

Choices

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Choices

by [FutileEditor](#)

Summary

Draco's one goal his eighth and final year at Hogwarts is to get through to graduation with his head down but he should have known nothing could ever be that simple.

Not two weeks into term, everything goes to shit when a potions lesson goes awry. Stuck to his long-time rival until a solvent can be brewed to unglue their hands, Draco Malfoy and Harry Potter must get along and make accommodations for each other for the sake of their joint sanity. At least neither of them is inclined to kill the other anymore and Potter inexplicably wants to be friends.

One big problem: if they don't get unstuck soon, there's going to be big trouble and Draco's greatest secrets could get out and ruin everything.

Chapter 1: Prologue

Chapter Notes

This is the first multi-chapter fic I've ever finished writing and oh my god was it a journey! It was certainly a labour of love and probably way more research than was strictly necessary 😊 and took roughly eight months from start to finish.

Weirdly it all began as a dream which I fixated on for several weeks before deciding to write it down in an effort to get it out of my head. What I thought would be ten chapters max, ballooned into this 43 chapter behemoth that kind of took over my life a little 😊

I welcome and encourage any fanart, please tag me in anything you make! I've also received requests to make translations and I welcome those as well, provided they link back to this as the original and are not AI generated.

I hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

In many ways Draco considered himself lucky. There are those who believed - possibly rightly so - that he belonged in Azkaban. Instead he was a free man, more or less.

Potter had spoken at his trial about how Draco was a victim of his birth and that the series of events that lead to the Mark on his arm and at whose side he stood during the Battle of Hogwarts were entirely outside of his control. He gave several examples of the times he had witnessed Draco struggle with what was right over his own terror at what would happen if he didn't fall in line. One of those times Draco was particularly ashamed of and had no idea that Potter had even been a witness to; his assassination attempt of Albus Dumbledore.

Draco could see the members of the Wizengamot looking doubtfully on at Potter's testimony. He could tell that most of them didn't care that Draco didn't *want* to have done the things that he'd done, all that mattered was that he'd *done* them.

It was easier for them to pardon Draco's mother. There was no evidence that she'd ever participated in Death Eater activities, and even better, her actions during the battle had actually saved Potter's life. People were happy to view her as the battered wife Draco knew she'd hate to be viewed as, though he privately agreed with the assessment.

But what the Saviour wants, the Saviour gets and even if the Wizengamot didn't believe Draco deserved a second chance, Potter did.

And that was how Draco found himself on parole, ordered to attend Hogwarts for the supplementary "eighth year" under the strict supervision of Headmistress McGonagall. As a

condition of his parole his movements were monitored and a Trace was placed on him. Furthermore he was required to take Muggle Studies at *third year level*.

It was bad enough having to learn about muggles in this way but to be surrounded by literal children while he did it was beyond the pale. He had tried to convince his parole officer to let him self study or at least take the class with NEWT students but he was denied.

“This isn’t meant to be fun or even easy for you, Mr. Malfoy,” he was reprimanded sternly. “As for taking it with NEWT students, you will be too far behind your peers to catch up. I’m afraid you’ll have to start at the beginning like everyone else. If you’re not happy with the conditions of your parole, you’re always welcome to take the alternative.”

The alternative was Azkaban of course, and while Draco couldn’t say he was happy with the conditions of his parole, anything was better than rotting in a cell next to his father.

However, being forced to attend Hogwarts did have a few drawbacks. Chief among them was Potter himself. Not everyone in Draco’s year had decided to return for an eighth year but Potter did. Something Draco hadn’t known until they ran into each other on Platform 9¾. It was painfully awkward and Draco struggled to make eye contact with him and struggled even harder to not outright run from him.

The last time they had been face to face had been after his trial. Potter had met him outside the courtroom after his sentencing. He lacked the usual expression Draco had come to expect on his face; total and complete disdain. Instead he looked conflicted, as if his brain wouldn’t let him be civil to Draco and he was having a war with it to do so.

What shocked him the most was when Potter walked right up to him and thrust out his hand to shake. There were reporters all around covering the Death Eater trials and even more had turned up for Draco’s trial than the others when they got wind that the Saviour would be testifying. Draco wondered what he was playing at, acting like they were mates. But he wasn’t going to be the one to look like a jackass and not accept the offered handshake.

Draco took Potter’s hand and when they made contact Draco’s mind flew back to the last time their hands met when Potter had saved his life in the Room of Hidden Things from Crabbe’s ill-fated Fiendfyre. He swallowed thickly at the memory and tried very hard not to tremble. Luckily what Potter said next surprised him out of a panic attack.

“Congratulations, Draco,” he said, not a hint of irony in his voice nor awkwardness at using his first name possibly for the first time in their lives. “I know you’ll make the most of this chance.”

“Right,” Draco muttered back, unsure what else he should say. He dropped his hand and shuffled slightly, wondering if he could get away without being bombarded by the press.

“Oh yeah,” Potter said, clearly pretending to have just remembered something. “I have something of yours.”

And from his back pocket he produced a wand. Draco’s wand. Draco stared at it, hesitant to take it from him; this is the wand that defeated the Dark Lord, the wand that saved the world.

Draco didn't feel worthy of it.

"Go on," Potter urged, holding it out to him. "It's yours, take it."

What the Saviour wants... Draco took the wand and at the moment of contact he felt a warmth spread from the handle up his arm just like the first time he held it. Clearly the wand believed him worthy of it.

"That wand really saved my ass," Potter said sheepishly, one hand rubbing awkwardly at the back of his neck. "But it really belongs with you."

Draco looked down at the wand in his hand trying to think of what to say and coming up with nothing.

"Right... well, see you around, I guess," Potter murmured, finally seeming to feel the awkward tension between them.

"Right," Draco finally choked out. "Thanks... see you."

And then he was gone, leaving Draco to deal with the press while he managed to dodge every reporter that called out to him with almost expert finesse.

Now he was at Hogwarts again and everywhere he looked he was reminded of the Battle. This corridor, that disused classroom. Even though almost all evidence that a war was won here was wiped from the castle and grounds, Draco could still see it everywhere he looked. And he knew he wasn't the only one.

On the first day of term he spotted Parvati Patil rooted to the ground in the entrance hall staring transfixed at a spot partway up the corridor some ten feet from her, a combined look of grief and horror on her face. Draco knew what she was remembering, he could remember it too. That was the spot where Lavender Brown had been mauled to death by Fenrir Greyback. One of the more brutal deaths of the battle.

Parvati's twin sister Padma walked up to her and gently led her away but Draco found that it was now he who couldn't move from the spot. He knew all too well the terror Lavender must have felt moments before her death. He was far too well acquainted with Greyback's vicious teeth. A shudder rocked through him and his breath began to come in short, uneven gasps.

Students surged past him without acknowledging him and some even jostled him when he was in their path, but still he didn't move. A high pitched ringing in his ears overcame all other sounds and he knew he was about to have a panic attack and desperately didn't want to have one in the entrance hall where everyone would witness. He'd had about a hundred panic attacks in the last summer alone and probably hundreds more in the two years before that and so was acutely aware of the sensations that preceded them, but he simply couldn't move.

"Malfoy?"

A familiar voice filtered through the ringing in his ears and he latched on to it. He desperately needed a new stimulus if he was going to stave off this attack long enough to go somewhere

private.

“Malfoy!” a hand came down on his shoulder and he was turned to face the speaker of that familiar voice. He forced his eyes to focus on the person in front of him and was met with the bespectacled face of Harry bloody Potter. Of course it was him, it was always him.

Potter placed his other hand on Draco’s other shoulder and gave him a small shake. The ringing began to fade and his breathing was able to level out a bit as he met Potter’s concerned gaze. Wait, concerned?

“Are you alright?” he asked. Why did he care?

Draco instinctively found himself responding the way he always did to Potter; with a sneer.

“I’m fine, Potter,” he bit out, like a liar. “I don’t know why you care anyway.”

He brushed Potter’s hands off his shoulders and stalked off to Charms class, keeping his eyes on the floor the whole way to hopefully head off any more reminders of the Battle, at least for the day.

Unfortunately for Draco, the size of the eighth year meant that house divisions for classes were a thing of the past, which meant that he’d get no reprieve from Potter’s presence in his life in Charms. For that he’d have to settle for Ancient Runes and Muggle Studies, neither of which Potter took. Even if he did take Muggle Studies, he wouldn’t be taking it with *third years*.

Despite there not being house divisions in classes, students sorted themselves into cliques divided by their houses with few exceptions. Padma of Ravenclaw sat next to Parvati of Gryffindor, presumably so she could continue to help her sister through her flashback in the entrance hall. Neville Longbottom also sat next to Hannah Abbot of Hufflepuff and Draco wondered if there was something between them and when that had started.

He looked around the room for a suitable place to sit and spotted the small group of Slytherins consisting of Blaise Zabini, Theodore Nott, Tracey Davis, and Daphne Greengrass. He decided if they didn’t mind him sitting with them, they’d be perfectly neutral people to sit with as none of them had been involved with the war. Even Theo, whose father now rotted next to Draco’s in Azkaban had managed to not be associated with the Dark Lord and survive.

He pulled up a seat next to Blaise who gave him a small encouraging smile and began pulling out his textbook, parchment, and quill. He was acutely aware of Potter staring at him from across the room where the Gryffindors all sat and did his best to focus on Professor Flitwick’s review of sixth year charms.

Potter’s eyes on him didn’t let up all day and his only reprieve came after dinner when he finally made it to his dorm room in peace.

Another downside to returning for eighth year was that all the eighth years had their own shared common room, once again not divided by house. However one benefit was that they

each had their own private rooms. Someone in their infinite wisdom decided that since they were all adults, they needed their privacy and fewer restrictions on their after hours movements. To avoid them causing disruptions to younger students after curfew, the eighth years obviously needed their own space. They were also allowed to go to Hogsmeade every weekend instead of only specific ones, something many of his classmates were eager to take advantage of, but which Draco didn't really care about.

His primary goal this year would be to keep his head down, get his schoolwork done, take his NEWTs, and graduate. While he had the decidedly not-hostile company of his fellow Slytherins, they weren't exactly his friends. Well, maybe Blaise was a friend; they had certainly been more than that at one point. But without a social life to speak of, Draco's only attention would be lessons and homework.

McGonagall had also assured him that his "special needs" would be attended to and that his dormitory was well secured for his purposes. He hadn't wanted to tell her – hadn't wanted *anyone* to know – but the safety of his peers was more important than his own comfort, and McGonagall for her part seemed to understand his desire for secrecy on the matter and assured him that unless he desired it, she and Madam Pomfrey would be the only people who needed to know.

Draco was sure if he just kept to himself, everything would work out and he could graduate and be a truly free man and never have to set foot in the castle that featured so prominently in his nightmares ever again.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! This is my first attempt at an E rated fic so I hope you like it!

For anyone that is interested, I have posted a companion fic to this one that is primarily in Harry's POV called Harry's Choice. The [first chapter](#) can be read as a prequel to this fic.

If anyone has fanart they want to share, you can find me on [Tumblr](#) !

Chapter 2: Veritaserum

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Naturally, Draco's plan to keep to himself and not make waves was put to the test basically immediately after term began.

He could not avoid Potter's scrutiny during the day save for the two classes he didn't share with the man. When he walked into Ancient Runes the first week back he was reminded that Granger would be in this class. To his relief it appeared she had not been instructed by Potter to keep an eye on him in this class while he couldn't. Either that or he had and she didn't care to. Either way he was relieved to not have eyes on him for that hour and a half at least.

Muggle Studies was a different story. Even though there was no one in his class whom he knew, *everyone* stared at the much older student in their midst. And not any student at that, a *notorious* one. He sat at the back of the class and tried not to let their staring affect him. *They'll get over it*, he assured himself, *in a few weeks when the novelty wears off and they get used to it*.

But it was Potions that was the worst. Normally Draco's favourite and best subject, the class was marred by *assigned partners*. Evidently Professor Slughorn had decided to partner them all off in "pairs that would best help each student thrive". What that really meant to Draco's eyes was the weakest performing students would be paired with the strongest to help the underachievers improve. This was clear the moment he named Granger and Weasley partners.

Besides Draco, Granger was the next best performing student in Potions and Weasley was quite possibly the worst, and despite the fact that the two of them had clearly been dating for the last few months, Granger did not look well pleased to be her boyfriend's partner. She no doubt feared he'd be bringing down her marks in the class, or else that she'd be left doing all the work. Despite their past animosity and Draco's horrid treatment of her, he suspected she'd have rather been partnered with him. Then at least her marks wouldn't be in jeopardy.

Draco too would have preferred to have been partnered with Granger, anyone was better than who he *was* partnered with. Potter deposited himself into the seat next to him and began unloading his backpack of the needed supplies for class as if he did this every day.

Draco remembered the last time they'd sat next to each other in Potions. He had been playing up an injury and had only sat next to Potter and Weasley to piss them off, taking advantage of Snape's hatred of Potter and his favouritism of Draco. That had been third year, he recalled, and he had been an entirely different person. Thirteen-year-old Draco wouldn't recognize eighteen-year-old Draco in the least.

"Hey," Potter said softly next to him, startling him out of his memory. "You good?"

“Fine,” Draco uttered curtly. He must have been wearing some kind of expression that made him ask that. He fixed his face and set to work on his own supplies.

At least in his other classes he didn’t have to sit *right next* to him. This would be a long year.

Two weeks went by without much drama, though Draco felt Potter’s eyes on him every day. It reminded him of sixth year when Potter dogged him everywhere he went. Only then he’d had very good reason as Draco had been on an assassination mission and had been behaving extremely suspiciously. This time, Draco supposed Potter had taken it upon himself to make sure Draco behaved. As irritating as the attention was, he was determined to prove that he could be better, that he would *do* better, that he would earn the testimony Potter gave at his trial and that he would be worthy of the wand that saved the world.

“Today,” Slughorn addressed his eighth years, “you will all begin working on your first potions project. Some of you will have worked on this project last year but for many of you this will be your first time.”

Draco was one of the few in class who had done the project before but in all the chaos and madness of the war, he didn’t apply himself as well as he could have. In fact, he’d probably benefit from a sixth year refresher course as well.

“You will all begin work on brewing Veritaserum,” Slughorn continued. “Can anyone tell me what this potion does?”

Predictably, Granger’s hand shot up. Draco didn’t even have to look behind him to see; he heard Weasley’s muttered “Blimey, Hermione!” as she undoubtedly narrowly missed taking out one of his ears.

Next to him, Potter also raised a hand. Draco was surprised; despite his inexplicable Potions prowess in sixth year, Draco knew Potter to be a bit of a slacker in this subject.

“Yes, Harry?” Slughorn called on him.

“Veritaserum is a truth potion, sir,” Potter answered. “Only a few drops is enough to make someone spill all of their secrets if asked.”

“Excellent, Harry!” Slughorn praised, pleased that his favourite student was so knowledgeable. “Exactly right, five points for Gryffindor. Now who can tell me how long it takes to brew Veritaserum?”

Potter didn’t raise his hand this time but Granger did and Slughorn called on her, lacking any other volunteers.

“It takes one full lunar cycle from start to finish beginning on the new moon, so twenty eight days,” Granger answered breathlessly like she had been bursting to answer.

“Very good Miss Granger! Take another five points for Gryffindor.”

As Slughorn began to go over the many and complex directions for brewing the potion, Draco reflected on the professor’s usage of Granger’s surname while using Potter’s first. Draco rolled his eyes, could he have made his favouritism any more obvious?

Once they were set loose to begin their potions, Draco got up from his seat, catching Potter’s eye as he did so.

“I’ll go get the ingredients for this stage, you can prepare the cauldron.” He forced a bored tone into his voice, desperate not to sound too awkward.

Congratulating himself on saying more than two words to Potter that weren’t hostile or stupid, he carried on to the student store room to collect their ingredients. He bumped shoulders with someone as he approached the doorway.

“Sorry,” he said reflexively before looking at who it was he’d bumped into. It was Granger. “Shit,” he uttered.

She eyed him cautiously as if waiting for him to say or do something horrible. He didn’t blame her; he’d been terrible to her for years.

“It’s fine...” she said cautiously after determining that was all he planned on saying.

He stood awkwardly and looked around, searching for what to say and finally decided on just stepping aside and gesturing for her to enter the store room first. She nodded curtly and hurried inside to collect her own ingredients.

Draco knew he probably should apologise to Granger for the years of torment he put her through. To say nothing of the literal torture his aunt put her through on his drawing room floor while he watched, helpless to stop it. She deserved a hundred apologies but a public classroom was probably not the best place for them, and when she wasn’t in class or at meals, she was flanked by Potter and Weasley. Maybe if he just treated her with the respect she deserved for the first time in their acquaintance she’d understand how sorry he was. She’d probably want him to say it though.

Once Granger had her ingredients, she hurried out of the storeroom and back to her table with Weasley. Draco entered after she left to collect his and Potter’s ingredients. He reflected that he owed Potter a few dozen apologies too but suspected that unlike Granger, he’d probably be satisfied with changed behaviour and wouldn’t require the actual words.

He returned to their table to find Potter breaking off a hushed conversation with Granger and Weasley. Probably discussing the interaction he’d just had with Granger. Satisfied that there was nothing sinister in his behaviour that they could find fault with, he began laying out their supplies without commenting on it.

It turned out that Potter was actually decent at Potions when Snape wasn’t breathing down his neck. Draco found himself almost mesmerized by his focus as he carefully measured ingredients and double checked instructions.

Weasley, it turned out, was practically inept.

“No, Ron, you have to slice it *lengthwise*,” Granger corrected behind him, exasperated.

He glanced over at Potter’s preparation of their ingredients as he continued to monitor and add ingredients to their cauldron and was pleased to see that he had already sliced the adder’s fork lengthwise perfectly down the middle. He had feared that he would have to correct him at least as often as he could hear Granger hissing corrections to Weasley but he was surprisingly competent.

It was as they were at the stage of adding the jobberknoll feathers, Potter adding each one while Draco stirred, that everything went horribly wrong.

“No, Ron! One at a time!” Granger shouted urgently.

Draco and Potter whipped their heads around in time to see Granger and Weasley’s potion turn jet black and begin spitting thick globs like tar all over. The two of them leapt back from their cauldron avoiding the splatters but Draco and Potter were not as lucky. They were both splattered with fat globs of failed potion which turned out to be very sticky.

“Merlin’s beard!” Slughorn exclaimed as he rushed over to assist.

He began vanishing the globs of failed potion, beginning with the still spitting cauldron. Draco reached for his wand to begin doing the same to the globs that had fallen on his robes but found that the sticky substance had joined his left arm to Potter’s right, drawing Potter’s attention to their shared predicament.

“Shit,” Potter muttered lowly and tried to tug his arm away from Draco’s.

All he succeeded in doing was yanking Draco towards him.

“Hang on!” he cried indignantly, regaining his balance. “Professor, a little help please?”

“Certainly!” Slughorn turned to assist them with the mess they were covered in. “*Evanesco!*”

With one spell, the potion vanished from their robes and hair but the glob joining their wrists together stayed.

“Oh dear,” Slughorn lamented, examining their arms. “It seems particularly stubborn on your skin, gentlemen. Off to the hospital wing with you both! I’ll clean up your potion, a shame too because it looked like it was going very well. We’ll have to schedule the two of you to have a chance to remake it, Miss Granger and Mr Weasley as well.”

Draco glanced over at the culprits of his current condition and found Granger glaring angrily at Weasley whose ears were as red as his hair as he stared forlornly at his trainers. He sighed, bent awkwardly to retrieve his backpack, Potter did the same and they silently left the classroom to a multitude of stares, their wrists joined.

The trek up to the hospital wing was uncomfortably quiet and Draco longed to break the silence but couldn’t think of what to say.

“Sorry about this,” Potter said as if reading his mind. “Ron’s never been very good at Potions.”

“How is that your fault?” Draco asked, happy to jump onto this topic.

Potter shrugged. “I convinced him to take it for NEWTs back in sixth year. If I hadn’t, Hermione would have been paired with someone else and we might not be in this situation.”

“Hmm,” Draco hummed noncommittally. “I was under the impression you hated Potions, why take it for NEWTs anyway?”

“I don’t hate Potions, I hated Snape,” he corrected. “As for why, I need a Potions NEWT to qualify for the Auror Programme.”

Of course he wanted to be an Auror. Harry Potter doing anything else for his career seemed laughable. Though Draco once thought he should play professional Quidditch with his skills but couldn’t picture that future for the Saviour of the Wizarding World.

“I never really liked the way Snape taught Potions,” Draco found himself saying unsure why he said it at all.

“Really?” Potter was surprised. “He definitely favoured you.”

“That doesn’t mean I like his teaching methods. And Slughorn favours *you*,” he shot back.

Potter sighed in annoyance. “Slughorn is exhausting.”

Draco laughed, surprising them both. Draco had never laughed at anything Potter said or did unless he was mocking him. This was new, much like everything else about the way they interacted now.

There was a more comfortable silence between them as they continued the rest of the way up to the hospital wing. Draco was beginning to feel rather giddy and he suspected Potter was too as he seemed to be struggling to hold back a chuckle if the way his shoulders shook and his lips pressed together were anything to go by.

They entered the hospital wing together and Madam Pomfrey looked up from her desk at the sound of their entrance. She looked exasperated the moment she laid eyes on them.

“What have you two gotten into *now*?” she tutted. “It’s barely two weeks into term!”

It was all too ridiculous and the giddy feeling in Draco’s head came to a crescendo and he burst out laughing. This seemed to trigger Potter to do the same and they both found themselves doubled over, clutching their stomachs with their free hands as they laughed harder than either of them had in the last few years.

Pomfrey tutted and ushered them over to the beds.

“Must be a universal law,” she muttered as they sat down beside each other on a bed, presenting her their joined hands for her examination. “Every year the both of you will turn

up in my hospital wing at one point or another. First time for both of you on the same day though. You two haven't been fighting have you?"

"No miss," they said at the same time and then fell about laughing again.

She eyed them suspiciously like she didn't quite believe them.

"What is this substance?"

Potter was the first to recover so explained.

"We were working on Veritaserum in Potions and Ron and Hermione's potion exploded all over us," he managed to say breathlessly.

"Professor Slughorn was able to vanish the rest of the potion," Draco gasped between giggles. "But the bit that hit our skin wouldn't vanish."

"Hmm," she hummed thoughtfully. "Exposure to a failed potion might explain your giddiness. Do you know at what stage the potion exploded?"

Potter frowned and looked to Draco for the answer. He thought back to what he heard Granger shout just before the potion exploded.

"They might have been at the stage of adding the jobberknoll feathers like we were but I think Weasley added them all at once because Granger had shouted that he should have added them one at a time."

"Oh yeah!" Potter exclaimed. "That's when we looked back and it was exploding like *kwoosh!*"

He made a gesture with both hands, jostling Draco's left arm everywhere, while he mimed the failed potion boiling over and spitting globs everywhere. Then he began snickering again like it was the funniest joke in the world.

Draco had to admit, the whole situation was actually hilarious and found himself trying to stifle another round of laughter at Potter's antics.

Pomfrey looked between the two of them in exasperation.

"You're both stuck with an incomplete Veritaserum which has reacted with your skin, which is why Professor Slughorn was unable to vanish it. That accounts for the case of the giggles, which should wear off soon. There may be some other side effects so keep an eye out for any unusual sensations or behaviour. For the moment I have a few things I can try to hopefully get the two of you unstuck. I'll need to consult a few of my notes, I'll only be a few minutes. Wait here."

She turned and proceeded to her storeroom where she kept dozens of remedies on hand. While she did so, Draco forced himself to calm down so he could take this more seriously.

Potter seemed to be of the same mind as his chuckles began to subside. Finally he let out a cheerful sigh.

“We make a good team,” he said, apropos of nothing.

“What?” Draco questioned, incredulous.

“In Potions,” Potter clarified. “I think our potion was turning out great until Ron and Hermione’s exploded into it.”

“Yeah,” Draco agreed. “Wouldn’t have thought anything Granger touched would turn out that horribly. She looked like she wanted to skin Weasley alive after that mess.”

“Yeah. Never get between Hermione and her marks. If those two were married already, Ron would be sleeping on the couch.”

Draco snorted, then had to struggle to hold down another bout of laughter.

“I’m glad you and I were partnered,” Potter said suddenly, then looked surprised at himself for saying it.

“Really? Why?”

He seemed to consider his answer thoughtfully. “I wanna get better at Potions. I’ve been average at best this whole time and I’m not really satisfied with that. Normally I partner with Ron because that’s what he expects, but Ron is rubbish at Potions and completely happy with barely scraping by, copying Hermione’s work. And I wouldn’t want to be partnered with Hermione because she can get *really* overbearing and I don’t think I’d learn anything and she’d only stress me out. But you, you’re brilliant at Potions and I’ve never seen you stress over it. I dunno, I just think you’re probably the best person to learn from.”

“I wouldn’t think *anyone*, let alone you in particular, would want anything to do with me,” Draco said, surprising himself with his own self-deprecation. All of his earlier mirth had evaporated.

“Most of our classmates probably don’t want anything to do with you,” Potter agreed. “Which is why it’s a good thing Slughorn paired you with me.”

“How’s that?”

“Because I don’t feel the same way as our classmates. I’m probably the only person in our Potions class, besides Zabini and Nott, probably, who wouldn’t mind being your partner, which is probably why Slughorn put us together.”

Draco thought about the other students in their Potions class. In sixth year there had been twelve in their class, now there were only eight. Milicent Bulstrode hadn’t come back this year, neither had Ernie Macmillan or Michael Corner, and Anthony Goldstein had been killed during the war. That left just Draco, Theo, Blaise, Potter, Granger, Weasley, Terry Boot, and Padma Patil.

Theo and Blaise had been partnered and Draco couldn't see any of the others happy to be his partner. Granger would probably suck it up for the sake of her marks but Potter was right about her too, she'd be insufferable and probably make him miserable. Weasley would probably rather chew off his own arm than to so much as say a civil word to Draco and he felt the same way in return, not to mention the *state* he'd leave all of their potions in. Boot and Patil had both fought in the Battle and would likely look at him as the enemy. Potter was right, he was the only sensible choice for the same reason Hagrid had put them together on their detention in the Forbidden Forest in first year; Potter didn't scare easy.

"I don't get why you don't feel the same or even *worse* about me than they do." Draco couldn't remember a time in his life he was this honest about his feelings and to be this way with *Potter* of all people was insane.

"They don't know you like I do," he said simply, shrugging.

Draco thought back to his trial and Potter's testimony. He had known things about him, things he had done that he had no business knowing.

"You probably know me better than my own *parents*," Draco agreed. "But I figure that should make you hate me more."

"I don't hate you, Malfoy." Potter seemed annoyed now.

"*Why not?*" Draco demanded. After everything that he'd done, he deserved to be hated by Potter, so *why didn't he?*

"You never had a choice," he said simply, shrugging. "Dumbledore once told me that it's our choices that make us who we are. The way I figure it is if you'd never been given a single choice your whole life, then you've never been who you really are."

Draco gasped softly at that. He had never considered what his life would be like, what *he* would be like if everything hadn't been decided for him from the moment he was born. But Potter wasn't done.

"And then that night in the tower," he continued and Draco's breath hitched, remembering that night as clearly as the day it happened. "Dumbledore gave you a choice, offered you a way out, and you *lowered your wand*."

"And then this past spring at the manor." Draco's heart thundered in his chest remembering again Granger's tortured screams. "I know you recognized me, I could see it in your eyes. We've known each other half our lives, of *course* you recognized me. But you didn't give me up."

Draco was trembling and with their hands joined there was no way Potter couldn't feel it, but he ploughed on.

"Each time you had the opportunity to choose, you chose what you believed was right. *That's* why I don't hate you. Because *you* are your choices, not all of those other things you did."

And now the war is over, the people making your choices for you are gone and I can't wait to see who you really are."

Who he really was? He'd spent his whole life trying to be his father's son. A man he had come to resent for the hell he'd put him through. He had been a puppet his whole life, but now that his father was in Azkaban and the Dark Lord and his aunt were dead, what sort of man would he become now that no one was pulling his strings?

"I don't know who I really am," he admitted quietly.

"That's okay," Potter said with a smile. "I'm not really sure who I am either."

Draco stared at him incredulously. How could he not know who he was? He was Harry bloody Potter! He saved the world! Draco was just about to tell him so when Pomfrey came back.

"I have some bad news, gentlemen," she began, returning empty-handed from the storeroom. "I don't have the tinctures I need to dissolve this particular substance."

"You mean we're stuck like this?" Potter exclaimed.

Draco went cold. No, they had to be separated!

"Relax, Mr Potter," Pomfrey soothed. "I can have some brewed but it will take some time."

"How *much* time?" Draco demanded, trying to remind her of the urgency without saying so in front of Potter.

"A few days, Mr Malfoy," she stated, making firm eye contact with him, communicating that she was, in fact, aware of the deadline. "Do you think the two of you will be able to get along for that amount of time?"

Potter cast a sideways look at Draco who gave him a resigned sigh in response.

"Yes miss," Potter answered for them both.

Chapter End Notes

If you're interested in this chapter from Harry's POV check out [chapter 2](#) of Harry's Choice!

Chapter 3: Potter's Secrets

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Being stuck to Potter was tremendously inconvenient. Not only would they now have to sit right next to each other in all of their classes, but Potter would also now have to join him for Ancient Runes and Muggle Studies. They'd also have to sit at the same house table at meals, Draco would probably concede to sitting at the Gryffindor table since it wasn't like he socialized much these days anyway and Potter would want to sit with his friends.

The worst part of course would be hygiene and sleep. Draco dreaded having to use the toilet the most. He and Potter may have formed some kind of truce but watching each other take a shit was a bridge too far. There was just nothing for it though, they'd just have to suck it up and make it work.

Heads turned when they walked into the Great Hall for lunch. Evidently word had spread about their mishap in potions. He cast his eyes to the Slytherin table and caught the twin amused smirks from Blaise and Theo and he had to resist the temptation to hex them both. They were probably the reason for everyone knowing already. Well partly, he thought, as he remembered Boot and Patil had probably told all their Ravenclaw friends and Patil had probably told her twin sister who was the castle's biggest gossip.

"Everyone is staring," Draco grumbled.

"Welcome to my life," Potter said with a sardonic smirk. "You're stuck with me for the next few days so you'll have to get used to it."

Potter led them to the Gryffindor table and Draco didn't resist. There was some awkward shuffling as a few students had to scoot down to make room for both of them. Draco found himself sitting next to Neville Longbottom who gave him only the barest of glances before returning to his conversation with Dean Thomas as if he wasn't sitting next to the man who'd bullied him for seven years straight.

Granger and Weasley were sitting across the table and looking completely mortified in different ways. Granger looked like she wanted to cry and Weasley looked like he was looking for someone to blame as if this mess wasn't entirely his fault.

"Hey everyone!" Potter said cheerfully as if being glued to his biggest school rival was an everyday occurrence.

"You're still stuck together?" Weasley observed, a note of disgust in his tone.

"Yeah," Potter shrugged. "Madam Pomfrey said she'd have to brew a solvent to dissolve it which will take a few days."

Weasley looked horrified, so did a few other Gryffindors.

“So you’ve got to be stuck to him for *days!*?” he exclaimed.

“Oh, Harry, I’m so sorry!” Granger said, her voice full of remorse. “I wish there was something I could do to fix this.”

“S’not your fault, Hermione,” Potter said dismissively.

“No it’s mine,” Weasley replied morosely. “I’m the one who screwed up our potion. I don’t even know why I’m still taking that class, I should just drop it.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Potter reassured him. “Accidents happen, we’ll just deal with it.”

“You may be able to suck it up but what about the ferret?” Weasley said directly at Draco whose shoulders went up reflexively.

Draco heard Thomas and Patil as well as a few seventh years down the table snort and snicker at the old moniker. Potter went very tense next to him and his eyes narrowed coldly at Weasley.

“*Don’t* call him that,” he said dangerously and the whole table went dead quiet in an instant.

Weasley looked surprised at the admonishment but at the look in his best mate’s eyes, he wilted.

“Sorry,” he muttered sourly, and ducked his head down to stuff his face before he said anything else to piss Potter off.

Draco stared at him in astonishment while the rest of the table went back to their earlier chatter. Potter had always had a bit of a temper but Draco had rarely seen it directed at any of his friends and never in defence of Draco. And the fact that everyone had stopped laughing the moment he expressed his displeasure was a shocking display of social power. He wondered if Potter even realised the kind of influence he had.

Potter seemed to decide that Weasley’s apology was enough but his expression remained stormy as he reached for a plate of sandwiches to begin his own meal. Unfortunately, he reached with his right hand which was firmly attached to Draco’s left, causing him to be jerked forward unexpectedly.

“Shit!” Potter uttered. “Sorry.”

“S’fine,” Draco muttered, righting himself while Potter helped himself with his left hand instead.

He felt eyes on him and turned to see that Longbottom’s eyes were locked on the place where he and Potter were attached. Draco looked down at the spot and saw what had snagged Longbottom’s attention. When he had jerked forward, his sleeve had ridden up partially, revealing the bottom part of the slightly faded but still very visible Dark Mark tattoo on his left forearm. He hastily yanked his sleeve back down and cast his eyes down at the table, suddenly feeling sick, appetite gone.

Potter, of course, noticed the movement, his eyes casting down to Draco's left forearm, then to his face, and then to Longbottom. Draco saw a small exchange between them out of the corner of his eye; Potter gave Longbottom a hard look and a small shake of his head and Longbottom gave a small frown before turning back to the group's conversation, pointedly ignoring Draco.

The atmosphere was oppressive. He felt hundreds of eyes on him, hating him, even when everyone went back to chatting happily, ignoring his presence. How was it possible to feel both watched and ignored at the same time? He scratched absently at his left arm.

After Weasley recovered from pissing Potter off, he launched into a discussion about Quidditch and debating the Cannons' chances this season which inspired Thomas to talk about football which began a ridiculous argument between the two about which sport was better.

"There's only one ball," Weasley griped. "And no one is allowed to fly! What's so great about that?"

"Oh I don't know, let's ask the two hundred countries that have been playing it for thousands of years!" Thomas bit back. "Or the couple hundred *million* professional players worldwide!"

"Just cos it's *old* and popular with muggles—" Weasley retorted.

"So because muggles like it, it must be shit?" Thomas interrupted, raising a eyebrow challengingly.

That shut Weasley up and he frowned into his potatoes.

"Damn, Ron," Longbottom laughed, "can't stop putting your foot in it, eh?"

The rest of the table laughed and Weasley's ears turned red while Granger gave him a reassuring pat on the back.

"You're not eating?" Potter whispered to Draco while the others were bickering.

He shook his head. He felt like if he opened his mouth to speak, he'd vomit. He hated everything about this; being stuck to Potter, his friends all laughing and joking, all the while there's a snake in their den of lions that they all wish was elsewhere. He tried to control his breathing but it was beginning to come in short gasps and he scratched some more at his Mark. Potter seemed to be the only one who had noticed.

"You wanna get out of here?" he asked him quietly.

Draco nodded, not caring how desperate he looked.

"Hey, we're gonna take off," Potter announced to the table, getting up. "See you lot at dinner."

Some of his friends looked surprised but called "see you"s after him. Draco stumbled to his feet, and Potter helped arrange him on his right side when he got somewhat tangled by their

joined arms. Eyes followed their departure until they were in the entrance hall.

“Where do you wanna go?” Potter asked. “I’m free the rest of the afternoon.”

“Common room,” Draco managed to choke out, and began almost dragging Potter up to the Astronomy Tower where the eighth year dormitories and common room had been added on.

“Okay, yeah hang on,” he pulled him up short.

Draco fought the whine that wanted to crawl up his throat at the delay. He needed to be somewhere where he could have this breakdown in relative privacy. But Potter led him down a corridor on the second floor and pulled back a tapestry, revealing a staircase that Draco had never seen before.

“This’ll take us straight to the Astronomy Tower,” he declared.

Draco decided not to question it. He knew Potter had spent half his life sneaking around after curfew. It only stood to reason he knew a few shortcuts and secret passageways.

Despite being five floors above, it only felt like they had climbed one flight when they came out of a supposedly solid wall at the top.

“Unfortunately there’s no way to access it from this side and it leads to the corridor outside Ravenclaw Tower on Tuesdays,” Potter explained as he led the rest of the way to the eighth year common room, giving the password to a painting of crups playing gobstones.

Draco would have to keep that in mind the next time he wanted to make a quick getaway to his dormitory. Speaking of which. He led them through the common room, bypassing all of the comfortable armchairs and sofas, up the stairs to the boys dorms, pushed open the door to his room and dragged Potter inside, slammed the door behind them and collapsed to the floor against it, nearly dragging Potter down with him.

He didn’t care that Potter was there anymore, he wouldn’t be getting away from him for several days and he was bound to witness one of his panic attacks sooner rather than later so why not right fucking now? But where he expected to experience the ringing in his ears grow louder, it began to fade away, where his hands had been trembling, they were now still. His breathing, too, had begun to even out. His heart still felt like it was trying to gallop out of his chest and there were tears forming in his eyes but he no longer felt the overwhelming need to *run*. Even with Potter there, he felt somehow *safe*.

Potter lowered himself to the floor and just sat quietly next to him, not saying a word. Draco couldn’t fight the sobs that suddenly poured out of him. All the while, Potter didn’t say a word, didn’t look at him and didn’t touch him save for the spot where their joined hands touched.

It was several minutes before Draco could collect himself. His crying subsided and his heart rate had returned to normal. He sniffed and wiped his tears with his sleeve knowing his mother would be appalled but not caring one bit. He’d already humiliated himself by almost completely falling apart, what was a little snot and tears on his robes when compared to that?

“It’s hard,” Potter said finally, his voice soft.

Draco cast his eyes to him, not knowing where this was going.

“When they’re all laughing and happy and you’ve got all this pain inside,” he explained.

“You’re speaking from experience,” Draco realised, his voice rough.

Potter nodded. “They’ve all lost people but none of them went through the shit we went through.”

“You have no fucking idea,” Draco sighed.

“You wanna talk about it?”

“Not at all.”

Potter huffed a small laugh. “Fair enough.”

“You already know the broad strokes anyway.”

“Yeah.”

“*You* wanna talk about it?”

“Not especially.”

Draco nodded at that. He was actually relieved. He had his own horrors to work through without having to imagine whatever hell Potter endured during the war.

“Can I ask you something?” Draco asked after several minutes of silence.

“Is it about why I told Ron off for calling you a ferret?”

“No, I figured it was for the same reason you shook my hand in front of all those reporters at the Ministry.”

“Oh?” Potter tried to play innocent but Draco knew better.

“You have a lot of power and influence over people, I think you know that.”

Potter shifted uncomfortably but didn’t say anything.

“I’ve never seen you throw your weight around like that,” Draco continued. “I’ve known you for seven years and even though I acted otherwise, I always knew how much you hated your fame.” Potter stared at him in surprise but Draco ploughed on. “So for you to take advantage of how people treat you was surprising. When you testified at my mother’s trial I thought it was your way of saying thank you for saving your life. And then you testified at *mine* and I didn’t know what you were doing.

“It wasn’t until today when you were talking about choices that it made any kind of sense. You believed I deserved a second chance and I wasn’t going to get one so you inserted yourself. Who’s going to say no to the Saviour of the Wizarding World?”

Potter shifted some more.

“When you shook my hand in front of all those reporters, I remember thinking ‘what is he playing at?’ but now I know. You were *endorsing* me. Telling the whole of wizarding Britain that they should back off because *you* said so. You told off Weasley because you want everyone to give me a chance. And everyone falls in line because you tell them to. Believe me when I say this, I’ve never seen power like that ever before.”

“Voldemort had power like that,” Potter said in a small, uncomfortable voice.

“No,” Draco shook his head firmly. “People feared him, but they *respect* you. That’s real power.”

“I never wanted power like that,” he said lamely.

“Well then it’s a good thing you’re the one who has it,” Draco decided.

“What does *that* mean?”

“You could use that power to get virtually anything you want, but you don’t. Power isn’t very dangerous in the hands of people who don’t want it.”

“Like the Elder Wand...” he murmured.

“Yeah, like the Elder Wand.” It still frightened Draco to know that for almost a year, he had been master of the literal Elder Wand and never knew. It somehow didn’t surprise him that Potter would be its current master and not ever use it.

“What did you actually want to ask, then?” Potter reminded him.

“Oh, right,” Draco thought back to his original question. “I wanted to know what you meant earlier about how you don’t know who you are?”

“Oh I thought it obvious,” Potter said flippantly. “We had been talking about choices and how a person who’d never been given any choices wasn’t who they really were.”

“Right...” Draco said slowly.

“Well it’s not like I’ve ever been given many choices in my life either.”

“What are you talking about?” Draco burst out. “You’ve been the most contrarian motherfucker I’ve ever met! I don’t think you’ve ever done one damned thing you were ever told!”

“Oh because *you’ve* been such a rule follower?” Potter retorted. “My whole life was decided before I was ever born.”

“What are you on about?”

“The prophecy...”

Oh. The prophecy.

“I had forgotten about that...” Draco murmured. “I never knew what it said, only that there was one and the Dark Lord was desperate to get ahold of it.”

“The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches...” Potter intoned, a hard look in his eyes. *“Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies. And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not. And either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives...”*

“Holy shit...” Draco breathed. “You really *were* the Chosen One.”

“I knew ever since I was fifteen that one day either he’d kill me or I’d kill him. But I never could see how I was meant to do that. He was a powerful dark wizard and I was just a kid.”

“So sixth year, when you were following me everywhere hoping to figure out what I was up to...”

“I was on a mission of my own, yes.” Potter sighed and leaned his head back against the door, looking up to the ceiling as he remembered. “That night in this tower, Dumbledore and I had just returned from a mission to find and destroy one of Voldemort’s horcruxes.”

Draco hissed. Not at the name but at the mention of a horcrux.

““One of’?” he asked, voice faint.

“So you know what they are?” Potter asked, turning his head to look Draco in the eye.

Draco nodded weakly, sure his already fair complexion had gone paler.

“Yes, ‘one of’,” he continued to watch Draco’s reactions as he resumed his explanation. “He made seven.”

Draco sucked a sharp breath in through clenched teeth. Seven?! To make one was horrid enough, but *seven*?

“Though actually he *really* made six, at least on purpose.”

“How do you make a horcrux by *accident*?” Draco nearly whimpered.

“I don’t know how they’re made on purpose,” Potter said with a faint wry smile, turning his attention back to the ceiling. “And if Hermione’s reaction to *reading* about them is anything to go by, I don’t *want* to. But as far as I can figure, he must have done all the steps but the last one the night he tried to kill me the first time. But he fucked up.”

“Fucked up?” Draco was incredulous, how was Potter talking about this so casually? He wouldn’t have even thought someone like Potter would even know what a horcrux was.

“Yeah, I guess he wasn’t expecting my mum. Or more accurately, he hadn’t accounted for my mum turning herself into a human shield to protect me. Maybe he just didn’t know what that kind of sacrifice does. The kind of magic it creates. He never did understand love in the end.”

“What do you mean?”

“Love. The most powerful protection spell there is. She gave up her life for that spell. It saved my life and destroyed his body. Would have killed him too if it hadn’t been for his horcruxes.”

Draco was silent for a moment. Then something clicked.

“You said he made one by accident?”

Potter nodded slowly. “That night, his body was destroyed but his soul was damaged by the rebounding killing curse too. He had been prepared to make another horcrux that night, no doubt using my death to do it. So when his curse failed, a part of his soul broke off and latched itself to the only living thing it could find.”

Draco stared at him in horror.

“You don’t mean...”

“You probably know this but the killing curse doesn’t leave a mark on its victim,” he raised his left hand and pointed at the fractal scar on his forehead. “So what do you suppose did this?”

“So then, you have...”

“*Had*, ” he corrected. “Yes. I was a horcrux from the time I was a year old until an hour before our duel at the Battle.”

“But... If you had a piece of his soul in you...”

Potter raised a questioning eyebrow at him.

“How are you...?” Draco wasn’t sure what he was asking.

“How am I...? Me? Normal? Sane? Alive?” He offered all of these suggestions like people had asked him before. “That’s the thing, I’m not sure who ‘me’ is, I’m still figuring that out. As for normal, I’m definitely not that, sane is also debatable, but as for alive...”

He sat up properly now and looked at Draco head on.

“What did your mother tell you about what happened in the Forest?”

Draco sat up too. Was Potter going to tell him how he survived the killing curse for a second time? No one seemed to know, he certainly hadn't told the press. Granger and Weasley probably knew, Potter told them everything.

"She said the Dark Lord had summoned you and was sure you'd come even though many of the Death Eaters in the Forest didn't think so. You showed up at the last minute, unarmed and just stood there. She said the Dark Lord looked surprised that you didn't plan to fight back. Then he shot the curse at you, and you just... f-fell to the ground, but then so did he.

"Everyone was freaking out but then he got right back up and said he was fine. Mother could tell he wasn't fine, she said she thought he sounded afraid." Draco shuddered at this. He hated to think what would frighten the Dark Lord. "And he ordered her to see if you were really dead. So she went to check and you were alive! She asked you if I was alive still, in the castle somewhere, you told her I was and then she *lied* to him and told him you were dead."

Potter nodded at this as if it had confirmed some suspicion he had.

"All of that is exactly what happened, but there was something else that happened in that clearing that no one else witnessed."

"What?"

"Where do you suppose people go when they die?"

This was an odd line of questioning. "I don't know. 'On' I suppose. But you didn't *die*, you lived."

"I lived, sure, but I *did* die," he said softly.

Draco's mouth fell open.

"Bollocks!"

"It's true!" he insisted. "I talked to Dumbledore and everything!"

"What?!"

"Yeah and that bit of Voldemort's soul that was in me was there too." He grimaced. "It was really horrible looking."

"But if you died, how am I talking to you right now?"

"Well that's the question isn't it. I was allowed to come back, I could have gone 'on' too but I felt like I wasn't done. I had to finish the job didn't I? He wasn't dead yet and he had one more horcrux that had to be destroyed. Though I had put Neville on that job and that worked out better than I could have hoped."

"The snake!" Draco exclaimed, remembering Longbottom producing a sword from nowhere and taking off the beast's head. "Nagini, she was a horcrux?"

Potter nodded.

“Merlin, I hated that snake!” Draco sighed, Potter snorted. “I actually had to hold my hand over my mouth to stop myself from cheering when Longbottom killed it.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah, but then you just up and vanished and all hell broke loose.”

“Oh I remember,” Potter said with a dark sort of smirk. “You can cause an awful lot of chaos when you have an Invisibility Cloak.”

Draco rolled his eyes. That bloody Cloak, of course.

“So you were *allowed* to come back?” he asked, getting them back on track. “Why?”

Potter shrugged. “I was never told *why*, but I guess the bit of his soul took the brunt of the curse and was purged out of me. So now here I am, alive and entirely myself for the first time ever.”

“Why are you telling *me* this?”

“Dunno,” he pondered the question. “Because you asked, I guess.”

“I know for *fact* journalists from the Daily Prophet and every other news outlet in magical Britain have asked you about a hundred times this summer. So I ask again. Why *me*?”

Potter pondered that for a long moment.

“I’m... not really sure...” he said finally. “I haven’t even told Ron and Hermione what happened in the Forest.”

Draco gasped.

“Have you told *anyone* else?”

“No. No one. Not all of it anyway.”

“Why?”

“It’s been too hard to talk about. And I don’t want to see horror in Ron’s eyes and pity in Hermione’s.”

“What about your girlfriend? Girl Weasley?”

Potter rolled his eyes. “Her name is *Ginny* and I haven’t told her either. Also, she’s not my girlfriend anymore.” His eyes suddenly widened at that. “I *definitely* don’t know why I told you *that*.”

Potter was suddenly spilling all his secrets just because Draco asked. What was up with that? Then his own eyes widened in understanding.

“Shit,” he uttered lowly.

“What?”

He raised their joined hands to eye level to show Potter the culprit. His eyes widened too.

“Veritaserum,” Potter whispered. “But it wasn’t even finished! And it was made wrongly!”

“Jobberknoll feathers are the primary ingredient in truth serums because you’re open to suggestion while you’re holding one,” Draco informed him. “And Weasley threw all eight in at once right before the whole thing exploded on us. And we’ve been slowly absorbing it through our skin!”

“So we can’t lie?”

“More like we’ll answer truthfully any question posed to us.”

“Shit.”

Draco couldn’t agree more.

This glob of failed potion was gonna do a lot more than slightly inconvenience their lives for a few days.

“We’ll just have to agree not to ask each other any personal questions while we’re like this,” Draco decided. He grimaced. “Starting now.”

“Right,” Potter agreed easily. “Seems a bit unfair though since I told you something I haven’t ever told anyone, even my best mates.”

“I won’t go blabbing if that’s your concern,” Draco drawled, rolling his eyes.

“I wasn’t concerned about that, actually,” Potter said, surprising Draco for about the hundredth time that day.

Draco decided to take his own advice and not ask why. He was right though, Potter had been spilling his secrets for the last hour. It wasn’t really fair. Draco sighed.

“You may ask one question,” he offered.

Potter thought about it for a moment then asked the one question Draco didn’t want him to ask.

“What was that silent conversation you had with Madam Pomfrey about?”

Dun dun! What could be so bad about that question? You all probably know already because of the tags and super unsubtle hints in the last two chapters 😁

Chapter 4: Draco's Secret

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

He would have to ask the one question that would tear Draco's greatest secret out of him. Of course he would notice their silent communication in the hospital wing. He'll make an incredible Auror one day.

"I was reminding her that there was a deadline on how long we could safely be attached to each other," he felt the words slip past his lips unbidden and wondered if this was how it had felt for Potter.

"Deadline?" he questioned. "What's the deadline?"

Draco tried to suppress the answer but all that happened was a shuddering inhale as his mouth ran away on its own.

"The full moon..." Draco was trembling now.

Potter was staring at him in horror and Draco knew that he'd put the pieces together very quickly, practiced mystery solver that he was. Shitshitshitshit! Why did he have to ask *that* question?

"You don't mean that you're... a werewolf?" he all but whispered.

"I am," Draco choked out.

"Since *when*?"

Stop asking questions! he pleaded silently, but out loud he found the answer spilling out.

"A little over a year now," he muttered. Might as well get it all out, Potter was just going to ask more followup questions. "I-it was a p-punishment. I had f-failed to follow through with my o-orders. I d-didn't k-kill Dumbledore..."

Draco's trembling had become full body shudders and sobs as his mind was taken back to the summer following sixth year. Once he'd started talking he found he needed to tell Potter everything. He didn't know what it was but he just *knew* he would listen and not judge and Draco really needed that.

"Snape had taken me straight home after the siege had started and when we got there *he* was there," Draco shuddered. "He had been in and out of the manor the previous summer but that summer he was there *all the time*. He was always *right fucking there*. Any time I turned down a corridor there was a chance he'd be standing in it. I didn't feel safe anywhere in my own home! I tried to lock myself in my room but I was always being summoned to watch him t-torture someone. Father said it would t-toughen me up. Any time he k-killed someone he'd feed them to that fucking snake and I'd be forced to watch the whole thing.

“And then one night, my aunt brought me down to the cellar and I knew something especially horrible was going to happen because she was *giggling* the whole time. And mother was being held back by the Carrows and screaming and pleading and crying for me. Father was just standing there like all the fight had left him and he wouldn’t look at me. I thought I was going to be killed...

“And *he* was there. He had this smile on that he always wore when he was about to do something horrible to one of his Death Eaters who had fucked up.”

“Malfoy, you don’t have to...” Potter started to say but Draco shook his head.

“It was a full moon that night,” he continued. “Greyback had a cage in our cellar for when he was there over the full moon. *He* told me that I had f-failed him. That I needed to learn to follow orders without hesitation. That I shouldn’t expect others to finish the job for me.

“He p-pointed his wand at my parents and told me if I didn’t walk up to the cage and let Greyback b-bite me, he’d k-kill them.”

Draco was fully crying now, tears pouring down his face but he didn’t wipe them away.

“What kind of a choice is that?” he cried.

“It’s no choice at all,” Potter answered softly.

“So now I’m a w-werewolf,” he finished through choked sobs.

“Who else knows?”

“McGonagall,” Draco answered automatically, wiping his face with his sleeve and trying to control his crying. “Pomfrey, my parents, and now you. The only other Death Eaters who knew were the Carrows, Bella, and Snape but they’re all dead now...”

“I won’t tell anyone,” Potter assured him. “But you should know, Hermione figured out Remus was a werewolf after the first full moon of term back in third year so...”

Draco’s eyes went wide.

“Do you think she’d figure me out?”

“Probably, but I wouldn’t worry about her telling anyone.”

“No? Don’t you lot tell each other everything?”

“Not always, I told you I hadn’t told either of them I died didn’t I?”

“This isn’t really the same though is it?”

“No, but she won’t tell, I’m almost positive of that.” Potter seemed so confident.

“How can you be so sure?”

“Because when she found out about Remus, she didn’t even tell me or Ron. All year. She did try to feel us out once to see if we’d figured it out because we were discussing why he might be missing some classes. She said something like ‘well if you don’t know, I’m not going to tell you.’ Ron thought she was just pretending to know something to be more interesting but I didn’t buy it. Course, she was hiding a lot more than the secret our Defence teacher was a werewolf that year.”

“Wait, what was she hiding?” Draco asked before he remembered he shouldn’t.

“Oh she had a time turner that she was using to get to all of her classes because she had taken five electives and there weren’t enough hours in the day.”

“A *time turner*? For *school*?” Draco was astounded. “That’s such a stupid use for time travel.”

Potter burst out laughing and for a moment Draco wondered if their earlier giddiness had returned but then Potter turned and smirked at him.

“You want a better use? We used it to save Buckbeak.”

Draco’s mouth fell open.

“That hippogriff that nearly clawed my arm off?”

“It was a *scratch*,” Potter said sternly. “Madam Pomfrey fixed you up in about a minute, and it wouldn’t have happened if you’d paid attention to Hagrid’s warning not to insult him. Don’t act like you don’t know exactly what you did.”

Draco shut his mouth with a click of his teeth. Potter was right; he *had* done it on purpose to cause trouble for Hagrid. And when his father had pushed to get the beast put down, Draco hadn’t cared that it didn’t deserve it or how it would hurt Hagrid or anyone else. He’d thought it was *funny*. He’d been a right little shit and he’d totally deserved that slap Granger had given him.

“Am I a terrible fucking person?” Draco asked softly, knowing Potter would have to answer honestly.

“You’ve been a right twat,” Potter answered without difficulty. “But ‘terrible’ isn’t exactly the word I’d use. Anyway you can make up for that by being better now.”

They were quiet for a long time, just sitting on the floor against Draco’s dormitory door. He was just about to wonder what time it was when a bell rang through the castle to tell everyone it was the end of third period.

“Shit,” Draco muttered.

“What?” Potter asked.

“You have to come with me to my next class.”

“You have a class right now? What class?”

“Muggle Studies,” Draco groaned and stood up, hauling Potter to his feet too before checking his backpack to make sure he had his textbook. “You might want to bring some homework or something to work on, I’m sure you’ll be bored to tears otherwise.”

“Uh sure, I’ll start on our Veritaserum essay,” Potter said, picking up his bag as well. “I didn’t know you were taking Muggle Studies.”

“It’s a condition of my parole,” Draco sighed. “Wouldn’t be so bad if I wasn’t taking it with *third years*.”

“Damn, that’s unfortunate,” Potter said but Draco definitely detected a hint of amusement in his tone.

“I wouldn’t be laughing if I were you,” Draco warned him as they left their common room and headed down the grand staircase for the first floor. “This class is full of pureblood thirteen-year-olds who all probably worship the ground you walk on.”

“Shit,” Potter groaned.

“Unfortunate,” Draco parroted with a smirk.

It felt almost thrilling to be bantering with Potter again. It was even better than when they were younger because there was no hint of their old animosity. There was no risk of them cursing each other in the corridors, or being thrown in detention together for fighting and made to traipse through the Forbidden Forest with nothing but a cowardly dog to protect them.

Draco was most intrigued to notice that his mood had significantly improved since their trip to the hospital wing. Somewhere between bawling his eyes out and spilling his most closely guarded secret to the last person he wanted to find out, an enormous weight had been lifted off of him. All he needed now was for Madam Pomfrey to turn up and tell them she’d figured out a way to separate them before either of them had to use the toilet and Draco would truly be happy. That was probably a pipe dream though.

Draco’s prediction about his classmates’ reaction to Harry Potter in their class turned out to be extremely accurate. Since they had begun their journey to the Muggle Studies classroom from the tallest tower and on the far other side of the castle, they ended up arriving last after all of the third years had already taken their seats. When they walked in, a hush went through the room and twenty pairs of eyes went wide as dinner plates before a sea of hissed whispers started like there was a water leak somewhere.

Draco glanced over at Potter to see his face fighting a grimace.

“This happen to you a lot?” Draco teased.

Potter scowled at him as he nodded jerkily and he suspected if there weren’t so many witnesses he might have hexed him or at least given him the finger.

“Oh, Mr Malfoy,” Professor Davies greeted him. “You’ve brought a guest?”

“Er... yes, sort of,” Draco started awkwardly but Potter saved him from having to explain.

He held up their joined hands to show the professor.

“Mishap in Potions, sir,” Potter explained with a winning smile that Draco knew the teachers all just *loved*. “We’re kind of stuck together until Madam Pomfrey can brew a solvent. I promise not to be disruptive, I was just going to do homework this period.”

“Oh no trouble Mr Potter,” Davies said cheerfully. “We’ll just add an extra chair to Mr Malfoy’s worktable, Miss Smith if you wouldn’t mind?”

A Hufflepuff girl with dirty blonde pigtails leapt up like it was her life’s ambition to get a chair for Harry Potter. She pulled one of the extra chairs from a stack in the corner and put it next to Draco’s at his worktable at the back of the classroom.

“Thank you,” Potter said kindly to her. “Are you related to Zacharias Smith by any chance?”

“He’s my big brother,” she said, turning scarlet. “Are you two friends?”

“We don’t get on, no,” Potter said and then went red in the face too. Smith’s face fell and he hastened to add. “But that doesn’t mean we can’t be friendly.”

She nodded awkwardly before all but *running* back to her seat.

“I’m really starting to hate this whole telling the truth thing,” he muttered to Draco as they took their seats.

“Would you rather have lied to her and told her Smith was your bezzie mate?” Draco asked snickering.

“No,” Potter retorted snottily. “But I might have put it nicer instead of being so bloody *direct*.”

“Alright, class,” Davies addressed them. “Quiet down, time to begin.”

It was then, as Davies began his lecture on the history of the automobile that Draco realised another thorn in his and Potter’s predicament. Draco was left-handed. Potter was right-handed. The very hands that were stuck together.

As they both attempted to begin writing, Draco to take notes and Potter to start his Potions essay, there was a momentary struggle before they stopped and realised the problem. They both looked down at the offending goop that had, in the intervening hours, gone from a sticky glob to a solid cast, then up at each other as they both came to the same conclusion. This was going to be such a fucking pain in the arse.

“You write,” Potter muttered after letting out a resigned sigh and allowing his right arm to go limp on the desk. “I’ll just read the textbook.”

Despite Potter trying his best to make it easier for Draco, writing while attached to the dead weight of someone else's arm was no picnic. As if writing with a quill wasn't hard enough for someone who was left-handed now he had to worry about smudging Potter's arm as well as his own through still wet ink. It was very distracting and Draco was sure he hadn't given the lesson the proper amount of attention when the period ended and they'd been given an assignment on other modes of transportation taken by muggles besides cars.

"How are either of us meant to do our homework?" Draco growled as they were heading to dinner. "Why do you have to be right-handed?"

"I'm in the majority," Potter retorted. "Why do *you* have to be left-handed?"

"Ugh," he groaned. "The next few days are going to be such a pain in the arse! I don't suppose you can write with your left hand at all?"

"Not with a quill," he replied thoughtfully. "Though I might be able to manage something halfway legible if I could use a pen."

"Yeah?" Hope bloomed in Draco's stomach that they might not have to fall several days behind on their schoolwork because of this situation. "Do you think the professors would let you? Because I don't see this working otherwise. I can't write with my right hand no matter what tool you give me. I can't even wave my wand with my right hand without shit exploding."

They entered the Great Hall and it was clear that the novelty of their predicament hadn't worn off yet because half the students already in there craned their necks to stare at them.

"I didn't even *think* about wandwork," Potter groaned, ignoring the stares with practiced ease. "But yeah I'm sure the professors wouldn't mind if I did my homework in pen for the next few days, and I doubt anyone would care what my personal notes are written with."

Draco decided to take his lead and tried to act casual as he was led to the Gryffindor table.

"How is it you can write with your left hand anyway?"

Potter stiffened and Draco realised belatedly that this was one of those personal questions he wasn't meant to ask.

"My cousin broke my right arm when I was nine and I had my arm in a cast for five months while it healed and I had to learn how to write with my left hand," he said quickly and quietly like he was trying to get it over with. He then cast Draco an almost pleading look that both begged him not to ask followup questions and to not tell anyone what he'd just said.

"Sorry," Draco muttered and knew Potter would understand he was apologising for asking and not the injury and shocking revelation about how long it takes muggles to heal a broken bone.

Luckily, no one else seemed to have overheard the exchange and they were able to sit down to dinner without further questions. For which Draco was glad because he was *starving*,

having missed lunch, and this time not even snide comments from Weasley were going to get in the way of his meal.

Chapter End Notes

Bit of a grim one this time but I hope I softened it a bit with a bit of humour at the end there.

Thanks for all the kudos and bookmarks! I never expected this much engagement.

Chapter 5: Can We Be Friends?

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: Self harm

Dinner was almost painless. They had gotten there early enough that they had already started eating their meal when most of the rest of the Gryffindor eighth years trooped in as a single unit, most of them coming from a free period. Every one of them studiously pretended Draco wasn't there and talked amongst themselves at a shocking volume.

Draco just kept his eyes on his plate, clumsily eating with his right hand while his left and Potter's right rested on the bench between them. Potter wasn't as clumsy with his left hand as Draco was with his right but he supposed he'd probably had to eat with his left hand for five months as well as learn to write.

Granger came in late to dinner with a rushed expression and a book under her arm.

"Hermione, where have you been? You nearly missed dinner," Ginny Weasley asked.

"*Library*," half the group answered at the same time before Granger could and then all burst out laughing like it was the funniest joke ever told.

"Yes the *library*," Granger answered snottily, dropping the book she was carrying on the table. "I was researching solvents and trying to calculate the best one for this application." She gestured at Draco and Potter as she said this.

"Why?" Weasley asked around a mouthful of sprouts. "Madam Pomfrey is already on it."

Granger gave him a disgusted look, rolled her eyes and shook her head in annoyance. Why were these two dating again?

