

# Why Me: Three Sides of the Same Coin

*by Pearle*

Another interlude into the marital infidelity of Hermione Weasley and Severus Snape. This time, they take a few people along with them.....  
HGSS.....Companion piece to Why and Why, Indeed

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*Chapter 1 of 6*

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~~~~~ Why Me: Three Sides of the Same Coin ~~~~~

What the bloody hell did she want from him anyway? The last two years haven't exactly been heaven on Earth for him either. He never wanted to hurt her. Thank God he was traveling with the team or they would be in real trouble.

Ron believed when he married Hermione it would be like when they were back in Hogwarts, only with sex. He never anticipated they would end up just the two of them, alone and unhappy. They had stayed at the Burrow for almost a year after the final battle. Harry had married Ginny; they were still living there while their new house at Godric Hollow was being built. Fred and George would drop by and a fast pick-up game of Quidditch would become an all night affair. It was fun.

Then Harry and Ginny moved out. Fred and George started to come round less, business was picking up. The world was moving on. Marrying Hermione had seemed the right thing to do. Even the sex wasn't that bad at first.

Ron smiled fondly, remembering the brunette from last weekend. She had been a fireball, all legs that one had been. What was her name? Mary something? Margaret? Well, whatever it was, she had been amazing, maybe the best one yet.

He hadn't meant to take up with any of the young witches that followed the Chudley Canons. They threw themselves at the team. It was after a particularly bad fight with Hermione, when his self-esteem had hit an all time low, that he'd had his first affair.

Now what?

The last few months she had seemed a bit distant, no longer yelling about being alone. Not one mention of their last fight. She didn't even fight with him any more. Of course he never mentioned his alternate form of entertainment, either.

He briefly wondered when they had made love last night, where she learned that little trick with her tongue. It had really felt good. He felt a spark he hadn't felt in a long time. If he knew his wife, it was probably from a book somewhere. They still made love. She was his wife. He wanted children someday. Hermione would make a great mother.

Things would get better if they just gave it time.

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He intended to talk to her this time. She would listen to him even if he had to cast Stupefy. They couldn't go on this way. They could have a chance at some happiness together, didn't see she that? He was willing to risk everything for her. Was she willing to do the same?

He understood it would be worse for her. Public opinion had always held him as a bastard anyway, even after his Order of Merlin. She had been part of the Dream Team. Maybe they could go to South America, some place where they would not be as visible, and start over.

Severus believed they could have a life together, if only she would take a chance on him, on them. He watched her at the Ministry Celebration last week with that idiot of a husband. What he wouldn't have given to sweep her up in his arms and carry her away.

The little blonde chit he had left with had been a poor substitute for her. She barely seemed to have two brain cells to rub together. He had to make his excuses about being needed at Hogwarts so he could leave rather than stay the night. If only Hermione would agree they had a future together.

Her owl had arrived a few minutes ago. Friday, 9:00p.m. It had said. Fine, that was only three days from now. He would meet and talk to her, get her to see reason. They couldn't go on this way. Either she agreed to leave that moron she married or they would have to end it.

Why couldn't she understand? None of the others mattered. They could have a life together if they could just be together. She was the only one he really wanted.

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She left her bosses office with her internship barely intact. That little mistake she made could have had major repercussions. She made a mistake. Little Miss-Know-It-All made a mistake.

Hermione needed to focus. Her life had become subdivided. Ron. St. Mungo's. Severus. Now what?

Last night with Ron hadn't been too bad. She imagined it was Severus when she closed her eyes. Thank God she could brew her own contraception potion. Ron had started in on her about having children again. He didn't seem to understand her education was important to her. He just figured his mother had been happy with a large noisy brood, why not her too?

And Severus. Hermione understood she was being a bit unfair, she was at the Celebration with her husband, but how much could Severus care about her when he seemed to be drooling over that little blonde bint he been talking to in the corner? For Gods sake, they had even left together!

It was time to take a stand. If he wanted out, that was fine with her. She needed to get on with her life. It was bad enough she knew Ron was still fooling around. She wasn't going to put up with him having affairs, too.

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Harry smiled as he watched Ginny. She absently rubbed the gentle swell of her stomach while straining the tealeaves. Their first child, life had been good to the two of them. They had enough money to live comfortably. He and Ginny were happy together, and now a child.

He thought back to his two best friends, now his brother and sister-in-law. They had made a mess of it. He had tried to talk to Ron before he had married Hermione. Ron kept insisting they were happy. Who was he to say what happiness was?

It was only by chance that Harry had been in London last week and witnessed Hermione entering that hotel. He knew Ron was away with the team. What the hell was she doing in that part of London on a Thursday afternoon? The bar keep had been more than happy to relate the details of her coming and going, as well as to supply the name of the person she had been coming and going with.

Albus had asked him to pick up a package for the school, something about a problem with their owl delivery, other wise he never would have known. How long had it been going on? Hermione and Snape. Well, it sort of figured. He wondered if Snape quizzed her at potion ingredients in the heat of the moment.

He didn't have to wait too long to witness Hermione leaving the hotel less then an hour later. A few minutes after that Snape had departed. He never would have believed it if he hadn't witnessed it with his own eyes. The question was, now what? What did he do with this information?

Harry knew Ron and Hermione had been having a few problems, but this went beyond anything he could have imagined. He hadn't told Ginny yet. He really didn't want to upset her. Should he talk to Ron? Talk to Hermione? Confront the git?

Now what?

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Albus sat back and looked out the window. All the pieces should be in place by now. He had been accused of meddling in people's lives before. He really had not been as instrumental as some people thought he was. It was surprising what fate could come up with on its own.

This was not one of those times. He had been watching this little drama play out for some time now, hoping one or all of the players would come to their senses and do the right thing. It was time to intervene before the situation became explosive.

The question was, what to do? It was not up to him to decide their lives. Free will and all that, but the cauldron was bubbling, so to speak. He could only hope to push one of them in the right direction. Even he was not infallible.

Albus knew Severus had received another owl. He had been most curious when his Potions Master started to discreetly leave the castle on a regular basis. The last few weeks his mood had turned darker than ever.

Last weekend, the Ministry Celebration had almost brought things to a head. Albus could feel the tension running high just below the surface of all those polite smiles.

What to do, what to do.

Now what?

The end?? TBC???

A/N: I had written Why? as a one-shot look into an angsty situation. Why, Indeed covered Hermione's point of view since so many had asked for it. I started thinking about Ron and that developed into this. I suppose I should band them together, as they have taken on a life of their own and started to form their own story.

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

## Why Me: Now What?

*Chapter 2 of 6*

Another interlude into the marital infidelity of Hermione Weasley and Severus Snape. This time, they take a few people along with them. HGSS

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Summary: Another interlude into the marital infidelity of Hermione Weasley and Severus Snape. This time, they take a few people along with them.

