

Three's a Crowd

by Southern_Witch_69

Hermione and Harry seek out each other for comfort after Ron's supposed death.
What happens when he's found alive?

One-shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: I'm having a bit of fun with J.K.R.'s characters. No Galleons are being made. Pity.

Notes: I want to thank CocoaChristy for reading through this for me. This is a response to prompt number 35 over at the LJ Community Trioqf's Fifth Wave. (See end for details.)

"Where's Ron?" Hermione asked, panicking slightly. "He was behind us just a moment ago. Just there." She pointed back near a large tree. At that moment, something moved in the darkness, twigs breaking as it did so.

"He probably just needed to have a pee," Harry said, turning back to point his lit wand to the path in front of them. "Looks like someone's been here recently. See how the overgrown weeds are beaten down some?"

Hermione nodded. "That's not good."

"No," Harry agreed. "If anyone came this way, they could only be looking for..." He spun around and pointed his wand back to where they'd last seen Ron. "He would have said something to one of us."

"Ron!" Hermione called loudly.

"Shh!" Harry exclaimed, pulling her back off the path behind a tree. Whispering, he added, "I don't think Ron's alone."

"Why do you say that? Do you see someone?" she asked, worry littering her words.

Before Harry could answer, a sudden litany of different colored lights suddenly lit the dark sky. With each, the shapes of four Death Eaters could be made out...all directing their spells towards a tree where Ron was holed up. Without thinking, both ran out from behind their cover and began casting spells of their own, getting a couple shot back at them.

A jet of pale light hit Hermione, causing her to fall immediately. Both Harry and Ron called out to her, but there was no answer. Quickly dropping down into the brush next to her, he continually flicked his wand towards the Death Eaters in hopes of keeping them away while he checked her.

"Harry!" Ron yelled from afar. "She all right?"

A quick look told him that she was still breathing. It seemed as though she were sleeping peacefully. "I think it was a Slumber Spell," he called back. "I can't really be sure though." He ducked down as spells were cast his way.

More pops of Apparition sounded.

"Bloody hell!" Ron shouted. "There's more of them!"

Harry opened his mouth to reply when he noticed Hermione shuddering as if in a seizure. "Something's wrong with Hermione!" he yelled.

"Take her and go, Harry! Use the Portkey!"

"But, Ron, I can't just..."

"*Do it!*" Ron yelled in reply before casting hexes towards the newcomers. "Take care of her for me, Harry."

Some were nearing Harry and Hermione. He had to get her to someplace safe, to someone who could help her. He could come right back with others to help Ron.

"*Protego!*" he roared forcefully, protecting them from a few curses shot their way by the approaching Death Eaters. "Hang on, Ron! I'll be back with the others!" he said as he activated the Portkey. Pulling Hermione into his embrace, he held her tightly as the familiar tug behind his navel signified their escape.

Harry frowned as he watched Hermione sleep. It had been six weeks since they'd lost Ron. The moment he'd ensured her safety and medical care, he'd gone back with help. There had been no sign of Ron: not a drop of blood, no body, nothing. The worst came a few days later when Yaxley had been captured. He'd told a tale of how the others had tortured and killed Ron, along with other important tidbits of information, in exchange for his life. It seemed that the new Minister wasn't above getting physical or carrying out death sentences to set examples.

They'd all started mourning Ron that day. Harry, feeling the need to be protective over his other best friend, insisted on being allowed to stay with Hermione no matter where they were, be it Grimmauld Place, Hogwarts, or the Burrow. Everyone seemed to understand, aside from Ginny of course.

Hermione, who had been fully healed, seemed to want his comfort and never tried to deter his decision to remain with her. After a week of sleeping on a Transfigured cot, she'd patted the bed beside her in invitation. He'd been sleeping next to her ever since, sometimes waking up to find her entangled in his arms. Neither mentioned it.

A soft sigh broke into his thoughts, and his gaze slid over his friend's form. The duvet had slipped to the side, and one of her legs was exposed. He reached out without thinking of the consequences and softly touched her just above the ankle. Slowly, he moved his hand up over her smooth flesh, enjoying the soft feel beneath his palm. He stopped when his hand came in contact with the hem of her nightgown, which was about mid thigh. Instead of removing his hand, he let it stay there and closed his eyes.

