

In Need of a Moment

by Southern_Witch_69

Hermione finds herself drawn to Ron's older brother. He feels the same. Is something possible between them? This is in drabble format--my first attempt at it.

Finding the Courage

Chapter 1 of 5

Hermione finds herself drawn to Ron's older brother. He feels the same. Is something possible between them? This is in drabble format--my first attempt at it.

Disclaimer: I'm playing round with the characters JKR created again. I'll return them unscathed when I'm done.

Thanks go to CocoaChristy for looking this over for me. JenKM1216 has influenced me; after reading hers, I felt like trying these little drabbles out.

Her brown hair bounced wildly as she plodded down my family's stairs on her way to the kitchen. I wanted very much to reach out and touch her long locks with my fingers, but I knew that I could not. To do so would change many things and disrupt our family.

Just last night, she passed by me closely on her way up to the room she shares with my sister. The scent of her freshly washed hair wafted up and invaded my senses. I would have given anything to have her stop and lean her head against my shoulder.

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I see him watching me; he doesn't know. I wonder why he's always lurking about each time I turn around. Does he feel some sort of kinship with me? I wish that it were so, for I could really use someone to talk to. All's changed now that Dumbledore's gone.

As closely as I dare, I walk near him, enjoying the faint scent of his cologne. I often wonder if he's put it on for me... or to impress Fleur? That thought bothers me. She gets everyone's adoration already. Couldn't at least one person here hold some affection for me?

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She smiles so prettily; it's insanity that nobody else takes note. Can they not see that it is she, Hermione, who is the princess at our table? It's certainly not Fleur, for she hasn't the heart, internal beauty, nor the courage that's *hers*. It's clear that my brother finds her attractive, and he definitely wants to shag her. However, he's not making the move that he should. I must force myself to gather the courage to have a word or two with her before the wedding because after that, it will be too late. I'll be gone, out of reach.

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He's so handsome; that's plain to see. I wish that I could find a moment to speak with him privately, but I'm uncertain as to how to make that approach. What would I say? What if I've misread things? I wouldn't be able to bear the shame. Ron leans closer, his thigh brushing mine. I wish that it was his brother's instead. As if reading my thoughts, *his* gaze firmly meets mine. It's at this point that I decide that I must speak with him before the wedding. If I don't find a way to do so, he'll be gone.

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I watch her leave the table and go off for a silent walk out in the back gardens and decide that it's time to follow. Perhaps I can stage a coincidental meeting. Nobody could prove it to be otherwise, not even she.

Excusing myself, I quickly find a moonlit path that will lead me to her. From the way she'd gazed at me during dinner, I could swear that she felt the same fascination as I. Turning a corner, I hear another voice; she's not alone now. It would figure that at this moment, Ron would get wise. Disappointment abounds.

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A hand on my shoulder prompts me to turn around. To my dismay, it's Ron who's followed me out. I wonder if he's finally decided to make his move and gaze at him expectantly. Has he finally decided which it will be: Lavender or me?

"It's a bit cool out tonight," he whispers.

"It is," I reply.

"I don't like you out here alone."

"The wedding is coming. The house is so full and noisy. I just wanted some time alone."

"Come in when you're done."

I nod that I will and watch his retreat, noting the retreat of another.

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I don't want to go right back into the house. A little fresh air will help quell my disappointment. I don't know what I was thinking, following her out. She should be for Ron while I should be for another. It was simply the way of things: me being born too soon or her too late...too many years apart for a real chance.

A twig snaps behind me, pulling me from my thoughts. I swallow thickly. It's her.

"I saw you walking away," she says quietly.

"I did."

"Why?"

"You were not alone."

"I am now."

My heartbeat quickens.

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Well, I've done it. I've made the first move. But first move towards what? Surely our futures lie on different paths, only a simple attraction, if that, drawing us together now. He's staring at me quite intently, red hair moving in the slight breeze. My throat becomes dry. I feel as if I've made a mistake. What will he tell Ron? What will Mrs. Weasley think when she learns I boldly approached a different son? I could always explain that I wasn't inviting anything, only making conversation.

"I'm sorry," I say, turning to leave.

A single word stops me. "Wait."

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She's approached me, and my silence nearly causes her to retreat. I cannot let her leave without having my say. Words fail me as she steps back closer. Instead I place a hand under her chin, lifting her face so that her eyes stare into mine. I see uncertainty, curiosity, and hope.

"My brother loves you," I blurt for reasons unknown to me.

"Does he?"

Her voice is so soft, words flowing from the softest lips. I am mesmerized. Mine drift closer, suddenly grazing, pressing, and caressing hers. Lips part, tongues tangle, and explorations commence. I'm lost in her kiss.

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He's kissing me...passionately yet gently. His kiss was unexpected but welcome. The dim days ahead of me suddenly shine with a new light. I know in my heart that he'll never be mine, but for this moment, this one time, in this kiss, he belongs to me.

My stomach tingles as one hand moves down to grip my arse and pull me closer to him while the other clutches my hair. The moment my pelvis moves against his body, he moans and intensifies our kiss. In return, his hips gyrate, pushing a hard bulge against my stomach.

"Oh, my..."

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Her words break the spell, and I realize what I'm doing. This is Hermione, she's innocent, and my brother should be the one to claim it. I dare not apologize for kissing her because it's something I'll never feel sorry about.

Our kiss ends, and I rest my forehead against hers as we both catch our breaths. After a few moments pass, I whisper, "We can't."

She replies evenly, "I know."

"I just had to know..."

"As did I."

Our lips meet again of their own volition, and I wonder if I'll ever be able to resist her. Not likely.

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His mouth and his hands feel so good on me. It's this closeness that I've been craving. I wanted it with Ron, but he is always so unsure about us. Whereas I was disheartened about being lonely and feeling as though I am possibly near the end of my life, what with the war, I now feel as if I'll at least have a little something to think of when times get too tough.

"A secret then?" he asks, knowing I'll understand.

"Yes."

We'll not go any farther than what we already have: snogging, touching, and holding. Dreaming of more.