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Chapter 2:

~~~~~ Why Me: Now What? ~~~~~

Harry took a deep breath before knocking on the office door.

"Come in," Hermione's voice rang out.

Harry opened the door and stepped inside. "Do you have time for lunch with your brother-in-law and an old friend?" He was hoping he would still be her friend after lunch, the brother-in-law part he was not so sure about.

"Harry! Come in." Hermione's smile was genuinely bright as she greeted him.

"I was in town running a few errands and it occurred to me that you and I haven't talked in a long time. Just the two of us. So, here I am. Are you free for lunch?" Harry hoped he could count on the easy friendship they had shared over the years, 'cause she sure as hell was going to be furious with him by the end of lunch.

Hermione studied her friend for a moment. Something was wrong. She was sure of it. "Is Ginny okay? Is something wrong between you and Ginny?"

"Of course not. Why would you ask?"

"Because you are the worst liar in the world, Harry. I would love to have lunch with you. But I am sure that is not the only reason you are here. Do you want to tell me now, or should we have lunch first?" Hermione smiled as she watched his face.

Harry's mind was whirling. Should he talk to her now, in the privacy of her office where she could just throw him out without making a scene? Should he talk to her at the restaurant? Maybe she would be a lot calmer with other people around. Should he say anything at all? He still wasn't sure what to do.

"Harry? Harry!" Hermione was trying to attract his attention. "Talk to me, Harry. What is it?"

That settled it. Without preamble he asked, "How long has the affair been going on?"

Hermione's shoulders sagged as she sat back in her chair. Well, this wasn't the conversation she thought she would be having. "How did you find out?"

"I saw him coming out of the hotel." Well, so far so good. She wasn't screaming at him and she hadn't thrown him out yet.

"Where?"

What difference did it make? "In London."

"Ron brought one of his little bimbos here, where anyone could have seen them!" Hermione was furious. She failed to notice Harry's reaction to her words.

"Ron? I'm talking about Snape. The barkeep at the hotel, Afternoon Enchantment, told me you had been meeting Snape there. I saw him leave a few minutes after you did. What has Ron got to do with it? What bimbo? Is Ron having an affair, too?" This was worse than he thought.

"What do you mean you're talking about Severus? How dare you follow me? What are you doing here? What do you want? Did Ron send you?" Someone had just lit a match to the first round of explosives.

"Severus? Hermione, what is going on here? I am trying to be your friend. Albus asked me to pick up a package at the shop across the street from the hotel. I saw you going in and thought it was a little odd. You left about an hour later. I was going to go after you but then I saw Snape leaving. The barkeep filled me in on you two. Seems he works the same shift and noticed the two of you meeting on a regular basis. Your both pretty well-known, you know, heroes of the final battle and all that. What were you thinking, and with Snape of all people? Do you love him?"

Hermione seemed to shrink in her chair. "Do I love him? I don't even know him. Pretty much we get together, have great sex, and leave."

Harry winched. Not exactly what he wanted to hear. "What is going on with Ron?"

Her laugh was bitter. "What did he tell you; we're happy as two clams? Ron has been having his little flings almost since the beginning of our marriage. We had a great friendship before we got married. It just wasn't enough. I never should have married him, and now I'm stuck. We love each other, but not like that. Sex with Ron is barely tolerable. It was after a fight about eight months ago, when he told me the little chit he had slept with the night before was so great and I wasn't, that I decided I'd just had it with him. I ran into Severus a few days later. One thing led to another and, here we are." Hermione shrugged her shoulders.

Eight months? And Ron had been having affairs all along? Harry was going to wring his neck when he got his hands on him, brother-in-law or not. He was partially responsible for this if he had been fooling around from the beginning. "Here we are. Now what?"

Hermione rose abruptly and started to pace. "That seems to be the question, doesn't it? Now what? Do I leave Ron and lose my internship? I will be finished here in two months. Even if I finish, who will hire me if I leave him?"

"What about Snape?" Harry cringed at the thought of the two of them together.

"What about Severus?"

"Will you stay with him?"

Hermione sank back into her chair. "Harry, I don't even know him. Did I tell you the sex was great?"

"Yeah, you, ugh, mentioned that already." Harry looked embarrassed. The topic of sex didn't bother him. It was the thought of sex with the greasy git that was getting to him.

"Did you say Albus asked you to pick up a package? He never stops does he?" She would kill the headmaster when she saw him.

Harry flashed her his infamous boyish grin. "So, you still want to have lunch with an old friend? I can at least offer you a shoulder to lean on."

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Severus walked through the lobby of the hotel. She was going to listen to him this time. He would not let her leave before they talked.

He noticed the change in her the minute he walked through the door.

Hermione was sitting at the table on the far side of the room. A bottle of firewhisky and two glasses were on the table. "Hello, Severus. Sit down, we need to talk." She hurried on without waiting for him to speak. "We can't go on like this. We don't even know each other. We have said three-dozen words to each other the last few months, and most of them have been either each other's names or 'faster'. I don't know about you, but that must be some kind of record for me."

Severus burst out laughing; the little witch had a sense of humour after all. "Yes, I seem to recall a hand being waved in my face on a regular basis by someone who could have talked my arm off. All right. What do you suggest, Hermione?"

"I suggest we get to know one another. And then, well, we'll see. I don't know what type of foods you like to eat, what books you read, what your favorite colour is. We jumped into bed without finding out who we are or how we are together. At least we know the sex is great."

"Italian."

"I beg your pardon?"

"My favorite food. I am partial to Italian. North Italian, actually; there is a difference. I normally frequent a small bistro in a very tiny border town. It is run by a wizard I helped escape from the Dark Lord a few years back. He even bottles his own wine. Perhaps you will permit me to take you there for dinner one night. In answer to your other questions, trade journals and of course, black."

"Black, of course. Can we shag now?"

One eyebrow went up. "Are we through talking for today?"

Her hand drifted across the table and caressed his arm. "We could lay in bed and talk after."

His member was growing impossibly hard. He took hold of her hand and pulled Hermione into his lap. "You won't jump up and leave?"

Hermione shook her head. "Not this time."

She straddled his legs, feeling his erection throbbing below her. His hands tangled in her hair. His kiss was forceful, demanding. Their tongues dueled for control. He thought he could taste mint. His mouth moved to the side of her neck and kissed a path to the hollow between her breasts. He murmured a quiet spell and their clothes seemed to dissolve from their bodies, only to reappear on top of the dresser across the room.

His engorged shaft, no longer trapped below layers of clothing, sprang free, only to be trapped a minute later between his belly the heat from Hermione's sex as she moved forward on his lap. His mouth was hot as he sucked one hardened nipple.

Hermione groaned, electric shocks tingling through her blood. She clutched his shoulders, her nails digging into the soft skin as she impaled herself on his length. Severus fell back, the sensation of being fully sheathed overwhelming his senses. His name was a whisper from her lips fueling the lust that threatened to overtake him.

Hermione started to move, fanning the fire growing between them. It was all the coaxing he needed. Severus's hands went to her arse, and between them they reached a frantic rhythm. Hermione felt the familiar tightening in her groin, signaling her approaching orgasm. Her muscles clamped down on his hardened member sending her over the edge as she shattered around him. His hips pumped a few more times before he joined her in his release. They sat still for a minute, arms loosely draped around each other, both breathing hard.

Severus tightened his arms around her as he started to stand. She locked her feet behind his back, a small smile on her lips. "I can walk myself, you know."

"No, no. I can do this." With an effort, he stood up and made it to the side of the bed. They fell in a heap, Severus's arms still around her. "Next time we start on the bed, okay? If I let go of you, you're not going to jump up and leave, are you?"

"No, I'm not leaving," she said with a chuckle.

Severus nodded. "So, now what?"

"Now I tell Ron I'm leaving and then I look for a place to live." Hermione had moved to lie on her stomach, tracing patterns on the bedspread as she spoke.

"You could live with me."

Hermione turned to look at him. "At Hogwarts? Severus, I will be a pariah in the Wizarding world. A married witch who willingly separated from her husband, who happens to be Harry Potter's best friend. Oh, yeah, I am sure Albus will be willing to overlook that if you and I live together."

"He overlooked my time as a Death Eater, how can he condemn you for being unhappy? What if I rent a house for us in Hogsmeade?" Severus was gently rubbing Hermione's back, not even sure why he was trying to be so accommodating.

"Thank you. That really means a lot to me that you would even offer. I think it's time I try living on my own for a while. I lived with my parents, then at Hogwarts, then the Burrow, and then with Ron. I have never lived alone. I think I need to try being on my own for a while. Besides, you and I don't know each other. I don't even know if we can get along."

"What will you tell Weasley?"

"I haven't told him about us, if that is what you're asking. He's had a few trysts of his own. I suppose I will tell him I've had enough. It's time to look after me." Hermione shrugged, not really sure how she was going to tell Ron.