It had been so long since he'd had sex, not that he'd done it all that much. Was that the reason he was reacting this way towards Hermione? Was she just a beautiful girl that he'd been too close to? Was Ginny right? Would too much time in Hermione's company ruin things they planned to have one day? It wasn't hard to imagine his life without Ginny. He'd been without her for a long while as it was.

The thought of losing Hermione, however, was too much to bear. She kept him grounded, kept him sane. He didn't want to be without her, and if he never had a relationship with Ginny after this war was over, given that he would be the victor, so be it. Hermione mattered more. And anyway, he'd promised Ron.

He opened his eyes only to find that Hermione's eyes were open and watching him intently. Reflexively, he squeezed her flesh before pulling his hand back. "Hermione, I..." He wasn't certain as to what he could say to her. He'd been caught touching her, crossing the line.

To his surprise, she boldly pulled his hand back to her leg. However, she didn't stop there. She moved it so that it glided up, passed over her heated center...causing Harry to groan...slid it up her soft stomach, and placed it firmly against the curve of her full breast. Her other hand reached up to touch the side of his face.

Ever so slowly his head lowered. When their lips met, he felt a spark of heat pass through him. Opening his mouth in invitation, he deepened their kiss when she did the same, tongues tangling, exploring, tasting. The soft press of her lips felt better than anything he'd ever experienced.

God, Hermione... how could I have not known we'd feel this right?

Someone moaned, and before Harry realized what was happening, his hands were unfastening the buttons of her nightgown, revealing her body to him. He took in her high, full breasts, the pert nipples bidding him hello, the soft skin of her stomach, and the knickers hiding her most intimate place from him. He smiled appreciatively and gazed at her.

"Are you..."

His words were cut off by her lips as she leaned up and kissed him again, her hands pulling down his pajama bottoms. He knew then that he didn't need to ask if she wanted to go further. Her actions spoke for her. Eagerly kicking away his pajamas and underpants while she did the same with her knickers, his hands roamed over her flesh, caressing her breasts, sliding beneath her to cup her arse, and finally moving to rest between her thighs.

His brain recognized many things at once: wet, hot, sensual grinding. She needed him just as much as he needed her. Further foreplay was unnecessary at that moment. She was more than ready. As he quickly moved into position, her lips left his and moved down to suckle at his throat and shoulder. He was certain she would leave a mark. The odd part? He wanted her to.

"Anh," she muttered as he slid in roughly.

He echoed with a grunt and pulled back to begin the first of many thrusts, starting their rhythm. Surprisingly, Hermione wrapped her legs behind his thighs, helping to pull him further into her with each stroke. Her back arched, enabling her to be in a position for full stimulation.

"Don't stop, Harry, don't stop... more," she murmured before beginning a litany of pants and moans.

He obliged by slamming into her until he could hold back no longer. Luckily, she'd already peaked and had slumped back in bliss. For many minutes, he simply remained lying on top of her, both breathing heavy.

I've had sex with Hermione. Incredible sex. There was only a slight pang of guilt as Ron's face flashed through his mind. The vision was soon followed by the memory of Ron yelling for Harry to take care of her for him. *I fully intend to take care of her. Always.*

Harry placed a few kisses along Hermione's collarbone before looking up into her eyes. "All right, Hermione?" he asked, voice soft and hopeful.

"Never better," she replied, holding him to her more tightly. "Never better, Harry."

"What do we do now?" he asked later, after he'd moved to lay behind her.

"We just keep living. We find the last Horcrux before going to find Voldemort. We build a life after that... together if you'd like," she whispered.

"I would," he said firmly, tightening his hold on her. "I'll take care of you."

"And I'll take care of you," she replied.

"About Ron..."

"I know," she said. "Shhh."