"It doesn't hurt to know things, Ron. It seemed like an interesting field in potionneering and I wanted to see how the process worked."

"As if you don't have enough homework already," Seamus Finnigan snorted.

"I'm all caught up on my homework actually," she said briskly sitting down for her meal. She patted the book. "This is just leisure reading."

"Only *you* would read up on solvents for *leisure*, 'Mione," Weasley said affectionately, thankfully without food in his mouth this time.

“Not *just* me, Ron,” she said, rolling her eyes and loading up her plate. “Draco knows what I’m talking about don’t you, Draco?”

Draco’s eyes went wide and his head shot up. Had Granger just voluntarily decided to talk to him? Why would she do that? The whole table went silent looking between Granger and Draco. Weasley looked like he might explode. Potter had stopped eating, fork halfway to his mouth, and was looking on guard. He realised Granger was staring at him expectantly, waiting for his answer.

“W-what?” he stammered.

“You read potions books for leisure,” she clarified. It was a statement, not a question. “I’ve seen you in the library. You study books on topics we never cover in class. I’m guessing you want to do something in the field of potions for career?”

“Yeah...” he said hesitantly. Because she phrased it like a question, he had to answer truthfully. His skin was crawling with everyone staring at him.

Potter seemed to have relaxed somewhat and his guarded expression had changed to slightly amused as he resumed eating.

“I figured,” she said as if all of her suspicions had been confirmed. “You’re the only one in our year that’s ever given me much competition in Potions.”

“I hadn’t realised it was a competition...” he muttered.

Potter snorted. Draco cut him a quizzical look.

“Everything is a competition when Hermione is involved,” he explained with a smirk. “You should have seen her face when I got an O on my Defence OWL and she didn’t.”

“Only because you raised the expectations of all the examiners by performing a patronus!” she exclaimed indignantly.

“Is that the reason I only got an E when I know I did everything else properly?” Draco asked accusingly at Potter.

“How should I know?” he cut back, a massive shit-eating grin on his face. “Maybe you’re not as good at the subject as you think you are.”

Draco’s stomach fluttered at the dazzling smile Potter had shot him, despite the smug nature of it. He silently cursed his traitorous emotions for being so easily affected by such a small gesture.

“Quick show of hands,” Granger called, unaware of Draco’s internal turmoil. “Who got an O on their Defence OWL?”

Potter raised his hand, broad grin still in place. It looked like no one else was going to but then another hand sheepishly rose.

“Neville?!” several voices exclaimed.

“What’s that tone supposed to mean?” Longbottom cried indignantly. “Do you all think I’m stupid or something?”

“No, no, Neville,” Thomas said placatingly. “We just never thought you cared that much about Defence, you’re all about Herbology.”

“A man can be good at two things,” Longbottom grumbled.

“I’m not surprised,” Draco said, forgetting that in doing so everyone would turn their eyes on him again.

“What?” Longbottom’s eyes were wide as saucers. Everyone else was also looking at Draco in shock.

“You were all at the Battle,” he said, suddenly regretting bringing it up and reminding them, especially given on whose side he stood during the war. “You must have seen how Longbottom dueled. I’m not sure why any of you are surprised.”

The table was quiet for awhile. Eyes scanned to Potter for direction and he just continued to eat like this was the most normal conversation in the world. Draco wondered if he was aware of just how much power he had over his friends.

“Yeah but that was, like, *after* OWLs,” Finnigan finally said, taking the direction from Potter to act natural.

“Did you all forget that Neville was the most improved in the DA?” Potter finally said.

“We were all in the DA too and none of *us* got an O,” Weasley retorted. “Not even *Hermione!*”

“It blows up Hermione’s patronus theory anyway,” Thomas stated.

“Actually...” Longbottom said sheepishly.

“No way!” Weasley exclaimed. “You never cast a corporeal patronus in DA.”

“No but I kept practicing on my own after we were disbanded,” he explained. “And I was in the same defence practical as Harry and we all saw him do the patronus for the examiner and after he left I told my examiner that I could do that too so he let me show him.”

“What sort of animal was it?” Thomas asked eagerly.

“A wolverine.”

A chorus of oohs and ahhs went out but Granger was not impressed.

“That is so unfair!” she complained furiously. “I could do a patronus too and if anyone had bothered to ask me to demonstrate one I would have.”

“Calm down, Hermione, that was over two years ago,” Weasley soothed. “I could do a patronus back then too but you don’t see me complaining. Besides, *none* of us would be able to do a patronus at all right now if Harry hadn’t taught us, so how unfair is it really?”

There was a little bickering after that before someone changed the subject and everyone broke off into small group conversations. By then Draco had finished his meal and was quietly waiting for Potter’s cue that they could leave. But he was engaged in a discussion with the Weasleys about Quidditch.

Draco didn’t feel much like joining in despite his interest in the subject. He scanned his eyes over to Granger who was now buried in the potions book while she ate. He wondered why she had invited him to join their conversation and he wondered why he had let her. He also wondered at her use of his first name.

He was so lost in thought that he didn’t notice Potter getting up until he had tugged on their joined hands. He looked up at him in confusion.

“You ready to go?” Potter asked him.

“Yes,” he replied automatically.

“We should go talk to McGonagall,” he said as Draco stood.

“Why?”

“So we can ask about me using pen on my assignments for the next few days.”

Oh right. Draco had assumed that they would ask each teacher individually but Potter going straight to the Headmistress who had a soft spot for him was a much more efficient plan. So their first stop was her office.

Unlike Dumbledore, McGonagall did not password protect her office. The gargoyle that stood sentry outside the head office would only bar entry if the Headmistress was in a meeting or not in, and allow students to enter at any other time. Draco liked this better; if a student needed to talk to the head teacher, it seemed stupid for them to need to know a password to do it. Perhaps this was because she was still holding the position of Head of Gryffindor House as well as Transfiguration teacher, having not found suitable replacements in the past summer in time for the beginning of term. Draco wondered when she found the time to eat and sleep with so much work taking up her day.

They went up the spiral staircase and Potter knocked on her office door which magically opened for them as soon as he did.

“Ah, Potter, Malfoy,” McGonagall greeted them. “Poppy has informed me of your predicament. Please.” She gestured for them to sit opposite her desk.

They had to scoot the chairs closer together in order to sit in them comfortably with their joined hands hanging in open space between them.

“I suspect you two are here to discuss accommodations. Ginger newt?”

She held out a tin of biscuits in front of them and Potter took one automatically. When Draco didn't immediately take one she shook the tin invitingly at him and he took one but didn't eat it.

"Yes, Professor," Potter confirmed. "There's a small problem... er, besides the obvious."

"I'm left-handed," Draco continued, giving said hand a small shake for emphasis, jostling Potter's entire arm. "And Potter is right-handed."

"I see," she said thoughtfully. "That could make doing your schoolwork difficult for a few days. I assume you're here to ask for an extension on your assignments while you're in this predicament?"

"Actually we had come up with a different solution," Potter explained. "See, I can sort of write with my left hand but not with a quill and I was wondering if I could be allowed to turn in assignments written in pen for the next few days, and Malfoy can carry on using his left hand while I just let him drag my hand around his page."

"We don't want to fall behind in our coursework so early into term," Draco added. "So this felt like a decent solution. I can't say what our penmanship is going to look like though, considering the circumstances."

"I must say, gentlemen, this is a refreshing change for the two of you," McGonagall remarked. "The two of you have come up with a very elegant solution. It's very nice to see the both of you getting along."

"Does that mean you approve then, professor?" Potter asked.

"Yes, Potter, I think that will do fine, I'll let your other professors know that some of your assignments for the next few days will be completed in pen and warn them that both of your penmanship may suffer from your condition. I'm sure they won't mind."

"Brilliant! Thanks, professor," Potter said brightly.

"Yes, thank you," Draco agreed.

They both stood and after a moment of properly orienting themselves so they could walk side by side, they made to leave.

"Oh and gentlemen?" McGonagall called just as they reached the door and they turned to look at her. "I hope this new cooperative manner between you two is a sign of things to come. Have a good evening."

They both murmured "good evening" back and left her office.

Draco wondered if they *could* get along without the forced proximity they were currently under. Potter had said he didn't hate him and Draco didn't hate Potter, far from it. He didn't dare to expect them to ever be *friends* but he suspected they could probably manage to be civil.

“Do you think she’s right?” Potter asked as if reading his thoughts.

“That us getting along could stick?” Draco confirmed and Potter nodded. “I think it could.”

Potter beamed like Draco had just told him the best news.

“You know what’s funny?” he asked, smirking at Draco with a look of something like triumph in his eyes. “If it wasn’t for this shit on our arms, I doubt you would have admitted that you thought we could ever get along.”

“I don’t know if ‘funny’ is the right word, but you’re probably right.”

“Do you think we could ever be friends?”

“No,” Draco answered automatically before sighing and clarifying. “I think there’s too much shit between us. I think the best we could ever hope for is not hating each other.”

He looked over at Potter who looked *disappointed*. Draco’s rebellious stomach did another flip.

“Why?” Draco asked. “Do *you* think we’d ever get along enough to be friends?”

“Yes,” he answered quickly. Draco’s eyebrows shot up in surprise. “I think there is potential there.”

“You think so?” he asked incredulously. Potter nodded and Draco scoffed. “You trust too easily.”

“I actually think I’m an excellent judge of character.”

“Didn’t your parents get betrayed by someone who was supposed to be their friend? Naïvety must be a heritable trait.”

“Are you trying to tell me there’s some reason I shouldn’t want to be your friend?” Potter accused, giving Draco’s left arm a yank.

“Yes, idiot,” Draco retorted. “I’ve been an absolute twat to you – your words – for the last seven years, did a bunch of horrible shit, and was on the wrong side of the bloody war. *Why* would you *ever* want to be friends with me?”

“I think I’ve made my feelings on the ‘horrible shit’ and whose side you were on pretty clear already,” Potter said, rolling his eyes. “As for being a twat, we were kids. I’m sure I was at least as much of a twat right back. For fuck sake, I almost *killed* you once!”

Draco flinched. He looked around the corridor hastily and was relieved that no one was around to have heard him say that.

“Try to say that a little louder,” he hissed. “I don’t think the whole school quite heard you.”

Potter had the decency to look embarrassed but carried on as they continued along the scenic route to the Astronomy Tower.

"The way I see it," he continued. "There was really only two things standing in the way of us being friends."

"Oh yeah?" Draco asked skeptically. "And what's that?"

"One was the choiceless nature of your upbringing," Potter answered, holding up one finger, then raising a second. "And two, neither of us was ever properly honest with each other."

Potter raised his right hand and Draco's left with it.

"I'd say those obstacles are gone now."

As Draco stared at the hard cast sticking them together his sleeve fell down, exposing his Mark. He blanched, grabbed the hem of his sleeve and yanked it back in place.

"Wait," Potter said, pulling Draco's arm closer to him. "Let me see."

"What? Why?" Draco choked.

"I thought I saw..." Potter muttered, pulling Draco's sleeve back to examine the Mark. What he saw made him gasp. "Did you do this?"

Over the faded Dark Mark on Draco's forearm were a series of criss-crossed scars where he had hacked and clawed at it over the summer. Some of them were still only a few weeks old.

"Yes," Draco ground out, unable to refuse to answer. "I've tried everything to get rid of it but it won't go away..."

"So you resorted to shredding your arm apart?"

"I'd have cut the whole thing off by now if I wasn't left-handed," Draco admitted.

"Malfoy..."

"I don't want your pity," he snapped and yanked his arm back, pulling the sleeve back down. "You don't want it from your friends and I don't want it from *you*."

"Okay," Potter whispered.

"And I don't want pity about the..." he whispered the last, "*werewolf* bit either."

"I won't pity you for *that*," Potter said, a note of venom suddenly in his voice. His tone sent a shiver down Draco's spine. "But if Greyback wasn't dead, I'd kill him."

They had stopped in the middle of the corridor. Potter was so angry Draco could *feel* it in the air. It was the first time he realised that Potter's power wasn't simply social in nature; he was

magically powerful too. He couldn't help but stare at him with a mixture of awe and fear. Potter must have noticed because one look at Draco and he instantly deflated.

"Sorry," he said sheepishly. "I have some pretty strong feelings about the shit Greyback has done."

"I'll say," Draco said breathlessly.

They continued walking up to the tower in tense silence.

He couldn't believe he'd ever tormented the man next to him. Draco was sure Potter could take him apart in less than one blow if he wanted to. This was not someone he ever wanted to be his enemy. Never again. Potter had the potential to be terrifying. Good thing he had such a strong moral backbone and no desire for power or the whole wizarding world would be in trouble.

They got back to their common room without further conversation, but when they entered, Draco suddenly felt overwhelmed by his peers' attention again even though none of them actually looked at him this time.

"I suppose we should get some homework done," Potter sighed looking over to where Granger and Weasley had their heads bent over textbooks and parchment at a table in the corner.

"Could-could we go somewhere else and do that?" Draco pleaded.

He hadn't been able to study in the common room yet this term and didn't think he was ready for it now, even with Potter behaving like a human shield charm.

"Sure," Potter shrugged. "Library?"

"I was thinking either my dorm or yours," Draco muttered.

"Sure," Potter said easily, and began leading them back to the dorms.

Chapter 6: Sleeping Arrangements

After retrieving some textbooks and pens from Potter's dorm, they headed back to Draco's where they had to rearrange his small work desk and conjure a second chair so they could both work at it. Instead of getting started on his homework, though, Draco had some pressing concerns.

"We should talk about sleeping arrangements."

Potter looked up from the Transfiguration textbook he was flipping through and made a face.

"I suppose it's that time," he sighed.

"I doubt either of us are going to experience what one might call restful sleep while we're like this," Draco said. "Obviously we'll have to budge up in one bed."

"Do you have a preference for whose bed?"

"I'd really prefer mine, naturally," Draco drawled.

"I figured," Potter said, nodding. "And what are we going to do about the issue we've been avoiding up until now?"

"What issue?" Draco drew a blank.

"Using the toilet and showering," Potter said, rolling his eyes like Draco was being stupid on purpose.

"Oh," Draco grimaced. "*That* issue."

"Yes, *that* issue," Potter drawled. "How should we handle it?"

"I suppose normal toileting rules apply," Draco considered. "No talking and no eye contact, and we wash our hands. And we're using the prefect's bathroom when one of us needs the toilet outside of the Tower," he added when it occurred to him that they wouldn't always have the relative privacy of the eighth year toilets. "We'd be less likely to be walked in on and the cubicles are larger."

"It's on the fifth floor," Potter complained. "What if we're on the other side of the castle and have a toilet emergency?"

"What kind of toilet emergency do you predict one of us might have?" Draco sneered.

"I dunno, like what if we've been holding it for ages and just can't wait anymore? Or what if one of us has diarrhoea?" Potter was smirking now. He obviously wasn't taking this seriously.

"First of all," Draco rolled his eyes. "Unless you have some kind of intestinal disorder, diarrhoea isn't going to be an issue if you don't eat dodgy food and I'm sure the house elves

would rather throw themselves on a fire than serve something that made a student ill. And don't hold your bladder until it's an emergency you twat!"

"But what *if*?"

"Fine, if you need a contingency, in the event of a toilet emergency we can use the nearest available toilets," he finally relented. "But we're using your social status and my prefect authority to kick out anyone already in there and barring the door."

Potter burst out laughing at this and Draco was suddenly captivated by the way his face lit up and his stomach did a little flip. Besides their potion induced giggle fit earlier, Draco had never seen Potter laugh like this up close, and never had *he* been the cause. The hard worn expression he always wore placed there by the war that had prematurely aged his face was totally gone and he looked *young*.

Draco tried to think back to the last time Potter looked this carefree. It might have been after the Gryffindor-Ravenclaw Quidditch match in third year when he had caught the snitch and secured the Quidditch cup for Gryffindor. Was it really that long ago? They were just *kids* then.

"W-we are n-*not*," Potter gasped through his laughter. "Kicking people out of the toilets."

"Then we're not going to have any toilet emergencies," Draco decided.

"Fine," Potter said while still chuckling, a brilliant smile on his face that made Draco's head fuzzy. "And what are we going to do about showering?"

Draco felt his face immediately heat up.

"M-maybe we should stick to c-cleansing spells for the next few days," he cursed himself for stammering. The idea of being naked in close proximity to Potter was not one he had the brainpower to be mature about.

"I mean..." Potter sighed. "I guess we can do that but..."

"But what?"

Potter grinned at him and pointed at the mop of loose curls on his head.

"If you think this is a disaster now, you should see what it looks like when I clean my hair with magic."

Draco scanned his eyes up to Potter's hair. It had always been an uncontrollable mess for as long as Draco had known him, and if the images of James Potter he'd seen were anything to go by, disastrous hair ran in the Potter family. He realised suddenly that he *had* seen Potter's hair in a worse state than this. In the manor last spring. His heart clenched and his breath hitched like it did every time he remembered something horrible from the war.

"Woah, Malfoy!" Potter's voice filtered to him through the haze of his memories. "What just happened? Are you alright?"

"I ha-haven't been a-alright in *years*," Draco bit out through gasps, forced to answer the question. "R-remembered – at the manor – you... you... G-Granger..."

He realised distantly that his hands were over his ears, tears streaming down his face. With Draco's left hand over his ear, Potter's right brushed against his face but he didn't take his hand back. Instead he did something Draco would have never guessed he'd do; he moved in closer and with his free hand he pulled Draco into a crushing hug.

Draco didn't fight the embrace. It wasn't like any other hug he'd ever received – not that he had a lot of points of reference to compare it to – where his mother's hugs were the suffocating embrace of a mother who nearly lost her child, Potter's hug was comforting and safe. It was the embrace of someone who knew *exactly* what he'd been through and was promising he'd make sure he'd never have to suffer that pain ever again.

He dropped his hands from his ears to clutch at Potter's robes and buried his face in his chest. It should have felt humiliating, bawling his eyes out against the robes of his long time rival but he only felt security. Potter made him feel *safe*.

It felt like hours but was probably only a few minutes when Draco had finally stopped crying and released his deathgrip on the front of Potter's robes. They separated and Draco hiccoughed.

"Sorry..." he mumbled.

"Don't worry about it," Potter said softly.

Draco looked at his face and saw evidence that Potter had been crying too. His eyes were red-rimmed and his eyelashes were wet. Maybe he'd needed that hug as much as Draco had.

"We're a mess aren't we?" Draco tried to joke but his voice came out slightly strangled.

"Yeah," Potter gave a watery chuckle anyway.

He looked down at their half-started homework and suddenly didn't feel the energy to focus on it anymore.

"I'm tired," Potter said, once again seeming to read his mind. "Maybe we should just turn in early. We're probably going to have to spend a little extra time getting comfortable than normal."

Draco agreed and they went back to Potter's dorm so he could retrieve pyjamas and then returned to Draco's so they could prepare for bed. Draco studiously kept his eyes on his own work as he shucked off his trousers and pants to put on his pyjama bottoms. It was as he was struggling to tie his drawstring one-handed that their next problem occurred.

"Er..." Potter muttered.

Against the unspoken agreement not to look at each other while they changed that Draco had known since first year sharing a dorm with four other boys, he looked over at what was bothering Potter. He had changed into pyjama bottoms without trouble and was now half out

of his shirt and robes which were now hanging over his right arm with no further means of removing them. Draco stared at the articles, dumbfounded.

“Well fuck,” he uttered.

Before he could begin to ponder a solution, Draco’s thoughts stuttered to a halt as they snagged on Potter’s bare chest. In the middle of his chest, right over his heart was a massive fractal scar, spiderwebbing outward in every direction like he’d been struck by lightning. It called to mind the similar, much smaller scar on Potter’s forehead.

“How do you suppose we should handle... Malfoy?” Potter called to him, snapping him out of his trance-like state. He shot his eyes up to meet Potter’s and determined not to ask the question on the tip of his tongue. “I was saying, how do you think we should handle this?”

“Er...” Draco gave himself a mental shake and tried to focus on their problem. “Maybe an enlargement charm? And climb through the arm hole?”

So they tried it, and despite how undignified it was to clamber out of their shirts and robes through an arm hole, it worked.

“It’s going to be such a pain in the arse if we have to do that in reverse,” Potter remarked, staring at the t-shirt he had intended to wear to bed. “Do you mind if I go shirtless?”

Heat bloomed on Draco’s face.

“I don’t mind,” he choked.

He decided to also go shirtless and it seemed Draco’s own scars had caught Potter’s attention the way his had caught Draco’s. But where Potter had one very large scar in the middle of his chest as evidence of his miraculous survival of a curse that should have killed him, Draco had several all over his torso and upper arms. Diagonal slash marks as well as a particularly deep and mangled bite from massive jaws over his right shoulder and collar bone.

If Potter didn’t already know Draco was a werewolf, he’d have never let him see this scar. However, it wasn’t the werewolf bite that Potter’s eyes snagged on, it was the slashes. Tremendous guilt overtook his face and his left hand made an aborted movement like he had started to reach out to touch the scars and thought better of it.

“I’m – I’m so *sorry*,” he whispered, his voice wrecked. “You have no idea how–”

“It’s fine,” Draco interrupted without making eye contact, suddenly wishing he’d covered up instead.

“It’s not *fine*,” Potter argued almost angrily. “I almost *killed* you.”

“I tried to use the Cruciatus on you,” Draco retorted.

“That’s not a good reason to use a spell I didn’t know the effects of that I found scribbled in the margins of a book labeled ‘for enemies’!”

“Wait, what?” Draco’s face went slack. Potter hadn’t known what the curse would do? Well didn’t that just explain everything. If he’d known, there was no way Harry “good-to-a-fault” Potter would have ever used such a dark curse.

“I had a second-hand Potions textbook I had been using in sixth year,” Potter explained. “The previous owner had scribbled notes on nearly every page. It was mostly improvements on potion recipes but there were also notes on spells they had been inventing, incantations and wand movements and stuff. One of the spells though had no other notes just the incantation and a note that said ‘for enemies’. I had no idea what would happen when I cast it on you.”

“And where is this textbook now?” Draco had to ask, fearful that Potter had it still, or worse, that he had left it somewhere someone else could have picked it up.

“Gone, destroyed,” he answered. “After I cursed you, I hid it in the Room of Requirement. And then Crabbe’s Fiendfyre destroyed everything in that room.”

Draco fought back the reminder of the heat of the flames licking at his heels, while he clung to Potter for dear life on the back of a broomstick that could barely fly.

“Why,” he asked in a tense voice, “in *Merlin’s name*, would you take instruction from mysterious notes you found scribbled in an old textbook?”

“They had seemed harmless at the time,” he muttered guiltily. “Ginny had said almost exactly the same thing at the time, actually.”

“Clever girl,” Draco remarked dryly. “You should have listened to her.”

“I should have,” he agreed softly. “I’m so sorry I didn’t.”

“Forget about it,” Draco dismissed, and awkwardly climbed into bed, dragging Potter down with him.

“Easier said than done,” he grumbled while trying to sort himself out on the bed with their hands joined.

“Now you understand how I feel,” Draco retorted.

“Touché.”

They managed to arrange themselves more or less comfortably in the bed, side-by-side on their backs, and pulled the covers up over them. It was just as he had gotten situated that he realised they hadn’t doused the torches and their wands were on the desk out of reach. He was just about to resign himself to having to get up to get his wand and do this whole bed shuffle over again when Potter waved a hand at the torches and they all went out.

“What the fuck?” Draco exclaimed.

“What?” Potter asked, slightly alarmed by Draco’s tone.

“What the fuck did you just do?”

“Put out the torches?”

“*Wandlessly?* Without an incantation?”

Potter couldn't seriously be that dense to not know that that wasn't normal.

“Oh, that. Yeah.”

““Oh, *that*’?” Draco mocked. “Since when could you do *that*?”

“Er... Since this summer,” he said sheepishly. “I was actually pretty alarmed the first time and so freaked out I actually went to a healer.”

“Why did you think you needed a healer?” It was astonishing, sure, but not exactly a cause for concern.

“Because the last time I could do unusual magic that no one else could do it was because I was a horcrux,” he whispered.

Shit. He really needed to stop asking personal questions.

“What unusual magic?”

Wow! He really couldn't help himself could he?

“Parseltongue,” he answered with a sigh.

“Wait!” Draco sat up, wide-eyed, and looked at Potter in the gloom. “The reason you're a Parselmouth is because...”

“Because Voldemort was a Parselmouth, yes.”

“So does that mean you can't speak it anymore?”

“That's what I had thought but it turns out I can still do it, which is another reason I went to the healer.”

Draco stared at him in alarm. Potter probably couldn't see the horrified expression on Draco's face in the dark and without his glasses, but he evidently could sense some tension because he continued despite not being asked another question.

“The healer said I was fine,” Potter said. Though his words were meant to be reassuring, his tone was one of confusion and frustration. “I swore her to secrecy of course but she searched for evidence of dark magic and traces of a horcrux. What she concluded was that the scar on my chest was produced when the horcrux was purged out of me and took the path of least resistance – the point of contact with the killing curse. She also suggested the reason why my magic was suddenly so much more powerful was because it had been suppressed for nearly seventeen years by the horcrux and was now finally unburdened.”

“Is that like when people train their bodies with weights on so that when they don’t wear them they’re so much faster?” Draco reasoned.

“I suppose,” Potter shrugged. “Makes about as much sense as anything else.”

Draco laid back down with a sigh.

“I need to stop asking you questions...”

“I guess you’re just too nosey to resist,” Potter said, chuckling. He sighed. “I’ve decided I don’t mind you knowing this stuff.”

“Why?”

“Because, like you said, we’re not friends.”

“I don’t get it.”

“The reason it bothers me so much how Ron and Hermione look at me when they hear about the worst parts of my life is because they pity me,” he explained. “I can’t fucking stand the pity. It’s like they think I’m so goddamned fragile. They stop acting normal and it drives me nuts.

“But you’re not my friend, so you don’t pity me. You’re clearly horrified by the stuff you’ve learned but you still act normal. You don’t treat me like I’m made of glass and one stiff breeze from shattering into a million pieces.”

“I thought besides the whole *literally* dying bit that they knew everything about you,” Draco queried.

“They know a lot but not everything.”

“What don’t they—” Draco cut himself off before he could finish asking. Merlin! He really needed to get a better grasp on his self control.

“You’re learning,” Potter noted, a smile in his voice.

“You don’t seem to have the same problem I have,” Draco remarked petulantly.

“That’s probably because I already know everything about you,” Potter reasoned.

That wasn’t true, Draco thought. He still had one secret Potter didn’t know.

“The only secret you had left was the werewolf thing,” he continued. “Though I suppose there are a few follow up questions I’d like to ask...”

“Go ahead and ask them then,” Draco sighed.

“Really?”

“May as well.” If Potter thought he’d exhausted all possible questions he could ask, he’d never stumble on the ones that would squeeze that final confession out of him.

“If Pomfrey and McGonagall are the only people besides me and your parents who know, where are you getting your wolfsbane potion from?”

“I’m not taking wolfsbane.”

Now it was Potter’s turn to sit up and blink at Draco owlishly in the dark room.

“Then what are you doing to manage full moons?”

“McGonagall has assured me that this room is very secure. I can lock myself in here on full moons and I won’t be able to get out. The house elves have been instructed to empty the room of everything in it before moonrise and I’ll just stay in here until the moon sets and I’m back to myself. It’s soundproof too so no one will hear anything and the door is impenetrable on full moons so I don’t have to worry about anyone breaking in. Or me breaking out.”

Potter laid back down with a huff.

“Wouldn’t it just be easier to take wolfsbane potion?”

“I’m sure it would but I don’t want people to know,” Draco explained. “Having someone brew that potion for me would be the same as telling them I’m a werewolf.”

“But you’re brilliant at Potions,” Potter exclaimed. “You could brew it yourself.”

“I would but half the ingredients are poisonous to werewolves on their own. The fumes alone would make me incredibly dizzy. Not exactly the best headspace for brewing such a difficult potion. And if brewed wrong…”

“It would poison you,” Potter finished.

“I assume you learned all you know about werewolves from Lupin?” Draco asked.

“Yeah,” he sighed, a note of grief in his voice. Draco remembered seeing Lupin’s name on the Fallen Fifty memorial that was erected on the grounds that summer honouring the fallen Defenders of Hogwarts. “He was one of my dad’s best friends. Greyback bit him when he was a little kid. Dumbledore made it so he could attend Hogwarts by making all these precautions for him because they didn’t have wolfsbane potion in those days. My dad and Sirius became animagi in their fifth year so they could spend the night with him on full moons to prevent him from hurting himself.”

“Hang on,” Draco shifted onto his side to look at Potter better. “You said they hung out with a werewolf *during full moons*?”

“Yeah well, on a full moon a werewolf is only dangerous to humans so…”

“So they became animals,” Draco’s eyes were wide in amazement.

“Yep.”

“And that *worked?*”

“Yep,” Potter said cheerfully. “Sirius said Remus had even bitten him a few times while play fighting and he was fine.”

“That’s incredible! Why don’t more people know this?”

“Because wizards are a notoriously prejudiced bunch of people and hardly anyone has researched lycanthropy,” Potter said darkly.

“Oh.”

There was silence for a few minutes and Draco wondered if Potter had fallen asleep. But then he spoke again.

“What if I learn how to brew wolfsbane for you?” he asked softly.

“Why would you do that?” Draco asked, a tightness forming in his chest.

“Because you need it.”

“It’s that simple is it?”

“Yes.”

Potter may not know who he was without the prophecy hanging over his head but Draco did. He was exactly who he’d always been; a man with a saviour complex, good and selfless right down to his bones. There was no other explanation for how he treated Draco now despite their past.

“Go to sleep, Potter,” he sighed finally.

“Good night, Malfoy,” he said softly back.

Chapter 7: Wrackspurts

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: Self Harm

Draco woke to something warm and heavy wrapped around him and there was a brief moment of alarm when he realised he couldn't move before he remembered that Potter was in his bed. The man in question had managed to tangle his legs with Draco's and had wrapped his free arm over his waist. He'd also buried his face in Draco's chest and was breathing softly through his mouth.

He took a moment to appreciate how unbelievably comfortable he was like this as he stared down at the top of Potter's unruly head. Well, *mostly* comfortable, he considered, noticing that his left arm, trapped under their bodies, had entirely gone numb. That and a certain biological necessity had become very urgent.

"Potter," he called, giving the man a nudge with his free hand, which he now just noticed had been wrapped around Potter's bare torso too.

Potter groaned and buried his face harder into Draco's chest. Draco felt his face turn very red. Potter was *snuggling* him!

"Potter wake up," he tried again, his voice cracking slightly which he hoped to play off as morning voice. He gave the other man a little shake.

"Mmm... five more minutsh..." Potter slurred against his human pillow.

"Potter, I have to pee," Draco deadpanned.

Potter suddenly went rigid around him and he jerked his head back and looked up at Draco with wide eyes. Then detangled himself so hastily that he fell out of bed and onto the floor in a heap. The sudden movement nearly pulled Draco's arm out of its socket and he cursed in alarm.

"Ow..." Potter grumbled from the floor.

Draco sighed and tried to get to his feet but Potter had moved to a sitting position with his face in his hands. What little of it Draco could make out was red as his old Quidditch robes.

"Come on get up," he scolded. "Or this is going to become one of those toilet emergencies we discussed."

"Right," Potter said hastily, getting up and searching for his glasses.

Draco was closer to the desk so grabbed them for him.

"Thanks," he muttered. "And sorry for er..."

He gestured vaguely at the bed, his face very red.

"It's fine," Draco said stiffly. More than fine actually. "It's not like you can control what your body does in your sleep. Now can we go please?"

They quickly made their way to the eighth year toilets and took turns taking care of business in complete silence and without eye contact as they had discussed. Several of their peers using the facilities at that time cast them sideways looks and Draco spotted Theo who snorted at him as they passed.

"I'm gonna hex Theo and Blaise the next time I see them," Draco muttered in irritation when they returned to Potter's dorm first so he could get some clean clothes.

"Why?" Potter asked idly as he picked out a pair of socks from his drawer.

"*Why?* Because they're driving me insane."

"What exactly have they done?"

"Snickering, smirking, funny looks..." Draco trailed off as he heard how stupid he sounded.

"So all the shit you did to me for like five years?" Potter said, smirking, arms full of clothes. "Should I just change here or should we head back to your dorm first?"

"I would remind you that you left your wand in my room but you probably don't need it," Draco drawled, but his face heated up at the idea of just standing there while Potter changed. "Let's go back to my room."

So they returned to Draco's dorm and spent several frustrating minutes trying to work out how to get their tops on. Finally dressed and with their hair in disarray (Potter's more so than usual), they got on with putting their abandoned homework from the previous night in their backpacks. Draco picked up their wands and passed the holly wand to Potter who took it and stuffed it carelessly in his back pocket. Something occurred to Draco as he was about to put his own wand in his robe's wand pocket.

"Can I ask you something at the risk of setting myself off with reminders of the war and the Battle again?"

Potter looked at him cautiously while Draco continued to stare at his wand.

"Alright," he agreed.

"Why were you using my wand at the Battle? Was it because you'd known it would give you an advantage because I had been the master of the Elder Wand?"

“No,” he replied, his voice even and deliberate. “I was using yours because mine had broken.”

“What?” Draco looked up at him suddenly. “But *that* wand...” he gestured at the place where Potter had stowed the holly wand. “Isn’t that the same one you’ve used forever?”

“Yeah,” he chuckled and grabbed his backpack, gesturing for them to head to breakfast. “I kept the pieces. I had tried to repair them with Hermione’s wand but wands are different, they don’t just magically get repaired.”

They stepped out into the common room which was bustling with eighth years getting ready for the day. Potter waited until they were in the corridor and headed downstairs before continuing.

“After the Battle I took the Elder Wand and decided to see if *that* would do the job. And it did. So now I have my old one back and it’s good as new.”

“Are you sure it was the Elder Wand that did the trick or could it have been your newly unleashed magical potential?”

“Maybe a bit of both,” Potter shrugged. “Who can say?”

“I can’t believe the one and only thing you’ve ever done with the most powerful wand in the world was fix a different wand,” Draco teased as they reached the entrance hall.

Potter laughed out loud at that and Draco’s heart did a little flutter. Merlin! He should try to make Potter laugh more often, it was the most beautiful sound he’d ever heard.

“I see you two are getting along,” a sly female voice remarked behind them.

They turned to see Ginny Weasley and Luna Lovegood coming down the stairs for breakfast.

“Morning, Gin, Luna,” Potter greeted.

“Good morning, Harry,” Lovegood said in an airy voice. “You’re remarkably free of wrackspurts this morning. You must have slept well.”

“Oh yeah I did, thanks Luna,” Potter replied cheerfully.

Ginny and Lovegood continued past them into the Great Hall and Draco leaned closer to him.

“What is a wrackspurt?” he asked.

“Invisible creatures that only Luna can see that fly in your ears and make your head fuzzy,” Potter replied without a hint of irony. “Apparently my head’s been full of them for years.”

They entered the Great Hall and sat down at the Gryffindor table across from Granger who was already drinking a coffee and reading the Daily Prophet. Draco stared at Potter incredulously. He’d told the truth because he had to, but the answer was nonsense.

“They’re not *real* though?” he demanded.

“What aren’t real?” Granger asked over her newspaper.

“Wrackspurts,” Potter answered, making himself a bacon sandwich one-handed. “Just ran into Ginny and Luna in the entrance hall.”

“No, they’re not real,” Granger directed her answer at Draco. “Luna believes in a lot of fanciful creatures that don’t exist. But they’re all very important to her.”

She said the last part with a warning in her tone and Draco understood immediately that he wasn’t to tease the moon-eyed Ravenclaw girl for her imaginary creatures. A warning that he would take seriously as he was not keen to find out what Granger would do to him now that she had more spells to work with than in third year when she’d resorted to a slap so hard he saw stars.

“Noted,” he said seriously, and picked out a blueberry muffin and poured himself some tea which he clumsily spilled everywhere.

He cursed under his breath and tried to mop it up with a napkin.

“*Evanesco*,” Granger cast and the mess vanished.

“Thanks,” he muttered.

Granger just nodded, put her wand away and returned to her paper.

“Hey, Granger...” Draco’s voice caught in his throat. He had meant to say something friendly in an effort to build a bridge but suddenly couldn’t think of what to say.

She lowered her paper and gave him a raised eyebrow and a guarded look. Potter was also looking at him curiously, sandwich halfway to his mouth. Merlin, this was so hard.

Say something, he urged himself.

“Er... anything interesting in there?” he asked, nodding to the Prophet.

Granger’s other eyebrow joined the first and both attempted to disappear into her hairline. Potter let out a soft snort and resumed eating his breakfast.

“There *is* something you might find of interest,” she said finally. “Your father has issued a request for appeal and he’s to have a hearing on the twenty-first of this month.”

“What?” Draco’s voice came out strangled and breathless.

“Says so right here,” she said, turning the paper and showing him the short article.

“He doesn’t seriously think they’ll let him out!” he exclaimed.

“Don’t you want your father out of prison?” she asked, her tone suggested she might be testing him.

“No!” the answer flew out of him and he nearly choked on it. He was trembling, eyes glued to the article. “He should stay in there. He *deserves* to be there.”

“I’m surprised you’d say that, Malfoy,” she said, primly folding up her newspaper. “He is your father after all.”

“That man is no father of mine,” he ground out darkly.

He began angrily tearing his muffin apart. His ears were ringing and he was only dimly aware of Potter and Granger staring at him. How dare he? Lucius Malfoy was the sole reason for Draco’s involvement with the Dark Lord. The reason he had that accursed Mark on his arm. The reason he had regular panic attacks and screaming nightmares from PTSD. The horrors he’d been forced to witness, been forced to *commit*. He deserved to *rot*.

“Malfoy stop!” Potter’s voice filtered through the ringing and Draco became aware of Potter’s firm grasp on Draco’s right wrist.

He looked down at where he held him and realised that Draco had been savagely clawing at the Dark Mark. His nails had broken the skin where the cuts were still scabbing over and his arm was bleeding quite severely. When had he done that? He felt tears prickle at his eyes as he met Potter’s horrified gaze.

Potter grabbed several napkins and pressed them to the wound.

“Hospital wing, come on,” he urged, careful not to tug on his arm when he got up.

Draco numbly got up and followed, noticing distantly that Granger also wore a horrified expression combined with what was unmistakably pity. Potter was right, pity fucking sucks.

They got to the hospital wing quickly thanks to another of Potter’s shortcuts and thankfully didn’t run into any other students along the way.

“Sorry, gentlemen,” Madam Pomfrey greeted them when they arrived. “I’m afraid the potion isn’t ready yet, I’m still waiting on delivery of a few ingredients.”

“Actually Madam Pomfrey, Malfoy needs your help with an injury,” Potter answered.

Draco was dimly aware that Potter was still holding the napkins firmly against his left forearm. They had bled through already. Wow! He hadn’t realised he’d hurt himself so badly. Even now, he could barely feel it.

“Oh dear,” Pomfrey tsked as she removed the napkins to examine the wound. To her credit, she didn’t balk or flinch at the sight of the Mark, only replaced the napkins and told Potter to continue holding it in place while she grabbed a few things.

She came back swiftly with a small bottle of potion and passed it to him.

“That’s blood replenishing potion,” she assured him. And he drank it in one swig as if on autopilot.

“And this one is for shock,” she added, handing him another. He downed that too and a moment later he suddenly became *very* aware of the pain in his arm.

“Ah,” he cried softly, curling his arm close to his body protectively.

“Now I should be able to heal those cuts without much trouble,” she said brandishing her wand.

“No, don’t,” he protested.

“Young man, if I don’t you’ll have a very nasty scar,” she chided.

“Good,” he bit out.

Her expression softened.

“You’re not the only student to come to me because of self harm,” she said gently. “If you’ll let me help you.”

“The only way you can help me is if you know how to get this Mark off my arm,” he growled angrily. “But you can’t, no one can, so let it scar.”

She sighed. “Very well. Will you at least let me bandage it?”

He allowed her to bandage the wounds and she very carefully cleaned the cuts, smoothed a pain reliever potion over them and wrapped gauze over his entire forearm. When she was done, the Mark was completely obscured. The cuts still stung faintly but he didn’t care. She gave him another roll of bandages and told him to clean the cuts with soap and warm water and rebandage them before bed.

Potter thanked her and led Draco out of the infirmary and down the corridor a ways before stopping in an alcove.

“We should head to class,” Draco muttered. “We’ll probably be late. And we left our backpacks in the Great Hall.”

“It’s fine,” Potter assured him. “Hermione will bring our bags to Transfiguration for us and explain why we’re late to McGonagall. Just take a moment.”

So he did. Draco sat down on the ledge in the alcove and just *breathed*.

“So is it like... cursed?” Potter asked after several minutes. “The Mark?”

“Yeah...” Draco sighed. “It’s made from a special potion that is essentially indelible ink. It was literally *burned* into my skin. Getting it was unbelievably painful. I’ve seen a dozen healers, even some who have less than legal practices and none of them can get it off.”

"I wonder if laser tattoo removal would work..." he pondered. Draco's head shot up.

"What? Don't tell me *you* know how to remove it?"

"Well I don't know if it would work," Potter said hastily. "I wouldn't want to get your hopes up."

"What is it? Where can I get it done?" Desperation dripped off of Draco but he didn't care; Potter had already seen him at his most embarrassing.

"Well, it's a muggle technique..." he said doubtfully. "They have these lasers which are like highly concentrated bursts of light. And they just zap it off. Pretty sure it takes a few sessions over several months. I don't even know if it would work on a cursed tattoo..."

"I don't care," Draco said urgently. "I've tried everything else. I'll take anything!"

"Alright, then I'll look into it for you."

"Why?"

"Because you need it."

There was that answer again. Draco could kiss him.

"Harry?" he said softly.

Potter's breath hitched and it was only then that Draco realised he'd called him by his first name.

"Yeah?" he breathed.

"Thank you," he said with more sincerity than he'd ever said anything in his life.

"Don't thank me yet," he said with a chuckle. "We don't even know if it'll work."

"It doesn't matter. It's the fact that you offered to try and find a solution. You don't have to do that."

"I know I don't have to. It's my *choice*."

Draco gasped at the usage of the word "choice" again. Potter wasn't obligated by anything to do this for Draco, he also wasn't obligated to learn to brew wolfsbane potion but he'd offered to do that too. It was a choice he was making. This was Potter being himself. His real self.

They sat for a minute more before deciding they were pushing their luck on McGonagall's lenience for being late to her class and made their way to Transfiguration. In the corridor outside the classroom, Potter decided to ask him a rare personal question.

"Do you still think we can't be friends?"

Choices. They were their choices. Potter *chose* to offer his help to Draco, and Draco knew that Potter would stick to his word. Potter wanted to be friends. He'd said their only obstacles were their choiceless upbringing and their lack of honesty with each other. They were literally incapable of lying to each other now so the only real obstacle was Draco's choice to hold him at arms length. His *choice*. He could choose different.

"No," he answered finally, and the sun shone out of Potter's face.

He pushed the door to the classroom open without further discussion and went inside, Potter trailing right behind.

Chapter 8: The Last Secrets Between Them

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Getting through lessons was tricky but they worked out a system. Since Potter could barely write with his left hand, pens or not, Granger had offered to duplicate all of her notes for their core classes and for Ancient Runes as well which had surprised Draco.

Since the debacle at breakfast, she had been uncharacteristically friendly with him. Something that seemed to annoy Weasley immensely, which in turn amused Draco in equal measure. He could see possibly being friends with Potter and even Granger but he did not see any universe in which he'd get along with Weasley long enough to ever consider friendship with him.

Of course, if he was to ever make nice with Granger properly, he'd need to apologise for all the shit he'd put her through over the years. However, he really didn't want an audience for that conversation, even if it was just Potter. He didn't want it to seem like he was being pressured to apologise, he wanted her to know that he really meant it. And for that, they really needed to have a private conversation.

"What are you thinking about?" Potter asked that evening while they were studying in Draco's dorm.

"Granger," he said shortly. "Doesn't that count as a personal question?"

"I suppose it does," Potter answered, surprise in his tone. "You've just been staring at that same spot for the last five minutes without doing anything. Why are you thinking about Hermione?"

"I was thinking I should try and find an opportunity to make nice with her and apologise for being the world's biggest wanker to her for years."

"I don't know about 'world's *biggest*'," Potter said laughing.

Draco felt his cheeks warm at hearing Potter laugh again.

"I think she'd appreciate that," Potter said eventually. "She has a very forgiving nature, you know?"

"No, I didn't know that," Draco murmured.

"Now Ron on the other hand," Potter smirked at him. "He holds a grudge."

"I don't expect Weasley and I to ever get along," Draco drawled, rolling his eyes. "I hope that's not a dealbreaker for you and I to be friends in the future."

Potter laughed again and Draco's stomach swooped.

“If you and Ron start getting along, I’ll consider it a sign of the apocalypse.”

“Best not then,” Draco said dryly, going for a joke on purpose this time. “Already had one of those so I’m good for this lifetime.”

Potter snorted. Damn, not funny enough.

“Good call,” he said with a smile. “I’m sure I can manage, though. I can’t expect all of my friends to like each other.”

“Have you got friends who don’t get on?”

“Er...” Potter thought about it. “I don’t think so now I think about it. I mean there was a time when Hermione didn’t get on with Luna, or that time Ron and I ran across Ginny snogging Dean in a secret passageway and Ron declared him his mortal enemy for like a week. And then there was when Ron and Hermione weren’t speaking to each other in third year cos Ron reckoned Hermione’s cat had killed his rat. And then there was fifth year when everyone thought I was mad and Ron and Seamus got into it, but Seamus wasn’t exactly my favourite person at the time either.”

Draco hadn’t been expecting a complete breakdown of Potter’s interpersonal relationships but he found it all oddly fascinating.

“I’m assuming you weren’t dating Ginny at the time you found her snogging Thomas in the corridor then?” Draco confirmed.

“No,” Potter laughed. “Though that *was* the day I realised I fancied her. I got insanely jealous and I kept having to remind myself to be sensible. I think I also must have considered the idea of dating her to be madness because she’s my best mate’s little sister and I thought Ron might have a cow like he did with Dean.”

“I rather think your concern ought to have laid with upsetting Ginny and not her brother,” Draco remarked, remembering the youngest Weasley’s Bat-Bogey Hex with a shudder.

“Oh yeah, she can be pretty terrifying,” Potter had a fond smile as he spoke about her.

“You said she wasn’t your girlfriend anymore,” Draco couldn’t resist asking. “What happened?”

“We broke up right before I went on the hunt for horcruxes,” Potter said quietly. “I knew anyone with too close a connection with me would be used to hurt me.”

“So you did it to protect her?”

“Yeah.”

“So then why didn’t you get back together now that the war is over and neither of you are in danger anymore?”

“It wasn’t a good time,” Potter explained, a note of grief in his voice and Draco’s heart clenched. “We were celebrating the end of the war but we had both lost people close to us and we didn’t think we could be what the other needed. We decided that it would be best if we parted friends and if, when we were both in a better place emotionally and were still interested, we could try again. But I told her she shouldn’t wait for me.”

“You still love her, don’t you?” Draco asked and cursed himself for doing so. He really had to stop.

“I’ll always love her,” Potter said sadly. “But I think love isn’t always enough for a relationship to thrive. Relationships are work, and I don’t think either of us can put in that work right now. She’ll always be my friend, though and that makes me very happy. I think it would break my heart if we couldn’t be friends.”

Draco didn’t know what to say to that. He didn’t think he had ever loved anyone like that.

They studied quietly for awhile after that and Draco tried to quell a jealous feeling roiling in his gut when he thought about Potter and Ginny Weasley. He wanted someone to love him like that, he wanted to love someone like that. To know that no matter what got between them, they’d always be friends.

His father had always taught him that love was a fantasy and a weakness. His mother had always loved him though. Never very openly and certainly not in public, but she loved him with her whole heart and would have given her own life to defend his. Which was why Draco had been so easy to manipulate. The Dark Lord had taken advantage of Draco’s attachment to his mother to control his actions. Draco had allowed himself to be bitten by a werewolf to save her life. He hadn’t even hesitated.

An hour later, they decided to finish for the night and get ready for bed.

“So now you know about my love life,” Potter said while stretching, taking Draco’s arm with his as he did so. “What about yours?”

“I don’t have a girlfriend if that’s what you’re asking,” Draco muttered. *Please don’t ask*, he should have said.

“So you and Parkinson broke up then?” he asked mildly.

“I was never dating Pansy,” Draco blurted. Shit! This was getting way too close to that last secret of his that Potter didn’t know.

“If you were never dating her, why was she always clambering all over you?”

“She. Was. Covering. For. M-me,” Draco tried to stop the words from spilling past his lips but it only caused them to come out stilted and robotic.

Potter gave him a baffled look which morphed into a grimace.

“This is one of those personal questions you wanted to avoid isn’t it?”

“Yes,” Draco gasped, out of breath like he’d just run a mile.

“I won’t ask then,” he replied with a note of finality.

Draco was relieved. Tension he hadn’t realised he had been holding in his shoulders loosened and he slumped slightly.

“Thank you,” he whispered.

“It’s fine,” Potter shrugged. “You didn’t press me about my cousin breaking my arm so…”

He trailed off and Draco decided to let it lie.

They dressed for bed as they had the previous night and went through the usual indignity of cramming themselves through enlarged arm holes. Then went to the bathroom to take care of toileting and brushing their teeth awkwardly with their wrong hands, before returning to Draco’s dorm to climb awkwardly into bed.

Potter waved away the torches and they just laid there on their backs staring up at the canopy of their shared fourposter.

“My muggle family hate magic,” Potter said quietly in the dark.

“What?” Draco was confused. Why was he telling him this?

“My aunt is my mother’s sister,” he continued. “When my mum got her Hogwarts letter, my aunt got really jealous. She wanted to be a witch too. But that’s obviously not how it works. She said their parents spoiled my mum but I’m not sure how true that is. By the time they were adults my aunt hated my mum, and at the time when my parents were killed, she hadn’t seen or spoken to her in years. Then she got stuck raising me.

“My uncle apparently knew about the wizarding world at that time too, and he always hated anything that wasn’t what he figured was ‘normal’. So you can imagine what they thought of having a wizard in their house, making things change colour, undoing terrible haircuts and setting boa constrictors loose at the zoo.”

“You did *what*?” Draco had been transfixed by the story but the last bit surprised him into incredulity.

“I didn’t do it on *purpose*,” he said defensively. “I was just chatting with it—”

“As one does,” Draco interrupted sarcastically.

“As I do,” Potter agreed with a chuckle. “Anyway, my cousin wanted a better look at the snake so punched me in the gut to move me.”

“What a little animal!”

“Yeah, well I guess I must have been pretty pissed cos the glass front on the snake’s tank vanished and it started slithering out onto the floor and made a bid for the exit. It told me it

was going to go find Brazil but I doubt it made it. Scared everyone in the zoo absolutely silly but I don't reckon it was ever any serious threat. I expect the zookeepers wrangled it and put it back in its enclosure."

"And when exactly did all of this happen?"

"It was my cousin's birthday the spring before I got my Hogwarts letter, so I would have been ten."

"You vanished something before you ever got to Hogwarts?" Draco would never cease being amazed at Potter's magical power.

"I guess so," he shrugged.

"So you knew you were a Parselmouth before you ever came here."

"Well I figured out I could talk to snakes," he amended. "I didn't know what Parseltongue was or even that I was a wizard. I didn't understand the significance of my speaking Parseltongue until second year at the dueling club. And I'm not sure what I thought back then when I encountered what for all appearances to me was a talking snake."

"Wow," Draco breathed. He'd never figured Potter had grown up not knowing he was a wizard. But he supposed if his aunt and uncle hated magic they'd hardly want to encourage him by telling him he had it.

"Has your cousin always been such a brute then?"

"Yeah," Potter laughed softly. Draco didn't know why, it's not like any of this was funny. "But he's gotten better."

"Hard to get worse than breaking your limbs and punching you just because you're in his way," Draco remarked dryly.

"True, but after he found out I was a wizard, he was a little afraid of me. Stopped messing with me, mostly just left me alone. But then he learned I wasn't allowed to do magic outside of school and it was on again. Dudley's always been a lot bigger and stronger than me, and I haven't always been fast enough to get away from him. It never came to violence after I started Hogwarts but he'd, like, steal my food or say nasty shit.

"Like after the Tournament, I had horrible nightmares about Cedric dying over and over. Apparently I would talk in my sleep and he would taunt me with what he'd overhear with no idea what it meant to me. Only that it hurt. But then that summer we were both attacked by a pair of dementors and I had to cast a patronus to save us. I don't reckon Dudley knew what was happening since muggles can't see dementors but he could sure *feel* them. I think enough of it made sense to him that he understood that I had saved his life. I guess his feelings toward magic changed that day.

"I doubt he and I will ever be a happy family but I reckon we have an understanding now and can get along if we have to."

“It would be funny if he had a kid with magic,” Draco snorted.

“It would certainly be ironic but if that ever happened, I’d hope Dudley would have the good sense to keep his parents away from his kid. He’s not very bright but even *he* would have to know that wouldn’t be a good mix from seeing the way my whole life was in his home.”

“Why are you telling me this anyway?” Draco finally asked.

“I wanted you to know,” he said softly. “Because whatever it is that you don’t want me to know, I wanted you to know that you can be vulnerable with me if you need to. So I decided to be vulnerable with you first.”

He took a deep breath like he was preparing himself for something painful.

“For ten years of my childhood, I lived in a cupboard under the stairs and I would get locked in there for days and denied meals any time I did magic even though I didn’t know I was doing it.”

Silence.

Draco was horrified. Furious. Outraged.

“They locked you in...”

“Yes.”

“Do Granger and Weasley know this?”

“No.”

Holy shit! Another of Potter’s deepest secrets and he was the only one who knew. He was putting a tremendous amount of trust in Draco with this secret. He was being vulnerable so Draco could feel comfortable doing the same. He didn’t *have* to tell him. Potter was giving him the space to tell him or not. It was his choice. There was that word again. Choice.

“I’m gay,” Draco blurted. “I’m gay and I’ve fancied you since fourth year.”

More silence followed this confession. Draco was just starting to regret saying it when Potter rolled over on his side to face him.

“Seriously?” he asked.

“Yes,” Draco breathed.

He’d phrased it like a question to make sure Draco would answer with the truth. To make sure the *confession* was the truth. Draco supposed that was fair, he *did* have a history of screwing with Potter after all.

“That must make this situation a bit uncomfortable then,” he remarked, gesturing to the minimal space between them.

“You have no idea,” Draco groaned.

“You’ve never *acted* like you fancied me,” Potter accused.

That’s what he was focussing on? Seriously?

“That’s because I didn’t want to be fancying you, you git,” Draco bit out.

“What exactly did it for you?” Potter asked, a sly smirk on his face. He was teasing him!

“Seeing you fly against that dragon,” Draco breathed. “It was incredible! And then you looked so smart in your dress robes at the Yule Ball. But I hadn’t figured out my feelings until I saw you shirtless at the second task.”

“Seeing me shirtless made it all click for you?”

Draco half expected Potter to attempt to cover his naked torso with the blanket but he just continued to tease like this didn’t make him uncomfortable in the least.

“I mean yeah...” Draco said sheepishly. “At first I just thought it was cos I liked blokes in general and you were pretty fit and all. But Krum and Diggory were shirtless too and that didn’t do anything for me. And it all just fell together; I fancied you and it pissed me off.”

“Is that why you were so much nastier to me in fifth year than you had been before? Because you were overcompensating?”

“Yeah,” Draco answered lamely.

“Sounds exhausting,” Potter murmured through a huge yawn.

Draco could tell Potter was drifting now and turned on his side to face him back.

“Yeah,” he agreed softly. “This is better.”

Potter didn’t reply, his eyes were closed, breath coming in rhythmic waves. He was asleep. Draco just watched him, admiring the way his face relaxed in sleep. He frowned too much, he was going to wrinkle prematurely if he kept it up.

That was how Draco finally drifted off. Completely relaxed for the first time in his life, no more secrets to weigh him down and sharing a bed with a man who made him feel safer than anyone else in the world. It didn’t even matter if Potter never fancied him back.

Chapter End Notes

It's heating up now!

Chapter 9: Weasleys and Quidditch Players

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The next morning was a Saturday so Draco was happy to lie in for a bit and ignore his bladder. Potter was wrapped around him like an octopus again and Draco couldn't think of a better way to wake up in the morning. If someone had told him a year ago that he would be waking up in bed with Harry Potter, he would have sent them to St Mungo's to have their head examined.

Potter mumbled something against his chest and began to stir. Draco went very still, not wanting to surprise him into falling off the bed again.

He began to stretch out all of his limbs at once which was when he became aware that he was cuddling Draco again and his eyes went wide and he jerked back swiftly. Draco grabbed his free arm quickly before Potter could fling himself out of bed again.

"You're going to give yourself a concussion if you keep doing that," Draco warned him.

"Sorry," Potter mumbled. "I don't know why I keep glomping you in my sleep. I've never shared a bed with anyone before."

"It's fine, I don't mind."

Potter eyed him skeptically.

"Do you actually not mind or are you trying to be nice?"

"I actually don't mind," Draco said rolling his eyes.

"Surely it's awkward for you?" Potter said reminding Draco of their previous night's conversation.

"No more awkward than the situation is as a whole," Draco replied, holding up their joined arms, which had once again gone numb from sleeping on them. Draco also noticed that his bandage had come loose and was falling off.

"You were supposed to clean and redress that last night," Potter remembered.

"I forgot..."

"Well let's take care of it now then," he said, getting up. "I have to use the toilet anyway."

So they got out of bed, grabbed the extra roll of bandages from Draco's backpack and were about to head out to the corridor outside the dorm when Potter suddenly pulled them to a stop.

“What?” Draco asked, confused.

“I don’t think you want people to see this,” Potter murmured, raising his free hand to touch Draco’s right shoulder with a featherlight contact.

Draco’s mouth went dry instantly and his heart leapt into his throat. It was a few seconds before he realised to what Potter was referring. His scar. The bite wound from Greyback.

He was about to resign himself to having to struggle into a shirt before going to the bathroom when Potter’s hand moved in a light stroking motion across the scar. Draco looked down at what he was doing and was astonished to find the scar disappearing under some sort of wordless, wandless coverup charm. Then he watched, speechless as Potter did the same thing to the scar over his heart, vanishing it from sight.

“Th-thanks,” Draco stammered, barely finding his voice.

“Don’t mention it,” Potter said gently. “Now let’s fix that bandage.”

Still marvelling at what he’d done, Draco allowed Potter to lead them both to the eighth years’ bathroom. After taking care of their biological needs and washing their hands, Potter helped him take the old soiled bandage off so he could clean the wounds.

It was as they were just finishing up wrapping the clean bandage around Draco’s arm that Weasley walked in.

“Morning, Harry,” he called.

“Morning, Ron,” Potter returned, tucking the loose end of the bandage under the other layers.

“What are you doing?” Weasley asked as he turned to the urinal and began voiding his bladder.

“Helping Malfoy bandage an injury,” Potter replied curtly. “Can you not talk to me while you’re taking a piss, please?”

“What kind of—”

“Ron!” Potter cut across him before he could finish asking the question that Potter would be forced to answer.

“Right, sorry,” Weasley mumbled and returned his attention to his task.

Potter quickly turned and led Draco out before either of them could be asked any further questions. Then they ran into Granger in the corridor outside the bathrooms.

“Oh, Harry, good morning!” she greeted. “And you too Draco,” she added in an almost gentle tone.

“Morning,” Draco mumbled.

“Morning, Hermione,” Potter greeted in a hurried tone.

“Is something the matter, Harry? You seem a bit upset.”

Potter winced. “Yeah. Something is the matter...” he trailed off for a moment, waiting to see if that was answer enough for the potion. It seemed to be.

“Are you going to tell me what it is?” she pressed.

“I wasn’t planning to, actually,” Potter replied and then grinned. “I’ll catch you later.”

They hurried back to Draco’s room, leaving a very baffled Granger staring after them.

“I can’t believe that worked!” Draco exclaimed after they shut the door behind them.

“The potion just makes us answer truthfully,” Potter said with a small, relieved laugh. “It doesn’t force us to elaborate.”

“Too bad we can’t just stay in here and avoid anyone potentially asking us any more questions,” Draco lamented.

“Why don’t we?” Potter asked suddenly, turning to him with wide excited eyes behind his glasses.

“Uh, we have to eat at some point,” Draco reminded him.

Potter grinned at that and Draco wondered what he had up his sleeve.

“Kreacher!” he called.

Suddenly the oldest elf Draco had ever seen, dressed in only a filthy loincloth and a locket on a gold chain, apparated in front of them.

“Master is summoning Kreacher?” the old elf said in a voice like crunching gravel.

“Good morning, Kreacher,” Potter said warmly. “My friend, Draco, and I were hoping to stay in here all day to avoid running into anyone and I was wondering if you could help me out with that?”

Draco’s heart skipped a beat and his stomach swooped to hear Potter call him his friend and introduce him to his elf by his first name. He felt as though his face was on fire.

“Kreacher can be fetching meals for master and friend Draco,” the old elf offered.

“That would be great, Kreacher, thanks!”

The elf bowed low and vanished with a *crack*.

“Where did you find what is possibly the oldest elf in existence?” Draco asked incredulously. “I wouldn’t have even thought you had a house elf with the way Granger always bangs on about them.”

“I inherited him,” Potter explained, walking them over to sit on the side of the bed. “He belonged to the Black family. If Sirius hadn’t left him to me in his will, I suspect he’d probably be *your* elf as he’d probably have gone to your mother.”

Draco grimaced.

“Mother probably would have freed him rather than have such an old servant.”

“Mmm, probably not,” Potter said. “Since he knew the location for the Order of the Phoenix and was witness to more than a few of our meetings.”

“Then I suppose it’s a good thing your godfather knew how to properly write a will,” Draco conceded. “Is that why you never freed him yourself?”

“Yeah basically,” Potter shrugged. “I didn’t want him at first. I blamed him for Sirius’ death since he’d tricked me into going to the Department of Mysteries. I even had to actually order him to stop calling Hermione ‘mudblood’.”

Draco flinched at the word. How many times had he himself called Granger that?

“But we have an understanding now,” Potter continued, pretending not to notice Draco’s discomfort. “I’ve forgiven him for the part he played. He’s a bit mad; he’s been alone with nothing but a mental portrait of Walburga Black to keep him company for about fifteen years, and honestly after a month in that house with that horrible portrait I thought *I* would go mad.”

“Why not remove her?” Draco inquired.

“Tried,” Potter shrugged. “We think she’s stuck on with a permanent sticking charm. We’ll probably have to tear that whole wall down to get rid of her. I think Sirius would approve.”

Kreacher came back at that moment, carrying a large tray of breakfast foods over his head.