"The boy doesn't deserve you. And Sir Potter?" Her friends has always influenced her life before. He wondered how the boy who lived to take out the Dark Lord would take to the thought his best friend was shagging the dreaded Potions Master.

"Yeah, well that's rather interesting. Harry plans on donating a large sum of money, in the form of a grant, to St. Mungo's, with the stipulation I am to be in charge of the funds and the research it is used for. He figured that way they wouldn't let me go or try to discredit my internship. If I use it carefully, I should get three or four years out of the money. I agreed to split fifty-fifty any money I make from any discoveries I come up with." Hermione smiled evilly as she thought of what her boss's reaction would be.

"Potter knows?"

Hermione nodded. "Albus sent him to a store across from the hotel to pick up a package. He saw me; he saw you. The barkeep was happy to fill in the details of our comings and goings. Two heroes of the war and all, he said."

"I assume this was sometime in the last few days. Potter hasn't decided to avenge your honor and hex me?" Severus was skeptical that Potter would condone infidelity, and with him no less.

"I'm a big girl. I seem to have made enough mistakes on my own. Harry was surprisingly understanding, especially after he heard about Ron. The grant was his idea."

"Very Slytherin of him. Would you like me to go with you when you tell Weasley?" It was not something he wanted to do, but he thought he should make the offer anyway.

"No, I need to talk to Ron myself. He is still my husband after all. This isn't about you and me. There are more problems than just my shagging you. Believe it or not, Ron still thinks things are going to work out between us. He still believes my getting pregnant would solve the whole problem."

"And that is not an option?"

Hermione snorted. "No, that is not an option. I need to look for a house or flat to rent, tomorrow, in London. Ron will be back on Sunday. I intend to talk to him when he gets back. I can't see any reason to wait."

"And?"

"And?" Hermione looked questioningly at him.

"And will I see you again, or is this goodbye to me, too?"

"I just thought we should take a step back and get to know each other better. We sort of did this backwards. Usually you talk and get to know one another before you start shagging like bunnies. I'm hoping it will all even out in the end. It's not goodbye unless you want it to be."

"No, I would rather it wasn't. I am just not sure what you want. I would like to continue seeing you. Maybe even with clothes on, sometime." Severus grinned.

"Enough talk?"

"Enough talk." He leaned in to kiss her. No other words were necessary as they made love again. Taking their time to explore each other's bodies. To actually listen to each other's responses, to learn what made her moan, what made him gasp. They took their time, and in the end, when they reached their climax, they came together.

Hermione promised to owl him the next week after she found a place to live. A quick kiss and she was gone. Severus stood at the window watching the street, a glass of firewhisky in his hand. He watched as Hermione reached the Apparition point and left. She was going to leave Weasley and move into her own flat.

Now what?

TBC?

A/N: I suppose next would be Ron's point of view and the argument, I'm sure it will escalate past a simple discussion, between the two. Will Harry confront Ron or Severus or both? Will Ron and Severus have a go at each other? Where will Hermione live? Tune in next time for more answers and more questions.

I am more than happy to say my beta, Nakhash, is back from vacation and on the prowl for my mistakes. A grateful thank you to Nakhash, for her corrections and suggestions. Another set of eyes is always helpful, the mistakes, however, are still my fault.

Let me know what you think.

Please review, I love hearing from you! As always, thoughts, comments, reviews, whatever are always welcome.

Regards, Pearle

## Why Me: Dragons May Not Be the Only Endangered Species in Romania

*Chapter 3 of 6*

This episode: Severus, Albus, Harry, Ginny, Ron, and where is Hermione?

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Summary: Another interlude into the marital infidelity of Hermione Weasley and Severus Snape. This time, they take a few people along with them. HGSS

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### Chapter 3 - Why Me: Dragons May Not Be the Only Endangered Species in Romania

Severus was lost in thought as he rode the moving stairs to the top. Hermione. He still found it difficult to think of her on her own. It was not a common practice in the Wizarding world, especially since she planned to leave her husband. He supposed having Potter as a best friend did not hurt. It was hard to know what he wanted from her, what would happen to them.

One thing was certain; he did not want Albus meddling in the two of them again. If he were going to make mistakes, he would make them on his own. Severus stepped off at the top of the stairs. He could see Albus through the open doorway. Squaring his shoulders, he strode purposely into the office.

Albus smiled as he discreetly watched Severus out of the corner of his eye. 'The man certainly has a flair for the dramatic,' he thought. "Severus, good morning. What can I do for you?"

The Potions Master placed a roll of sealed parchment on the desk in front of the aged wizard. "I am tendering my resignation, effective immediately, Headmaster. I shall remain until you can find a suitable replacement. I would hope a candidate could be found quickly."

He remained standing stiffly in front of the oversized desk. He needed another dose of pain medicine. His back had bothered him ever since last night, when he had carried Hermione over to the bed. If he had a bad back at forty, what the hell would he be like at one hundred? Maybe he had just lifted her wrong when he rose from that chair.

Albus knew Severus had to be extremely upset about something. This scenario had been played out before. He only quit when he felt a problem spiraling beyond his control. He schooled his features to express the worry he felt over the man's state of mind. "Please sit, Severus. May I ask what has transpired to bring you to this decision?"

Severus remained standing, his scowl firmly in place. "I should think it would be obvious to you by now."

"I am afraid you have me at a disadvantage. What seems to be the problem?"

His answer was terse, his eyes blazing in the dim sunlight. "Hermione."

The Headmaster suspected as much. It was the reason he had sent Harry on that little wild goose chase. His voice was neutral as he asked, "How is Mrs. Weasley?"

"Hermione is fine. When do you think a replacement instructor can be found? I should like to leave by the end of the week." He was not going to let Albus manipulate his life. Her name was Hermione. She would not be living as Mrs. Weasley much longer.

"Severus, I understand you feel something for the witch but she is married. Short of Mister Weasley's demise, there is no remedy for her in our world. Before you decide to hex me for interfering, please answer one question. Are you really acting in her best interest, or your own?" Albus sat back and watched the dark man he had come to think of as a son. He had rarely seen him look so defeated, not since he'd come to him over twenty years ago to confess his involvement with Voldemort.

Severus's shoulders sagged as he sank into the chair in front of the desk. The weight of Albus's words settled across his shoulders as if they were made of lead. One hand wearily dragged across his eyes before he answered. "She is not happy, Albus. Perhaps my actions were wrong. I may not have helped the situation but I did not create it. He has been unfaithful to her since the beginning of their marriage. I was merely a diversion that got out of hand."

"And how do you feel about her?" There was no easy answer out of this as far as Albus could see.

Severus rose abruptly, slamming his hand against the desktop. He barely contained his fury as he paced in front of the desk, shouting at the Headmaster. "Damn it, Albus. What do you want me to say? Do you intend to miniaturize yourself and sit on my shoulder? I believe the job of my conscience might be available." He stopped suddenly and sank back into the chair he had just vacated. His anger suddenly spent. It was with a heavy sigh he confessed, "I don't know what I want. I was jealous she was returning home to him each time she left me. It was wrong. I know it was wrong. But, I don't know. I am tired of the empty-headed little chits that keep turning up at the Ministry affairs. Hermione is an amazing woman. I don't know why she ever married that twit in the first place. You should have heard her that day at the lecture. She cut the speaker off at the knees. The man never knew what hit him."

Albus watched as Severus's eyes took on an unusual gleam. It was the first time the aged wizard could remember him remarking so fondly about anyone. Maybe there was something there. "What will she do now?"

"What will she do? Hermione plans to leave Weasley. She is looking for a flat to rent in London."

"How will she live? Perhaps she would consider teaching Potions, here at Hogwarts?"

Severus glared at the man. "Very funny. It seems your precious Potter has saved the day again. He is donating money to St. Mungo's for research with the stipulation Hermione is to control the grant. She will not be destitute if that is your concern."

"And what will you do when you leave here?"

His glare deepened. "I suppose that is my cue to say I will stay? Not this time. What do you think the fall-out will be when it becomes known we are seeing one another?"

"Are you worried about the Ministry? They will have no say. You are quite capable of teaching your classes. You only need to point out the lack of serious accidents or accidental deaths, compared to any of the other schools, to prove the point. Tell me, when have you ever worried about what the Ministry will say? Or it is Hermione you are concerned about? She will have to do what she feels is right for her, regardless of the outcome. Severus, this is your home. No one is forcing you to leave. However, if you are serious about leaving, I will not stop you." Albus watched Severus, waiting for his response.

They both knew it was a bluff, he would let it pass for now, too concerned about Hermione to worry about what Albus really thought. "Fine, I will remain for now. Remember, old man, you are the one who wanted me here." Severus turned and stormed out the door, his robes billowing out behind him in true Potions Master fashion.

