

Gone

by notsosaintly

Sometimes a marriage cannot be fixed, as Hermione painfully discovers.

(one-shot)

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: This story was written for a friend on LJ, who prefers to remain anonymous right now. It was written in about two hours upon reading an f-locked LJ entry. I just couldn't help myself; her situation struck me that deeply that it simply flowed out of my fingertips and onto the screen. She knows who she is and has read the story. I hope that this story can bring an ounce of hope and strength to others in similar (even if not exact) situations.

I placed the warning of abuse on this story because it is involved, although in no way is it graphic or detailed. Use your judgement, but I think that even those easily bothered by stories with abuse, this one would be weathered well, and the message it conveys I hope would be worth the read.

A big 'thank you' goes to Annie Talbot and 'Reader One' (I'm sorry, I don't know who you are!) from OWL who adminned this story for me over there and corrected a couple errors. I was too anxious to get it posted after writing that I hadn't had it betaed, so those two ladies are the ones to credit for finding my mistakes.

Disclaimer: JKR wants her nice little characters to live happily ever after, the end. In my world, things don't happen that way...reality occurs. So the characters, fame, and all that goes along with it are hers. The plot is mine.

The silence was deafening. Rose and Hugo had gone to stay with Auntie Ginny for a few days; Ginny had insisted, and Hermione hadn't had the strength to argue. Right now, she was both thankful and... dreadfully lonely. Trembling hands covering her face, she slumped to the floor against the wall for what must have been the hundredth time that day.

But she refused to cry anymore. Either that or she had simply cried herself out; perhaps her body refused her request for more tears. In any case, the well was dry. So she just sat, knees drawn up to her chest, forehead resting on hands resting on knees, and intended, at least for the moment, to remain that way until death parted her soul from her body. Till death do us part ... She half-sobbed a chuckle at the irony.

She woke as the first light of dawn filtered through the kitchen curtains at the end of the hallway. Her hands braced themselves upon the floor, and a still sleep-addled brain made her wonder why she was sitting here, in the semi-darkened hall near the front entrance. A single glance towards the door worked like a reverse Memory Charm, and it all flooded back with painful results.

She hiccuped a sob, but still no tears came. She didn't need tears, though, to make it any more real than it already was: Ron was gone.

Gone. Her breath shuddered at that single word, which rattled mercilessly through her brain, almost seeming to mock her. He was gone, and she had failed: failed herself, failed her children... failed her marriage.

Drawing her chin upwards, she banished these self-deprecating thoughts and chastised herself. The decision had been made weeks ago to stop blaming herself for Ron's behaviour. She was only responsible for her own, and she had tried so hard...so diligently!...to modify her behaviour in hopes of winning Ron back, saving her long-suffering marriage, sparing her children the heartache their shoddy relationship was creating.

It had begun with scaling her hours back at work...a feat in its own right, but it had been accomplished through a bit of begging, not a little cajoling, a promise or two for extra time off later on, and a lot of delegation spread out amongst the other Healers in the entire ward. Word had gotten around somehow...over which she was still a bit baffled and more than a little miffed...that Healer Weasley was 'in a strop with Mr Weasley', but that had been enough for her co-workers to willingly comply with her request.

She had gone on a shopping binge to update her rather common wardrobe for one with more flash. Unfortunately, that had backfired spectacularly when Ron had thrown a wobbly, claiming: "We're skint, and you're wasting our dosh on that rubbish?!"

Every evening after work, no matter how knackered she was from her day, she had showered and perfumed and tidied her hair and, after the kids had fallen asleep, let her husband know very plainly that she was up for a little slap and tickle. No matter that 99 percent of the time he couldn't be arsed to get it up and have it off. She would just try it again the following night, undaunted, as though she hadn't been snubbed the evening before. And that other one percent of the time? She had felt used and came out of the whole affair with more than a few bruises, both to her body and to her psyche. Still, she was a Healer. A few well-placed charms and she was good to go the following night, determined to be a good wife, to give her husband that which most men wanted...didn't they?