The end had come more quickly than anyone could have imagined. In a matter of months, all the Horcruxes had been destroyed, including Nagini, leaving only Voldemort. In an anticlimactic duel, Harry had bested the man, blasting him with Snape's created slicing hex in the throat. Voldemort had been greatly weakened, though, since all the parts of his soul had been destroyed. Luckily, he didn't realize until Harry was upon them why he'd been feeling out of sorts.

Hermione had been with him all the way, winning a duel against Bellatrix thanks to a little help from Neville. As Order members collected themselves and as Aurors took away the remaining Death Eaters that had given up, Harry opened his arms to Hermione, who immediately fell into his embrace. They shared their first public kiss, not caring who was about or what they thought.

Most had likely suspected that they'd been seeing each other secretly. From what he could tell, none seemed to mind or think they were disgracing Ron's memory. It was an unspoken agreement that they needed each other; he was happy that everyone approved. Well, almost everyone. Only Ginny seemed bitter and suspicious, but she'd never openly said anything.

Fleur Weasley's screams of anguish drew Harry's gaze. She was clutching the lifeless body of her husband. Molly moved to try to comfort her and to cry over her lost son. Her added wails soon ended, and she shouted in disbelief.

"Ronald!"

Harry and Hermione both watched as Arthur helped his badly beaten son walk over to his mother.

"Yaxley lied! Been alive all this while, he has," Arthur was saying to all. "My son's alive."

"Lose one son and regain one they thought was lost," commented Hestia from their side. "I expect you two should go and greet your friend."

Holding Hermione's hand, Harry led her over. He was quite happy to see that Ron had lived, and he could tell that Hermione felt the same. While the twins were hugging their younger brother, a feeling of dread fell over him.

Hermione.

Would he lose her? Would Ron be angry that they'd moved on together? How did Hermione feel about the situation? He felt her hand squeezing his, causing him to meet her eyes. She seemed to be reassuring him that all would be well, that things would work out.

But for whom?

He released her hand the moment Ron opened his arms for her. Harry watched *ashis* Hermione snuggled into Ron's embrace.

"Come on then, Harry," Ron said, voice cracking with emotion.

Feeling tears forming in his eyes, he moved to embrace Ron and Hermione. *God, I'm being selfish. My best friend is alive, and all I care about is losing Hermione to him!* The three of them held each other and cried freely as others gathered around.

When Harry finally pulled away, resolved to let things simply happen...even if that meant losing her, his eyes met the shiny brown eyes of Ginny. He could tell that her expression was quite smug and knew that part of her was happy that Ron had lived... just so Harry would lose Hermione to him and be hurt as she'd been when she'd realized that he would never go back to her.

Without thinking, he angrily Disapparated to Grimmauld Place. He didn't want to be around any of them. He didn't want to know what Hermione's decision was. He didn't want to see Ron's face as she, or someone else, told him that Harry had made the moves on Hermione and wanted her for his own.

He decided that he would celebrate alone. He was tired of always having people underfoot, always having someone wanting to get to know the Boy Who Lived. It was the first time that he could look forward to the future without the threat of Voldemort looming in the distance.

"*Accio Ogden's*," he said, catching the bottle of whisky as it zoomed his way. He didn't bother with a glass, simply drinking from the bottle. He moved to look out of a window that overlooked the small backyard. He and Hermione had made love beneath the stars more than one night in that very backyard.

How could he be free of her if everything reminded him of her? He frowned and took another sip. The distinct crack of Apparition from the kitchen drew him from his thoughts, and he turned around, hoping that Hermione had come for him.

To his disappointment, it was Remus. He nodded a greeting and turned back to look out the window.

"So this is where our hero has run off to?" Remus asked, moving to stand beside him. "Hermione figured you'd come home, needing time to yourself. She wants you to go to the Burrow when you feel up to it."

Harry nodded and didn't look at his friend.

"She's only going there to help Molly with things. They've lost Bill. Fleur's a mess. Percy's bad off. Penelope was killed yesterday, did you know?"

"I know about that already," Harry said, feeling guilty for not sounding more compassionate. "I just have things on my mind, and I... I don't know exactly what to do with myself anymore now that Voldemort's dead."

"Now, it's time to live, Harry. You've no limits to what you can do," Remus said, putting a hand on Harry's shoulder.