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I wish that I could tell Hermione all that I'm feeling about how I wish Ron wouldn't want her, how I wish she wanted only me, and how I wish that I could remain and help them with whatever they must now face. This isn't possible...any of it. There is no reason to deny ourselves the pleasure of a mostly innocent companionship when we can steal a few moments alone.

"Someone will come looking for you," I say, realizing our tryst has come to an end.

She flashes a brilliant smile, nods, and says, "Goodnight, Charlie."

"Slip away later."

~~~

I enter the house feeling like a new woman...one who was actually desired by someone who sees her for something more than just a convenient girl. I look at Fleur and Bill as they talk with Mrs. Weasley about a few wedding plans, and for the first time, I do not envy the attention she receives or her beauty. If Charlie can overlook her to gaze at me, I can't be all that plain.

I make my way over to where Harry and Ron are playing chess.

"All right, Hermione?" Harry asks.

"Never better," I reply. And it's true.

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**Southern's Notes:** Well, that was different for me. I have no idea how the heck that happened, but I've written my first Charlie and Hermione tale...not that it was anything deep, but I enjoyed the sweetness of it all. I was trying to be sneaky so people would think that it was Bill at first. Anyone get tricked? Hehe!

**Christy's Notes:** What a wonderful set of drabbles! I was totally engrossed, and I hated to see it end! I really loved it, Sun! Good job!

## Faltering Resolve

*Chapter 2 of 5*

In twenty-three 100-word drabbles, I continue the tale of Hermione and Charlie... fighting their feelings, yet admitting they exist.

**Disclaimer:** I'm playing round with the characters JKR created again. I'll return them unscathed when I'm done.

*Thanks go to CocoaChristy for looking this over for me. I chose to center it on the Weasley family. I never see many of those, aside from the set that Phoenix did a while back. And I can't write drabbles like this without waving to Droxy and Pearle...Drabble Queens.*

I got a bit carried away with this chapter...there are twenty-three 100-word drabbles. Oops! I was only going to try to do fourteen or so like last time. \*shrug\*

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It's been six months since I saw him last. I wonder if he remembers those nights we spent sneaking about, touching, and stealing kisses. Will he want to continue that? Will he want to forget about it? Does he feel guilty? I know that I do sometimes because I do love Ron, my boyfriend...his younger brother, but I can't help wondering how things could have been had that not been the case. Other times, I don't feel guilty. Those times are usually when I'm feeling invisible, used, or taken for granted. I truly wish Ron's touch felt like Charlie's.

~~~

The days since I've last seen her are nearing one hundred-eighty. The longing for her kisses, smiles, and laughter hasn't lessened. Soon, we will meet again at my family's home for the holidays. What will happen between us? I know that Ron loves and belongs with her. But how will I be able to stay away? I think the absence between us has made my heart grow fonder instead of forgetful. I will simply watch them to see if they appear happy. If so, I will gracefully push my feelings aside. My heart is not worth tearing my family apart.

~~~

"I love Christmas!" Ginny says happily.

"You love presents," Harry adds, though looking at me. "You all right?"

"I am," I say softly, allowing Ron's hand to rub my thigh while he gazes at Fleur's little sister, Gabrielle.

Harry's gaze follows mine, causing him to frown for a moment, and then glare pointedly at Ron. "Lost in thought, mate?"

"Eh? No... are you sure she's only fourteen? Looks just like Fleur, only shorter." He grins and flushes when he sees me watching. "Sorry, love, it's the Veela in her that draws me."

I can understand the lure of another perfectly.

~~~

Bill is the only one still up to greet me when I Apparate in. He tells me that Fleur is expecting and that her family is also visiting for the holidays. I'll have to sleep in the living area since my room has been taken. I won't stoop to intrude on any of the other filled rooms. I easily transfigure the corner into a private, makeshift room, allowing me to see out without others seeing in or hearing me. I purposely came late, needing extra time to collect myself before seeing Hermione with Ron, before learning I've been long forgotten.

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"I won't be long," Harry promises as I close the door.

He and Ron made plans for private time with us. While he was with Ginny, I was to go to Ron. Before I could slip upstairs, I hear a creak in the floor below. I move down a few steps to the landing stealthily and see Ron creeping down, noting how his too short pajama pants expose his white ankles in the dim light.

He's likely off to get something to eat, so I wander up to his bedroom to wait for his return, knowing he won't be long.

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Just as I settle down to sleep, I see an upset Ron walk in to sit on the couch. His head is in his hands. I rise to let him know that I'm awake if he needs someone to talk to, but I pause immediately as Gabrielle joins him.

She says, "I am so sorry about zat. I would not want to 'urt either of you. Ze kiss can stay between us."

"You're young," Ron says, taking her hand. "And pretty. It's not that I didn't want that. It's just... Hermione."

"Say no more," she whispers and flees.

"Bloody hell."

~~~

"Hermione?" I hear and open my eyes. It's Harry. He's looking down at me oddly. "Where's Ron?"

"I saw him going down for a snack, or so I thought. I must have fallen asleep waiting. How long has it been?" I ask and rub my eyes.

"Only about an hour," he replies. "Want me to go look for him?"

"No, it's all right. Maybe..." An idea comes to mind. "Maybe Charlie came in, and they're catching up." My heart begins beating quickly as I realize this is likely what's happened. "I'll just go back to bed."

"Good night."

"Night, Harry."

~~~

I sit and watch as my brother runs his fingers through his long, red hair. From what I gather, she'd kissed him after some encouragement, he'd returned the kiss until he realized what he was doing, and he'd fled, feeling guilty. He'd more or less admitted that if it weren't for his relationship with Hermione, he would have let their kiss continue. How could he let anyone else draw his attention when he had Hermione? Bill said that they seemed to get along well. If they are attracted to others, perhaps they're not "the ideal" couple Mum always boasts about.

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After passing Gabrielle on the stairway, I continue down to find Ron and see exactly what is going on. I'd thought he was talking to Charlie, but after seeing her, I cannot deny that she is the reason he stayed away.