“Where should Kreacher place this?” he croaked.

“Oh right here,” Potter offered, getting up and clearing the desk of their homework. “Thanks Kreacher.”

Kreacher placed the tray down and stood back.

“Kreacher is collecting the tray later,” he announced. “Is there anything else master is wanting?”

“Actually, yeah one more thing,” Potter said, apparently just thinking of something. “In my dorm in the top drawer of my bedside table is a large bit of folded parchment. It’s quite old. Do you think you could grab it for me?”

“Kreacher will be right back!” he announced and disappeared again.

“Why do you need a bit of old parchment?” Draco asked.

“To see where people are,” Potter replied mysteriously.

“What?”

“You’ll see.”

Kreacher reappeared a moment later holding some parchment.

“Is this what master is wanting?”

“Yes! That’s it, thank you Kreacher!” Potter praised and the old elf preened.

“Is master needing anything else?”

“No that’s all, thanks Kreacher,” Potter dismissed him kindly.

“Kreacher will be returning at lunch time,” he informed them and disappeared for a third time with a loud *pop*.

“What is that?” Draco asked.

“The Marauder’s Map,” Potter answered brightly.

He reached across Draco to grab his wand from his backpack on the floor then laid the parchment out flat on Draco’s bed and touched the tip of his wand to the middle of the parchment.

“I solemnly swear that I am up to no good,” he said.

Draco was about to ask what the hell that was meant to mean when he noticed the blank parchment had suddenly come alive with ink. A map! It was a map of Hogwarts! And what was more, there were tiny moving dots all over it with people’s names on. Draco quickly scanned the map for the Astronomy tower and sure enough saw his and Potter’s names side by side.

“We can use this to see if we’re going to run into anyone in the toilets when we eventually have to go,” Potter said brightly.

But Draco wasn’t listening, his eyes had snagged on the top of the map where the creators had written their names. Moony, Wormtail, Padfoot, and Prongs.

“Wormtail,” he murmured. He knew that name.

“Yeah,” Potter sighed. “My dad and his friends made this map when they were at Hogwarts. Those were the names they called each other based on their animal forms.

“Remus Lupin a werewolf, Peter Pettigrew a rat, Sirius Black a dog, and James Potter a stag,” he intoned, pointing to each name on the map. “This map is one of the few things I have that remind me of my dad, Remus and Sirius. Sirius thought it was brilliant that I had it,

Remus pretended to be all stern and teacher-y about not getting up to trouble with it but I know he was really happy for me to have it too. I think my dad would have loved the idea.”

“Is this what you were using when you managed to keep popping up on me in sixth year?” Draco asked, suddenly realizing that it would be an excellent spying tool.

“Yeah,” Potter laughed sheepishly. “Mostly I’d just watch you on the map though. But the Room of Requirement is unplotable so sometimes you’d just disappear off the map and it would drive me nuts. Hermione said I was obsessed with you.”

He pointed his wand at the map and said “*mischief managed*” and the map instantly went blank. He folded it up neatly and put it and his wand back in his backpack.

They sat down to their breakfast and Draco pondered the idea that Potter had been obsessed with him. On the one hand he liked the idea that he occupied Potter’s mind, but on the other he was reminded what he’d been up to that year and exactly why Potter had been so obsessed.

After breakfast, they decided to open the windows and let some of the cool autumn air in while they finished all of their homework that was assigned.

“Hermione would be shocked but very pleased to learn that I’m all caught up on my homework before Saturday is half gone,” Potter remarked, neatly packing everything back into his backpack.

“Amazing how much work you can get done when you’re hiding from everyone and you’ve got nothing better to do,” Draco remarked dryly. That’s how term had been for him so far.

Potter chuckled and Draco couldn’t help but stare. Potter noticed and grinned at him.

“Like what you see?” he teased.

“Yes,” Draco blurted then frowned. “Don’t do that.”

“Do what?” Potter asked perplexed.

“Flirt.”

“I wasn’t *flirting*,” Potter denied.

“You were.”

“I wasn’t, I’m not even into blokes.”

Draco’s gut clenched but he ignored it and decided to tease him back.

“How can you be so sure?” he asked. “You’ve only ever dated birds.”

“I... don’t... can’t,” Potter seemed to be struggling with being forced to answer a question he didn’t know how to answer.

Draco thought it might be fun to watch him struggle a bit longer but his brow was furrowed in confusion and frustration so he decided to put him out of his misery and ask a different question.

“Have you ever looked at a bloke the way you look at a girl?”

“I... yes,” Potter’s eyes went wide as his answer seemed to surprise even him.

“Wait, you *have*?” Draco leaned forward. This was incredible news. “Who?”

“Cedric Diggory,” Potter answered automatically, his eyes widening further. The confession had clearly caught him off guard but he wasn’t done. “Bill Weasley, Charlie Weasley, Blaise Zabini.”

He slapped his hand over his mouth at the last name but there didn’t seem to be more coming anyway.

“Holy shit!” Draco exclaimed.

“I don’t think,” Potter breathed into his hand, “I ever knew any of that consciously until I started saying it.”

“I think you have a type, Potter,” Draco teased.

“What the hell are you on about?” Potter looked hopelessly embarrassed. It was so cute.

“Quidditch players and Weasleys,” he informed him. “I actually think Bill Weasley is the only person you named or dated who never played for his house team, I don’t think. I’ve never met him but given your apparent tastes, I assume he’s fit?”

“Yes,” Potter bit out. “Holy shit!”

“No but seriously, what is it with you and Weasleys? Three out of what? Seven? And you’re best mates with a fourth.”

“Sirius always said that Potter men always had a soft spot for gingers,” Potter remarked distantly. “I always thought he was teasing me about Ginny, but maybe he was on to something. The only Weasley I was never particularly close with was Percy.”

“Well they say that a man looks for a woman that reminds him of his mother,” Draco said smirking. “Not sure what sort of *man* he looks for though.”

“Well it’s not their fathers,” Potter retorted. “Since you fancied me and I bloody well hope I don’t remind you of your father in any way.”

“Merlin no! Thank the stars!” Draco exclaimed and Potter burst out laughing.

“My dad *was* a Quidditch player though,” Potter added. “So maybe you’re just rebelling.”

“I’m fine with that,” Draco grinned. “I’ll just carry on rebelling then.”

“Do you think I might be bi?” Potter asked him suddenly. “Or do you think I just really appreciate attractive blokes.”

“Dunno really,” Draco replied. “I suppose it’s realisations like this that cause people to experiment.”

“Experiment? You mean like kissing blokes?”

Draco laughed. “Yeah, among other things.”

“How would I go about experimenting?” he asked earnestly.

Draco was not sure he had the self control for this conversation.

“I would assume you’d find someone you’re comfortable with and who’s comfortable with you and... well...” Draco made a sort of “carry on” gesture with his free hand. “I’d say try Weasley if he wasn’t already dating Granger.”

“Ugh, no thanks,” Potter said with extreme distaste, causing Draco to let out a most ungentlemanly snort.

“I thought you liked Weasleys and Quidditch players,” he teased through barely suppressed laughter.

“Ron is fine and all, but I have never thought of him that way even once. He’s like my *brother*.”

Potter looked so horrified at the thought of snogging Weasley that Draco couldn’t hold it back anymore and burst out laughing in earnest.

When Draco finally managed to pull himself together he looked up at Potter to find him staring at him in awe.

“What?” he asked.

“You should laugh more,” he whispered. “You look... younger.”

Draco’s breath caught in his chest. He’d thought the very same about him. Why did it always seem like Potter could read his mind?

“I’ll... keep that in mind,” he murmured.

There was a quiet moment where they looked away from each other awkwardly. What had they been talking about again?

“I don’t think I have anyone I’d trust to experiment with,” Potter said finally.

“You can’t think of one person?”

“I can think of *one*, but I don’t think it would be a good idea,” his voice cracked a bit.

“Who?” Draco didn’t know why he was pushing so hard.

“You,” he breathed and Draco’s heart leapt.

Helping Potter explore his sexuality sounded like half his fantasies come to life. But he was getting ahead of himself.

“Why do you think it would be a bad idea?” he asked guardedly, prepared for reasons relating to their past or the way his friends would react.

“Because it would feel like I was taking advantage of you,” Potter replied softly.

“‘Taking advantage’?” Draco parroted. “If anyone was taking advantage it would be me. You’ve featured rather prominently in my fantasies for years.”

He couldn’t believe he’d just said that! Potter was surely going to be so disturbed by this revelation that he called the whole notion off.

But when he looked up to meet his eyes, there was a flush across his cheeks and he was staring at Draco with astonishment. Then his eyes flicked down to his lips and back up so quick, if Draco had’ve blinked he would have missed it and he felt his entire body respond to the movement, a thrill going up his spine.

“Harry,” he said quietly and he swore he saw his pupils dilate. “Do you want me to kiss you?”

“Yes,” his honest answer gusted out of him on a sigh.

Holy shit! He really did! Draco was going to kiss Harry Potter! Potter *wanted* him to!

Draco stood and pulled Potter toward his bed with their joined hands. Potter just followed without protest, emerald eyes locked on Draco’s the whole way. Draco sat them on the side of his bed and turned to face the man he’d been crushing on for three and a half years.

“You sure?” he asked to be certain he had Potter’s consent.

“Yes, Draco,” he said softly and Draco’s heart did a flutter at hearing his name on his lips.

With their joined hands planted on the mattress for balance, Draco raised his right hand to Potter’s face and gently cupped his jaw. With deliberate slowness so that he could pull away if he changed his mind, Draco leaned in until his lips were just a centimetre from Potter’s. He looked up to his eyes to find that they had fallen shut. Taking this as encouragement, Draco closed the gap and their lips met.

It was like a bolt of electricity went through them. Potter inhaled a sharp gasp through his nose and leaned into the kiss, free hand coming up to rest on Draco’s still bare chest. Encouraged, Draco trailed his hand to the back of Potter’s head and threaded it through his hair. How long had he fantasized about touching Potter’s unruly hair? It was softer than he’d expected. His skin tingled everywhere they made contact and his head felt light.

Draco moved to pull away, thinking that this might be enough for Potter's first kiss with a man, but Potter made a noise of protest and reached his own hand up to cup the back of Draco's neck and hold them together.

Draco moaned into Potter's mouth and felt himself becoming hard. Potter took that as invitation to proceed further. He leaned in closer and their chests brushed. He gasped at the contact and Draco took the opportunity to breach his mouth with his tongue. Now it was Potter's turn to moan into Draco's mouth.

Their lips and tongues danced clumsily but deliciously, while their one free hand each roamed. Draco was content to rake his nails gently along Potter's scalp while Potter's hand went from his neck to his hair, to his shoulder, back to his chest. It was almost too much stimulation but Draco wanted more.

So, it appeared, did Potter as he seemed to forget that they were attached at the wrist and tried to lift his right hand to join in the fun but all he managed to do was cause Draco to lose his balance and fall backwards onto the bed. Their lips detached and Potter fell with him, landing half on top of them, their bare chests heaving.

But that didn't stop him. Raising Draco's left arm over his head and pinning it there with his own, he brought his lips back to Draco's. His free hand roamed down to his waist now.

"Sorry," he murmured against Draco's lips and Draco keened.

"Don't stop," he pleaded back.

Potter needed no further encouragement and dove back in, devouring his mouth. Draco bucked reflexively against him and his erection pressed against Potter's thigh.

Potter clearly felt what he did to him and moaned against Draco's lips. He repositioned so that he could slot a leg between Draco's and lowered himself so they were flush and Draco could clearly feel Potter's erection against his own thigh. He bucked up again and Potter ground down with a moan and shockwaves of pleasure shot from Draco's cock up his spine and he threw his head back and let out a series of embarrassing noises.

Potter lowered his forehead to Draco's shoulder and continued to rock against him while breathing heavily and occasionally let out little noises of pleasure.

"Fuck, Potter," Draco gasped. "Nn... don't stop... gonna..."

Pleasure spiked to a crescendo and he finally tipped over the edge gripping Potter's hair tightly and coming in his pyjama bottoms. A moment later Potter went rigid over him and let out a long and low moan against Draco's collarbone. His hips twitched once or twice before he went still.

"I think it's safe to say you're not straight," Draco finally said when he got his breath back.

Potter burst out laughing against his neck and it was the most beautiful sound in the world.

Chapter End Notes

Finally! Amiright?

So this is the first spicy scene I've ever written for other people to read so I don't mind feedback but please be gentle.

Chapter 10: Lazy Saturday

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Draco didn't know how long they laid there. He didn't care that his spunk was cooling in his trousers or that Potter was *heavy* on top of him. He was the happiest he'd ever been. He'd snogged the life out of his long time crush while they'd rutted against each other to completion like the couple of teenagers they technically still were and now they were in a post-coital snuggle while Draco idly ran his fingers through Potter's hair.

"Feels nice," Potter mumbled against his collarbone.

"What, this?" Draco asked and deliberately scraped his nails against Potter's scalp.

"Mmmm, yeah," he sighed.

"If someone had told me a year ago this was how I'd be spending a Saturday morning," Draco murmured into the top of Potter's head, "I'd have told them to get their head examined."

Potter laughed softly. "Yeah, same."

"So what do you think?" Draco asked with a smirk. "You reckon you might like blokes?"

"Might do, yeah," he said and Draco could feel him smile against his skin. "Was that anything like your fantasies then?" he returned.

"I reckon it was better," Draco said thickly around a lump in his throat. "Because it was real."

The post-coital haze was fading now and Draco's leg was going numb where Potter was laying on it, as was his left arm which was still pinned above his head. He reluctantly removed his free hand from Potter's hair and Potter correctly interpreted that as signal to get off him.

He rolled over onto his back and Draco instantly missed his warmth.

He suddenly felt a tingling sensation over his skin and the sticky feeling in his trousers vanished. Draco shot his eyes over to see Potter with a hand raised in his general direction.

"Did you just...?" Draco started, already knowing the answer.

"This new power has got to be useful for something," he replied cheekily.

"Only you would use the most casually powerful magic I've ever heard of since *Merlin himself* to clean spunk out of our trousers," Draco said with a severe eye roll.

"What else would you suggest I use it for?" Potter asked, smirking.

“I can’t think of a better use just now,” Draco said petulantly while stretching luxuriously. He raised their joined hands to look at the cast of failed potion sticking them together. “I think that this was the best thing to happen to me in years.”

“Yeah,” Potter sighed. “Me too, though the bar is pretty low on that front already.”

Draco snorted. Potter certainly had the monopoly on shitty life experiences. Though Draco believed his own were a very close second. Draco had at least had a happy childhood before everything went to shit.

“Do you think if the war had never happened and *he* had never come back, I’d still be an unbearable dick?” Draco asked.

“Maybe,” Potter answered honestly. “You always struck me as someone who very desperately wanted to be exactly like his father.”

“Yeah well that ridiculous notion has been wiped entirely from my list of ambitions,” Draco remarked darkly.

“What are your ambitions *now*?” Potter asked. “I mean you must have some? Slytherins are all about ambition right?”

“It’s not a very interesting or lofty ambition but right now, all I want is to get through this school year without causing any trouble and hopefully get a potions apprenticeship somewhere that doesn’t mind accepting ex-Death Eaters. Probably move out of my family home and never look back.”

“You’re moving out?”

“I can’t be in that house anymore,” Draco said with a shiver. “Everywhere I look, he’s there. This past summer on house arrest after my trial waiting for term to start was fucking *torture*. I had to board off the drawing room to keep from hearing Granger screaming every time I had to walk past it. What I’d *really* like to do is burn the whole fucking place down.”

Potter rolled onto his side and reached across to pull Draco into a hug. Draco let him, because as embarrassing as it was, he liked when Potter held him.

“I’m so fucking sorry,” Draco sobbed into his chest. “For all the shit I’ve done. For the way I’ve treated you for years. For getting involved with *him*.”

“You don’t have to apologise,” Potter said softly to the top of his head.

“Yes I *do*,” Draco insisted, pulling back to stare into Potter’s eyes. Those beautiful, green, forgiving eyes. “I need you to know I regret all of it. Not just because I was personally effected but because I know now it was wrong. And not just the big wrongs, the little ones too. I was a horrible, relentless bully for no fucking reason.”

“My father was a bully,” Potter said suddenly.

“What?”

“Does that surprise you?”

Draco nodded.

“Yeah, he and the other Marauders,” Potter sighed. “I’ve seen memories. They were all terrible right little shits when they were kids. Well maybe not Remus, but he was certainly an enabler.”

Draco tried to imagine a young Remus Lupin, Sirius Black, and Peter Pettigrew palling around with someone who, to Draco’s imagination was basically just Potter, acting the way he, Draco had with Crabbe and Goyle backing him up, tormenting other students and showing off.

“I can’t picture it,” Draco said when the image wouldn’t solidify in his mind.

“I couldn’t either until I saw it for myself,” Potter said sighing. “You know why Snape always hated me so much?”

“I never really thought about it,” Draco admitted.

“Well it’s because he was the one my dad and his friends picked on at school the most. What’s worse is he was keen on my mum and she ended up marrying his childhood bully. He hated me because he assumed I’d be just like my dad. Didn’t help that I look exactly like him.”

“Your dad picked on *Snape*?”

“Yeah and it wasn’t like how you and I were,” Potter added. “It was so much worse.”

“*Worse?*” Draco couldn’t imagine much worse than what he’d done. Though he supposed that was a lack of imagination on his part.

“They would curse him in the corridors and on one occasion levitated him in the air upside down for everyone to see his pants.”

Draco gasped in horror. He’d never done something so heinous as to actually sexually assault someone.

“If Snape were alive, he’d fucking *kill* me for telling you this,” Potter continued. “But I don’t tell you this to humiliate Snape, I’m telling you this so you realise that bullies don’t have to stay bullies forever. And with the exception of Pettigrew, they grew out of their outrageous behaviour and became good people.

“My mum had once been best friends with Snape, and I know she’d have never gotten with my dad if he’d continued to be the little shit I saw of him in that memory. She fucking *hated* my dad back then.”

A giddy notion suddenly crossed Draco’s mind. Perhaps Potter was more like his mother than he was like his father, despite physical appearances, and if it was true that people fell in love with people who reminded them of their parents, and Potter was reminded of his own father

when he thought of Draco... He gave himself a mental shake. He needed to get a grip, one kiss and a romp and he was already fantasizing about Potter falling in love with him.

"People change," Potter concluded.

"But your dad and his friends were never Death Eaters," Draco countered.

"One was," Potter reminded him.

"Wormtail doesn't count," Draco said, annoyed. Why wasn't Potter taking this seriously?

"I know you think I'm not taking this seriously," Potter said and Draco went stiff in his arms. "But we've been over this, you weren't in control of your life. I'm not going to accept any more apologies from you. You can *show* me and everyone else how sorry you are by just doing better."

"Not to change the subject," Draco said. "Because I'm absolutely going to do better but this has been driving me mad the last two days and I have to ask."

"Yeah?" Potter gave him a confused look.

"Are you a legilimens?"

"No," Potter denied, baffled. "Why?"

"Because you seem to keep knowing exactly what I'm thinking," Draco explained.

"Maybe you're just predictable," Potter teased.

"Or maybe you know me better than either of us thought," Draco teased back.

"Hmm, you might be right."

"So what do you think I'm thinking now?" Draco asked, staring deep into those beautiful green eyes.

"You're thinking..." he considered, staring intensely back. "That you'd like to kiss me again."

Draco chuckled. "While I *would* like to kiss you again, that's not what I was thinking."

"What were you thinking then?" he asked leaning in to press his forehead to Draco's.

Draco's breath caught in his throat at the proximity of his face and if it wasn't for the potion, he might have failed to answer the question.

"I was thinking about how safe you make me feel," he whispered into the small space between them. "Like nothing bad could ever happen to me when I'm with you."

"I was thinking that no one understands me like you do," Potter said softly. "I was also thinking you're a very good kisser and I'd like to kiss you again."

And without waiting for a reply, because Potter knew he wanted him to, he closed the gap and slotted their lips together again.

Draco was in heaven and he never wanted to come down. He didn't know how long this experiment would go on but he would take advantage of the time he had while he had it. He wove his hand into Potter's hair again, carding the soft strands between his fingers. Potter grinned against his mouth.

"You seem to have some kind of fixation with my hair," he teased against his lips.

Draco retaliated to the comment by fisting his hand in Potter's hair, tugging it lightly. Potter gasped and tilted his head back, exposing his neck. Draco felt this was an excellent opportunity to explore more of Potter's skin and trailed his lips along his jaw. As he travelled southward to the junction of his neck and shoulder, licking and kissing the whole way, Potter began to make pitiful whimpers and tiny moans.

"Merlin, Potter," he teased. "You make the most beautiful sounds."

"I th-think," he stuttered breathlessly, "that we might be on first name terms at this point, don't you, Draco?"

"Mmm, yes I think so," he agreed, nibbling gently on a soft spot. "I like it when you say my name like that."

"Uhhn... Draco..." he gasped and the sound went directly to Draco's groin.

"Yes, Harry?" he purred.

"K-kiss me!"

Well when he asks like that...

Draco returned to his lips with fervor. It was wet, it was messy, and it was urgent. Draco kissed Harry with more passion than he'd ever kissed anyone before, spurred on by the little noises he made. He was just about to consider pushing the boundaries a little and see how far Harry would let him take this when...

Crack!

Harry and Draco leapt apart and sat bolt upright at the sudden arrival of Kreacher the house elf. Their faces were red and their chests were heaving.

"Kreacher apologises for the intrusion, master," the elf croaked with a sly grin. "Kreacher was just bringing lunch like master requested."

Sure enough, the old elf was holding up two plates each with sandwiches and crisps.

"Oh, yes, Kreacher, thank you," Harry mumbled, his face aflame. "You can just put it on the desk."

Kreacher smirked and placed the plates where instructed. Then he snapped his fingers and a pitcher of pumpkin juice and two glasses appeared on the table. He picked up the empty breakfast tray and gave Harry and Draco a knowing look.

“Kreacher will knock before he brings supper,” he informed them and disappeared without further comment.

“Ugh,” Harry groaned, dropping his forehead to Draco’s shoulder. “He’s never going to let me live that down.”

Draco chuckled.

“At least he’s not going to go gossiping about this,” he teased, dislodging Harry’s head from his shoulder so he could lead him to the desk for lunch. “House elves keep their masters’ secrets.”

“Sure, but he is quite senile and has a tendency to mutter things under his breath he thinks people can’t hear,” Harry half agreed, picking up one of the sandwiches.

“Really? What sort of things?”

“Well before I ordered him to knock it the fuck off, he used to mutter about ‘half-bloods, blood-traitors, and mudbloods in the ancestral Black home’ and what a fucking disgrace it was,” Harry said with an eye roll so forceful it looked painful and took a savage bite out of the sandwich.

“And this is an elf you’re happy to keep in your service?” Draco asked in astonishment, tucking into his own meal.

“Well I wasn’t happy at first like I told you,” he corrected. “He wasn’t happy either to be honest. He kept on about what an awful shame it was to be in service to a ‘filthy half-blood’ and ‘what would his old mistress say?’. But we came to an understanding.”

“How do you come to an understanding with feelings like those?”

“Well see, Kreacher loved Regulus Black more than anyone else in the family. Would have happily done anything for him,” Harry explained.

“Regulus Black was a Death Eater in the first war wasn’t he?” Draco asked.

“He was,” Harry confirmed. “But like you, he’d been pressured into it by his family. Only *unlike* you, he didn’t love his parents enough to stick around when things got too hot. I don’t blame him, honestly, his parents were seriously a piece of work. But he knew if he ran he’d just be caught and killed by Voldemort. Or more likely by someone acting on his orders because Regulus wasn’t important enough.”

Draco shuddered. He too had considered running once, but hadn’t been brave enough and feared what would happen to his mother if he did. Not that he’d get very far with the Mark on his arm.

“So Regulus had to think of a better way out,” Harry considered. “Through Kreacher, he discovered the location of one of the horcruxes. I don’t know how he knew what it was but he thought if he could destroy it, he could weaken him and he’d be able to free himself. But there were traps guarding the horcrux and he was killed. But not before he ordered Kreacher to take the horcrux and destroy it.”

“So Kreacher destroyed the horcrux?” Draco asked.

“No,” Harry said sadly. “Kreacher spent years trying to destroy it but couldn’t fulfil his master’s last instruction. His failure, combined with being confined to that house by himself for years, caused him to go mad. Then I came along with the replica locket that Regulus had left in the real one’s place, and promised Kreacher I would destroy it for him.”

“So you fulfilled Regulus’ last wish and now that mad old elf loves you?”

“I’m not sure ‘love’ is the right word,” Harry laughed. “But I reckon he likes me and likes serving me. I gave him the replica locket and he treats it like the most precious heirloom in the world. When we still hated each other I expect I would have freed him after the war was over but I can’t now, it would break his fucking heart.”

“I don’t expect he’s got many years left in him anyway,” Draco remarked. “I’ve never seen such an old elf.”

“Yeah,” Harry laughed. “Ron said he’s surviving on pure spite.”

They ate their lunch while chatting casually about nothing at all while still in their pyjamas on a lazy Saturday afternoon. After they finished their meal, they lounged on Draco’s bed, reading for leisure and occasionally borrowing each other’s hand so they could turn the page. It was a little awkward but they developed a system. They sat incredibly close so that their shoulders and legs touched. It was so *domestic* that it was almost comical, but this was how Draco wanted to spend every weekend for the rest of his life.

He looked over to see what Harry was reading and his heart started doing somersaults. He had his Potions textbook open to the section on wolfsbane potion and was studying it carefully.

“You’re seriously studying ahead?” Draco asked when he was sure his voice wouldn’t tremble. “Granger would have a field day.”

Harry chuckled. “Yeah, and Ron would lament that he was surrounded by swots.”

“He should get used to it if he’s going to keep dating her,” Draco remarked daily. “Biggest swot I’ve ever met.”

“You haven’t seen how she gets around exam time,” Harry said ominously.

“I’m almost afraid to ask.”

“She does this thing where she just *decides* for you how you’re going to revise and when,” Harry shuddered. “I think I probably still have my revision timetable for OWLs buried in my

trunk somewhere I can show you. Mine's actually worse than Ron's because she left openings in his schedule for Quidditch training but I had been banned from playing by then. Every second of my day was accounted for, even bathroom breaks! It was a nightmare."

"I mean, besides Quidditch training, and scheduling my bowel movements, I think my revision timetable was probably just as packed," Draco mused. "OWLs are important, they decided what classes we'd be allowed to take in sixth year."

"Merlin, it's like she's in the room!" Harry exclaimed teasingly. "You sound *exactly* like her."

"I do?" Draco asked, bemused.

"Oh my god, you're a swot too!"

"Am not!" Draco cried indignantly, throwing a pillow at Harry who protected his face with the textbook.

"I think in another life you and Hermione would have been best friends," Harry said cheekily.

Draco privately agreed. And hopefully, if he could build a few bridges, they might become friends in this life.

They spent the rest of the afternoon like that. Reading and occasionally chatting while cozied up in Draco's bed. Once or twice they had to take bathroom breaks and checked the Marauder's Map before leaving the dorm to make sure they wouldn't run into anyone in the corridor who might ask them questions they would be forced to answer.

True to his promise, Kreacher returned at dinner time and knocked at the door before being let in. He shot them knowing looks several times as he laid out their food and cleared the dishes from lunch.

After dinner, they returned to their earlier position on the bed and Harry reread the chapter on wolfsbane potion. A tremendous wave of affection stole over Draco and he had to stop himself from throwing himself at Harry and snogging his brains out. Not that Harry would probably complain.

When they finally turned in for the night, they dispensed with pretending they wouldn't end up tangled together and snuggled up with Harry's head on Draco's chest and his free arm over his waist, Draco idly carding his fingers through Harry's hair. It was completely and utterly perfect. Draco would treasure this moment for the rest of his life.

Chapter End Notes

A chapter of tooth rotting fluff as a palette cleanser from the last chapter. I was kicking my feet like a schoolchild while I wrote this one!

Chapter 11: Busted!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Draco...”

It was a soft voice that roused him from his sleep. Draco became dimly aware that the sun hadn't quite risen yet but it would soon as a grey light filtered through his curtains. He wondered why he was awake so early on a Sunday morning. Then he remembered that he'd heard a voice call his name.

He tried to wake himself up properly without rousing the man sleeping on top of him when the man in question shifted and whined in his sleep.

Was Harry having a nightmare?

“Draco...” he moaned, muffled against his chest, and squirmed against him.

Something stiff rubbed against his hip as Harry continued his movements, breaths coming in soft pants and quiet moans.

So *not* a nightmare.

Holy shit! Harry Potter is having a wet dream about me! Draco thought wildly, now wide awake.

What was the protocol here? Should he wake him up? Help him out? Draco was quickly becoming hard as the possibilities ran through his head and Harry continued to rut against him.

He decided that the best course would be to wake him. The rules of consent were a little tricky here and he didn't think he and Harry had the kind of relationship where he could touch him like that while he slept. So he stroked his face gently and ran his fingers through his hair.

“Harry,” he said softly, his voice catching. “Harry, wake up.”

“Mmm...” Harry mumbled and continued to rub himself on Draco's hip.

It was taking every ounce of Draco's self control not to respond in kind to these movements.

“Wake up, Harry,” Draco said, a little louder this time.

“Mmm?” Harry mumbled in a sort of questioning tone. His movements stopped and he slowly opened his eyes and blinked blearily up at Draco. “Wassa matter?” he slurred.

“You were dreaming,” Draco choked. “And talking and er... *other things*.”

Harry's eyes went suddenly wide as he undoubtedly remembered what he'd been dreaming about. He looked down between them and saw the evidence of his unconscious activities.

"I could... help you out with that," Draco offered in what he'd meant to be a seductive tone but really came out much more timid than that, his voice cracking slightly.

"Help...?" Harry's voice was still layered with sleep and he seemed somewhat confused.

It was too early in the morning. Draco would have to spell it out for him.

"Do you want me to touch you, Harry?" he asked, this time landing closer to seduction than before. He trailed his hand down Harry's bare chest and stopped at his waistband, playing with the elastic so as to make his meaning very clear. Harry's eyes widened, now fully alert.

"Yes," his voice came out in a moan.

Draco needed no further invitation. He slipped his hand past the elastic waistband and lower. Harry's breath hitched when Draco's fingers brushed against the head of his cock. It was already slick with precum and Draco used this to lubricate his hand as he delved further to fully grasp him properly.

Harry moaned loudly and threw his head back. Draco dove in with his mouth, nipping and sucking at the exposed flesh while stroking Harry slowly.

Harry clumsily bucked into Draco's hand while fumbling with his own, unsure what to do with it. He started with it buried in Draco's hair while the latter covered his neck and shoulder with love bites. Then it moved down his neck and to his shoulder where he gripped him tightly while Draco began to stroke him faster, swiping his thumb over the tip, smearing precum over the spongy head.

"Uhn... Draco... ah..." Harry gasped.

Draco's cock was impossibly hard but he ignored it in favour of pleasuring Harry. The noises he was making were so hot, he thought he might come untouched from the sound alone.

"Do you like that, Harry?" he purred against his throat. "You like how I touch you?"

"Yes!" he cried. "D-don't stop... ah! So close..."

Draco lifted his head to watch Harry's face. His eyes were closed, mouth hanging open and panting. There was a small crease between his eyebrows as he chased his own pleasure. It was a gorgeous sight, but Draco wanted to see his beautiful green eyes as he came.

"Harry, look at me," he commanded, his voice filled with lust.

Harry's eyes flew open and met Draco's own. Draco leaned in so their foreheads were touching.

"Come for me, Harry," he ordered lowly.

“Ah! Fuck!” Harry gasped, struggling to keep his eyes locked on Draco’s as instructed as he came into his pyjamas and over Draco’s hand.

The intensity of his gaze and responsiveness combined with his cries and the fact that he *came on command* had Draco suddenly coming untouched in his own trousers. He groaned softly into Harry’s open mouth and shuddered as the unexpected orgasm rocked through him. Harry’s chest heaved against Draco’s and he panted across his face.

Draco slowly withdrew his hand and, making sure Harry was watching, raised it to his mouth and licked it clean. Harry’s already blown pupils dilated even further and his face reddened. His come was slightly bitter and a bit salty, overall it just tasted like come. But it was Harry’s so it was the best fucking thing in the world.

“That’s so fucking hot,” he breathed, eyes fixed on Draco’s mouth.

Draco smirked. “None of your girlfriends ever licked your come off their hands before?”

“My girlfriends have never been anywhere *near* my come before,” he confessed.

Draco’s eyebrows ticked up in surprise at that.

“Harry Potter,” he said in a dramatically teasing tone. “Are you a *virgin*?”

“Yes,” he pouted petulantly. “Sorry I didn’t find an opportunity to pop my cherry while I was off saving the world, my bad.”

“You had a *girlfriend*,” Draco reminded him.

“Ginny and I hadn’t gotten around to it before everything went to shit,” he said defensively. “And Cho well... Cho was a disaster.”

“What ever happened to you and Chang anyway?” Draco was suddenly struck with a need to know *everything* about Harry’s dating history despite the peculiar subject for pillow talk.

“She was... possessive,” he decided, finding the right word. “She didn’t like me being friends with other girls. She had a *major* problem with Hermione.”

Draco snorted at that. “Well half the school thought you and Granger were an item for years so that sort of makes sense.”

“Me and *Hermione*?” he said incredulously. “No never! Despite all that rubbish Skeeter published.”

Draco chuckled at this, knowing he’d been partially responsible for much of said rubbish.

“So that’s a no for Granger and a yes for Cho Chang and Ginny Weasley,” Draco said, mentally counting off in his head. “What about Patil?”

“Parvati or Padma?” he asked.

“Whichever one you went to the Yule Ball with.”

“You paid attention to who I took to the ball?” he said with surprise and a sly grin.

“Yes,” Draco said like it was obvious. “If you haven’t figured it out by now, I’ve been obsessed with you for years. So, Patil?”

“We went as friends,” Harry said dismissively. “All of the Champions were obligated to have a date to do the opening dance with. I’d originally tried to ask Cho but Cedric had gotten to her first. Pavati was last minute. And I mean *last* minute.”

“Hmm, I suppose she’s not your type anyway,” Draco teased. “Neither a Weasley nor a Quidditch player.”

“Oh sod off,” Harry said good naturedly, rolling his eyes. “I do *not* have a type.”

“You *do*!” Draco argued, rolling onto his back to free his left hand so he could count off on his fingers. “For Weasleys we have Bill, Charlie, and Ginny, and for Quidditch players we have Chang, Diggory, Blaise – which was a surprise, Charlie again, *Ginny* again, and now *me*,” he added extra emphasis on the last word with a very smug grin.

“Well what’s your type then?” Harry shot back. Draco noted that he didn’t address the accusation that he was Harry’s type.

“Hmm, specky brunets with a saviour complex,” he said leaning in to steal a kiss.

“No, seriously,” he pouted, returning the kiss automatically.

“Seriously,” Draco confirmed. “You know I can’t lie.”

“So then does that mean *you’re* a virgin too?” Harry asked.

Well, now this was awkward.

“No,” he muttered.

“*No?*” Harry teased. “Found another specky brunet with a saviour complex out there?”

“Well, he *is* brunet,” Draco admitted awkwardly. He supposed he had walked into this conversation first. “But I never said he was my type.”

“Oh? Do tell.”

“I was fifteen, horny and queer. I didn’t exactly have a lot of options,” Draco sighed.

He’d expected the exes conversation to be a lot more awkward but Harry seemed to be the least jealous person on the planet. Either that or he didn’t feel particularly possessive over Draco because he was just experimenting with his sexuality and didn’t actually feel that way about Draco romantically. Draco wasn’t sure how he felt about that possibility.

“Do I know him?” Harry asked.

“Yeah,” Draco let out a small chuckle. “He’s your type actually.”

Harry frowned for a moment to try and work it out and then understanding dawned across his face.

“Zabini.”

“Yeah,” Draco sighed. “I was beginning to irritate myself with how much I was obsessed over you so I thought I could drive you out of my head and my fantasies by getting in bed with someone who was the least like you as I could find and also willing to sleep with me.”

“So you slept with Zabini because you fancied me?” he confirmed and Draco nodded. He laughed. “That’s some backwards logic, Draco, I gotta tell you.”

Draco laughed. He was right of course. All that sleeping with Blaise had done was make Draco wonder how it would feel to do the same with Harry. In the end he’d pictured Harry’s face while they’d fucked. Thankfully Draco had managed not to moan his name in bed as that would likely have ended in disaster.

Draco yawned and stretched and became immediately aware of the now cold mess in his pyjama bottoms and grimaced. Harry must have been watching because he immediately waved his left hand and Draco was clean. Draco stared at him in astonishment.

“You know, it’s not just that you can *do that*,” he said in amazement. “But that you’re doing it with your wrong hand as well.”

“I haven’t really thought about handedness for wandless magic,” Harry mused. “It’s not like with a wand where you have wand movements and incantations and shit. With this, I just sort of wave a hand in the general direction of the thing I want to happen and think about what I want to happen.”

“Wait so you’re not even using actual spells?” Draco exclaimed.

“Not really,” Harry shrugged, then grinned. “It really pisses Hermione off.”

Draco barked a laugh. “I bet it does!”

Harry’s face suddenly went slack and stared at Draco like he’d seen a ghost.

“What?” he asked in alarm, worried that he’d somehow triggered a flashback or something.

“Nothing, you just...” he swallowed thickly. “You just suddenly looked just like Sirius for a second.”

“I can think of worse relatives to resemble,” Draco said with a soft smile.

“Yeah,” Harry laughed weakly. “God, imagine if you looked like Bellatrix!”

“I don’t think I could look in another mirror if I resembled *her* in any way,” Draco said with a shudder. “Still, I sometimes do a double take in the mirror with how much I’m starting to look like my father.”

“Hmm, a bit,” Harry conceded.

He pushed Draco’s hair back off his forehead and examined his face closely. Draco felt himself blush under the scrutiny.

“I think you look more like your mother,” he said finally, tracing his fingers gently over Draco’s cheekbone and along his jaw. “Black genes must be very strong because other than your hair colour, I don’t see much of your father in you. And you have the same grey eyes that Sirius had, so you must get that from your mother.”

Draco stared at him in amazement. All his life people had been comparing him to his father and never even mentioned his mother. Almost as if she didn’t exist. Draco loved his mother very much and had often wished he looked like her more. He would spend hours staring into the mirror in the hopes of spotting some feature that she also had, but as he got older, he only looked more and more like his father. Harry saw his mother in him the way no one else ever had.

How was Harry so amazing all of the time? He accepted Draco with his shitty past and glaring flaws. He learned every single last secret he had and barely batted an eye. He saved him from a life sentence in Azkaban, saved his mother from the same fate. Had saved his *life* at the Battle of Hogwarts *twice*, despite fighting on opposing sides. He decided to learn to brew wolfsbane potion for him because he didn’t have anyone else he trusted to do it. He’d also promised to look into other means of removing the Mark from Draco’s arm. And now he was telling him something he’d longed to hear for over half his life; that he didn’t resemble his father. Was it any wonder Draco was completely in love with him?

Oh.

Oh *no*.

Something of this revelation must have shown on Draco’s face because Harry frowned in concern.

“Are you okay?” he fretted. “Did I say something wrong?”

“I’m fine,” Draco choked, trying not to cry. “You said everything right, as usual.”

Before Harry could ask him to elaborate, Draco surged forward and captured his lips in a fierce kiss. Harry made a noise of surprise and then melted against Draco, free hand snaking up under his arm and palming the spot between his shoulder blades, pulling their chests flush while he deepened the kiss. Draco’s hand found its favourite spot in Harry’s hair and almost *petted*. Harry hummed in appreciation against his mouth and Draco settled in for a proper snog. This day was already off to a brilliant start.

They were soon interrupted, however, by a knock at the door. They reluctantly broke apart.

“That’ll probably be Kreacher,” Harry muttered millimetres from Draco’s lips. “Probably checking if we want to hole up in here again today.”

“Such a diligent old elf,” Draco murmured, stealing another swift kiss before extracting himself from Harry’s arm and legs.

They clambered out of bed, not quite with ease, but certainly with quite a bit more dignity than they had done so far since they’d had a bit of practise at that point. But when they answered the door, it wasn’t Kreacher who greeted them but...

“Hermione!” Harry exclaimed.

“Good morning to you too, Harry,” she said sniffily.

She eyed them both in their slightly ruffled state. Draco hoped she would assume their rumpled appearance was due to having just woken up and not the incredible snog they’d just been having.

“No one saw you two all day yesterday,” she accused.

“And so everyone elected you to check in on us?” Harry asked sardonically.

“No,” she protested. “I decided on my own, especially after that odd conversation we had yesterday morning. Ron also said you were acting funny.”

“Why? Because I didn’t want to hold a conversation while he was having a wee?” Harry asked pointedly. He tried to cross his arms but Draco’s arm made that difficult so he dropped them awkwardly to his sides. “I don’t know if girls chat in the toilets but that’s a big social no no for blokes.”

“Right,” she muttered, seemingly mollified. “But then what have you two been doing in here for the last twenty-four hours?”

Shit.

“Homework,” Draco managed a partial truth.

“Snogging,” Harry failed.

“*What?!*” Granger nearly screeched.

Harry sprang into action, and before Draco knew what he was doing, he’d grabbed Granger by the arm, yanked her into the room, and slammed the door.

“You can’t tell anyone!” he implored.

Granger’s eyes were wide as saucers.

“Hermione!” Harry prompted when she didn’t say anything.

"I *knew* it!" she exclaimed, suddenly.

"*What?*"

"I knew you two had a thing!" she clarified.

"Since when?" Harry spluttered.

"Since forever!"

"That's impossible, Hermione," Harry denied. "This *thing* started yesterday!"

"That's cute, Harry," Granger said with a smirk, crossing her arms and leaning against the door smugly.

Harry spluttered some more, unable to come up with a response, so Draco took the reins.

"Exactly when do you suppose this *thing* started then?" he asked, deciding to humour her and see where she took this.

"Years ago!" she exclaimed. "You two have had this *obsession* with each other basically since you *met*!"

"We hated each other!" Draco protested.

"And now you don't," she said simply. "So this was the obvious natural progression."

"Obvious," Harry choked weakly.

"Yes," she confirmed. "I knew this was inevitable since you told me you wanted to make nice with Draco at the start of term."

"Wait, does Weasley know then too?" Draco asked warily.

"Ron wouldn't notice unless he literally walked in on you in action," she said, rolling her eyes. "He's more oblivious than Harry is, and that's really saying something."

"Well, considering Harry didn't know he liked blokes until yesterday, I have no doubt that that's true," Draco said smirking at Harry.

"Wait, Harry you didn't know?" Granger was incredulous. "How did you not know? I've known since fourth year!"

"No, I didn't know!" he exclaimed. "How did *you* know?"

"That summer you wouldn't take your eyes off of Bill!" she said in an obvious tone. "I know he's fit but you were practically drooling."

"I was not!" he cried indignantly.

"I just assumed you weren't keen on people knowing because you had enough attention as it was," she continued, ignoring Harry's outburst.

"Well *I'm* not keen for people to find this out," Draco stated coolly. "Homosexuality isn't exactly the done thing in pureblood society."

Granger eyed him carefully.

"Not the 'done thing'?" she queried, an ironic glint in her eye. "Like it's something you have control over?"

Draco rolled his eyes. "Yes, Granger, the irony is not lost on me that I have for all my young life been a closeted gay man filled with prejudice against another minority."

"Closeted?" she confirmed, he nodded and she quirked an eyebrow. "Well then you've been doing a poor job of keeping it quiet"

"Literally no one outside this room knows," he pointed out. "Besides my ex-boyfriend anyway."

"I've known since third year," she said smugly. "Or suspected rather. Then you started seeing Zabini in fifth year and that confirmed it. If I noticed, surely other people have as well."

Draco's mouth fell open. How could she have known? Why did she keep it a secret?

"You're fucking scary, Hermione," Harry said suddenly. "You realise that don't you? How could you possibly know any of that?"

"Well Pansy Parkinson has been climbing all over him since third year and I knew from his body language that he wasn't into it *at all*."

"You couldn't have figured I just didn't fancy *her* in particular?" Draco asked weakly.

Granger gave him a pitying look.

"My best friends are boys," she said in a slow and methodical way as if he was being particularly slow. "Teenaged boys don't much care whether they *like* the pretty girl if she's throwing herself at him."

"You think Pansy is *pretty*?" Draco asked incredulously.

She shrugged. "Pretty enough, but teenaged boys also don't care much if the girl is very pretty."

"Okay so you're some kind of social genius as well as academic," Draco relented. "I'm not even going to ask how you knew about me and Blaise. What I would like to know, though, is why you never told anyone?"

"Why would I tell anyone?" she asked, perplexed. "It wasn't my business."

Draco had to sit down. He dragged Harry back to the bed so they could sit on the side. Granger followed them further into the room and took a seat on one of the desk chairs.

"I'm such a piece of shit," Draco muttered, dropping his face into his hands. Harry allowed him the use of his right arm to do so.

"Why do you say that?" Granger asked gently.

"Because if I'd found out some gossip of equal significance about Harry or you or any of your other friends I would have spread it all over the school within a day," Draco lamented into his hands. "Actually I did literally that in third year after the dementor came onto the train. And I was fucking *horrible* to you and called you wretched names and you still kept this to yourself. You didn't even tell your best friends!"

"I'm not in the business of revenge, Draco," she said softly. "And besides, you don't have the monopoly on calling me 'mudblood'."

Draco flinched violently at the word and he dropped his hands to his lap.

"I'm so sorry, Granger," he whispered. Her eyebrows went up in surprise. "I was a terrible cretin to you in particular and I have no excuse."

"I forgive you," she said decisively.

Draco jerked his head up to see that the guarded expression from before was gone from her face and she was just staring at him kindly.

"*Why?*"

"Because I believe you when you say you're sorry," she said simply. "And because Harry is a very good judge of character and if he's decided he likes you enough to spend a whole day *snogging* you..." she trailed off with a cheeky grin.

"It wasn't *all day*," Harry said indignantly.

"Speaking of which," she said, ignoring Harry's protest and turning to him. "Why did you tell me you'd been snogging him if you didn't want people to know?"

"It's this shit," he answered, holding up their joined hands. "We have to tell the truth whenever someone asks us a question."

"Really?" she asked in fascination.

"Yeah, it's why we've been hiding out in here," he explained. "To avoid awkward interactions and the possibility of people discovering things about us we'd rather they not know."

She eyed him suspiciously.

"Then why did Draco say you'd been doing homework?"

“We *were* doing homework!” Harry exclaimed. “Like I said, we weren’t snogging *all day*. It only forces us to answer with a true response to the question, it doesn’t have to be the complete truth.”

“So then why didn’t you also say ‘homework’?”

Harry turned very red. “I might have had my mind on something else...”

She narrowed her eyes at him.

“What did you get me for my birthday?”

“A signed first edition of A Wizard of Earthsea,” he answered swiftly before his expression turned upset. “Hermione! Now you’ve ruined the surprise!”

“Harry!” she exclaimed excitedly, bouncing in her chair. “You remembered!”

“I don’t get it,” Draco said baffled. “I assume it’s a book, what’s the big deal? Who is the Wizard of Earthsea?”

“The Tales of Earthsea is a book series I absolutely loved as a little girl,” Granger explained. “It’s a story about a boy who discovers that he’s a powerful wizard and goes away to a school to learn magic. I read the books so many times the spines fell out of some of them. And when I learned that *I* was a witch, it was like the books had come to life!”

“Hang on, these books were written by a *muggle*?” Draco confirmed.

She grinned at him. “Ron had a similar response to yours. Purebloods are always amazed when they find out muggles write about magic.”

“How can they write about something they know nothing about?” Draco asked, baffled.

“They make it up,” Harry laughed.

“And they’re not often even close to correct,” Granger added. “But they’re entertaining anyway.”

“I wasn’t allowed to read fiction containing references to magic,” Harry said. “My aunt and uncle thought it would give me dangerous ideas.”

Draco rolled his eyes. “Yes because you had as much control over being a wizard as I had being gay.”

“So you never read Lord of the Rings?” Granger asked.

“Nope, there’s wizards in it, not to mention elves, dwarves, goblins, giants, dragons and hobbits.”

“What the hell is a hobbit?” Draco asked.

“It’s like a shorter dwarf with huge hairy feet and like to live quiet lives in peaceful villages,” Granger answered. “What about Chronicles of Narnia?”

“There’s a witch in it,” Harry said, shaking his head. “And a magic wardrobe that takes you to another world. And talking animals. And unicorns.”

“What about...?”

“Hermione,” Harry interrupted. “If it had magic, wizards, or fantastical creatures in it, I wasn’t allowed to read it.”

“What about science fiction?” she asked, ever persistent.

“Depends,” Harry said. “Star Wars? No. The Force was too much like magic. But Ender’s Game was fine because everything was explained by science. And before you ask, I *have* found opportunity to read most of those popular books I wasn’t allowed to read as a kid in the years since finding out I was a wizard.”

“Granger,” Draco asked before she could start listing more popular fiction that Harry probably had never read. “Have you read any wizard fiction? Or has it all been textbooks?”

“I’ve read Tales of Beetle the Bard,” she offered hesitantly.

“Nothing else?” he asked.

“Er... no?”

An incredible idea struck him.

“Why don’t I lend you a few of my favourites and you lend me some of yours, and we can discuss them?”

“*Swot!*” Harry coughed unsubtly into his fist. Draco ignored him.

Granger’s eyes lit up.

“Oh that sounds like a wonderful idea!” she stood up excitedly and began talking very fast and pacing. “Of course I’ll have to pick out the right books. And if I choose any science fiction I’ll have to write up a cheat sheet to explain some of the technology, and oh! I will probably have to include supplementary material to explain muggle folklore and what they’ve assumed about magical beings that doesn’t align with what wizards know to be true.”

“Hermione!” Harry interrupted and she whirled around, eyes bright. “Start with Chronicles of Narnia, there’s not a lot you’ll have to explain in that.”

“Right!” she exclaimed. “But that’s just seven books, there’s so many other incredible stories! Oh Matilda! You’d like that one too, Harry, I expect you’d relate to the protagonist quite a bit. I should go and see what I’ve brought in my trunk, I’m not sure what would be suitable.”

She started for the door in a hurry.

“Wait, Granger!” Draco called hastily. She halted and looked at him almost impatiently. “You’re not going to tell anyone about us are you?”

“Please,” she rolled her eyes. “It’s nobody’s business who either of you snog. And if we’re going to be in a book club, you should really start calling me by my first name.”

With that, she bustled out of the room in an excitable hurry.

“What have you *done*?” Harry exclaimed when she was gone. “You’ve unleashed a monster!”

“I was just trying to find a way to build a bridge,” Draco pouted. “How was I supposed to know she’d go completely mental?”

“How about the evidence of the last *seven years*,” Harry said, rolling his eyes. “Get Hermione talking about books and she’ll lose her mind or she’ll make you lose yours, whichever comes first.”

Chapter End Notes

I hope Hermione knowing all this stuff doesn't seem too out of character. The way I see it is that Harry has the observational skills of a brick wall so he wouldn't notice the sort of things that Hermione who is hyper-observant would notice (think about the trap door and Fluffy; while everyone else was--rightfully--distracted by the terrifying monster, she somehow managed to notice he was standing on a trap door).

Ron isn't going to figure this out for awhile though lol!

Chapter 12: Prefect's Showers

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

They had Kreacher bring them breakfast and he smirked slyly at them as usual. After breakfast, they had to brave going out of the dorm to use the toilets.

“Most everyone is probably still at breakfast,” Harry said, perusing the map. “Yeah, see here, besides the Ravenclaw Quidditch team which appears to be training, nearly everyone is in the Great Hall. We should be clear for a bit.”

Draco eyed Harry over. They had been stuck together for three days now and Draco could now see what Harry meant about cleansing spells causing his already disastrous hair to become a matted, tangled mess. It didn't help that Draco had been running his hands through it at every available opportunity in the last day.

“What are you staring at?” Harry asked, noticing Draco's attention.

“Your hair has gotten severe,” he remarked with a smirk.

Harry blushed slightly. “I told you cleansing spells would fuck up my hair.”

“Suppose you should have a shower and wash it properly, then,” Draco said, idly.

Harry blushed a deeper shade of scarlet which was now over his chest and creeping up his neck. “You just want to get me naked,” he said in what was obviously meant to be a cheeky tone but actually came out more huskily.

Draco felt his dick twitch in interest with the sound of Harry's voice in that state. He was clearly turned on by the idea of being naked with him.

Draco cleared his throat, trying to get his tongue unstuck. “At the very least I'd like to continue to run my hands through your hair without being tangled up in it like a Devil's Snare.”

Harry snorted. He looked around for something before apparently realizing they were in Draco's room and whatever he was looking for was probably not there.

“I could probably manage a quick hair wash in the eighth year bathrooms,” he mumbled. “But there's less likelihood of running into anyone if we went to the prefect's bathroom instead. People are probably not using it at this hour.”

Draco had to tamp down the overwhelming arousal that reared up when he considered the possibility of complete privacy in the shower with a naked Harry Potter.

“That... uh,” Draco coughed. “That sounds fine.”

So Draco gathered up a change of clothes and the map and they went to Harry's dorm so he could collect his clothes as well. He also reached into the bottom of his wardrobe and pulled out something silvery and flowy. It took a second for Draco to identify it as Harry's Invisibility Cloak. He'd seen him use it on one occasion in their childhood so he'd known he had one but had never gotten a proper look at it.

"This should make it easier for us to get there without being spotted," Harry explained. "And this way we won't have to get dressed to go there only to get undressed to shower and then dressed again. With the way getting a shirt on is such a massive fucking chore, I thought this might be better."

Draco couldn't help but agree. So with their bundles of clothes and the Marauder's Map, they stood very close together and Harry threw the Cloak over them one-handed. He fussed with the edges to make sure they were properly covered and they set off.

One or two students were milling about the corridors, on their way to the library or the Owlery or just having a stroll but no one noticed them as they crept past under the Cloak. They got all the way to the prefect's bathroom without being spotted, gave the password and slipped inside. Once out of sight, Harry threw the Cloak off them and bundled it up into a loosely folded lump.

"How do you resist going around in that thing all the time?" Draco asked, feeling slightly giddy. "I'd never take it off if I had one."

Harry laughed. "I did go around under it a lot in fourth year. It was nice being able to go someplace like the Three Broomsticks without everyone and their brother flashing a 'Potter Stinks' badge at me."

Draco went very red at this. "Sorry," he mumbled. Would he ever run out of things to apologise for?

Harry surprised Draco by laughing harder. "Don't worry about it," he said, waving him off. "By the way, did you enchant those yourself?"

"Er... yeah," he was forced to admit.

"The message wasn't very clever," Harry said, smirking. "But the spellwork was. Did you know that the Creevey brothers got ahold of a few and were trying to spell them to say other stuff?"

"No," Draco raised an eyebrow. The Creeveys were one and three years younger than him. It seemed unlikely they'd have had much luck changing his enchantment as first and third years. "How did that go?"

"Not great. At first all they managed was to get it stuck on 'Potter Stinks' and then by the next day they all just said 'Potter REALLY Stinks' and no one could undo it. There's probably a few still kicking around Gryffindor Tower."

An absolutely *unruly* snort escaped Draco at this news and he pressed his lips together in a bid to not laugh.

“That’s... unfortunate,” Draco managed between barely suppressed snickers.

“It’s alright, you can laugh,” Harry said with mischief in his eyes. “You know, Ron and I had been in a row back then and I threw one of them at his face.”

Draco *did* laugh at this, doubling over and clutching his stomach. He recalled Harry and Weasley had been fighting about whether Harry had put his name in the Goblet of Fire. Weasley had made the incredibly absurd decision not to believe the word of his best friend of over three years. Even Draco had believed him, whatever else he’d said in public. He suspected that the only thing that had stopped Weasley from wearing the badge was that Draco had made it.

Tension officially broken, they perused the room they had to work with.

“I’m going to bar the door,” Draco said, reaching into his bundle of clothes and withdrawing his wand.

Harry did his best to avoid letting his hand get in the way of Draco’s wand movements as he sealed the entrance to the bathroom with a second tier locking charm. Now even *Alohamora* wouldn’t unlock the door.

Draco looked down at his left forearm which was still bandaged from his own savage attack on it just two days ago. Stealing himself for the sight of the Mark, he began to carefully unwrap the bandage. Harry was watching him intently without comment. When the bandages were away, Draco couldn’t bring himself to look at it and shuddered.

“Here,” Harry said gently. “Let me have a look.”

Draco looked away in shame as Harry examined the fresh cuts before pronouncing them scabbed over enough to let it heal in open air.

After quickly using the toilet in a businesslike fashion they turned their attention to showering. They set their clothes, wands, map, and Invisibility Cloak on a bench by the showers and then stared contemplatively at the row of shower stalls.

“Why don’t you go first,” Draco offered in a slightly strangled voice.

“Yeah, sure,” Harry mumbled, his face and neck turning red again.

Draco pointedly looked away as Harry removed his pyjama bottoms and glasses and set them with their clothes on the bench. He kept his eyes firmly on the ceiling and didn’t remove them until Harry had gotten in the shower stall and pulled the curtain closed. He leaned against the wall next to the stall, his left arm under the spray while Harry tried to quickly wash without making Draco’s hand touch anything untoward.

Not that Draco would have minded. His face was getting very hot again and he didn’t think it was the steam, the Mark temporarily driven from his brain. Harry was not three feet from

him, completely naked and dripping wet. His already half hard dick swelled further at the thought. He was sorely tempted to peep through the gap in the curtain created by his arm. His fantasies hadn't prepared him for the possibility of Harry in the shower, none of them had been quite this domestic. He shifted his weight awkwardly, trying to alleviate some pressure on his aching cock.

"Are you peeking?" Harry called, a teasing lilt to his voice.

"No," Draco protested.

"Do you *want* to?" Was that *seduction* in his tone?

"Yes," Draco groaned and Harry chuckled. His dick was so hard that he was considering taking himself in hand right there, to hell if Harry caught him at it. He was panting now, trying to control his impulse to just tear the curtain aside and join Harry in the shower.

Harry had his hands in his hair now, lathering it up with shampoo. Draco could tell because his own hand had been conscripted for the chore. He allowed himself the indulgence of digging his fingers into the tangles to help him loosen them up.

"Mmm..." Harry sighed. "I like when you play with my hair."

"Y-yeah?" Draco stuttered.

"Yeah," he said, his voice becoming husky again. "In fact you should come in here and play with it some more."

As if he'd only been waiting for the invitation, Draco dropped his pyjamas to the floor and immediately stepped into the shower. The sight that awaited him was breathtaking. Harry was standing there, wearing nothing but the brightest grin Draco had ever seen. His caramel skin glistened with water, his jet black hair dripping over his forehead, curls relaxed from the weight of the moisture and shampoo suds that still lingered.

Draco allowed his eyes to roam down Harry's entire body. From his hair, he travelled down to his brilliant green eyes which squinted ever so slightly without his glasses, down to his mouth which was split in a delighted smile, down to his neck where Draco only just now realised had been peppered with love bites that Hermione *definitely* hadn't failed to notice. His eyes roamed further down to his chest and the massive fractal scar that stood out starkly against his dark skin and had horrified Draco at first but now fascinated him and he privately thought made Harry look rather *badass*. Further down, he finally got to parts of him he'd touched but had yet to see.

He'd gotten an approximate measure of Harry's dick when he'd handled it that morning but somehow it looked bigger than he'd estimated and he was at least as hard as Draco was. Draco's mouth watered. He'd originally come in here with the promise of burying his hands in Harry's hair but now his mind went *other* places.

"Like what you see?" Harry asked for the second time in two days. He had a smirk and a quirk to his eyebrow. He was *definitely* flirting this time.

“Yes,” Draco moaned.

“What are you going to do about it?” he asked, implying an invitation to do *something* about it.

Draco was suddenly struck with indecision. What did he want to do now he was in the shower with Harry? His domestic brain wanted to accept the invitation to wash his hair. The lovesick and touch starved part of him wanted to run his hands – and lips and tongue – over every inch of skin he could see. And his horny brain wanted to either drop to his knees and worship Harry’s magnificent cock the way he deserved or have Harry on *his* knees doing the same to him.

“Huhnn...” Draco let out a strangled moan and tried to answer the question. “C-can’t decide...”

Harry’s smirk grew and he pulled Draco closer by their joined arms. He took Draco’s free hand in his and raised it to place it in his hair. He raised their connected hands to join the first and let his hand go limp when Draco automatically fisted his hand in Harry’s hair. Harry hissed at the tug on his scalp and Draco released his grip slightly.

“Sorry,” he muttered.

“Don’t worry about it,” Harry rasped, placing his hand on Draco’s waist. “I actually kind of liked it.”

He pulled Draco flush against him under the spray and their erections pressed together between their bodies. They both moaned at the contact and crashed their lips together in a frenzy of hormones. Draco tugged at Harry’s hair again and he keened.

“Fuck, Draco,” he gasped into his mouth.

The sound of his wrecked voice went straight to Draco’s cock and he bucked against his hips. The water made for decent lubrication and their cocks slid against each other with just the right amount of friction.

Harry’s grip on his hip tightened and he pressed himself harder against Draco’s body from chest to groin like he wanted to occupy the same space. Draco delighted in so much skin-to-skin contact and responded in kind. He ground his hips into Harry’s repeatedly and pulled roughly on his hair. Harry moaned wantonly and threw his head back in ecstasy, giving Draco the opening to attack his throat with love bites again

They would definitely need cover up spells if they wanted to keep this relationship secret, he thought distantly. But that was a future Draco problem, present Draco was too wrapped up in the incredible sounds Harry was making at all the stimulation he was receiving.

“Ah ah... Draco!”

Harry’s moans and whimpers suddenly pitched higher and his hips began to stutter against him. Was he about to...?

With an abrupt cry, Harry suddenly came across their stomachs. Draco ceased his attentions to Harry's throat and looked at his face as he orgasmed. His entire chest and neck were red, his face equally flushed. His mouth hung open as he gasped for air, his chest heaving against Draco's. It was the most beautiful sight he'd ever been granted, and he would file the image away for later when he was alone and needed something to think about while he was wanking.

"S-sorry," Harry apologised weakly when his breath returned. "Didn't mean to come so quickly."

"Are you kidding?" Draco exclaimed breathlessly. "Nothing could be a bigger ego boost than that. I made you come in under a minute!"

It was so hot that he'd come so quickly and that was after already having an orgasm earlier that morning. Draco distantly wondered how many orgasms he could eke out of Harry in one day and just like that, a new fantasy was born.

"But what about you?" Harry pouted looking down at Draco's still straining cock sandwiched between their bodies.