"The shock of seeing Ron tonight..."

A long silence stretched between them until Remus cleared his throat. "The Harry that I know would never leave something unsaid." He shook his head. "No, he'd say what was on his mind and face the consequences."

"This is different."

"It's not," Remus insisted. "I learned my lesson the hard way. Fight for what you want, Harry. Make it work. Tell Ron that she's yours now."

Harry then turned to gaze at Lupin. "What if that's not what *she* wants? The only reason she's with me is because he wasn't here. What if Ron hates us?"

"I think you can handle Ron's feelings," Remus said. "He's probably just happy to be free. A Healer is seeing to him as we speak, making certain nothing will linger and administering potions to him."

"And if he is what she wants?"

"Do you think she wants him?"

"I don't know. They were lovers first," Harry said. "I never meant to love her, but I do now." He sat down heavily. "At the same time, I don't want to hurt Ron. He's been through so much, you know?"

Remus nodded. "I'm sure things will work themselves out. For now, come with me back to the Burrow. Everyone's expecting you. Don't shut us out now."

Remus Disapparated, leaving Harry to ponder things. A portrait that had been listening to their conversation quietly said, "He's right, you know. Fight for her. I've seen the two of you together these past couple of months. She wants you, mate. Be sure of that."

Harry looked up at the woman. She normally only made haughty faces at them, sometimes giving them snide advice. It was the first time she'd been kind. He saluted her with the bottle, took a deep swig, placed it down, and Disapparated away.

When he entered the kitchen of the Burrow, Molly motioned for him to follow her back outside. Once there, she said, "I've only just got him back, Harry. I don't want him traipsing off too soon. The Healer's given him something to make him sleep, so wait to talk to him in the morning."

"Mrs. Weasley, I wasn't going to ask him to do anything. We've all had enough, and I think we should all take time to just sit back and... enjoy life." He looked past her and saw Hermione coming out.

"Harry, I was worried!" she said, moving to his side, giving him a quick hug.

Molly shook her head and looked away. "Just... Oh, come on in then. I've got onion soup."

Hermione pulled Harry in behind the woman without saying anything. A large bowl was thrust at Harry, and he took his place at their table. The twins were retelling some of the things they'd seen during the altercation. The mood was somber, having lost one son and a daughter-in-law to Voldemort, but the family had hope. Ron had come back. Bill had a child that would carry on his name. Percy could rebuild his life in the wake of his wife's death. Family stuck together.

That was not lost on Harry. Would he no longer be welcomed as part of the family if Ron chose to shun him? He would hate to lose the Weasleys. They were the only family he'd ever truly been a part of. He watched Hermione as she held Bill's son on her lap, telling him a story about a young wizard who'd lost his mum's wand. She would have a lot to lose as well.

"Bet you're right glad to have You-Know-Who off you're back, eh?" Charlie asked quietly. Everyone at the table grew silent suddenly and looked at him.

"Yeah, I am." He smiled wanly. "Don't know what I'll do now. I've always been striving for that goal. Now that it's here, I feel so lost."

"You're free, Harry," Hermione said softly.

"That's right," Fred added. "Think positively, mate. There's no old bloke waiting for you to take 'im out!"

Harry's eyes never left Hermione's. The words she'd said to him long before, after they'd made love the first time, came back to him. He used them to gauge her reaction. If anyone had any objections, they would voice them in the next moment.

"Free to build a new life," he said, adding, "together."

She nodded and smiled. "A new life sounds great. I'd like to spend some time with my parents. I've not seen them in so long."

"Oi!"

Everyone looked towards the stairway. It was Ron's voice shouting down.

"He supposed to be sleeping, what with the potion the Healer gave him!" Molly said, quickly climbing the stairs to see to him. After a few moments, she came back. "He wants to see you two," she said, nodding to Harry and Hermione."

Dread formed in Harry's stomach. He wondered if Ron's mother had broken the news to him or if someone else had slipped and said something. Following Hermione, he climbed the stairway up to Ron's room.

"How are you feeling?" Hermione asked.