"What are you doing?" I ask when I see him on the couch in great despair.

He jumps. "No-nothing. Just about to go back up."

"I fell asleep waiting for you in your bed," I say bitterly.

He flinches. "I only meant to be a moment."

"And then you started talking to Gabrielle..."

"Yeah, that's not all I did."

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I feel my mouth drop open at my brother's honest admission. What would Hermione say? Would she end things?

"Go on," Hermione prompts.

"You know how Veelas make me act," he says. "I was flirting a little, and she kissed me. I came to my senses and told her it couldn't happen again."

"Did you like it?"

I'm shocked by her question. She doesn't seem upset.

"Not now...at that first moment, yes. She's just a young girl."

"Nobody's perfect, Ronald."

"I'm sorry." He leans into her, putting his arms around her in the way that I long to do.

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So I was right. He was with her. "I just don't understand why you came down in the first place when you knew that Harry would send me up to your room."

"Oh," he says, cheeks reddening, "I was looking for a quick snack. That's when she came in."

"Fair enough," I say quietly, shifting away from him.

"Do you still think about him?" Ron asks suddenly. "Is that why you aren't upset?"

"Who?"

"The bloke you fancied before I asked you to be my girl. The one you had a few snogs with, the mystery man."

"Yes, I suppose."

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My heart pounds rapidly. She'd told Ron about snogging another bloke and having feelings for him. She still thinks of me. I refrain from breathing so I won't miss anything they say next.

"Why won't you tell me about him?" Ron prods.

"There's no need. It's in the past."

Disappointment seeps through my veins, and my heart threatens to burst. Then I hear her next words.

"He never looked back, never wrote, nothing. Sometimes I wonder if it was a figment of my silly imagination."

If I'd written letters, someone might have found out about us...about how I feel.

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I smile at Ron and lean closer to kiss his worried cheek softly. "I told you that I would give us an honest attempt at a relationship, and I meant it. You didn't make plans to meet her, did you? She kissed you first. It just happened. I forgive you."

"No, it just happened," he replies, grinning hopefully. "I'll make it up to you."

"You'd better go up before Harry comes down looking for you."

"All right. Coming up?"

"No, I'm going to get a glass of juice, I think." I move to the kitchen as Ron leaves the room.

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I didn't leave my Disillusioned corner until I was certain that Ron was back in his room. I went to the kitchen quietly to watch as she stood near one of the windows, sipping her juice, moonlight framing her body, showing me the silhouette that's haunted me for the past year.

When my foot hits the table, she doesn't jump or seem surprised, so I say, "It's not that I didn't care...the reason I never wrote. I just... I just thought I shouldn't."

"You were right not to," she replies, not turning around. "I didn't ask for any promises."

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I would know the scent of his cologne...no matter how faint...anywhere. I turn around when he says nothing and am startled to see that he is now right behind me, one hand suspended in air as if he were debating on touching my hair.

"Maybe I should have given you some," he whispers.

Unable to help myself, I take his hand and press it against my cheek. "I've always thought about you."

"Every single day..." he agrees.

"We can't," I blurt sadly as he nears.

"We won't," he says, face narrowly missing mine, burrowing in my hair instead.

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Pulling back to look at her teary eyes, I say, "I just want you to know that last summer meant a lot to me. On many nights, you've kept me warm... sane even."

"Sometimes I'm so lonely even though I'm not alone, but in my mind, you are always here for me."

"Is Ron not good to you? He..." My voice falters. "He seems to love you." *As I do*, I nearly add.

"He does," she says confidently, "and as you heard, I promised to give a relationship with him a real try."

"When does the try end?"

"I'm uncertain."

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I know what Charlie is getting at, but I don't think that I could find it in my heart to hurt Ron. He's always honest. If I told him the things that bothered me, he would likely try to fix them. Sometimes it feels as if we're only friends who shag.

"Would you have me?" he asks.

My heart shatters. I'm confused. "I would if things were that simple."

"What do I have to do?"

Any fear I had about him not remembering our moments dissolves. It seems that he cares a great deal more for me than I'd imagined.

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I know it sounds as if I'm desperate... Maybe I am.

"There are things that I have to do with Harry and Ron that must come first...for the good of the war."

"Can't I help?"

She shakes her head. "I won't jeopardize that no matter how much I would like to be with you."

"So, you do care," I say happily, hope simmering in my soul. "I'll wait while you and he try to work through things. If it doesn't work out, then..."

"I will never ask you to put your life on hold for me," she says.

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The emotions behind his words frighten me. If I asked it of him, he would wait for me, but I could never do that. What had I ever done to deserve such devotion from him? Was it because I was something he couldn't have? Had I truly made that much of an impression on him last summer?

I rise to the tip of my toes and press my lips against his for a chaste kiss, battling internally at the wrongness of it. I don't stop him as his tongue pries between my lips and deepens our kiss, making me tingle.

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"Hermione," I murmur minutes later, "I've missed this." I have her ensnared tightly in my arms, nuzzling her throat. I feel her trembling against me and hope that she's not crying. What have I done? Have I pushed her too far?

"Charlie, as much as I want this... and you..."

"I know," I say, squeezing her once more and enjoying the feel of her attempt to tighten her hold on me. "I just needed this moment."

This time, her lips find mine for another heated kiss. My hands lower to cup her arse tightly, pulling her flush against my body.

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Why can't I feel so complete when Ron's holding me like this? If I had never kissed Charlie, would I always keep part of myself detached where Ron is concerned? Why could I put all of me into *this* kiss for *this* man?

The kiss seems to not want to end, but as he begins grinding his body against mine, which is stuck against the counter, I can feel how deeply he wants me through the hardened bulge of his trousers. I know that I have to stop things. We can't go that far.

"Please, no, we can't..." I beg.

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I release her and step aside, not wanting her to cry, though I can hear the quaver in her voice and know that she will likely dissolve into tears the moment she leaves the room. "I'm sorry," I say, wishing I could take her to my bed, brother be damned.

"So am I," she says sadly, rushing from the room, wiping her cheeks.

