

Moving On

by CharmedForce

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One

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: Special thanks to my beta, chivalric. She is a great nagger, particularly over point of view.

As always, none of this is mine. I could afford that fantastic Blackberry Storm if it was...

The Portkey Office was bustling at the Ministry of Magic, Department of Magical Transportation, that cold morning. As the couple made their way through the crowd, the man slowly angled them toward a pair of available seats.

"Why don't you rest here while I get our papers and information? I'll be just a few minutes," he said, placing a quick kiss on her forehead.

Hermione smiled, watching him move easily through the throngs of travellers until he turned the corner and went out of sight. She sighed, thanking Merlin that she had him. A year ago she had hit rock bottom, and it took months for her to see what she had been missing when she was without him.

She reflected on what she was leaving behind. There was no sense of loss in her departure from Britain; if anything, she felt only joy with the world now being opened to her.

She noticed the commotion near the lifts, wondering what was making all the people squawk with indignation. She gasped as she saw the ginger-haired young man push his way through the crowd. His eyes were scanning the office, intently searching for something. When he spotted her, he quickly cried out.

"Hermione! Please... wait!" He began rushing toward her, reaching her in just a few seconds. "Please, Hermione, don't go! You don't want to do this."

"Ron, stop it! You're making a scene." She wished she could just get up and walk away, but she didn't want to leave the seats her companion had found for her, afraid he would think she had changed her mind and left him. "What are you even doing here?"

"Please, just listen to me. You can't do this, 'Mione, you just can't. Britain is your home; you can't just take off on your own. You're making an awful mistake," he pleaded, grasping her hands and sitting next to her.

"Mistake? Who are you to judge whether it is a mistake? You have no right to be here, Ron. You lost that right when you cheated on me *with* her." She yanked her hands back, but he had been expecting it and only held tighter.

"As if fleeing the country is any better," Ron said with a sneer. Offended by his criticism, she huffed, but was cut off when Ron lowered his voice. "I have every right to be

here. I admit I made a mistake with Lavender, but you were the one who left. I can't be blamed if you refused to see reason. I've always been willing to take you back, and you know Harry and Ginny want you home, too."

With an even voice and blank face, she responded. "I refuse to take the blame for your dishonesty and weaknesses, Ron. We were engaged to be married, and you cheated on me. Not once, not twice, but for months. It wasn't a drunken one-night stand, it was a relationship. A relationship you continued even after I moved out of our flat."

She was incredibly annoyed by the tone of his voice. Once she would have accepted the calming intentions, but now it just grated over her like sharp stones. "And don't think for one moment that I know anything of Harry and Ginny's desires. You know damn well that they haven't spoken to me this past year because of the lies you told them. You were the one who gave them the ultimatum to decide between us, and as Ginny's brother, they could hardly turn their back on you. You were the one who cheated, and I am the one who has to pay the penalty. But I won't any longer. I've grown up, and I've dealt with my past with you. I can't regret it anymore, but I won't be trapped here burdened with the blame."

Ron look stunned at her words. The last time they had seen one another, she was bundle of energy, spewing anger, resentment and shame at him. This stone-faced woman she was trying to be was no one he would recognize.

"Who are you? Where is the Hermione I grew up with and fell in love with?" he whispered. "She never would have given up on us."

"That Hermione only existed in your mind, Ron. I was never going to stay home with the kids while you lived your Quidditch or Auror dreams, with no chance of realizing my own." Gesturing wildly at him with their joined hands, she scoffed and continued. "You couldn't even decide what you wanted, yet you were horrified that I was willing to go after my own dreams. You couldn't see that it would never be us standing on the platform at King's Cross, waving our kids off to Hogwarts with Harry and Ginny's kids." His grip on her hands finally relaxed enough for her to pull them away. There was an expression of slow understanding on Ron's face as he listened to her.

Noticing the people nearby begin to stare at the obvious quarrel, Hermione lowered her voice. Her eyes narrowed as she tried to make her point. "All you wanted was to be a wealthy Quidditch star with hoards of groupies night after night while I sat at home waiting for you bestow your exalted presence on me. You wanted me to be thankful that you were allowing me in your life. You didn't care that I was a real person with real feelings, with real goals. That didn't factor into your considerations. When I didn't agree to your plans, you turned everyone against me with your venom and ultimatums. And now, after ignoring me for a year, you show up to keep me from doing what I need to do because it doesn't fit your plans." She stopped to take a deep breath, trying to calm the emotions swirling so heavily through her and to find the equilibrium she needed to finish this confrontation. Ron took the pause as an opportunity to jump in.