Possibilities swam in Draco's mind but he hesitated to voice them for fear that Harry, being a literal *day* into his sexual awakening, might not be ready to participate in those particular fantasies.

"What are you thinking?" Harry asked in a sultry tone Draco hadn't known he was capable of.

"I was thinking I'd like you to suck me off," Draco replied quickly. His face heated up and he winced internally. *Really classy, Draco*, he chided himself.

If Harry was surprised by the request, he didn't show it. Instead he smiled softly and dipped to kiss Draco's neck just below his jaw. Draco's breath hitched. Harry drew a line of kisses up under his jaw all the way to his ear where he nipped at his earlobe and whispered.

"I think I can manage that."

Where had Harry learned to be this sexy? Draco's head was swimming in hormones and his cock was hard enough to cut glass. His fantasies had nothing on reality.

Harry walked Draco backward until his back met the cold tile of the shower wall so they were out of the direct spray. He then began kissing his way down Draco's chest and it felt like a line of fire followed his lips. Harry had retaken control of their joined hands so he could run both hands down his sides. Draco was already hyperstimulated and they hadn't even gotten to the main event.

Harry lowered himself to his knees in front of Draco and he nearly came all over his face from the sight alone, but he had to control himself or this would be over before it began. Harry looked up at him with doe eyes and licked his lips nervously. Fuck, why was that so hot?

“I’ve never done this before,” he reminded him. “So you’ll have to tell me if I’m doing it wrong.”

Draco privately believed there was no wrong way to suck a dick so long as you didn’t involve your teeth but all he could do was nod encouragingly.

Harry placed his right hand on Draco’s hip for leverage and, with his left hand took hold of the base of Draco’s cock. He swallowed reflexively and Draco’s eyes were drawn to the bobbing of his throat. Draco urged himself to stay very still and watched Harry’s actions with avid attention, patiently waiting for Harry to begin at his own pace. He realised his right hand was still buried in his hair and he stroked it gently, almost lovingly.

Apparently encouraged by this, Harry leaned in and gave the head of Draco’s cock a tentative lick. Draco gasped responsively to the warm contact. It was taking everything in him not to force Harry’s head down onto his dick. Spurred on by the noise, Harry licked again, more assuredly this time, from base to tip, and Draco threw his head back against the tile and groaned obscenely.

Suddenly his cock was enveloped in heat and Draco looked down hastily, having missed the moment where Harry took the plunge and finally took Draco into his mouth. Not wanting to miss a single thing more, Draco forced himself to keep his eyes on the show between his legs.

His mouth was so hot and wet and Harry seemed to be decently proficient with it despite his inexperience. He fit about half of Draco’s cock in his mouth, the other half he clumsily stroked with his left hand. He bobbed up and down, a look of concentration on his face and saliva leaking from the corners of his mouth. He was salivating so much that Draco’s cock slid easily in and out.

Draco was panting and groaning softly, his hand in Harry’s hair stroking repeatedly in encouragement. Harry looked up at Draco from under his eyelashes with a look that begged for approval and Draco fisted his hand tightly in his hair reflexively at the erotic sight. Harry moaned around Draco’s dick at the move and the vibrations went straight up Draco’s spine. His hips bucked involuntarily and Harry gagged as his cock touched the back of his throat.

“Shit!” Draco gasped. “S-sorry.”

Harry pulled off him, a string of saliva connected his lips to his cock. He gasped for air for a second, then looked up at him with lust-blown eyes.

“Do it again,” he moaned and returned his mouth to Draco’s cock.

Draco’s brain derailed. Did he hear what he thought he just heard? Harry wanted him to do it again? He wanted him to *fuck his face*?

Draco looked down at Harry properly and saw that he was hard again. Seriously, how many times was he going to come this morning?

Scanning his eyes back to Harry's face he met his eyes and saw that his pupils were dilated so much that hardly any of his green irises were visible. He gave an experimental thrust and felt the head of his cock come in contact with the back of Harry's throat and he gagged again but didn't pull off this time. The sound was so erotic it sent a pulse of pleasure and desire up Draco's spine.

Harry dropped his hand from Draco's cock and took him further into his mouth. He relaxed his jaw and took Draco all the way into his throat like a fucking professional. He bottomed out with his nose in Draco's pubic hair and Draco let out a cry of mingled pleasure and surprise. He pulled back until he only had the very head of Draco's cock in his mouth and looked up at him expectantly.

Carefully, so as to not hurt him, Draco pushed his head down while he canted his hips forward and Harry complied with the direction and took Draco deep into his throat. He didn't gag this time and instead he *swallowed* around him, his throat tightening around his cock like a vice.

"Fuck, Harry!" Draco cried. "Your mouth... so fucking perfect!"

Harry moaned around him at the approval and Draco noticed he had taken his own cock in hand and was now stroking himself to having his face fucked. Draco almost came at the sight but held off, wanting to enjoy Harry's mouth some more.

He thrust again, fisting Harry's hair tightly in his hand. Harry continued to allow his mouth to be used, obscene wet noises filled the shower stall. Draco's moans came louder and more frequent and his thrusts more erratic. He could feel himself on the edge but desperately wanted to keep going for just a little while longer but his body seemed to have other ideas.

"Fuck... ha... Harry," he moaned desperately. "I'm gonna come!"

Draco tried to pull out, unsure how Harry would take having him come in his mouth, but he dove back down, his right hand holding Draco's hip with a bruising force. Harry moaned around his cock again and that did it. Draco came harder and longer than he'd ever done before, his hips stuttering against Harry's face. His come filled Harry's mouth so much that it dribbled out of the sides and he made a choking noise. Draco almost came again at the absolutely wrecked expression on Harry's face, his come dribbling out of his mouth around his cock which he was still sucking on like it was his *job*, milking him dry.

Just as he was becoming oversensitive, Harry pulled off of him with a *pop*. He made deliberate eye contact with Draco and *swallowed*.

"Ah, fuck," Draco swore. "You're so fucking hot!"

Harry positively *beamed*. He rose to his feet and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. It was then that Draco noticed Harry's dick had become soft and he wondered distantly when he had come. Draco had been so wrapped up in the ecstasy of Harry's mouth that he'd missed it. Harry leaned in to kiss him lazily and Draco could taste his come on his tongue and his legs went weak.

"We should probably finish showering before we turn into prunes," Harry whispered against his lips.

"Hmm..." Draco hummed in return, no longer capable of human speech.

Probably a good thing, he thought. Otherwise he was liable to say something stupid like "I love you" and ruin everything.

So they finished showering once he got his land legs back and Draco got to shampoo Harry's hair like he'd originally planned.

"I think you have some kind of obsession with my hair," Harry teased while they were drying off and struggling into their change of clothes.

"I think a man can be allowed a *few* indulgences," Draco drawled back and Harry snickered.

"I don't get the appeal honestly," Harry mused, fixing his shirt. "It's completely unmanageable. I can't even cut it 'cause it grows right back to the way it was basically immediately."

"That's exactly the appeal," Draco insisted. "Because it's always a disaster, I can run my hands through it as much as I want and it's no more messy than it usually is."

And to demonstrate his point, Draco reached up and mussed Harry's damp hair.

"Draco!" he spluttered, swatting his hand away. Draco laughed.

Once they were dressed, they decided they were decently attired enough to not need the Cloak on the way back to the eighth year dorms and left the prefect's bathroom with it neatly folded and tucked under Harry's jumper.

They did pass a group of first years who stared openly at them and Draco suddenly remembered the love bites. He hoped the little eleven-year-olds were too innocent to notice or put it together but he hurried them back to his dorm anyway.

"We should probably do something about those," he said, gesturing at Harry's neck.

"About what?" he queried and looked at himself in the mirror on the inside of Draco's wardrobe door. "Oh you little *savage*," he teased.

Draco smirked, unrepentant. "I know a few cover up charms if you need," he offered cheekily.

"You know," Harry said with narrowed eyes. "If you're trying to keep this a secret—" he gestured between them for emphasis, "— you might wanna lay off gnawing on my neck."

"Hmm," Draco purred. "I thought you liked when I gnawed on your neck. If the sounds you make when I do it are anything to go by anyway." He got into Harry's personal space and his breath hitched. "I could gnaw on *other* parts of you if you'd prefer..."

“God, Draco,” Harry croaked. “I’ve already come three times today, you’re gonna make my dick fall off.”

“Well we can’t have that, can we?” Draco said with a fake pout, pulling away from him.

Harry actually *whined*.

“And you think *I’m* insatiable,” Draco teased. Harry pouted.

Draco relented and stepped back in range for a kiss.

Chapter End Notes

Those hickeys are definitely a Chekhov's Gun 😁

Another spicy one for you, hope it was good!

Chapter 13: Book Club

“Do you think we should actually go to the Great Hall for lunch before people start drawing conclusions about us?” Harry said when they were starting to get hungry.

“Probably,” Draco mused. “What will we do if people ask us uncomfortable questions?”

“Deflect with partial truths?” Harry offered.

“What if their questions are too direct?”

“I suppose we’d be forced to answer,” Harry shrugged. “But I don’t think anyone is going to walk up to you and ask, for instance, ‘are you a werewolf?’ so I’m not hugely concerned.”

“You said Gran – er... *Hermione* – would work it out quickly, though,” Draco pointed out, not yet used to using Hermione’s first name. “What if she says something? What if she’s worked it out already?”

“She *won’t* say anything,” Harry insisted. “She never even told Ron and I that Remus was a werewolf, remember. And she probably hasn’t worked it out yet anyway, wait ‘til after the next full moon and I’ll bet she’ll know then.”

Draco hummed noncommittally at this, unconvinced.

“And anyway,” Harry continued. “By then, she and everyone else can ask any question they like and you can lie to your heart’s content because we won’t be connected by then. And if we are, we’ve got bigger concerns.”

“That’s not funny,” Draco said weakly. “If we’re not disconnected before the full moon, I’m cutting my arm off.”

“*That’s* not funny,” Harry countered.

“Who’s laughing?” Draco said, deadly serious. “I’d rather lose an arm than kill you, because that’s exactly what would happen, Harry.”

“Well it’s a good thing none of that actually matters,” Harry said, a forced brightness in his voice. “Because Madam Pomfrey will separate us in a day or two and we’re *both* going to be fine.”

Wanting to get away from the uncomfortable conversation, they set off for the Great Hall. They passed Theo and Blaise in the common room who had been chatting when they walked in but stopped abruptly when they saw them and resumed when they were out of earshot.

“What do you suppose those two were talking about?” Harry asked when they go out into the corridor.

“Considering they shut up when we walked in, I’m going to go with us,” Draco remarked dryly.

“I figured that much out, funny enough,” Harry deadpanned. “I meant—”

“I know what you meant, Harry,” Draco cut across him. “Ask me again when we’re in private.”

“O-oh... *oh!*” he exclaimed. “Do you think they know?”

“I don’t think they *know*. More like suspect. Or even more likely cracking jokes about how funny it would be if it was happening. Don’t forget that Blaise is *very* much aware of certain *things* about me.”

“Would he have just told Nott though?”

“Hmm, probably not?” Draco shrugged. “It’s also entirely possible that Theo already knew. He’s pretty observant, that one.”

They broke off their conversation as they got closer to the Great Hall and the crowds headed to lunch got thicker. They entered and made straight for the Gryffindor table and sat down across from Weasley who was already stuffing his face like no one ever fed him.

“You know, I don’t mind sitting at the Slytherin table sometimes if you would prefer,” Harry offered, filling his plate with shepherd’s pie.

Weasley choked. “You *must* be joking,” he said around a mouthful of potatoes.

Draco grimaced at him. “It’s fine,” he addressed to Harry. “I don’t have a lot of friends these days so we’d be sitting alone anyway.”

“Gee, I wonder where all your friends are, Malfoy,” Weasley said with heavy sarcasm.

“Ron,” Harry said sternly. “*Don’t.*”

“I’m just saying—”

“Well just *stop* saying.”

Weasley relented and went back to his food while shooting occasional glares at Draco. Draco didn’t let it bother him, though, as he filled his own plate. It’s true that anyone who he might have considered a friend in the past was either dead or in Azkaban. With the exception of Blaise and Theo, anyway, and he wasn’t keen to sit with them given their dodgy behaviour in the common room. At any rate, he knew that there was little likelihood that he and Weasley would ever be friendly; there was just too much bad blood there. The best he could ever expect was a grudging tolerance so long as he could restrain himself from snapping back at him.

They were saved from an awkward silence by Hermione joining them with an armload of books. She bustled in and deposited the pile of books on the table and sat down next to

Weasley.

“*There* you two are,” she exclaimed at Harry and Draco with exasperation. “I tried to find you in one of your dorms but then I ran into Kreacher who said you’d probably come to have lunch in the Great Hall. He’s very annoyed with you by the way, Harry. You should have told him you weren’t staying in for lunch. He went to so much trouble.”

“You’ve been having Kreacher bring you meals?” Weasley asked Harry in confusion. Draco tensed, afraid of the obvious question he would ask. “Why wouldn’t you just come here?”

“Obviously to avoid the awkward scrutiny of their peers,” Hermione said swiftly before Harry could stumble over an answer.

“Yeah, that,” Harry agreed breathlessly.

“So, Hermione,” Draco cut in causing Weasley to splutter in disbelief at Draco’s use of her first name. “Are those the books you threatened me with?”

Hermione laughed. “Yeah, I think you’ll probably like these ones.”

She pushed them towards him and he started perusing the titles. Like Harry had suggested, she had included seven books entitled *The Chronicles of Narnia*, as well as a few others. At the bottom of the pile he recognized the title of a very worn, well-loved, and taped together book.

“Oh, good, you included *A Wizard of Earthsea*,” he remarked. “I was intrigued by your description of it.”

“Okay, what is happening here?” Weasley exclaimed staring incredulously between Draco and Hermione.

“What does it look like, Ron?” she rolled her eyes. “I’m lending Draco some of my books.” She turned to Draco. “You’ll lend me some of yours when you get a chance, right?”

“Of course,” he agreed. “I think you’ll probably enjoy *Fortune in the Dunes*, it’s a mystery adventure about a young woman who is an amateur cursebreaker set on discovering a lost treasure deep in the Sahara desert but there are other, less than savoury wizards who are also after the treasure.”

“Oh, that sounds a lot like *Indiana Jones* or *Nancy Drew*!” Hermione enthused.

“Are those books?” Draco asked. “Can I read them too?”

“*Swot!*” Harry coughed again.

Draco kicked him under the table.

“Well *Indiana Jones* is a film,” Hermione explained. “Though I *think* there may be a few books too. I can lend you some *Nancy Drew* though. Fair warning, it’s written for little girls so the writing is a bit simplistic.”

“No seriously,” Weasley cut in again looking faintly off kilter. “Since when are you and *Malfoy* all chummy and trading reading recommendations? And since when does *Malfoy* read muggle fiction?”

“Since this morning,” Draco and Hermione answered at the same time.

Harry snorted loudly next to him.

“And I’ll be reading muggle fiction starting at whatever time I crack one of these open,” Draco sneered at Weasley, patting the top of the pile of books. “Probably after lunch since I have nothing else going on.”

“Oh, which one are you going to start with?” Hermione asked eagerly. “If you’re going to start with *Chronicles of Narnia*, you should start with either *Magician’s Nephew* or *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*. You can start with either because CS Lewis wrote *Magician’s Nephew* as a sort of prequel to the rest of the series so even though it happens before everything else chronologically, he’d actually written *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* first so you can begin with that one and you won’t be too lost, plot-wise.”

Draco’s eyes widened in alarm. Hermione really chattered on when she got excited.

“I thought I’d start with *A Wizard of Earthsea* since it’s your favourite,” he said carefully.

She squealed in delight and bounced up and down in her seat.

Draco stared at her with apprehension and Harry chuckled at the look on his face.

“Regretting making friends with Hermione yet?” he asked cheekily and Hermione pouted at him.

“No,” Draco answered easily. “I’m just not used to such excitable people.”

“Am I excitable?” Hermione asked with a slightly put out expression.

“Yes,” Harry, Draco and Weasley all answered at the same time.

Harry burst out laughing.

Weasley didn’t laugh, however, and glowered at Draco instead.

“What are you playing at, *Malfoy*?” he snarled.

“I’m not playing at anything, Weasley,” Draco replied calmly, trying not to start anything.

However, his measured response only seemed to piss Weasley off more.

“So you just expect us to believe that all of a sudden you’re friends with Hermione after all the shit you put her and the rest of us through for *years* and you haven’t got any ulterior motives?”

“Yes,” he said simply.

“Yes?” he demanded. “That’s all you have to say? Do you expect us all to just forgive and forget?”

“I don’t expect anything of the sort,” Draco said coldly, trying his best not to sneer. “What Hermione and I have discussed has nothing to do with you and if she wants to share with you her feelings on it, that’s up to her.”

“Ron, let it go,” Hermione chided quietly. “It’s my business if I want to forgive him for the past.”

A lot of people were looking at them now and Draco was surprised Harry hadn’t cut in and told Weasley to knock it off yet. Not that he wanted him to, this fight was going to happen eventually, and it might as well be while he was still glued to someone Weasley wouldn’t risk hurting by slinging curses when words finally failed him. Hermione seemed the most embarrassed by the attention out of the four of them.

“You forgive him?!” Weasley exclaimed incredulously. “After all the shit he’s done? The way he’s always treated muggleborns, the shit he’s *said* to you. What about what happened in *his house* this past spring while he watched and *did nothing*?”

Draco suddenly went cold and a familiar ringing began in his ears. Across from him Hermione paled, her dark skin turning ashen and he was plunged into memories he wished he could wipe from his mind.

Hermione was on his drawing room floor, screaming in agony as Draco’s aunt tortured her with the Cruciatus. He could smell her blood and sweat and the grime of rough living as if he was still there. Draco was frozen to the spot, holding several wands in his hand, confiscated from his old school rivals when they’d been captured, certain that this was the end for them and unable to stop it.

Hermione’s screams of agony filled the air while the snatchers and Death Eaters looked on. Some snickered or sneered, others looked on with cold, emotionless expressions. Bellatrix had bloodlust and madness in her eyes. Draco knew his own expression was of terror, but there was nothing he could do about it; his face was just too expressive.

Something tightened around his left forearm causing a sharp, stinging pain where his cuts were still healing and the sensation ripped him from his memory. He looked down at his arm and found that it was Harry’s hand that was gripping him. He realised then that his right hand had been en route to his left arm and Harry had clocked the movement and blocked him from maiming his arm further. He hadn’t even looked up from glaring at Weasley across the table.

Sound slowly filtered back in and he became dimly aware that Hermione and Weasley were still arguing.

“... perfectly well what he’s said and done, Ronald,” Hermione was saying angrily. “I don’t need you to be my white knight. I’m perfectly capable of deciding how I feel for myself, thank you.”

“I just don’t see how we’re meant to just forget about it all,” Weasley argued stubbornly.

“No one’s *asked* you to forget!” Hermione exclaimed, finally giving up all concern for onlookers.

“No one has even asked you to forgive him, Ron,” Harry added finally. “But *we* have and you need to respect our choices on this.”

“What has he said that’s convinced you to forgive him, then?” Weasley demanded.

“He said he was sorry,” Harry replied easily.

Weasley looked at Hermione and she nodded in agreement.

“He’s *sorry*?” Weasley scoffed. “And you believe him?”

“Yes,” Harry and Hermione said at the same time.

“You’re both cracked,” he said dismissively and stood to leave.

He looked back to see if Hermione would stop him or follow but she stayed resolutely in her seat and finally began tucking into her lunch, not looking at him. Bluff called, all he could do was storm off.

“That felt familiar,” Harry said darkly.

Hermione sighed.

Draco wanted to ask what Harry meant but thought better of it. Instead he directed a question at Hermione.

“I’m not trying to be mean but,” Draco began hesitantly. “You fight constantly, why are you two even dating?”

“We don’t fight *constantly*, ” she argued. “But every couple has arguments.”

“You more than most, I fear,” Draco said dryly.

“Ron just has strong opinions and big feelings,” she said patiently. “We always make up in the end. We’re together because we love each other.”

Draco thought about his latest discovery about himself that he was in love with Harry. *Draco* had had strong opinions. They were terrible opinions and he’d been a lot worse to Harry than Weasley had ever been to Hermione. They’d fought bitterly and constantly, but he’d been entirely in the wrong. Weasley had every reason to hate Draco and absolutely no reason to forgive him or let go of the past.

“You two are a lot more forgiving than he is,” Draco observed. “He has every right to feel like this.”

“Maybe,” Harry conceded. “But he doesn’t need to give *us* a bollocking because we chose to feel differently.”

There was that word again. Harry and Hermione had *chosen* to forgive, Weasley had chosen not to. Neither option was inherently a better choice.

“He’ll come around,” Hermione assured him.

“I wouldn’t count on it,” Draco said. “Our two families have been bitter rivals for centuries.”

“Don’t tell me wizards have blood feuds,” Harry said in a tone that suggested it wouldn’t surprise him if they did.

“We do actually,” Draco confirmed. “But they’ve fallen out of fashion for the most part. Really only the oldest pureblood families still have them. The Weasleys may not be old world traditional like some other pureblood families but in this...”

“Are you saying that the Weasleys and the Malfoys have an actual blood feud?” Harry asked in amazement.

“Of course,” he answered. “Did you never wonder why he and I instantly hated each other the moment we met on the train?”

“I just assumed you were a dick and he rightfully had a problem with that,” Harry said with a smirk. “I didn’t like you straight away too.”

“But we’d met before the train,” Draco countered. “I thought that meeting had gone rather well actually.”

Harry actually snorted derisively at that and Draco couldn’t help but be affronted.

“Wait when did you two first meet?” Hermione asked eagerly.

“Madam Malkin’s,” they both replied.

“Hagrid was taking me to get my school things and Draco was already in there when I went to get fitted for my robes,” Harry elaborated.

“I thought we’d had a nice chat,” Draco pouted.

“Er, *no*,” Harry said with a laugh. “That’s not how I’d characterize that interaction.”

“But I was being perfectly nice!”

“You went on about a load of stuff I didn’t understand like Hogwarts houses, Quidditch and broomsticks, insulted Hagrid, then asked me if my parents had been magical and when I said they had been, you went off about how muggleborns shouldn’t be allowed in,” Harry reminded him with a sardonic smirk.

“Oh,” Draco said lamely.

Hermione giggled. “You forgot all that?”

“It was seven years ago, Hermione,” Draco said defensively.

“Harry remembers,” she pointed out.

“Well clearly that interaction meant more to him than me.”

“It probably did,” Harry confirmed. “You were the first wizard my own age I’d ever met and I’d walked away from that interaction deciding that whatever house you were sorted into, I didn’t want it to be in it.”

Draco scoffed and rolled his eyes. “Like you’d ever have ended up in any other house but Gryffindor.”

“Actually, the Sorting Hat was originally going to put me in Slytherin,” Harry said watching his reaction carefully, a playful grin on his face.

Draco’s eyes went very wide and his eyebrows flew into his hairline. Hermione also looked surprised at this information.

“You what?!” he exclaimed, causing several heads to turn. He lowered his voice. “Is that really true or are you screwing with me?”

“It’s true,” Harry confirmed with a laugh. “I told it I didn’t want to be in Slytherin and it said I would do well there. I told it I was sure and it sorted me into Gryffindor.”

A small hysterical laugh escaped him before he could stop it.

“Merlin, how would our lives have been different if you’d been sorted into my house?”

“Who’s to say,” Harry said idly. “It doesn’t really matter. I made a choice seven years ago and now here we are.”

“Do you think you would have chosen differently if we’d not met before our sorting?” Draco asked.

“Hmm, possibly,” Harry said thoughtfully. “If we’d never run into each other in Diagon Alley and you hadn’t come into our compartment on the train, I very much doubt I would have had such strong feelings about the house.”

“Harry also wouldn’t have ended up the youngest Seeker in a century,” Hermione reminded them. “The whole reason he ended up on the team was because of that stunt you two pulled in flying class. If Harry hadn’t been in Gryffindor, I expect McGonagall would have taken house points and put you both in detention.”

“Who’s to say we’d have ended up in the air at all?” Draco countered.

“Neville would have still fallen off his broom,” Harry disagreed. “And he still would have broken his wrist and dropped the remembrall, and you would have still picked it up and acted

like a wanker.”

“Ah, but would you have defended a kid in a rival house?” Draco asked, electing not to address being called a wanker.

“I think I would have,” Harry mused.

“You’re probably right,” Draco conceded. “That’s just who you are isn’t it?”

“I don’t reckon I’d have liked you anyway,” Harry shrugged.

“Even if we hadn’t had that apparently disastrous first meeting?”

“Our first meeting would have likely been disastrous no matter when or where it happened,” Harry teased. “When we first met, I remember thinking you reminded me of my cousin.”

“Oh Merlin no!” Draco cried in horror. “That horrible beast of a boy?”

Harry burst out laughing.

“You know Dudley?” Hermione asked with a grin.

“Only by reputation,” Draco said glumly. “I can’t believe I reminded you of that brat!”

“It was the way you talked,” Harry gasped through his laughter. “Like everyone should know exactly who you are and you deserved every privilege and the rules that normal people had to abide by didn’t apply to you. You struck me as very spoilt.”

“You know,” mused Hermione, still grinning. “I never met Dudley myself but from what Harry has said and what I heard about the one meeting Ron, Fred and George had with him, I can see some similarities too.”

“Ever thought you’d have anything in common with a muggle, Draco?” Harry asked brightly.

“Never considered it before but I’m sure you could find something in common between any two people in the world,” Draco mused.

“Dudley’s not so bad these days,” Harry reminded him in what was obviously meant to be a reassuring tone.

“So just like Draco!” Hermione chimed.

Harry and Hermione laughed at this and Draco couldn’t help but smile fondly. This was nice. Even though Weasley still had strong feelings about Draco – feelings that were entirely justified – it was still nice that he could have this. And now that he had it, he wasn’t going to fuck it up.

Chapter 14: On The Subject of Werewolves

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: Graphic depictions of blood and violence after the break

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

“Can I ask you something?” Harry asked that evening when they’d curled up in Draco’s bed, legs tangled together and Draco’s fingers in Harry’s hair as was his newest habit.

“May as well, I suppose,” Draco murmured at the top of Harry’s head. “It’s not like I have any secrets left to share.”

Well that wasn’t entirely true but he seriously doubted that Harry would stumble on the right questions to make Draco admit he was in love with him.

“When you said being gay ‘isn’t the done thing’, what exactly does that mean?” Harry asked.

Draco didn’t understand the question but the potion made him attempt to answer it anyway.

“It’s just not what purebloods in high society do,” he ventured. “I don’t really understand the question.”

“Okay, let me rephrase,” Harry said, pulling his head back to look at him properly. “You’re gay right?”

“Yes,” Draco replied with an eye roll and dropping his hand, already missing his hair.

“But you’re also pureblood.”

Draco snorted. “I see what you mean. It’s not like anyone can stop me from being gay, but there are certain... *expectations* from me regardless of my sexual orientation.”

“Expectations,” Harry stated flatly. It wasn’t a question.

“Hmm,” Draco hummed, nodding in confirmation. “I’m the only heir to my family name. I’m meant to get married and have my own heirs. I can’t obviously do that with a man.”

“And you’re obviously meant to marry a pureblood woman?” Harry asked, though he clearly knew the answer.

“Obviously,” Draco nodded. “There are always lavender marriages here and there in pureblood society. I won’t lie to my future wife and allow her to go around believing I love

her in that way. I'm sure we'd come to some arrangement. It's how I always pictured it anyway."

"Have you ever thought to say 'fuck it all' and stop giving a shit and marry a man that you actually love and build a *real* marriage with him?"

Draco's mind suddenly went wild with the idea. Marry a man he loved? A preposterous image of Harry in a tux standing opposite him in front of an altar, exchanging rings and declaring that they would love each other for the rest of their days. He had to shake the image from his head before he started thinking what a future with Harry would look like.

"I never thought about it before..." Draco murmured.

Get a grip! he chided himself. *He doesn't feel the same way. This is just physical for him, don't get attached.*

"Isn't this just one more thing other people have chosen for you?" Harry asked, oblivious to Draco's internal turmoil.

"I suppose it is..." Draco mused. "I'm not even sure I *want* kids."

"Oh? Why?"

"It's not like I've had the best upbringing to model parenting after. I fear I'd be an absolute shit father."

"I think you'd be a good father," Harry disagreed.

"You're mental if you think that," Draco almost sneered.

"No really," he insisted. "You have an exhaustive list of examples of what *not* to do."

Draco scoffed and Harry gave him a blinding smile.

"But seriously," he continued with a more sober expression. "I think you'd give any children of yours absolutely everything they need. I know you'd fight tooth and nail for their wellbeing and safety, if the lengths you went to to protect your parents is anything to go by."

At this, he placed his hand over the horrible scar maiming Draco's right shoulder, and ran gentle fingers over the brutal lines across his collarbone and pectoral.

"If that's the sort of sacrifice you'd make for your parents, I can only imagine what you'd do for a child."

Harry's hand was warm and his words sincere and his heart felt like it was swelling with even more love for the man in his arms. The impulse to say 'I love you' in this moment was almost impossible to resist. He had to bite his tongue to keep from blurting how he felt.

"I don't think it's going to matter anyway," Draco said once he'd gotten his wits about him.

"I'd have to disclose my condition to any future bride. I don't expect anyone wants to marry

a werewolf.”

“Tonks did,” Harry said with a shrug.

“Who?”

“Nymphadora Tonks,” Harry clarified. “Your cousin. She married Remus.”

“My... cousin?” Draco asked, perplexed. He tried racking his brain for his old genealogy lessons. He couldn’t remember anyone called Nymphadora. And Tonks wasn’t a name associated with any pureblood family he knew of.

“She’s the daughter of your mother’s second-oldest sister,” Harry prodded. “Andromeda?”

Draco frowned. He didn’t know any Andromeda.

“Boy, when the Blacks disown someone, they don’t mess around,” Harry exclaimed softly.

“She was disowned then?” Draco asked. That explained why he’d never heard of her or her daughter.

“Yeah, for marrying a muggleborn.”

“Oh,” he said lamely. “That would do it.”

“Yeah well,” Harry shrugged. “Anyway, Tonks married Remus and they had a kid. They named him after Tonks’ dad, Ted. Since Tonks and Remus were killed at the Battle, Andromeda has been raising him alone. I think at some point after I graduate, I’ll have to step up and take care of him though.”

“Why you?” Draco asked, baffled.

“Oh, because I’m Teddy’s godfather,” Harry said as though eighteen year olds routinely became godparents to war orphans on a regular basis. “Andromeda has been an excellent grandmother to him but she can’t be expected to raise a newborn on her own so soon after losing her husband and daughter.”

“Do you think you’re ready for that?” Draco asked. “Being a parent?”

“Ready or not, I promised Remus I’d be there for his son if anything happened to him.”

Well there was no arguing with that. It was just so like Harry to do something so noble, agree to be the godparent to the child of his father’s old school friend in the midst of a war.

“I never realised you were so close with Lupin,” Draco said softly.

“Not as close as I wish I could have been,” Harry sighed.

“Hey,” Draco suddenly said, a thought occurring to him. “What’s the kid like? I mean with having a werewolf father.”

“Oh he’s fine,” Harry assured him. “Totally normal. Well except that he’s a metamorphmagus, but he got that from his mum. He’s constantly changing his hair colour. It’s adorable!”

“So he’s not a werewolf too then?”

“No, not at all,” he said. “Hermione says that it’s not common knowledge because wizards don’t like to study things they’d rather get rid of, but werewolves can’t have werewolf children, that’s just not a thing. The only way to become a werewolf is to be bitten by one during a full moon. Even if a werewolf bit someone when it wasn’t a full moon, they wouldn’t be turned.”

“Why in the world would a werewolf be inclined to bite anyone when it wasn’t a full moon?” Draco asked, slightly horrified.

“Well my only example would suggest to me that it’s because he’s a murderous raving lunatic who developed a taste for human flesh,” Harry said dryly.

“You’re talking about Greyback,” Draco guessed, remembering how the mad werewolf had behaved during the siege. “So none of the people he mauled and lived were turned? They were fine?”

“Well I wouldn’t say *fine*,” Harry pointed out. “I imagine there’s some psychological trauma there. And while they weren’t turned, they definitely would have experienced some er... *changes*.”

Draco paled. “What kind of changes?”

“Cravings for red meat cooked very rare, I’m given to understand,” Harry mused. “Maybe agitation and restlessness during full moons. You’d have to ask Bill Weasley for more details.”

Draco remembered someone at the foot of the Astronomy Tower who had been attacked by Greyback as they were making their escape after Snape killed Dumbledore. He vaguely remembered the person had had red hair but he’d never gotten a proper look at his face as he was hurried away, dragged by Snape. That must have been Bill Weasley. Draco had known that the Weasleys were in the Order of the Phoenix, so it made some sense that Bill had been one of those appointed by Dumbledore as extra security that year.

Draco’s eyes roamed down to Harry’s neck where little marks left from Draco’s love bites were scattered across his throat and collar. Would those bites do something to Harry? He hadn’t even considered.

“Hey,” Harry said softly.

Draco’s eyes snapped up to meet his. Even in the dark and without his glasses, Harry had been watching Draco’s expression carefully. And knowing him as well as he did, he’d obviously determined what he was thinking once again.

“I’m fine,” Harry assured him. “Just don’t break the skin and everything will be fine. You shouldn’t worry so much.”

Easy for him to say. He wasn’t the one with metamorphic saliva that could completely change the course of a person’s life if it came in contact with their blood.

Harry yawned and snuggled closer to Draco, burrowing his face into his chest. Draco wondered if he could hear his heart beat slowing to a calm steady rate at the contact. Even with his racing thoughts, Harry still managed to make Draco feel incredibly safe. He burrowed his hand back in Harry’s unruly hair and sighed.

He knew he was slowly breaking his own heart by getting so attached and falling deeper in love with Harry every minute, but he just couldn’t bring himself to distance himself from him. He wondered when Harry would pull out of this arrangement. Would it be when they were separated? Or would they carry on after that? And for how long after that?

Harry knew that Draco fancied him so maybe he’d pull out sooner rather than later for fear of hurting him too much if this went on too long. Harry had also been hesitant to experiment with Draco in the first place for fear that he’d be taking advantage of Draco’s feelings for him. Draco spared a moment to feel slightly guilty for indulging his own feelings with Harry while he was exploring his sexuality, but pushed the feeling aside, knowing that in the end it would be Draco that got hurt and not Harry. He could live with that.

Harry’s breath deepened and evened out against Draco’s chest and he knew he’d fallen asleep. Draco pressed his lips against the top of Harry’s head, unruly black curls tickling his nose. It was the most fond gesture he’d given Harry so far and he wasn’t brave enough to do it while he was awake for fear that he’d see the real meaning in it.

Perhaps it was their discussion about werewolves before falling asleep or Draco’s turmoil about his growing feelings for Harry but one of the two was surely responsible for the nightmare that followed when Draco finally found unconsciousness in Harry’s arms.

It started out the way this particular nightmare always started.

Bellatrix was dragging him by the arm through the corridors of Malfoy Manor. He wasn’t resisting but she was moving with some excitement and he had a difficult time keeping up. It was late evening and the full moon shone brightly through the tall windows as they passed the parlour, creating long ominous shadows on every surface that seemed to reach out to him.

There was a snarling, howling beast somewhere below that got louder as they approached the cellar door and Bella ripped it open with a delighted flourish, a mad giggle escaping her as she did. Draco stumbled slightly on the stairs when she pulled him down to whatever horrible fate awaited him. Another sound filtered up to him under the sounds of the furious caged

werewolf, it was his mother's pleading, screaming and crying voice. He'd never heard her so desperate, not even when he'd been Marked.

"Please!" she cried in a high desperate voice that felt like a knife to Draco's heart. "Please not this! I'll do anything! Please! Take me instead, I beg you!"

No! Draco tried to cry out as they entered the cellar, but his voice was stuck with terror. *Don't touch her!*

The Dark Lord was standing by the caged werewolf, Snape at his side looking impassive, and Draco's parents across from them. Lucius stood ramrod-straight, eyes blank, face pale. Narcissa was straining against the twin grips of the Carrows on either side of her. Her arms were restrained as she tried to throw herself at the Dark Lord with pleading cries. Amycus and Alecto looked delighted at the whole situation.

"Enough, Narcissa," replied that high cold voice that had haunted Draco's nightmares since the first time he'd heard it. "What happens next is entirely up to Draco. Ah, and there he is, thank you, Bella."

The Dark Lord's figure was always somehow more grotesque and frightening in Draco's dreams. He looked at him with cold amusement in his eerie red eyes.

"Come, Draco," he ordered and Draco obeyed.

Bella let go of his arm and he stepped forward. The werewolf snarled and slammed himself against the bars of his cage, trying to get at him, he flinched violently and his mother sobbed loudly. Bella cackled.

The Dark Lord stood only a metre away from the cage and did not flinch when the werewolf shoved his face through the bars to try and bite him. He had his wand in hand and was twirling it idly while regarding him.

"You were given an assignment, Draco," he began in a soft voice that sent chills up Draco's spine. Draco had to strain to hear him over the snarling werewolf. "And while I admit, I did not expect you to succeed, given the difficulty of the task, you did remarkably well to corner and even disarm Dumbledore. So I must congratulate you on that effort."

Draco knew he was not here to be rewarded for his actions in the Astronomy Tower. If he was, his mother would not be straining to get to him and pleading for his life.

"However," the Dark Lord continued, his voice taking on a more dangerous tone. "When the time came to finish the job, you hesitated. I cannot allow hesitation amongst my followers, Draco."

Slowly and deliberately, taking care to make sure Draco caught every movement, he raised his wand and pointed it at Draco's mother. Narcissa didn't flinch at the wand leveled at her face, only continued to cry with a pleading look in her eyes.

“When the Dark Lord gives you an order, Draco,” he said coldly, “you follow it without hesitation, and you do not wait for someone else to follow through for you instead. Now it seems you must learn that lesson the hard way. I’m going to give you another order, Draco, and you will follow it without hesitation or I will kill your mother. Do you understand?”

“No, Draco don’t!” his mother cried desperately.

The Dark Lord ignored her. He only gave Draco a pointed, expectant look.

Draco was numb. He couldn’t find his voice. Tears sprang to his eyes, knowing that he would have to disobey his mother’s pleading words because if he didn’t, she would die. He didn’t doubt that the Dark Lord would follow through on his threat. He met the older wizard’s cold, red eyes and nodded mutely.

“You will walk over to this cage,” he instructed with a satisfied smirk. “And you will allow Fenrir to bite you.”

He had suspected this would be the case. He didn’t hesitate. He only turned to the cage and walked forward.

“No!” his mother wailed. “Draco, stop! Don’t do it, please!”

He didn’t allow his steps to falter as his heart broke for his mother’s grief.

I can’t hesitate, he reminded himself. *If I hesitate, she dies.*

He got nearly within reach of the cage and the werewolf snarled, bearing his slavering teeth in anticipation.

“Draco don’t!”

This voice wasn’t his mother’s. Nor was it his father’s or anyone else in the room. It didn’t even belong in this memory.

It was Harry.

He whirled around to find that his parents, Snape, Bella, and the Carrows had disappeared. In the place where his mother had been struggling now stood Harry on his knees, defenceless at the end of the Dark Lord’s wand. There were tears in his eyes and his face was pleading, his hands reaching out to Draco.

He had to do it. He couldn’t hesitate. He locked eyes with Harry and backed up until he met the bars of the cage.

The werewolf snarled in triumph and clamped his jaws down on Draco’s shoulder through the bars. White hot pain exploded down his arm and chest and he screamed in agony.

“Draco!” Harry screamed back.

Harry surged forward and grabbed his arms, trying to pull him away from the bars, but the werewolf only clamped down harder and Draco screamed again. He could feel hot blood pouring down his arm in swift rivulets and drip into a quickly forming puddle on the floor beside him. His senses began to dull and Harry's voice drifted to his ears as if through a dense fog or from down a long corridor.

"Draco! Draco!" he cried over and over, but Draco could barely hear him over the Dark Lord's laughter and his own screams of pain and terror.

"Draco!" Harry's voice called again, this time very close to his ear. *"Wake up!"*

Draco's eyes flew open and for a moment had no idea where he was. Someone was holding his right arm very tightly and he thrashed, trying to get free.

"Draco, stop!" Harry's voice filtered through his panic. "It's me, you're safe! It was just a dream, it's not real."

Draco stilled. He took a moment to take in his surroundings and remembered that he was at Hogwarts, in his bed, with Harry. It was Harry's hand that gripped his arm so tightly, no doubt to keep him from striking him while he flailed. His throat burned like he had really been screaming. He looked at the man who was half on top of him and restraining him and found his face filled with concern.

When he was sure Draco was done thrashing about, Harry released his hold on his arm and pulled back his weight from pressing on his legs which he'd only just noticed.

"You okay?" he asked gently.

"No," Draco sobbed, his voice rough from screaming. "I haven't been okay since I was fifteen."

"Yeah," Harry sighed sadly. "Me neither."

Draco felt raw and exposed. He was trembling slightly and his tears flowed freely but he didn't care. Harry had seen him cry enough times at this point that he no longer felt shame at being so vulnerable around him anymore. He couldn't get the image of Harry's stricken, horror-filled eyes as Draco was mauled by a werewolf from his mind. It somehow made an already terrible memory that much worse.

Harry reached an arm around him and pulled him against his chest and allowed him to sob into his shoulder while he stroked his back gently. He didn't say anything, just offered silent comfort.

Draco wasn't sure how long they laid like that before he felt safe again and his shuddering sobs finally subsided.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Harry whispered in the slowly lightening gloom.

"Not really," Draco sighed.

Harry nodded and just held him for a bit longer.

“I get them too,” he said softly after a few minutes. “The nightmares. I live through the worst moments over and over again. See friends and family dying all around me. And when I wake up, sometimes I forget that it’s over. That he’s gone. But he *is* gone, and he’s never coming back.”

“I’m sorry I woke you up,” Draco murmured, unsure what else to say to that. “I’m sure it’s not the most pleasant way to be woken.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Harry said, shaking his head dismissively. “It was bound to happen to one of us sooner or later. I’m sure I’ll return the favour if we’re stuck together much longer.”

Draco didn’t think he could bear the thought of Harry screaming and thrashing in the throes of a nightmare.

“Though if you’re taking opinions,” Harry said with a slight cheekiness in his tone in an effort to lighten the mood. “I much preferred how you woke me yesterday.”

Draco let out a huffed half-laugh at this.

“Yeah,” he agreed. “No contest.”

He sighed and rolled over onto his back and stared up at the canopy of his four poster. Harry did the same next to him and they just laid there in companionable silence as the dawn began to break.

Chapter End Notes

You know I had to throw in a little angst in a Drarry fic. My poor traumatized little bean



Chapter 15: What We Get Up To In Dormitories

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

They eventually had to drag themselves out of bed and get dressed. Due to their early morning wake up call, they were the first ones out of the dorms but only just. Right as they were about to exit the common room, someone else joined them from down the boys dorm corridor.

“Oh, you two are up early,” Hermione called cheerfully.

“Nightmare,” Draco said shortly and she nodded sympathetically.

“Hermione,” Harry began with a scrutinising look. “Why were you coming down from the boys dorms?”

Hermione turned very pink. “Never you mind,” she said dismissively. “Shall we head to breakfast then?”

She hurried past them and Harry gave her an incredulous look.

“Don’t be so surprised, Harry,” Draco said with an eye roll. “Hermione and Weasley are grown adults.”

Harry looked faintly queasy at this and Draco had to pull him along or get left behind by Hermione.

“I don’t like to imagine what they get up to in private,” he said faintly.

Draco snorted. “I’m sure Weasley would be just as disturbed at what *we*’ve gotten up to in private.”

Harry went instantly scarlet all the way to his hairline.

“I’m tempted to ask,” Hermione said with a sly grin.

“*Hermione!*” Harry exclaimed. “How about I don’t ask you about your sex life and you don’t ask me about mine.”

“*Is there a sex life to ask about?*” she asked in surprise.

Harry spluttered, struggling not to answer but Draco knew by now that the potion would win. Harry clapped a hand over his mouth and mumbled something into it. That seemed to do the trick and he was able to relax. That wouldn’t work on anyone else, unfortunately, as it wasn’t exactly subtle.

“It depends entirely on your definition of sex,” Draco answered with a smirk.

Hermione laughed without a hint of embarrassment and Harry's eyes went wide and he stared at Draco in horror. Draco couldn't help but chuckle at this.

"She already knows we've been snogging," Draco replied to Harry's unspoken admonishment. "And unless she's completely blind, she's undoubtedly noticed what I did to your neck the other day."

"Oh I noticed," she confirmed cheekily.

"And we're all adults here," Draco finished.

"I just never thought about discussing my... *bedroom activities* with one of my best friends," Harry said weakly.

"I was under the impression that's what best friends were for," Draco quipped, grinning.

"Among other things," Hermione confirmed. "Though there are one or two questions I feel are probably important for me to ask going forward."

"Might as well," Harry sighed.

"I just want to make sure we're all on the same page," she assured him hurriedly. "I don't want to pry but I also don't want to create an awkward situation for you two."

"Go ahead and ask, Hermione," Draco said, becoming impatient with her waffling.

"Right," she nodded decisively. "So you two are obviously keeping this... relationship...? a secret. And apparently Draco being gay is not something he wants people to know."

"Correct," Draco confirmed.

"But I suppose I should ask Harry then," she turned to the man in question. "Are you telling people you're bisexual or is that a secret too?"

"I... er," Harry hesitated. "I'm still sort of new to the revelation, myself. I'm not inclined to hide it but I'm not going to just stand up and make an announcement."

"Okay, then my second question is this: how much of this is it okay for Ron to learn about?"

"I'd rather not disclose my sexuality to *Weasley*, thanks," Draco sneered.

"I think Ron would explode if he found out about us," Harry said weakly. "I don't mind if he knows I'm bi but..."

"Okay that's fair..." she ventured. "But, Harry, I sincerely doubt you can keep this from him forever. Think how betrayed he'll feel when he *does* find out you've been keeping secrets."

"That's a future me problem," Harry said grimly.

“Fine,” Hermione sighed. “One more question: who all knows about Draco’s sexuality, then?”

“The three of us, Blaise, Pansy, and my mother,” Draco replied. “Possibly Theo as well but I can’t be sure. Goyle might know too but he’s not a concern what with being in Azkaban.”

“*Goyle* knows?” Harry exclaimed in surprise. “I know you lot spent a lot of time together, but I never got the impression that you were especially close.”

“Yes well, when you share a dormitory for seven years, you tend to learn things about each other,” Draco said dryly. “I’m sure you know uncomfortable things about Weasley and Longbottom.”

“Only that Ron snores loud enough to wake the dead,” Harry laughed.

“He *is* pretty loud,” Hermione giggled. “The first couple weeks when we were on the run, I was half tempted to put a pillow over his face.”

Harry burst out laughing.

They had reached the Great Hall at that point and Harry’s outburst drew the attention of several early morning breakfast goers. Several heads turned in their direction as they entered and headed for the Gryffindor table. Draco pointedly looked away, trying to ignore the attention the way Harry and Hermione seemed to be doing.

“And now you willingly share a bed with him,” Draco pointed out. “You must have the patience of a saint.”

“Actually,” she said with a sly smirk. “I just Silence him after he falls asleep.”

“You do *not*!” Harry exclaimed.

“It’s for his own good as much as mine!” Hermione justified sincerely. “Honestly if I didn’t, I’d have to break up with him or murder him in his sleep because I think I’d go completely mad.”

“He’s not *that* bad,” Harry said between giggles. “I’ve shared a room with him for nearly seven years. Summers too!”

“Yes and I admire your strength, Harry,” Hermione praised condescendingly, sitting down to breakfast. “Some of us just don’t have your patience.”

“You’re joking right?” he deadpanned. “I’m quite possibly the least patient person in the world.”

Draco snorted. That much was true. Harry embodied Gryffindor impulsivity with every fiber of his being. It had always been ridiculously easy to rile him up or piss him off.

“Maybe for most things,” Hermione conceded. “But you have endless patience for Ron.”

“I’m sorry,” Harry said sarcastically. “But were you or were you not there the last time he said something stupid and I exploded at him, and he took off for months?”

“Yes but when he came back the two of you acted like none of it had ever happened,” Hermione reminded him. “The same thing happened over the Goblet of Fire nonsense when your name came out. After the first task you both acted like he hadn’t been a complete ass to you for an entire month. I don’t think he even apologised!”

“Seriously,” Draco cut in. “*Why* are you dating him?”

“It’s not something I can explain,” Harry answered instead of Hermione. “But they’ve been dancing around each other since fourth year. Just makes sense if you know both of them well enough.”

“I’m with Ron because I love him,” Hermione explained. “It’s as simple as that.”

Draco decided to let it rest and eat his breakfast. Honestly, her explanation wasn’t nearly satisfying enough. All she ever said was that she loved Weasley but never said *why* she loved him. Sure maybe he was reliable in a fight, but he had the empathetic capacity of a Blast-Ended Screwt. He didn’t have to be best mates with him to know that he was a shit friend. Maybe there was something in there that only Harry and Hermione ever saw.

Even Draco knew that there was more to a relationship than simply *loving* a person. And no one loves someone for no special reason. Draco loved Harry because he was generous and brave and forgiving. He was fiercely loyal, always stood up for what he knew was right, never backed down from a fight, and always lifted up the people around him, and made Draco feel safe just by standing next to him.

Draco supposed that Harry’s forgiving nature was why he and Weasley were still friends after some of the shit he’d pulled. He still had no idea what Hermione saw in him, but his own experience with her would suggest that she was equally forgiving. Harry and Hermione’s friendship made sense, Hermione and Weasley’s did not. Harry and Weasley’s kind of did when you considered that Weasley was probably Harry’s first friend ever, and despite his idiocy, Weasley was often ride or die for Harry. Perhaps he was the same way with Hermione and it was just not something Draco had ever witnessed.

“Anyway,” Harry said after a few moments where they began their breakfast in silence. “Besides Ron’s snoring, the fact that Seamus took up sleeping starkers in sixth year, and I apparently talk in my sleep, not a lot of weird stuff took place in our dorms.”

“Except the time Sirius broke in looking for Wormtail and scared the wits out of Ron,” Hermione reminded him.

“Oh yeah!” Harry exclaimed. “That’s actually pretty funny in hindsight.”

“Why was Black looking for Wormtail in your dorm?” Draco asked in confusion.

Now that he thought about it, since Black had never been trying to harm Harry, all of his motivations for breaking into Gryffindor Tower were confusing under that light.

“Oh Wormtail was hiding out as Ron’s pet rat for twelve years,” Harry said, waving a bit of sausage around on the end of his fork. “Well actually he was only Ron’s rat since he started at Hogwarts and before that he was Percy’s.”

Draco’s eyes widened in horror.

“You mean to tell me that you had that *man* in your room with you for three years?” Draco exclaimed in disgust.

“Two and a half,” Harry corrected. “It *is* kind of disturbing looking back at it. He slept in Ron’s *bed*.”

“Only you would describe a grown man hiding in a bedroom full of eleven-year-old boys as ‘kind of disturbing’,” Draco said, rolling his eyes and giving a little shudder. “I mean, you must have changed in front of him and everything.”

Harry and Hermione grimaced at this.

“Honestly, I try not to think about it too much,” Harry said, looking faintly ill.

“Do Longbottom, Finnigan, and Thomas know about this?” Draco asked pointedly.

“Er, no,” Harry replied uncomfortably. “Probably best for their sanity if we don’t tell them.”

That was probably wise. Draco was already quite disturbed by this information, he could only imagine the reaction of the three oblivious young men it directly affected.

“Anyway,” Harry said, forcing brightness into his voice. “What about you, Hermione? Any weird things you learned sharing a dorm with four other girls?”

“Oh nothing quite so disturbing as you, Harry,” Hermione said dismissively. “Everyone slept quietly which was their best quality in my opinion. I never was very close with the other girls in my dorm.”

“Why was that?” Draco asked.

“Oh they had their little cliques,” Hermione explained. “Lavender and Parvati were all about boys and beauty tips and Divination.” She gave a very severe eye roll at this. “And Fay and Sally-Anne were joined at the hip. They were almost never in the dorms and I only ever saw them at bedtime and in classes.”

Draco smirked at that. He recalled once walking in on Fay Dunbar and Sally-Anne Perks having a very heated snog in a disused classroom in fifth year. He suspected their absence from normally trafficked parts of the castle were due to this illicit relationship they undoubtedly didn’t want made public. Dunbar’s family was a new money pureblood family and definitely didn’t want their daughter to tarnish their name by cavorting with Perks who was not only a girl but a half-blood. He’d noticed that they were conspicuously absent from eighth year. He assumed they’d probably eloped or something.

“What about you, Draco?” Hermione asked. “Any fun stories about the Slytherin boys?”

“I don’t know about ‘fun’,” Draco said. “But Crabbe and Goyle snored quite ferociously too. In first year, Theo, Blaise, and I had to get a prefect to enchant their bed curtains to completely block the sound because the three of us were losing sleep.”

“Why didn’t *I* think of that?” Harry exclaimed. “I bet Fred and George would have happily enchanted Ron’s curtains. Although I’m sure they probably would have sabotaged them instead. I’m sure Percy would have done it properly though.”

Draco chuckled. “Well besides that, you know about Blaise and I, but *Theo*. He was constantly bringing girls into our dorm to snog or shag in his bed. I swear, it was a different witch every week!”

“Ron did that once!” Harry exclaimed. “Back when he and Lavender were joined at the mouth.”

“I’m still trying to scrub that from my memory, thanks, Harry,” Hermione said with a grimace.

“Sorry,” he said sheepishly. “Seamus and Dean told him off for it and said they didn’t want her in our dorm. I never said anything but I privately agreed and I reckon so did Neville. Not to speak ill of the dead but all that ‘Won-Won’ and ‘Lav-Lav’ nonsense was sickening.”

“When was all this?” Draco asked.

“Sixth year,” Harry answered. “I can’t believe you didn’t notice. They were all over each other everywhere at all times.”

“I believe my attentions were on other matters at the time,” Draco reminded him darkly.

“Oh,” he said lamely. “Right.”

“Well this has been a cheerful conversation,” Hermione quipped.

Draco snorted and Harry laughed a bit too loudly at the awkwardness.

“Well this is cozy, isn’t it,” Weasley said, suddenly appearing at the table. He had a scowl on his face and was eyeing Draco with immense loathing.

“Oh, morning, Ron,” Harry said with a grin, either ignoring Weasley’s tone or oblivious to it.

“Hi,” he said shortly. “Got up early so you could hang out with your new buddy, then I see.”

“Uh, I’m literally glued to him, Ron,” Harry said to him as if he were slow. “Where Draco goes, I kind of have to follow. Same in reverse.”

“Right,” he said, annoyed. “What’s your excuse then, Hermione?”

“I wake up early *every* morning, Ron,” she said snappishly. “And I don’t need an excuse to hang out with anyone I like.”

“But its *Malfoy*, ” Weasley sneered.

“Not that Draco isn’t a perfectly fine person to chat with,” Hermione snapped. “But am I now not allowed to hang out with Harry because he’s stuck to him?”

“You – that’s not–” Weasley spluttered. “You’re missing the point!”

“And what exactly *is* the point, Ronald? The only reason you’ve given is that ‘he’s Malfoy’. If you’d let go of this pureblooded blood feud nonsense, you’d realise he’s changed.”

Weasley reeled back at that.

“This has got nothing to do with any blood feud, Hermione,” he seethed. “And people *don’t* change.”

“You’re wrong,” Harry said softly. “People change all of the time.”

Though his voice was quiet, all three of them heard him. Draco didn’t know if he was talking about him or his own father when he said that. He remembered what he’d said about James Potter and Sirius Black once being bullies and that if they’d never changed, Harry’s mother would have never married his father.

“*Some* people, maybe,” Weasley persisted. “Not Malfoy.”

Harry sighed and stood up from the table. Draco hastily stood with him and followed his lead when he bent to pick up his backpack.

“Where are *you* going?” Weasley demanded angrily.

“The hospital wing,” Harry snapped back. “To check on the progress of the solvent. That alright with you?”

He didn’t wait for a reply and only stormed out, Draco half-jogging to keep up with him.

They didn’t say anything until they reached the grand staircase.

“Sorry about Ron,” Harry muttered in a defeated tone Draco had never heard from him before.

“You don’t have to apologise for him,” Draco said, shaking his head. “I’m actually surprised at *your* reaction to what he said.”

“Did you think I wouldn’t defend you?” he asked, raising an eyebrow.

“No, I expected that. I actually expected you’d shout at him. You’ve always had a bit of a temper if you don’t mind my saying so.”

Harry snorted. “Yeah. Sirius said I got my temper from my mum.” He sighed. “I’m just so sick to death of fighting.”

“Fighting with Weasley?” Draco asked curiously

“Fighting with *everybody!*” he exclaimed. “I’ve been fighting for the last seven years and I just don’t want to fight anymore!”

Draco was suddenly horrified to see tears in Harry’s eyes. Noticing a few second years giving them odd looks as they passed, Draco pulled Harry into an empty classroom so no one would see.

“Even after the war ended, I keep having to fight,” Harry sobbed. “Only now instead of fighting dark wizards, I’m fighting with friends, and the Wizengamot, and the fucking press!”

Draco pulled him into a hug and let the shorter man cry into the collar of his robes.

“About a dozen people tried to convince me not to speak at your trial,” Harry mumbled into his shoulder. He pulled back to look him in the eye, his emerald eyes swimming with unshed tears. “But I knew you deserved a second chance. That you could be a good person if you were given the opportunity. I fought with Ron about it for half the summer and we’re still fighting about it even though you’ve proven me right!”

He pulled out of the hug and buried both hands in his hair in frustration. Draco allowed him the use of his hand for this.

“I’m just so sick of being right all the time and no one believing me! I give up! I’m done fighting, I never want to fight ever again!”

“You realise being an auror, you’ll have to do rather a lot of fighting,” Draco pointed out gently.

“WELL MAYBE I DON’T WANT TO BE AN AUROR ANYMORE!” he shouted angrily, throwing both hands into the air. The dusty furniture around them rattled violently at the force of his emotions and barely contained magic.

Draco’s eyes widened in shock, both at the volume and the display of power. Harry was breathing hard, his own eyes wide at his words, as though he’d never thought them before, let alone spoken them aloud.

“You don’t mean that,” Draco choked out. “You’ve wanted to be an auror forever.”

“Yeah... I do mean it,” Harry whispered. “I don’t want to be an auror anymore. I don’t want to spend the rest of my life hunting after dark wizards. I’ve done plenty of that for this lifetime. I’m done.” He let out a choked laugh. “You wanna know something funny?”

“What?” Draco asked warily.

“The reason I wanted to be an auror in the first place was because I was told I’d make a good one,” Harry said with a weird ironic-looking smile. “By a Death Eater.”

Draco stared in astonishment.

“What?!” he exclaimed.

“Yeah,” he let out a short, humourless laugh. “Barty Crouch Jr in fourth year when he was using polyjuice potion to impersonate Mad-Eye Moody. He told me I had the instincts and skills to make a good auror. Funny, he’s also the reason I can’t be controlled by the Imperius Curse too. Used it on me so many times until I threw it off completely.”

Draco stared. “And this made you want to be an auror?”

“I guess,” Harry shrugged. “I’ve never been good at anything else besides Quidditch. He put the idea in my head and the more I thought about it, the more I liked the idea.”

“What would you do instead?” Draco asked.

“I don’t know...” Harry thought about it. “Maybe I’ll do what you plan on doing. Get a mastery in Defence and go from there.”

“There’s not a lot outside of law enforcement that a mastery in Defence is going to do for you,” Draco pointed out.

“Well I don’t actually care,” Harry said dismissively. “Even if I never figure it out and never work a single day for the rest of my life, I can live on my family fortune. Hell, my children and grandchildren could do it too.”

“I think you’d be bored,” Draco said with a fond smile. He couldn’t picture Harry in a life of leisure. “With nothing to occupy your time, you’d go mental, I think.”

“You’re probably right,” Harry sighed.

There was a lengthy pause. Harry’s frustrated tears had dried and Draco checked the time.

“We should probably head up to the hospital wing,” he said finally. “There’s only about fifteen minutes before first bell.”

“Yeah,” Harry agreed. “Can you not tell anyone about me not wanting to be an auror? I haven’t told Ron and Hermione yet. I’m not sure I’m ready for the barrage of emotions when they find out.”

“Of course,” Draco agreed easily. “As long as no one asks me directly about it.”

He held up their joined hands to emphasise his point. Harry let out a soft chuckle and they resumed their trip up to the hospital wing.

Chapter End Notes

A bit more friendship building for Draco and Hermione for those of you who were excited for that. A bit more angst too cos there's no way MY Harry is gonna be a cop!

And of course, you can't have a Drarry fic without Ron being an ass.

Chapter 16: Draco's Patronus

“Bad news gentlemen,” Madam Pomfrey said somberly.

A pit formed in Draco’s stomach.

“You can’t separate us?” Harry guessed anxiously.

“Well I can,” she assured them hastily. “But the key ingredient I need to make the solvent is rather uncommon and is currently on backorder.”

Draco was beginning to hyperventilate, anxiety climbing with every word. Harry reached across and grabbed Draco’s left forearm preemptively.

“How long will it take to come in,” Harry asked evenly, clearly trying to be calm for the both of them.

“Another week,” Pomfrey said sympathetically.

“And when is the next full moon?” he prompted.

Pomfrey’s eyebrows ticked up in surprise at the question. She flicked her eyes over to Draco who was taking deep breaths to try and calm himself.

“Next Wednesday,” he gasped out.

“Oh then we’re fine!” Harry said cheerfully, still holding on to Draco’s arm. He gave it an extra squeeze for comfort. “Three whole days to spare. We can tolerate being stuck together for another week right, Draco?”

“Y-yeah,” Draco stuttered.

“Are you sure you’re alright, Mr Malfoy?” Pomfrey asked gently.

“I’ll be fine,” he hedged. Harry’s grip on his arm was stabilizing. He was right, they had gotten this being joined thing down to a science at this point. “As long as we get separated by next Wednesday.”

“The ingredient I need is due to be delivered by Sunday evening and I should have the solvent ready for you before breakfast on Monday morning,” she assured them. “I must say, Mr Malfoy, I’m surprised you told Mr Potter about this.”

“Yes, well it directly effects him, doesn’t it,” Draco muttered, not wanting to tell her about the effects the failed potion was having on them.

“Indeed it does, but I expected you would have waited until the last possible minute.”

“That would be irresponsible, Madam Pomfrey,” he drawled and internally winced. If he hadn’t been forced to tell the truth, he very well might have held off telling Harry until Tuesday morning at the earliest if they weren’t separated by then.