I move over to the table and slump down, putting my head in my hands much like Ron had done. "Why did I even come home?" I whisper aloud. "I should have known I couldn't do this."

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I take my seat next to Ron at breakfast the next morning as Mrs. Weasley reads her note to us all.

"He says, 'Mum, I got an urgent owl last night about the dragon I'm training personally. There's an accident. I don't trust anyone else to look after her. I am sorry. Send my love to all. Happy Christmas. Charlie.'" She sniffed disappointedly.

Frowning slightly, I stir my tea. It's my fault that he left his family. I vow to be stronger next time. Ron's hand finds his way to mine under the table and squeezes. We both flush guiltily.

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**Southern's Notes:** Well, I hope this second installment is as enjoyable as the first for some of you. I decided to carry on with it a bit more. Pulling for Charlie, anyone? It's really odd to write in this drabble style. I'm so long winded, and when I realized how many drabbles I'd written, I wondered if perhaps I shouldn't have just written it normally. LOL. Anyway, cheers!

## Crossing the Line

*Chapter 3 of 5*

After an encounter with Death Eaters, Charlie tries to help, but he and Hermione ultimately let things go too far.

**Disclaimer:** I've borrowed some of Rowling's characters again. Muahahaha. I'll return them when I can.

*Thanks go to CocoaChristy for reading over this for me.*

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It's been many months since I've seen her, yet I can still see her face so clearly in my mind. Things are getting worse for Wizarding kind with each passing day. Friends and family are continuously in danger, some meeting their demise. My father sent word that they could use my help. One of my friends and I will go over with two dragons we've been working closely with to lend a hand. God knows that I hope she's still alive. If I only see her once more before I die, all would be well in the world for me.

~o~

"Harry!" I scream, seeing him dodge behind a tree as a jet of green light flies towards him. I am certain that he's all right. "Ron?" I call out, looking around. There is nothing but mist behind me, so I trudge forward to seek out Harry. I hear his labored breathing before I see him and cringe, afraid of what I will see. "All right?" I ask, noticing the blood on his leg.

"All right," he breathes. "Hit a rock on my fall."

"I can't find Ron."

Grinning, Harry said, "He took the Portkey to get... others. He'll be back."

~o~

"Charlie!" Ron screams, waving me over. "We were ambushed! Hermione and Harry are still there! Help me!"

I run to meet him and take the Portkey from his hands. "You're bleeding!" I say in shock, realizing that my brother is paler than I'd ever seen him.

"Slicing Hexes..." he says before passing out.

"Mum!" I yell. "Ron's lost a lot of blood. He needs help right now!" She moved to my side an instant later with Ginny.

"We'll take him!"

"I'm off for Hermione and Harry," I tell them absently, reactivating the Portkey and hopping atop my Common Welsh Green.

~o~

A jet of red light hits the tree's bark, sending splinters to rain down on us. We could hear them getting closer. There must have been nearly ten Death Eaters waiting for us. Nodding in agreement with Harry, I point my wand out and prepare to hurl as many hexes as I can at our enemies.

However, before we could do anything, there is a loud roar and flames blazing brightly.

"Charlie's come!" Harry points out.

I help Harry up and move with him to the safety of the dragon's backside. Pops of Disapparation prove that our foes are leaving.

~o~

"Cowardly blokes!" I say happily, sliding down from my dragon, patting her back heartily. I hold up the Portkey. "I didn't think of this before, but she won't ride the three of us. The Portkey might not hold for us all." An idea comes to me. "Harry, you look the worst. Take it. Hermione and I will fly back."

"She can just come with me," Harry replies, gazing at me oddly.

"One of you will need to guide me back. I'm only authorized to enter with someone the wards recognize. Sorry, but I left before they could charm me in."

~o~

"Harry, he's right," I admit, squeezing his hand. "We'll get back as quickly as we can, though with the dragon and dawn coming, it may take a little longer."

Harry nods. "Where's Ron?"

Charlie frowns. "He was bleeding, so they're tending to him."

I gasp. "Will he be all right?"

"Of course. He's more worried about you two. Go on, Harry. Put him at ease."

Harry gives me one last long look before activating the Portkey and disappearing from our sight.

I boldly look at Charlie then, knowing most Portkeys have no limits. "Were you in need of a moment?"

~o~

I should have known that she would see through my lies. We could have likely all made it with the Portkey, though I can always argue that I never used one with my dragon and other people.

"Are you angry?"

"We should see about Ronald."

"He's fine."

"You think that you can just waltz back into my life and make decisions for me? You just up and left! No letters again; nothing but a quick note to your mother."

"You don't understand, Hermione. I had to leave," I try to explain. "I couldn't owl you."

"But why couldn't you, Charlie?"

~o~

The sound of my voice disgusts me. I can hear its quavering and can feel my eyes watering with tears.

"So... it is as I feared," he says softly, turning away. "You're lost to me."

I cannot stop myself from hugging him fiercely from behind. My lips press against his shoulder blade as I say, "It will never be as easy as that. I swear."

"But?"

"But I do love Ron." It's then that I notice that I've grown used to Ron's gangly, thin frame. Charlie, being shorter, didn't give him as much advantage over me. "If things were different..."

~o~

It's time that I let her go. She's right. I have no right to just waltz in and expect her to still care for me or want a few stolen moments with me.

"When I left last time, it was to give you the time you needed to make your decision without being influenced," I say softly, turning and gathering her into my arms. "You told me that we couldn't. I didn't want to press you. Then..."

"Then?"

"Ron," I say, horrified that I feel my emotions overwhelming me. "He knew."

"Knew what?"

"He saw and heard us that night."

~o~

"But... no," I say, shocked. "Why would you think that? He went back to bed."

"No, he came back down and watched us. He heard everything."

As he steps away, I pull him back to me and stare into his eyes, seeing the truth. "Oh, my God. Wh-what did he say?"

"He said he didn't blame you, but I should have known better. He was right glad you turned me down and stood up for him." He closes his eyes. "He said for once he'd done something right without his brothers' help or them doing it first."

"Oh, poor Ron..."

