

Perfect III: Complete

by darklotus

*Ron knew he'd made a terrible mistake moments after he stalked out of the wards in a fit of rage. Ron Weasley's search for redemption. Third story set in the "Perfect" universe. This world is not a happy place. **Warnings:** Dark, AU, Mention of violence (not graphic)*

Perfect III: Complete

Chapter 1 of 1

*Ron knew he'd made a terrible mistake moments after he stalked out of the wards in a fit of rage. Ron Weasley's search for redemption. Third story set in the "Perfect" universe. This world is not a happy place. **Warnings:** Dark, AU, Mention of violence (not graphic)*

Author's Note: This is the third story set in the "Perfect" universe. This world is not a happy place. I may come back to this one later and expand it into a chaptered, longer story, but as it is, I feel it stands well alone. I hope you enjoy it. As ever, a great big thank you to laurielove, who did a wonderful job beta-ing my Gobbledygook into something readable you're a marvel, my dear.

Disclaimer: The characters and canon situations in the following story belong solely to JK Rowling, Scholastic and WB. I am not making any money from the publishing or writing of this story. I just play with them... and sometimes I'm not very nice.

PerfectIII:

Complete

Ron knew he'd made a terrible mistake moments after he stalked out of the wards in a fit of rage. The camp site disappeared behind him, and the Confundus Charm made him unable to find his way back.

It took another half an hour to calm down enough to admit it to himself.

By the time the drop in his gut told him he'd really made a total bollocks of it, he'd been charging in who knows what direction and was completely lost. He wandered around for another hour or two in the dark, trying to recognise anything, anything at all that could lead him close enough in the hope that either Harry or Hermione would be keeping an eye out for him and guide him back.

He daren't call out. Bands of Snatchers were scattered all over Wizarding Britain, or anywhere that was a likely hiding place, hunting for those on the run from the Ministry.

Finally, both emotionally and physically drained, he slumped down, his back against a tree trunk, knees drawn up, jacket wrapped tightly across his chest to fight off the chill seeping into him from the fog and the damp, cold ground. He waited for dawn in the hope of perhaps finding his way back. With the growing realisation that it would be an exercise in futility, he cursed himself for a fool and wondered what to do.

In this sorry state, he drifted off into an exhausted sleep, only to be woken by the sensation of being grabbed by the shoulder, jerked to his knees, and shaken roughly.

Snatchers.

As the panic of such a rude awakening cleared, he realised, more correctly, Snatcher. A rather short, though stocky, ratty looking one, at that.

Even for a Snatcher, who all tended to look as though they'd slept rough for most of their lives, this one was ratty: gappy leer, filthy, the smell of unwashed body turning Ron's stomach when he gasped at the surprise of being woken so rudely.

He made short work of him, courtesy of his greater height, the adrenalin surge that accompanied his being yanked into wakefulness, the almost ever present anger that never seemed to be far from the surface these days, and the disgust in himself for getting into this situation in the first place. Taking the Snatcher's wand, Ron gave him a final, disgusted kick before leaving him, a broken, bleeding, unconscious heap of rags on the forest floor.

He spent all of that day searching in the ever fading hope of coming across something familiar or, by his very presence, being spotted and brought back into the fold.

By the time dusk had dimmed what little colour there already was in the drab shade of the old forest, he had to admit defeat; they'd have moved on by now he would have... if he were in their shoes. Totally demoralised, he Apparated to the one place he could think of that would be even close to bearable: Shell cottage his brother Bill's house.

He knew he'd be hammered with a barrage of questions, but at least Bill would accept the excuse that he couldn't answer them. He'd have a hard enough time with Bill and Fleur. He didn't think he could face the the histrionics, nagging and tutting, and lack of privacy he'd receive from his mum if he went to the Burrow.

With a loud crack, he appeared atop the windswept hill above his brother's home. With a weary sigh, shoulders slumped in anticipation of his reception, he headed down the path.

It had been three weeks, and with every day his heartache and desperation for news of Harry and Hermione grew.

He was heartsick. The constant ache of longing, regret and worry that now sat like a rock in his chest was so debilitating; he wondered each night how he would face the coming day.

He'd been such a berk! Once again, his hair trigger temper, fuelled by his insecurity and jealousy, had seen him come undone. You'd think he would have learned to put an effing lid on it by now, especially after the goings on at the Tri-Wizard Tournament. That bout of stupidity had almost cost him his friendship with Harry, and for no good reason.

