

A Little Fall of Rain

Ron Weasley grunted as he let Hermione Granger-Lupin's trunk fall onto a luggage trolley. "Don't tell me," he said, straightening up and rubbing his back. "You bought books by owl order all year."

"Of course I did. Where do you think I got all those study aids for the O.W.L.s?"

"So why do you still have them now that O.W.L.s are over?"

"So I can give them to Ginny and Luna. Speaking of Ginny..." Hermione looked around, then stepped closer. "Have you noticed a certain change in certain things since Harry broke up with Cho?"

"Er, no."

Hermione raised her eyes to the clouded sky. "Why do I even bother asking?" she said to it.

"I don't know. Are you going to tell me what you're talking about, or can we get on with this so you can get home and post that letter I saw you writing?" Ron let his irritation with Hermione's perpetual mysteriousness spill out. "I bet Vicky's just dying to hear from you."

Hermione's eyes came down so fast Ron thought he heard a slamming sound. "Oh, you're a fine one to talk, with Fleur Delacour sashaying around the house at Christmas and calling you Ron-ald. *M'sieur Ron-ald*, at that." She sniffed. "You look like a complete idiot every time she comes near you."

"As if you don't with *Vicky!* You nearly drooled over him when he showed up in Hogsmeade, and then you ran off with him for the rest of the day – he could have taken you anywhere, and we'd never have known!"

"And why is it any of your business where I go with Viktor?"

"It would be, if he got you caught by Death Eaters!"

Hermione's eyes widened, and Ron ducked automatically before her hand could connect.

A brush of air past his head coincided with several screams from other parts of the platform. He pulled his wand and shot off a Leg-Locker under his arm, only then turning to see what he was shooting at.

A wizard in a black cloak and white mask lay on the ground, swearing furiously as he tried to reach his fallen wand. Ron stunned him, summoned the wand and stuck it in his own pocket, then turned back around, a cocky smile on his face.

Hermione lay crumpled at his feet, her hand still out to one side.

Ron dropped to his knees, feeling along her neck for a pulse. He pressed his elbow to his side, trying to stop his hand shaking, until he realized that he was shaking all over, half with fear's cold and half with the strange quivers that the soft skin under his fingers evoked.

She isn't dead. She can't be dead. She can't be...

Soft and slow, her life beat its message into his fingertips.

Fear rushed out of him, leaving more room for the other feelings, and Ron swallowed hard to mask the sudden heat in his face.

Cool stings on the back of his neck made him look up. It had begun to rain. He shifted position to cover her. "You'll be all right," he told her, fingers still resting in the hollow of her neck where her pulse beat. "This'll be over soon, and then Mrs. Letha and Meghan will come and heal you. They can heal anything..."

"No."

He thought he'd imagined the breathy voice at first, but her eyes were open, just a little, and she was looking at him. "Hey," he said, surprised at the catch in his own voice. "What d'you mean, no? They can so."

Her head moved a fraction of an inch side to side. "Not... death," she whispered. "And they can't... get to me in time." Her eyes turned to something farther up the platform.

Ron followed her gaze, and a giant hand closed around his chest, squeezing breath from him. Mrs. Letha and Meghan knelt one on each side of Harry, who lay sprawled and far too still, one hand loosely grasping his wand. Meghan's face, the only one Ron could see, was calm with a terrifying resolve.

"They can't... let him die," Hermione breathed as falling rain began to blur the scene. "He means... everything..."

"So do you!" Ron freed one hand and pulled his cloak off, draping it over his head and her, enclosing them in darkness. "You're going to live, Hermione. You have to live. You have to."

It was hard to see under the cloak, but he thought she was smiling. "Why?"

"We need you. I need you. I..." He bent closer to her, close enough to feel her breath on his face. "I love you."

Her hand tugged at the cloak, and it slid off his head, falling to the side. She was smiling, but her eyes were sad. "You couldn't have... told me before?"

"I don't know." Ron reached for the cloak. He had to keep her warm, keep her safe. "I don't know anything."

Hermione's hand enclosed his reaching one, and she shook her head again. "Leave it," she said. "I want to see you."

"But you're getting wet. The rain..."

Her other hand rose to touch his lips, sending a brief wave of dizziness through him. As he blinked the mist away from his eyes, he heard her begin, very softly, to sing.

Don't you fret

M'sieur Ronald

Her smile came into focus, teasing and tender all at once.

I don't feel any pain

A little fall of rain

Can hardly hurt me now

Her hand pressed his weakly.

You're here

That's all I need to know

And you will keep me safe

And you will keep me close

And rain will make the flowers grow

Ron shook his head, hard.

"No, Neenie," he said, and found he was singing, following the pattern she'd begun.

You will live – dear God above

If I could heal your wounds with words of love

Hermione's finger traced his lips.

Just hold me now, and let it be

Shelter me, comfort me...

Ron leaned closer to her, cradling her to him.

You would live a hundred years

If I could show you how

I won't desert you now

Hermione brushed his cheek with her lips.

The rain can't hurt me now

This rain will wash away what's past

And you will keep me safe

And you will keep me close

I'll sleep in your embrace at last

The rain slowed, and Hermione's eyes shifted to the sky beyond for one moment before returning to his face.

The rain that brings you here

Is heaven-blessed!

The skies begin to clear

And I'm at rest...

She shifted her head to rest against his arm.

A breath away from where you are

I've come home from so far

The knots in Ron's throat loosened just enough that he could murmur to her.

I'm right here, Hermione

You won't feel any pain

A little drop of rain

Can hardly hurt you now

I'm here

Hermione smiled and closed her eyes.

That's all I need to know

And you will keep me safe

And you will keep me close

And rain...

Will make the flowers...

Her lips parted for the last word, but only silent breath passed through them. Her body quivered once in his arms, then lay still.

"Grow," Ron whispered to her.

The song had to have a proper ending, after all.

One last drop of water fell onto Hermione's robes.