad thing that this is forcing you to step back and look at the bigger picture.”

“What bigger picture?” Ginny glared. There was nothing bigger than baseball in Ginny’s life. Of course, that was what Evelyn was saying was the problem.

“Your life, Ginny Baker,” Evelyn said, her tone serious. “You are not just a baseball player, Gin. You are not your arm, you are not your ability to pitch. I know you love the game, and I know you’re a true player. But I think somewhere along the way, you lost sense of what else you are besides a baller. Or maybe you never got to figure it out.”

Ginny turned away from the sympathy in Evelyn’s voice. She hated pity. Evelyn was right, but that didn’t make it any easier to hear. Ginny had thrown herself into playing baseball. And she did live and breathe it. Take it away, even temporarily, and Ginny wasn’t sure who she was. It had only been a day and Ginny already felt loose, adrift on a sea after unexpectedly being torn from her moorings. When she was a kid, Ginny didn’t have to think. She just had to do what her dad said. And that carried on up until his death. Then, she had stepped up, determined to see their dreams through. But that meant being single minded and relentless. It left time for nothing else. Suddenly, Ginny seemed to have nothing but time for anything else.

Evelyn watched the emotions slide across Ginny’s face. She could see that she had perhaps hurt her friend, and at the very least disconcerted her. That was well and good, but Evelyn couldn’t let Ginny stew for too long, not while she was around. “In any case, it’s just something to think about Ginny. But what’s more fun to think about is the way the Padres stormed the pitch after you got hit today.” Evelyn grinned evilly and Ginny managed to smile back. She really was curious about what had happened while she was struggling to breathe again.

“Well since I was a little preoccupied, why don’t you tell me?” Ginny smirked.

“Miller jumped the fence!” Evelyn squealed, rocking back in her chair for a moment, hands held to her face in laughter.

“No!” Ginny cried, sitting up a little more, and ignoring the pain in her side as she self-adjusted.

“Yes! And Blip almost fell running up from the dug out—idiot—and Lawson, well he couldn’t figure out what to do with himself! He was running around looking like a chicken with his head cut off.”

Ginny’s brow wrinkled in confusion. “What do you mean?”

“I mean he started running towards you, and then at the mound, and then stopped to go back to you, but Al waved him off, and then he just bee lined it for that pitcher. Of course he was a little late to the party but I did see him land a beauty of a punch right in the guy’s stomach that had him dropping to his knees.”

Ginny listened, rapt as Evelyn relayed the story. Though it was normal and expected for a team to be pissed when one of their own got injured, it sounded like they were all out there

mixing it up with Cincinnati.

“Al’s blow up at the other coach keeps being replayed on ESPN. Actually....” Evelyn got up and grabbed the remote from Ginny’s bedside table. With a few clicks, they had found ESPN and, within fifteen minutes, they were showing the shouting match between the two coaches, as well as Ginny’s own injury.

“That looks like it hurt,” Ginny breathed, watching herself double over.

Evelyn snorted, “You tell me.”

“Oh. Yeah,” Ginny laughed lightly.

Evelyn shook her head, laughing at Ginny. “Dumbass,” she said fondly.

The two chatted for half an hour more before the nurse came in and told them in no uncertain terms that it was time for Evelyn to leave. Both women pouted, but knew it was for the best. Ginny was tired.

“I’ll be back tomorrow,” Evelyn promised.

“You don’t have to....” Ginny mumbled, wanting to give Evelyn an out. She didn’t want her friends to think she was too needy or demanding. She didn’t want them to visit her because they felt they had to.

Evelyn rolled her eyes. Hands on her hips she stared Ginny down. “Ginny Baker, I will be here tomorrow because I want to be here. So stop that.”

“Yes Ma’am,” Ginny said, falsely meek, causing Evelyn to roll her eyes again.

“Good night, Ginny,” Evelyn said, leaning in to kiss Ginny’s forehead.

Ginny smiled up at her friend. She reached over and clasped her hand. “Night Evvy. Oh, and bring the boys tomorrow!”

Evelyn smiled. “I’m glad you said that because they’ve already asked, I swear to God, 100 times when they were allowed to come visit.”

“Tell them any time.”

“Oh careful, Baker, or they literally will be here all the time.”

“What was that, Evelyn? I need my rest. Yeah, you’re right, I should get some sleep.” Ginny was just kidding, of course. She loved the twins. Aside from Evelyn and Blip ~~and Mike and Amelia~~, they were her best friends.

Evelyn’s laughter filled the room, leaving Ginny with a cozy feeling even as Evelyn left. Snuggling down a bit, Ginny closed her eyes. Despite her teasing, she really was tired and

was glad to get back to sleep.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Guyssss I'm having so much fun with this. Hope you are liking it too!

When Ginny woke up, it was because someone was throwing...something at her. She threw her good arm over her face. "What the hell?" she whined. Whatever it was hit her again. With a groan, she pried her eyes open. The room itself was not pitch black, but instead dimly lit, so nurses could still see what they were doing if they popped in to check on her. Luckily none of them had. But someone had sure come for a visit. Ginny swore, if some nut had gotten out and come to pester her, she was gonna be pissed.