Albus sat back. Maybe it was time he personally got involved. Perhaps a visit to the Minister of Magic might be in order. He only hoped he could help to effect some change before Severus decided to pay a visit to the unfortunate Mister Weasley. While Albus did not condone infidelity, there seemed to be deeper issues involved here.

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Ginny kissed Harry again. She marveled at the rush of love she felt for her husband. It still took her by surprise, even after almost three years of marriage. She laughed to herself, more likely it was the damn pregnancy hormones acting up again.

Harry gently rubbed Ginny's shoulders, trying to ease the aching muscles. They were sitting on the couch. Ginny was leaning back into his massage, sighing contentedly.

"I saw Hermione yesterday," he ventured.

"You did? Where? I haven't talked to her in months. She always seems to be so busy these days." Ginny turned to face her husband. "Harry, you don't think my pregnancy is bothering her, do you? I mean, maybe she can't get pregnant. Maybe that's the reason she seems to be avoiding me."

He looked into the worried eyes of his wife. Great. How did he explain to her that wasn't the reason Hermione was avoiding her? 'No, Gin,' he thought. 'She's avoiding you because your brother, her husband, is a lying, cheating arse. Oh, and by the way, she's having an affair with Snape. Do we have any of those cookies left with the chocolate sprinkles? I could do with a nosh about now.' Right. Wouldn't that play well?

"I stopped by her office and took her to lunch. It's been a while since I've talked to her, too. I thought I would see how she was doing."

"And?"

"And, what?" Great. Now what? Why had he ever started this conversation with her?

"How is she? Harry, what aren't you telling me?" Ginny frowned as she watched his eyes. She loved Harry but he was the worst liar in the world. She always knew when he was lying or trying to hide something from her.

Harry sighed. "How do you think Ron and Hermione are getting along?"

"Oh." Ginny sank back into the couch. "She found out about Ron?"

"What do you mean she found out about Ron?"

"Isn't that what you were going to tell me? Well, I wasn't going to say anything. My brother is an idiot but I know how close the two of you are. Not to mention how you feel about Hermione. Mum and dad were in Romania visiting Charlie about a month ago, when the Chudley Cannons came into town for a match. Mum was delighted to have two of her sons together and wanted to take them both out, after the match for a bite. She sort of walked in on Ron and some little chit. The idiot didn't even bother to ward the door. There they were on the desk of some office he was supposed to be using temporarily." Ginny shook her head. Her brother was such a prat. Poor Hermione.

"And you never told me?" How could she have kept this from him?

"All right, maybe I should have told you. I'm sorry. I've just been so angry at Ron." Tears started to form in her eyes.

Harry sighed and hugged her. "It's all right. Shhh. Really."

"Harry, I'm sorry."

"No, it's okay. What, uhm, happened with your mum?" He wondered if he should tell her about Hermione and Snape.

"Well, I only know about it 'cause I overheard her and dad talking one day. I had stopped at the Burrow to pick up a jumper I had left there. I don't think they even knew I was upstairs. I stopped when I heard them talking. They were getting ready to leave the house and mum was going on and on about how Ron didn't deserve Hermione. How could he do that to her? What did Ron think he was doing shagging that little chit on the desk? How many others have there been? And what kind of idiot forgets to put up a ward, for God's sake? Didn't he care about his marriage? What if one of them got pregnant? Then what would he do? That kind of thing; dad barely got a word in edgewise. I know Ron and Hermione are not happy. That's pretty easy to see. I just can't see how they can make things better."

"It gets worse."

Ginny looked at him. "What do you mean?"

He might as well tell her. It was bound to come out anyway. "I stopped in to see Hermione because I found out she's been seeing...-Snape, for the last few months. Your mum's right. That wasn't Ron's only...infidelity. He's been fooling around since the beginning. Hermione finally got fed up with it. She ran into Snape one day after a particularly bad argument with Ron and...she and Snape, well. She's planning to leave Ron."

"Poor Hermione."

"Poor Hermione? What about her and Snape?" Harry couldn't believe it. She felt sorry for Hermione?

"You said Ron was fooling around from the beginning? Let me tell you, if he had been married to me he would have been dead or neutered by now. Snape wouldn't be my choice to have an affair with, but then I think she's always been a little attracted to him."

Harry sat back in shock. "I don't believe this."

"I don't either. Is there anyway we can help her? What will happen to her job if she leaves Ron?" Ginny was just as aware as Harry of the Wizarding world's reaction to separated women.

"He's your brother!"

"He's an arse. He obviously didn't take his marriage vows seriously from the beginning. He deserves whatever she does to him. How is she going to live? Maybe she could stay here with us for a while?"

"Well, I, uhm, was going to set up a grant at St. Mungo's for research, naming her as the administrator. That way they can't let her go or they will lose the grant. We'll split the rights to any discoveries she makes. She was going to look for a flat to rent in London. She said she needed to be out on her own for a while." Harry shook his head. This discussion had started off feeling odd and taken a turn into the surreal somewhere along the way. Maybe he should just wait and see if he was dreaming. His alarm could go off any minute and wake him up. Either that, or this definitely had to be the oddest conversation he had ever had, bar none.

"Oh, Harry, that's a wonderful idea. I need to owl Hermione. Let her know we care." Ginny kissed him enthusiastically on the cheek before going off in search of a quill and parchment.

Harry sat back stunned. Maybe his first explanation would have worked after all. He could only hope Hermione would fare as well when she confronted Ron.

TBC

A/N: Ron's point of view and the argument, and where is Hermione? I'm sure it will escalate past a simple discussion, between the two. Will Harry confront Ron or Severus or both? Will Ron and Severus have a go at each other? What could Albus possibly be thinking? What will Molly say? Tune in next time for more answers and more questions.

A grateful thank you to Nakhsh, my beta for her corrections and suggestions. Another set of eyes is always helpful, the mistakes, however, are still my fault.

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

# Why Me: Confrontation

Chapter 4 of 6

Hermione and Ron, Ron and Harry, Ron and Severus, Severus and Harry, Harry, Ron Severus, Albus, and Minerva.  
Minerva?

Why Me: Three Sides of the Same Coin by Pearle

Summary: Another interlude into the marital infidelity of Hermione Weasley and Severus Snape. This time, they take a few people along with them. HGSS

Companion piece to Why and Why, Indeed

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 Me: Three Sides of the Same Coin ~~~~~

Chapter 4 - Why Me: Confrontation

Hermione wrung her hands as she paced in front of the desk. Finding a suitable flat had been surprisingly easy. She had found a lovely one bedroom with a small study. It had a tiny balcony, just right for a few flowers and a breath of fresh air when she was feeling closed in. Her heart raced in both fear and excitement as she thought of starting on her own.

The biggest shock had to be the owl she received from Ginny telling her she knew about Ron and his extracurricular activities. She had been even more surprised to discover Ginny was willing to help in anyway she could. Hermione would have thought she would back her brother but there was Ginny, offering a place to live, a shoulder to cry on, whatever she needed to help her through this difficult time. She owed Ginny, thanking her for her support, it meant a great deal to her, and promised to come to dinner sometime next week, after she was settled in. Now all she had to do was get on with her life.

Ron was due back any minute. She was still unsure how she was going to tell him they were through. She had very few fond memories of the last three years with him. Their time together had been marked by anger and resentment. The last few months had seen a dramatic shift occur between the two of them. Hermione no longer tried to find a common ground, consequently, they had barely spoken to one another. Ron would often relate highlights of his latest match to her. If he ever noticed she never responded to his comments, he failed to show it.

Hermione steadied her shoulders as she heard the front door of their home open.

Ron's voice rang out through the foyer. "Hermione? Are you here?"

"I'm in the study, Ron." Now or never, she thought.

"Ah, there you are." Ron plopped on the couch, never noticing his wife's stance. "You should have seen this match. It was unbelievable, bloody brilliant. I can't believe the Transylvania Bats were that easy to beat. There we were, five goals behind, when Zyyph goes into a fake dive for the Snitch. He saw it floating high but was trying to throw Ashton off. Aston, he's Transylvania's Seeker. So, Ashton follows Zyyph down and barely pulls up before he's about to crash into the pitch. Zyyph, on the other hand makes a sharp turn and takes off like a demon is on his arse. Ashton realizes he's been taken and goes after him, calling to two of his mates to aim their Bludgers at Zyyph. Zyyph dodges the first Bludger without a problem. Just as he reaches for the Snitch, the second Bludger hits him smack in the right side. He goes tumbling off his broom. Lucky he only fell ten feet. He broke four ribs, but he had managed to grab the Snitch just before he fell. That's dedication for you."

Hermione drew a deep breath. "Ron, we need to talk."

Ron glanced at Hermione. "Yeah, sure. Everything okay? You look serious. What, did you invent something at work?"

"I do research in infectious disease, Ron." Three years of marriage and he still did not know what she did.

"Yeah, I knew that." His face lit up as he said, "Wait, you're pregnant, right?"

Hermione sighed. She took the chair facing him. "No, Ron. I am not pregnant."