The object of his insecurities and jealousy was different now, admittedly, and along with it came a passion and devotion that would have been completely alien to him back then, but the result had been the same; he'd made a ruddy great mess of it all, and if he had the chance, he was determined to set it right.

Trouble was, he wasn't sure there would ever be the opportunity.

They would more than likely succeed without him. Knowing Hermione's determination and sheer brains, she'd work out a way to achieve their goal hers and Harry's goal, now and destroy the Slytherin locket that was the third Horcrux.

He had to find a way to get back to them. He had to.

Then, one evening, whilst fidgeting with the Deluminator left to him by Dumbledore, a habit that annoyed anyone who spent any time around him, he heard his name. A blue light appeared out of the magical gadget and shot into his chest and he knew.

He knew where they were. Without thinking twice, he grabbed his rucksack, which he'd never bothered unpacking, his heavy jacket draped on the top of it, rushed outside, and to the calls of both Fleur's exclamations and Bill's panicky voice asking him to tell him what the bloody hell was the matter, he Apparated away.

Ron was in a forest in the biting cold not far from a snow-covered clearing.

His jacket, which he still clutched in his hand, was forgotten for the moment, his body temperature leaking away into the icy air, unnoticed, as a glowing, silvery form held his attention.

It was a Patronus, a deer Harry's surely.

A lump formed in his throat. He wasn't aware that he was holding his breath as his heart thudded, loud and strong against his ribcage, as though trying to break its way out and escape. He allowed himself to hope; he'd been given another chance.

He could make it right; the way it was supposed to be before he'd almost ruined everything.

The shock of seeing the Patronus and his upsurge of hope had frozen him in place. He watched as it made its way with delicate steps into the clearing and turned, then stood still, as if waiting. It had stopped at a spot that seemed flatter and had less snow cover than the small embankments that had built up around the rest of the clearing.

He saw a shadowy figure appear from the surrounding trees. It was Harry. Yes, it was him!

It was at that moment that Ron allowed himself to feel pure, unadulterated joy; they would be reunited!

He could definitely make it right he could make up for his stupid foolishness, and he would never make the same mistake again, he promised himself.

But what the hell was Harry doing? Was he stripping off? Had he gone completely mental?

Harry was now down to his pants, and Ron saw the faint golden gleam on his thin, pale chest. He was wearing it.

A feeling of dread filled him as he broke out of the frozen stance he was in and started toward the boy who glowed, almost wraith-like, in the moonlight. But before he could get close enough, Harry suddenly sat down and appeared to be swallowed up by the snow.

Ron broke into a run as the last vestige of the Patronus floated away in wispy, silvery tendrils into nothingness, unacknowledged and forgotten in his haste to see what had happened.

As he got nearer, he could see a sheet of ice, and a hole broken in it, jagged at one end. Ron's brain tried to make sense of what he'd just seen; Harry must have fallen through the ice. But why had he undressed? Surely he wasn't trying to commit suicide?

His thought processes ceased at this stage as all he could think of was rescue; it was up to him.

His bag and jacket lay forgotten, dropped along the way on his dash to the pond. Without a second thought he jumped in, grabbing Harry, who appeared to be struggling with the locket around his throat with one hand. Ron quickly bent and grasped the sword he'd just noticed, glittering at the bottom of the pond, with his free hand, and straightened his body as his feet hit, knees bent. And then, with those long, strong legs he had been blessed with, he kicked with all his might, sending them shooting up, breaking the surface of the freezing water.

Taking a great gulp of air, Ron somehow heaved the semi-conscious Harry halfway back onto the icy surface, threw the sword along after, and, with an unnatural strength

borne of the sheer, overwhelming instinct to protect a loved one, hoisted himself out of the pond. He stood, then dragged Harry off the loudly cracking ice, picking up the sword on the way.

They spoke briefly, and Harry seemed honestly glad to see him. Ron told him of how the Deluminator had led him back. Harry told him of seeing the Patronus, following it, and how it had led him to the sword. Ron had realised now he'd been mistaken; this one had been a doe, and Harry's was a stag, but he had been so excited that it hadn't occurred to him. Harry then told how the locket had choked him, trying to kill him before he could reach the sword.

Then, using the argument that Ron had earned the right, as he had been the most affected by it, and had been the one that had actually retrieved the Sword of Gryffindor, Harry insisted that Ron be the one to destroy the locket.