~o~

I know that she needs to hear everything, so I continue. "He asked me to leave so that you'd give him a fair chance. He said if I were there, then he wouldn't be able to compete with me. So, I agreed. I told him I wouldn't write or go by without warning."

"So... you two just talk things over and decide what my future is going to be without me having a say?" She shakes her head in anger.

"That's not how it was. What he said made sense. How could I hurt him like that? Hurt my family?"

~o~

"It's all right to hurt me though," I say bitterly, enjoying the way he flinches.

"No, we just want what's best for you. I thought..."

"I should tell the both of you to bugger off! If he knew, he should have talked to me about it... like I'd done with Gabrielle. I even told him about us... just not your name."

"Come on, love. It's not..."

He sounds so much like Ron that I pull back and slap him with all of my might without thinking. "It's my life, too, damn it!"

He pulls me to him roughly.

~o~

"What would you have preferred?" I ask bitterly, face still stinging from her slap, unable to resist giving her a slight shake. "Would you have truly wanted me around? Snogging you every chance I got? Confusing you? Touching you? Making you want me?"

She says nothing...only stares at me with wide eyes.

"If I would have talked you into my bed as I so badly wanted, Ron would have lost you forever, and you would never have forgiven yourself for not giving him that real chance! You would have ended up hating us both!"

"I hate you both anyway!"

~o~

"Don't you say you hate me," he yells at me, mouth quickly pressing against mine. "Anything but that!"

"Wait..."

Too late. His hands are in my hair, his mouth is back against mine, tongue trying to coax mine into mutual exploration, and somehow, we've managed to slide down, half struggling, half holding.

I feel the cool breeze blowing against my legs as he maneuvers my robes a little higher. Unable to speak with his mouth on mine, I groan for him to stop, but he mistakes it for encouragement, and I feel his hand on my thigh beneath my skirt.

~o~

I can only think of how much I want her and how good it feels to have her responding to me so passionately. She moans in anticipation as my hand glides up the length of her smooth, bare leg.

After all this time, I am finally going to be able to show her what she does to me, what I've wanted for so long. Our slight row had heightened our feelings and made us strike out at each other.

We both moan as my fingers slide beneath the hem of her knickers. So hot. So wet. One finger slides in.

~o~

The moving of his mouth against mine makes me dizzy. I can barely think about anything as I realize that he's touching me intimately. It's all happening so quickly.

"Anh," I gasp as a knuckle grazes against my sensitive spot.

His lips and teeth move down to my shoulder where they suck and bite my flesh. I am faintly aware of his body shifting again before he removes his finger and pushes something much thicker inside.

My eyes open wide with shock as I realize what's happening. The protest dies on my lips as he slams all the way in.



~o~

After a few strokes with my head arched back in attempt to savor every sensation that I could, I finally look back down at her. I see that her eyes are closed, that there are tears on her cheeks, and that she's biting her lip.

"I love you, Hermione," I say suddenly, wanting her to hear the words that my body is showing her. I begin rubbing her clit with the fingers of the hand that I am holding her knickers aside with and enjoy the feel of her moving her body against mine while she searches for her climax.

~o~

The feeling of climax comes to me twice and ebbs away both times. With my eyes closed, I can almost imagine that this isn't happening. Not like this. Not here with him. But it doesn't help. This is not Ron. I'm allowing his brother to have my body. How did this happen? I was in control.

When I finally feel him shudder, slump over me, and forgo his quest to give me pleasure, I sigh with relief. It's done. The deed I'd always wondered about has come and gone... and wasn't worth it. I will never feel the same again.

~o~

I can tell something's wrong the moment she sits up and starts brandishing her wand to clean herself.

"Hermione?"

"Not now, Charlie," she says.

My heart sinks. What have I done? She'd wanted to be with me. She'd... "Hermione, we have to talk about this. What happened..."

"It didn't happen," she says fiercely, pointing her wand at me.

When she lowers her wand and cries, I put my head in my hands and do the same. All I've managed to do is make things worse for us by having to blurt out the pact Ron and I had made.

~o~

I'm looking off in the distance and wiping tears from my cheeks when sudden pops of Apparition sound behind us. We both turn, wands drawn, to find Ron and Harry behind us. One look at Ron's angry, hurt, and suspicious face brings on a whole new bout of tears. How could I have done this?

"What's wrong?" he asks, kneeling down next to me.

I shake my head, allowing his arm to slide around me.

"Tell me."

"She was... worried about you," Charlie blurts. "I thought it best if we waited until she collected herself before we tried to leave."

~o~

"Is that right?" Ron asks, sneering at me.

I can see that neither he nor Potter believe my lame excuse, but I'll be damned if I'll have it out with him about Hermione with someone around...especially not now that she and I have... had sex.

"I thought we should wait," I say again.

Before I realize it, Ron runs for me and swings wildly at me. "You just can't leave her alone, can you?" he rages.

I duck one blow only to be landed by another before Potter can restrain him.

"Ron..." I begin, not knowing what to say.

~o~

I can see the scuffle and haven't the will to stop them. I whisper, "Is your bleeding done? Are you all right?"

That seems to get everyone's attention. Ron stalks back to me and looks into my eyes. I thank God that he's no Legilimens.

"I just needed some potions. Harry's healed up good as new."

"Ron..."

"Yes, Hermione?"

"I want to go home. Not your mum's. My parents' home."

"What? Why?"

"I need some time," I say firmly. "He told me about what you and he talked on."

Ron's face dropped. "Let me explain."

"It's all right. I know..."

~o~

I watch helplessly as the woman I love slips away from me. I hate that I had a part in putting that sad expression on her face. I've never wished that I could redo something over again. Why couldn't I have been blessed with a Time-Turner?

Taking advantage of her when she was distraught was not the brightest thing that I've ever done. My brother and his friend are both suspicious. That is quite obvious. I can feel their hate in their accusatory glares. I suppose I can only be grateful that they hadn't popped in a few minutes before.

~o~

"Come on," Ron says, pulling me up. "I'll see you home."

"No, it's all right," I say, wanting to get away from them.