"Then what do you want to talk about?" Confusion was clear in his expression.

This was going to be harder than she thought. "I rented a flat in London yesterday, near the hospital."

"That may not be a bad idea. You could stay there when I'm away with the team. Considering the season we're having, I'm sure the management will up my pay a bit."

"Ron, I want a separation. I rented the flat for me. I plan to live there, full time. You can have the house. I really don't want it. I moved my things out yesterday, so you can stay here or leave, it's up to you."

Ron really looked around the study for the first time since entering the room. Most of the shelves were empty. The desk in the corner was bare. "What's going on here?"

"I've tried. For three years I tried. I really did. I don't want to be angry and hurt all the time. I just can't do this anymore." Hermione walked to the window; knowing this was the right thing for her and actually dealing with the fallout, were two different things.

"What are you talking about? You're leaving? Why would you leave?" Ron's face turned red, his anger rising to the forefront. He grabbed her arm, trying to turn Hermione to face him.

"Ron, you're hurting me. Let go!" Hermione pulled back, anger blazing in her own eyes.

"Is there someone else? There is, isn't there? You've been seeing someone else. Who is it?"

"How dare you! After all the groupies you shagged, you accuse me of being unfaithful." Whatever feeling she had left for him disintegrated in a haze of anger. A small voice in the back of her mind asked if she was going to tell him about Severus. Hermione quickly silenced that thought. He had been unfaithful long before she ever made a move. 'Rationalization of the human mind was a wonderful thing. It had to be the driving force that made her get out of bed some mornings,' she thought.

"There has to be someone. Who is it? Is it someone at the hospital?" He couldn't believe she would leave him. There had to be someone else. That was the only answer



that made any sense.

Hermione's voice was bitter, her expression hard. "Not everyone fools around at work, Ron. We're through."

Ron recoiled from the hate he saw on her face. "You can't go. There is no such thing as divorce. What will people say? What do you expect me to tell my family?"

"What will people say? You sure as hell weren't thinking of what people would say when you shagged your little groupies. I don't care what you tell your family. In fact, why don't you ask your mum what she thinks of your extracurricular activities? I'm sure she will have a few things to say to you when she finds out that little bint in Romania was not the beginning or the end of the line. I am through with this sham you call a marriage. I may not be able to divorce you but I sure as hell don't have to live with you." Hermione headed for the front door, intent on Apparating away.

Ron caught up with her in the foyer. His voice was charged with anger, "You can't leave. I won't let you."

"Just watch me, you bastard." Hermione wrenched the door open and moved to the Apparition point past the front walkway. She Apparated as Ron grabbed her cloak.

He was left standing on the grass, staring at the empty space she had just occupied, a piece of his wife's cloak dangling from his hand.

He stood staring at the ground for several moments, unable to comprehend the events of the past few minutes. His mind refused to accept Hermione was gone. Now what? "Harry!" Harry would know where she went. More importantly, Harry would know what to say and do, how he could get her back. A loud crack broke the quiet of the afternoon as Ron took off in search of his friend and brother-in-law.

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Harry heard the sound of someone Apparating in just before he heard Ron's voice and the pounding at his door. From the sound of things, Hermione must have told him she was leaving. He was glad Ginny was out shopping with her mother. He would rather she didn't get too upset in her condition. It didn't matter how many times Ginny reminded him she was pregnant, not injured, he still thought she should take it easy and not get upset. Harry sighed as he went to answer the door, now what?

Ron rushed in, pushing Harry aside; seeing the empty living room, he turned to his friend. "Harry, mate, I am so glad you're home. Hermione left me. You have to help me. Do you know where she went?"

"What happened?" Harry could only guess at what Hermione had told him, maybe if he had a clue as to what she said, he would know how to handle things.

"Some rubbish about she's had enough. I hurt her, or something like that. Do you know where she is? I need to talk to her."

"Ron, maybe you should leave her alone for a while. Let her cool off before you try talking to her." Harry shook his head, how could Ron be that clueless.

"She's my wife, Harry. What will people say? This could hurt the team. She has to come back. Where is she?" He had to find her before this got out of hand. That was all there was to it.

"Ron, she told me you were fooling around. She's not going to come back that easily." Harry watched his friend, sorry for both of them, Ron and Hermione. They both deserved more, something better than this.

Ron flushed with anger. "You knew she was going to leave me, didn't you? Why didn't you stop her? Some friend you turned out to be."

Harry was getting angry himself. "You've been playing around on her since you got married. What did you want me to do? Hermione is my friend, too. I didn't create this, you did."

"Great, now you sound like her. I will not have her running off. What's she going to do now, go off and start dating? She said there's no one else, but that's a load of rubbish." Ron was pacing back and forth. Harry was supposed to help, not put more problems in his path.

"She left you because she was unhappy, Ron."

"Yeah, well you wouldn't believe what she told me." Ron shook his head.

"What did she tell you?" Hermione couldn't have mentioned Snape, Ron was much too calm for that. What did she tell him?

"I don't want to go into details, but it had to do with a certain someone and a bit of shagging." He'd be damned if he was going to tell Harry his mum had caught him fooling around. He still didn't know how Hermione had found out about that.

Harry looked surprised. "She told you about Snape?"

"Snape? What about Snape? I was talking about my mum. She was seeing Snape? I'll kill that bastard." Ron flew out the front door and Apparated before Harry could get a word in edgewise.

Harry shook his head. He really needed to let people finish talking before he jumped to a conclusion. The tracking spell he cast showed Ron had Apparated to Hogwarts. Harry sighed as he followed his friend. Why did he think peacetime was going to be easier than the war? All he had to worry about then was Voldemort trying to kill him.

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He never saw it coming, for all his years of spying, for all the times his lightening reflexes had saved his life, he never saw the punch coming. Or so it seemed.

"You son of a bitch. What did you do to her? Did you slip a potion in her drink? Is that what you did?" Ron's face was as red as his hair as he yelled at the dark man. His fist was cocked, ready to launch another blow. Ron had raced into the Headmaster's office yelling and screaming at Snape. Then out of the blue, he hauled back and punched him.

"Ron!" Harry had arrived at Hogwarts just minutes after Ron. It had taken him a moment to perform the appropriate tracking spell after Ron had suddenly Disapparated. The Headmaster helped Severus off the floor while Harry held Ron back.

Severus rubbed his jaw. He pulled a pristine handkerchief from his robe pocket. Blood trickled down his chin where his lip had split from the force of the blow. He gingerly patted the broken skin, attempting to still the flow of blood from the wound. "Weasley." The name was spat with utter contempt from his injured mouth.

"Mister Weasley, control yourself. We are all adults here. I will not have you striking my staff." Albus glowered at the young man.

"Your staff had an affair with my wife. She left me. Did you know that? What did you do to her?" If at all possible, his face grew redder. His voice raised in anger.

Severus was calm in comparison, especially in the face of Ron's rage. "What did I do? I cared for her. A skill you seem to be lacking. I brought her an hour or two of escape - from you. Why don't you return to those little bints you have been having your own fun with? I am quite sure one of them will be pleased to service you."

"Severus!" Albus admonished the Potions master. The scene was quickly getting out of hand.

"Ron, stop it." Harry held on to his friend. He understood Snape was taking it easy on Ron. He knew he could have easily hexed or killed him by now. He thought the Potions master might even have let Ron hit him so he would appear to be the injured party. Harry wouldn't put it past Snape. It was a Slytherin thing to do.

Ron sank down in the chair in front of the desk, his head in his hands, his voice an anguished sob. "She left me. We could have worked it out. I loved her and she left me. Now what do I do?"

Severus's voice was cold with the contempt he felt for this man. "You never deserved her. You have been unfaithful to her from the beginning and you have the audacity to accuse me of adultery. I maybe a lot of things, but I did not take your wife, Weasley. As a matter of fact, she came to me willingly. Such a passionate woman."

Ron was out of his chair in a minute. Harry grabbed for the back of his shirt.

Albus's voice roared through the office. "Mister Weasley, sit down! Severus, control yourself!"

Minerva came running into the office. "Mister Weasley, what are you doing here?" She noticed Severus's bruised lip. "Severus, what happened to your lip? What is going on here?"

Albus looked at the two men in front of him. Ron sat in one chair, Severus in the other. Harry stood between the two, his hand on Ron's shoulder, anchoring him in place. "Thank you, I believe we have things under control now, Minerva."

It was clearly a dismissal. Minerva refused to comply. "What is going on? Mister Weasley asked where Severus was. The next thing I know he is racing through the halls when I told him he was here, in your office."

Ron was still clearly agitated. "You want to know what's going on? I'll tell you. He's having an affair with my wife. She's left me, for him!"

Harry was losing his patience. "Ron, shut up. She didn't leave you for Snape. She left you because you're an idiot."

