

Why, Indeed

by Pearle

Some questions defy answers and only serve to complicate an already complicated issue. Some questions just can't be answered. Hermione Weasley, nee Granger, and Severus Snape have a chance encounter that leads to a road better left untraveled. Angst-ridden one-shot into the world of marital infidelity.

This can be read as a stand alone, or with its companion piece, *Why?*

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: The characters, settings, etc. of the Harry Potter series are not mine they belong to J.K. Rowling and Co. I promise to return them when I am through. Well, most of them anyway.

~~~~~ Why, Indeed ~~~~~

She stared at the parchment in her hand before coming to a decision. With determination, she viciously ripped the paper into pieces before throwing it in the fire. She gazed out the window, lost in thought, her arms crossed defensively across her chest.

'We're through. I'm finished with him,' Hermione thought. It was time she moved on. She looked longingly at the embers burning in the fireplace before leaving the room. Ready to meet her life head on.

Her resolve held for six days this time, before she sent her owl flying to Hogwarts with its cryptic message: Monday, 6:00pm.

No other words were necessary. He would be there. He always came. She still could not understand why he allowed her to use him in such a fashion. She had never meant to see him again after that first encounter.

Hermione had found out about Ron's little interlude only a few days before the Potions lecture. It was during yet another argument between them, their life seemed to be

measured by the time between arguments, when he made the mistake of telling her about the last chit he had bedded. His tone was mean as he tried to inflict as much hurt as possible.

"There is at least one witch who doesn't find me so boring in bed. At least she doesn't think that sex with me is her duty. Something to be endured, isn't that what you said? She seemed pretty happy last night," he yelled at her.

Hermione's words died in her throat as the meaning of his words sunk in.

Instantly, Ron realized his mistake. "Hermione, I didn't mean that. I'm sorry. We're both upset. That's all."

Her voice was low, harsh with restrained anger. "Get out."

"Hermione... let me explain. You're always..." He was at a loss for words.

Her voice grew in volume. "GET. OUT."

Ron beat a hasty retreat in the face of her fury. He would hide out somewhere for a few days, give her time to cool off. They could work it out once they were both thinking more rationally. Maybe this was a good thing he reasoned. Maybe now they could figure out why they were so unhappy together.

He left in a hurry, leaving Hermione to sit alone, crying bitter tears in front of the fire. The cold seeping into her bones, chilling her heart. When she had finally gained control of her emotions, she moved to the kitchen to fix a cup of tea. She felt numb, unable to rationalize a single solution to their problems. The wizarding world did not recognize divorce. She was stuck with the bastard until 'his soul shed its mortal burden' as the wedding ceremony had so romantically and decisively put it.

Why in the bloody hell had she ever married him? Hermione sighed heavily. She knew why. How could she have been so stupid? Her parents had fallen victim to a Death Eater attack just weeks before the final battle. Hermione was barely able to face the loss before they were thrown head long into the devastating fight. When the dust had cleared, Ron had lost two of his brothers. Molly, still reeling from the loss of two of her brood, had taken Hermione to her heart.

Hermione had felt safe, protected, her mind slowly healed along with her body. Harry had married Ginny a month later. It was an innocent time in the midst of all the tragedy falling around them. When Ron proposed a few months later, it seemed the right thing to do. Even when her doubts started to surface, she submerged them. Knowing she would break Molly's heart if she called the wedding off, she went ahead with the marriage thinking everything would work out in time.

Looking back, with only the type of clarity hindsight can provide, Hermione understood she had condemned Ron to a life he didn't deserve. Condemned them both. Still, she tried her best to make him happy. They were just too different to ever make it work, she could see that now, finally she could accept the truth.

Knowing how wrong they were for each other did not dull the ache she felt at his betrayal. Had they laughed at her, Ron and his little chit? Sex with Ron had always been...comfortable if not a little dull. No great passion. What had he felt with this one, or any of the others for that matter? Hermione knew there had been more than one indiscretion over the years, he had never thrown it in her face so blatantly before. Was it the same type of heat, passion, she felt with Severus?

It was less than a week later she had run into the Potions Master at the lecture in London. His manner was easy. While still sarcastic, he radiated a smoldering sensuality. She had seen him leave the Ministry celebrations with some young thing on his arm, time and time again. He had gained quite a reputation as a ladies man.

Hermione would shake her head in wonder each time she heard an account of his latest conquest from this witch or that. She had spent seven long years in his classroom. Seven years enduring the caustic barbs and jeers he hurled at her and her friends. Seven years being flayed by that acerbic tongue. No one, no one could change that much she reasoned.