"At least let Harry," Ron pleads.

"I'll go," Harry says.

I know in that instant that he won't pry or try to question me. "All right." I move to Harry. "Have you a Portkey?"

"No, we came in from a different location. I'll bring us there," he replies, wrapping an arm around my shoulders.

I see Charlie's disappointed expression and say, "Thanks for... attempting to rescue us."

He nods and sadly smiles before Harry takes me away.

~o~

"I sent you to help them, not to take advantage of her!" Ron says bitterly.

Guilt floods me. I know I've done wrong.

"When Harry told me that excuse you'd made, I knew I had to come before it was too late!"

I feel even worse upon hearing these words.

"Fucking hell, Charlie! Was it too late? Why was she crying?"

"I... She told me she loves you."

"You were both crying, both disheveled! What am I supposed to think? Now she's gone off! I saw her first!"

"You win, Ron. She's yours. I swear to never touch her again."

---

**Southern's Notes:** I have no idea how this came about. I was just writing away, and this happened. It's definitely NOT what I had planned. However, my muse said she'd skip town if I didn't do it this way.

**Christy's Notes:** Poor Charlie, Hermione and Ron! It's a rare thing, but I feel bad for all three in this chapter!

## Working Things Out

### Chapter 4 of 5

Harry talks Hermione into confiding her feelings to Ron. The couple decide how to progress.

**Disclaimer:** I've borrowed some of Rowling's characters again. Muahahaha. I'll return them when I can.

*Thanks go to CocoaChristy for reading over this for me.*

---

Harry frowns sadly as I talk. I know that he doesn't like what he's hearing, but I can't stop myself from pouring out my feelings to him. "It's what I wanted and yet not. I love Ron, really. I just... Why can't I stop this yearning for Charlie? I could have Disapparated away. I didn't."

"You said it happened so fast though," he says, trying to make excuses for me.

"I led him on," I admit. "I let the kisses continue, and then..." I look away.

"Do you want to break things off with Ron?" he asks dejectedly.

"I should."

~o~

I've never seen Hermione look so upset, and I must say that I'm shocked that she and Charlie... had sex. I wasn't gone that long, and Ron made certain that we went to them right away, having a bad feeling about Charlie's motives.

Ron told me months back what he'd seen with Charlie and Hermione and how he'd had a deal with his brother. I'd simply been surprised that Charlie had fallen in love with Hermione, what with how little they'd seen of each other. You can't help whom you love. Maybe Ron and Hermione just weren't meant to be.

~o~

"Harry? Aren't you listening? I... I don't know what to do," I say, confusion lacing my voice. "I love Ron. He's stable, he loves me, his parents approve, and he..."

"What do you feel about Charlie?"

"Angry. He leaves, doesn't owl, nothing! When he does come round, he can't keep his eyes or hands off of me and seems shocked that I don't have to touch or be with him!"

"Love?"

"I... Well, I do care. Truly. I've always wanted to know how it could be with him...not just sex either." I frown, hating the disappointment. "That's ruined now."

~o~

"Well, why's it ruined?" I ask her curiously.

"It was nothing like I'd expected. H-he didn't respect me." She shakes her head and sits down on her bed with a thump. "He just took without asking to make certain it was all right, not caring if I'm taking contraceptives." She brings her hands up to cover her face. "Good God."

"Are you?" I ask uncertainly. I know that she and Ron have sex on a regular basis...when they can...but I've no idea about their precautions.

"No, not since before my last... cycle."

"Oh." I pale when she does.

~o~

"Wouldn't that be ironic?" I ask Harry sarcastically. How could Charlie have been such a dunderhead? I know that things can be a bit spontaneous sometimes, but even Ron's not gone as far as to throw out all thought of contraceptives. Nor have I ever allowed it. *You didn't know he was going to shag you*, a voice defends. I have to agree with it. So fast. So sudden. I wasn't prepared. *Or didn't really care*, another voice said.

"We'll get through this, Hermione. Come back with me."

"I don't think that I could face anyone there. Not now anyway."

~o~

"How about we slip in and just talk to Ron."

"Are you mad? I can't tell him that I slept with Charlie!"

"He probably figured that out. I mean, you were crying... so was Charlie. You both looked disheveled."

"Charlie won't tell him."

"He'll know," I insist. I care for Hermione like a sister and hate to see her hurting, but she has to own up to what's happened and face Ron. "Come on."

"Go to him for me. Tell him to meet me here so we can talk privately."

"I can do that." I kiss her cheek before Disapparating.

~o~

Waiting for Ron is proving to be quite the task. My stomach is roiling nervously. Flashes of what happened with Charlie keep passing through my mind. Should I tell Ron? Why not just pretend it never happened? He and I could carry on as before and live out our lives happily.

That's ridiculous.

I can't hide from the fact that something in our relationship is not right. I wanted those kisses and caresses from Charlie. Deep down I relished his taste and feel. I simply hate myself for wanting them, knowing it's wrong. I hate myself for not being stronger.

~o~

"Harry said you wanted to talk to me," I say from Hermione's doorway. She looks pale and has been crying. I'm angry, but I try not to show it. I don't want to lose her.

"W-we need to talk, Ronald," she says shakily.

I dread this conversation. "All right then. Where do you want to start?"

"The first talk you had with Charlie."

Sitting next to her and taking her in my arms, I explain what I saw, how I felt, and the reasons I begged him to give me a chance...even how knowing they still cared affected me.

~o~

I've never felt more unappreciative in my life. All this time I've been pining for Charlie and never truly realized what an amazing man I had the entire time. "I love you, Ron, but tonight... tonight..."

He senses what I want to say and presses a finger against my lips. "It didn't happen."

Harry had been right. Ron knew...had sensed it somehow. I smile sadly and nod. "It did, and the bad thing is that there was no potion or spell that we used to..."

"Shhh."

"But I might be..."

"Shhh."

"But what if I am..."