"I wanted nothing more than for you to be happy, but nothing I did could do so!"

He stood up and waved his arms as he spoke. His wild and harsh movements demonstrated the loose control he held over his emotions, but she wouldn't allow him to see how nervous it made her.

"Because you decided that getting married and having babies would make me happy. What would have made me happy was to have a quiet dinner alone with you or a weekend away with just the two of us. Instead we always had to see your mother so she could constantly tell me how I was failing to care for you, or listen to Fleur say that a real woman loves and supports her man no matter, even if it means putting aside her own dreams for him."

Trying to regain control of the conversation, he sat back down and tried to place his arm around her shoulders. She quickly leaned away from his grasp.

"They were trying to help you, Hermione. You always have your nose in a book or are covered with parchment whilst studying. We were trying to get you to see that there was more to life than books."

Hermione shot him a triumphant glare. "I *had* my nose in a book to hide from you. But I don't do that anymore. You wouldn't know that though, since you cut yourself and everyone else off from me."

Huffing with indignation, Ron stood up and pointed his finger viciously in her face. "You cut yourself off from us. You never let me explain what happened before you threw me out, and then you never answered your door; you didn't acknowledge us at all."

"And needing space to handle your deception qualifies me as the enemy? You cheated, Ron, and then you turned my friends against me like it was my fault," she replied, with the same even voice she had been trying using the entire time. Ron seemed to be getting more and more frustrated.

He opened his mouth to rebut her argument, but she quickly spoke over him. "I'm not getting into this anymore, Ron. We both made awful mistakes in our relationship, mistakes we need to work out on our own. But it is in the past now. Hopefully, now you see why I have to leave."

He sank one more time into the chair next to her, gripping his hands in his hair. "But I don't! I don't see why you have to leave at all. Yes, it's been hard lately. But we're the Golden Trio. We would have found our way back together. Things are awkward right now, but we can go on together from here, Hermione, as the friends we always were. You just need to stay."

His pleas fell on deaf ears. "I didn't think you would understand. Ron, we were the Golden Trio at Hogwarts; it's been years since we finished school. No matter what we do, we are always seen that way though. I can't do it anymore. I can't be seen as just one-third. I am not the disposable one. I am more than that. It took losing everything to realize that it will never change. I can't just sit here watching the years go by, eventually making up with you, Harry and Ginny, listening to people ask when you and I will settle down and pop out babies. I am not that person. I won't do it."

"And you are willing to throw away everything just to be alone in some strange city?" Ron sounded as though his world were falling apart.

When she broke the engagement, she knew he thought she would get over it and be back in a few months. She was sure that was why he issued the ultimatum to Harry and Ginny. Ron had always made comments about how the troll saved her from being friendless at Hogwarts, and forcing Harry and Ginny to cut her off would reinforce her loneliness. Hermione knew Ron had never realized that she had other friends.

Hermione looked at him now, knowing that he was finally understanding what his actions over the past year had caused. As she watched at him, she saw a dark figure approaching. She smiled sweetly as she watched him advance.

With a quiet voice, she told Ron the truth. "I won't be alone. Not ever again."

Ron looked at her face and saw she wasn't looking at him but rather at something behind him. Afraid of what he would see, he took a deep breath as he turned, swiftly choking as he saw who she was smiling at.

"I'm sure a hair-ball remedy would be most helpful, Mr. Weasley. Your mother has a brilliant recipe that she provides to Lupin; certainly she would be willing to share it with you," snapped the voice of Severus Snape as he reached them.

Holding out his hand to Hermione, he quietly murmured, "Are you ready, my dear?"

Pleased at his words, both to Ron and to her, she grinned widely and placed her hand in his. "Absolutely."

Severus helped her up and tucked her hand on his arm. Turning to look at Ron, she spoke gently. "I'm sure you will understand, Ron. One day you will be able to find your own forgiveness."

And Ron sat there, watching as Hermione moved on.