As she turned her head, her eyes widened and her heart rate jumped. "Lawson! What the fuck?" the expletive flew threw her mouth in surprise as she sat up, leaning on her arm. She winced with the upward motion, but finished the job, not wanting to appear weak in front of her captain. Not that it mattered since no matter how strong she appeared, he wasn't going to help her get back in the game any faster. Though with his bad knees and back, if anyone was going to understand her frustration, it was him.

Looking down at herself, Ginny saw fluffy white pieces covering her and her bed. She looked up at the catcher who was grinning at her like a madman. Picking one up, she gave it a closer look. "Popcorn?" She popped it into her mouth to confirm, making Mike snort with laughter.

"What if that hadn't been popcorn?"

Ginny grimaced. "I don't even want to know what else it could have been."

Picking up another piece of popcorn from her bedspread, Ginny shrugged and popped it into her mouth with a grin in Lawson's direction. "How did you get in here anyway?" she asked, frowning in confusion.

"I won them over with my rugged handsomeness and charm, Baker." He waggled his eyebrows at her, his smile growing wider when she only rolled her eyes at him. "I bribed the nurses with a couple tickets to our next game."

Ginny nodded. "That seems more plausible. Good to know my nurses can be bought like that."

Mike frowned at her phrasing. It hadn't occurred to him before that if he could get in with little more than a smile and a couple tickets, others could get in with a lot more. Access to Ginny Baker was a precious thing, as he knew first hand. He made a mental note to remind Amelia and Oscar to get Ginny's security stationed at the hospital too. In all the confusion, clearly that had been one thing that had been forgotten.

“What?” Ginny asked, noticing the frown on Mike’s face. Not that he was particularly subtle in his facial expressions in the first place.

He turned his attention back to her, and re-adjusted his face. “Nothing. Just a thought.”

“Ah, must have hurt. You’re not used to those,” Ginny quipped, leaning back a little on her pillows, a satisfied smile on her face.

“Oh ha-ha, Rookie,” Mike said, throwing another piece of popcorn from the bowl in his lap at her.

Ginny caught it one-handed and ate it, the smile staying on her face.

“So are you breaking me out, or what?” she asked.

Mike gave her a look that clearly said she should—and did—know better. Ginny was not going anywhere until the doctors gave her the okay to and she wasn’t going to be able to convince anyone otherwise.

She pouted at him, but knew he was right. Still, it didn’t help her at all. Being stuck in the hospital was bad enough, but being stuck in here with no light at the end of the tunnel to head towards, no guarantee of when she’d be able to play again was even worse.

The disappointment on her face was clear, causing Mike to shift in his chair. He put his legs up on her bed, kicking her right leg. “Come on, Baker, it’s not that bad.”

Ginny threw him a look that clearly said it was. Why was he here anyway? To throw popcorn at her and remind her of how awful the next few months were going to be? He should have just let her sleep.

“Like I said, I’m going to teach you to have fun again.” Mike stuck his hand in the popcorn bowl and shoved a handful into his mouth, dropping a couple pieces into his beard in the process.

“I know how to have fun,” Ginny shot back at him. “I like to dance. And I like to play ball. Those are my ideas of fun.”

“Well then we need to expand your horizons, Rookie. Clearly you are a newbie in more ways than one.”

Ginny blushed a bit at the comment, though she didn’t know why. Clearly she had been spending too much time in the locker room. Or maybe it was the tone in which he had said it. In any case, she was *not* content with letting him think she was some pathetic loser with no life... even if he was right .

“Yeah, well, you’ve had plenty of time to figure out how to fuck up, *old man*,” she stressed, her tone a little sharper than normal.

Mike held up his hands in a gesture of surrender. “Hey, I admit that I have not always made the best choices. But Baker, fucking up, making mistakes, that’s a part of life.” That was

something Ginny hadn't seemed to learn yet. She couldn't handle screwing up at all, and so when she did, even if it was just a little mistake, it messed with her head and her game.

"It's not part of mine," she returned stubbornly, shaking her head.

"Baker—" Mike growled. "It is part of literally everybody's. Everybody makes mistakes." A distracted look came over Mike's face, as if he were trying to remember something. "Isn't that a song? Everybody makes mistakes...."

"Everybody gets that way," Ginny mumbled when Mike didn't finish his thought.

"That's some teeny bopper song, isn't it?" he asked, still looking like he was still trying to place it. He picked the popcorn off of his beard and ate it, nearly making Ginny laugh. "In any case, it doesn't matter. It's true." He pulled his feet off the bed and leaned forward, looking at Ginny intently. Clasp his hands together, he pointed them in her direction. "Part of life is figuring out how to cope, how to make mistakes, how to fix them, and how to survive. You have to mess up at some point, Baker. But you also have to be able to brush it off, and not let it eat you up until someone has to come along—someone like a tall, strong, ruggedly handsome and dashing charming catcher with a fantastic beard perhaps—and talk some sense to you." He gave her his signature grin at the end, not wanting to sound like he was lecturing her too much. He could tell that he had been getting a little too serious.