~o~

I know what she's trying to say, but somehow I know if I don't hear it out loud I can deal with it better. People make mistakes. I'd made a mistake with Gabrielle in the kitchen and told Hermione about it. She'd repeated that mistake with Charlie. I'd made a mistake with Lavender a couple of months back when I was pissed. Now she's done the same with Charlie. I didn't tell her about mine, so I don't want to hear about hers. It's the only way we can make it.

"If so," I whisper, "it's mine, and that's it."

~o~

Part of my burden has lifted. He knows. He understands. He still wants me. "Why do you love me so much?" I ask suddenly.

"Well, I love you because..." His voice trails away.

I wait as he closes his eyes and searches for the words. Several moments pass, and he doesn't speak. "Ron?"

"I just do," he says finally.

I blink rapidly. He can't even name one reason he loves me. "That's rich," I say in irritation.

"Why do you love me?" he retorts.

"I just do," I toss back at him in a clever moment.

"Is it enough?"

"Yes."

~o~

I know she's disappointed that I didn't have a list ready for her as to why I love her, and I'm shocked that my answer was nearly 'because it's what everyone expects, because you're always here, because you're something stable in my life' or something like that.

So I can't exactly say why? I just know that she's my world. Clearing my throat, I say, "Charlie's promised that he's not going to bother you again."

"All right. I'll keep my distance."

"He's still my family," I say suddenly. "I can't fault the bloke for falling for the same amazing girl."

~o~

"Amazing?" I ask. "Sometimes I feel as if I'm only something convenient for you. Do you really feel that way?"

"Convenient? What's that supposed to mean?"

"I don't know, like you're only with me because it's... stable or what everyone expects."

He frowns and blushes. "You're amazing and the perfect girl for me."

My heart warms. "Sometimes I feel a bit lonely. It's like you are more concerned about Harry and the war. I just... need more of you."

"Bloody hell. You have all of me," he says defensively. "Don't act like I only think of you as a shag!"

~o~

In that moment I wonder if maybe Hermione hasn't chosen the wrong brother. I can't say the things she wants me to say, make her feel the way she wants to feel, and some of the solid reasoning that I have to be with her seems unacceptable as reasons to her.

"Sorry," she says, lips trembling.

I kiss them before she can cry. She's holding back. I feel it and carry on anyway. "You're so much more than a shag," I manage.

The tears in her eyes startle me, telling me she's been wanting to hear those words very badly.

~o~

Seemingly some good has come of what happened. Ron looks as if he's going to try to be more open with me, try to say the things I crave, try to give me the soft touches and kisses that I long for... I'm so tired of sneaking around, only having quick shags. I want him to be like...I have to stop thinking like this.

Charlie. I'll have to get him out of my head to make certain that I am faithful to Ron completely. Noticing his eyes are glistening, I ask, "What's wrong?"

"I want you to be safe."

~o~

"I will be," she says, cupping my face with her soft hands.

"Stay here with your parents."

"No."

"You must," I say, suddenly terrified of losing her, of having her face anymore battles like the one we'd been in earlier or the worse ones to come.

"This is my cause, too. I'll not just walk away from it."

"At least stay back with Ginny and help out with strategy or the injured." I sigh. "I can't take another one like tonight."

"We're fine."

"I ran off to fetch help while you and Harry stayed behind. Right brave of me, that."

~o~

"Why are you doing this?" I ask him. "You did what needed to be done. We came out all right." I frown. "Well enough, I mean..."

"Yeah, because my brother rides a fucking dragon!" he exclaims, rising to pace. "I can't deal with another tonight...us being separated. Promise me you'll stay behind when I ask." He kneels before me. "It's too hard to handle myself when I'm fearing for both you and Harry." He nods as if realizing something. "It's why Harry makes Ginny stay."

I hug him tightly and whisper, "You're one of the bravest men I know."

~o~

Something occurs to me. I'm worried about her, but death could find me as well. And if that should happen...my gut clenches tightly...I would want her to be happy and safe.

"Hermione, if something happens to me, I want you to know that I wouldn't mind..."

"Nothing will happen!"

"Stop, love, and listen." I hold her hands in my own. "Charlie, he loves you. I'm not sure how or why, but if something happens to me, he would take care of you."

"I don't want to talk about Charlie just now! You're my choice, Ron. You alone."

~o~

The prospect of losing Ron has upset me more than I ever imagined. Life would not be the same without him... or Harry. I always lived without Charlie. He only comes round once in a while, but this would be devastating.

"I'm just saying. Don't you feel guilty if I'm not here," he says quietly. "Live for me. Fight for me." His lips find mine for a small kiss.

I nod, realizing what he's saying is true. "I want you to do the same for me," I say. "If something should happen, I just want you to be happy. Promise?"

~o~

Smiling at her, I say, "I will." It feels as if I'm a bit lighter. She loves me, and while she cares for Charlie still, she's willing to put that aside and give me her heart and her life. For the first time in my life, I've bested my perfect brother at something.

There is a sudden crash and scream below, and instinct quickly takes over. We jump up with our wands out while I pull the Portkey out of my pocket, reactivate it, and press it into her hands.

"My parents!"

"I'll see to them."

"No!"

"You promised me!"

~o~

"Please!" I say, wanting to run down to see what's going on, but knowing that it's likely a raid on my family's home by Death Eaters.

He is on the verge of agreeing with me when the door bangs open, shards of wood flying about. The billowing, dark robes and white mask of a Death Eater barges in.

"What have we here?"

Ron jumps in front of me as the man's wand is pointed my way, and I clutch his robes to keep him from falling with his momentum. A jet of green light envelops us as the Portkey activates.

---

**Southern's Notes:** I'm well over my limit, so I had to stop here. Evil cliffy, I know, but I'm curious to see if anyone can guess what's happened. Quite obvious, eh? One chapter left.

**Christy's Notes:** The conversation between them was quite sad. I felt sorry for Ron and for her confusion, too. She wants to do what's right, but who knows what the right thing is?

## New Beginnings

*Chapter 5 of 5*

Hermione and Charlie learn to cope with things and start anew.