"For once, you and I agree on something, Potter. She left you for herself, not me. Though I would have to agree, you are an idiot." Severus sat back and traced the sharp crease in his trouser leg. The calmer he remained, the angrier Ron became.

Minerva was aghast. "Is it true, Severus? You had an affair with Hermione Weasley? How could you?"

"He's a Death Eater, that's how. There isn't anything he won't do." Ron was shouting and pointing at the Potions master who, for his part, appeared to be nonchalantly straightening the cuffs of his coat, unfazed by the outburst.

"You can't honestly believe that?" Harry looked at Ron in amazement.

"She never would have left me if he hadn't come along. She might even be pregnant by now. We could have been happy." Ron bemoaned his fate.

"Pregnant? You can't be talking about your wife, Weasley. I know for a fact she has not expressed an interest in having a child with you. Ahh, you must mean your mistress. Well, one of them at least." Severus sat back as he watched Minerva turn on the man.

"Mistress? You have been unfaithful to that poor girl? How could you?" Minerva's hands shook with rage as she confronted Ron.

Harry shook his head. Evidentially Snape didn't matter. Everyone felt sorry for Hermione - Molly, Ginny, even Minerva. He could only hope Hermione was all right, wherever she was.

"What is wrong with you people? She left me for Snape. *Snape* of all people." Ron looked bewildered, what was wrong with everyone? Didn't they see the truth staring them right in the face?

Harry glared at Snape before turning back to his friend. "Hermione leaving you had nothing to do with Snape. She's been unhappy for a long time. You've been unfaithful to her since you married her. How the hell do you think her getting pregnant would solve anything?"

Ron's tone was sullen. "We would have worked it out, eventually."

"That. Is. Enough." All eyes turned to Albus. "I believe this matter is closed."

TBC

A/N: Now what? What can Albus do? What will Molly say? Where did Hermione go? Dinner with Harry and Ginny? And we won't even talk about Ron right now! Tune in next time for more answers and more questions.

According to the HP Lexicon, Transylvania has a Quidditch team that played in the first World Cup. They have been known to conceal flocks of vampire bats to be released against the opposing team during a match. No name is given for the team, call it artistic license, I decided to name them the Transylvania bats,.

Romania is made up of forty-one counties. The counties are divided, not equally, into four 'Administrative' areas Transylvania, Wallachia, Moldavian, and Dobrogea.

A grateful thank you to Nakhsh, my beta for her corrections and suggestions. Another set of eyes is always helpful, the mistakes, however, are still my fault.

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Regards, Pearle

## Why me: At Last, We Meet Again or Who Brought the Dip?

Chapter 5 of 6

This episode: Severus confronts Hermione, an emergency arises, and everyone seems to have an opinion.

Why Me: Three Sides of the Same Coin by Pearle

Summary: Another interlude into the marital infidelity of Hermione Weasley and Severus Snape. This time, they take a few people along with them. HGSS

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~~~~~ Why Me: Three Sides of the Same Coin ~~~~~

Chapter 5 - Why me: At Last, We Meet Again or Who Brought the Dip?

Severus strode through the hallway, his robes billowing out behind him. His eyes darkened with anticipation. Without breaking his stride, he bellowed at two passing students. "Mister Smythe, Mister Thomatz. Fifty points each, from Gryffindor, for loitering in the corridors. To your common room, immediately."

"But, Professor..."

Severus rounded on the students with almost childish glee. "Speaking back to a Professor? Another twenty points and detention tonight with Filch. Well? What are you waiting for? Return to your common room before I am forced to take points from your children's children to satisfy your flagrant disregard for the rules."

"Y-y-y...yes, sir." Both boys took off in a hurry, neither one understanding what they had done wrong.

In truth, the only crime the young men were guilty of was to be in the wrong place at the right time. Severus had just left the bloody boy who lived and his idiot sidekick in the Headmaster's office. He touched the corner of his mouth. His lip was still tender where the skin had been healed. Trust Weasley to act true to his nature. Albus had asked him to leave so that he might have a word with the idiot.

Snape's mood was dark as he thought about the obvious chain of events. Hermione had apparently told that fool she married she was leaving him. Even Potter, twit that he normally was, was annoyed with Weasley. Minerva, paragon of all things good, had turned on him. All this was well and good. Where the hell was Hermione? Why hadn't she owled him? Was she through with him, too? Had she finally decided he had out-lived his usefulness? Why did he even care?"

He bypassed the side corridor leading to his office in favor of the exit ahead of him. A trip to St. Mungo's was in order. Then maybe he would get pissed at some nice dark pub where no one knew him. That was after he told Mrs. Weasley he had better things to do than worry about her, of course.

In true dramatic fashion, the side door slammed against the stonewall. Severus burst through the door and headed to the Apparition point outside the main gate.

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"Troy, have you rechecked the Arithmancy figures? This variable should not have this wide a range of objectives. If this many outcomes were possible, how would the potion ever be useful in fighting this curse?" Hermione was sitting at her desk, busy recalculating the figures in front of her. A tall, blond young man stood to her right, reviewing the numbers as she spoke.

"Look at line 94. I think the value was inverted; that would throw off the entire calculation." Troy moved to show Hermione the line. He knocked over her coffee cup, spilling coffee on the papers, Hermione, and the floor. In his attempt to grab the errant cup, he sent the nearest stack of papers and several items crashing to the ground. Troy dropped to the floor, trying to clean up the debris.

"Hermione, I'm sorry. God. The report isn't ruined, is it?"

Hermione was waving her wand, trying to clean up the mess the young man had made of her desk in just a matter of minutes. "No, I think I can remove the coffee stains."

The office door opened with an unusual amount of force. Severus Snape stood in the doorway, light from the hall throwing his face into deep shadow. The effect heightened his scowl and the glare in his eyes, emphasizing the anger radiating from the man.

Hermione looked up in surprise. "Severus. What are you doing here?"

Troy managed to hit his head on the desk drawer as he picked up the last of the papers. "What did you say?"

"Excuse me, Mrs. Weasley, obviously I seem to have interrupted you." Severus's eyes darkened, taking in the young man on the floor, on his knees, and the guilty look in Hermione's eyes.

Hermione stumbled over Troy. "Troy, move. Severus, what is going on here?" she hissed.

The Potions master fixed the young wizard with a brutal glare. Seven years as a student of the dark wizard had taught him to fear the man. In the face of danger, Troy ran. Severus sneered at Hermione, his anger palatable in the small office. "I would hate to interrupt your little soirée, Mrs. Weasley. Perhaps I should leave?"

Hermione studied Severus's face. The scowl was typical of the type she remembered from her school days, but his eyes, his eyes were different. She wasn't sure if it was an unspoken feeling or she could actually read the emotions in the depths of his black glare. But fear and trepidation seemed to be lurking below the surface of his words, behind the glare currently aimed in her direction.

She sighed as she returned to her desk, vaguely indicating the visitor's chairs in front of it. "Would you like tea? I think we need to talk."

Severus sat heavily in the offered chair, not happy with her tone of voice. He knew there were no improprieties between the young man and Hermione. They were co-workers. That had been evident when he entered the room. That knowledge did not stem his anger towards the woman, unreasonable as it may have been. Years of spying had taught him patience. He waited for Hermione to speak, to give him some idea of her mindset after his disastrous run-in with Weasley this morning.

A small voice in the back of his mind told him he was over-reacting. It was obvious she had just informed her husband of her intentions this morning. It had been the catalyst for the little scene that had played out in the Headmaster's office. He really hadn't given her time to contact him, yet. He told the voice to bugger off. If she left Weasley, she had already leased a flat. Why didn't she owl him with that information he wanted to know? There didn't seem to be an answer to that particular question.

"I left Ron. I didn't tell him about us. I just told him how unhappy I was with our marriage. It would be an understatement to say he was angry. I suppose he will get used to the idea, eventually." She refused to meet his eyes as she spoke, instead fixing on some unidentified point to the left. She wrote as she continued. "I was going to owl you with my new address. Here, you can have it now. I think I still need a few days to get settled in and adjust to the changes. Why don't I owl you next week?"

"Hermione. Look at me, please."

It was the quiet 'please' that drew her attention.

"I will give you all the time you desire; however, this feels more like an obligation than something you want. Would you prefer I did not contact you again?" A part of him wanted to see her again, the other part wanted to run after that cute little blonde clerk that had waited on him in Flourish and Blotts yesterday. It was not as if he needed to be drawn any further into this sordid mess.

He had a hard time agreeing with his own assessment.

The truth was, while the little blonde might prove to be a nice distraction, she was absolutely clueless when he casually mentioned an article in this month's *Arcs Amentas*. He was sure Hermione could have debated the entire issue, including footnotes, in her sleep. And therein lay his real attraction for her. She had proved to be as sexually liberated as he was, but so were the others he had bedded; not one of them, however, could hold a candle to Hermione's intelligence.