"Same as before. Minus the hurt," he said with a small smile. "Healer gave me something for the pain."

Harry stayed quiet, uncertain where to begin.

Ron beckoned for him to move closer, but he stayed where he was. "I guess we need to talk." He looked from one to the other. "When I was in there, the thought of you two kept me going. I knew I had to hold on."

Taking another step back, Harry felt his gut tighten even more. Guilt began to nip at him, greedily taking chunks of his soul. "Ron..."

"Let me finish, Harry," he said determinedly. "Then one day, they told me that they'd gotten word that the two of you were seeing each other. Shagging in the moonlight to hear them tell it."

Hermione stood. "Ron, I..."

"Please, Hermione, I have to say it." He swallowed. "I thought they were lying, but then one forced me to view a Pensieve... Just another way to torture me, you see... aside from all the hexes and bugging of course."

Harry couldn't face Ron. How had someone spied on him and Hermione? He'd warded the grounds himself. He should have been the one to tell Ron... not some damn Death Eater. His throat went dry, and he was unable to form words of apology as he thought of all the things his mate had endured. *Yeah, he's over there getting tortured, and I'm off shagging his girl.* He frowned. *I thought he was dead. I just couldn't lose her, too.* He thought of life without Hermione and knew it would be hard.

"I used that anger to stay alive. I wanted to see you again so that I could kick your arse," Ron said, voice rising a little. "But then, the more I thought about it, the more I realized that it made sense." He nodded. "That's right. If I couldn't be there for her, then I wanted you to."

Hermione was crying. "Oh, Ron," she sobbed, sitting next to him again and taking his hand. "We missed you so much. It wasn't right away. I swear it..."

"S all right," Ron said.

Harry knew he had to make a stand. If he let her slip away, Ron would win her back. He could feel it. "Hermione," he said, voice wavering. When she looked back at him, he held out his hand in silent question. He watched as she wiped her tears and gazed at his hand. Just as he was about to retract it in defeat, she stood and grasped it tightly.

He let out a breath of relief and clung to her. Having her at his side gave him the strength to face Ron. "Sorry, mate," he whispered. "She's mine now."

All three of them remained quiet for a long moment. It was Ron who spoke first. "Fair enough."

"This is awkward," Hermione said shakily. She took a deep breath before speaking again. "Oh, I'm just happy you're alive!"

"Same here," Ron said.

"Me, too," Harry agreed. "Maybe, er, we could still all be housemates like we'd talked about? Only..."

"Only Hermione wouldn't be sharing a room with me," Ron added. He nodded. "Maybe so. I think I'm going to stay here for a while. Let Mum wait on me and treat me like a king. You know how she is." He grinned broadly. "I wish things could have turned out differently, but I've had all this time to deal with it, and I'm all right with it. Really, I am."

From the doorway, Molly, who had likely been eavesdropping said, "How about a spot of soup since you're awake, Ron?"

"Sure, Mum," he said, sitting up. "After that, I'll get back to trying to sleep." He looked to his friends. "Be sure that the two of you come here tomorrow. Bring some chocolates and all the stats from Quidditch for this season that I've missed." He smirked. "And, Harry, you might as well hand over that Playwizard collection you have. Looks like I'll be the one needing them now."

"You have a collection?" Hermione asked, playfully elbowing him.

"Er... well, I wouldn't call it that," Harry began, turning red.

"Oh, yeah," Ron said, "he's got loads of magazines. Even has...WATCH IT!" he yelled as Harry tossed a nearby pillow at him. "Bloody hell. It's more dangerous in here than it was out there!"

With their combined laughter, Harry knew that things would be fine and would work out for them all. It would be awkward at first, but he was certain they could make it work. Smiling genuinely for the first time since his battle, he looked forward to a future that was yet to be planned out for him.

Southern's Notes: Not the best story I've done, but I like it all the same. I had a bit of trouble with bringing Ron back, being uncertain how to make it all work out "happily" for them all. It was a bit fast-paced, but I hope you still enjoyed it anyway. Cheers.

This was prompt number 35 (Ron returns from Death Eater Captivity to find that Harry and Hermione are together!).