The first bell rang, announcing they had ten minutes to get to class.

“Best hurry along,” Pomfrey urged.

And so, still joined at the wrists, they went to Defence Against the Dark Arts.

This year the class was being taught by Professor John Dawlish, former auror who had been forced into an early retirement after suffering a few too many curses during the war. He was stern but generally mild-mannered and very knowledgeable. However, he seemed at a loss as to what to teach the eighth years, most of whom had fought in the war themselves and were more experienced than most junior aurors. So he allowed them the free time to study or practice spells under his supervision and only assigned homework on dark creatures. Mostly he just made himself available to them if they had specific questions.

“You’re all adults,” he had told them at the beginning of term. “So I don’t expect to have to hound you to study the appropriate material in time for NEWTs. I am available to offer any additional help you may require, so if you fail your exams, that will be entirely on you for not taking advantage of the resources you’ve been provided.”

Draco had noticed in the last two weeks that Harry only ever read the textbook in Defence. Sometimes one of their classmates would ask him a question or request that he help them with their casting. Dawlish had remarked that maybe Harry should be teaching the class. This had made some of the students laugh. Most of them had been in Dumbledore’s Army so the suggestion had been very funny to them.

Draco and Harry entered the classroom with the rest of their year and made their way to the sidelines where Harry usually sat to read the textbook. Draco was planning on sitting with him to do the same since casting spells while one’s wand arm is stuck to another was rather cumbersome, but Harry had other ideas.

“What spells are you working on?” he asked after they dropped their bags by the wall.

“Just the concealment charm and the patronus charm left,” Draco answered. “I know all the other ones we need for NEWTs but those two have been giving me trouble. What about you?”

“I’ve mastered all the spells on the list,” he replied with a shrug. “I’ve just been reading up on dark creatures.”

“I can do that with you this week,” Draco offered.

“Or,” Harry said hesitantly, looking around at their classmates who’d already spread out to practice defensive spells. “I could help you with your list. I’m really good at patronus charms.”

Draco remembered very well Harry's prowess with that particular charm. Not only had he seen a rudimentary version of it in third year when he, Crabbe, and Goyle had tried to frighten Harry into falling off his broom again, but he'd also witnessed the fully corporeal version at their OWL examination. He had been very impressed at the time but annoyed at his own appreciation of the display that he'd simply glowered at Harry when their eyes had met.

"I'm not sure this is something you can help with..." Draco hedged. "Once you know the wand movement and incantation, it's all about digging up an appropriately happy memory. Most of my really happy memories are sort of ruined in the light of things that happened more recently..."

"Surely you have something that makes you happy, like really happy?" Harry pressed.

"Maybe..." Draco was glad Harry had not asked more directly what made him happy. He didn't want to be forced to say that it was *Harry* that made him happy. But he didn't think the fleeting happiness he had waking up in Harry's arms was enough for a patronus seeing as it was tainted with the knowledge that it would likely end soon and he knew it would break his heart when it did.

"This may be a personal question, but..." Draco started, not sure if it would be appropriate to ask in such a public place, or at all.

"You want to know what I think of to conjure one?" Harry guessed.

Was he sure he wasn't a Legilimens? Because this was getting spooky.

Draco nodded.

"Hmm," Harry hummed, thinking about his answer. "I suppose it varies depending on the situation. Usually, without any stress or dementors present, I can conjure one without really thinking too hard on what makes me happy. During our OWL exam I imagined Umbridge getting sacked." He said this with a grin.

"So it doesn't have to be a memory?" Draco confirmed.

"Nah, just any thought you can conjure that makes you really happy."

"What about when there *is* a dementor or something else that's stressing you out?"

"Well if it's a dementor, that can make things very tricky, because they really have a way of making you forget everything that makes you happy," Harry offered. His voice had taken on a sort of academic tone. Draco didn't have to wonder why so many students had learned so much from him in fifth year.

He noticed that Dawlish and several of their classmates were listening to Harry's explanation with interest. But Harry was so focussed on instructing Draco that he hadn't realised.

"If they make you forget how to be happy, how are you meant to conjure a patronus around them?" Draco pressed. It all seemed so counter intuitive.

“Well in that case, I’ve found that trying for a happy memory almost always fails,” Harry answered with expertise. Draco didn’t want to think about how many times Harry had to have been around dementors to know this. “What I find actually works better is to think of something or someone you *love*. See, love is one of those powerful magics that dementors can’t touch. When they attacked me and my cousin the summer before fifth year, my first two attempts at a patronus failed because I was trying to summon a happy memory but I was being bombarded at the time with the memory of what had happened only a few months before that was still very fresh in my mind.”

Draco knew exactly what memory he was talking about but didn’t say anything.

“And just when I thought ‘this is it, I’m doomed’ I thought about all the people I loved who I’d never see again,” Harry continued. “And then their faces became clear in my mind like the dementors couldn’t touch them. So I thought of the people I loved, pulled their faces into my mind and conjured the patronus and I was able to save myself and my cousin.”

“Bloody hell, Potter!” Theo piped up, breaking the tense quiet that had started as the whole class had tuned in to Harry’s explanation by then.

Harry started and looked around to see his classmates and teacher staring at him.

“What?” he demanded, confused by the attention and several horrified looks.

“Just how many dementors have you been around to know that much about the best way to conjure a patronus?” Theo demanded, looking slightly pale.

“Hundreds,” Harry said with a half-hearted chuckle. “So, too many, I’d say.”

“*One* is too many, mate,” Weasley stated sardonically.

“Yeah,” Longbottom agreed. “Remember when that one came onto the train in third year?”

The whole class including Draco all shuddered at that.

“I’m sorry,” Daphne piped up. “But did you say *hundreds*?”

“Er... yeah?” Harry answered. “So have all of you. Remember the Gryffindor-Hufflepuff match in third year when they all came swarming onto the pitch?”

“Sure, mate,” Finnigan replied. “But none of us fought those bastards did we?”

“There’s no way you fought off a hundred dementors,” Blaise said shaking his head.

“Oh, he did,” Hermione countered with a glare, as if daring him to call her a liar. “I was there. They’d all come out because Sirius Black was there.”

“Is that true, Potter?” Dawlish asked in astonishment.

“Er... yeah,” Harry answered.

“As a *third year*?” he confirmed.

“Yeah,” Harry answered awkwardly. “I’d asked Remus – er, I mean Professor Lupin to teach me how to do a patronus because of the way dementors affected me.”

“You used to faint!” Zacharias Smith recalled tactlessly.

“Yes well,” Harry agreed, leveling Smith with a dangerous look. “I reckon most of us would faint around them now after the shit we all went through last year.”

Smith had a the decency to look ashamed, and looked away at the rebuke. Harry looked around at the rest of the class who seemed to be hanging on his every word, even the Slytherins.

“How a person is affected by a dementor depends on the severity of their worst memories,” he lectured. “Dementors make you relive your worst experiences, play them back to you in your head in vivid detail. If your memories are particularly bad they can overwhelm you, and yes, make you faint. It is not a weakness.” He said this last part with a challenging glare at Smith.

“But what memory could you have been made to relive at the age of thirteen that was bad enough to make you faint?” Smith asked, apparently not done making an ass of himself.

“My parents’ murder,” Harry said flatly, leveling Smith with an unimpressed stony-eyed look.

All of the air went out of Draco’s lungs. Harry could remember the night his parents were killed? The memory was made more vivid and detailed by the dementors. And Draco had teased him mercilessly about fainting.

Hannah Abbot swatted Smith upside the back of his head and hissed something angrily at him. Smith turned as red as a tomato and slunk off to a corner to stuff his nose in the textbook.

Dawlish cleared his throat awkwardly and everyone turned their attention to the ex-auror.

“How many of you can produce a corporeal patronus?” he asked, donning his teacher voice again. Over half the class raised their hands. “Right, then I suggest we work on that for the next few lessons. Those of you who can produce a patronus, pair off with someone who can’t and help each other out. Keep in mind Mr Potter’s advice about the best way to conjure one and if you have questions, as always, I am available.”

As soon as Dawlish finished his instruction, Finnigan rushed over to Harry and Draco.

“Harry, d’you mind being my partner?” he asked. “Only I think I might be the only one in the DA who can’t do one yet.”

“Actually, Seamus, I’m gonna partner with Draco,” Harry said apologetically. “Just easier with us stuck together, plus I already offered. Why don’t you partner with Dean, he looks a bit offended you didn’t ask him.”

Finnigan looked over his shoulder and sure enough, Thomas looked annoyed.

“Right,” he muttered and wandered back over to his best mate who snarked at him quietly when he got close.

“He just wants the best teacher in the room,” Draco remarked, trying to smirk but knowing it came out a bit strained.

“Then he should ask Dawlish,” Harry replied dryly.

“I sincerely doubt Dawlish ever fought off a hundred dementors at any age,” Draco said, rolling his eyes. “Humility doesn’t suit you, Harry.”

Harry shook his head as if to shake off the complement and fixed Draco with a pointed look.

“Are you going to work on the charm or not?” he demanded, back to business.

“Yes, alright,” Draco griped.

He drew his wand and Harry positioned himself next to him. He held his own arm aloft to keep from weighing Draco’s arm down while he cast the spell.

“Think of something that makes you happy,” Harry instructed softly. “Forget about everything else and let it fill your mind. Once you’ve done that, give it a go.”

He thought about what made him happy. Harry made him happy, but he also made him sad, so maybe that wasn’t the best. His mother made him happy, though she was very melancholy these days, not quite the woman she once was. He cast his mind about for something that made him happy that wasn’t tainted with unhappiness.

Flying. Flying made him happy. Draco had loved flying since he was very small. It was probably the only thing he still enjoyed that hadn’t been taken from him in the war. So he filled his mind with all the memories of flying he had, many of which even featured Harry as they competed for the snitch. He felt a smile cross his face as he remembered all the times he flew with Harry. Maybe he could get him out on a broomstick with him after they were separated. He took a deep breath, allowing that thought to fill him and prepared to cast the charm.

“*Expecto Patronum*,” he incanted. A silvery wisp escaped the end of his wand. Draco frowned.

“That was great!” Harry exclaimed.

Draco disagreed, it was pathetic. He looked around the classroom to see his classmates also casting the charm. A couple of silvery animals gambled around while a few students either had their eyes screwed up tight, thinking about something that made them happy, or were reciting the incantation and similar silvery wisps occasionally spitting out of their wands. At least he wasn’t the only one struggling.

“Hey,” Harry nudged him with his shoulder. “No one gets it on the first go. You just have to keep practicing. I won’t ask you what you were thinking of cause it’s usually pretty private,” he continued, blushing slightly. “But since you’re only producing silver mist it means you’re not thinking of happy enough thoughts or memories, you’ll want to think about happier things. In fact, you should be thinking about something that makes you the happiest you can imagine, it doesn’t even have to be real. It’ll get easier the more often you do it and it won’t be so difficult to summon the patronus.”

The happiest he could imagine? What would make him happier than he’d ever felt? His eyes roved over Harry who was watching him expectantly. His emerald green eyes alight with encouragement behind his glasses, his cheeks slightly pink still. Draco was suddenly overcome with the desire to kiss him. He imagined what it would be like, to kiss Harry in front of all of their classmates. In front of their respective friends. They’d all flip out. Except Hermione of course, who already knew. Weasley’s reaction would be especially entertaining. He imagined being able to show Harry affection in public, not caring who found out he was gay, not caring that it would end up splashed across the front page of the Daily Prophet, not caring that it was Ex-Death Eater, Draco Malfoy kissing Saviour of the Wizarding World, Harry Potter. He imagined telling Harry he loved him and having him say it back. His stomach swooped like he’d taken a particularly daring dive on a broomstick. Merlin, did he want that!

“*Expecto Patronum!*” he cried, not taking his eyes off of Harry’s and thinking of snogging him in front of all their friends.

Harry’s eyes slid from his to the end of his wand and they lit up and his face split in a huge grin. Draco tore his gaze from Harry’s brilliant smile to see what he was so delighted by just in time to see a small silvery bird of prey like a hawk or a falcon escape from the end of his wand and take flight and soar around the room.

“I was expecting it to be a ferret,” Weasley remarked later at lunch with a sneer.

They were at the Gryffindor table as usual and all the eighth years were chatting happily about the lesson. A few of the people who’d never cast a patronus before had succeeded for the first time, and even those who hadn’t were hopeful that they would soon. But Weasley seemed determined to put a damper on Draco’s good mood.

“Yes because thats what determines what a person’s patronus is,” Draco snapped sarcastically. “An assault they suffered when they were fourteen.”

“Don’t act like you were innocent in that!” Weasley shouted indignantly. “You tried to curse Harry when his back was turned!”

“Enough, Ron,” Harry said calmly. He looked tired which was a strong contrast with how cheerful he’d been in Defence.

“Seriously, Harry?” Weasley retorted, ears red either from the rebuke or the conflict with Draco.

“Yes, seriously,” he snapped. “It’s in the past. Sit down and eat your lunch.”

Weasley just scowled at Harry but sat down anyway.

“I don’t know what animal I expected your patronus to be, but I am surprised it was a falcon,” Hermione mused, apparently deciding to ignore her boyfriend’s sulking.

“Why are you surprised it’s a falcon?” Draco asked.

“I don’t know,” she shrugged. “Falcons symbolize power, strength and nobility. I would have thought something more wily would have suited you better.”

“What do stags represent?” Harry asked.

“Well stags represent nobility and strength also but I think the symbolism of your patronus doesn’t really count in this,” she explained.

“Why is that?”

“Because what your patronus represents is something much more personal,” she stated as if it was obvious. “We know that a patronus can represent a person close to the caster. In this case yours represents your dad.”

Harry nodded thoughtfully.

“So you’re saying my patronus might represent a person?” Draco asked.

“Maybe,” she shrugged. There was something sly in her expression like she knew something she didn’t.

Draco thought about it while he ate his lunch. If falcons represented power, it did seem odd that one would be his patronus. Draco wasn’t especially powerful, and he personally believed he lacked a certain strength of character. His father would have been pleased to learn the form his patronus took, though.

Draco shook his head. He didn’t care what his father thought, and he never would again.

If the patronus didn’t represent him then it had to represent someone important to him. Someone who was powerful and noble. He glanced over at Harry who was talking Quidditch with Ginny Weasley. *Harry* was powerful and noble. The most powerful person he knew, in fact.

He felt someone’s eyes on him and he turned to see who was staring and locked eyes with Hermione. She was looking at him with interest, a knowing look in her eye. When they made eye contact she glanced pointedly at Harry, then back at him, then raised an eyebrow. Bloody social genius. He desperately hoped that if she worked out Draco’s feelings for Harry, that

she would keep the discovery to herself alongside his sexuality and his lycanthropy once she worked that out too.

If he ever felt brave enough to tell Harry he loved him, he didn't want him to find out from his best friend before he could say it himself.

Chapter 17: Sexy Uses For Wandless Magic

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The rest of the day went by rather undramatically. They had Charms after lunch and then Harry had a free period while Draco and Hermione had Ancient Runes. Weasley had whinged about not being able to hang out with Harry during his free period until Hermione lost her patience with him and snapped that he should go hang out with Longbottom.

“Honestly you’d think Ron was the one glued to Harry the last seven years and all of a sudden can’t cope for a single week,” she had said, rolling her eyes in irritation on their way to class.

“It’s not like we haven’t been apart before,” Harry sighed.

“Yes well that’s when you were having a row,” she said dismissively.

“If he doesn’t stop having a go at Draco for no reason, we might have another of our famous rows very soon,” he grumbled back darkly.

Draco’s stomach did a somersault and Hermione quirked an eyebrow and hid a smirk.

“You shouldn’t fight with him over me,” Draco mumbled, his feelings conflicted over delight at Harry defending Draco from his best friend and discomfort at getting between them.

As much as it thrilled him to have Harry jumping to his defence, he really didn’t want to be the reason the Golden Trio became a duo. He really didn’t like Weasley and didn’t see a future where they got along but he was important to Harry. Not to mention Weasley had many good reasons not to want to be friendly with him. Harry and Hermione were somewhat mental, in his opinion, for forgiving him so easily.

“I don’t *want* to have a fight with him,” Harry countered. “I don’t want to have a fight with *anyone*. I just wish he’d let the past go.”

“The trouble is, I was your enemy not four months ago,” Draco pointed out. “That’s not exactly the *past* so much as it’s still quite present.”

“You haven’t been my enemy in over a year, Draco,” Harry shook his head in exasperation. “Not since the Tower.”

The tower. He meant the Astronomy Tower the night he tried to kill Dumbledore. The night he realised he wasn’t capable of murder. Harry had decided that night that they were no longer enemies?

“Actually,” Harry mused. “I think the only time I ever considered you a proper enemy and not simply some kid I really didn’t like, was sixth year. So really, it was all pretty short lived because that night changed how I saw you.”

Draco remembered their conversation about the cutting curse that had almost killed him. Harry had said the spell was labelled “for enemies” which meant that at the time he’d used that curse, Harry had considered him an enemy. But now he was saying that year was the *only* time he’d considered him that way. He didn’t know what to say about that and they arrived to class right then so decided a response wasn’t required.

He had spent the entire class distracted by Harry’s presence at his left shoulder rereading the wolfsbane unit in his potions book for the third time and Hermione shooting him knowing looks.

After class was done for the day and they had a few hours before dinner, they decided to go back to Draco’s dorm to avoid questions and Weasley’s glaring and whinging. As soon as the door was shut and they dropped their backpacks on the floor, Harry turned and abruptly shoved Draco against the door, stepping into his space.

“What?” Draco gasped in surprise before Harry’s lips were on his.

Draco groaned into his mouth and shoved his right hand into his hair while Harry pinned his left next to his head. Harry’s left hand which had been pressing him against the door through his chest, roamed southward until he reached his hip and fisted in the hem of his shirt.

“I’ve been wanting to do this all day,” Harry breathed against his lips before capturing them in another fierce kiss.

He had no idea what brought this on but didn’t care. If Harry wanted to throw him against doors and snog his brains out, who was he to complain?

Harry used the leverage of his grip on Draco’s shirt to press himself into him from chest to groin. Draco gasped when he felt Harry’s erection against his hip and Harry used it as an opportunity to deepen the kiss. Draco welcomed Harry’s tongue as it intruded into his mouth and tangled with his own. Draco threaded his hand through Harry’s hair and tugged gently causing him to gasp in that enticing way that Draco couldn’t get enough of.

“You like when I pull your hair, Harry?” he purred against his lips before diving back in.

Harry moaned and canted his hips into Draco’s. He yanked his face away so he could answer the question.

“Fuck yes!” he gasped. “Pull harder!”

Who was Draco to deny such a request? He fisted his hand in Harry’s locks and pulled back somewhat roughly. Harry let his head fall back, exposing his throat, and let out an almost pornographic moan and went nearly boneless. All of his blood rushed southward and Draco felt lightheaded.

“Merlin, Harry,” Draco groaned. “How are you this sexy?”

Taking control back from Harry, Draco used their joined hands to grip Harry’s hip and pivot them so that they traded places. He pinned him against the door with his hips and, using his

grip on his hair, he pulled Harry's head back again so he could attack his throat. He licked and nipped and sucked at every inch of his throat he could reach while Harry moaned and writhed against him.

"Hnn... Draco..." he gasped, pliant and submissive.

A bolt of desire shot through Draco at the way his name sounded coming out of Harry's mouth in this state. He wondered how many more incredible noises he could get out of him and what it would take. Suddenly it was all he could think about. He wanted to lay him out on the bed and take his time with him, explore every inch of his body, learn what parts of him were the most sensitive, what made him moan and squirm and *beg*.

He couldn't do all of that with their hands joined but he could make a good show of it anyway. He removed his hand from Harry's hair and he actually *pouted* at the loss. He didn't give him much time to complain, though, as he immediately yanked Harry's shirt out of his waistband and hiked it up to his armpits. Holding it there with his right hand, he dove in and licked a stripe up his sternum and Harry gasped.

Draco looked up to see how he was responding to the new touch. Harry's face was very red and his pupils were blown wide as he stared at Draco with avid attention. Draco smirked up at him and, while maintaining eye contact, he leaned in and slowly ran his tongue across his chest until he reached a nipple. Harry's chest hitched and his eyelids fluttered like they wanted to close but he stubbornly kept them open to watch Draco's ministrations.

Maintaining eye contact, he swirled his tongue around his nipple. Harry bucked and keened. Draco smirked against his chest and latched his lips around the bud and flicked his tongue back and forth.

"Ah!" Harry cried. His left hand flew up and buried in Draco's hair. He pressed Draco's face harder into his chest.

Draco couldn't get enough of the sounds Harry was making. He firmly believed there was nothing hotter than the noises a person makes during sex and Harry had the best noises of all. He experimented with technique to see what made Harry moan and cry out the loudest and discovered that tightening his tongue into a point and flicking it hard against Harry's nipple got the best reaction.

Harry's hand fisted tightly in Draco's hair and he hissed in pain at the rough treatment. Harry loosened his grip slightly and carded his fingers against his abused scalp in apology. Draco didn't like it quite as rough as Harry seemed to. With his only free hand holding up Harry's shirt, he couldn't pull on his hair like he liked.

An idea struck Draco. Maybe Harry liked other things on the rougher side too.

Locking eyes with Harry again to make sure he was watching, Draco bit down gently on his nipple and worried the little bud between his teeth. Harry yelled loudly and threw his head back so forcefully it struck the door with a thud. His hips continued to cant into Draco's, seeking more stimulation, but Draco wasn't quite done with his exploration of Harry's chest yet.

“Ah! Draco!” Harry cried urgently. “More! Harder!”

He wanted him to bite harder? Something primal awakened in Draco. It thrilled at the idea of biting Harry all over and leaving him covered in marks. He had to remind himself that he wasn't like other people. He had to be careful not to break the skin, even by accident.

But Harry wanted him to bite harder, so he complied. Very carefully.

He bit down on Harry's nipple as hard as he dared and he let out the most delicious moan yet and nearly thrashed against him. He bucked hard against Draco's groin and his right hand struggled to move from where Draco had it pinned against his hip. His left hand was fumbling all over Draco's hair and neck and shoulder, trying to decide where to hold him.

Draco was compelled by this extremely positive reaction to do the same to Harry's neglected side. Repeating the exact same treatment, starting with licks and kisses and progressing to nips and harder bites until Harry was a blubbering mess.

“Please... Draco...” he gasped.

“Please what?” Draco teased against his chest, giving him a particularly rough bite to his pectoral.

“Ah!” Harry moaned loudly. “Please... need...”

He couldn't finish the sentence. Draco was sure Harry didn't even know what it was that he needed so badly, but he could make an educated guess. Harry's hips hadn't stopped stuttering against Draco's, eliciting just enough friction to feel *really* good but not enough to get off.

“I know what you need, Harry,” he murmured in what he hoped was a sexy timbre.

He began to trail his bites and kisses down Harry's chest, licking at the lines of his scar. He lowered himself to his knees and looked up into Harry's eyes, only the thinnest ring of green surrounding completely blown pupils. Draco bit down at the flesh of his hip and Harry moaned and bucked into his face, his very hard erection brushing against his cheek though his trousers.

Draco dipped his fingers into Harry's waistband and played with the sensitive skin there. Harry whined impatiently and thrust his hips shallowly at Draco's face to make his desires clear. Either from embarrassment and inexperience or from being so seriously turned on, Harry was practically nonverbal and apparently unable to ask outright for what he wanted but Draco could take the hint.

Borrowing Harry's hand to use both of his own, he undid the button of Harry's trousers and pulled the zipper down slowly. He looked up to meet Harry's intense gaze and was encouraged by the rapt attention he was giving him. Hooking his fingers into the waistband of both his trousers and pants, Draco pulled them down at the same time and Harry's very hard cock sprang free.

Harry whined and squirmed impatiently and Draco smirked up at him.

“So needy,” he teased.

“Tease,” Harry accused back, voice cracking. He gave Draco’s hair a light tug.

Draco bit his thigh in retaliation and Harry yelped and jerked his hips forward causing the head of his cock to brush against Draco’s cheek smearing precum over it. Harry moaned at the contact and Draco didn’t even mind the fluid wetting his face. Honestly he wouldn’t mind anything at all if Harry kept making sounds like those throughout it.

Finally putting an end to his teasing and giving in to the impulse he’d had when he first saw Harry’s cock, he licked a stripe up the underside and took about three quarters of him down in one fluid motion.

“Fuck!” Harry yelled and jerked his hips forward again at the sensation.

Draco gagged when Harry’s cock hit the back of his throat and he grabbed his hip with their joined hands and held him still. Harry petted Draco’s hair frantically, urging him to continue. So he continued with enthusiasm.

Allowing saliva to fill his mouth, Draco bobbed up and down while laving his tongue over the underside of Harry’s cock. He took the part he couldn’t reach with his mouth in his free hand, his escaping saliva lending a slickness to his efforts.

Draco was never more grateful for the soundproofing of his dorm as Harry was a very vocal person during sex. He kept up a string of noises ranging from incoherent jabber, to barely coherent praise, to loud wordless shouts, moans or cries of Draco’s name, all the while alternating between throwing his head back against the door with his eyes shut to take in the sensations of his first blowjob and forcing himself to watch Draco’s efforts with lust-blown eyes and a flushed face and chest.

Draco hoped they would still be engaging in this experiment after they were separated; he had plans for exploring every inch of Harry’s virgin body, assuming he let him, of course. He wondered how he’d sound as Draco breached that final barrier and claimed his virginity. Draco moaned around Harry’s length at the thought and suddenly wished for some stimulation of his own as his rock hard erection trapped in his school trousers was becoming very painful.

Harry’s noises started to get more frequent and higher pitched, which Draco had begun to learn was the signal for an impending climax. He made sure to keep his ministrations exactly the same as they were and ignored the sudden frantic pulling on his hair as Harry tried to nonverbally warn him. And then he came long and hard, his come hitting the back of Draco’s throat with enough force to make him choke slightly, but he made sure to swallow all of him down and lick up any stray drops that escaped from his lips. He only stopped when Harry began to whimper feebly.

Draco withdrew with a soft pop and sat back on his heels with a very smug look on his face at the absolutely debauched one on Harry’s, who sagged and slid down the door to sit on the floor, now no longer held up by Draco’s pinning hand on his hip.

"That was..." Harry murmured, barely back to coherency.

"The best blowjob of your life?" Draco asked cheekily.

Harry laughed breathlessly. "The *first* blowjob of my life," he corrected.

"And therefore best," Draco countered, still very smug.

"It was pretty incredible," Harry agreed.

Draco hummed in agreement and passed his right hand over the straining bulge in his trousers. Harry's eyes zeroed in on the movement and, like a predator, slinked forward until he was looming into Draco's space. Draco's heart skipped a beat at his sudden proximity.

"Your turn," Harry purred.

He captured his lips in a heated kiss and pressed his free hand against Draco's chest, pushing him back until he was lying flat on the floor with Harry propped up over him, still devouring his mouth.

With his right hand now free, Draco buried it in Harry's hair and pulled. Harry moaned against Draco's mouth and trailed his hand down to his waistband where he fumbled with the button on his trousers one-handed for a minute before growling in frustration at the futile activity. Draco was about to offer to help him with his efforts when Harry broke their kiss to glare at the offending button which magically sprang open at his wordless command.

A thrill of excitement went up Draco's spine at the action. Harry's power had alarmed him at first but now, in this context, it was unbelievably sexy.

"Fuck, that's so hot!" Draco gasped.

"You think it's hot when I use wandless magic?" Harry asked with an amused smirk.

"When you use it for sexy things, yes," Draco clarified. "I wonder what else you could do with it."

"Hmm," Harry pondered, scanning him with a heated look.

Draco shivered with anticipation at what Harry might use that power for. He squirmed impatiently, his erection straining against the confines of his pants and partially opened trousers.

"Harry..." Draco keened, arching towards him, begging him to touch him.

Harry smirked, and lifted his hand away from Draco's trousers causing him to whine pitifully.

"I wonder..." Harry whispered quietly and waved his left hand ever so slightly over Draco's chest.

A bolt of pleasure shot up Draco's spine. He threw his head back and his back arched as he moaned loudly. Every nerve in his body was alight with sensitivity. His eyes rolled back into his head and he panted desperately. Suddenly the sensation was gone and he almost sobbed.

"What... was... that?" he asked breathlessly between gasps.

"I just thought about making you feel really good," Harry said in awe. He also looked a bit unsure. "Did it feel good?"

"Good?" Draco asked incredulously. "That was the most incredible feeling I've ever experienced! It was like my whole body was one giant erogenous zone. Good doesn't begin to cover what that felt like."

"Oh good," Harry said lamely.

Draco rolled his eyes. "Master of understatement, you are," he teased.

Harry's eyes flashed with mischief.

"I'll show you understatement," he growled playfully. He dove back in for a heated kiss and at the same time the incredible sensation returned.

Draco moaned into his mouth while he writhed on the floor. His body craved stimulation, even the friction of his clothes against his skin was nearly enough to make him come. Nearly.

Harry's spell felt incredible but it wasn't enough. His dick strained and even though he couldn't see it, he knew it would be nearly purple from arousal. He bucked his hips and panted into Harry's mouth.

"P-please!" he gasped, barely capable of speech. "Ha-Harry please!"

"Please what?" Harry teased back, throwing his own words back at him.

"T-touch me, please!" Draco cried.

Harry complied, moving his free hand southward again. The spell didn't abate and the light touch on his abdomen shot sparks of pleasure in every direction from the point of contact. Draco cried out in relief when Harry finally freed his erection from its confines. It was indeed purple and dripping wet from precum.

Harry just admired it for a moment and Draco thought he would explode if Harry didn't *do something*. He jerked his hips upward in invitation and desperation.

Finally, Harry wrapped his warm hand around Draco's cock and in his overstimulated state, he let out a cry that was more scream than moan and he came so hard that he felt his hot come hit his forehead. Harry kept stroking him through the most powerful orgasm of his life and wave after wave of pleasure shot through him and spurt after spurt of come shot out of him in time with his heartbeat.

After about a minute of one continuous orgasm, he finally felt himself begin to soften and the shockwaves of pleasure started to become uncomfortable and too much. His cries started to become whimpers and Harry removed his hand and at the same time the mysterious pleasure spell lifted, leaving Draco sated, soiled, and out of breath.

“That was the hottest thing I’ve ever seen,” Harry breathed.

“That...” Draco gasped. “That was...”

He didn’t have words for what that was.

“The best handjob of your life?” Harry asked cheekily.

“Fuck yes!”

Harry had officially ruined him for all other men. No one else would be able to beat what had just happened.

“Good,” Harry said in a satisfied tone, then rolled off him to lay beside him on the floor.

Draco looked him over appreciatively. His shirt was still hiked up partway, revealing his lean abdomen and the lower parts of the scar on his chest. He also hadn’t yet pulled his trousers back up and he was sporting a semi, undoubtedly from enjoying pleasuring Draco so much.

“Enjoying the view?” Harry teased, noticing the attention.

“Always.”

Harry blinked like a thought had struck him but before Draco could ask about it he grinned and reached his free hand out to Draco’s face and swiped a finger through the mess on his forehead before bringing it to his lips and sucking it clean. If Draco hadn’t just come enough for a whole week he might have reacted more strongly to the action but as it was, he was beginning to feel lethargic.

“The view from here isn’t so bad either,” he said playfully.

Draco felt the tingle of magic on his skin cleaning up his mess and he shivered at the sensation.

He knew they’d have to get up soon, make their appearances at supper, pretend they weren’t shagging, socialize and do their homework, but for the moment he just wanted to lay there on the floor of his dorm and stare into Harry’s beautiful emerald eyes and resist the temptation to tell him how in love with him he was.

This chapter took me literal ages. I'm not super experienced with writing smut and this one was rather detailed so I hope it's good!

Chapter 18: Planning for the Future

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

They fell into a routine. Wake up cuddled together in Draco's bed, get dressed with as much dignity as they could muster, go to breakfast, chat with Hermione about muggle fiction, ignore Weasley's glowers and sneers, go to classes, go to meals, study, snog or get handsy or both – sometimes while in the shower together, fall asleep wrapped around each other, repeat.

Hermione had been extremely instrumental in preventing people from asking them uncomfortable questions, either by cutting across them before they could finish speaking, answering for them or distracting the questioner while they whispered their answers inaudibly. She had appointed herself their personal body guard and had also copied all of her diligent notes for them to use. As an unintended side effect, much of this additional attention from her had been cause for a number of arguments between her and Weasley.

Between this kindness of hers and the obvious friendship blossoming between Draco and Harry as well as a number of his other friends including Hermione, Longbottom, and Ginny, Weasley had picked a number of fights with each member of the group but mostly with Draco. The common thread of which seemed to be jealousy over Draco seemingly turning his friends against him. A notion Harry pointed out as ridiculous, stating that just because someone gets a new friend doesn't mean they have to push out an old one.

By the end of the week, Weasley insisted that he wouldn't go anywhere that Draco was and had started changing seats in classes and at meal times. He had also taken up giving Harry and Draco the silent treatment which was fine in Draco's book and Harry pretended not to care while Draco let him. He never asked questions about what he thought of Weasley's behaviour or asked if he was *actually* fine with it. He knew what the truth would be and he also knew Harry would end up in a fight if he had to confront his feelings on the matter.

After Harry's outburst on Monday about how he didn't want to fight anymore, Draco decided to respect Harry's assertion that he was fine and not call him on how that was obvious bullshit. Instead he tried his best to keep his mind off the issue.

"You should do professional Quidditch," Draco said apropos of nothing while they were doing their homework Friday afternoon before supper.

Harry had been intent on laying about and snogging the afternoon away but Draco was determined to drill some better study habits into him. Tempting though the offer had been. He had only managed to convince him with the promise that if they got all their homework done tonight, they'd have all weekend to snog and other such activities.

"What?" Harry asked distractedly, looking up from his Transfiguration essay.

"For a career," he clarified. "You said you didn't know what you wanted to do, that you'd only ever been good at Defence and Quidditch."

Harry hummed thoughtfully, tapping the end of his pen against his bottom lip in a very distracting way. Draco wanted very much for something else to be touching those lips but he had to restrain himself since part of encouraging Harry to actually study had been going to the library where anyone could see them if they got any ideas.

“You know, Wood always said I could play professionally,” he said finally. “And even Krum said I flew very well.”

“Well Krum would know good flying, wouldn’t he?” Draco agreed. “You’ve been a brilliant flier for as long as I’ve known you. And the only time you actually lost a Quidditch match was because of a swarm of dementors.”

“But does that actually translate to a professional level?” Harry asked, insecurity in his voice.

“Harry,” he said in an almost condescending tone. “If Victor Fucking Krum thinks you could play professional, then you can play professional. You outflew a fucking *dragon* for Merlin’s sake!”

“*Shhhh!*” came an angry hiss from the direction of the librarian’s desk.

Draco lowered his voice and continued.

“I’ve only ever seen you happy for attention when it came from Quidditch, so what’s with the insecurity all of a sudden?”

Harry was often insecure, Draco had learned. He believed all of his accomplishments were on the backs of other people’s success coupled with pure luck. And sure, Harry and Weasley probably would have died last year without Hermione saving their arses, but she and Weasley would have died just the same without Harry saving them right back. And while he was always insecure about the various reasons for his fame, Quidditch had never been one of the things he was unsure of. Harry was brilliant at Quidditch and damned well knew it.

“I’m just not sure I want a career that’s so attention based,” he shrugged.

“After a season of watching you play, all this attention for being the Saviour is gonna die back for you being England’s best Seeker. You should try out for the national team! A talent like yours shouldn’t be wasted.”

“God, you sound like Wood!” Harry said with a laugh.

“He thinks you should play too, then?”

“Yeah, he wrote me right after term started, trying to convince me to drop eighth year and try out for Puddlemere United.”

“Is that the team he plays for?”

“Yeah, he made reserve Keeper straight out of Hogwarts and he’s since made the starting team. He’s already convinced Angelina to try out but she was scouted by the Harpies so she’s playing reserve Chaser for them now.”

“Who would you play for if you could pick any team?”

A thoughtful look crossed Harry’s face as he considered his options.

“Well I’ve followed Puddlemere since Wood made the team, I also follow the Harpies but that’s an all women team so that’s out. I don’t think I have a preference, honestly. Though it would be kind of funny if I signed with the Cannons.”

Draco barked a short laugh before smothering it, not wanting to get kicked out of the library.

“Weasley would love that,” he said with a laugh. “And with you on the team they may actually win for once. But you know, since they’re bottom of the league, you wouldn’t get a very good compensation for it. They won’t have the budget to hire someone as talented as you.”

“Yeah but I wouldn’t be doing it for gold would I?” Harry countered. “I’m independently wealthy so playing Quidditch would be entirely a passion.”

“True,” Draco conceded. “But all the more reason to play for a team you like and not just because it would be funny. I’d say go for Puddlemere if you’d like to play with your old captain again.”

“Just so long as he’s not captain of Puddlemere,” Harry said, shuddering. “Wood is a madman when he gets wound up for a win.”

Draco chuckled. “Flint was like that too. Completely mental.”

There was a lull in the conversation where Draco considered returning his attention to his essay on muggle transportation, but a moment later Harry seemed to consider something.

“Most people don’t play Quidditch past their mid-thirties, though,” he mused. “After awhile, the younger players start outpacing them or they take one too many bludgers to the head. What would I do with the rest of my life after thirty-five?”

“Teach,” Draco found himself answering automatically.

“*Teach?*” Harry was baffled.

“Yeah,” Draco rolled his eyes. “It’s so obvious you have a knack for it.”

“Because of the DA? That was as much Hermione as it was me.”

“There you go again,” Draco rolled his eyes in exasperation.

“There I go again, what?” Harry asked, annoyed.

“Acting like the shit you do was done by someone else.”

“I had a load of help—”

“*Everyone* gets help, Harry!” Draco exploded in frustration, prompting another angry shush from Madam Pince. He lowered his voice again and continued. “I get that you grew up in a shit environment where you couldn’t rely on anyone, but you never have to see those fucking people ever again, and you’re allowed to receive help. And just because you’ve *been* helped, doesn’t mean you didn’t accomplish the thing.”

“But tutoring my peers doesn’t exactly translate to proper teaching,” he countered.

“Of course it does. Look, when you were lecturing us all about dementors in Defence on Monday, even Dawlish looked like he was a student, hanging on to your every word. You know your stuff and you present it to others in a very easy to understand manner. That’s exactly what good teachers are made of, and if you don’t believe me, ask McGonagall what *she* thinks. She’s still your head of house and the one you should really be talking to for career advice.”

“Do you seriously think I’d make a good teacher?” he looked nearly convinced but still a bit unsure.

“I think you’d be a brilliant teacher,” Draco said decisively. A thought occurred to him of something that would really convince him. “And you know something else? When you were teaching the other day, do you know who you reminded me of?”

“No. Who?” he looked confused, like he was wracking his brain for someone they both knew well enough for him to remind Draco of.

“Lupin.”

Harry’s eyes widened and his eyebrows disappeared into his fringe.

“Your teaching style is exactly like his. I think you probably didn’t mean to but you modeled yourself after the best Defence teacher we ever had who wasn’t secretly a Death Eater.”

“It *is* weird that one of our best Defence teachers was Crouch wasn’t it?”

“Yes it is bizarre,” Draco agreed dismissively. “You’re changing the subject.”

“So you really think I should be a teacher?”

“After a stellar Quidditch career where I get to ogle your arse on a broomstick for a few more years,” Draco grinned cheekily.

Harry looked wildly around to make sure they weren’t overheard, his face suddenly very red.

“Careful!” he hissed. “Someone could have heard you.”

Draco continued to grin unrepentantly.

They returned to their homework but Draco found his mind wandering. The discussion of Harry’s future made Draco think about his own. He knew Harry would find joy in both Quidditch and teaching and he wondered about his own joy.

There weren't many career options for someone in his position. His father had never had what one would call a career. Unless you considered professional meddling to be a career. Much of the Malfoy wealth came from investments and business ownership. All of that sounded dreadful, to say nothing of how unbelievably bored he'd be without something to do. Trouble was no one was going to hire an ex-Death Eater no matter that he had been exonerated; it was all optics.

A terrible choiceless mistake made in youth would follow him for the rest of his life. Already, anything with the Malfoy name attached to it had plummeted in value so their investments weren't worth nearly what they had been before the war. They were far from knutless but they would never again have the kind of station in society they once had, at least not for several generations. With that in mind, would it even matter if he never had children to carry on the name?

So without a care for heirs or the possibility for a fulfilling career, maybe Draco could at least have one small joy and be true to himself. He wouldn't marry, he decided, unless it was to a man he loved. His heart fluttered at the decision and he suddenly felt freer than he'd ever felt in his entire life. He was going to make choices for himself from now on, forget what society or his parents might want for him. In fact, fuck his father entirely.

When they wrapped up the essays they had been working on, they were a bit late for supper so the Great Hall was packed when they arrived.

Weasley was notably absent from his usual seat next to Hermione and was instead further up the table talking with Finnigan and Thomas while Hermione chatted pleasantly with Ginny as if she hadn't noticed the obvious snub.

"Ron's being a twat again," Ginny said by way of greeting when they sat down, noting Draco glancing down the table to find him.

"Ginny, don't," Hermione sighed.

She sounded exhausted to Draco's ears.

"Ginny, *do*," the redhead countered. "He's my brother and I'm allowed to say when he's being a twat and right now he's being a twat."

"What's he done now?" Harry asked in a similarly tired tone to Hermione's.

"He caught her copying her Ancient Runes notes for Malfoy again and lost his shit over it," she said waving her fork around with a bit of roast on the end of it. "He's just bent out of shape cos he can't bring himself to fathom that someone might be capable of change cos he's not."

"I have those notes for you in my dorm, by the way," Hermione said to Draco in a businesslike tone. "I'll get them to you after supper if you like. And I've got our Transfiguration and Charms notes for the both of you as well."

"Right, thanks," Harry said distractedly, looking up the table at Weasley who was pointedly ignoring him. He sighed and began serving himself some roast and potatoes.

"He's not going to change, Harry," Ginny said not unkindly.

"I'm not looking for him to change, Gin," Harry sighed.

"You are if your aim is for him to stop hating Malfoy," she looked to Draco and smirked at him. "He's never going to not hate you, you know?"

"I figured as much," Draco shrugged. "There's a lot of bad blood between us. I'm surprised *you* don't hate me too, frankly, after all the shit I've said about your family."

Ginny shrugged and grinned in an almost feral way sending shivers down Draco's spine.

"I don't hold grudges, Malfoy. I get even."

Draco shuddered, remembering her Bat-Bogey Hex again and reminded himself that this was the youngest girl of six brothers and knew full well how to take care of herself.

"Remind me to never get on your bad side, Ginny," Draco said sincerely, surprised at how comfortable he was in using her first name. There were far too many Weasleys to call her by her surname without confusion anyway.

"Again, you mean?" she teased.

"Right, yes, again," he agreed.

"Hey all!" a cheerful voice interrupted.

Longbottom had just hurried in, covered in soil and sat down briskly next to Draco and began serving himself his supper.

"Why are you so late, Neville?" Ginny asked.

"And why are you covered in dirt?" Draco added.

"A personal project," Longbottom said cheerfully and slightly out of breath. "I've got a few winterbloom seedlings I've been babying and time got away from me a bit. I only just realised what time it was and didn't want to miss supper."

Longbottom reached across to grab the spoon from the potatoes to serve himself some when Hermione made a disgruntled noise.

"I hope you don't plan to touch that with your hands in that state!" she tutted like a mother hen. "You're absolutely filthy!"

“Well if I had gone to wash up first, I would have missed supper!” Longbottom pouted.

“Oh for heaven’s sake!” Hermione rolled her eyes and flicked her wand in his direction and suddenly his hands and arms were clean up to his elbows where he had the sleeves of his robes rolled up to.

“Cheers, Hermione!” Longbottom brightened and resumed dishing up. “So what are we talking about?”

“Oh just Ron’s latest social cock up,” Ginny said dismissively.

“Is that why he’s all the way down there with Seamus and Dean?”

“Yup,” she replied cheerfully, popping the P.

“He’ll come around,” Hermione said with the patience of a saint.

“No,” Ginny disagreed. “What he’s going to do is what he always does, which is wait for an opening and come back like he never left and not address any of the hurtful shit he said in the meantime.”

“He doesn’t do that,” Hermione argued. But something in her tone suggested to Draco that she didn’t believe her own words.

Longbottom choked on his pumpkin juice and spluttered for a moment. Draco thumped him on the back.

“You’re joking, right?” he managed, face pink while he took a napkin to the mess he’d made. “What about in fourth year when he wouldn’t be in the same room as Harry without saying something nasty, and then as soon as half the school was back on Harry’s side ‘cause of that stunt with the dragon, he came back with his tail between his legs and didn’t even say sorry!”

“Or after all that mean an nasty shit he said to you about Crookshanks when he thought he’d killed Scabbers,” Ginny reminded her.

“I also seem to recall him outright bullying you for two months in first year even worse than I did back then,” Draco added. “Did he ever apologise for that or did you all just collectively agree that a near death experience involving a troll made you all best mates for life or something?”

“He never apologised for leaving us in the middle of nowhere last year either,” Harry added quietly. “Just came back and went back to what we’d been doing like he’d never been gone. Saved my life when he came back though so I’ll grant him that.”

“So he’s good to have on your side when the chips are down but he’s been a shit friend to the both of you for years,” Ginny continued.

“He’s my best friend, Gin,” Harry argued.

“He’s your *first* friend,” she countered. “Hermione is your best friend.”

Draco could see Harry becoming stressed by the subject of conversation and cast about for a change in topic.

“So, Longbottom,” he said pointedly. “Winterblooms. Don’t they prefer the cold, I wouldn’t think they’d do well in a greenhouse.”

Longbottom seemed to catch on immediately to what Draco was trying to do and animatedly started explaining to them how he had cross pollinated winterblooms with hyacinths in the hopes of creating a more temperature tolerant winterbloom and the seedlings he was currently growing were proving delicate and required careful handling. He talked at length about the selection process for the flower to cross the plant with and why he’d settled on hyacinths.

As Longbottom monopolized the conversation with Herbology, Harry and Hermione both shot him grateful looks. Ginny looked frustrated but let the subject drop.

He didn’t want to be the reason the Golden Trio broke up but from what he could see, it was well on its way to doing that on its own. He was quite keen on forming a friendship with Harry and Hermione and thought he was well on his way to becoming very good friends with them both but he knew that if he was the reason they stopped being friends with Weasley, they’d resent him a little for it.

He’d already decided that he was going to make all of his own choices from now on and pursue what brought him joy. Harry brought him joy and even if they didn’t end up together in the end, he would do anything to stay friends with him. Even if it meant putting up with Weasley.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry not a lot happened in this chapter, it's mostly filler. If I'm being honest, this chapter kind of wrote itself and kind of came out of nowhere and the chapters I've been working on that come after this one have taken a left turn somewhere and have taken the story in a different direction than I'd originally intended. I'm sure it's obvious from this one that I actually can't stand Ron, I had a friend like him in middle school and she was awful to me in ways I didn't realize at the time meant that she wasn't really my friend. Harry, like me at aged 12, needs to learn that he deserves better from his friends.

I wanted to thank all of you who commented on my last chapter, I was a little insecure about it so I'm really glad you all enjoyed it. Every time I got an email telling me there was a new comment, I would do a little happy dance.

There's just one more chapter before they're separated and then things really start to kick off.

Chapter 19: Friends and Lovers

The weekend passed in a blur and Draco was finding that he was dreading Monday morning when he and Harry would be finally separated. He was keen on being separated and thus no longer in danger of harming Harry on the upcoming full moon, but he dreaded the lack of excuse for them to spend all of their time together.

They spent Saturday morning after breakfast doing the remainder of their homework in the common room with Hermione and Longbottom. Draco used the opportunity to grill Hermione and Harry about muggle transportation so he could finally finish his essay which was due Tuesday.

“So a bicycle is nothing like a motorbike?” Draco clarified.

“Aside from the general shape and that they both have two wheels, not really,” Hermione confirmed.

“A motorbike has an engine fueled by petrol and can go as fast as or faster than a car,” Harry added. “And a bicycle is powered by the rider who has to pedal to keep it in motion and only goes as fast as the rider can make it go.”

“That sounds exhausting,” Draco muttered, taking notes as they spoke.

“It can be,” Hermione confirmed. “It is a popular way of getting exercise, and they’re great for getting around cities because you can go places that cars can’t, and often on really busy days, you can get places faster on a bike than in a car even though they go slower because they don’t have to contend with traffic.”

“So then do most muggles have a bike like the way most wizarding families will have at least one broomstick?”

“I’d say that’s a fair assessment,” Hermione agreed. “I certainly had one. I used to ride mine to and from primary school.”

“What about you, Harry?” Longbottom asked.

“Oh I never learned how to ride a bike,” Harry answered. “And my cousin had one for about a minute before he immediately broke it doing something stupid. Bikes are probably too much exercise for him anyway.”

“Wait, you can’t ride a bike, Harry?” Hermione asked as if this was a very shocking bit of information. “*Everyone* learns to ride a bike.”

“Everyone who has parents or guardians interested in getting their kid a bike and then taking the time out of their day to teach them how to ride it,” Harry said flatly.

Hermione blushed in embarrassment at her accidental faux pas. Even after being one of his best friends for the last seven years, Draco found it surprising that Hermione would find anything shocking about Harry. Draco wasn't the least bit surprised that Harry had never learned to ride a bike based on his comparatively limited amount of knowledge of Harry's childhood.

They talked more about bikes and other forms of muggle transport that didn't involve engines and Hermione at some point decided she would teach all three of the men in their little study group how to ride a bike someday. Draco wasn't sure he was going to be able to manage it, especially after Harry pointed out that it was much harder for adults to learn than for children, but she assured them that they'd do great because she suspected they'd be able to balance well from their experience flying. He didn't see the point, honestly, but she insisted it was a very useful skill somehow.

Saturday afternoon and evening, Harry made good on his promise to spend the majority of the day snogging and fooling around. They hadn't gone beyond handjobs and blowjobs and Draco was looking forward to being able to have his full range of motion back so he could show Harry a proper good time with *both* of his hands. Assuming, of course, that Harry wanted to continue this arrangement after they were separated.

Sunday morning, both of them were too antsy to get up to any shenanigans. The ingredients for the solvent were supposed to be delivered that evening and they were just waiting with baited breath that they arrived on time. This time tomorrow they would be separated with only two days to spare before the full moon.

And speaking of the full moon, Draco was increasingly more on edge and waspish as it approached. He could feel the wolf inside, right beneath his skin, anxious to come out. It was making him paranoid. It felt as though everyone could tell.

It didn't help that Hermione kept shooting him curious looks at mealtimes whenever she thought he wouldn't notice. Harry kept wheedling him to eat something while Draco picked at his food without much appetite.

"Are you feeling unwell, Draco?" Hermione asked with genuine concern.

Harry stiffened next to him and shot her a wild-eyed look.

"Yes," Draco managed tensely.

Harry was being his usual brand of extremely unsubtle so Hermione clearly knew instantly that something was up but thankfully chose not to question him further. She was good like that; any time he or Harry gave short, clipped answers that didn't elaborate, she knew she'd touched on a subject they didn't want to discuss and would drop the line of questioning immediately.

It didn't stop her brilliant mind from sussing out the answers anyway without having to ask. Draco could practically see the gears turning in her head when her eyes went from scrutinising Draco to studying Harry's response to her question. He was studiously avoiding her gaze while he tried to eat his lunch and was doing a very poor job of looking casual about

it. She had clearly determined that whatever was up with Draco, Harry definitely knew what it was.

He had previously held out hope that she might not figure out what Draco's secret was but that only worked if she didn't know there was a secret to have. She definitely knew there was one now if she didn't before. Maybe if he hadn't been spending so much time with her in the last week, he might have been able to go on hiding it but Harry was right, she would figure it out by the next full moon for certain.

That evening, a school owl dropped a note between them at supper. It was from Madam Pomfrey; the ingredients she needed for the solvent had arrived and she was beginning work on brewing it immediately. She also instructed them to come straight to the hospital wing first thing in the morning and with luck, they'd be separated before breakfast.

"The end is in sight," Harry sighed.

Draco nodded, similarly relieved.

"I can't wait to go to the toilet in privacy again," he said with a smirk.

"I can't wait to not have to shove my entire body through the armholes of my robes," Harry added with a grimace.

"I can't wait to be able to use a quill and wand properly again."

"I can't wait to not have to go to Muggle Studies with third years anymore."

"Or Ancient Runes?" Draco queried.

"Actually that class isn't so bad," Harry mused. "I think I should have taken that instead of Divination. At least I might have learned something useful."

"I *told* you it was a fascinating subject," Hermione piped up.

"Yes, Hermione, you're always right," Harry said placatingly in a barely condescending tone.

Longbottom snorted.

"She's not right about *everything*," he argued. "Remember Lockhart?"

"We do not speak of that!" Hermione cried, face turning a vibrant shade of red.

Draco snickered.

"I would have thought the two of you couldn't wait to sleep in your own beds again," Longbottom said mildly, bringing the conversation back around to their imminent separation.

Harry and Draco exchanged a look. Harry's expression was unsure and seemed to ask Draco to handle answering. He was such rubbish at coming up with a lie on the spot. Thankfully

Longbottom hadn't phrased his comment like a question so Draco was able to answer however he liked.

"On a list of the miserable parts of being stuck together, that's surprisingly low," he remarked smoothly while Harry nodded enthusiastically in agreement. "I mean after having to stand in the cubicle next to each other while one of you takes a shit, it rather puts the rest into perspective."

Hermione looked scandalized while Longbottom burst out laughing.

There was a loud clatter of plates and cutlery further down the table and the four of them turned to see what the commotion was about. Weasley had roughly shoved his plate away from him, knocking over a goblet and sending several pieces of silverware scattering to the floor. He stood up aggressively and stormed out of the Great Hall amid curious and confused stares.

Ginny came over from where she had been sitting with him, Finnigan and Thomas. She sat down in the empty seat next to Hermione and stole a chip off her plate.

"Ron was eavesdropping," she informed them. "I reckon he's pissed about how happy the lot of you are."

"Should we be miserable?" Longbottom asked sarcastically.

She shrugged.

"I think he's the one that's miserable," she mused. "He doesn't like when people are happy when he's not. He's been like that his whole life."

"That's an absurd expectation," Draco drawled, rolling his eyes.

"No one is stopping him from joining us," Harry said bitterly. "If he wants to be miserable by himself rather than have a good time with his friends, that's his business. He doesn't need to make it everyone else's problem."

Ginny nodded encouragingly while Hermione frowned but didn't say anything.

"Maybe you should say that to his face," Ginny urged.

"I'm tired of having this argument with Ron, Ginny," Harry sighed. "Why don't *you* tell him?"

"I *have* told him," she shot back. "He doesn't listen to me. Why would he? I'm just his little sister."

"Do your other brothers not listen to you either?" Harry countered in a tone that suggested he knew damned well the other Weasley boys respected their little sister much more than their youngest brother did.

“This isn’t about them,” she said in irritation. “This is about Ron, and he wouldn’t listen to George or Charlie or Bill any more than he’d listen to me.”

“What about Percy?” Hermione asked.

“*No one* listens to Percy,” Ginny rolled her eyes.

“Well then who *would* he listen to?” Harry asked pointedly. “‘Cause he’s never listened to me.”

All eyes turned to Hermione and she froze, wide eyed.

“You want *me* to talk to him?” she asked anxiously. “What makes you think he’ll hear me anymore than the rest of you?”

“You’re his girlfriend,” Ginny said like it was obvious.

“And what precisely am I meant to be saying to him anyway?”

“Tell him to take his head out of his arse for starters,” Ginny remarked dryly.

“Don’t say that,” Harry said, rolling his eyes. “Just tell him that I’m not trying to have a fight with him and if he wants to spend time with me he’s going to have to stop being an ass to my friends.”

“I think his main issue is who you’re now friends with,” Longbottom remarked.

“If he’d stop being a prick for thirty seconds, he’d realise that the war is over and not everyone who was on the wrong side of it had any choice in the matter.”

Harry was beginning to raise his voice, his famous temper on the verge of outburst, and people were beginning to look in their direction. Personally, Draco thought all this would be settled if Harry just let himself be properly angry at Weasley, instead of bottling it up. Equally, he believed Harry would be happier if Weasley wasn’t his friend, but he’d never say that out loud.

“I really don’t think I’m the one who has to say all this,” Hermione said in a small voice like she was trying to speak sense without Harry becoming angry with her as well.

Draco found that Hermione was a bit of an enabler of Weasley’s bad behaviour. She was always making excuses for him and playing peacekeeper between him and Harry. He thought she should be less concerned with Harry’s righteous anger and more concerned about Weasley’s apparent inexhaustible ability to be a terrible friend.

“Maybe Malfoy should have a word with him,” Longbottom said, grinning cheekily at Draco, clearly trying to break the tension.

Draco snorted loudly.

“Yeah I’m sure that’ll clear everything up,” he drawled, rolling his eyes.

“More like we’d end up scraping the both of you off the floor because you’d end up in a duel,” Ginny snickered.

“Fine,” Harry said in a defeated tone. “I’ll talk to him. Tomorrow.”

Now Draco was anxious about Monday morning for two reasons.

That night as they laid tangled with each other in Draco’s bed, possibly for the last time, Draco found that he couldn’t sleep and based on how often Harry fidgeted and sighed, he wasn’t sleeping either.

“Draco,” Harry murmured softly. “Are you awake?”

“Yes,” he whispered back.

“Are you worried about tomorrow?”

“A little,” he replied. He didn’t elaborate that he was worried their arrangement would be over tomorrow and that he might never again wake up in Harry’s arms. “Are you worried?”

“Not about getting unstuck,” he sighed. “I’m worried about talking to Ron.”

“Why are you worried about that?” Draco could guess but he wanted to know specifics and this was his last chance to know for sure that Harry was telling him the truth.

“I don’t really know what to say to him that won’t cause our friendship to completely combust,” he admitted sadly.

“If your friendship is going to combust that easily,” Draco said carefully. “Then are you sure you’re even actually friends?”

“Of course Ron is my friend!” Harry said indignantly. “He’s been my best mate for seven years.”

“But are you *his* friend?”

“I...” he trailed off, unable to answer a question about something he didn’t know the true answer to. “I always thought I was. Do you think I’m not?”

“I don’t know him well enough to say,” Draco hedged. “But from my observation, you’ve always had his back but he hasn’t always had yours.”

“He’s had my back loads!”

“What about when your name came out of the Goblet of Fire?” Draco countered.

“He thought I had put my name in on purpose, that I wanted more attention,” Harry spoke in a strange tone that sounded both sad and defensive.

“Did Hermione think you put your name in?”

“No. She believed me. I think she might have been the only student to believe me.”

“I believed you,” Draco confessed.

“You did? Why?”

“Because trouble finds you, not the other way around,” Draco drawled rolling his eyes.

“Because you hate attention. And I knew you well enough at fourteen to know that there was nothing in that Tournament you’d be interested in. Fame? You already had plenty of that. Glory? You hate that. Gold? You have loads already. That and the absolutely gobsmacked look on your face when your name was called.”

“That was Hermione’s explanation for why she knew I hadn’t done it too.”

“Yes well, you know what they say about great minds,” Draco said with a smirk.

Harry chuckled softly.

“Why do you think it was so obvious to you and Hermione but not to Ron?”

“It’s my impression that Weasley thinks everyone thinks the same way he does, and then gets pissed off when they don’t.”

“How do you mean?”

Draco rolled onto his back to look up at the canopy of his fourposter.

“So to use the Tournament fiasco as an example,” he began academically. “He would have put his name in if he could have, am I right?”

“Yeah,” Harry agreed. “He said he would have.”

“Right, so he thinks *anyone* would have done it if they could. He thought you had put your name in and didn’t show him how to do it too so he felt betrayed. But you wouldn’t have done it even without the age restrictions.”

“Right,” he confirmed. “He even asked me if I would if I could and I told him I wouldn’t.”

“Right but he obviously thought that was a lie. Weasley lives in a universe where he’s in constant competition with everyone around him so everyone must also be in competition with him. Merlin knows why he decided to be *your* friend.”

“What’s the matter with being my friend?” Harry asked indignantly. “*You* wanted to be my friend on the train. You’re my friend *now*.”

“There’s nothing wrong with being your friend,” Draco placated swiftly. “But you’ve hit the bludger head on there, I also wanted to be your friend that day. For the same reason as Weasley, I suspect.”

“Because I’m Harry Potter,” he said in a defeated tone.

“Exactly.”

“You think Ron’s only been my friend all this time because I’m famous?”

“I think that was his initial aim. He probably does genuinely like you most of the time, but let me ask you this; if he hadn’t been with you the day Mrs Norris was petrified in second year, do you think he would have believed that you might’ve been Slytherin’s heir like half the school did? Especially after your stunt in the dueling club?”

“*Your* stunt, you mean?” Harry accused and Draco just nodded and grinned unrepentantly. “He might’ve. I don’t know. He did act very anxious after he heard me speak Parseltongue but he was just worried that it would make more people believe it.”

“My point is that he’s only friends with you when it suits him. He only believed you in second year because he had unrefutable proof. He may have had your back once or twice and that’s excellent, he’s not a terrible person and he’s good to have on your side in a fight. But Weasley strikes me as the sort of person to forget all of his friends if he ever became famous.”

“Ron *is* famous!” Harry argued. “Have you seen, they’ve got chocolate frog cards with the three of us on?”

“I had *not* seen,” Draco said with some amusement. “I think I may have to look out for your card now.”

“Don’t change the subject,” he said petulantly.

“Fine, but this doesn’t change my belief in this. In fact it bolsters it.”

“How’s that?”

“He’s pulling away from you. He’s a war hero. He’s almost as famous as you now and thinks he doesn’t need you anymore.”

“He’s pulling away because he doesn’t like that I’m friends with you,” Harry countered.

“That may be part of it, but I really think that a proper friend would have more patience if their supposed best friend started being friends with someone they didn’t like.”

“Ron is a good man,” Harry said firmly.

“Of that I have no doubt,” Draco agreed. “A better man than me, certainly. But he’s a terrible friend.”

“Is that why you hate him so much?”

“Oh I don’t hate him,” Draco denied. “I don’t like him one bit, but I never hated him. As for our animosity since our first meeting, well that’s all blood feud.”

“Do you think I should stop being friends with him?” Harry asked directly.

Draco had seen this question coming and had already figured out a truthful but diplomatic answer.

“I think that if I had been in your place, I would have dropped him as a friend a long time ago. But I’m not you, and despite how I feel about him, I *don’t* actually know him that well. It’s not my place to say who your friends should be.”

“So if I made up with him, you’d still be my friend?”