A great rush of relief washed over Ron. He still had the chance to redeem himself; there could be a reconciliation.

This was his chance. He was nervous almost to the point of terror: a slow roiling in his gut as he waited, sword in hand, for Harry to speak the words in Parseltongue, that would open the locket. He had to be strong, he had to be brave. This was going to be difficult, oh so difficult, he knew, but it was his only hope at redemption, and he was determined he wouldn't waste it.

Harry spoke in sibilant hisses. The locket opened and spoke. Ron steeled himself, legs so shaky that it almost felt as if he'd been jinxed.

He swung the sword and struck.

There was an ear piercing scream. Then silence.

He'd done it.

A dead calm washed over him, and into that then flooded a deep happiness, deeper than he'd ever felt, along with a piercing, but detached twinge of regret.

He looked down at the gravely wounded Harry Potter, curled into a foetal position, arms clutched around the deep chest wound from which his life's blood flowed into the snow, causing an almost beautiful ever spreading bloom, like a rose of darkest crimson that glinted in the moonlight on the pristine blanket of purest white...

The regret faded as his eyes slid past the dying form of his once best friend to be replaced by an anticipation and reverence, a deep satisfaction, as he walked toward the object of his desire.

He reached for it with slightly shaking hands, gently picked it up, closed it, and placed it around his neck, tucking it under his sodden shirt, next to his heart where it belonged. He felt the coil of tension, longing, fear and trepidation that he'd been carrying with him since he'd so stupidly stormed out that night unwind.

The locket Slytherin's locket had whispered to him every time it had been his turn to wear it. How he'd hated to share! But the whispers told him it wasn't time, and he'd listened: sweet, corrupt, disgusting, tempting whispers. And Ron could do nothing *but* listen; blood called to blood, after all, and Ronald Weasley was a member of one of the oldest pure-blood families in Wizarding Britain.

It played on his fears, his insecurities and his jealousy. It had chosen *him*. It belonged to him. And now he belonged to it as it hungrily fed upon his soul and would continue to do so until there was nothing left.

The corruption of Ronald Weasley had been slow, insidious secretive and complete. The dark enchantments woven into Slytherin's Locket had slowly filled him with a darkness from which there was no return, and he rejoiced in it.

Voldemort's pitifully weak Horcrux, one of seven, silently screamed in powerless outrage, held captive within Salazar Slytherin's single, stronger one, now finally awoken to complete the task it had been created for.

It would not be a problem, and neither would the upstart half-blood that presumed to rule a pure Wizarding Britain: the incompetent, pretentious fool! But he could be used for now to further the cause. He would be dealt with when he had served his purpose. But for now, the captive Horcrux would serve as a bargaining tool and a powerful one at that, once he'd destroyed the others. And he would, with Hermione's help.

Ron shivered in disgust at the thought of having to play the charade of the caring, comforting, protective friend, or perhaps lover, sharing in the grief over Harry's loss in the coming months. But needs must as the devil rides, and the sweet, caressing whispers would see him through, give strength to his conviction. He'd almost failed, and he'd never give himself the opportunity to again. His resolve was iron clad, as was their binding.

Before he Apparated away, to begin the farce of the returning, failed rescuer to a no doubt worried and watchful Hermione Granger, he placed his hand over where his one true love rested. He pressed it possessively into the flesh of his chest and felt the Dark magic fill his now black, tainted, and thoroughly possessed heart no longer his own.

He looked once more at the huddled, bleeding figure lying on the snow, then whispered the name that would bring the Death Eaters to the spot almost instantaneously. Potter was now no more than a possible distraction to disarm the upstart and feed his laughable belief in his absolute power.

He then flicked his wand, turned on the spot and was gone.

A pity about Hermione Granger but her time would come... as would Voldemort's.

Ron Weasley's eventual absorption by Salazar Slytherin would ensure that the Wizarding world would be purified. And once Slytherin was returned to physical form, he would see that it would remain so.

Slytherin had been a determined, patient and far-sighted wizard: whatever it took, however long it took. But, in time, he knew the opportunity would present itself.

Salazar's plan had been a slow dream coming true, but it was finally beginning.

It was the perfect union.

And Ronald Weasley was the perfect host.

Perfect.

Did you enjoy this tale of Ron's fate in the "Perfect" universe? I'd love to hear what you think. Reviews would be greatly appreciated.