The real question seemed to be, now what?

Hermione smiled. It was rare to hear Severus unsure of anything, rarer still for him to hand the reigns to her. "You are not an obligation. I just need some time."

"Weasley showed up at Hogwarts. He may still be there with Potter and the Headmaster." Severus unconsciously touched the corner of his mouth.

"Ron was at Hogwarts? Why? Severus, I never said anything about us. That wasn't the reason I left him. I've been unhappy for a long time." Concern showed in her eyes.

"Yes, Potter pointed that out. He admitted to letting our...relationship slip." Begrudgingly, he gave the prat his due. He did seem to have a better assessment of the situation than Weasley, though that was not saying much. Severus seemed to sink in the chair. "What, exactly, do you want, Hermione? I am willing wait. I would like to know what it is I am waiting for."

Hermione laughed. "Would the answer, me, be too conceited?"

Before Severus could answer, a young witch appeared in her doorway.

"Hermione, they've just admitted your sister-in-law. They said to come get you." The young woman's eyes grew large when she noticed the Potions master sitting quietly in front of the desk.

"Oh my god. Ginny." Hermione was on her feet and out the door without a backward glance.

Severus had little choice but to follow.

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Harry was arguing with one of the Matrons when Hermione arrived.

"I don't care what hospital policy is. She's my wife and I want to see her."

Molly was standing next to Harry, wringing her hands. That was her daughter in there. She needed her mother. Ron and Arthur were perched at the end of very uncomfortable bench.

"Harry, calm down. Margaret, what is going on here?" Hermione was known and respected through-out the hospital. Her position as a war hero aside, she had provided invaluable assistance in a myriad of situations since starting at the hospital almost three years ago.

"Mrs. Weasley, the Healers are in with Mrs. Potter right now. He can't go in there until they're finished." The girl looked distraught. Harry was a war hero, the man who saved the Wizarding world; she would rather not upset him, but it was her job. He could not see his wife until the Healers were through. She turned pale as she spied Severus turning the corner.

"Go on. I'll take care of things here." Hermione followed her line of sight. Wonderful, her estranged husband, mother and father-in-law, Harry, and Severus all in one spot. What type of cosmic joke was that?

Ron leaped off the couch. "You! Couldn't wait to come running, could you?" His arm was drawn back as if to throw another punch at the dark wizard.

"I do not recommend hitting me again, Weasley. This time you will find yourself on the receiving end of a few rather dubious spells." Severus's wand was out, and while not aimed directly at Ron, a slight shift would bring it to the right angle.

"He hit you? You hit him? I don't believe it!" Hermione was livid as she looked from one to the other.

"Ronald Weasley, what is going on here?" Molly was grateful for the diversion from her worries. 'What has he gotten himself into now?' she wondered.

"Enough!" Silence followed Harry's roar. "My wife and child are in there. Ron, you prat, sit down! Snape, put your wand away. Molly, you can hex Ron tomorrow for all I care, but not now. Hermione, go find out what they're doing. I want to see Ginny." Harry's voice cracked on his wife's name, worried about her and the baby.

The group was properly chastised in the face of Harry's righteous anger. Severus sat on the far side of the seating area, scowling darkly and glaring periodically at Ron. Molly sat next to Arthur, holding his hand. She would take Ron to task once she knew Ginny was all right. At six months of pregnancy, the baby would be all right, especially with the care and treatment available in the Wizarding world. It would still be better if she carried to term. Ron, for his part, vacillated between glaring at the Potions master and imagining the worst about his now separated wife.

The door to Ginny's room opened. "Mister Potter, your wife would like to see you now."

TBC

A/N: Uhm, okay a bit of a cliff hanger there; a sticky wicket, as it were and, just for your information, throwing monitors, rotten fruit, money, and garbage in my direction won't help. Sorry. Well, maybe the money might help. It couldn't hurt!

Next episode: What is happening with Ginny and the baby? What do Molly and Arthur have to say to Ron? Severus and Ron, and another go-around? And what does Hermione have to say about all this? Hermione's new flat? What pressing business does Albus have with the Wizengamot? Tune in next time for more questions and more answers.

A grateful thank you to Nakhsh, my beta for her corrections and unbelievably wicked suggestions that will surface in future chapters. Another set of eyes is always helpful, the mistakes, however, are still my fault.

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

# Why Me: Would the Innocent Parties Please Stand Up, or Who Wants To Cast the First Stone?

Chapter 6 of 6

This episode: We find out what is wrong with Ginny and the baby; Ron, Molly, Arthur, Severus, and Hermione share a waiting room; Arthur talks to Hermione.

Why Me: Three Sides of the Same Coin by Pearle

Summary: Another interlude into the marital infidelity of Hermione Weasley and Severus Snape. This time, they take a few people along with them. HGSS

Companion piece to *Why and Why*, *Indeed*

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 Me: Three Sides of the Same Coin ~~~~~

Chapter 6 - Why Me: Would the Innocent Parties Please Stand Up, or Who Wants To Cast the First Stone?

Ginny lay exhausted against the pillows, her hair a stark contrast to her pale complexion. A thin sheen of sweat covered her brow. The pain had finally subsided. She didn't know whether it had run its course, or the potion the Healer had given her had taken effect, either way she was grateful it had stopped. Her hand idly caressed her stomach, reassurance for both her and the baby.

Harry rushed to her side. "Ginny, are you okay? Is the baby all right?" The worry was obvious in his eyes. He had lost too many people in his short life. His heart couldn't lose her or the baby.

A slight smile crossed her lips. Her eyes opened to view her husband. "We're okay. The Healer said it was a magical surge. Seems our little one is doing magic in the womb. I suspect the Headmaster will be sending a Hogwarts letter sooner than later."

"Magic in the womb? Is that normal? It would have to be wandless magic." Harry grinned lopsidedly, relieved that she was okay. He held her hand, afraid to let go, afraid she might disappear. "You didn't send a wand in there did you, Gin?"

"There's only been one wand in there I can think of."

The sound of someone clearing their throat caught Harry's attention. "Mr. Potter, it is a great honor to meet you, sir."

Harry nodded. He had never been comfortable with the Wizarding world's hero worship of him. It had grated on his nerves as a young man and only increased in adoration in the years since his defeat of Voldemort. He understood the need to thank him, even sometimes the need to touch him, to reassure themselves that the Dark Lord was really gone. He understood it; he didn't have to like it, but he understood it. Harry's simple acceptance of his fate was what set him apart from mere mortals. He had saved the Wizarding world, and the world at large, from a heinous fate, yet he asked nothing in return. For this fact alone, he should have been touted as a hero.

Harry was long used to dealing with the admiration. "Thank you, that's very kind of you. How are my wife and baby? What does it mean, a magical surge?"

The man's countenance changed as he resumed his professional manner. "Yes, magical surge. It's very rare. Most babies do not show their talent until much older. Normally it is a manifestation of a simple desire. A toy that is out of reach that 'magically' floats across the room to them. An extreme surge of anger at a young age that starts a fire or blows something up."

Harry thought back to the time of Dudley's birthday, at the zoo, when he had made the glass of a snake cage disappear and then reappear, trapping Dudley behind it, but he had been almost eleven then.

"You are one of the most powerful wizards in our world, Mr. Potter. And you, Mrs. Potter, come from a strong, pure wizarding family."

Harry's brow furrowed, his voice mildly harsh. "Because my wife is a pureblood?"

The man's smile was genuine. "No, sir. Because there is no known history of squibs in the family, and the fact that she stood with you and the others at the final battle proves the strength of her magic. I, myself, am Muggle-born. It is one of the reasons I am most grateful to you for your unselfish devotion to this world."

Harry's shoulders slumped. He normally did not lash out at someone else. Worry for Ginny and the baby's health, coming on top of dealing with Hermione and Ron, had shaken his normally calm exterior. Oh god, Hermione and Ron were in the outer waiting room, along with Severus and his in-laws. He ran his free hand over his eyes, giving his wife's hand a quick squeeze with the other.

"Harry, what is it? I'm fine. The baby's fine. They said I could even go home." Ginny knew her husband only too well to know that something of major importance was bothering him. She was fine, now what?

"Hermione, Ron, your mum and dad, and...Snape are in the waiting room." His voice was quiet in the small room.

Ginny's eyes went wide. "Are any of them dead, yet?"

"Mr. Potter, if someone is injured in the other room..." the Healer rushed towards the door.

Harry held up his hand. "No, no one's been hurt. Yet. They're all too worried about Ginny."

"Snape?" Ginny asked in surprise. Why would he be worried about her?

"He was here seeing Hermione when one of the matrons ran to get her. I'll deal with them in a minute. Healer Addams, what do we need to watch? What care does my wife need?"

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The air in the waiting room seemed to crackle around its inhabitants. Severus had grown restless sitting on the antique wooden bench, he now paced the small area in front of the elevators. It would have been an almost comical sight to watch him pace twenty feet, robes billowing out menacingly behind him, only to have to turn in on himself to avoid hitting the wall so he could continue his movements. Only the scowl and the deadly gleam in his eyes held the redhead watching him in check.