“I’ll be your friend forever if you want me to,” Draco said much more honestly than he meant to. He turned to meet Harry’s wide eyes in the dim light.

Harry’s breath hitched at the declaration. Draco could feel his breath fanning his face with each exhale.

“*Why?*” he breathed.

Because I love you. Draco barely managed to stop the words before they tumbled out of his mouth and told him his second truthful reason instead. “Because you’re the best person I know.”

Silence filled the space between them. Draco wanted to kiss him but feared that Harry would understand the meaning behind it given the current context.

“If I had asked Ginny if I should stop being friends with Ron,” Harry said finally. “She’d tell me to dump him.”

“Yes well she knows him better than any of us,” Draco agreed dryly. “She’s also a very straightforward person. I also noticed she’s very protective of you.”

“Yeah she’s good like that,” he agreed, fondness in his tone.

Draco suddenly felt a pang of jealousy. Harry had told him before that he still loved Ginny, and it was clear to anyone with eyes and a brain that she still loved him too. And really what’s not to love? Ginny was Harry’s equal in every way, she was fierce, loyal, brilliant, and badass, and Draco may be gay but he wasn’t blind, she was beautiful.

The only thing standing in the way of Harry and Ginny being together was their grief over lost loved ones during the war. For Ginny, her brother, and for Harry, yet another member of his dwindling found family, possibly two (Draco wasn’t sure how close he was to Tonks). And knowing Harry, he probably felt responsible and grieved for all the other people whose lives were cut short because he didn’t get there in time.

But once they both grieved and found peace, they'd probably find each other again. Draco was just the one keeping her seat warm.

Just when the silence had grown so long that Draco started to think that Harry had probably fallen asleep, he spoke again.

"We never talked about how this was going to go after we separated," he murmured softly.

"What do you mean?" Draco hedged, unwilling to allow himself hope.

"I mean us," Harry said, unsure. He trailed his hand up Draco's side sending shivers down his flank. "Will we still see each other like this when we're unstuck?"

"I'd like to," he said breathlessly, his heart beating furiously. "Do you want to?"

"Yes," he said softly, his lips suddenly ghosting against Draco's. "I'd like to keep doing this. As long as it's okay with you."

"I'm game for as long as you are," Draco said much more bravely than he felt.

Harry replied by catching Draco's lips with his own. Draco sighed into his mouth and Harry held him closer, snuggling in for a lazy series of kisses as sleep began to finally sneak up on them.

He didn't care that his heart would be broken. Even if he went back to Ginny when he was done exploring his sexuality. He'd take everything Harry would give him and never regret a moment. He'd never regret being in love with Harry Potter.

Chapter 20: Separation

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Monday morning dawned grey and rainy. There was a heaviness in the air that Draco knew wasn't just from the weather. He and Harry dressed in silence and picked up their backpacks with their books for the morning in them.

They headed down to the hospital wing early before even Hermione was up. They had both slept fitfully, Draco had had another nightmare and had woken Harry in the middle of the night. He would have been embarrassed if Harry hadn't been so understanding.

For once, his nightmare hadn't been an awful memory from the war. Instead he dreamt he and Harry were locked in a room together while the full moon rose and he transformed. Dream-Harry begged him to recognize him and to not hurt him. Luckily he woke up violently before the inevitable conclusion.

He'd sobbed into Harry's shoulder for twenty minutes before he could calm down.

"I've had nightmares where I killed you in that duel we had," Harry admitted. "I almost did and when it I cast that curse and you went down and there was all that blood, I thought for a moment that I *had*."

Draco found a bizarre sense of relief that Harry feared hurting him as much as he did.

They approached the hospital wing doors with the air of someone going in for a dangerous procedure.

"It'll be fine," Harry reassured him, once again seeming to read his mind, or perhaps his body language.

He pulled the door open and gently led Draco in by their soon-to-be unjoined arms.

Madam Pomfrey greeted them warmly and commended them for getting up so early while assuring them that she was certain that the solvent would do the trick.

"The good news is that this solvent should dissolve the substance in only a few minutes," she told them as she situated them on a cot and laid a towel across their laps. "The better news is that it should have no negative effects on your skin so we should be able to thoroughly remove it all without injury."

Both of them just silently allowed themselves to be positioned by the healer and quickly learned what the towel was for when she began liberally applying the sickly green potion to the hard cast on their wrists with a brush and it instantly began to dissolve and start dripping off of them like ice cream on a hot day.

“Now we’ll just let that sit for a few minutes and I’ll be back to check on the two of you in a bit,” she told them when she was finished coating their wrists in potion and bustled off to clean up while they waited for the solvent to do its work.

“D’you wanna partner up in Defence again today to work on your concealment charm?” Harry asked conversationally when she was out of earshot.

“Really?” Draco asked in surprise, noting briefly that despite the fact that the solvent had only just begun dissolving the substance joining them, he no longer felt compelled to answer the question.

“What, did you think we were just going to go back to the way things were after this?” Harry asked. “We already talked about continuing... er... the other stuff.”

His face went a bit pink and Draco grinned softly.

“I didn’t know if you’d be comfortable with being my friend in public,” Draco admitted. “Given our respective reputations.”

“Of course I’ll be your friend in public. Besides, at this point I don’t think there’s much that could damage my reputation,” Harry said with a roll of his eyes so severe it must have pulled something. “And I don’t care about your reputation. No one knows you the way I do. I know you’re not the person everyone thinks you are.”

“That’s only because you’ve been privy to all of my secrets.”

“I knew you better than anyone else long before that,” he argued, shaking his head. “Why do you think I spoke up for your defence at your trial?”

Harry often brought this up as proof of his faith in Draco. If he had been a Slytherin he might be holding it over his head, after all Harry is the one and only reason he and his mother aren’t currently in a cell in Azkaban next to his father. But Harry was a Gryffindor through and through; he only talked about the trial to remind Draco that he was a good person inside and worthy of another chance. Before this last week stuck together, Draco might have thought Harry *was* holding it over him, but he now knew Harry better than even Hermione, whom Draco privately agreed with Ginny was Harry’s *true* best friend and not Weasley.

“Hey,” Harry said, breaking his train of thought with a nudge to his shoulder.

“What?” he asked looking up to meet wide green eyes.

“You didn’t answer my question.”

“Did it require an answer?” he asked, perplexed. “I thought it was rhetorical.”

“It *was*,” he said with a grin. “But you weren’t forced to answer anyway. Which means we don’t have to worry about people discovering our secrets and personal information anymore.”

Draco grinned too and looked down at their arms which were still being held together by the smallest band of the failed Veritaserum.

It was a relief to not have to worry someone else might figure out his various secrets, though he was starting to suspect that Hermione might know the one secret he was still keeping from Harry. One he might never tell him.

He frowned, remembering a conversation they'd had at the beginning of this incident. The only real things that stopped them from being friends all along was the choiceless nature of their upbringing and a tendency to be dishonest with each other. What if they fell back on old habits now that they were no longer forced to tell the truth?

"What's the matter?" Harry asked, noticing his sudden melancholy.

"It's stupid," Draco denied, shaking his head.

"I bet it's not."

"I just..."

He didn't know how to say it without coming off needy.

"Hey," Harry said, taking his free hand and turning Draco's head to face him.

Draco gasped at the intimate contact in such a public place. His stomach fluttered and Harry's eyes bore into his own.

"Tell me what the matter is," he demanded. "You know I'm not going to let it go."

"Can we..." Draco started, suddenly feeling very vulnerable. "Can we keep telling each other the truth?"

"What do you mean?" he asked, cocking his head in confusion.

"I mean like even though we're not forced to anymore..." Draco's usually excellent eloquence had suddenly failed him.

Harry grinned, finally understanding.

"You want us to always be honest with one another," he confirmed.

"I told you, it's stupid," Draco said, shaking his head, his face heating with embarrassment.

"I don't think it's stupid at all," Harry argued. "If we went back to how we were before, we'd be constantly lying about how we really felt. Like if this was a few years ago and you were upset about something and I asked you if you were okay, you'd lie and say you were fine."

"If this was a few years ago you'd have never asked me if I was okay."

"True, I'd probably say something snarky."

"And then I'd say something witty and cutting back."

"*Witty?*" Harry choked on a laugh. "You think calling me Scarhead was *witty?*"

Draco laughed loudly at that.

“Okay that’s fair,” he admitted. “Not my best work, I’ll give you that.”

“No, your best work might be Weasley Is Our King,” he added with a snort.

Draco raised an eyebrow at that.

“Harry, I’m surprised,” he said, genuinely thrown off. “That song was mean as shit. And it was about how terrible your best mate was at Quidditch.”

“It *was* mean, and he *was* terrible but that was ‘cause of nerves. But that doesn’t mean it wasn’t very clever.”

“He played *that* badly because of nerves?” Draco asked unbelievably. “He was quite possibly the most rubbish Keeper I’ve ever seen. And I’m not saying that to be mean, I *genuinely* believe that.”

“Well remember how he played in later games?” Harry reminded him. “He’s actually quite decent but he gets inside his own head too much.”

“A good player doesn’t let how the crowd feels about him affect his playing,” Draco pointed out. “Even with a bludger chasing you and me shouting taunts and insults, *you* still caught the snitch. With a broken arm!”

“Careful, Draco, or I might think you were impressed by me,” Harry teased.

“I *am* impressed by you,” Draco breathed.

Madam Pomfrey came back into the room then, causing the two of them to hurriedly lean away from each other. Draco hadn’t noticed until then that they had been leaning closer and closer together and had been nearly in kissing range when she’d come in. Draco wondered what she’d heard and seen.

“That’s coming along nicely,” she commented while examining their hands and wrists. If she had noticed something between them, she was clearly too professional to remark upon it. “Should be just a minute more and then you can wash the rest off in the sink.”

They watched as the remaining hardened potion melted and dripped into the towel on their laps until at long last, their hands were separated. Madam Pomfrey wiped the remaining goop from their hands with a dry bit of the towel and instructed them that they could go to breakfast after they had washed off the remaining residue.

“Is it weird that my arm feels suddenly very light?” Harry asked him in wonder.

“Probably not,” Draco remarked. “Mine feels light too. Probably because I don’t have yours weighing it down anymore. Bit stiff too, probably from not using it much.”

Harry agreed and they took turns washing their hands in the basin in the corner of the room. When they were done, they picked up their backpacks and headed out.

Draco idly noticed that Harry preferred to sling his bag over his right shoulder which he hadn't been able to do while they were joined. Draco preferred to wear his properly to keep his hands free, which he also hadn't been able to do for the last week.

Harry swung his arms out and did a little spin around the corridor just because he could and Draco laughed.

"You look ridiculous!" he teased.

"It's fun," Harry retorted with a grin. "You should try it."

"No thanks, I have *some* dignity."

"Come on!" Harry urged, trying to grab both of Draco's hands to spin him around.

"Someone could see," Draco protested.

"Someone like me?" a voice interrupted them.

They whipped around in alarm, dropping their hands to their sides. Once they saw who it was, though they relaxed. It was only Hermione.

"You two are adorable," she teased.

"Adorable!?" Harry spluttered indignantly.

Draco also grimaced at the word. No grown man has ever wanted to be called "adorable". Hermione giggled at their reactions.

"I see you've been successfully separated," she observed with a sly grin. "Congratulations, though I suppose you'll probably continue to see each other pretty closely."

"Not as closely as before, thank you," Draco remarked dryly. "I never was so fond of using the toilet with an audience."

Hermione giggled.

"Are you headed to breakfast?" Harry asked. "We were just on our way."

"Were you?" she teased and linked her arm with Harry's steering him in the direction of the Great Hall. "I thought you were having a dance party in the corridor."

Draco followed on Harry's other side and had to resist the temptation to hold his hand.

"Harry was just enjoying his returned full range of motion," Draco informed her. He stretched both arms lazily over his head, enjoying the slight burning sensation in his left bicep as he reminded it what proper movement felt like. "It'll be nice to be able to read my own handwriting again; my penmanship has been completely rubbish."

“It’ll be nice to write with my proper hand again,” Harry remarked, flexing his left hand. “I was starting to get a permanent cramp in my left one.”

They reached the Great Hall then and as Harry and Hermione automatically headed towards the Gryffindor table, Draco hesitated. Now that he was no longer attached to Harry, he was no doubt expected to return to the Slytherin table, but he had no friends over there. Sure there was Blaise and Theo but they had been distancing themselves from Draco since the term had begun. They’d never been his real friends anyway, nor had anyone really. His only real friends were Harry and Hermione, he was even starting to become friendly with Ginny and Longbottom.

“Hey,” Harry said, suddenly close to him. “Come sit with us.”

He brokered no argument, he took Draco by the elbow and steered him towards what had become his usual seat at the Gryffindor table.

“Weasley won’t like it,” Draco muttered in weak protest.

“Since when have you ever cared what Ron thinks?” Harry asked with a snort.

“It’s fine,” Hermione agreed and helped Harry usher him to the table. “You’re our friend now and you’re welcome to join us.”

Between very much wanting to sit with them despite the reaction it would garner from their peers and the exhaustion that was beginning to set in because of the approaching full moon, Draco was helpless against the two Gryffindors’ persistence.

Draco sat down next to Harry like he had all week and Hermione went around the table to sit across from them. They were soon joined by Longbottom and Ginny who both noticed that he and Harry were no longer attached and congratulated them both.

“So, couldn’t get enough of us you had to come sit with us voluntarily, eh?” Ginny teased.

“I got used to the chaos,” Draco said snootily making Longbottom laugh.

“It is pretty chaotic sometimes, I’ll give you that,” he agreed.

“Oh admit it,” Ginny pressed with a pleased grin. “You actually like us.”

“Oh fine,” Draco said fondly while pretending to roll his eyes. “You’re not that bad I guess.”

She laughed at his terrible acting and Harry started a low chant.

“One of us, one of us,” he intoned.

Soon Ginny, Longbottom and even Hermione had joined in.

It was then that Weasley made his appearance. Just in time to ruin all the fun. As usual.

“I thought you were meant to get separated this morning,” he accused, interrupting the chant.

“We were,” Harry informed him, holding up his now freed right hand in demonstration.

“So what’s he still doing here?”

“Eating breakfast,” Longbottom offered helpfully making Draco snort.

Weasley looked furious. His ears had gone an incredible shade of red and were clashing horribly with his hair.

“I suppose you think this is funny, then,” Weasley snapped, rounding on Draco directly. “Pretending to be their friend? What’s your angle here, Malfoy?”

“I’m not pretending to be anything, Weasley,” Draco drawled evenly. “For once in my life, I am being who I want to be and not what others have decided I *should* be. And what I *want* to be is exactly what I appear to be. Harry and Hermione *are* my friends and – I don’t want to be too presumptuous – but I think Ginny and Longbottom might be also. There’s no angle.”

“Aww Malfoy, you sweet talker, you,” Ginny teased.

Harry snickered at this, no doubt thinking of what Draco’s sweet talk *actually* sounded like. Weasley shot him and his sister a look of utter betrayal, turned several darker shades of red and stormed off without breakfast.

“I knew this wouldn’t go over well with him,” Draco said dryly when he was gone.

“Oh fuck him,” Ginny said dismissively.

“Ginny! Language!” Hermione scolded earning an equally dismissive eye roll.

“He’s missing breakfast. I’m going to have to hear about how hungry he is in Defence aren’t I?” Longbottom complained.

“He’ll probably just go straight to the kitchens and bother the house elves for food,” Ginny remarked.

“He’d better not take out his emotions on them,” Harry said darkly. “He has a habit of snapping at the wrong person when he’s pissed off.”

“I’m sure he won’t...” Hermione said not sounding as sure as her statement.

“You can go after him if you want,” Harry told her gently. “I won’t be offended.”

“Yeah, me neither,” Draco added. “Not that you need *my* permission.”

“I think... I’m just going to make sure he isn’t being mean to the house elves,” she said decisively but shot Harry a pleading look.

“It’s fine, Hermione,” he urged. “Go. I’ll see you in class.”

With Harry's reassurance, Hermione quickly grabbed a piece of toast and her backpack and hurried out of the Great Hall.

"Why's she so worried you'll be upset with her?" Draco asked.

"Hermione is often in the middle whenever Harry and Ron are on the outs," Ginny answered for him.

"I've never been cross with her for talking to Ron when I'm having a row with him," Harry said sadly. "But he's been cross with her for talking to me."

"In fourth year he hollered at her for studying with you," Longbottom informed him.

"He did?" Harry was surprised. "I never knew that."

"Well you weren't there and it's not like Hermione to bring her problems to other people," Ginny remarked.

"I've been between the two of them as often as she's been between us," Harry mused. "Like when she went to the Yule Ball with Krum, or when he started dating Lavender. I've never really been on the outs with Hermione though."

"Well there was that period in third year that neither of you were talking to her," Longbottom pointed out.

"I was annoyed at her for like a *minute*," Harry argued. "She thought my Firebolt needed examining and it was a reasonable precaution considering the circumstances. And as it turned out Sirius *was* the one who sent it to me, we were all just wrong about who he really was. So in hindsight she was the most right she's ever been.

"Ron was the one who was the most pissed about it. But that was also on top of the whole Crookshanks-Scabbers situation."

"But you didn't talk to her for like two months," Longbottom argued.

"Well that was because she was taking a million classes and had walled herself into a corner of the common room with a thousand books, wasn't sleeping enough, overworking herself, and snapping at anyone who suggested she get some rest. That wasn't a conscious choice on my part."

"Time turner was driving her mad was it?" Draco remarked.

"I'm sorry?" Longbottom nearly shouted. "She was using a time turner?!"

"Oh shit," Draco uttered. "Was that not common knowledge?"

"No," Harry said with a fond snort. "It was not."

"Merlin's pants!" Ginny shouted so loudly nearly every head in the Great Hall turned to look and Professor Flitwick cried "Miss Weasley!" in admonition.

“Are you telling me that the reason she was able to be in Care of Magical Creatures and Ancient Runes at the same time was because she was repeating the hour and a half period?” Longbottom demanded.

“Yeah,” Harry admitted sheepishly. “No one was meant to know. Even Ron and I never knew until after finals and she had given it back after dropping Divination and Muggle Studies.”

“Why in Merlin’s name was she taking Muggle Studies?” Draco asked incredulously. “She could *teach* the class!”

“That’s what I said!” Longbottom said louder than necessary.

“I bet she was the only muggleborn in the class,” Ginny snorted, shaking her head.

“I wish I had taken Muggle Studies,” Longbottom groused. “Divination was a joke.”

“Yeah,” Harry agreed. “I wish I had taken Ancient Runes. I bet no one would be predicting my imminent death in that class.”

Longbottom snickered so hard he nearly choked.

“I beg your finest pardon?” Draco demanded.

“Oh you never heard?” Harry said causally. “Trelawney told me I would die a gruesome and tragic death on a near weekly basis.”

“I mean she predicted I’d break that cup our first class,” Longbottom reminded him.

“I could have predicted that, Neville. And I wasn’t even there,” Ginny teased.

“And I think you’ll find that despite her, let’s say a hundred and fifty predictions of my death, I’m still here,” Harry remarked dryly.

“Yeah, she’s a fraud,” Ginny said dismissively.

“Well I wouldn’t go that far,” Harry disagreed. “I have heard two very real prophecies from her and both came true.”

“Ex-cuse me?” Ginny demanded.

“Oh, well after my Divination final in third year she went into this sort of trance and predicted that Voldemort’s servant who had been hiding out for twelve years would return to him and he would come back more powerful than before. That happened when Wormtail turned up that night and then ran off and a year later he was back.”

The table was fully silent. Draco, Longbottom, and Ginny were staring at Harry in varying expressions of shock and horror.

“Dare I ask what the second prophesy was?” Ginny asked in a weak voice.

“It’s the one we went to the Department of Mysteries for,” Harry said casually.

“The one that called you the Chosen One?” Longbottom clarified with awe.

“Well that’s not exactly what it said, it just named a child that would be born at the end of July with parents that had fought against him that had the potential to become the one to defeat him.”

Longbottom looked pale.

“You okay, Neville?” Ginny asked, concerned.

“I was born at the end of July,” he said in a weak voice. “And my parents were aurors. They fought him.”

“Yeah...” Harry sighed. “Before the night he came after me, the prophesy could have meant either of us.”

Longbottom squeaked and Draco was suddenly reminded of the chubby, timid little boy he had been in first year and not the very confident and capable man he’d transformed into in the last few years.

“When were you going to tell me?” Longbottom asked in a small voice.

“Honestly, I never planned to tell you at all,” Harry admitted.

“I kind of wish you hadn’t.”

“Yeah...”

There was an awkward silence for awhile while they picked at their breakfast and Longbottom processed this new information. This conversation had taken such a bizarre turn but it reinforced Draco’s belief that Harry should never tell Longbottom and the other boys who shared his dorm that Weasley’s pet rat had been an animagus the whole time. That news would do nothing but harm.

“This is why I don’t wanna talk to that publisher who thinks I should write an autobiography,” Harry grouched. “There’s some things I learned over the last several years that would really badly affect some very specific people I don’t want to hurt.”

“Affect like dropping the bomb that but for a twist of fate I might have been the Chosen One?” Longbottom said sarcastically.

“Yeah, like that.”

The first bell rang and a surge of movement went out across the hall as everyone stood to leave or crammed the last few bites of breakfast in their mouths before heading to class.

“This is a fun mood to go to Defence in,” Draco remarked, trying to break the tension.

“Speak for yourself,” Ginny said with a sarcastic snort. “I’ve got Charms. We’re still reviewing past years charms. Today is the cheering charm so I think this is the best mood to go into that with.”

“I’m just glad I’ve already mastered the patronus charm,” Longbottom sighed. “Not exactly the right mindset for that one.”

“You’re doing patronuses this early into term?” Ginny asked in surprise. “We’re not due to start ours until November.”

“Dawlish lets us do whatever in his class,” Draco informed her. “Because most of us know most of the material already so we work on whatever we want.”

“Yeah, and Harry doesn’t even do any work in class ‘cause he knows it all already,” Longbottom added.

“Lucky!” Ginny whined enviously. “See you at lunch!”

She waved them off and they parted ways at the third floor landing where she turned left toward Charms and they turned right toward Defence Against the Dark Arts.

Chapter End Notes

This one feels kind of short even though its over 4k words. I know not a lot happened in this one and I'm starting to realize I've written 20 chapters that only span two weeks. It's kind of crazy when you think about it.

Chapter 21: Breaking Point

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

When they entered the Defence Against the Dark Arts classroom they found Weasley had already gotten there ahead of them and was furiously pretending to read the textbook in a corner. Draco knew he was pretending because his eyes weren't moving and his ears were redder than ever as he glared at the page as if it had personally offended him.

Draco had a moment to wonder if he'd spent all of breakfast in the classroom before Hermione came in after the rest of the class had already begun breaking into small groups. She made it in just before the late bell rang which was very uncharacteristic of her to cut it so close. Her face was pink and her eyes were puffy like she had been crying.

He hurried over to her, quickly followed by Harry and Longbottom who had noticed the same thing.

"Hermione, what's wrong? Why have you been crying?" Draco pressed with concern.

"It's nothing, I'm fine," she brushed him off.

"Was it Ron?" Harry demanded angrily. "What did he say to you?"

"Don't worry about it," she insisted while busily taking her textbook from her backpack and flipping through it to find a subject to study. "What are we working on?"

"We're not working on anything until we talk about this," Harry stated firmly and pulled the textbook out of her hand and passed it to Longbottom who used his superior height to keep it out of her reach when she tried to snatch it back.

"He's just a little upset that we're still hanging out with Draco, that's all," she said dismissively, trying to grab her book again.

"A little upset?" Longbottom quoted, still holding her book out of her reach. "He looks *furios*."

"And you've been crying," Draco added pointedly. "Don't tell me you haven't; I've made you cry enough times to know what that looks like."

"He reminded me of that actually," she said airily as if commenting on the weather, then sighed in defeat. "He said that playing friends with you was only going to end up getting me hurt and when it did, I shouldn't come crying to him because it will have been my own stupid fault and I will have deserved it for being an idiot."

Draco's mouth fell open in outrage and Longbottom dropped his arms to his sides in shock, giving Hermione the opportunity to finally snatch her book back. At the same moment a

nearby desk fired itself across the room and smashed to tinders against a wall, causing several nearby students to shout in alarm and draw their wands at the noise.

Draco looked round at Harry who had his hands balled into trembling fists, his face tense but weirdly blank except for his jaw which was clenched tightly. A frisson of energy crackled in the air around him and Draco knew it was he who had been unintentionally responsible for the desk.

Draco, Longbottom, and Hermione all watched Harry silently and tensely, expecting him to go off. Instead he closed his eyes and inhaled slowly and deliberately through his nose, held it for three seconds and slowly breathed out again through his mouth. He deliberately relaxed his jaw, shoulders, and hands and then opened his eyes.

“He’s the idiot if he thinks you could ever be stupid about anything,” he said in a measured tone. “Come on, we’ll work on the concealment charm.”

The three of them exchanged looks that seemed to communicate that the subject was dropped for the moment and now was not the time nor place for Harry to feel his full range of emotions. So they broke away to the other side of the classroom near to the remains of the desk to drop off their bags so Harry and Hermione could help Draco and Longbottom with the charm. Hermione spared a glance and the shattered desk with a fretful expression.

“Should we try to fix that, maybe?” she worried.

“That might be beyond repair,” Longbottom remarked, surveying the damage.

“I’ll fix it,” Harry said impatiently. “Only right since I broke it in the first place.”

He examined it carefully, looked around at an intact desk for reference, then flicked his wand at the broken one.

“*Reparo*,” he incanted with a look of concentration.

Draco was sure if it was anyone else, the desk would have been beyond the scope of an ordinary *reparo* as it was in far too many pieces for the average witch or wizard to repair. But Harry was no ordinary wizard and so the many splinters and shards of the wooden desk began arranging themselves properly and fusing back into shape.

While his efforts were in progress, Dawlish entered the room and observed the activity.

“What happened here?” he inquired.

“Harry went mental and smashed a desk,” Weasley supplied savagely.

Harry’s efforts on the desk faltered for a moment before he regained his concentration and resumed the repair, ignoring Weasley’s comment.

“It was *accidental* magic, sir,” Hermione explained while glaring angrily at Weasley.

“Yeah he was angry at something nasty *someone* said about his friend,” Longbottom added pointedly, also glaring.

“I see...” Dawlish said cautiously while looking curiously between their group and Weasley standing on his own and observing the clear hostility between them. “Well it happens to the best of us from time to time. Excellent work on that repair, Potter.”

Harry had just finished fixing the desk and it looked better than it had before it was smashed.

“Thank you, sir,” he muttered, pointedly ignoring his supposed best friend.

“Right, get to work, all of you,” Dawlish instructed. “You all know what you should be working on, and I’ll want your essays from last week on my desk by the end of class, so if you’re not done those, I suggest you take advantage of the time now.”

“I’ll run the essays over to his desk, if you all just want to give me yours,” Hermione volunteered.

The four of them all dug their dementors essays out of their bags and the three men handed her theirs so she could deliver them to the professor for them.

Seemingly taking advantage of Hermione’s momentary absence, Weasley sidled up and addressed Harry in a disdainful tone that should have been out of place but had become all too familiar in the last week.

“Aren’t you a bit old to be losing control of your magic like that, Harry?” he accused.

Harry spared him only a slightly annoyed look before turning his back on him entirely to close his backpack up without a word.

“So you’re just going to ignore me now?” Weasley demanded angrily, his raised voice drawing an audience.

“What’s the problem, Weasley?” Draco drawled, suddenly feeling very defensive of his new friends. “Not getting the reaction you want?”

“Butt out, Malfoy,” he bit back. “No one’s talking to you.”

“Not satisfied until someone is in tears?” Draco continued as if he hadn’t spoken. “Do you feel like a big man, making your girlfriend cry?”

“I said fuck off, Malfoy!” Weasley was shouting now. He had turned fully in his direction and was clenching his fist around his wand so tightly it looked like it might snap. “What Hermione and I discussed is none of your business!”

“Is that what you call ‘discussion’?” he scoffed. “Because she went to check on you and came back crying. And by the way, only the world’s biggest moron would call Hermione Granger and idiot.”

“*Mustelafors!*” Weasley shouted, raising his wand at Draco.

Draco flinched his wand up to protect himself but knew he wouldn't be fast enough.

"*PROTEGO!*" Harry roared and a bubble of force grew between Draco and Weasley, shoving them apart.

Weasley's spell bounced off of Harry's shield and rebounded into its caster, transforming him into a ginger ferret.

Draco let out a shocked bark of a laugh before stopping himself. He didn't want to be a hypocrite for laughing at Weasley when he found his own transformation into a ferret seriously unfunny. On the other hand, Weasley had done this to himself, and for once Draco was pretty sure he was in the right in this conflict.

The whole class was dead silent for a moment, and then several students started laughing uproariously, beginning with the Slytherins, followed by Zacharias Smith and then Thomas and Finnigan. Dawlish seemed to not know how to handle the situation for a moment before he was able to collect himself and enter stern teacher mode, using all of his auror discipline the way he might do if two junior aurors had been bickering the way Draco and Weasley had been.

"Enough!" he shouted over the laughter and the class went silent. "*Reparifarge*," he cast at Weasley who immediately transformed back into himself in a heap on the floor, every inch of his face red from a mixture of rage and embarrassment. "Fifty points from Gryffindor for unauthorized dueling, Weasley."

Weasley spluttered and tried to defend himself but Dawlish held up a hand for silence and continued.

"And detention," he stated firmly. He turned his attention to Draco. "And ten points from Slytherin for instigating, Malfoy."

Draco accepted this with a shrug. It was fair; Draco *had* riled him up after all. At least he didn't get detention, or turned into a ferret for the second time. Where had Weasley even learned that spell?

"I want the two of you in separate corners," Dawlish continued. "I don't want to see either of you near each other for the rest of class, am I understood?"

"Yes, sir," Draco agreed easily.

Weasley just muttered something angrily under his breath.

"What was that, Weasley?" Dawlish demanded.

"Yes, sir," he bit out, and stormed back to his corner to bury his face in the textbook again.

Hermione returned to their group when the dust settled with wide, owlsh eyes that somehow looked both alarmed and disapproving at the same time.

"Why did you do that?" she hissed at him.

“Do what?” Draco asked, confused and offended. “I didn’t do anything! He was having a go at Harry.”

“He’s been doing that all week, that doesn’t mean you need to provoke him,” she tutted.

“He provoked me first,” he asserted, crossing his arms defensively.

“And how exactly did he provoke you?” she demanded.

“By making you cry and then calling Harry mental.”

Draco knew that for once a fight with Weasley was not his fault and he was not going to allow himself to be lectured.

“He was only defending you, Hermione,” Longbottom offered in a diplomatic tone.

“Thank you, but I can take care of myself,” she said primly. “I don’t need anyone getting into duels on my behalf.”

“That was hardly a duel,” Draco drawled, rolling his eyes.

She glared at his sarcastic tone but there was no heat to it. She looked around at Harry who had been oddly quiet through the whole exchange. Draco looked too.

Harry had a deeply sad and distant look in his eyes. Draco had to restrain the overwhelming urge to pull him into a bone crushing hug. He looked like he could really use one.

“You okay?” Draco asked him softly.

“Fine,” he said shortly.

Draco knew that was a lie so he raised an eyebrow at him challengingly, hoping he’d remember their discussion about being honest with each other from now on. Harry sighed and gave him a pointed look of silent communication. *Later*, the look said. So Draco decided to let it go for now.

The rest of the double period went by without further incident and Draco and Longbottom started making some headway on their concealment charms while Harry’s and Hermione’s were already perfect and needed no improvement.

Somehow news had escaped the containment of the eighth year students, and by the time the four of them made it to the Great Hall for lunch, the whole school was talking about how Weasley had tried to turn Draco into a ferret but got himself instead.

“How is it people know about it already?” Hermione remarked in disbelief. “No one outside of our year witnessed it and class only just got out.”

“Never underestimate the power of the Hogwarts Rumour Mill,” Longbottom quipped.

Lunch was rather uneventful except for the occasional outburst from Weasley any time someone asked him about the incident. People also asked their little group what happened, and aside from Ginny and Luna Lovegood, who'd joined them for lunch, they didn't humour anyone with the story. Harry was still looking gloomy and the other three didn't want to make his mood worse.

Charms was equally normal after lunch and they managed to get through the whole class without another conflict. Though Weasley kept shooting glares across the classroom at the four of them who had chosen to sit next to each other again.

After Charms, their group of four broke into two pairs as Harry and Longbottom went back to the common room to work on homework and Draco and Hermione went the opposite direction to Ancient Runes.

"You get attached easily, don't you?" Hermione asked when they were alone in the corridor.

"What do you mean?"

"In only a week and a half, you've become very attached to Harry and I."

"Honestly? I think the two of you are the first real friends I've ever had," Draco admitted.

Hermione looked at him in astonishment and with a hint of pity, which he didn't care for.

"What about Crabbe and Goyle?"

"They weren't really my friends," Draco said dismissively. "Our families have known each other for generations. We grew up together but I never especially liked either of them. And I don't believe they liked me either."

"But you went everywhere together," she pressed.

"Because it was expected of us," he explained. "We were expected to be friends so we acted like we were."

"I don't suppose that turned out to be a 'fake it 'til you make it' arrangement did it?" she joked.

Draco let out a short derisive laugh.

"Definitely not."

They sat next to each other in class and bounced ideas off each other for the project they'd be working on for the first half of the term. It was very amicable and their classmates – all seventh and eighth years because of the small class size – didn't even stare anymore at the unlikely friendship as most everyone had gotten used to seeing it over the last week. Granted, it was now without Harry as a buffer between them. It was nice.

After class they returned to the eighth year common room and then their respective dorms to drop off their bags and books and take a break before supper.

When Draco entered his dorm, he was suddenly engulfed in a hug. Harry gripped him tightly like he might drift away if he let go. Draco hastily shut his door and dropped his bag carelessly on the floor so he could hug him back.

“I’m not fine,” Harry admitted into Draco’s collar.

“I know,” Draco sighed, holding him tighter.

“No one’s called me mental in two years, and Ron never has before,” he murmured shakily. “I didn’t realise how much of a trigger it would be.”

Now his shutdown made sense. Weasley had violated a tenant of their friendship and Harry had been so affected by it that he clamped down on his emotions to prevent any more magical outbursts.

“Have you been in here since Charms?” Draco asked.

Harry nodded against his shoulder.

“Is that okay? I didn’t think anyone would look for me in here. And it smells like you.”

Draco shivered. Not just from the brush of Harry’s lips against his neck as he spoke, but also from the knowledge that Draco’s scent brought him some comfort. The primal part of him preened at the information and the wolf growled possessively.

“I don’t mind,” Draco choked out, trying to shove the wolf back down. *It’s not your time yet*, he told it.

Harry’s breath evened out and the tension left his shoulders with a sigh. He pulled out of the hug and looked Draco in the eyes. There was something serious in his gaze that had Draco tensing up.

“Ron and I had another row while you and Hermione were in class,” he said evenly.

“What happened?” Draco asked worriedly, wondering if there was some spell damage in the common room he’d somehow missed.

“He gave me an ultimatum,” he sighed. He looked so worn out. “He said I had to choose. If I wanted to keep being his friend, I had to stop being yours.”

Draco gulped. This was it, the end of their relationship. He hadn’t thought it would be this bad; he’d expected an end to the physical side not the entire friendship. He didn’t think he could cope. Tears sprang to his eyes and he started hyperventilating.

“Hey, hey,” Harry said gently, taking his face in his hands. “Don’t freak out, it’s okay. I told him to shove it. Real friends don’t make you choose.”

It took a moment for the words to make it through the ringing in his ears, but once he processed them, his eyes went wide in awe.

“You chose *me*?” his voice squeaked on the last word, his throat constricting with emotion.

“Ron should have known better than to issue a challenge like that,” Harry said with a slightly sad but conspiratorial grin. “After all, even you know how contrary I can be. You’d think he’d know that too.”

“You’re just blowing up your oldest friendship for me, though?” Draco couldn’t believe what he was hearing.

“No,” Harry shook his head. “*Ron* blew it up. But if, in the future, he decides to come to his senses, I’m sure we can work it out and maybe be friends again. But for now, I just need a break from him.”

“Okay,” Draco agreed. There was some comfort in knowing that Draco hadn’t been responsible – or at least not entirely responsible – for upending Harry’s friendship with Weasley. He didn’t want Harry to look back on this time in his life and blame Draco for the event.

Chapter End Notes

He's finally done it! Harry has finally kicked Ron to the curb. Have I told you how much I hate Ron?

He's only gonna get worse, by the way.

If you want to see that fight between Harry and Ron go check out [chapter 3](#) of Harry's Choice!

Chapter 22: Popularity Contest

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

When they went to dinner, it was later than everyone else so the Great Hall was full by the time they arrived. When they entered together, several more heads turned in their direction than usual and Draco wondered if the news of Harry and Weasley's friendship's abrupt end had escaped the containment of the eighth year already. If the wide-eyed stares and hushed whispers and even curious looks from teachers were anything to go by, it likely had.

Harry halted abruptly a few steps into the hall and Draco looked back to see what had stopped him. Normally he pretended he wasn't being stared at so Draco wondered what had him so troubled all of a sudden. He was staring hesitantly in the direction of the Gryffindor table. Draco looked to see what was bothering him.

Weasley was sitting in the spot next to Hermione and was having a quiet argument with her. Across from them was Ginny and Longbottom, the former looked furious while the latter looked unsure. Thomas and Finnigan were next to them looking distinctly uncomfortable. As they watched, Weasley broke off his argument with Hermione and looked up to glare challengingly in their direction.

He was clearly trying to draw lines. He wanted their friends to choose between him and Harry. Draco almost snorted. If it was a popularity contest he wanted, he'd lose. Badly. But Harry would never make his friends choose the way Weasley was doing.

"Come on," Draco said quietly. "Why don't we go down to the kitchens instead?"

Harry straightened his back at this and raised his chin slightly in defiance.

"No," he said. "Come on."

He took Draco by the elbow and drove him forward. But instead of finding a seat at the Gryffindor table, he bypassed it entirely. Draco couldn't control the shocked look on his face when Harry led them to an open spot at the Slytherin table across from Theo and Blaise.

"D'you mind if we sit with you?" Harry asked them casually, ignoring the sea of eyes following their movement.

Theo raised an eyebrow in surprise. Blaise smirked in amusement and gave Harry an appreciative once over that made Draco's wolf internally growl territorially.

"Sure, mate," Blaise said amiably.

They sat down and the moment they did, a din of chatter broke out across the hall, even teachers were muttering to each other and shooting curious looks in their direction.

“Not a popular choice, Potter,” Theo remarked in amusement. “You’re in a den of snakes now, but I think it’s the other houses that have the bigger problem with it.”

He was right. Most of the younger Slytherins followed the lead of the older ones who’d experienced the worst of the war and pretended like all of this was normal. It was, logically speaking, in their best interest to be welcoming – or at worst, indifferent – to the Saviour of the Wizarding World. It would not serve them well, politically, to be hostile to the man who defeated the most dangerous dark wizard of their time. It was the Slytherin way. The rest of the school, on the other hand, seemed to be outraged; this wasn’t just *any* Gryffindor sitting with Slytherins, it was *Harry Potter* and even now, most of the students in other houses still looked at Slytherin as a house full of potential enemies.

“I’ve never exactly taken the popular option, have I?” Harry pointed out while casually serving himself dinner.

“Touché.”

“So Weasley’s not your best mate anymore?” Blaise asked casually.

“We’re taking a break from each other,” Harry said coolly.

“What did he do?” Theo pressed curiously.

Blaise and Theo evidently had not been present in the common room when the blow up happened. Either that or they were digging for details. They were almost as bad as Parvati Patil for gossip.

“How do you know it wasn’t me who did something?” Harry asked slyly.

Blaise snickered.

“You probably did something incredibly benign and he lost it on you for it,” he said between chuckles.

“Would you consider befriending Draco benign?”

The two Slytherins looked between them with calculating looks. There was something knowing in Blaise’s eye.

Before anyone could reply to that, Ginny suddenly appeared in a huff and sat down on Blaise’s other side like she belonged there and picked up a dinner roll and bit into it savagely.

“Hey,” she said casually to the group as if she did this every day.

“Hey, Gin,” Harry said cautiously. “What’re you doing?”

“Sitting with friends who don’t piss me off,” she answered with fake cheer and the barest hint of annoyance in her tone.

“Friends, plural?” Draco asked in what was meant to be a casual tone but came out somewhat hopeful. Now he got to know her, he found he liked Ginny a lot and they had a surprising amount of interests in common.

“Yes, Malfoy, plural,” she said with a smirk. “You’ve grown on me.”

Draco gave a pleased grin for a moment before she added an addendum.

“Like a fungus.”

Theo snorted into his goblet and sprayed the table with pumpkin juice and Harry burst out laughing. Draco beamed with joy at the sound and didn’t even mind being called a fungus because it made Harry laugh. He had been in such a miserable mood all day that it was nice to see him cheering up.

There was a sudden commotion at the Gryffindor table. Several heads turned to see what was happening, including their little group at the Slytherin table.

“Enough!” Longbottom shouted at Weasley and stood up. It was such a contrast to Longbottom’s usual meek and quiet manner that it shocked everyone more than Harry sitting with Slytherins.

Longbottom stormed over to their table with the air of a man pushed past his patience and threw himself into the seat next to Draco.

“You can’t be serious!” Weasley called after him with a nasty scowl.

“Grow up, Ron!” Hermione scolded him and then she too stood and marched over to the Slytherin table and sat down next to Harry with her chin held defiantly high.

Draco thought this was particularly brave on her part. While unusual, Ginny and Longbottom sitting at the Slytherin table might have caused a small stir but they would get over it quickly as they were both purebloods and Harry’s blood status didn’t matter so much as his social standing. Hermione, on the other hand, was muggleborn and Draco knew for a fact that many of the students in his house still privately held certain outdated beliefs and might object more strongly to her presence among them. He hoped *her* social standing would be enough to keep their thoughts to themselves.

He glanced cautiously at Theo with whom he had for many years made many cruel remarks about Hermione’s blood status and what should be done about people like her. Theo had enthusiastically engaged in the rhetoric while they were growing up and Draco was particularly concerned about how he’d react to her being there.

Theo was staring at her with a strange intensity, looking her up and down critically but didn’t say anything.

“What just happened?” Harry asked Longbottom in confusion.

“Ron reckons Draco has turned all his friends against him,” he said with a roll of his eyes.

Draco blinked, registering Longbottom's use of his first name. He'd done it so naturally and casually that he'd almost missed it. Did this mean he thought of Draco as a friend like Ginny did?

"Looks that way," Ginny said with a wry grin.

"Weasley is delusional if he ever thought he could win a popularity contest against Harry Potter," Blaise said, smirking.

"That's not what's happening here," Harry denied. "I'm not trying to make my friends choose between us."

"No, but *he* is and I'm not sticking around for that rubbish," Ginny argued back. "He's my brother and I love him, but Merlin help me do I hate him sometimes."

"I'm just glad we don't have to share a dorm with him anymore and listen to him bitch all night about how we're all betraying him," Neville said in a tired tone.

"If you walk around smelling shit everywhere, check the bottom of your shoe," Ginny quipped.

"What in Merlin's name is that supposed to mean?" Blaise asked, faintly scandalized at the crass language.

"It's a vulgar way of saying 'if everyone around you has a problem with you, then you're the problem, not them'," Hermione explained, shooting Ginny a disapproving frown for her language.

She too looked tired of her boyfriend's attitude. Draco was starting to sense a theme; Weasley was exhausting.

"Hey, I've got a question," Theo said with an odd grin. "How is it we're sitting at the Slytherin table and outnumbered by lions?"

"Cos this is the happening place to be," Ginny quipped.

"Maybe we're imposing..." Hermione looked unsure, starting to get up.

"Don't be ridiculous, Granger, sit down," Theo said rolling his eyes. "It was a joke."

Theo always did have an unusual sense of humour. His wit was often dry and sarcastic and, to the uninitiated, came off as unfriendly or even rude, but once one became accustomed to his brand of humour, he was actually quite funny. It was a good sign anyway, that he had invited Hermione to stay, and it quelled some of Draco's anxiety about how she'd be welcomed at their table.

Perhaps, like Draco, Theo had come to see the absurdity of blood purity and overcame his feelings about muggleborns. Of course it was always possible that it had been an act all along and Theo had never believed any of it and only engaged as a defence against scrutiny by his

extremely bigoted father and that of his peers in Slytherin house, especially Draco himself. Draco wondered if it would be too intrusive and nosey to ask him about it sometime.

“So, Potter,” Blaise asked conversationally. “How’s it feel to lose the dead weight?”

“Ask me again in a month,” Harry said with a sigh. “Right now I’m just tired.”

“I heard the two of you had a massive row in the common room,” Theo said, unknowingly answering one of Draco’s questions. “Sorry I missed it. I would have brought popcorn.”

Ginny snorted. Draco suspected she would have done the same.

“It was not pretty,” Neville informed him.

“Oh, Harry,” Ginny added, a thought occurring to her. “Don’t be surprised if you get a letter from mum all concerned about your recent choice in society.”

“He’s telling on Harry to his mother?” Draco asked incredulously.

“Oh, mum’s always considered Harry one of her own so it’s a bit like telling on his brother to his mum,” Ginny replied.

“Didn’t the two of you go out?” Blaise asked with a grin. “Wouldn’t that be like dating your brother?”

Ginny wrinkled her nose in disgust while Harry looked perturbed.

“No it’s *not*, thank you,” she snapped.

“The twins always did treat Harry like a little brother,” Neville pointed out. Bravely, Draco thought, given the fiery glare the redhead was shooting him across the table. Ginny was not a witch to be crossed.

“Just because half my brothers and both my parents thought of Harry as one of their own does not make my dating him in any way incest,” she snapped at all of them angrily as if they said it did.

“Ron’s probably going to write to your mum about a pack of lies and made up rubbish,” Harry sighed, bringing the topic back around while trying to put out Ginny’s flames.

“Probably,” she agreed, throwing her hair over her shoulder like she was trying to brush their remarks off with it. “I’ll write her too, just in case, so she doesn’t get the wrong idea of what’s happening here.”

“What wrong idea would that be?” Hermione asked.

“Probably that I’ve fallen in with the wrong crowd,” Harry guessed gloomily. “Remember how Molly reacted to what Witch Weekly was printing about you supposedly two-timing me with Krum?”

Hermione pursed her lips, apparently remembering a less than motherly reception from the Weasley matriarch.

“You’re a grown ass wizard!” Ginny exclaimed in frustration.

“Not to mention Saviour of the Wizarding World,” Blaise added.

“And that!” she agreed. “I think it’s about time mum stops concerning herself with your social life.”

“You’ll get no argument from me,” Harry agreed. “It’s like I’m fifteen again, trying to join the Order and demanding to have some say in what they do with me and there she is treating me like a child.”

“At least you had Sirius and Remus in your corner then,” Ginny sighed. “Don’t worry, I’ll have a word with her. Maybe we can recruit George to help too.”

“By ‘Order’ do you mean the Order of the Phoenix?” Theo asked. “You were actually a member? At fifteen?”

“Not exactly,” Hermione answered. “They wouldn’t let us because we were underage.”

“I did manage to convince them to let us sit in on one meeting as it was about me anyway,” Harry added.

“Not me though,” Ginny griped. “Mum said I was too young.”

“Molly said we were *all* too young, even the twins, who were seventeen at the time,” Harry said, nodding. “But Sirius overrode her because, without my aunt and uncle, he was technically my guardian. I think the rest of the Order knew he’d just tell me anyway.”

“Then when that was settled, the twins insisted that they were of age and if Harry got to stay, so should they,” Ginny continued. “And of course Ron and Hermione got to stay too cos Harry would have just told them everything anyhow. But mum made me leave.”

“I told you everything when I went up to bed, anyhow,” Hermione said shaking her head fondly.

“And if you hadn’t, the twins would have.”

“So you were never actually *in* the Order?” Theo pressed.

“I mean after Dumbledore was killed, we kind of *were* the Order,” Harry shrugged. “We all sort of broke off into small groups and did our own thing with no one to organise us.”

“It’s a bloody wonder you won the war with disorganization like that,” he said, somewhat awed.

“It’s a small wonder we won with more than half the people fighting on our side being barely seventeen, if that,” Neville pointed out.

“That’s pretty messed up,” Theo agreed.

“What were you two doing during the war anyway?” Ginny asked bluntly.

Draco felt this was probably a risky question. If he didn’t know for a fact that neither of them had been involved with the Dark Lord he’d be concerned that it would bring up some uncomfortable subjects. Not that they’d answer in any incriminating way if they had been. It was a touchy subject anyway

“Fled the country, didn’t I?” Blaise answered with a shrug. “Mum packed the two of us up before I even got on the train after sixth year. Took us to a safehouse she had set up in Italy two years beforehand when Potter told everyone that You-Know-Who was back.”

“I ran too,” Theo said. “I knew my dad was gonna make me take the Mark and I just ran. I got off the train at Kings Cross and I apparated away before my dad even saw me. I hid out in a muggle village for a year, no post, no magic, no contact with the wizarding world at all. Total isolation. I was afraid someone would find me.”

“How did you find out the war was over if you had no access to post?” Neville asked.

“Blaise found me two months ago,” he shrugged.

“It took some doing and half the summer,” Blaise said proudly. “It was like he’d disappeared off the face of the earth. I was actually scared he’d been killed. But I thought to look in muggle communities and hired a muggle investigator to find him. It wasn’t cheap either!”

“So you lived among muggles for a year?” Hermione enquired curiously. “Had you ever done anything like that before? What was it like?”

“I mean, there was a steep learning curve,” Theo shrugged. “I had to learn how to do all sorts of basic tasks like cooking and cleaning. I had to get a job bussing tables at a diner because I had no money, and I swear I broke more plates than I cleaned. And every muggle I met for the first few months thought I was a foreigner because I didn’t understand any of the references they made to television or sports.”

“That’s so interesting, tell me more,” Hermione seemed enraptured by the idea of a pureblood having to learn to live like a muggle.

A light bloomed in Theo’s eye that Draco recognized from when they were younger. It was always followed up by him bringing the witch that put it there to their dormitory to snog. He was leaned forward, elbows propped on the table in front of him while he spoke with his hands as he enthusiastically told Hermione all about his year as a muggle. Every part of his body language screamed that he was interested in her.

Draco would have to have a word with him. Hermione’s relationship might be rocky for the moment but she very much still had a boyfriend. And even if she and Weasley broke up – and they might with how things were going – he didn’t want Theo to use her like he used all the other witches he’d been with. Hermione deserved better than a player.

“I don’t know which is more surprising,” Neville was saying as they were relaxing in the common room after supper. “That Nott spent a year as a muggle or that Zabini’s mother took steps to leave the country the moment we were all warned that Voldemort was back.”

Draco flinched at the name but he was the only one in their small group to do so. It was just him, Neville, Harry, and Hermione; Theo and Blaise had gone off to do other things and Ginny had Quidditch practice. Draco had gotten used to Harry or Hermione saying the name but Neville saying it had caught him off guard. He knew he shouldn’t be surprised since despite how timid Neville had been growing up, the war had transformed him into a much more confident and courageous person, while it had somehow made Draco more timid. It was like their roles had been reversed.

“Signora Zabini has always been the prudent sort,” Draco said, hoping no one would comment on his reaction to the name. “I’m not the least bit surprised that she responded to that news that way. Either she believed Harry when he said he was back, or she didn’t believe him but made preparations anyway on the off chance that he wasn’t lying. She’s very much the sort of person who covers all her bases and has a plan for every contingency.”

“That’s smart,” Neville remarked. “Then I guess the most surprising bit is Nott’s stint as a muggle. I’m surprised he didn’t starve to death, has he ever made food for himself before?”

“Probably had house elves doing it for him his whole life,” Draco answered. “I have no idea how to feed myself if I’m being honest. Someone else has always done it for me, and Theo comes from old money too so it’s probably no different.”

“Yeah I have no idea how to cook, either,” Neville admitted.

“You really should learn,” Hermione said disapprovingly. “It’s an important life skill and you never know when you’ll find yourself without people to do it for you. You can’t go through life relying so much on house elves and the women in your lives.”

Draco nodded receptively. It really was sensible to know how to take care of yourself on a basic level. He wondered if there were classes he could take.

“Do you know how to cook, Harry?” Neville asked.

“Oh yeah,” Harry said a little too casually. “I’ve been cooking since I could reach the hob.”

Draco realised that Harry’s muggle relatives probably made him cook for them. He exchanged a look with Hermione that told him she had come to the same conclusion. She may not know the complete account of Harry’s abuse at the hands of his aunt and uncle but she knew enough.

“Must be a muggle thing to teach kids how to cook,” Neville said thoughtfully.

“No I think it’s a money thing,” Hermione said shaking her head. “Mine and Harry’s families are firmly middle class, and middle class people don’t have other people doing their chores for them. You and Draco are upper class, loads of family money and house elves and things like that.”

“Molly Weasley has been teaching her kids to cook since they were all really small,” Harry added. “Starting with stuff like helping her shuck peas or chop potatoes, setting the table, that sort of thing.”

Hermione nodded in agreement.

“She made them do it even though she could have probably done it all quickly with magic, she wanted them to have an appreciation for the work that goes into a meal,” she explained.

“That and they don’t teach household spells at Hogwarts,” Harry added.

“Which I’ve always thought was really stupid,” Hermione huffed. “You learn all these household spells at home and they’re passed on through the family so sometimes the knowledge of how to do something like folding your socks with magic completely disappears. And muggleborns don’t get to learn them at all! It would be so useful to have a class that teaches these things.”

“Be a sight more useful than Divination,” Neville agreed with a sigh.

“I sometimes wonder if there’s things my parents might have taught me that’s just lost forever now,” Harry sighed.

“I’ve wondered that for myself,” Neville said in sympathy. “Gran’s never exactly been handy with the household spells. And most of the ones I know are greenhouse related that my Great Aunt Enid taught me.”

“Well my aunt taught me how to cook, and garden, and do the laundry, and all that, so I’ll probably be doing it the muggle way for the rest of my life, ‘cause I don’t know who’s supposed to teach me the spells that do all that,” Harry shrugged.

Draco frowned, the way Harry spoke about his aunt teaching him to do these things made it seem like a parent teaching their child how to live in the world without them, but Draco knew better that Harry was taught these things so his aunt would have less work for herself while also keeping Harry occupied and out of sight.

“Maybe Molly can teach you,” Hermione suggested. “She’s taught me several very handy sewing charms as well as some tricks in the kitchen.”

“Yeah she probably could,” Harry agreed, nodding thoughtfully. “Assuming she doesn’t stop speaking to me after she reads whatever Ron writes her.”

“Don’t be ridiculous, Harry,” she rolled her eyes. “Molly loves you like one of her own.”

“Because I was best mates with her son and dating her daughter,” he retorted. “As I’m no longer doing either of those things—”

“You’re *family*, Harry, don’t be stupid,” she chided him, loading her tone with patience and kindness.

Draco wondered how many times in his life Harry had needed to be told he didn’t have to do something for someone in order to be loved by them. It made sense that it would be his initial impulse to be something for someone else for them to care about him, given his childhood was entirely devoid of love, and he was expected by his relatives to prove his usefulness just for them to keep him around. He wondered how many *more* times he’d have to be told before he believed it. Before his initial expectation was kindness rather than indifference.

“Have you thought about writing to Mrs Weasley first?” Neville suggested. “You know, before Ron can spin a story?”

“And what am I supposed to say?” Harry demanded, peeved. ““Oh I’m friends with someone who used to bully us and Ron and I broke up over it, is it cool if I still come round for Christmas?””

“Yes,” Hermione said simply. “Don’t use those words obviously. Just tell her exactly what’s happened.”

“Yeah, you shouldn’t leave this to Ginny,” Neville agreed. “She’ll go to bat for you but it’s going to come off as sibling rivalry instead of what it really is.”

“And what is it really?” Harry queried, eyebrow raised.

“You saw the good in someone no one else did and you made a friend and Ron can’t bring himself to be mature about it and keeps stirring up trouble and you finally had enough,” Neville said decisively.

Draco wasn’t sure he felt comfortable being talked about like this while he was sitting there. It was like he was a stray dog that no one had wanted because he had fleas and kept pissing on the carpet, and that Harry was doing this very charitable thing by taking him in. He shifted awkwardly in his seat on the couch.

Harry noted the movement and placed a hand on his knee.

“Are we making you uncomfortable talking about you like this?” he asked.

Draco’s throat went dry and he felt his face flush, all of his attention zeroed in on the warm hand gripping his leg. He didn’t trust that his voice wouldn’t crack so he just shrugged awkwardly. Harry seemed to understand – bloody mind reader that he was – and insisted on a change of subject after that, but he left his hand where it was, either as a soothing gesture or an unconscious one, Draco couldn’t figure out.

Neville’s attention kept flicking to where Harry’s hand rested above Draco’s knee and the flushed look on his face with a calculating look. Draco was suddenly very conscious of how closely on the couch he was sitting to Harry but didn’t want to move both because he enjoyed the closeness and because he feared that if he did, he’d draw *more* attention to it by moving.

Chapter End Notes

Things are heating up in the friend group! If Ron's not careful he's gonna end up bitter and friendless.

Chapter 23: Waxing Gibbous

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tuesday proved to be his worst day of term so far. The full moon was only a day away and his dreams had become full of blood and violence. What was worse is that he'd grown accustomed to sleeping with Harry and this was their first night apart since becoming unstuck and Draco hated it.

He struggled to get out of bed that morning as it felt like he hadn't slept at all, and when he finally managed to drag himself to breakfast, he was reminded that his father's appeal was that afternoon.

"I've been asked to testify," Harry stated while Draco nibbled unenthusiastically on some toast at the Slytherin table. "They want me to be there at two pm today. Which means I'd have to leave during my free period after lunch and I probably won't be back until supper."

Draco didn't say anything. He knew that if Harry spoke against Lucius at trial, he'd never succeed at his appeal. Draco would never have to see him again.

"I don't *have* to, you know," Harry added gently.

"What?" Draco suddenly sat upright and stared at him incredulously. "Why wouldn't you?"

"Because he's your dad," he explained like it was obvious. "Your feelings on this must be pretty complicated."

"They're *not* complicated," Draco gritted out. "If he'd answered for the shit he's done at the end of the last war, maybe I wouldn't be where I am now. He made his mess, he should clean it up."

"I agree," Harry placated. "But I don't need to be the one that sends him back to Azkaban."

"Of course you do," Draco insisted. "He's always getting out of all of his trouble through corruption and bribery. It doesn't matter how many people know what he's done, he'll get away with it. But no one can say no to you. You got me and my mother off, and people would have been happy to throw us both in Azkaban right along with him. If you say he belongs there, that's where he'll stay."

"Then d'you *want* me to speak at his appeal?" Harry confirmed. "Be *completely honest* with me here. I'll speak or not speak, it's your choice."

Draco knew Harry was appealing to their agreement to be totally honest while also reminding him that he has choices and he should think carefully about his decisions.

He thought it over. Even if Harry doesn't testify, there was a good chance that Lucius would be locked back up regardless, but there was always that small chance that he'd weasel out

like he always does. If Harry did testify, he'd undoubtedly talk about all the things he'd witnessed Lucius doing, some of which even Draco probably didn't know about. If asked if he thought Lucius belonged in Azkaban, he'd say he did, and that would be the end of that. When a war hero condemns you, you're done. Harry had a lot of power in this situation and he was handing it all to Draco. He'd not go if Draco asked him not to. It was too much to ask of him to make that choice.

"I don't want to be the one who has this power over my father's future," Draco admitted. "I don't want to ever see him again, but whether that's by choice or because he's locked up, I don't care. You should do what *you* think is right, don't worry about how complicated my feelings might be."

Harry nodded silently. He looked thoughtful for a long time before coming to a decision.

"I'll testify," he decided. "He's done some really terrible shit and has shown no remorse for it, and I don't think he deserves to get away with it."

Draco nodded.

"Good," he said firmly. "Then it's settled."

The rest of the morning Draco's stomach was in knots, his little bit of toast sitting like a stone in his gut. The news of Lucius Malfoy's appeal was the only thing anyone was talking about in the lulls between teachers' lectures and instruction to pay attention to the material. All that on top of the restless anxiety usually brought on by the full moon and Draco couldn't focus on his lessons.

"You don't look well, Draco," Hermione fretted at lunch. She made an aborted gesture to touch his forehead to see if it was hot – it probably was – but she withdrew before making contact. "Are you coming down with something?"

"Might be," he groaned pathetically, glad that he was able to lie again.

"Maybe you should see Madam Pomfrey," she suggested.

"No, I'll be fine," he said, pretending to be brave. "I'll just go have a nap during my free period. I didn't sleep great last night, that's probably all it is."

"If you're sure..." she said worriedly.

"I'm fine, Hermione, don't worry so much."

He wondered if it would just be simpler to tell her now that he was a werewolf and his general malaise was due to the approaching full moon. Every instinct in him told him not to tell but he knew she'd never treat him differently because of it and she'd never tell another soul. He'd rather just wait until she figured it out on her own, it made for awkward conversations but he just couldn't bring himself to tell her.

Harry walked him back to his dorm after lunch to make sure he actually did rest.

“You know I’m not actually ill, right?” Draco pointed out. “It’s just the full moon.”

“Yes but I know you didn’t sleep last night so go take a nap right now,” Harry demanded like a mother hen.

“So bossy,” Draco teased. He wriggled his eyebrows suggestively. “What will you do if I don’t?”

Harry’s face instantly turned scarlet and he inhaled sharply through his nose. He shivered and his eyes roved over him from head to toe and back again.

“I *really* want to get into that subject,” he said breathlessly. “But you need to sleep and I have an appeal to testify at.”

Draco pouted.

“I suppose it can wait until after the full moon,” he sighed.

“Why not tonight?” Harry asked, sounding slightly disappointed.

“If I’m even in the mood tonight, I’m worried I’ll be too rough,” Draco confessed. “I’m worried I might bite too hard and break your skin. I tend to get more feral as the full moon approaches and I’m *really* not trying to acquire a taste for human flesh.”

“I’m not sure that’s how it works but okay,” Harry agreed easily. “Whatever makes you comfortable.”

“I’ll be more in my right head on Thursday anyway,” Draco assured him.

So Harry tucked him in – which was very sweet – kissed him goodbye, and left Draco to try and get a nap in before he had to be up again for Muggle Studies.

He missed Muggle Studies.

And dinner.

He’d slept through all of it and was only awoken in the middle of the night when Harry crawled into bed with him.

“Wha...?” Draco asked blearily.

“Sorry,” Harry whispered. “I had a nightmare.”

“You okay?” he whispered back, still very tired but wanting to check in.

