

With You I'm Born Again

by jmlane57

What happens between the time Harry and company leave the Headmaster's study and Ginny sees him again. Starts where Chapter 36 of DH leaves off. (One of a planned series intended to bridge the gap between Chapter 36 and the Epilogue.)

I Was Half, Not Whole

Chapter 1 of 1

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With You I'm Born Again

(Song by Billy Preston)

Come bring me your softness

Comfort me through all this madness

Woman, don't you know, with you I'm born again

Come give me your sweetness

Now there's you, there is no weakness

Lying safe within your arms, I'm born again

I was half, not whole

In step with none

Reaching through this world

In need of one

Come show me your kindness

In your arms I know I'll find this

Woman, don't you know with you I'm born again

Lying safe with you, I'm born again

Upon leaving the Headmaster's study, Harry felt weariness and hunger descend upon him like a tangible weight. He was only eighteen, but felt as though he had experienced enough for several lifetimes. As his friends led him up to Gryffindor Tower, he thought of Ginny in the Great Hall, most likely still in her mother's arms. He wanted so very much to be with her, feel her warmth in his arms, taste the sweetness of her lips once again ... but he was just too tired, too hungry, too *everything* right now to think beyond his present physical need for rest and nourishment.

He hoped she wasn't too upset with him for leaving without so much as a word or a smile in her direction, but wouldn't blame her if she was. There would be a lot to do in the reparation and rebuilding of the Wizarding and Muggle worlds, both physically and emotionally. Hopefully the two of them would be too busy assisting with both to dwell on past grievances and manage to enjoy what private, quality time they could manage to catch in between all the work, but he couldn't count on that. He would simply have to be as prepared as best he could for whatever happened in the upcoming days and weeks.

It was at this point that they entered the boys' dormitory, and Ron led Harry to his waiting bed, settling him on the side of it, then helping him to lie down. Harry sighed blissfully as he sank into the pillow and mattress. They embraced his weary, aching body like the arms of a lover.

Ginny's arms ... Inexplicable tears sprang to his eyes at the memory of the pain he had put both her and himself through a year ago, but he kept them closed so the others wouldn't see. Even though the breakup had been necessary, knowing that hadn't made it any easier to endure, not for either of them. Fortunately, that was all behind them now, but it would still take some time to get back to where they had been before everything had gone to hell.

Ron and Hermione seemed to sense this even as they exchanged glances, and she left to get them all some food and drink from the Hogwarts kitchens. While she was gone, Ron gently removed Harry's shoes, then his glasses, putting them in his customary spot...on his night-stand. Harry reluctantly cracked open his eyes to see a blurry image of his closest friend sitting next to him. However, he saw only Ron. Where was Hermione? Alarmed, he tried to sit up, but was gently pushed back down.

"Don't worry, mate," came his friend's gentle, soothing voice. "Mione just went to get us all some food and drink from Kreacher."

"I'm so hungry I could eat a hippogriff," Harry declared just before yawning deeply several times. "I just hope I'm not too tired to eat."

"No one would blame you if you were, mate. But what matters is that the worst is all behind us now."

"The war is, yes ... but I have a feeling that the real work is yet to come."

"It'll wait," Ron assured him. "At least until we've had the chance to rest up. And I'm sure Gin will understand if you can't see her or be with her right away. She's waited seven years for you; I don't think a few more days are going to make any difference."

"As long as it's just a few more days," Harry interjected. "I've put her through so much already ..." His voice trailed off into another deep yawn.

"She knew the risks of being with you from the get-go, mate. What matters is that now we've got the time to build our lives, our futures, all thanks to you. If it hadn't been for you, none of us would *have* a future."

Harry closed his eyes in pain at the thought of Remus and Tonks's son, orphaned as a baby just as Harry himself had been, the pair having sacrificed themselves in order to give their son a better life and happier future. He could only hope to prove himself a worthy choice as Teddy's godfather. Not to mention the close to fifty others who had lost their lives, among them Colin Creevey and Fred Weasley.

One of the few good things about this was that Neville had proved his mettle in his attack on Voldemort and his killing of Nagini, the last Horcrux, and as a result, redeemed himself in his grandmother's eyes; because of this they shared a new, closer relationship. But balanced against all the casualties were the thousands of Wizarding and Muggle families who could now live without fear, which surely must be what Ron had to be referring to.

As much as it would hurt to know that even more of his friends and loved ones were gone, no others were likely to lose family or friends, thanks to his and his friends' efforts. But there was someone more important than any of the others, someone with whom he very much wanted to begin building a future. However, he knew he would need help to do so.

"Ron?"

"Yeah?"