It was to her amazement she was proved wrong by the man himself. She had seen him at the lecture. He had been the only other participant to see the problems with the potion's solution the lecturer had presented. She lost sight of him when she stormed out of the lecture hall, at the very end of her patience with the lecturer. She stopped in the bar for a drink to try and calm her nerves. It was more out of idle curiosity, and a strong desire to delay returning home, that she had even asked him for a drink. Now she would see for herself what all the fuss was about.

His manner was restrained, but his voice. His voice flowed over her, through her, caressing her senses. His eyes gleamed with intensity. A fire started low in her belly. She was mesmerized as she listened to him talk. Hermione didn't know who made the first move. Suddenly he was kissing her, evoking feelings and emotions she had never felt before. They managed to make it to his hotel room before ripping each other's clothes off. It was hardly the type of romantic tryst Muggle romance novels spoke of. He took her hard and fast against the door. They came within minutes of each other in a burst of heat.

Severus barely made it to the bed before collapsing on it, her legs still wrapped around his waist. He hardly stopped to catch his breath as he kissed and caressed her nude body. Touching, tasting one another, adding to the heat of the moment. Their second joining was less hurried than the first, but no less explosive. They each lay quiet for several minutes trying to catch their breath. The enormity of what had just transpired hit her. Guilt welled inside her. Her only rationale, the only thing that made any sense, was the anger she still felt towards Ron. This was her way at striking back at him. She left quickly without a word of explanation.

That would explain the first encounter. It did not explain the second, or the third, or the one after that, or the one after that. She had turned to Severus in anger, as a way to make Ron pay for hurting her. She never planned on getting caught in her own trap. She never expected the passion, the lust. The feelings Severus stirred deep within her.

Each time she left the tawdry little hotel, she went home feeling more alone. Hermione would vow not to contact him again. Her resolve would crumble as she moved aimlessly through the days that followed. She would break down and owl him to meet her, vowing it would be for the last time. Until the next time she sent her owl flying to Hogwarts.

She had almost hoped he wouldn't show up that second time, or the third. Then she could put this behind her and move on with her life. She could blame Severus for their actions instead of herself.

Ron had returned home a few days after their argument as if nothing had happened. If he had any further liaisons, he kept them to himself and she never asked him. They never spoke of it again. It was easier that way. Just sweep it under the rug and it never happened. They made love with all the emotion of two robots completing a task. And one day overlapped into the next. Could she continue to live this lie, day in and day out, for the next one hundred and fifty years or more?

She suspected Severus felt something more for her than just lust. What, exactly, did she feel for him? There was no such creature as divorce in the wizarding world. Separation was almost unheard of. If you were unhappy with your life, you put up a happy façade and moved forward. Ron could continue traveling with the team. She could continue her education. They would have dinner at the holidays with his family, now hers too, and that would be that. They had been leading separate lives almost from the beginning anyway. Nothing really had to change. Is that the life she was condemned to live?

Molly had often said she loved her like a daughter. How would Ron's family take her deception? And Harry, God, how would she face Harry? He and Severus still hated each other. Time had not changed anything there.

It was so much easier to not think about the future. To just take each day as it came. How long could she follow this road? What would she do if Severus decided not to meet her one day?

If she left Ron, she would become an outcast. He would be the injured party, regardless of his past behavior. St. Mungo's would never keep her once news of her separation became public knowledge. Would Dumbledore give her a job? She really didn't want to teach. What else could she do? Who would hire her? What if she and Severus didn't work out? What if Severus didn't want her? Then where would she go? Where would she live? What would she do?

She didn't really have any kind of relationship with Severus to build on. Their time together had consisted of mostly sex. They had said very little to each other. She was unhappy with her life, with her choices. She felt guilty every time she left him to return home, knowing she wasn't being fair to either one of them.

Severus had tried to talk to her. Why was she doing this? How could she answer him, when she didn't know the answer herself? Life was never easy. What exactly, did ~~he~~ she want? What if Severus wasn't the answer, just another wrong turn? As far as she could see, there was no easy way out this mess she had made. Why was she doing this?

Why?

Why indeed.

~ Finis ~

A/N: I really had not intended to write Hermione's point of view when I originally wrote Why. I find it easier to write from the mind of the Potions Master, but so many requested her side of the story. Right or wrong, here it is.

Please review and let me know what you think. I love hearing from you! As always, thoughts, comments, reviews, whatever are always welcome.

Regards, Pearle