“I’ve been better,” Harry shrugged. “Can I sleep here tonight?”

A lump formed in Draco’s throat as he agreed and made room for Harry and pulled the blanket over them both while Harry snuggled in close like they had when they were stuck together. Only now, Draco was able to hold Harry close to him with both arms, which he promptly did.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Draco whispered once they were settled.

“Not really,” Harry sighed.

“How did the appeal go?” he asked instead.

“He got his sentence reduced from life to twenty years,” Harry informed him.

“Wonderful,” Draco said sarcastically.

“He gave me a letter to give to you,” he added. “I left it on my bedside table, I can give it to you in the morning.”

“Did you read it?”

“No, it’s not for me.”

“How did he seem when he gave it to you?”

“I dunno,” Harry shrugged again. “He was sort of odd. Not like how I’ve ever seen him. Sort of distant, defeated. The only time I saw any emotion in him was when he gave me that letter and asked me to get it to you. He sort of almost pleaded with me to get it to you.”

“Weird,” Draco wasn’t sure what to make of that. He also wasn’t sure he wanted to read that letter. He’d been ignoring all the other letters he’d been owled.

“Your mum was there,” Harry added.

“I expected that. Did she say anything to you?”

“She asked me how you were doing. Said you hadn’t answered any of her letters.”

There was an unasked question in there but Draco didn’t address it.

“What did you tell her?”

“I said you’d been keeping out of trouble and that you and I had become friends,” his tone became hesitant. “Was that okay?”

“Yeah,” Draco decided. “I’m sure the press’ll get ahold of that news sooner or later anyway. I can just see the headlines now ‘War Hero Harry Potter Befriends Ex-Death Eater Draco Malfoy, more on page 11’.”

Harry chuckled.

“You don’t think it would make the front page?” he teased.

“Maybe if it’s a slow news day,” Draco returned.

“Oh you know everything I do makes the front page,” Harry laughed quietly, pretending to be cocky. “I swear I can’t wipe my arse without ten reporters asking me about the quality of the loo roll.”

Draco chuckled.

“Imagine if they learned what we get up to behind closed doors.”

“Hmm, now *that’s* news,” Harry agreed, grinning softly against Draco’s chest. “Though I think they’d be more focussed on my sexuality and digging into my personal life rather than scandalized about *who* I’m shagging.”

“Oh they’ll be *so* scandalized,” Draco disagreed. “They’ll think I’ve corrupted you.”

“Is *that* what you’ve done?”

“Oh it’s definitely you that’s done the corrupting,” Draco teased.

Harry hummed against his chest but didn’t say anything in response.

“Harry?” Draco asked, wondering if he’d fallen asleep.

He hummed again in answer.

“I’ve decided I don’t care who knows I’m gay.”

Harry shifted so he was looking at him with squinted eyes through the gloom.

“You’re sure?”

“Yeah,” Draco breathed. “I’ve been thinking about it for a few days now and I’ve decided. The whole reason I was keeping it a secret was because of bullshit old world pureblood culture and I’ve decided I don’t want anything more to do with it. I want to be able to love whoever I want and no one gets to have a say in it. Especially not my father.”

“Okay, Draco,” Harry said gently.

“We don’t have to tell people we’re seeing each other though,” he added hastily. “I mean if you don’t want to. I wouldn’t mind if you wanted to though.”

Harry was quiet for a long time.

“I don’t want my private life to be public business,” he said finally.

“Okay,” Draco said agreeably. He was honestly fine with keeping it a secret, but a small part of him was disappointed.

“I’m okay with our friends knowing though,” Harry added. “Like Hermione, Neville, and Ginny. Not Ron though, he’d tell everyone.”

Draco didn’t point out that Harry and Weasley were no longer friends and so stating that he wouldn’t be told wasn’t required. It would take some getting used to, on Harry’s part, not to include Weasley in his considerations when thinking of his friends.

“Hermione already knows,” Draco pointed out instead. “And if you’re comfortable with Neville and Ginny knowing, then I’m fine with that too.”

“Okay, then we’ll tell them,” Harry decided and yawned hugely before snuggling back up to him.

Harry quickly fell asleep after that, his breath coming slow and even against Draco’s chest.

He felt warm and content. Harry was wrapped around him and using his chest as a pillow. He wanted to tell their friends that they were seeing each other. That had to mean that he saw potential in this relationship, right? He wouldn’t tell his friends if this was casual, would he? Or would he? Draco realised he didn’t know. Was Harry the sort of person to tell his friends when he was sleeping with someone casually, or was he the sort to keep that to himself?

Now that he considered it, Draco believed that Harry would tell his friends because he believed in transparency more than anything else. Harry hates secrets, that much was for certain. He hates keeping them, and he hates having them kept from him. When Hermione discovered their relationship, Harry was noticeably lighter and more relaxed. Though that could have also been because he was no longer afraid that she’d stumble on an uncomfortable question that he’d be forced to answer truthfully.

Harry couldn’t help but stand or sit close to Draco when they were in public. He’d find excuses to make contact, like when he’d lead him by the elbow – never the hand – or when he rested his hand on Draco’s knee, which Neville had *definitely* noticed. Draco knew it was only a matter of time before Harry slipped up and people saw what was really going on between them. Better to get it out now than for the wrong people to figure it out on their own and spread it around the school. He was incapable of controlling his face.

The next time Draco awoke, it was midday and Harry was creeping into his dorm, dressed in his school robes, carrying a tray of food. Had Draco slept through class?

“Oh you’re awake,” Harry remarked, noticing he was being watched. He set the tray down on the desk and came over to sit on the edge of the bed next to him. “How are you feeling? You missed Herbology, I have the notes and the homework in my room, I’ll get them to you tomorrow.”

Draco was overwhelmed by the kindness. Harry had let him sleep and brought him lunch, and took notes on the lesson he missed. In his hyperstimulated and slightly feverish state caused by the full moon which was only a few hours from rising, he was suddenly brought to tears by the gesture.

“Oh my god!” Harry exclaimed worriedly. “Are you okay? Did I do something wrong?”

“No,” Draco sobbed. “This is the nicest thing anyone has ever done for me.”

“It’s just a bit of soup,” Harry tried to deny looking distinctly unsteady by the bizarre reaction.

Draco sat up properly and pulled Harry into a tight hug, his scent – stronger than usual – filling his nostrils.

“You’re the best,” he mumbled against his neck, nuzzling him.

Once Harry was able to extricate himself from Draco’s embrace, he coaxed him into eating some soup, reminding him that he hadn’t eaten anything except a bit of toast more than a day ago. His stomach was roiling aggressively but he managed about half the bowl before giving it up.

“I usually get pretty nauseous near the full moon and I can’t eat much,” he explained. “But then after, I’m ravenous and eat loads.”

“What time does the moon rise tonight?” Harry asked.

“Six twenty-three,” Draco recited. He’d memorized the date and time of each full moon for the entire school year to be sure that he was prepared and wouldn’t find himself out of his dorm when the moon rose.

“Can I stay with you until then?”

“You can stay until six, but then you should go to dinner,” Draco decided.

“What should I say when people ask where you are?”

“What did you say when I missed Herbology?”

“That you must have slept in.”

“And they bought that?” he asked, incredulous. One does not simply oversleep and miss the entirety of a three hour lesson, not to mention lunch right after.

“Hermione suggested you might be ill,” Harry shrugged. “You *have* been looking peaky the last two days.”

“Then tell them that. I’m unwell and sleeping it off in my dorm. Pomfrey will probably back me up too if anyone asks.”

“I doubt anyone will ask,” Harry said with a smile. “Hate to break it to you but people don’t actually care that much if you miss classes and meals.”

“They might start to if they notice I do it monthly,” Draco pointed out.

“Maybe you should skive off on other days to throw them off the scent,” he suggested with a grin.

“Very funny,” Draco rolled his eyes. “No I’ll probably have to try harder not to sleep through lessons leading up to the full moon. I really shouldn’t have missed Herbology today and Muggle Studies yesterday.”

“You missed Muggle Studies too?”

“Yeah, I slept straight through from when you put me to bed to when you woke me up in the middle of the night.”

“Sorry about that,” Harry said sheepishly. “Was it weird that I just crawled into bed with you because of a nightmare?”

“I didn’t mind,” Draco assured him.

“I slept like shit on Monday,” Harry admitted. “I missed you.”

A broad grin spread slowly across Draco’s face, pushing out the wan tiredness that had been marring his features so far.

“I missed you too,” Draco breathed, heart in his throat.

“I never had nightmares when we were attached,” Harry said. “It’s like you keep them away.”

“That might be a tad codependent,” Draco quipped with a snort.

“Probably,” Harry shrugged. “But you haven’t scratched at that for a week,” he pointed at the Dark Mark clearly visible on his bare forearm. “So I’d say we’re even.”

It was true; any time in the last week that Draco found himself triggered by something that reminded him of the trauma of the last two years, Harry was already holding his hand firmly around Draco’s left forearm, preventing him from scratching it savagely to pieces. Harry protected him from hurting himself, so Draco had no room to talk about codependency.

They chatted aimlessly for hours. Harry had already had lunch before he came up and they had afternoons free on Wednesdays so had no need to leave him alone in his dorm with the wolf scratching at the edges of his consciousness to be let out.

As the afternoon wore into evening, Draco began to feel restless and began squirming or kicking his feet or flapping his hands to try and rid himself of the feeling of needing to sprint from the room.

“You okay?” Harry asked in concern.

“Yeah, this is pretty normal,” Draco assured him. “It’s like my skin is crawling while some instinct inside is telling me to run.”

“Run from what?”

“Not *from* anything exactly,” Draco tried to explain. “Just *run*. I have all this energy and restlessness and I have to contain it to this room because if I don’t...”

He didn’t have to finish the sentence. Harry had been in close proximity to a transforming werewolf so he knew well the potential consequences of being in the open with one.

“Does running around help the feeling go away?”

“A little, I suppose,” he said with a shrug. “But I don’t exactly have a lot of room to do that in here.”

“Remus used the Shrieking Shack when he was at Hogwarts,” Harry informed him. “But it’s pretty cramped in there too.”

“He went all the way to Hogsmeade and locked himself in a haunted building on full moons?” Draco asked incredulously. That seemed a lot more convoluted than creating a secure room closer to home.

“Actually the Shack never was haunted,” Harry said with a laugh. “All the noises the villagers could sometimes hear from it were actually just Remus on full moons.”

Draco stared. The shrieks and noises heard in the Shrieking Shack were just a confined werewolf? Didn’t anyone notice they only occurred on the full moons?

“There’s a secret entrance from the grounds to the Shack, too,” Harry added. “It’s under the Whomping Willow.”

“You’re kidding!” Draco exclaimed. “Who puts a secret entrance under a tree that clobbers anything that gets too close?”

“Dumbledore,” Harry said simply.

Draco gave him a wry look that said that wasn’t a good enough answer. Harry just laughed and elaborated.

“The tunnel and the tree were placed there *specifically* for Remus,” he explained. “The tree prevents people from discovering the tunnel and going down there during the full moon. There’s a way past the tree, I’ll show you sometime.”

“Do you just somehow know all the secrets in this castle?”

It certainly felt like it. Harry seemed to have his ear to the ground and his nose in everyone’s business. It was probably one of the many reasons people thought he’d make a good auror.

The bell to indicate the start of dinner rang then, signalling the end of their socialization for the evening. Draco now had twenty-three minutes until the moon rose and he was locked in the room until it set.

“I’ll come see you in the morning?” Harry offered, heading to the door.

“You can try,” Draco hedged. “I might be sleeping it off, you might be late for Potions.”

“Well, I’ll check on you anyway,” he promised. “If you’re sleeping, I’ll leave you be and tell Slughorn you’re still ill.”

Warmth and affection bloomed in Draco’s chest. Harry gave him a swift kiss before leaving the room to go to dinner.

A short while later, three house elves appeared in Draco’s room and began removing the furniture and his belongings to be stored until the morning so that he didn’t destroy any of it during the night. He also undressed and paced his room in preparation. Without the furniture, the space echoed slightly and felt colder.

As the first painful twinges started in his joints, Draco wished that he had someone to stay with him the way Remus Lupin had when he was young. Going through the transformations might not be so horrible if he had someone to help him through it.

Chapter End Notes

There is a chapter that takes place between this one and the next posted on Harry's Choice but it contains spoilers for Chapter 33. So I leave the choice up to you, dear readers. If you want to see what Harry gets up to this first full moon of term now go ahead and head over to [Chapter 6](#) of Harry's Choice now. But if you want a spoiler-free experience, I encourage you to wait until after you've read chapter 33!

Chapter 24: Wolfsbane

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: Self harm, Blood

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Draco woke the way he usually did after a full moon; every joint right down to his fingers and toes ached powerfully. He was naked and curled in a tight ball in the middle of his dorm room floor, whether from cold or pain from the transformation, he wasn't sure. Probably both.

He stretched all of his limbs meticulously. He had learned some time ago that stretching after a full moon was essential to not hurting for multiple days afterward. He rolled his head and wrists, ankles and shoulders, stood and bent his knees a few times, attempted to touch his toes then reached for the ceiling. Everything hurt and his muscles burned uncomfortably from the stretch, but he continued anyway because the benefits far outweighed the pain.

Once he was done stretching, he did a quick inventory of himself for injuries. He discovered his fingernails were broken and crusted with dried blood, probably from clawing at the stone walls. He also had a scratch behind his ear that matted his hair with dried blood, but the worst injury was to his left arm. It appeared that even as a wolf, he'd tried to mutilate the Dark Mark. There were deep teeth marks in his arm that still slowly oozed blood and burned with pain in a way that was somewhat reminiscent of when the Dark Lord would call to his followers using the Mark. He winced and shivered, trying to shove the memory down.

There was a soft knock at his door and he panicked for a second, not wanting anyone to see him in this state, but before he could do anything, the door crept open and a cautious bespectacled face peeked in.

"Oh good," Harry said in a soft voice. "You're awake."

He let himself in, carrying several bundles and a tray and quickly shut the door behind him.

"You said you'd be hungry when you changed back and I didn't think you'd want to go to the Great Hall straight after in your state so I brought breakfast to you," he explained, setting down the tray on the floor in front of him and beginning to sort through the bundles he'd brought.

Draco's stomach gurgled loudly, betraying his hunger and he looked at the food Harry had brought him. Somehow without being told, Harry seemed to know to stack his plate high with various meats; sausages, black pudding, bacon and ham. He'd also included two fried eggs, beans, toast and fried mushrooms. A full English without the tomatoes which Draco hated and Harry had obviously remembered. He sat down on the floor and dove in to the

delicious meal without a word; he wasn't sure he'd be able to say anything without bursting into tears at the kind gesture.

"Let me have a look at you," Harry said gently while he ate.

He knelt next to him and examined him all over without concern or awkwardness at Draco's nakedness. He tutted once at the injury to his left arm, and then took his right hand to examine more closely while Draco let him and continued eating one handed. Harry looked over the cracked and bloodied fingernails then looked around at the walls which Draco, too, only just noticed had shallow furrows in the stone where he had clawed at them all night. There were traces of blood in the scratches too.

"*Episky*," Harry muttered wandlessly while holding Draco's hand between both of his.

The stinging sensation in his fingertips disappeared and when he looked, the blood was gone and, while his nails were in sore need of a manicure, they were no longer splitting down to the quick.

Harry did the same to his other hand before turning his attention to the more severe injury on his forearm with a sigh. For this he drew his wand and Draco flinched for a second when Harry pointed it at his arm.

"It's okay," he soothed, rubbing his thumb back and forth on the back of his hand.

Draco forced himself to relax and tamped down the impulse to yank his arm back and cradle it against his chest. Past experience had him leery of wands pointed at the Mark. Harry pointed his wand at the injury again and murmured a spell Draco had never learned but which sounded strangely familiar.

"*Vulnera Sanentur*," he murmured in a sort of lyrical tone.

The still fresh blood that had been oozing down his arm slowly returned into the wound and the torn skin knitted itself weakly back together. Even Draco could tell that there would be a massive scar marring the Mark once it healed properly.

Not done, Harry reached inside one of the bundles and removed a vial of what Draco easily identified as pain reliever potion and a roll of bandages, both of which he used to cover the partially healed wound. Draco had no idea Harry was so handy with healing spells and wondered where he'd learned them.

"Healing spells are a pretty useful thing to learn when you're on the run," Harry said conversationally, once again seeming to read Draco's mind. "You might recognize that last one. Snape used it on you after I nearly killed you. I kind of became obsessed with learning it this last summer. It would have come in handy when Ron splinched himself last year. I only learned it because I didn't want to be in a position of needing that spell again and not knowing it. I never actually thought I'd find a lot of use in it."

"I thought it sounded familiar," Draco murmured, his voice rough, probably from howling all night.

“It’s not as good a job as Snape did, but that could just be because werewolf bites aren’t really susceptible to healing spells,” he added. “You’ll have a pretty nasty scar, but I expect you won’t mind that anyway.”

“It’s fine,” Draco said dismissively. “Thanks for all this, you didn’t have to bring me breakfast and heal my injuries.”

“Of course I did,” Harry insisted. “I’m happy to do it. Did I miss any?”

Draco pointed to the scratch behind his ear and Harry healed it easily.

“It’s still early so you have time for a shower and you won’t even be late to Potions if you’re planning on going,” Harry informed him.

“I should probably go,” Draco sighed. “I’ve missed too many classes already.”

In the other bundle, Harry had brought a clean uniform and his Invisibility Cloak. Once Draco had finished devouring his massive breakfast, they ducked under the Cloak with all of their things and slipped out of the eighth year common room and down to the prefect’s bathroom.

Draco showered alone while Harry chatted to him outside the stall.

“I took your advice and spoke to McGonagall last night about my career plans,” he informed him. “She gave me a bunch of paperwork for mastery programmes and stuff. She’s also arranging for talent scouts to come see me play Quidditch.”

“But eighth years aren’t allowed on house teams,” Draco said, confused while lathering up his hair with shampoo. “How will they see you play?”

It was one of the more controversial decisions that Hogwarts had come to during arrangements for an eighth school year for students who wanted or needed it. The conclusion was that they would have normally left the school by this time and would have left space for younger students to have a chance to play. Not to mention existing players might have the opportunity to serve as captain that they might miss out on if a returning eighth year like Harry stayed in that role. And indeed, this specifically affected Ginny Weasley more than anyone else as with Harry still on the team and serving as captain, she’d never have been given the role herself which she definitely deserved according to Harry.

“I’ve been allowed to practice with the Gryffindor team but not play in matches,” Harry explained. “I talked to Ginny about it this morning and she’s on board. I think she’s just excited that talent scouts might see her play too.”

Draco chuckled at this. He knew that Ginny’s intention was to play for the Holyhead Harpies since she brought it up any time someone discussed Quidditch within her hearing. Draco had only seen her play once and that was as Seeker when Harry had been banned in fifth year. He knew she was a Chaser these days but he hadn’t played Quidditch in years and never paid attention to how good she was. But Harry put her on the team when he was captain and spoke very highly of her skills so Draco was keen to see how she played against Slytherin in their

upcoming match in November, and if she made the Harpies, he'd definitely be interested in following her career.

"Have you thought any more about what team you'd like to play for?" Draco asked.

"Nah," Harry said carelessly. "I've decided I don't have a preference. I'm just going to see which teams are even interested and go from there."

"That's a very easygoing attitude for you," Draco observed, finishing up and rinsing off.

"Well it's hardly a life or death decision is it?" Harry laughed. "I'm taking life easy from now on. I just want to relax for once, you know?"

"I get it," Draco agreed. "Just don't play for the Cannons, you're a damned good Seeker but that'd be career suicide for you."

Harry just chuckled at this.

He turned off the water and stepped out of the stall. Harry offered him a towel and he began drying off. Draco found he liked that Harry didn't eye him up just because he was naked, the way Blaise used to. He knew it wasn't because Harry didn't find him attractive, but because it wasn't the time to get frisky and Draco wasn't a piece of meat. He appreciated that Harry was taking care of him because he wanted to and not because he expected something in return.

Harry passed him his clothes and he began to get dressed while he continued to talk.

"Hermione cornered me after dinner last night, by the way," he said with a significant tone.

"She knows," Draco concluded.

"Yeah," he nodded. "She put it together pretty quickly actually. I'm a rubbish liar, you should know that going forward. She knew I wasn't telling the truth when I told everyone that Madam Pomfrey sent you to bed. Neville and Ginny believed me though, I think. Hermione just knows me better I suppose."

"What did she say about it?"

"Only that your secret was safe with her," he shrugged. "She might have a hundred questions though."

"What else is new?" Draco drawled sarcastically.

He fixed his hair in the mirror and waved his wand over it to dry it. Harry had brought all of his school things and his backpack with them to the bathroom so they could go straight to class after.

"How did you get my things?" Draco asked.

"When I went to get you breakfast from the kitchens I asked for a few of your things like a change of clothes and your backpack," Harry explained casually.

“What? And they just gave them to you?”

“I asked Kreacher,” he shrugged.

“That decrepit old elf would do anything for you, wouldn’t he?”

“Probably.”

Harry packed his Cloak into his backpack and they started heading down to the dungeons for Potions.

“It’s kind of weird having an elf just so happy to do whatever you want,” Harry mused.

“That’s how every elf behaves with their master,” Draco said rolling his eyes.

“I guess,” Harry sighed. “I suppose it shouldn’t totally surprise me anyway. Dobby always acted that way with me so I guess I should be used to it, but it’s still odd.”

“Hang on,” Draco halted in the middle of the corridor and upset the flow of traffic, causing several students to have to dodge him while exclaiming in annoyance. “You don’t mean *my* Dobby? The elf my dad sacked when I was thirteen.”

“Well he didn’t *sack* him, exactly,” Harry said with a sly grin. “I tricked him into giving Dobby a sock.”

“*Why?*” Draco asked, baffled. “I *loved* that elf.”

“You did?” Harry asked surprised. “‘Cause your dad fucking hated him. And Dobby was only too happy to be freed.”

Draco frowned as they continued walking down to class. He knew his father had a habit of mistreating his elves, much to Draco’s distress when he was young. His father often used Dobby to teach him a lesson about how a proper pureblood behaves. Any time Draco was in trouble for something, Dobby would get the brunt of the abuse and he’d most often be instructed to inflict it upon himself. Draco would always try to be on his best behaviour because he couldn’t stand for his favourite elf to be hurt for it if he misbehaved.

“How did you even meet?” Draco asked, still confused.

“Oh, he tried to warn me about the Chamber of Secrets,” Harry shrugged. “He’s the reason Ron and I flew that car to school that year and also why that bludger was trying to kill me that game. He was trying to prevent me from being here when the Chamber was opened.”

“I have a thousand questions,” Draco remarked, wide-eyed.

“It’s a *long* story,” Harry chuckled. “But anyway, your dad turned out to be the reason for the Chamber being opened. He planted a... er... an *artifact* on Ginny and it possessed her and made her open the Chamber and sicced a basilisk on the school.”

Draco stared. His father was responsible for the Chamber of Secrets? And Harry said the word “artifact” like it had another meaning. It possessed Ginny to open the Chamber which should have only been opened by Slytherin’s heir. Something half the school thought Harry was because he could speak Parseltongue. He only knew of one other person who could speak the language; someone who would have loved to loose a basilisk on the castle and kill all the muggleborns.

“This *artifact*?” Draco asked slowly. “It wouldn’t happen to have been one of seven would it?”

He couldn’t ask properly in the press of students on their way to class but he was sure Harry would understand his meaning.

“Yeah,” Harry confirmed. “It was given to your dad to hide it but he never knew what it actually was. But then the Ministry was doing all those raids on your home that summer and he decided to ditch it. I think he thought if Ginny was the one caught with it, it would destroy the Weasleys’ reputation.”

Draco stared.

“Then after all that,” Harry continued. “I discovered that Dobby belonged to your family and it all made sense. I’d been talking to him all year and I knew he was miserable and wanted to be free so I tricked your dad into freeing him.”

Draco was lost for words. It felt like fate had been constantly pushing him and Harry towards each other. They had been connected in ways Draco had never understood until he got the whole picture from Harry. And every time Harry told him a story, he was either horrified or fascinated. He wondered if Harry would ever stop surprising him.

“Was he happy?” Draco asked finally. “I mean after. Dobby, was he happy to be a free elf? They usually aren’t. Did he ever find any new work? People don’t usually want an elf that’s been sacked.”

“Yeah he was really happy,” Harry told him with a hint of sadness in his voice. “He got a job here actually, at Hogwarts. I saw him from time to time and he was always such a cheerful little guy.”

“I saw him with you at the manor,” Draco remembered. “He helped you escape, I remember wondering how he’d come to even know you. I guess it all makes sense now. How’s he doing these days?”

Harry looked at him with wide sad eyes.

“I thought you knew,” he said softly. “He died that night, when Bellatrix threw that knife as we were disappearing. It hit him. He’s dead.”

Draco had to stop again to collect himself from the news. He hadn’t thought of Dobby in years and now he was learning that the last time he saw him was the last time he would *ever* see him.

“I loved that elf,” he whispered again, tears threatening to escape his eyes.

“Me too,” Harry said sadly. “He was happy in the end though. I gave him a proper burial. I can take you to his grave sometime if you want.”

Draco nodded silently and resumed walking.

They made it to Potions ahead of the bell by just a minute and sat down at their work table in front of Hermione and Weasley, the latter of whom sneered at him as they sat down.

“How are you feeling, Draco?” Hermione asked kindly when they sat down and began unpacking their bags.

“Much better, Hermione, thank you for asking,” he replied warmly.

“You missed Herbology yesterday, do you need the notes?” she offered.

“Harry already got them for me, but I don’t mind looking at yours too as you tend to be a bit more thorough,” he looked pointedly at Harry. “Not that I don’t appreciate the effort.”

“It’s fine,” Harry brushed him off with a grin. “You’d probably fare better reading Hermione’s handwriting anyway. Even when I’m writing with my proper hand, it’s all chicken scratch.”

“I pity the teachers who have to read your essays,” Draco teased and Harry chuckled.

“Pity the students who will have to one day read the assignments I give them,” he countered.

“Oh so you’ve decided to be a teacher, Harry?” Hermione asked enthusiastically.

Draco was surprised that Harry was talking about it so openly with people nearby who might overhear. He’d been so keen to keep his change in career plans a secret last week.

“Yeah,” Harry answered lightly. “But I’m going to do professional Quidditch first and I’ll teach when I retire from that.”

“Oh that’s a wonderful plan!” Hermione enthused. “You’ll be so great at it!”

“I thought you wanted to be an auror,” Weasley piped up suddenly.

“I changed my mind,” Harry answered shortly, and turned his back on him to fuss with their potions supplies.

“Well don’t expect me to support whatever team you sign with,” Weasley grumbled.

“Hey, maybe you should sign with the Cannons, Harry,” Draco said unnecessarily loudly with a smirk.

Harry turned to look at him incredulously, remembering their conversation about it in the bathrooms. Then he took in the teasing expression on his face and grinned slyly back.

“Why would I play for the Cannons?” he asked innocently. “They’re rubbish.”

Draco knew Harry sometimes had a vindictive streak but had never seen it directed at Weasley. He was pleased to hear a choked indignant splutter coming from the table behind them which was shushed by Hermione as Slughorn entered the classroom to begin the lesson.

“Good morning, class,” he greeted them jovially. “Now, half of you should be halfway through work on your Veritaserum, and since yesterday was the exact halfway point of your brewing cycle, now is the best time to begin the second half. So those of you who have Veritaserum to work on, you will continue those in a moment.”

Hermione raised her hand and Slughorn nodded at her.

“Yes, Miss Granger, I haven’t forgotten,” he assured her and she put her hand down patiently. “Since Veritaserum must be started on the new moon, the four of you—” at this he indicated Draco, Harry, Hermione, and Weasley. “—will have to wait to restart your potion. But in the meantime, you can get a head start on the next unit which is wolfsbane potion.”

Draco gulped. He wasn’t sure how he was going to be able to handle being in an enclosed space with potion fumes from wolfsbane. He hoped it didn’t make him so nauseous as to need to leave the room. He’d already missed too many classes in the last two days.

“Now before you all get started,” Slughorn continued. “Who can tell me how long it takes to brew wolfsbane potion?”

Harry and Hermione’s hands shot up. No one else’s did, not even the Ravenclaws.

“Yes, Harry?” Slughorn invited.

“Two weeks,” he answered promptly.

“Very good, and what is wolfsbane potion used for?”

Almost every hand went up.

“Yes, Mr Boot?”

“It keeps a werewolf tame during a full moon,” Terry Boot answered.

“Excellent!” Slughorn cheered. “Now it is important for the werewolf who consumes it to take a dose every day for seven days leading up to the full moon. Can anyone tell me what happens if he were to miss even one dose?”

Harry, Hermione, and Weasley all raised their hands.

“Mr Weasley?”

“It wouldn’t work,” he answered confidently which was uncommon for him in Potions. “It would be like he hadn’t taken it at all, he’d transform as usual and attack any human he crossed paths with.”

Draco had almost forgotten that the three of them had been in close proximity to Lupin when he transformed on a full moon after forgetting his potion. It was a miracle they lived let alone got away without getting bitten, though he supposed Sirius Black had something to do with that.

“Very good!” Slughorn praised and continued. “Now wolfsbane potion can be especially tricky and must be done absolutely perfectly for it to be useable by a patient, can anyone tell me why?”

Harry’s hand went up but it was the only one. Draco was surprised that Hermione didn’t seem to know the answer to this one since she seemed to always have the answers.

“Yes, Harry?” Slughorn called.

“If it’s not made perfectly, it can poison the werewolf who drinks it,” he answered knowledgeably.

“Very good, Harry! And can anyone tell me which ingredient makes this potion poisonous if done incorrectly?”

Harry and Hermione both raised their hands again.

“Miss Granger?”

“The main ingredient, wolfsbane,” she answered breathlessly like she’d been anxiously waiting to be called on. “Also called aconite or monkshood. It is generally very poisonous even to humans but is especially poisonous and often fatal to werewolves who consume it in even the smallest doses if it’s not prepared correctly.”

“Excellent!” Slughorn enthused. “Five points to each of you who answered, ten for Harry for answering twice. Now, since wolfsbane is poisonous even to those of us who are not werewolves, you’ll need your dragonhide gloves to work with this potion. I must urge you to be *especially* cautious—” this he directed at Weasley. “You should have enough time for your potions to get to the stage necessary for their two week simmer. The four of you will begin on that today and the rest of you may resume work on your Veritaserum now.”

“I’ll get what we need,” Harry offered and Draco agreed.

Even with dragonhide gloves, Draco wouldn’t be able to handle the wolfsbane because the mere smell of the flowers would cause him immense dizziness and could cause him to go faint. He was beginning to wish he had skipped this class after all.

“Hey,” Hermione whispered from behind him. She had evidently sent Weasley to fetch their supplies in favour of setting up their cauldron. “Are you going to be okay?”

“We’ll see,” he hissed back.

She wore a fretful expression but didn’t say anything as Weasley had just reappeared with their supplies. Draco caught a whiff of the purple flowers in his hands and his vision swam.

“Ron, we only needed the leaves,” he could hear Hermione chiding him.

“It was easier to just grab the whole thing,” he argued back.

“Put it back, Ron,” she pressed. “It’s a poisonous plant, what if you brushed up against it and got it on your skin?”

“Well I just won’t, will I?” he snapped, but his voice had an uncertain edge. “Out of interest, what *would* happen?”

“Aconitum poisoning starts with face numbness,” she recited as if reading from a textbook. “Then intense stomach distress, vomiting, diarrhea, shortness of breath, irregular heartbeat and then death.”

He just stared at her open mouthed for a long minute. In that time, Harry had returned with their supplies, including just the leaves of the blasted plant.

“Why’s Ron got an entire potted plant?” he remarked to Hermione.

“Because he’s an idiot,” Draco muttered too faintly for anyone but Harry to hear.

“Fine!” Weasley barked. “I’ll put it back.”

“Wait,” Hermione stopped him and put on her gloves. She plucked several leaves off the plant before sending him on. “*Now* you can put it back. Carefully!”

Relief was nearly immediate the second the plant was out of scent range and Draco’s vision went back to normal, though a headache was forming in his temples.

“I don’t want to see any of that same carelessness as you showed with your last potion, Weasley,” Slughorn lectured when Weasley returned to his table. “I have an antidote handy for aconite poisoning but I don’t want to have to use it, you understand me?”

“Yes, sir,” Weasley said sheepishly.

Draco leaned close to Harry.

“You should know,” he said in a very low whisper. “That antidote is useless to werewolves.”

Harry nodded in understanding.

“I’ll be extra careful,” he promised.

And careful he was. He worked with a look of intense concentration on his face the likes of which Draco had never witnessed. He also worked with such confidence, Draco would have

guessed this wasn't his first time brewing the potion if he hadn't known better.

Harry passed certain ingredients to Draco with strict preparation instructions but added them to the potion himself not wanting to risk the possibility of Draco receiving any splashback. He wasn't even looking at the instructions as he worked.

"Have you *memorised* the directions?" Draco asked in shock when he'd noticed.

Harry just shrugged and mumbled something about reading ahead. Draco knew he'd been reading the wolfsbane chapter in their textbook over and over but hadn't realised that he'd literally memorised the thing. He threw a surprised look over his shoulder at Hermione who looked equally impressed. Weasley just sneered but Draco ignored him.

By the time the class was beginning to wrap up, Slughorn started doing his rounds and examining their cauldrons, first remarking on how well the other two groups' Veritaserum was looking, then walking over to their wolfsbane potions.

"Very good work, Miss Granger and Mr Weasley," he praised. "Decent first try."

Hermione looked put out by this. She'd undoubtedly hoped to make a perfect potion on her first attempt as always.

"Oh don't look like that, Miss Granger," Slughorn soothed her. "This is one of the most complex potions out there, you're not going to get it right on your first go."

She just pouted while Slughorn moved on to Draco and Harry's potion.

"Merlin's beard!" Slughorn exclaimed loudly, making them jump. "Splendid job, boys! Look at that colour! And the sheen! A near perfect potion, gentlemen, very well done!"

"*Near* perfect, sir?" Harry pressed. "What should we have done differently?"

"Oh I wouldn't worry, Harry, my boy," Slughorn said jovially. "If you produce a potion on this level for your NEWTs, you'll be sure to get an O."

"Thank you, sir," Harry said dismissively. "But you said it's *nearly* perfect. What did I do wrong?"

"Ah a perfectionist, I suppose?" Slughorn said fondly. "Very well, give it a sniff, what do you smell?"

Harry leaned over their cauldron and gave it a whiff. Behind them, Hermione was also leaning forward to examine their cauldron.

"Garlic?" Harry said unsure. "I think?"

"Yes, very good!" Slughorn said brightly. "That smell is caused by overheating the wolfsbane and mandrake leaf juice. My guess is that you had the heat up just a touch too high at that stage."

Harry nodded studiously and grabbed a piece of parchment and began scribbling the advice down diligently.

“Is that the only thing I did wrong?” he queried.

“There is a slight film on the edges of your cauldron that suggests you crushed the occamy egg too finely,” he added. “But other than that you did very well.”

Harry continued to nod and write careful notes while Hermione grilled Slughorn for feedback on what she could have done differently on her attempt.

The bell rang to signal the end of class and they had to rush to clean up their cauldrons, Harry taking care of anything that came anywhere close to the wolfsbane.

“Not to worry, class,” Slughorn called as they were on their way out of the classroom. “You’ll all have multiple attempts at this potion to improve before your NEWTs. Enjoy your lunch!”

Draco privately believed that was a tall order as the fumes from the two wolfsbane potions had filled his head with fog, he had a pounding headache and he felt nauseous.

“You just need a little bread to settle your stomach,” Harry said gently when Draco reported this.

“If we’re working on that potion again next week, I’m skiving,” Draco said wearily.

Chapter End Notes

I may have gone unnecessarily nerdy on this chapter, researching wolfsbane and wolfsbane potion. I mean it's fanfic right? I could have written anything I liked and said because it's my headcanon it's true in this universe even if it isn't true irl or in canon but I'm too much of a perfectionist to do that. Wolfsbane is a very real plant and it is extremely toxic. People who come in contact with it and don't receive an antidote right away DO often die quite painfully. So that's fun...

Anyway, I can't wait 'til you all get to read the next chapter, it's very exciting. I will say that I had originally planned a chapter between this one and the one before it from Harry's POV but it rushed the plot a little and the composition felt weird with it being the only chapter from Harry's POV, so I put it in with Harry's Choice. In fact, that chapter was the very first Harry's Choice chapter I wrote.

Chapter 25: Boyfriend

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: Homophobic slurs

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

In their free period after lunch, Harry rounded up Neville and Ginny and had them meet him and Draco in a disused classroom on the first floor. He didn't invite Hermione in favour of having her distract Weasley instead.

"I'm not going to lie to you, Harry," Neville said with a wary note in his voice. "I get a little anxious whenever you pull one of us aside."

"Why?" Harry looked baffled.

"Because the last time you pulled me aside with a serious look on your face, you told me to kill a bloody great snake!" he exclaimed back.

"Oh," Harry said lamely making Draco snort. "Right, well this isn't nearly that serious."

"Well out with it then," Ginny prompted impatiently.

Harry looked at Draco nervously. Draco just gave him a pointed look and jerked his head in the direction of their friends. He was not going to be the one to tell Harry's friends that they've been hooking up.

"Right," Harry began anxiously. "So... er... Draco and I... erm..."

"You've been shagging," Ginny stated, impatiently cutting across his waffling. She said it like it was old news.

Harry's mouth fell open and Draco was just as shocked.

"How..." Harry apparently still couldn't form complete sentences.

"Did you forget how long we've known each other?" Ginny asked with a smirk. "Did you also forget that I had a crush on you for years and would just stare at you all the time? Embarrassing, I know, but I noticed so much, and one of the things I noticed was what you look like when you fancy someone."

"W-when I..." Harry stammered.

“Yeah, I remember how you were with Cho,” there was a teasing lilt to her voice. “All dopey in the face and you stared at her all the time.”

“So just like you stared at Harry all the time?” Neville teased.

“Oh shut it, you,” she huffed. “*Anyway*, you’ve been like that with Draco for over a week now and even though the two of you aren’t literally glued together anymore, you still go everywhere and do everything together. I saw you bring him breakfast this morning for Merlin’s sake!”

“And you’re always making excuses to touch him!” Neville added. “You’ve never been much of a touchy person.”

“Oh please!” Ginny said to Neville, rolling her eyes. “You didn’t believe me when I told you it was happening until just the other day. You owe me a galleon by the way.”

“You *bet* on me?” Harry demanded incredulously, finally finding his voice.

“Of course,” she said like it was obvious. “You’re easy money and I can always use a few spare galleons.”

Harry just stared at her dumbfounded.

“I assume Hermione already knows?” Neville asked.

“Yes, she’s known since basically the beginning,” Draco confirmed while Harry continued to gape like a fish.

“Does Ron know?”

“Of course he doesn’t know!” Ginny exclaimed before Harry or Draco could answer him. “With the way Ron’s been acting, do you think he’d keep that to himself if he did? I’m assuming you don’t want to tell him?”

Harry shook his head violently.

“Definitely not,” he said vehemently. “I might’ve told him before but not now.”

“Yeah, he’s been a right ass,” Ginny agreed, nodding firmly.

“So how long has this been going on?” Neville asked casually.

“Since the weekend after we got stuck together,” Harry answered.

“*Told* you!” Ginny exclaimed triumphantly to Neville and swatting him in the arm. “That’s why they were holed up in the Tower all weekend.”

“Alright, fine!” Neville exclaimed rubbing his arm where she hit him. “You were right, O’ Great Relationship Whisperer, are you happy?”

“I will be once I get that galleon you owe me,” she replied smugly.

“So neither of you have a problem with this?” Harry asked nervously.

“Should we?” Neville returned.

“Harry,” Ginny said gently. “If you’re happy, that’s all we care about. Everything else isn’t really our business.”

“Yeah,” Neville agreed. “And we’ll keep it between us if you’re not ready for other people to know. I know how the press likes to dig up dirt on you.”

Harry nodded in agreement, an awestruck look on his face. He was going to have to get used to his friends treating him with dignity and respect. Draco was going to make it his life’s mission to make sure Harry learned to expect it and stop being surprised when he received it.

“I should have known you liked blokes years ago,” Ginny remarked fondly. “The way you wouldn’t stop ogling Bill’s arse when you came to stay with us before the World Cup.”

“I did *not!*” Harry spluttered indignantly.

“You did too!” Ginny teased. “Even the twins noticed; they were discussing it while we were setting up our camp at the World Cup. They said you couldn’t take your eyes off him.”

“Hermione mentioned noticing it too,” Draco added helpfully.

Harry glared at him and Draco just grinned in response.

“I think I have to meet this brother of yours, Ginny,” Draco mused, trying not to laugh at the look of betrayal Harry was shooting him. “He must be very fit for all this fuss.”

Ginny and Neville laughed loudly at this.

“Traitors,” Harry muttered petulantly.

“Bill’s always been very good looking,” Ginny informed him. “But he’s married now so don’t get your hopes up. Besides, you’ve got Harry to ogle and I think you and I agree that he’s pretty fit too.”

Draco grinned at this while Harry turned scarlet.

He was very relieved that Ginny was teasing Harry about this and showed no obvious signs of jealousy. He had been worried about her reaction the most, that she might want Harry back, that he might be compelled by her wanting him back and he’d go. That Harry would leave Draco for the girl he admitted he still loved. But Ginny showed no signs of wanting Harry back, only joy for Harry’s happiness.

Draco was in high spirits the rest of the afternoon. Even the scolding he got from Professor Davies for missing Muggle Studies on Tuesday and the docked points for turning his essay in late couldn't dampen his mood.

Harry telling his friends made their relationship feel more solid, like it was a real relationship and not just two horny young men fooling around. Draco was quite easily the happiest he'd ever been. So naturally something had to go wrong.

Harry met him outside of Muggle Studies when it let out and ignored all the third years gawping at him as they all filed out.

"Merlin, it's like they've never seen a war hero before," Draco quipped.

Harry chuckled and fell into step beside him as they made their way in the direction of the Astronomy Tower.

"They see several every day," he replied with a grin. "Half of sixth, seventh, and eighth year fought in the Battle."

"I've seen the younger ones staring at Neville too," Draco remarked. "You think they'll ever get bored of it?"

"In my experience, something more interesting always comes along," Harry shrugged. "Kind of reminds me of first year."

They were about to walk past a tapestry depicting the Battle of Camlaan, when Harry suddenly and swiftly grabbed him by the elbow and pulled him into a passageway hidden behind it. The tapestry barely fluttered at their passing and all sound from the corridor became completely muffled.

Harry pressed him up against the wall and stepped into his space.

"Hi," he breathed close to his face, his breath fanning across Draco's lips.

"Hi," Draco murmured softly, his heart beating fast. "What's brought this on?"

"I wanted to kiss you before, during free period," Harry explained softly. "I want to kiss you all the time if I'm being honest. But Ginny and Neville were there and it didn't feel appropriate, and then you had to go to class and I missed you."

"It was only an hour and a half," Draco teased. "And you couldn't wait to get back to the Tower?"

"Nope," he said simply and dove in to capture his lips.

Draco hummed in appreciation and took great satisfaction in burying both of his hands in Harry's hair and tugging lightly. Harry groaned against his mouth and wrapped his arms

tightly around Draco's back until their chests were fully flush against each other. One of his hands wandered down to Draco's ass and gave one cheek a squeeze.

Draco was about to say they should take this upstairs as he didn't feel especially keen to get caught snogging against a wall in a secret passageway when suddenly said passageway was filled with light.

Harry and Draco sprang apart from each other and stared with wide, blinking eyes at the source of the light.

Ron Weasley was standing in the opening to the passageway, holding the tapestry aside, with a look of mingled horror and disgust on his face.

"Now it all makes sense," Weasley said in a cold voice.

He dropped the tapestry and his footsteps could be heard stomping away down the corridor before the tapestry stopped fluttering and blocked the sound again.

"Shit," Harry breathed.

"He's going to tell everyone, isn't he?" Draco whispered.

"Not if I have anything to say about it," Harry said in a hard voice.

He shot Draco a regretful look before running out of the passageway to intercept Weasley on his way to the Tower before he could tell their whole year.

Draco just stood there alone in the passageway feeling a bit overwhelmed. It didn't matter what Harry thought, he was never going to keep a lid on this now that Weasley knew. Especially not after their falling out. Harry had the tendency to expect the best from Weasley and had the equal tendency to be crushed when reality struck and Weasley showed him his worst instead.

It would be all over the school by breakfast, there was just no way around it. And by the following day it would be front page news that Harry Potter was bent and had questionable taste in men. He knew from experience that the Daily Prophet was rarely kind and Witch Weekly even less so.

Draco wasn't worried about how this would impact him; Draco's reputation could only be improved by association with Harry. But Harry had been dogged by the media his entire life, he just wanted one thing to himself, one thing that wasn't a circus. And to be seen cavorting with the likes of Draco could only damage his reputation, Saviour or no Saviour.

He stepped out of the passageway and resumed his trip up to the Astronomy Tower and the eighth year common room alone. He supposed he would have to face it all eventually, may as well get it over with now. And he had been having such a good day, too.

He stepped into the common room and was hit with a wall of noise.

In the centre of the room was Harry and Weasley with several metres of space between them. Harry had a calm anger about him while Weasley's face was several shades of red and he was doing the majority of the yelling. Surrounding them was what appeared to be the entirety of eighth year and a few seventh years who sometimes hung out in their common room, including Ginny who looked outraged and was glaring at her brother. The faces around the room were a mixture of confusion and annoyance.

"Of all people, why Malfoy?" Weasley was shouting.

"I don't owe you an explanation, Ron," Harry replied in a calm fury. "It's not any of your business – or anyone else's for that matter – who I spend time with."

"Oh it's a lot more than spending time, though isn't it?" Weasley sneered.

"Ron, don't," Harry warned.

"What?" Weasley demanded. "You don't want people to know that I just caught the two of you snogging in a secret passageway?"

Harry didn't reply and that was enough of a response to confirm the accusation. Their crowd of onlookers had a strange collection of responses. Several made "ohh" noises like everything suddenly made sense, many more gasped in shock or horror, and a few like Blaise and Theo exchanged gold, having obviously made bets on them like Ginny and Neville had.

Draco was rooted to the spot, unable to react, he just stood there numbly while their perfect little bubble was burst in front of their entire year while people shot looks bearing a wide variety of expressions in his direction.

"Nothing to say?" Weasley asked triumphantly.

"Who I snog and where isn't *anyone's* business," Harry grit out. "We're not friends anymore, Ron, I don't owe you any part of my personal life."

"Don't you think a man has the right to know if he's been sharing a bedroom with a *poof*?" Weasley shouted hotly.

Several voices around the room made noises ranging from horror to outrage.

Harry's expression changed from fuming to hurt in an instant.

"I beg your fucking *pardon*?" Ginny chimed in furiously.

Her brother rounded on her.

"Stay out of this Ginny," he snapped at her.

"Is that what you're *actually* pissed about, Ron?" Harry cut in coldly, a blank expression covering the obvious betrayal that Draco had seen there a moment ago. "Are you really angry that I was snogging Draco specifically or that I have a boyfriend at all?"

Draco's heart stuttered.

Boyfriend?

Harry called him his boyfriend. He was Harry's *boyfriend*? Harry was *his* boyfriend?

Weasley seemed to be having a similar struggle with the word.

"*'Boyfriend'?*" he demanded. "He's your *boyfriend* is he?"

Harry hesitated and cast his eyes across the room at Draco. He looked unsure for a second at Draco's wide-eyed astonishment, but when their eyes met, Draco felt his face melt into a joyful smile. Harry smiled softly back then turned to Weasley with a determined look.

"Yeah, he is," he said firmly, then looked around at the assembly with a hard look. "Anyone else have a problem with that?"

People hastily shook their heads in denial and he seemed satisfied with that so turned his acrimonious gaze back on Weasley.

"Seems you're the only one with a problem here, Ron," he said finally. "And I never would have figured you for that kind of language."

He sounded so disappointed, like Weasley had let him down.

He turned his back on him and made for the boys dorms. He glanced over his shoulder at Draco with a questioning look when he reached the stairs. Draco took that as invitation to join him and swiftly crossed the common room amid roughly thirty sets of staring eyes.

Harry pointedly took Draco's hand – something he'd never done before now – and led him up the stairs to Draco's dorm.

As soon as the door was shut, Draco pounced on him.

He grabbed him by the front of his robes and slammed their lips together. Their teeth clicked painfully but he ploughed forward. Harry responded just as aggressively and clutched at Draco's robes while he breathed heavily into his mouth.

A magical surge of pleasure hit Draco all over for a brief moment causing his knees to buckle and a very loud moan to escape him. Harry caught him and swung them around to the bed which the house elves must have returned while they were in classes. Harry backed him up to it and he allowed himself to be pushed down but pouted when their lips lost contact but Harry quickly crawled over him and reattached their mouths while they ground their hips together deliciously.

Harry broke the kiss first to catch his breath and Draco took the opportunity to regain control. He wrapped his legs around Harry's waist and surged upward, flipping their positions so that Draco was now on top so he could attack his throat with licks and nips and kisses.

"Hnn, Draco!" Harry moaned.

Draco's already hard cock jumped at the sound and he rocked his pelvis into Harry's, releasing more of those delightful noises that turned him on so much.

Draco trailed his lips and teeth up Harry's neck until he reached his ear. He nipped at the lobe and Harry whimpered and writhed under him.

"So I'm your boyfriend am I?" Draco whispered seductively into his ear. "Skipped a step don't you think?"

"Hmm?" Harry made a noise that was half moan, half query.

"I believe it's traditional to ask the bloke you fancy to be your boyfriend before you go around telling people he is," Draco teased and gave a particularly rough nip to the junction of Harry's neck and shoulder.

Harry moaned again and turned his head to give Draco more access. Draco smirked against his skin and pulled away to look him in the eye with an expectant raise of his eyebrows.

Harry whined at the loss of contact and pouted at him in confusion.

"Are you going to ask me?" Draco prompted.

Draco could see Harry's brilliant green eyes flicking minutely back and forth between his own eyes, searching for something.

"Will... will you be my boyfriend, Draco?" he breathed, a note of uncertainty in his voice.

"Of course I will, you beautiful disaster," Draco replied swiftly with the biggest, happiest smile of his life.

"Oh good," Harry said breathlessly and Draco snorted at the understatement as usual. "I guess this means I don't have to feel guilty for taking advantage of you anymore."

"Hmm," Draco hummed in amusement and dipped his head for a kiss. "Is that what you were doing? Because I feel like the one taking advantage."

"Oh really?" Harry teased, shifting his hips to get some friction and making Draco gasp. "I wouldn't mind if you took a little advantage now."

Draco groaned at the implication.

"I want you so badly," he gasped.

"I'm right here," Harry said invitingly.

"I mean I want..." Draco trailed off feeling slightly self conscious.

All the things he wanted to do to Harry flashed through his mind but he worried that Harry might not be ready for it, top of the list being taking his virginity. He groaned softly at the thought.

“Sirius once told me that if you can’t talk properly about sex, you shouldn’t be having it,” Harry said pointedly.

As much as Draco didn’t appreciate bringing Harry’s godfather into the discussion, he had to admit that it was sensible advice. And more than that, this was apparently Harry’s way of saying he wasn’t going to let him do any of the things he had in mind unless he asked properly.

“I want to be inside you,” Draco breathed after deciding how best to phrase the request without coming off too crass.

That was evidently the right thing to say because Harry shivered and his hips bucked reflexively.

“I want that too,” he moaned. “Fuck me, Draco!”

Well there went trying to be classy.

A bolt of magical pleasure shot up Draco’s spine and he nearly collapsed on top of Harry.

“Fuck!” Draco cried, panting. “If you keep doing that I won’t actually get to the good part before I come.”

“Let’s call it foreplay,” Harry said teasingly, slipping both of his hands under Draco’s shirt. “If I bring you off first, you’ll last longer.”

Another burst of pleasure shot through him and he gasped and shivered.

“I don’t – ah – think my – fuck – my stamina is the – hnn – one we need to be – ah fuck! Don’t stop!”

Draco was putty under Harry’s ministrations. He could barely articulate a thought while his whole body was alight with sensation which was only further heightened with every spot of contact he had with Harry’s body.

Harry seemed content with Draco’s pleasure for the moment which was good because Draco couldn’t seem to make his body cooperate with him to return the favour. He wished, not for the first time, that he could make Harry feel what he was feeling right now especially since Harry seemed to enjoy doing it to him so much.

He was dimly aware through the haze of pleasure that Harry was undressing him. He was nearly limp and Harry had already divested him of his robes and shirt and had switched their positions again so he could take off his shoes and trousers. Before he knew it, he was entirely naked and Harry was standing over him, slowly unbuttoning his shirt. Draco had wanted to do that but he contented himself that he’d have more opportunities to undress his boyfriend.

A delighted bubble swelled inside him at the realization. He had a boyfriend! Harry was his boyfriend!

The magical wave of pleasure ebbed and Draco was able to prop himself up on his elbows to watch Harry give him an awkward striptease. It was only awkward because of inexperience and Draco found it very endearing and quite sexy.

Harry shrugged his shoulders out of his shirt and it hung around his arms, his bare scarred chest reddened with lust. Draco could see evidence of his lovebites already forming on his neck and shoulder. Harry began unbuckling his belt at an agonizing pace and Draco's mouth filled with saliva. He wanted to bat Harry's hands away and rip his trousers and pants off and devour him, but reminded himself there was no rush. This was to be Harry's first time after all.

"Fuck, Harry, you're so sexy," Draco murmured, palming his painfully hard erection which had been nearly completely ignored up until now.

Harry smirked and cast his eyes up Draco's form, zeroing in on his hand slowly stroking his cock. Draco could swear he saw Harry's pupils dilate. He dispensed with the striptease and shoved his trousers down, toed clumsily out of his trainers, threw off his shirt and then dropped to his knees on the floor in front of Draco.

He batted Draco's hand away from his cock and Draco whimpered at the loss of contact but his voice caught in his throat at the hungry look in Harry's eye when their gazes met.

"I want you to fuck my mouth," he said – more like demanded – without a hint of embarrassment.

Draco nearly came on the spot. He'd really enjoyed fucking Harry's perfect mouth in the prefect's showers and had been hoping for an opportunity for a repeat. He hadn't expected Harry to demand it, though.

"Fuck yes!" Draco exclaimed breathlessly, and clambered to his feet.

Harry eagerly reached for his hips and wasted no time in diving face first onto Draco's cock and Draco shouted in surprised pleasure as he was immediately engulfed in Harry's hot, wet mouth. He almost staggered and had to hold on to the bedpost to stay upright. Harry bobbed his head a few times to slick him up with saliva then cast his eyes up at Draco and gazed at him expectantly through his eyelashes.

"Ah, fuck!" Draco moaned wantonly. He was not going to last long.

He ran his fingers through Harry's hair gently at first then roughly fisted his unruly hair tightly in his hand causing Harry to moan loudly around his cock, sending vibrations up his spine. Using his hand in Harry's hair for leverage, he pulled his head down on his cock as he thrust forward, slowly at first so he could get used to it.

He didn't gag this time and when Draco pulled out in preparation for thrusting back in, a long string of saliva connected the tip of his dick to Harry's lips. His face was red and his eyes were glazed, his eyelids half closed like he was drunk on Draco's cock.

Draco thrust back in, faster this time, and Harry made a gurgled moan around him, his cock deep in his throat. Draco cursed under his breath and thrust harder.

Draco could feel himself approaching climax quickly and was conflicted. On the one hand he'd planned for Harry to come first, but on the other, Harry seemed really desperate for Draco's cock and who was he to deny him that, really?

He continued to fuck Harry's face, giving him regular breaks every couple thrusts so that he could catch his breath. Harry showed no sign of wanting to stop any time soon but Draco was going to burst any second.

"Fuck, Harry!" Draco cried in warning. "I'm going to come!"

Another magical bolt of pleasure shot through him and Draco almost screamed both in orgasm and surprise at the sensation as his release shot out of him. His whole body convulsed and his cock slipped from Harry's lips before he was finished, spraying his face with his climax. The visual stimulus was enough for several more spurts of come to shoot out over Harry's face and chest.

Draco sagged at his release and had to sit down on the bed for fear of falling over as his legs turned to jelly. He was gasping for breath and Harry was doing the same. He sat back on his heels with a very smug look on his spunk-coated face.

"Proud of yourself are you?" Draco teased when he finally found his voice again.

"Definitely," Harry preened, licking some of Draco's come from around his mouth before waving a hand and vanishing the rest of the mess.

"I'm going to fuck you 'til you can't remember your own name," Draco growled at him.

"Promises promises," Harry challenged with a smirk.

"Get up here and I'll show you," Draco demanded.

Harry immediately complied, getting to his feet and climbing onto the bed on top of Draco. Not having that, Draco flipped them again and straddled Harry's hips to pin him to the mattress.

Harry whined and squirmed, his neglected cock straining against his pants and pressing into Draco's groin.

"Fuck me, Draco," he pleaded. "I want your cock inside me!"

Draco groaned with desire. He never would have guessed Harry would be so demanding in bed but it was turning out to be the hottest thing he'd ever heard.

"Patience," Draco murmured and fell forward to capture Harry's lips, demanding entry with his tongue.

Harry readily allowed the breach and tangled his own tongue with Draco's. Draco could taste himself on Harry's lips and it made his head spin.

He trailed his kisses from his mouth to his jaw, down to his neck where Harry tilted his head aside to give him better access. Draco accepted the invitation and bit down on the muscle of his shoulder just this side of bruising and Harry moaned deliriously and canted his hips upward.

Draco took his time like he'd wanted to do for ages and meticulously licked and kissed every inch of skin on Harry's torso he could reach, sliding down so he was straddling his knees instead of his hips. He paid special attention to his nipples, biting and sucking and causing delicious sounds to spill out of Harry's mouth. Without the ability to thrust up into Draco's pelvis, Harry's whines and moans started to turn desperate as he canted his hips up into nothing.

"Please, D-Draco," he babbled. "Need you... touch me... please... more."

Draco briefly considered making Harry ask for what he wanted more directly like he had done to Draco but all of his noises coupled with his pleas for more stimulation had made him hard again and he was only too eager to get to the main event. So he complied with the demand.

He slid further down and changed his position so he was now nestled between Harry's legs rather than straddling them. Then, without any further preamble, Draco hooked his fingers into the waistband of Harry's pants and pulled them down. He shifted around awkwardly for a moment to remove them fully and threw them somewhere behind him, not caring where they landed.

He sat back on his heels for a moment to admire the beautiful man before him. Harry was flushed all the way to his navel, his eyelids heavy and his pupils blown. His hair was an even bigger disarray than usual and his neck and chest were littered in little bites and hickeys. His cock was heavy and laying across his stomach, leaking copious amounts of precum which had dripped down the shaft and now glistened in his dark pubic hair.

Harry squirmed impatiently under the scrutiny and made grabbing motions with his hands at Draco.

Grinning at his antics, Draco leaned into the invitation and allowed himself to be pulled down on top of him. They both groaned at the same time when their cocks brushed.

"Fuck me, Draco," Harry demanded again, breathlessly.

"I intend to," Draco assured him. "But I have to prepare you first or it'll hurt."

He whined impatiently at this.

Draco withdrew and looked down at the floor for his wand which had been in the pocket of his robes but which he could no longer locate.

“Dracoooo,” Harry whined again.

“Hush, I’m looking for my wand,” he told him.

Suddenly something whizzed by his head and Harry reached up and snatched it out the air. It was Draco’s wand. Harry handed it to him and watched expectantly for what he was going to do with it. Draco blinked for a second before pushing his surprise aside for the moment while he focused on the task at hand.

Draco flicked his wand in the direction of Harry’s pelvic region and muttered two quick incantations that he’d learned years ago.

“Oh!” Harry exclaimed in surprise at the sensation of having his entrance cleaned and slicked up with the lubrication spell.

He shivered in anticipation while Draco discarded his wand carelessly on the bedside table and shifted down the bed again so that his face aligned with Harry’s groin.

He began by trailing licks and bites up the inside of Harry’s thighs from his knees to the junction of his groin and back again until Harry was a blubbery mess and pleading for more. Only then did he finally turn his attention to Harry’s weeping cock.

He decided he was finished teasing him and took almost all of Harry’s cock into his mouth in one go. Harry cried out and jerked his hips up but Draco had expected this reaction and pinned his hips to the mattress with one hand. With the other, he trailed his fingers down to his entrance and probed gently with the pad of his index finger.

Harry gasped but spread his legs further to allow better access.

Gently and slowly, while continuing to bob slowly on Harry’s cock, Draco breached his slick entrance with just the tip of his index finger. Harry moaned and threw his head back.

“More!” he gasped.

Draco complied and slipped his finger further in, the lubrication spell making it easy. Draco looked up to check in that Harry was taking it well. He was taking it *very* well and after a few pumps of the first, Draco chanced a second. Harry winced a little but relaxed immediately and began moaning for a third.

“Patience, Harry,” Draco urged him, his cock slipping from his mouth with an obscene slurp. “If we go too fast, I’ll injure you.”

“I’ll be fine,” he assured him breathlessly, thrusting down onto his fingers. “I can take it. I want you inside me right now!”

Draco shivered and had to tamp down the urge to give in to the demand straight away. He knew Harry liked it rough but there was a limit, especially for his first time.

He’d originally intended to bring him off at least once before finally breaching him but it seemed Harry was too impatient for that. So instead, he abbreviated preparing him by

speeding up the process. He added a third finger and the stretch wasn't as easy as the first two and Harry grunted quietly at the intrusion.

He seemed to be forcing himself to relax which was good but what surprised Draco was the increased wetness around the digits working him open. Harry had evidently deemed the lubrication they had not enough and wandlessly cast the spell again. He pumped his fingers in and out a few times before Harry turned demanding again.

"I'm ready," he informed him. "I want you *now*."

"Fuck," Draco uttered, completely gone for the man beneath him.

He withdrew his fingers and positioned himself between Harry's legs, aligning himself with his entrance. Harry threw his legs up over Draco's hips and gripped his forearms while looking at him with pleading eyes.

He pressed the head of his cock to Harry's entrance and slowly pushed forward, finally breaching him for the first time. He was so hot and tight and Draco's eyes threatened to roll into the back of his head. He moaned softly, trying to maintain control so he didn't move too fast.

Harry's eyes had fallen shut and there was a faint furrow between his brows.

"Harry, you okay?" Draco checked in.

Harry nodded jerkily.

"I'm okay, keep going," he muttered, voice tight.

"It's not meant to hurt," Draco told him gently. "If you need more prep..."

"I'm fine," Harry assured him, opening his eyes to meet Draco's concerned stare. "Keep going."

