Remember to Forget
by auselysium

Summary

Years after the final battle, Harry decides to stop using magic and return to the Muggle world. Hermione helps him disappear.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.

To Hermione, it felt like murder. It was not the stopping of a heart, no, but the robbing of a soul. She did not steal away breath, but instead the very essence of what makes a life. And no matter how many times he asked her, begged her to do it, no matter how many times he told her it was what he wanted, what he needed to be free, that feeling didn’t go away.

“I’ll miss you so much, Harry,” she’d whispered, standing opposite him in his new, Gloucester flat, her wand twisting in her sweaty palm.

He’d smiled a sad, lopsided grin that fought against the weight of his depression but curled with the smallest hint of hope of what lay on the opposite side of Hermione’s pending spell and said “I wish I could say the same thing.”

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Even in the following numbness, the tears never ceased.

“What have I done?“ She'd whispered into her wringing hands as evening fell around her, her body curled against itself on the edge of her bed, felling as if her insides were ice. “What have I done?“ 

Ron, never having fully understanding Harry’s choice nor entirely approving of his wife’s decision to help him, laid beside her, spooning her trembling body to his, slowly stroking her hair. He said nothing, because what could he say? This had been their journey. The two of them. The one’s who
came from that other world. He had only been able to throw so many temper tantrums before realizing they weren’t going to change anything.

When baby Rose began crying in her crib sometime around 3, Ron got up, made the bottle, rocked her back to sleep. Hermione felt his absence keenly as she heard him hum those lullabies he had grown up with, the ones so different from the ones her mother had sung to her.

“I’m sorry,” she apologized. "I'm so sorry." To Ron who lost his best friend. To the Wizarding world who lost a hero. And of course to Harry, who lost everything.

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“So, will you do it?”

The conversation haunted her. Snuck up on her while she was washing dishes, staring idly outside the window. Crept into her dreams when she finally slept. Hit her during those rare moments in the middle of the night where the floors of Saint Mungo's were still.

Her mind seemed to pull to her back to that one conversation they’d had in her kitchen while Rose babbled on the floor, creating a right ruckus with a copper cauldron and one of her old potions stirrers. She’d barely heard the noise, so stunned by the ridiculous, heartbreaking request Harry was making.

“I hate to even ask you,” he’d said. “But you’re the only one I trust. Ron would be too emotional…”

“Can’t you have Draco do it?” She cut him off. "He is an Unspeakable after all.”

Harry had lifted his eyes to hers. “You really expect me to ask him?”

“I suppose not,” She’d said, averting her gaze away from those once brave, now simply weary eyes.

"Besides, you've done it before."

Yes, to her parents. And to those Death Eaters at the diner. She hadn't needed reminding.

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It was several months between when Hermione agreed to be Harry's eraser and when she actually did it. He spent those months, as one with a terminal illness might, putting his affairs in order - his fortune bequeathed, his treasured belongings bestowed upon those most deserving. He'd said goodbye's to those he needed to. Made peace where he wanted. Left alone some pains that were still to tender to touch.

And while these acts seemed to lighten the bleakness Harry's life had become, it only made to pull Hermione down into it. Harry's depression seemed to leach from him to her because when she looked forward all she could see was a painful goodbye, an act she could not take back.

She went from hating Harry for putting her into this ridiculous position, to hating a useless Ron and the inconsolable Rose who bound her to this side of the magical wall, not letting her follow where Harry went, then to hating herself for even thinking those thoughts about those she loves so much.

But mostly, as her thoughts turned darker, as her soul seemed to crumble inward and hurt, she felt the need to help Harry even more. Because even though she knew what it would cost her, it was
only with this sympathetic pain that she truly began to understand his need to escape.

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"I thought you were braver than this."

This had been her final stand. Exhausted and at her wits end, this had been her final plea to Harry to save them both.

They were back at that same kitchen table where his plea had first been voiced. Harry's invisibility cloak was in her lap, the edges of the fabric slipping like water between her fingers. A gift, he'd said, for the next generation of Weasley troublemakers.

"Brave?" Harry's voice had broken after he snorted softly through his nose. "I've never been brave. Stupid, more like. A pawn."

"You're the bravest man I know, Harry."

He had swallowed hard and looked away.

"Why do you have to run and hide? It's not like you."

"This is what I want. For once in my life, I'm doing what I want."

"Fine!" Hermione had yelped, slamming her palms against the edge of the table. "Leave! Move into that flat in Gloucester. Marry a Muggle. Stay out of the spot light. But why do you have to take it so far? Why make yourself..." She hadn't been able to say the word, making a vague gesture at her head instead.

Tears had welled behind his wire frames. More tired than truly sad. "It's either this or I throw myself off my broomstick. How is that for brave?"

With a whimper, Hermione had reached across the table clasping Harry's hands. "I'm so sorry, Harry. Why didn't I see this? I'm a mediwizard. I should have seen. I should have stopped this."

"No one could have stopped this. But," he'd sighed, "You can help me know."

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So she had done it. She had stared down the end of her wand and taken Harry Potter from the world, leaving in his place a man that walked and talked and looked just like him, but was nothing like him.

She had born the brunt of the media frenzy which erupted when Harry suddenly stopped showing up at the Auror Department. She looked away from the piercing stares of Draco Malfoy. Stares that seemed to question and accuse all at once. She bore the weight of her own guilt. Her uncertainty that perhaps helping Harry had been the worst choice she could ever possibly made, never knowing if she could forgive herself. Not knowing if she deserved to be forgiven.

But most of all she simply missed her best friend.

Winter melted into spring and by the time the summer winds ruffled the curtains in her bedroom window, getting out of bed in the morning didn't feel like quite the same chore it once had. The toothless smiles Rose gave her simply by walking in to the room became impossible to return, and were eventually even genuine.
She couldn't help but feel the sense of love and family that came with watching Ron throw Rose in the air as squeals of laughter filling their small backyard along with the sunshine. And when Ron asked if she'd even thought of having more than one, she pulled him the bedroom with a devilish grin and tried right then.

During those first sleepless nights with the new baby - a boy - she would whisper the story of the little baby who stopped the evil monster. Of the young man, who had been her friend, who saved the world. As her fingers found the downy hair at the back of his head and his eyes would finally close, Hermione's heart would ache. Because of her, Harry's life was little more than a fairy tale.

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The note arrived so early in the morning, Hermione was still preparing her first cup of coffee, pouring in a healthy dose of cream before sending it back to the refrigerator with a flick of her wand.

She broke the heavy wax seal, a giveaway of who had sent it.

"I know you had something to do with this", the small note, written in Draco's looping scrawl, read. "You bloody fix it, Granger. For me and for you. For everyone."

A newspaper clipping fell out of the envelop. She picked up her cup of coffee, blowing some steam off before taking a sip. The mug never reached her lips, shattering to the floor as she read the headline.

Gloucester Man Saves Girl with ImpossibleFeat

When asked to describe the heroic rescue that occurred at Westover Park early Friday evening, the word they kept using was 'magical'.

"Ron," she shouted, calling to him upstairs. "He's remembering!"

End Notes

Ages old fic, reposting from LJ

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