"Tell Ginny I want her to come by and see me, sit with me, even if I'm asleep. I'll sense her through my Legilimency and feel better, knowing she's close by." Harry's green eyes looked beseechingly into his friend's blue ones, and Ron knew he couldn't refuse him.

"No problem, mate. First chance I get. Promise." Ron squeezed Harry's nearest hand and the latter's lips curled into a smile...lips that had had so little to smile about. But now, with any luck, that would all change ... and very soon.

A short time later Hermione returned laden with food and drink from Kreacher, personally cooked by him for them. They happily tucked in the best meal they'd had in days, Harry having managed to rouse himself just long enough to fill his empty stomach. Shortly after finishing his meal, however, he was lying down again, out like the proverbial light almost the moment his head hit the pillow. Even as Hermione cleared away the remnants of the meal, she heard Harry begin to snore softly, and she again exchanged glances with Ron.

"What say we get some kip, too, 'Mione? Merlin knows we've bloody well earned it."

"Here?" She seemed almost scandalised. Sharing a two-bedroom tent was one thing; this was sharing *aroom* ... and what's more, she was in the *boys'* dormitory!

"Don't worry; all I want to do is sleep. Fun and games can wait until we've got more energy."

Their eyes met again, and Hermione knew that even as much as Ron may have wanted her, he wanted and needed rest even more. "If you say so," she returned dubiously but willingly. "Is there room enough for two in your bed?"

Ron's eyes momentarily widened at her question in spite of himself, but he simply said, "I think so ... if we lie close."

The pair then made their way to the adjoining bed, removing simply the outer layer of their clothing, along with their shoes and robes, and crawled beneath the covers to settle down for the night. "Good night, 'Mione." Ron kissed the top of her head, then rested his cheek on it, loving the sweet smell of her hair and the warmth of her body, not to mention the feel of her arms around him.

"Good night, Ron. Love you." With that, Hermione's eyes closed, and within moments she was deeply asleep.

Ron watched her sleep for a while before falling asleep himself, wanting to kiss her in the worst way, but knew that...among other things...would have to wait, at least for now. And when that time came, they fully intended to be alone and not snog in front of Harry again.

Speaking of Harry, neither knew it, but he had turned on his side to face the adjoining bed, cracking his eyes open momentarily to note his friends sharing a bed. He smiled knowingly to himself before going back to sleep, wishing that Ginny could have been with him right now, too ... but for now, the best he could realistically expect was an

intense dream of her. *Best get to it, then*, he told himself, bunching up his pillow under his head for comfort and drifting off into a romantic yet tantalisingly erotic dream of the one he loved. Best of all, he no longer had to worry about losing her to Voldemort...or any other Dark wizard or witch.

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Meanwhile, Ginny lifted her head from her mother's shoulder and looked around for Harry. She excused herself from her mother upon not finding him visually and went to search the room for him. After a time she sought out Luna when she couldn't find either Harry, Ron or Hermione. It frankly wouldn't surprise her if Harry had sought them out, then the three of them had gone somewhere to get away from all the carnage and destruction. She couldn't blame them for that, but the least they could have done was let her know they were leaving!

Tears burned her eyes at Harry leaving her behind yet again and, what was worse, without even a smile, much less a word to her. The best she could hope for now was that they had left a message for her with someone...and the most likely candidates were Luna and Neville. However, he was presently surrounded by a throng of enthralled admirers, so she headed for Luna, who was sitting at the nearby Ravenclaw House table.

"Luna?" Ginny called quietly as she stood next to her.

Luna looked up and smiled wearily. "Yes?"

"I can't find Harry, Ron or Hermione. Do you know where they might be?"

"I saw Harry a while back. He said he wanted some peace and quiet away from everything. I created a diversion so he could slip away without detection. I also suspect that he took Ron and Hermione with him for companionship."

Not surprising, Ginny thought with renewed hurt and anger even as she understood (at least intellectually) that Harry needed this time alone with his friends just as much as he needed rest and nourishment. But would it have been so hard for him, so much to ask, to have included her, just this once?

As if reading her companion's mind (and at times like these, Ginny wasn't sure that Luna couldn't), Luna said, "Don't worry, Gin. I'm sure you'll see him...them...again very soon."

"Probably," Ginny returned with a pasted-on smile, although she privately harboured serious doubts as to this scenario.

Luna continued, as if Ginny had not spoken. "Most likely as soon as they get some sleep, something to eat and share some quality time together without having to worry about either Voldemort, Horcruxes or fighting a war."

"I would like some quality time with Harry myself. After all, I haven't been with him for over a year. In fact I've done little but mark the days, just getting on with my life as best I can, simply thinking of him, dreaming about him and missing him."