She had even gone so far as to hire a house-elf. Well, she'd *tried* to hire a house-elf. In the end, she had purchased the elf, but when it had staunchly refused to work if it were paid, she had decided to secretly put aside every Galleon she would have given the poor thing into a special Gringotts account and release the rights to the account to the elf once she no longer had need of its services. So the house-elf had slaved away happily, cooking Ron's favorite dishes, tending to his every need, until Hermione had come home one night to find the battered body of the house-elf shivering in a corner. She had never sussed out exactly what had happened: if it had punished itself for something it had felt it had done wrong, or if Ron...but, no, she still could not bring herself to imagine Ron being *that* cruel.

Eventually, depression won the battle. Hermione, unable to keep up pretenses at home, had resumed her usual work schedule, donned her more common, comfortable clothes, gifted the house-elf to Harry and Ginny, who needed it more than she, and stopped trying to initiate any sort of sexual relations with her husband. She was sick of the humiliation, the disappointment, the harsh words, the abuse....

The abuse. For the longest time, she had made excuses for him. He had tried to go through Auror training, but had failed the final examination. Of course, Hermione was to blame for that. She had 'refused' to help him write his final thesis; had 'refused' to explain the theories in the textbook, which he had never bothered to read on his own; had 'refused' to help him study by allowing him to practise his spells on her. In actuality, she had encouraged him to read his textbook, saying she'd quiz him afterward, and had given him countless ideas on the topic of his final thesis. As for spell practise...well, she'd given in once, and once was all it took to warrant a trip to St Mungo's, where her colleagues treated her sympathetically and unquestioningly. But Hermione had seen the 'knowing' glances that had passed between her co-workers at the oddity of the situation and the fact that Ron wasn't at his wife's side in hospital. She had told them the truth: she had offered to help him practise spells for Auror training. What she hadn't told them, however, was that when she had tried to give a few pointers after he had difficulties with a few of them, he had thrown several hexes at her he did in fact know and, unfortunately, was quite good at.

What had finally pushed Ron over the edge wasn't the failed Auror exam, but his rejected application to the Chudley Cannons. Well, in all fairness, his application *was* accepted. They had asked him to come in to audition with the team, as they were in fact looking for a Chaser. Whatever had happened on the Quidditch pitch that day, Hermione never found out. All she had discovered that night was how loudly Ron could mouth off...and in front of the children, no less...and how hard Ron could actually throw a punch. Again, being a Healer had its advantages. Although, no amount of Healing could fix the damage that had been irreparably done to her poor children, who had witnessed the entire thing. She had shuffled them off to Rose's room as soon as she had been able and told them to keep quiet and not to do or say anything, for at that point an involuntary sneeze would have resuscitated Ron's raging fit. She had thrown up a Silencing Charm and, for good measure, a Disillusionment Charm on Rose's room, and then, at the last minute, she had returned to apply her own version of an Alohomora Charm that would make the door locked from the outside...and unresponsive to any sort of unlocking charm...but not from the inside, just in case her children needed to get out for any reason.

Hermione stood, rubbed at her sleep-stiffened face, and weaved down the hallway towards the kitchen, intent upon making some tea. Placing the kettle on the stove and igniting the fire beneath it with her wand, she leaned up against the wall to wait for the water to boil.

Her family was sympathetic and understanding of her separation and impending divorce. Ron's parents, as well as his brothers and sister, were mortified at his beastly behaviour and supported Hermione to the fullest, even to the point of agreeing that he should have limited and then only supervised contact...meaning, of course, Molly Weasley...with Rose and Hugo. Harry was... Well, Ginny was working on him. He still didn't want to believe Ron could be a prat of such magnitude. Ginny assured her that he'd come around, like he always did, under Ginny's incredible powers of influence. Hermione believed her.

The screaming teakettle startled her thoughts into the present, and she steeped the tea leaves a long time, letting the smell of the herbs calm her as well as give her the energy she would need to start her day.

It was a new day, the beginning of a new life. Ron was gone.... He was finally *gone*.