**Disclaimer:** Thanks, J.K.R. I'll snatch these characters for a few minutes and return them unharmed.

*Thanks go to CocoaChristy for giving this a read.*

---

Staring off into the distance, I jump as Hermione appears, clutching my brother's body to her and screaming hysterically. Everyone stands here completely dumbfounded. I am the first to go to her and look into Ron's open eyes, blue as ever but unseeing. My mother realizes that her youngest son has been killed and collapses into my father's arms.

"My house..." Hermione manages through frantic tears. "Death Eaters."

I see Harry gazing down at his best friends, a hard glare in his eyes. I know that the time for mourning Ron will be later. "Let's do this," I tell him.

~oOo~

Waiting is the hardest thing right now. Many of the others left to go to my home to defend my parents and to avenge Ron. They've been gone for a long time. Who will live? Who will join Ron? My tears have finally stopped and numbness is setting in. Ron died taking a curse for me.

Mrs. Weasley won't leave his side, and I feel uncomfortable sitting with her. I fear she will hold this grudge against me. I didn't ask for this. I would have gladly taken his place. *Why did you do this, Ron?* I know the answer.

~oOo~

I return from her nearly destroyed home to find that she's given in to exhaustion and has fallen asleep while sitting at my family's kitchen table. Her father has been lost, but her mother is receiving care at St. Mungo's and should live. Leaving as quickly as we did, we were able to capture or kill every Death Eater that had been in her home and had taken part in our loved ones, demises. Hours earlier, I would have given anything to have a way to be a part of her life. I would have never asked for this though.

~oOo~

Feeling someone running a hand down my back, I wake to find Harry sitting across from me while Charlie sits at my left. Ginny is hunched over, eyes closed, against Harry. After my eyes focus, I ask, "Mom? Dad?" Harry shakes his head. I turn to Charlie.

"Your father has been lost," he admits sadly, "but your mother will live."

"Where is she?" I ask, rising to my feet.

"I'll take you to her," Charlie offers.

Harry says, "No, I'll bring her."

"You can give my sister more comfort than I can," Charlie says firmly, putting his arms around me.

~oOo~

Not caring that Harry is glaring at me scornfully, I Apparate Hermione to St. Mungo's and lead her to the room where her mother is being treated.

"I'll give you some privacy," I say, moving towards the door.

"Please stay."

I do and sit in the corner to watch her as she holds her mother's limp hand and cries. If I hadn't pushed her so far, she wouldn't have been at her house, and Ron wouldn't have gone to her. He would be alive. Guilt eats at me eagerly, and I do nothing to stop it. I deserve the feeling.

~oOo~

Seeing my mother so frail and near death horrifies me. Her attack is my fault. My father's murder is my fault. Ron's death is my fault. I look over at Charlie and see that he looks as broken as I feel. I want to rail at him and ask if he's proud of himself, but I know that it's not the thing to do. His part is minor in what happened. If I would never have been graced with magic, Voldemort would have never heard of me, and my parents would be fine. It's just too much to handle now.

~oOo~

After listening to hours of whispers from daughter to sleeping mother, I pry her away from the bed and ask if she'd let me take her back home. She nods numbly, and within moments, I am carrying her up the stairs at my family's home. Noticing that Harry is with Ginny in her room, I keep climbing the stairs and place Hermione in Ron's bed, feeling that she needs to be with 'him' this night.

"Leaving?"

"Yes."

"Don't."

"All right," I reply, conjuring a chair and settling in to watch her sleep. I wonder if Ron's been taken off already.

~oOo~

I know Charlie is hurting, and the first moment we get after the funeral, I pull him aside and give him a hug.

"Hermione, I'm so sorry," he says. "If I hadn't instigated—"

"Shhh," I whisper. "Things happen for a reason. I think if I hadn't gone home, my mother would have died with my father." I sigh. "Granted, Ron would be alive, but I think if he would have had to choose, he would have picked this. It's just his way."

He nods and seems somewhat relieved, but pain is still in his eyes.

"We'll get through this."

~oOo~

Hermione consoles Ginny while Harry comes to talk to me. I listen to him only half-heartedly, as I have other things on my mind. I finally hear something that catches my interest.

"Don't you hurt her or leave her again. Ron wouldn't want that," he says casually before sipping his drink.

"He wanted me to leave her alone. I am confused."

"That was before." He nodded towards the girls. "Let the past stay there. Look to the future. It's what we all have to do if we're going to win. Ron's death won't be in vain."

"Thanks, Harry. We'll see."

## EPILOUGE

Months have passed since we lost Ron. I've watched as others fell as the war came to a close. Charlie has never left my side since Ron's death. He only offered companionship, never crossing the line. Until I told him what Ron said to me right before his death, that is. In that instant, things changed. Without another word, he became my future, and things developed between us again. Mrs. Weasley never said a word when she saw us huddled together for the first time. My mother welcomed Charlie into our lives. And we're about to welcome a daughter.

~oOo~

I smile as Hermione shows her mother the pictures from the doctor's visit. Both are excitedly watching the little one's movements.

"She's beautiful," Jane says.

"She is," I agree.

"Well, we can't really see her that clearly," Hermione puts in.

"Anything from you has to be beautiful," I say, unashamed.

She smiles and leans over to kiss me. Her mother interrupts the moment.

“What will you name her?”

“Charon,” Hermione says promptly.

“That’s different.”

We’ve never discussed it, so I listen to her explanation.

“The ‘cha’ is for Charlie, and the ‘ron’ is for Ron.”

I nod. “I like it.”

---

**Southern’s Notes:** I’m sorry that I included the small epilogue in with this one or if it seems like the tale was cut short. I feel as though it’s enough to give us something to look forward to and think about without having to actually see it.

Charon is a name that I’ve always liked. It can be found in Astronomy as one of Pluto’s moon’s, and it can also be found in mythology, as the name of the ferryman who ferried the dead across the river.

Thanks for reading. I appreciate the kind reviews—especially since I’ve never written these ships before.

**Christy’s Notes:** Oh, how sad and sweet at the same time! I felt bad for Ron, but I agree that he’d want them to be happy. I am glad Harry gave his blessing.