Ginny rolled her eyes at him, not wanting to admit that he might be right...about some things. She knew that she was a bit of a perfectionist, but her need for it had been driven into her by her father. And he had not taken screw ups particularly well. Ginny held herself to a higher standard, because all around her she saw other people failing. And she hated to mess up. Everyone expected so much from her, she just couldn't let them down. But like Mike had said so many months ago, she had to play ball for herself, not for anyone else. Maybe she had to live her life that way too.

"The beard is not fantastic," she stated, although he caught the twinkle in her eye that told him she was teasing.

"The beard is. You just won't admit it yet." He nodded smugly, sitting back in his chair. "Now, I brought you a present." He leaned down and pulled a DVD out of the bag Ginny hadn't noticed by his feet. He tossed it onto the bed.

"*A League of Their Own*?" Ginny exclaimed, holding up the DVD. "Lawson, you're such an ass," she grinned. She wouldn't admit that she did actually love this movie.

"You love my ass too," he stated, getting to his feet. He traded her the popcorn for the DVD and popped it into the machine he had managed to hook up to her hospital TV already.

Pulling his chair closer to her bed, he positioned himself so he could still snake his hand into the bowl when he wanted. And if he accidentally left it in there a little too long sometimes, only realizing when she reached for the popcorn too, her fingers sliding along his skin, neither of them said anything.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Short and sweet. But actually. Help guys. The cute is too much for me.

It was fully day when Ginny opened her eyes again, as evidenced by the sunlight streaming in through her window. Blinking, she noticed a weight on her good arm. She was almost afraid to look, worried that she had somehow managed to injure herself during the night and so now her good hand had to be restricted. It was itchy too.

Turning her head, Ginny's eyes widened even as a small smile started to creep unbidden to her face. The itchy, heavy thing on her arm was Mike Lawson. He had lowered the rail on the right side of Ginny's bed at some point, and was now leaning on the bed—and on Ginny's arm. His beard was what was scratching slightly at Ginny's skin, and, her gaze sliding down her arm, she realized that the weight continuing onto her hand was his own hand! In sleep, he looked younger, the lines of the face relaxing. Ginny wished the beard did not hide so much of his features. She wanted to see his mouth slack in sleep, see if he was a mouth breather so she could tease him about it later. Now that she was fully awake, she could feel his breath against her skin, and the way he had slid his arm under hers and was using it as a pillow. It was a good thing both of her hands were out of commission for the moment, because Ginny had the strangest desire to run her fingers through Lawson's hair.

A clearing of a throat caused Ginny to look up, a flush rising to her cheeks. An older nurse stood in the doorway, arms crossed over her ample chest. She looked disapproving, and for a moment, Ginny felt ashamed, and worried that she had done something wrong. And then she realized that the nurse was unimpressed with the popcorn littering the floor around her bed. Ginny had eaten the stuff that she had dropped or Mike had thrown at her—she didn't care about blanket or sheet-popcorn, but she drew the line at eating off the floor.

When the nurse brought her eyes to Ginny's face, though, her stern look disappeared, and a smile with a hint of a dimple took its place. "I'll go see about maintenance getting a broom," she said, in slightly accented English. Ginny nodded, unable to get any words out. Even though she and Mike had done nothing wrong—well, except the fact that he had snuck/bribed his way in here—she felt as if the nurse had caught them doing something intimate. She was grateful the woman had left, giving them privacy so Ginny could wake Lawson up and reclaim her arm.

"Hey Old Man, you're snoring," Ginny said after a moment, clearing her own throat. She shook her arm a bit for good measure.

"I don't snore," Mike mumbled. He nuzzled his face against her arm as he woke up and then stilled, as if he had just realized what he was doing.

Ginny was caught between a flush of embarrassment and amusement.

Nonchalantly, Mike released Ginny's arm, sitting up—or rather half sitting up before letting out a little hiss of pain. Clearly the position he had been sleeping in had done more harm than good to his back. His hands balled into fists, fingers sliding against the bedsheets as he fought against his own muscles.

“God, you're old,” Ginny said with a wrinkle of her nose. She was trying to tease him, distract him from his pain until his muscles decided to unlock.

“Next time I get the bed,” he shot back, looking up at her with a glare.

Ginny tried not to read too much into the fact that he had said ‘next time’. He had probably just meant it as a retort, and a figure of speech. She was distracted from responding by the return of the nurse, and the fact that the woman was not alone.

“Oh! I thought we would be the first visitors here.”

Ginny's eyes widened in surprise and she stiffened, causing Lawson to try to look (unsuccessfully) over his shoulder to see who had walked in.

“Mom? Will? What are you doing here?”

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