Ron may have had a redhead's legendary temper, but he wasn't stupid. He had acted in anger when he Apparated to Hogwarts. He knew now he was lucky to get out with his life, due largely in part to the Headmaster and Harry. Snape was one of the most powerful wizards alive and the most dangerous. He watched Hermione worry her bottom lip.

Molly watched the others in the waiting room. Her attention was divided between worry for her daughter and her unborn grandchild and whatever mess Ron had managed to get himself into this week. Deciding to break the tension, Molly turned to her daughter-in-law. "Hermione, I was thinking of having everyone for dinner at the Burrow on Sunday. Would seven o'clock be all right with you?"

Severus stopped his incessant pacing to watch Hermione. His focus came down to this, to her answer. He would stay or leave depending on what she said. His body tensed as he watched her lick her lips before speaking.

Hermione could feel the tension humming around her. She scanned their faces, each intent on her answer to Molly's question. Ron looked so hopeful; it was all she could do not to grab her wand and hex his bits off before turning him into something useful, say a doormat she could walk on. Molly seemed to know something she wasn't saying, her eyes were shadowed as she waited for her answer. And Severus. He looked like a cross between a giant bat and a caged panther she had seen at the zoo as a little girl. She would have dearly loved to turn the floor under his feet to super glue, if only to stop the restless pacing of the man.

Hermione turned to address Molly. "Why don't you ask..."

The rest of Hermione's answer was lost as Harry opened the hospital room door.

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All heads turned toward the sound of the door opening. Harry was glad to see everyone was still in one piece. A calliope of voices reached his ears.

"Harry, is Ginny all right?"

"The baby, what about the baby?"

"Harry, what happened?"

Wearily, Harry held up his hand. "Ginny and the baby are fine. The pain has stopped. The Healer said it was a magical surge. The baby was doing a bit of magic in the womb."

"It would seem your offspring has the same disregard for the norm that you do, Potter. I should hope I retire before he, or she, reaches Hogwarts." Snape's sneer was of long practice.

Hermione turned to Severus, almost forgetting he was there. "Severus..."

Molly looked between the two. "Severus - since when is Professor Snape -*Severus*? What is going on here?"

"Great, now you've done it. Gone and upset my mum you have. What do you have to say for yourself?" Ron glared at the dark man but directed his comment at Hermione.

"What do I have to say for myself? I'd say, I'm not the one shagging every little chit that bats her eyes at me. That was you. Maybe if you had shown a little restraint, I wouldn't have left you." Hermione's nerves were strung tight. She glanced at Severus. A shiver ran through her just watching him flex his hands. "All right, maybe I would have left anyway," she murmured.

"Left you? Ronald Weasley, what is going on here? What is Hermione talking about? And what is Professor Snape doing here?" Molly's voice was growing in volume. Had Hermione said she knew Ron was fooling around? This was bad. Now what, and what was Snape doing here?

"I am not shagging every little chit that bats her eyes at me. You're the one shagging the bat of the dungeon, or have you forgotten." Ron and Hermione were almost nose-to-nose. They were about to engage in a full-scale, all-out screaming match.

"Me? You're the one nailing anything that moves. Tell me, Ronald, did you limit your choices to only the females, or did you double your chances by including some of the lads as well?" Hermione's voice oozed sarcasm as she spoke to her now estranged husband.

Severus smirked as he watched Weasley's face turn redder than his hair. He had to hand it to the little witch, she knew how to hit below the belt, literally.

Arthur Weasley was strangely quiet in the face of the acquisitions flying around the room. He watched his wife's cheeks flush as she started a full attack at their youngest son. His mind was actually on the meeting of the Wizengamot Council called for tomorrow afternoon. He now had some inkling of what Dumbledore would present tomorrow, in view of today's escapades.

The Healer stepped out of Ginny's room. "Do I need to remind you people this is a hospital? I hear one more word and you will all need a week to recover from the hexes you are hit with." The man's stern gaze moved from person to person, it seemed to wither as he met the black eyes of Severus Snape. Hastily, he turned to Harry. "Please come with me, I have some discharge instructions for you and your wife."

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Ron moved to the far side of the little waiting room and slumped down on the antique bench. He held his head in his hands as he tried to figure out how things had gone so impossibly wrong so quickly. By the looks of things, his mother was going to kill him. And that seemed to be the least of his problems.

Hermione and Snape. He would not have believed it if he didn't see them with his own eyes. She was standing to the side talking quietly with the greasy git. How could she choose Snape over him? Well, he was going to have to put his foot down. She couldn't divorce him, so she had better come to terms with their marriage. Maybe they should take a trip somewhere, help her get over this foolish notion of leaving him, once and for all.

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Molly sat on the couch next to her husband. "Arthur, are you in a coma? You haven't said one word about any of this. What is going on between Ron and Hermione? She must know about his fooling around, but what is Professor Snape doing here?"

"I suspect he is here to see our daughter-in-law."

"Why would he want to see Hermione? You don't think the two of them...? No, she hates him." Molly's eyes went wide with surprise as she thought about exactly what 'seeing' might entail.

"She will just have to get over Ron's little indiscretions. She can't divorce him; they were married in a magical ceremony. St. Mungo's won't keep her on if they find out she's

left her husband." Arthur patted his wife's hand. "It will be fine, you'll see."

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"Severus, I need to straighten matters out with Ron. I will owl you in a few days. Perhaps we can have dinner this weekend." Hermione bit her bottom lip; she needed to get Severus out of there. She really didn't need any more of a scene than they had already created. Any minute now, her boss would show up and relieve her of her job, just to add to today's merriment.

Severus stared at the woman in front of him. Here was his chance. What did he want? Was he willing to allow himself to be drawn into the fray, or should he cut his losses and leave? His black gaze locked with Hermione's. Severus sighed, it would seem he was going to be just as much of an idiot as Weasley and jump into the melee.

He dropped the pitch of his voice and was pleased to see Hermione shudder slightly as he spoke. "Hermione, I understand you need to settle matters here. Meet me Wednesday for dinner. Just dinner, I will not ask anything further from you. It will be enough to know you are all right. I merely want to talk, or listen, the choice is up to you. I will owl you tomorrow."

Hermione nodded. Severus was being uncharacteristically understanding about all this, but she wanted him gone before she had to face her in-laws and Ron. "All right, dinner Wednesday."

Severus nodded and strode back up the hallway to Hermione's office without a backward glance at the others. He would be damned if he was going to stand there and wait for an elevator, he would take the stairs next to her office to the ground floor.

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Hermione squared her shoulders and turned back toward Ron and his parents. Her voice was cold as she addressed her husband, "Ron, since you seem bent on being the injured party here, why don't you explain to your parents about your extra-curricular activities for the last three years? I believe they started a month after we were married."

Predictably, Molly Weasley turned on her son. "Ronald, how could you? That girl in Romania wasn't the first one? You told me that was an isolated incident. You lied to your mother?" Molly's voice droned on as the woman continued to lash out at her son.

Hermione tuned out Molly's rant. At least she would not look half as bad in their eyes after Molly got through with Ron. Arthur's voice in her ear cut through her inner musings.

"There is no such thing as divorce, Hermione. How will you support yourself when knowledge of your own affair becomes public knowledge? A dalliance now and then is common among married wizards. It doesn't mean anything. Why don't you and Ron try and talk things out? You have both made mistakes, it's time to put them behind you and try again." Arthur was damned if he was going to be a laughing-stock because his son couldn't keep his pants up.

"How many affairs did you have, Arthur? Is that where he learned it? I don't give a damn what may be the standard for males in the Wizarding world. I don't have to put up with it." Hermione glared at the man she had come to think of as a father.

"You can't win. Give it up now and no one will be the wiser."

"I'll know." Hermione's voice rose above Ron's whine and Molly's lecture. "I believe the problem lies between Ron and I. I will thank you both to stay out of it. Ron, I will send you an owl outlining the terms of our separation. Thank you for your advice, Arthur. It is most gratifying to know you are concerned with my future, but don't worry, my job is guaranteed. I will be fine."

Hermione crossed to the door of Ginny's room. It was time to start taking control of her life. "I'll check on Ginny and see what's keeping Harry. If you will excuse me." Hermione knocked on the door and entered the room without waiting for an answer.

TBC

A/N: A quick thank you to all those reviewers who threw such useful items at me for the last chapter. I plan to hold a virtual/cyber garage sale next week, just as soon I get everything organized.

Next episode: What business does Albus have with the Wizengamot? And why would it concern Arthur? What will Ginny have to say to her brother? And her mother? Tune in next time for more questions and more answers.

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