"I'm sure he misses you and wants to be with you too. Don't worry. I'm sure everything will turn out fine."

Ginny bowed her head in pain for a moment, then lifted it to meet Luna's grey-blue eyes, eyes full of sympathy and understanding, after a soft, cool hand covered her own.

"Believe me, I understand how you feel. I've been in love with Neville for some time now, but he's too wrapped up in all the attention and adulation to have time for me at the moment."

Ginny was happy for her but incredulous. "You've been seeing Neville?"

"For about two months," Luna confirmed.

"Maybe I should tell him you want to see him."

"No, don't disturb him. He'll remember me eventually."

"Eventually"? You bloody well deserve better than that. Wait right here." With that, Ginny stood up and marched over to Neville, then leaned down and spoke softly to him. Neville looked up in Luna's direction and smiled apologetically, then excused himself from the throng of admirers surrounding him and accompanied Ginny back to where Luna was.

Within moments he had slid an arm around Luna's slender waist, bringing her to her feet and nuzzling her ear before the pair left the Great Hall, Ginny sure that Luna was smiling and blushing with the last glimpse she caught of her friend's face. It made her feel good to know that even if she couldn't help herself, she could at least help someone else.

It had been bad enough to have thought, even for a moment, that Harry was dead without his disappearing on her without a word. She prayed Luna was right but couldn't count on it. The most she could do for the present was hope for the best and plan the choice words she intended to say to Harry when she saw him again...and make no mistake, she fully intended to have her say. And what was more, she also fully intended to get the story of the last year and the Horcrux hunt, even if she had to literally tie all three of the Trio down and give them doses of Veritaserum.

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Fortunately Ron managed to keep his promise and told Ginny what Harry had said. That afternoon, she went up to the boys' dormitory in Gryffindor Tower to sit with him, just feasting her eyes on his incredible face and his closed eyes with long, dark lashes, the most beautiful things she had seen in a year. She had never seen his hair so long in her life, just a swath of ebony silk down to his shoulders, making a mental note to get a lock of it when it came time to cut it to the length he normally wore it.

Not that she hadn't carried his image in her heart for years, but especially this last year. Being without him had only reinforced that image, and her love had only grown with the passage of time. How long it would be before they resumed their previous relationship, Ginny had no idea. What mattered was that they no longer had Voldemort hanging over their heads and that both she and Harry had come through the War alive, if not unscathed ... so whatever excuses he might come up with to postpone their reunion, the Dark Lord would not be one of them.

She hated the additional scars on his body, particularly the permanent burn mark made by the locket Horcrux over his heart to name just one. There was no one who deserved it less than Harry...burns, torture, having his arm slashed open, curse scars, and near-starvation, as well as physical and emotional abuse. Not only that, of course, but slander and libel by the press, a Dark wizard trying to kill him, and losing his parents as a baby, not to mention the closest thing he'd ever had to a father when he was fifteen after only knowing him for two years. How could anyone have endured all that without becoming a basket case?

Harry had managed, although she had no idea how. It was a cinch that she certainly couldn't have, not in a million years, which said much for his strength of character. Economic hardship was one thing, emotional hardship quite another. At least she and her family had love and a close-knit relationship, however poor they had been ... which was more than one could have said for poor Harry.

If it hadn't been for her and her family, Ron and Hermione, Hagrid, Dumbledore, Sirius and Remus, he probably would never have known what love and affection were, much less how to express it physically. Of course, she had done all she could to help him in their brief weeks together and fully intended to give further help once they had resumed their romance.

She shifted in her seat after taking a swig of butterbeer, which she had charmed so it would remain cold for hours, and her movements roused Harry, if only slightly. He smelled a familiar flowery scent and knew immediately who was beside him. *Ginny. She was here.*

"Gin?" he whispered, tightening his grip on her hand.

"Harry, love, just sleep. Time enough for talk later."

"Just wanted to thank you for being here."

"Think nothing of it. I'm happy to do it. Shush now. Go back to sleep. If I'm not here when you wake up, you know what to do."

Harry raised her hand to his lips and kissed it, then went back to sleep with a smile, still holding the hand, their fingers gently but firmly entwined as it rested on his chest. Ginny ran her free hand through Harry's hair, provoking a sigh, another smile and a barely audible whisper: "I love you," before he went back to sleep again.

Ginny smiled at his words and kissed his hand this time, specifically, the scarred one. She still had plenty of grievances with Harry, of course, but they could wait, at least for the present. All the same, Ginny had no intention of allowing even Harry to get away with not treating her right...and before this episode in their lives was over, he *would* make proper amends to her, or she would know the reason why.