With that assurance but still concerned, Draco carefully forged ahead and very slowly breached Harry further until he was fully seated and held very still, trembling slightly with the effort. Harry's eyes had fallen shut again and his mouth was open slightly as he panted shallowly into the space between them.

Draco couldn't figure out if he was in pain or overwhelmed by new sensations. He was still hard between them so that was a good sign. If it hurt too much he would probably have gone soft. He was almost afraid to move.

Harry finally opened his eyes and reached up to Draco. He leaned forward in compliance, slipping out of Harry a little and they both groaned at the movement. Harry put his hands on Draco's shoulders and pulled him down further so Draco had to support himself on his elbows instead. Once he was close enough, Harry pulled his face down to kiss him fiercely.

Draco could work with this. He settled lower so their chests touched and Harry made a delighted noise. He then hooked his ankles together around Draco's hips and pulled him

down while thrusting upward causing Draco to slip back in with a groan into Harry's mouth.

"Move," Harry ordered him in a whisper against his lips.

Only too happy to comply, Draco angled his hips back without disturbing their embrace and then canted them forward again until he was buried to the hilt. They groaned in unison and Harry threw his head back again, exposing his throat.

Giving in to the impulse, Draco latched his teeth onto that spot Harry seemed to favour and began thrusting in earnest.

Harry moaned loudly and babbled continuously while scrabbling for purchase on Draco's shoulders. He knew he'd probably have scratches across the upper portion of his back when they were done but he didn't mind, he'd wear them proudly.

Eventually Harry abandoned the embrace in favour of gripping Draco's arms again, which allowed him the leverage to sit up and grip him by the hips so he could get a better angle. Draco hoisted Harry up by the hips so that he was holding up his lower half while the rest of him was sprawled beneath him on the bed. From this angle, Draco had much more leverage to thrust downward and reach deeper inside of him.

Harry cried out suddenly when Draco finally hit the spot he'd been searching for. He zeroed in on it and thrust with precision, hitting it with every downstroke.

Harry's moans became a single note punctuated by nonsense and the occasional shout of Draco's name or a swear. His voice started pitching upward, meaning he was close but Draco wasn't there yet. He'd been so focussed on Harry's pleasure, he hadn't had a chance to take in his own.

"Fuck, Harry," he gasped. "Not yet, hold on for me."

Harry whimpered, the muscles in his lower abdomen fluttering and clenching. He wasn't going to be able to hold back his orgasm.

Suddenly that now familiar bolt of pleasure was back and it was coupled with the strangest phantom sensation of something repeatedly striking his prostate. It only took a moment to realise it was happening in time with his own thrusts. Harry was sharing his pleasure with Draco.

Draco shouted, his head spinning from multiple sensations, his thrusts became erratic and rough. He could feel both of their climaxes approaching.

"Ah... come for me, Harry!" he cried.

He felt the moment Harry let go and felt himself letting go at the same time. He came so hard his vision went black for a moment, his hips continuing to stutter into Harry until it finally became too much and he stilled, panting heavily.

He blinked down at his boyfriend to make sure he'd finished too and was delighted to find that not only had he finished, he'd come so hard it caught him in the chin. Harry had gone

completely boneless and his legs had fallen down from where they'd been previously wrapped around Draco's hips. He was flushed, his chest was heaving, and his legs were trembling. He was the most beautiful creature Draco had ever laid eyes on.

Draco slipped out of him, wincing slightly at the overstimulating sensation, and threw himself down next to Harry on the bed. He pulled his limp and sated boyfriend into a cuddle, not caring about the mess between them. He gently plucked Harry's glasses off his face and placed them carefully on the bedside table next to Draco's wand before snuggling closer and peering down at him.

"You good?" Draco asked softly.

"Good might be an understatement," Harry murmured sluggishly.

"Might be?" Draco quoted teasingly.

"Hmm, just a bit," he agreed with the dopiest grin Draco had ever seen on his face.

"I lo—" Draco cut himself off.

He almost said it!

Circumstances may have changed, they may be in a proper relationship now but it was definitely too soon. He didn't want to scare Harry off by getting too serious too quickly.

"Hmm?" Harry queried sleepily.

"I..." Draco cast around for what to say instead. "I might be ruined for other men now," he confessed instead. "That trick of yours is pretty unique. I don't think anyone will ever be able to top that."

Harry chuckled and snuggled into Draco's chest. The sticky sensation between their bodies vanished, the blanket pulled itself over them, and the torches doused themselves.

"Show off," Draco muttered.

Harry gave a soft laugh before his breathing became deep and even, signalling that he'd fallen asleep.

They'd miss dinner going to sleep now but Draco couldn't bring himself to care. He'd never been happier in his life, nothing could ruin that tonight. They'd deal with the consequences in the morning, by which time the whole school would know they were dating.

For all of you who wanted to throw a shoe at Ron, I did warn you that he was going to get worse 😈

But yay! They're boyfriends now!

Also if you want to see the full argument Harry had with Ron before Draco arrived in the common room or a series of letters written to Mr and Mrs Weasley by Ron, Ginny and Harry from the start of term until this point, check out [chapter 4](#) and [5](#) of Harry's Choice respectively.

Chapter 26: Going Public

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: mentions of homophobia

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Draco woke up when Harry got out of bed. Disturbed by the movement, he cracked his eyes open to see what the matter was. It was dark out, probably the middle of the night, and Harry was shifting around the room quietly.

He probably had to use the toilet, Draco decided, and was just about to fall back to sleep when there was a loud thud and a muttered “fuck!”

“What’s happening?” Draco murmured sleepily.

“Shit! Did I wake you?” Harry whispered.

“A bit,” Draco answered, sitting up and yawning. “What are you doing?”

“I was looking for my pants. I’m starving so I thought I’d sneak down to the kitchens for a snack.”

“What time is it?” Draco queried suddenly feeling very hungry himself. They *had* missed supper after all.

“*Accio watch,*” Harry incanted. There was a faint jangling sound and a pause. Then, “Four twenty-seven,” he answered.

“Now why didn’t you do that with your pants?” Draco teased.

There was silence in reply and even though Draco couldn’t see him in the gloom, he could tell he was probably blushing with embarrassment. Draco snickered.

“Possibly the most powerful wizard in Britain and you didn’t even think of summoning your pants when you couldn’t find them,” Draco teased, shaking his head. “You’re a disaster.”

Harry grumbled something under his breath that sounded suspiciously like “not the most powerful wizard” and resumed shuffling around the room looking for his discarded clothes.

“Merlin, just light a torch,” Draco drawled, rolling his eyes and sliding out of bed.

“I didn’t want to wake you,” Harry pouted.

“Right, because slamming into all of my furniture wasn’t going to do that. I’m up now so lets get dressed and grab something to eat, I’m starving too.”

So Harry lit one of the torches and after letting their eyes adjust to the light, they found some clothes to throw on. Draco didn’t even bother trying to locate any of the clothes Harry had removed from him the previous evening and just retrieved clean pants, trousers, and a top from his wardrobe.

Once properly attired, they quietly left the dorm and went out to the common room.

They were about halfway between the Tower and the kitchens when Mrs Norris sprang out from behind a suit of armour and yowled at them.

“Piss off, you old beast,” Draco shooed.

“Psst,” Harry hissed at her sharply waving a hand in her direction.

She just glared at them with her lamplike eyes and hissed back.

“Don’t tell me you speak to cats now too,” Draco teased.

“No,” Harry snorted. “But that always worked on Crookshanks.”

They tried to step around her but she leapt into their path, blocking them.

“I hate this fucking cat,” Draco grumbled.

“I should have brought the Invisibility Cloak,” Harry muttered.

“We don’t need it,” Draco reminded him. “We’re eighteen, we don’t have a curfew.”

Then, as if summoned by his cat, Mr Filch arrived, wheezing and shuffling out of a secret passageway behind a painting that swung out like a door.

“Aha!” he exclaimed triumphantly. “Students out of bed!”

“We’re *allowed* to be out of bed,” Draco drawled.

“Yeah, eighth years don’t have a curfew,” Harry reminded him as if he hadn’t just needed reminding himself.

“And I’m a prefect anyway,” Draco added.

“Parolees don’t get to be prefects anymore, Malfoy,” Filch snapped at him. “And *you* Potter, I know you’re up to something, you always are.”

“Sure when I had a madman out to kill me,” Harry rolled his eyes.

“Don’t get smart with me, Potter,” Filch growled.

“We’re just going to the kitchens to get something to eat,” Draco cut in. “We missed supper last night and we’re starving.”

“No one is allowed in the kitchens,” Filch barked. “I’ll not have you disturbing the house elves. You’ll have to wait until breakfast like everyone else.”

“We won’t disturb them then,” Harry said reasonably. “I’ll just ask *my* elf. He’s working part time in the kitchens.”

“Don’t give me that line of dung, Potter! Everyone knows you live with muggles, you don’t have a house elf.”

Harry glowered and looked like he might say something out of line so Draco cut across him before he could.

“Kreacher!” Draco called, unsure if the old elf would come for him.

But he needn’t have worried because there was an immediate *crack* of apparition and Kreacher appeared in front of them looking as decrepit and crotchety as ever. Filch shouted in alarm at his sudden appearance and jumped back a step.

“Kreacher is being summoned?” the old elf croaked. He peered up at Draco and Harry with a baleful eye. “So early in the morning,” he grumbled lowly.

Draco winced. He’d probably woken him up.

“Sorry for waking you, Kreacher,” Harry apologised gently even though it was Draco that had done it. “Mr Filch doesn’t believe that you’re my elf.”

The old elf turned slowly on the spot and squinted up at Filch.

“Go on then, elf,” Filch prompted skeptically. “Who do you belong to?”

“Kreacher is not having to answer to you,” he growled. “Kreacher is not a Hogwarts elf.”

Filch spluttered indignantly. Before he could have a coronary, Harry spoke again to his elf.

“Just tell him, Kreacher,” Harry sighed.

Kreacher grumbled under his breath but complied, turning back to Filch.

“Kreacher is belonging to the head of the Black family,” he answered proudly. “Kreacher will also sometimes answer to other members of the Black family if it is not forbidden by the head of the family.”

Well that explained why Kreacher had come when Draco called, being one of the few remaining members of that family.

“Aha!” Filch cried pointing a crooked accusing finger at Harry. “You’re not a Black. You lied!”

Harry rolled his eyes in annoyance.

“Kreacher, who is the current head of the Black family?” Draco prompted.

“Kreacher is serving Harry Potter,” he said, standing straighter as if the statement brought him great satisfaction. “Kreacher’s former master made his godson the head of the family in his will when he died without an heir.”

“If you don’t know,” Harry said to Filch with a smirk. “My godfather was Sirius Black. And for the record, I don’t live with muggles anymore, I live on my own. Not that it’s any of your business. Now if you don’t mind, I’m starving.”

Harry swiftly sidestepped around Filch and deftly skipped over Mrs Norris who tried to block his path again. Draco dodged around Filch on his other side and fell into step beside Harry. Kreacher shuffled hurriedly to follow them, muttering something about wretched old squibs.

“Kreacher, I’ve told you before it’s not polite to comment about people’s blood status,” Harry scolded him. “Mr Filch being a squib has nothing to do with how wretched he is.”

Draco snorted.

“I’m watching you, Potter!” Filch cried after them. “And you too, Malfoy! The two of you sneaking around the castle at night can only spell trouble.”

Harry snickered as they rounded a corner.

“If this was two years ago, maybe,” he quipped.

“Most people aren’t so happy to leave the past in the past as you are,” Draco reminded him.

“Kreacher is wondering why Master Harry and Friend Draco are out of bed so early,” the old elf said conversationally while eyeing them knowingly.

“We kind of fell asleep really early last night,” Harry explained.

“Master and Friend are wearing themselves out in the early evening, Kreacher thinks,” he teased.

Harry turned scarlet and didn’t reply. Draco just laughed at the elf’s antics.

“Kreacher will go and prepare an early breakfast,” he informed them. “Master should not be missing meals. Master is skinny enough.”

With that he disappeared without waiting for a response.

“I think Kreacher has been hanging out with Molly Weasley,” Harry grumbled as they resumed their trip down to the kitchens.

“Why? Is she always trying to fatten you up or something?” Draco chuckled.

“Yeah,” Harry said fondly. “Though to be fair, she always saw me after a month or more of being starved at the Dursleys’.”

“The more I hear about those muggles, the more I hate them,” Draco said darkly.

“You know, Sirius said almost the exact same thing,” Harry said grinning.

“Great minds,” Draco quipped. “Good to know we have more than our good looks in common.”

They arrived at the painting that covered the secret entrance to the kitchens and Harry reached up and tickled a pear in a bowl of fruit with the tip of his finger. It giggled and turned into a doorknob which he grasped and pulled to open the painting like a door, letting them inside.

“I just realised, I had no idea how to get in here or even where the kitchens were before just now,” Draco said in amazement.

“Hermione learned that from the Weasley twins,” Harry explained. “Fourth year. That’s when I found out Dobby was working here.”

“What other castle secrets are you hiding?” Draco exclaimed, taking in the massive space which appeared to be a replica of the Great Hall above with four long house tables and the head table where the teachers sat.

“It might be easier to list the things I *don’t* know about the castle,” Harry chuckled. “Between the twins, the Marauders’ Map, sneaking around after curfew under the Cloak, and just making friends with the ghosts and house elves, there’s not a lot I don’t know about this place at this point.”

He led them to a small table off to the side. There were a handful of elves bustling around but Draco suspected the majority of them were still asleep. The ones who were up largely ignored their presence except for Kreacher who was over at one of the many stoves off to one end of the room and had glanced in their direction when they entered before returning his attention to his cooking.

Harry winced slightly as he sat down and Draco couldn’t help but smirk in satisfaction that he was still feeling their activities from the previous evening. He thought about teasing him about it but decided against it.

“So besides all the secret passages, what’s something about the castle I don’t know that would be interesting?” Draco asked instead. He loved knowing things other people didn’t know, it made him feel important.

“Hmm, well I told you about the passageway under the Whomping Willow,” Harry pondered. “Oh! There’s a passageway that leads into Honeyduke’s cellar from the third floor.”

“That’s how you got to Hogsmeade in third year!” Draco realised. “You threw mud at me.”

“You were being a prat,” Harry shrugged, smirking.

“What else?” Draco prompted, not addressing his old prattish ways.

“There’s not really anything else that’s that big of a secret,” Harry shrugged. “Unless you count the Chamber of Secrets, I suppose.”

“You know where it is?” Draco demanded in awe.

“Well yeah, I had to go down there to save Ginny from Riddle’s diary didn’t I?”

Draco frowned.

“Who?”

“Tom Riddle,” Harry explained. “That’s Voldemort’s real name.”

Draco shivered. He hated that his body betrayed him like that whenever someone said the name when he wasn’t expecting it.

“R-right, you mentioned Ginny was possessed by an artifact,” Draco remembered. “I assume that artifact was this diary then? That it was a horcrux?”

“Yeah,” Harry nodded. “I destroyed it with a basilisk fang.”

Draco blinked at him, unsure how to respond to that. Harry had a way of describing terrifying and traumatic events like they were just a Tuesday. He had no idea how he wasn’t more messed up than he was.

“So you can still get in there, then?” Draco decided to just move on. He had enough trouble sleeping with his own experiences in his head, he didn’t need Harry’s life story to give him nightmares too.

“Of course,” he shrugged. “Any Parselmouth can get in there.”

That made sense. Any heir of Slytherin’s would be a Parselmouth.

“Oh, also anyone who can approximate Parseltongue,” he added.

“Say again?”

“Yeah, Ron opened the Chamber during the Battle to get ahold of more basilisk fangs so we could destroy the rest of the horcruxes. They’re not easy to destroy, you know.”

“How did Weasley open it?” Draco asked. “He’s not a Parselmouth.”

“No, but he was there when I opened it in second year, and also he’s heard me speak it loads for years so he knew what it sounded like. Though when he demonstrated it to me later, it just sounded like a load of gurgled hissing that didn’t mean anything. Bit like Parseltongue gibberish, I suppose.”

Harry suddenly looked distant and sad. It didn't take a genius to figure out the reason was the turn the discussion had taken. Weasley was making Harry upset even when he wasn't around.

"I'm sorry," Draco offered.

"What are you sorry for now?" Harry asked, a light teasing tone in his voice.

"Being friends with me broke you two up," he explained sadly.

"No, Ron being a twat about me being friends with you broke us up," Harry corrected. "I can't be expected to live my life based on whether or not my every choice has the Ron Weasley Seal of Approval."

"Maybe not but that doesn't make you wrong for wanting it anyway," Draco soothed.

Kreacher came over then with two plates piled high with scrambled eggs, bacon, sausages and toast and a pot of tea and two mugs floating along behind him. He set the food and drinks down, instructed them to let him know if they were still hungry after, and shuffled away.

"I wish he'd just let me talk," Harry sighed after a few seconds of them digging in to their breakfast. "Any time I tried to explain, he'd just cut me off and shout about how you must be playing me. He can't get over the past and keeps on about the shit you've done without considering what you've done to make up for it since."

"Has anyone tried to shout at him about all the shit *he's* done?" Draco asked dryly.

"The rest of us don't hold grudges like he does," Harry explained. "Besides, it might be a bit hypocritical of me to go off about all the shit he's done to me over the years while at the same time encouraging him to put the past behind us with you."

"Or you could use it as example of how forgiving you are," he countered. "You put up with way too much from him. You never put up with *anything* from me. Why's he special?"

"I guess I put up with it because he was my friend," Harry shrugged. "I'd never had a friend before him so I suppose I was attached, too afraid to lose him or the connection I have with the rest of his family to tell him off. I wonder if I would have put up with you if we'd been friends back then too."

"Nah, probably not," Draco grinned. "I was an ass."

"So was Ron."

"Ah, but I was also a bigot."

Harry frowned at that, a painfully sad look in his eyes.

"I can't believe he called me poof," he said, choking on the slur.

"That *is* pretty bigoted behaviour," Draco agreed solemnly.

“Do you think he’s really homophobic, or do you think he was just angry and trying to hurt me?” Harry asked, tears swimming in his eyes.

“I don’t think it matters,” Draco sighed. “That’s a pretty awful thing to call someone who was your best friend for seven years whether you mean it or not. And I would know about awful things to call people.”

“I suppose,” he mumbled, picking at his eggs with his fork.

“Maybe we should discuss what comes next from here,” Draco said busily, hoping to change the subject from the charred remains of Harry’s oldest friendship.

“God, this is all my fault,” Harry sighed in defeat. “I couldn’t wait the five minutes it would have taken us to get back to the Tower. I just had to pull us into a secret passageway for a snog like a couple of teenagers.”

“We *are* a couple of teenagers, Harry,” Draco reminded him. “And I don’t care who knows. I’ll stand on top of Gryffindor table at breakfast and shout for the whole school that you’re my boyfriend, if you like.”

That got a laugh out of him and Draco grinned in triumph.

“What about ‘it’s not the done thing’?”

“I’ve decided I don’t care what posh purebloods are *supposed* to do anymore, remember?” Draco reminded him. “I told you, I don’t care anymore who knows I’m gay. I’m going to do what makes me happy. And what makes me happy is not having to hide a fundamental truth about myself.”

“So then if you don’t care, and I don’t care...” he started.

“You don’t care?” Draco asked in surprise. “What happened to not wanting your private life to be public business? What about when the Prophet gets ahold of it.”

“Oh fuck the Prophet!” Harry exclaimed. “They’ve been speculating about my dating life since I was fourteen.”

“What, you think people won’t believe it?” Draco questioned, raising an eyebrow skeptically. “Because you dragged me by the hand to my dorm after having public argument with Weasley about snogging me in a corridor and didn’t come out for the rest of the night. I think people are going to believe it.”

“I’m just saying,” Harry said with mock annoyance. “I’ve been dealing with being in the public eye ever since I came to the wizarding world. The Prophet or Witch Weekly or any other gossip rag will be talking about my love life for the *rest* of my life. I’m never going to get away from it so I’ve decided to stop giving a shit about what they print about me. Half of it’s rubbish anyway. Honestly, it’s a relief that everyone knows, I hate lying and keeping secrets.”

“Well, okay then,” Draco said, pleased. “Does that mean I can throw you up against a wall and snog you senseless whenever Weasley is in line of sight? Because I think that would be really funny.”

Harry laughed again.

“He’d deserve it after all the times he did that with Lavender and we all had to witness it,” he chuckled. “But no, don’t do that, I don’t want to cheapen our relationship.”

“That’s fair,” Draco shrugged easily.

“You’re welcome to kiss me in public whenever you want for other reasons, though,” Harry offered, wagging his eyebrows.

“I’ll have to take you up on that,” Draco teased.

“Please do.”

They spent the rest of the hour just talking and laughing and flirting until the kitchen came alight with activity as the house elves started working on breakfast. Not wanting to be in the way, they quickly finished their own breakfast and left the kitchens, calling a thank you and farewell to Kreacher on their way out.

They headed back up to the Tower to get dressed properly in their school robes, knowing that they’d have to face the reality of the whole school turning their gossiping attention on them very soon.

The common room was empty when they first arrived but they were soon joined by Hermione, fully dressed and on her way to breakfast.

“Oh Harry, Draco, you two are up early,” she greeted them. “You’re not dressed properly, were you out?”

“Yeah we woke up super early and decided to catch an early breakfast in the kitchens,” Harry explained. “We were just headed up to get dressed.”

“Oh, well if you’ve already eaten, I suppose I’ll see you in Transfiguration?”

Harry looked to Draco with an expression that Draco knew meant he was scheming something.

“No, we’ll join you,” he said. “We’ll just get dressed and see you in the Great Hall.”

“Okay...” she said hesitantly, undoubtedly seeing the same look Draco had noticed.

Harry grabbed Draco's hand and pulled him along.

"We're going to the Great Hall?" Draco asked. "We just ate.

"Not to eat," Harry said conspiratorially. "To make an appearance."

"What in the world are you on about?"

"We missed supper last night, which means by now, everyone will know we're dating," Harry explained. "So if we miss breakfast too, they'll all think we're hiding. And if they think we're hiding, they'll think we have something to be ashamed of and we don't. Besides," he smirked cheekily. "Didn't you want to shout about it from on top of the Gryffindor table?"

"That was a joke," Draco deadpanned.

"Trust me, Draco," Harry said earnestly. "Hiding only makes the gossip worse. I'm speaking from experience here."

Harry was right, of course. If they didn't get ahead of this, people would come to their own conclusions. He'd witnessed it himself for years any time something mad happened to Harry or one of his friends.

So he agreed and quickly got dressed and picked up both of their backpacks and wands and met Harry outside of his dorm where he'd had to go to get clean clothes.

"You should just move into my dorm," Draco drawled.

"Wouldn't it make more sense for you to move into my dorm and have yours for... y'know," Harry countered doing an awkward job of referring to his lycanthropy.

"My dorm is soundproofed and you're a screamer," Draco pointed out just as they reentered the common room only to find that Hermione had waited for them and had been joined by Neville.

"Well that's way more information than I ever wanted to know," Neville declared with a faint grimace.

Hermione seemed to be fighting a fit of giggles and losing. She was clutching her sides, her lips were pursed tightly together, and her shoulders were shaking so much she looked like she was almost vibrating.

Harry turned scarlet.

"I'm not bothered by it," Draco drawled with a smug grin. "Lets me know I'm doing something right."

"Can we go now?" Harry demanded, red-faced.

"Sure, yeah," Neville said with an amused shake of his head.

They exited the Tower and started making their way down to the Great Hall. At about the seventh floor they crossed paths with Ginny and Luna Lovegood coming down from the direction of Gryffindor and Ravenclaw towers.

“Fancy meeting you here,” Ginny quipped.

“Morning, Gin,” Harry greeted. “Morning, Luna.”

Everyone said their “good mornings” and continued down to breakfast.

“Harry, you’re looking well,” Luna said airily. “No wrackspurts again I see. You’re practically glowing.”

“Er, thanks, Luna,” Harry muttered.

“I’m pretty sure that glow is from the great shag he had last night,” Ginny said with a smirk. “Unless you have some other reason for missing dinner.”

“Ginny!” Harry exclaimed in embarrassment.

“Oh definitely that,” Neville agreed. “Apparently he’s a screamer.”

“You’re a dead man, Neville Longbottom,” Harry growled.

Neville just laughed and dodged when Harry made a bid to punch him in the arm then yelped when Harry got him in the side with a wandless stinging jinx.

“How do you know he’s a screamer?” Ginny asked with a grin so big it looked like her birthday had come early. “Could you hear them through the door?”

“Nah, Draco said,” Neville answered, dodging another strike from Harry. “Why are you coming after me? I wouldn’t know any of it if Draco didn’t have a big mouth.”

“A mouth he uses for biting it would seem,” Luna said mildly.

Draco’s eyes went wide for a second before he could school his expression. Harry and Hermione turned their heads sharply at her with slightly alarmed looks.

“W-what d’you mean by that, Luna?” Harry stammered.

“That,” she said simply, pointing at Harry’s neck.

Harry’s eyes went wide and he slapped his hand over the marks Draco had left there the night before. He’d forgotten to cover them.

“Woah!” Neville exclaimed and grabbed Harry’s hand away from the evidence. “How did I miss that?”

Ginny’s eyebrows raised appreciatively.

“So we’ve got a screamer and a biter,” she quipped and smirked slyly at Draco. “I know so much more about your sex life now than I ever thought I’d learn.”

“Get off!” Harry exclaimed at Neville, shrugging away from him and swatting away his hands.

He brushed his hand over the offending marks and they vanished from view with a silent and wandless cover up charm.

“Oh that’s a neat trick,” Ginny remarked. “You’ll have to teach me that one to cover up spots.”

“What are you talking about, Ginny?” Hermione asked frowning. “You haven’t any spots.”

“That you can *see*, ” she confided.

They made it to the Great Hall and found it unusually full for so early. About a quarter of the students and all of the faculty were already there and nearly every head turned in their direction when they entered.

“Wow, I haven’t had this many eyes on me since I killed Nagini,” Neville remarked.

“They’re not looking at you, you walnut,” Ginny snorted. “They’re looking at Harry and Draco.”

“What else is new?” Harry asked sarcastically.

“They’re looking at the rest of us too,” Hermione observed. “Because we came in with them and we’re all friends, they’ll assume we know things.”

“We *do* know things,” Ginny pointed out.

“Yeah like how Harry’s a screamer,” Neville snorted.

“Neville, if you don’t lay off I’m going to kick your arse in front of all of these people,” Harry growled without much heat.

Neville snickered.

They all sat down at the Gryffindor table and everyone except for Harry and Draco dug into breakfast. Draco helped himself to some tea and poured Harry a cup as well.

They were sitting closer together than they’d ever done in public, even when they were glued together. Draco could feel every eye in the hall scrutinising his every movement and analyzing his body language. He wondered if this was how it felt to be Harry for the last seven years. If his apparent unbothered nonchalance was anything to go by, it probably was. He was so used to it he seemed to barely notice.

After about half an hour of breakfast and conversation, most of the hall had filled in. Eighth years that passed by their spot at the table just nodded or waved on their way by and the

younger students seemed to be making note of this. It felt like the eighth year had become a united front overnight. Well, most of it.

Weasley came in last out of all of their year, looking surly. He tried to sit down next to Thomas and Finnigan but they turned away from him and pointedly started talking to the two fifth year witches next to them instead. He ended up sitting at the very end of the table by himself, stabbing his sausages angrily with his fork.

“Looks like your boyfriend is being shunned by the whole year, Granger,” a voice spoke up unexpectedly.

Draco turned to see Blaise and Theo standing behind Hermione and Ginny across the table from him. It was Theo who’d spoken. The two of them sat down with them, Theo electing to sit next to Hermione with Blaise on his other side.

“He’s not my boyfriend anymore,” Hermione said peevishly. “I broke up with him.”

“Wait, what?” Harry exclaimed. “When? Why?”

“Last night,” she said primly. “I don’t date homophobes.”

“Is this because he called me a poof?” Harry asked. “Cos I think he only said it to hurt me. I don’t think he’s actually got a problem with gay people.”

“Whether he means it or not, he should never have said it,” she argued coldly. “It was cruel and uncalled for and I won’t have it. You’re my best friend, Harry and even if he only said it to hurt you, I’m not going to continue dating someone who purposefully hurts my best friend.”

“Don’t defend him, Harry,” Ginny said flatly. “He doesn’t deserve it.”

The post arrived then and Draco looked up nervously at the owls streaming in.

“News won’t have reached the gossip rags yet,” Harry assured him.

He nodded, only slightly reassured, but continued watching the owls delivering packages. As he watched, he observed a tiny pygmy owl excitedly fluttering around with a red envelope in its beak.

“Someone’s got a howler,” Draco pointed.

Their whole group looked up at the sea of owls to see the letter in question.

“Isn’t that Pigwidgeon?” Harry asked in astonishment.

Ginny grinned maliciously.

“I do believe it is,” she said, a note of satisfaction in her tone.

“Ginny, what did you do?” Harry demanded.

“Me?” she asked with wide innocent eyes that Draco didn’t buy for a second. “Not a thing.”

“What in Merlin’s name is a Pigwidgeon?” Blaise demanded.

“That’s Ron’s owl,” Hermione breathed. “Ginny, you told your mum what he did last night, didn’t you?”

“I’ve got no idea what you’re talking about,” she said, pretending not to notice how the whole hall had focussed in on the tiny bird with the howler that was now making a beeline for her brother, who’d not been paying attention in favour of eating his breakfast as angrily as he could manage.

Pigwidgeon landed right in his plate, spraying Weasley with scrambled eggs. He yelped in alarm and started to scold the overexcited little owl before seeing the letter clasped in his beak and going pale. He froze in place, horrorstruck, while Pigwidgeon happily hopped around, showing off his letter.

Every eye in the hall was now on him as he shakily reached for the letter. It was difficult at first because his owl was so excited that he kept hopping all over the table. By the time he seized the little bird and wrestled the letter from him it was too late to open it and it exploded in his hand, letting out the outraged voice of Molly Weasley that Draco remembered so fondly from second year.

“RONALD BILIUS WEASLEY!” the letter shrieked. Weasley clapped his hands over his ears and shrunk in his seat in mortification. “WHAT’S THIS I HEAR ABOUT YOU ABUSING YOUR FRIENDS? YOUR FRIENDS ARE FAMILY AND WE DO *NOT* TREAT FAMILY THAT WAY! YOUR FATHER AND I RAISED YOU BETTER THAN THAT! YOU MAY NOT LIKE THE PEOPLE YOUR FRIENDS MAKE FRIENDS WITH BUT THAT IS NO EXCUSE FOR HOW YOU’VE BEEN TREATING THEM! AND IF I HEAR ANY MORE ABOUT YOU USING SUCH UNGENTLEMANLY LANGUAGE AGAIN, YOU WILL NOT LIKE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT, MISTER!”

Short but sweet, the letter finished its tirade, burst into flames and disintegrated to ash. A deafening silence followed. Weasley was as red as a tomato and sunk so far into his seat as to be nearly under the table. The hall then filled with the sounds of snickering children and a chorus of “ooooh”s and nearly every eighth year shot Weasley with vindictive smirks. Evidently using homophobic slurs was not a popular move in their circle.

It made sense, he supposed. He knew Padma Patil, Justin Finch-Fletchley, Blaise, and himself were all gay, and in addition to Harry being bisexual, there was at least one queer person in each house in their year (that he knew of) and their friend circles accounted for nearly everyone.

The rest of the post was delivered without further fuss except for the most raggedy owl Draco had ever seen, flying in haphazardly behind the rest of the flock. Instead of landing, it seemed to simply flop out of the air, skidded across the table and fell right into Harry’s lap. Several members of their group shouted in alarm.

“Errol!” Harry exclaimed, picking the limp owl up out of his lap and trying to ballance him on the table. The poor thing just flopped over and hooted pathetically, holding out it’s leg with a letter attached.

“Potter, you know this feather duster?” Theo asked incredulously, poking the owl cautiously.

“That’s our family owl,” Ginny said with a wry frown. “He’s ancient. Looks like mum’s sent you a letter too, Harry.”

Harry carefully extracted the letter with a grim look on his face.

“That’s it, Ginny,” he said with a shake of his head. “I’m buying your parents a new owl, and they can’t stop me. Errol needs to be retired.”

“You won’t get an argument from me,” she said placatingly holding her hands up. “And, hey, if you’re gifting people free owls...”

He laughed.

“Sure, how ‘bout I get you one for Christmas?”

“Sweet!” she exclaimed happily. “What’s the letter say?”

Harry opened the letter and Draco watched his eyes scan back and forth, then his eyebrows raised in surprise and tears welled up in his eyes before he blinked them away. He cleared his throat thickly and blinked several more times before looking up at Draco.

“You’ve been invited for Christmas,” Harry told him.

Draco just stared at him.

“Me?” he questioned in disbelief. “To the *Weasleys*’ Christmas?”

Harry just nodded and passed him the letter to read.

Dear Harry,

We’ve received your letter about your new friend and I know it’s been making things difficult between you and Ron. I know you and Draco Malfoy have a difficult past, but you’ve always been an excellent judge of character and if you think he’s changed then we’re happy to give him a chance too. You know how Arthur feels about his father so there might be a little tension but I assure you we trust your judgement.

We were just about to send you a reply when we received Ginny’s letter. She tells us that you and he are dating now and that Ron had some extremely ungentlemanly things to say about it that I won’t repeat here. I want to assure you that we do not condone that sort of thinking and certainly not that kind of language. We love you no matter what, and while I have to confess I am a bit disappointed you and Ginny didn’t work out, I am

relieved that the two of you are still close. She had nothing but good things to say about Draco.

We do hope you and Ron will make up but until he cleans up his act, I don't expect you to work things out with him any time soon. Just know that the rest of the family is behind you.

I don't know what your boyfriend is doing for Christmas but if he doesn't have other plans, we'd like to extend an invitation for him to join us at the Burrow. Do tell him he can invite his mother too if she'd like to come. I think it's about time we put this old feud to bed.

Do let us know what they decide.

Love,

Molly

Now he knew why Harry had been fighting tears. Even he found himself a little choked up and he didn't even know Mrs Weasley all that well. He did know her by reputation, however. She was exceptionally kind but fiercely protective and he had witnessed the lengths she would go to protect her children first hand during the Battle. He knew that she saw Harry as one of her own and if he ever hurt him, he had no doubt she would come down hard on him.

Once Ginny saw that he was no longer reading, she snatched the letter out of his hand to read for herself. A broad, feral grin spread across her face.

"You absolutely *must* come to Christmas," she said. "Ron would *hate* that!"

"I don't want to cause drama during a family holiday," Draco said hesitantly.

"Oh *please*," Hermione laughed, rolling her eyes. "Drama is what the Weasleys do best."

Harry and Ginny nodded vigorously in agreement.

"It's going to be a madhouse," Harry agreed. "I think even if I go alone there will be drama. Ron will probably pick a fight with me, then George will put something in his pudding that turns him green or sticks him to the ceiling or something equally ridiculous. Bill and Charlie will probably stage a table wrestling competition, and Percy will moan about how loud we're all being. Molly will probably yell herself hoarse at George, Bill, and Charlie, and probably Ron too for being the way they're being and Arthur will slink off to his garage when no one's looking to tinker with muggle technology until something explodes."

"Yeah, it'll be a great time!" Ginny exclaimed.

"Just don't eat anything George gives you and you'll be fine," Harry advised sagely.

"Or do," Ginny shrugged. "It's usually harmless and always hilarious."

“I wouldn’t,” Hermione said shaking her head with a fond grin.

“That’s because you’re a wet blanket,” Ginny accused.

“Things will calm down towards the end of the night once everyone’s had a drink or two and Molly puts on Celestina Warbeck,” Harry assured him.

“Dare I ask what a table wrestling competition is?” Blaise asked delicately.

“It’s where you enchant a couple of tables to attack each other until one of them is too broken to keep fighting,” Ginny explained.

“Sounds like a hell of a party! Can I come?” Theo asked excitedly.

“It certainly sounds much more... exciting than the soirées Mrs Malfoy usually puts on,” Blaise remarked. “I wonder if Draco’s delicate sensibilities could handle it.”

“I’m sure I can manage,” Draco said dryly. He turned to Harry. “I’ll owl mother and see what she says.”

“Brilliant!” Ginny crowed. “I’m going to go owl mum and ask if I can invite a few people too!”

“Ooh!” Theo exclaimed. “Me please! I wasn’t kidding; I *have* to attend this party.”

Ginny’s eyes glittered in delight.

“Who else wants to come? Show of hands.”

Theo, Neville, and Luna all raised their hands excitedly.

“Not you, Hermione?” Harry asked.

“No, I’ll be spending the holidays in Australia with my parents,” she said regretfully. “I promised them I would already, but I’ll come ‘round at New Year’s.”

“And I’ll be in Italy with my mum,” Blaise said. “But I expect to hear all about it after because it sounds like I’ll be missing quite the blast.”

“Brilliant!” Ginny cheered again. “I’ll go write mum now. And Luna, I’ll include your dad on the invite and Neville, your gran.”

“Cheers,” Neville said gratefully. “If your mum agrees, tell her we’ll come by in the afternoon, since we always visit my parents on Christmas morning.”

With that settled, she grabbed one last bite of toast and ran off, shooting two fingers at her brother as she swept past causing Professor McGonagall to shout “Miss Weasley!” in admonition for the vulgar hand gesture.

“Hey, anybody notice that like everyone keeps staring in this direction?” Blaise asked after she had gone.

“Probably cos three Slytherins are sitting at the Gryffindor table,” Theo remarked.

“No, it’s definitely because the whole school is trying to figure out if the rumours that Harry and Draco are dating are true,” Hermione corrected.

“Oh sure because the entire eighth year got together and decided to come up with the most unbelievable story possible and spread it around,” Blaise said sarcastically, rolling his eyes.

Harry glanced around to see the kind of attention they were attracting. People who caught his gaze ducked away unsubtly and tried and failed to look like they hadn’t been staring. Draco was sure a significant amount of the muttering he could hear was speculation on their relationship.

Harry caught Draco’s eye with a sly grin.

“Let’s give them something to really talk about,” he said suggestively.

“Thought you didn’t want to cheapen it?” Draco countered, eyebrow raised.

“One time free pass?” Harry offered.

Draco smirked back. Neville groaned in dismay.

“What did you have in mind?”

Harry replied by cupping his hand around the back of Draco’s head and pulling him in for a searing kiss. His hands automatically went around Harry’s shoulders and his fingers carded into the hair at the nape of his neck.

Distantly he could hear several wolf whistles amid gasps and girlish squeals, but he barely noticed. He was too busy enjoying the tangle of tongues and lips and the broad grin on Harry’s face as they kissed. Never in a million years had he imagined what it would truly feel like to be able to kiss Harry – his boyfriend – in public. What he had conjured in his mind to cast his patronus paled before the real thing.

Chapter End Notes

The new friend group is really coming together!

By this point in the story, it's been exactly two weeks since they first got stuck together. Can you believe it? So much has happened! The pace on things is about to pick up a bit soon but the fallout from the media won't happen for a few more chapters.

Chapter 27: Taking Care of Business

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“I can’t believe I missed it!” Ginny complained loudly at lunch. “You two snogged in front of the whole school and I didn’t get to see!”

“You wanted to watch us snog?” Harry asked, slightly perturbed.

“No,” she corrected sassily. “I wanted to see Ron’s head explode!”

“Plenty more opportunity for that,” Draco drawled with a smirk.

Neville snorted.

Weasley’s reaction had been rather entertaining and if Harry hadn’t specifically requested Draco not kiss him with the sole purpose of pissing him off, he’d be doing it a lot more. Weasley had done an honest-to-Merlin spit take and coughed and spluttered on his tea for a straight minute, his face a deep crimson.

He kept glaring daggers at the two of them throughout Transfiguration and at one point looked like he might be sick when Draco whispered something in Harry’s ear which made him blush. McGonagall actually threatened to separate them if they were going to be too distracted by each other to focus on their work. Their other classmates snickered but Weasley just scowled furiously.

“Too bad you don’t have any classes with us, Ginny,” Neville remarked. “Ron’s been pissed enough to inflate like a bullfrog.”

“He’s not going to get any work done in class if he keeps spending the whole time glaring at the two of you,” Hermione said disapprovingly.

“You concern yourself too much with other people’s studies, Hermione,” Draco chided. “You’ll stress yourself out a lot less if you stop giving a shit about whether the people around you are going to pass their exams. It’s not your concern.”

“I’ve been telling her that for years!” Harry exclaimed.

“We’ve *all* been telling her that,” Neville added.

“I can’t help it if I want my friends to succeed,” she pouted.

“If Ron can’t pass without you hounding him, he should ask for additional help from the teachers. And if he won’t do that, he doesn’t deserve to succeed in that field,” Ginny said coldly. “You don’t get good at something without hard work and dedication. Your *own* hard work, not someone else’s.”

“That’s surprisingly wise for you, Ginny,” Neville remarked.

“I have my moments,” she quipped. “I actually got that from Fred and George if you can believe it.”

“That’s surprisingly wise for Fred and George,” Hermione added.

“Nah, it makes sense to me,” Harry said with a shrug. “They made a successful business from the ground up in the middle of a war. That sort of thing definitely takes dedication and hard work. And now George is doing it on his own and the business is still thriving.”

“I still have no idea how they ever got the gold to get off the ground in the first place,” Ginny said shaking her head. “Mum thinks it was gambling.”

“I may as well tell you,” Harry sighed. “Can’t have Molly thinking her sons went to such irresponsible lengths.”

“Wait, you know?” Ginny demanded.

“Of course I know, I’m the one who gave them the thousand galleons to invest in the business!”

“What?!” Ginny and Neville both shouted, drawing the attention of nearby lunch-goers.

Draco was also surprised at the investment but had the decorum to not go shouting about it. He noticed that Hermione did not seem surprised by this news. She’d probably known for years where the Weasley twins had gotten their capital.

“You just *handed* them a thousand galleons?!” Neville exclaimed.

“Pretty much,” Harry shrugged.

“That’s a lot of gold, Harry,” Ginny grimaced.

Draco had noticed after spending some time with her that Ginny was often uncomfortable about expensive gifts. An owl for Christmas was one thing but a thousand galleons was an entirely different matter. There wasn’t an owl in the world that cost that much.

“It should never have been mine in the first place,” Harry explained. “It was my entire Triwizard winnings. I didn’t want it and the twins had been screwed out of their savings by Bagman so I gave it to them. Told them to spend it on their business and not tell your mum where it came from.”

“And you knew about this?” Ginny demanded, rounding on Hermione who started at the accusation.

“Harry told us after the twins had their grand exit with the swamp fifth year,” she explained sheepishly. “Ron said he was going to tell your mum all about it.”

“Well I don’t think he ever got around to it cos she wonders about it all the time,” Ginny said shaking her head. She looked sharply at Harry. “Wait is that why they were always giving you free product even though they made the rest of us pay?”

“I *try* to pay every time but they always said my gold was no good there,” Harry shrugged. “I even tried sneaking gold into their register only to find it in my shopping after I’d left!”

“It sounds to me like you’re a silent partner,” Draco pondered.

“What?” Harry looked baffled.

“You invested in a start-up as a financial backer,” Draco explained. “Normally such things are done with extensive contracts and meetings to hammer out details and whatnot, but essentially what you have is a handshake deal which makes you a silent partner in their business. You invested in their idea and they got to run the business however they liked with your gold. If you’re really interested in paying for your goods and George won’t let you, you should buy stock in the business instead. It will improve his business while making you passive income off of it as well.”

“I’m not trying to profit off of Weasley’s Wizard Wheezes,” Harry balked.

“Why not?” Draco queried. “It’s the same thing that earned your family that fortune of yours in the first place.”

Harry stared at him uncomprehendingly.

“Your grandfather, Fleamont Potter, invented Sleekeazy’s Hair Potions and made piles of gold from the profits, then sold the company in his old age but retained stocks and royalties. Your fortune grows every time someone buys one of their products.”

“I’m getting really tired of other people knowing more about my family than I do,” Harry sighed. “Until this exact moment I didn’t even know my grandfather’s name.”

“I’ve bought that potion,” Hermione remarked.

“I’m not surprised,” Draco shrugged. “Just about everyone with curly hair has bought that potion. It was probably originally designed to tame *this* unruly mop.”

At this he ruffled Harry’s hair.

“Hey!” Harry exclaimed, swatting his hands away. “Now I *know* you’re being ridiculous, I wasn’t even born when he invented that potion.”

“Oh that hair is definitely a family trait,” Ginny snickered. “Sirius always said you had your father’s hair.”

“Well I knew *that*,” Harry said rolling his eyes.

“Anyway, you should look in to whether Wheezes’ stock is publicly traded,” Draco said, returning to the topic. “The more stock that’s purchased, the more it’s worth, and the more

it's worth, the more successful the business has the potential to become."

"So you're saying that it would help us both?" Harry clarified.

"Definitely," Draco confirmed.

"How is it you know all this about the stock market anyway?" Ginny asked.

Draco shrugged.

"It's where most of my family gold lies too," he explained casually. "Though we were forced to sell most of our stocks to pay reparations from the war. And the stock prices in any holdings under the Malfoy name have plummeted because no one will do business with us. So most of what remains of our fortune is entirely liquid."

"You're broke?" Neville asked in shock.

"Well we're not going to starve or anything," Draco rolled his eyes. "And we kept the manor, though if it was up to me, we'd sell that too. Or burn it down, I'm not particular. But I guess you could say we're middle class now."

"I take it your mum is the one that doesn't want to sell the manor?" Hermione asked delicately.

Draco wondered if talk of his childhood home was as tense a subject for her as it was for him.

"And father," he sighed. "He sends letters from Azkaban about how he wants what's left of our gold to be handled and mother just handles it for him. But she's also sentimentally attached to the house, it's been in our family for ten generations."

"Are you not sentimentally attached too?" Hermione asked gently. "You lived there your whole life."

"There's nothing but bad memories left in that house," he sighed. He began absently scratching at his Mark and Harry swiftly swatted his right hand away from his left arm and grasped it tightly to shield him from hurting himself further. "If I ever go back there, it will be against my will."

"Well then it's a good thing you're coming to ours for Christmas," Ginny chipped in, trying to lighten the mood. "I for one, am excited to see how Ron reacts when you come. No one had better tell him ahead," she added sternly at the group. "I want to see his face when you turn up at the Burrow."

Draco snorted.

"Well then you'd better tell Blaise and Theo before they tell him," he instructed her. "Or they might do that sooner rather than later to get a rise out of him."

"Good call," she agreed. "I should tell Luna too."

With that, she hopped up and made a beeline over to the Slytherin table to talk to the two men in question.

After lunch Draco had Charms and Ancient Runes. Harry walked him to the latter and kissed him soundly outside of the classroom before heading off to study during his free period. Draco loved that he could now kiss Harry whenever he wanted with absolutely no regard for who saw and had a dopey smile on his face all the way through Ancient Runes which Hermione teased him for.

“You really love him don’t you?” she said casually after class as they were headed back to the common room.

“You’re really clever, you know that?” Draco sighed. There was no use denying it; he had suspected that Hermione had figured out the depth of his feelings for Harry ages ago.

“I may have been told that a time or two,” she said with a smirk. Then she got serious. “I hope you’re prepared for what comes with being in love with Harry.”

“I know,” Draco said in resignation. “The media is going to eat me alive.”

“Not just them,” she warned. “There will be jealous people who want you out of the way so they can have a chance at him themselves. Romilda Vane once tried to slip him a love potion.”

“Oh Merlin!” he exclaimed in horror. “What happened?”

“Ron got dosed by mistake,” she said dismissively. “That’s not the point. When he was dating Ginny, other girls would pick fights with her all of the time. She could handle herself, obviously, but I thought you should be warned.”

“Thanks for the heads up,” Draco drawled, rolling his eyes. “But I think I can handle a pack of jealous girls.”

“And boys,” she pointed out. “Now that they know he swings both ways, he’s going to have a lot more people who think they have a shot at him. And they won’t care that you two are already dating.”

“Because they’ll think that they’re a better choice than me,” he concluded.

“Well, given your history...”

“I’m not stupid enough to think I’m the best choice for him long term, Hermione,” he pointed out. “I may love him but he doesn’t love me, not like that. But even if this is temporary and he comes to realise that being my boyfriend is more trouble than it’s worth and ditches me, I don’t care. I love him so much that I will take whatever he gives me and be deliriously happy about it.”

“And if he breaks up with you?” she asked. “It’ll break your heart.”

“It’ll hurt,” he agreed. “But my heart will only be broken if he decides he doesn’t want anything at all to do with me. He’ll only break my heart if he decides he doesn’t want to be friends anymore.”

“You’ve really got it bad, haven’t you?” she said with sympathy.

“You can’t tell him,” he urged.

“It’s not for me to tell him that,” she agreed gently. “But don’t you want him to know?”

“No,” he shook his head. “It’s too soon.”

“You’ve known each other seven years.”

“He’s only just learned he’s queer, Hermione,” he countered. “It’s all brand new for him. And just because *I’ve* fancied him since we were fourteen doesn’t mean he has.”

They got to the common room then and the discussion was cut short.

They had obviously interrupted something as Weasley had been standing over Finnigan and Thomas, red in the face and angrily saying something about “special treatment” before he broke off and glared at Draco and Hermione when they entered. He didn’t say anything to them, just scowled and stormed off in the direction of the boy’s dorms.

“What’s his problem now?” Draco asked the two Gryffindors.

“Oh he just found out that Harry gets to train with the team,” Thomas sighed. “You just missed him, by the way. He left about five minutes ago with Ginny. They had their broomsticks and Ginny was in her Quidditch kit so they probably went to train down at the pitch.”

“He’s just sour that eighth years don’t get to be on house teams,” Finnigan said rolling his eyes. “Why *does* Harry get to be on the team anyway?”

“He’s not *on* the team,” Draco corrected. “He’s just allowed to train with them so he can get the rust off before he meets scouts.”

“Oh is he planning to go pro?” Thomas asked eagerly.

“He is,” Draco confirmed. “Any team that signs him will be very lucky, too.”

Thomas and Finnigan made noises of agreement and returned to their earlier conversation. Hermione said something about getting started on their Ancient Runes homework and Draco decided to go down to the Quidditch pitch to watch Harry train.

He went up the stairs to his dorm to drop off his backpack and get a cloak as the weather had started to turn chilly, but when he got there he found a letter lying on his bedside table that hadn’t been there before. He picked it up curiously and found his name written on the envelope in a familiar elegant cursive. This must be the letter his father had passed to Harry to deliver to him at his hearing. Harry must have left it for him before heading to the pitch.

He considered throwing it in a fire unopened but hesitated. His father had sent him several letters since his incarceration and Draco had destroyed every one of them without reading them. He had no interest in anything Lucius Malfoy had to say. However, Harry had gone to all the trouble of delivering it to him and it seemed an insult to just throw it away. So he steeled himself against whatever was inside and unsealed the envelope and unfolded the parchment inside.

Dear Draco,

I am sure you have not gotten any of my previous letters and your mother tells me you have not been replying to her correspondence as well since you went back to Hogwarts. It is my hope that I can get this one to you through Potter since it is obvious that you have formed some sort of alliance with him.

First, I must commend you for your prudence. I don't know what you did to convince Potter to speak up in your defence at trial but it seems to have worked splendidly. I am relieved that you and your mother managed to escape incarceration. You should continue to cultivate this alliance with him as it is sure to serve you well now that his side have won the war.

Next, I would like to ask your assistance in helping your mother manage our gold, or what remains of it, at any rate. I have taught you much in the way of managing business and you have a better head for it than she does anyway.

On that note, I must insist you respond to her letters in a more timely fashion. She is all alone while you are at school and she worries about you. You know how your mother frets.

I don't expect you to write me back. It's probably not a good look to be corresponding with a convict in Azkaban even if I am your father. And your mail is likely being monitored anyway so be mindful of what you write. Anything you want to reach me, you can write your mother about and she will pass it along.

Stay strong and keep your head down and you will get through this difficult period.

Never forget, you are a Malfoy and Malfoys are survivors.

Sincerely,

Father

Draco scowled at the letter, his hand curling into a fist and crumpling the edges. It was exactly the sort of shit he'd been expecting. He shouldn't have bothered reading it; it only pissed him off. His father thought he was using Harry as a political shield. He didn't know the first thing about him!

He wadded up the letter and threw it aside, not caring where it landed, dug out his cloak from his wardrobe and was about to leave his dormitory in a huff when one line of the letter stuck out to him.

“You know how your mother frets.”

He sighed, set down his cloak and pulled out a sheet of parchment and a quill to write his mother. She'd written to him several times since term had started, asking about how things were going and he'd been putting off replying for weeks because he hadn't had the heart to tell her that he was miserable. But he wasn't miserable anymore, and his father was right about one thing; his mother worried about him constantly. Besides, he'd promised Harry he'd write her to ask about Christmas anyway.

Dear Mother,

Much has happened since the start of term and you will undoubtedly read about it in the paper in the coming days so I wanted you to hear about it from me before you did. It's nothing bad, don't worry.

I've started dating someone. And before I tell you who it is, I want you to know that I've never been happier than I am right now. I worry you won't approve but I want you to know that no matter how you feel about it, I have no intention of breaking up under any circumstances.

It's Harry Potter.

He told me the two of you spoke at Father's appeal hearing and had mentioned that we'd become friends. Well it turns out we've become quite a bit more than that since he spoke to you. I love him so much, mother, and he makes me so happy I can't even begin to tell you how much. And I know what you must be thinking. He and I certainly have a complicated past and we've never gotten on but all that has changed.

We had a bit of a mishap in Potions and found ourselves glued together for a bit over a week and a half. We had to learn to get along with each other and I thought it would be a lot harder than it was but Harry is determined to put the past behind us. It also helped that the the failed potion that stuck us together was Veritaserum. I made it impossible for us to lie to each other. To make a long story short, he learned that I've fancied him for several years now and I was surprised to find that he wasn't at all bothered by this knowledge.

We quickly became friendly and then a bit more than friendly and now we're officially dating. That last part came about rather publicly and now the whole school knows even though we were trying to keep it quiet. So it'll probably end up in the paper by this weekend. You know how the Prophet loves to write about him.

He knows about my condition and it doesn't bother him at all. Though that shouldn't surprise me with how noble he's always been. I've gotten to know his friends better too

and we're all getting along great for the most part. I've also begun making amends with them for past wrongs and they've all been very forgiving, though I sometimes feel I don't deserve it.

On that note, you and I have been invited to attend Christmas at the Weasleys' home. Mrs Weasley would like to put our family feud to rest and says that any friend of Harry's is welcome.

I have been warned that it can be quite the dramatic affair, however. Apparently Weasley celebrations can get a bit out of hand, but Harry thinks it'll be a fun time. Though I think it's only fair that I should tell you that while most of the Weasley family has decided to trust Harry's judgement about me, their youngest son, Ron Weasley, still hates me quite ferociously. (Not without good reason, I assure you.) Though it's starting to look like he's not Harry's biggest fan anymore either as they've had a bit of a falling out.

I've become friendly with the Weasleys' daughter, Ginny, though, and she's very insistent that I attend. Though I think she just wants to cause drama between me and her brother for her own amusement. She's also asking her mother if she can invite a few friends as well and if she agrees, Theo Nott will be in attendance as well so Harry and I will at least not be the only people you know at the party.

I'll understand if you don't want to attend but let me know either way so I can pass your response on to Harry and Ginny.

I was ill on Wednesday but I've recovered well and I'm feeling fine now.

Love,

Draco

PS: Please tell Father to stop writing me as I have nothing to say to him and I don't wish to read anything he has to say either. Any further correspondence from him will be destroyed unopened so he shouldn't bother wasting his time.

He finished his letter and read it over to see if he was happy with it. He never stated his lycanthropy outright in his letters, always referring to it as an illness. It was an old paranoia held over from the war when people's letters were being intercepted. His father thought his letters might still be intercepted and it wasn't outside the realm of possibility given that he was still on probation and under strict scrutiny by the Department of Magical Law Enforcement.

It wasn't like it was illegal to be a werewolf and still hold a position in society, but if the Ministry found out, he'd be put on a registry, making it public knowledge and he'd be all but shunned by wizarding society and lose a great many rights. It wasn't worth the risk.

He quickly folded up his letter and sealed it in an envelope to take up to the Owlery. He would drop it off with his owl, Artemis, first before heading down to the Quidditch pitch to watch Harry's training. Admiring how his boyfriend looked while he chased the snitch was sure to put him back in a good mood.

Chapter End Notes

I was very amused by the idea of Ron seeing Harry and Draco publicly make out in the Great Hall and literally spit out his tea in shock 🤮

Chapter 28: Hallowe'en

September wore into October and the weather began to change in earnest. Draco and Harry spent much of their time together but it wasn't always just the two of them. Sometimes while Harry was at Quidditch practice, Draco would study with Hermione and Neville and occasionally Hannah Abbott, who had started joining them and sat very close to Neville when she did. When there wasn't Quidditch practice, Ginny could be found in the eighth year common room hanging out with them and sometimes Luna would join her.

Draco found that of all of Harry's friends, he understood Luna the least. She had been a prisoner in his home for months but seemed to show no outward signs of trauma from the experience. She interacted with Draco as if they'd been friends all along but also had a bizarre airiness to her manner that always left him feeling rather wrong-footed.

"You'll get used to her," Harry kept telling him. "You have to look for the real meaning behind the bizarre stuff she says. Like how she talks about me having wrackspurts. I think what she means is she can tell I'm troubled by something. Since term started she's been commenting that I have fewer and fewer and I think that just means she can tell I'm more relaxed and happy and untroubled than she's ever known me to be before."

Draco supposed this made sense, but it didn't make her any less odd.

Weasley had been all but shunned by their entire year. He had taken to being a bit of a loner. Eating meals by himself, studying alone in the library, and could occasionally be seen wandering the grounds looking bored. Draco wondered how long it would go on before he swallowed his pride and just apologised.

The only one willing to talk to him had been Zacharias Smith but even Weasley couldn't bear to tolerate *him*. It was one thing Draco found he actually agreed with Weasley on. Smith was a pompous ass who clearly thought he was better than others. It was most likely due to the popular belief among pureblood families that the Smith family were direct descendants of Helga Hufflepuff so he seemed to think that made him important.

"It's far more likely that they're related to a muggleborn family," Hermione had stated in irritation when Draco had brought up that explanation. "There's about three or four million people worldwide with that surname. It may be uncommon among wizards but its *extremely* common among muggles. Sure, someone called Smith could have married a Hufflepuff but who's to say it's Zacharias' ancestor?"

"Maybe he's got a family tree that proves it," Neville had suggested.

"Even if he does, who your ancestors were don't have any bearing on how important you are," Hermione countered impatiently.

A lesson that Draco had learned very painfully. Who his ancestors were turned out to be a bit of a curse rather than anything that gave him any clout.

“I’ve been thinking I should change my name,” Draco had confided to Harry one night while they were in bed.

“Why?” he asked idly, drawing random designs on Draco’s bare chest with the tip of his finger.

“Every time someone calls me by my surname it feels like an indictment,” Draco sighed.

“Whenever someone shouts ‘Malfoy’ it feels like it’s a curse. Everyone says it with so much venom or like it leaves a bad taste in their mouth.”

“What would you change it to?” Harry asked curiously.

Draco had a brief wild thought of asking Harry to marry him so he could change his name to Potter but shut it down and sent the thought to go live with all his other impossible fantasies.

“I don’t know,” he confessed. “I mean, I’d like to cut my father out of my life completely but changing my name might also distance me from my mother and I don’t want that.”

“What about Black?” Harry suggested. “It’s your mother’s maiden name so you wouldn’t be distancing yourself from her.”

“I think I’d run into the same issue of a troubling history associated with the name,” Draco pointed out dryly.

“The wizarding world has a short memory,” Harry said with a careless hand wave. “They only remember the deeds of the last person they heard of with that name. They’d probably associate you with Sirius more than anyone else in that family.”

“That may be so, but I don’t think I want to trade one stuffy pureblood name for another.”

“Hey!” Harry said indignantly. “*I* have a stuffy pureblood name, you know.”

“Yeah but like you said,” Draco agreed. “People only remember the most recent person with that name and you’re a halfblood. There’s no other Potters in wizarding Britain so as far as anyone is concerned, it’s a halfblood name now.”

“Maybe you should change your name to something not associated with wizards then,” Harry suggested teasingly. “Like a muggle name.”

“I don’t know any muggle names.”

“I wasn’t being serious,” Harry chuckled.

“What was your mother’s maiden name?” Draco asked curiously.

“Evans. Why?”

“Might make a nice name,” Draco said with a shrug.

Harry had turned scarlet at that and it made Draco wonder what thought had crossed through his mind to do that.

“I don’t care what your name is, for the record,” Harry said softly. “You shouldn’t have to hide where you come from for the world to accept you. Besides, whatever you change it to, it’s not like people won’t continue to know who you are.”

Harry was right of course. People would probably carry on calling him Malfoy even if he changed his name.

Another full moon passed with a lot less drama than the previous. Draco had even managed to attend all of his classes and luckily this one had fallen on a Thursday night so when he wasn’t especially attentive in Transfiguration the next morning, McGonagall knew why and didn’t comment on it. Harry had also brought him breakfast and attended to his injuries again which Draco could definitely get used to.

He’d also noticed that recently Harry often came to bed in the evenings smelling of potion ingredients. He’d taken to working on the wolfsbane potion in his own dorm in the early evenings, leaving Draco to do other things on his own or with one or more of his new friends. He never went into Harry’s dorm anymore because of the fumes. Hermione sometimes joined him to work on it too, either because she wanted to help or because she was unsatisfied with the potion she’d made herself, though Draco privately blamed Weasley’s contribution to their potion for its poor quality.

“Would it be rude to ask Professor Slughorn to let me change partners?” she had asked him on one of the evenings Harry was at Quidditch practice.

“Rude to whom?” Draco had countered.

“Well... to Ron,” she said in a small voice.

“It’s not rude if it’s indisputable fact that he’s bringing down your grade,” he pointed out. “Who would you prefer to work with?”

“You or Harry would be an excellent choice,” she said with a slightly hopeful note.

“That’s not going to happen,” Draco refused flatly. “I’ve never had such an excellent potions partner, I’m not giving him up. Besides if you partnered with one of us, the other would have to partner with Weasley and whichever that ends up being, it will *not* go well.”

“That’s the trouble I keep bumping up against, too,” she sighed. “The only person I can think of it sort of working out with is if I worked with Padma and Terry worked with Ron. But there’s no way they’d risk their grade any more than the rest of us.”

“Maybe you can convince Slughorn to shuffle partners from time to time,” Draco shrugged. “It’s not really fair to you that you have to be tethered to the worst performing student in class for the entire year. D’you know that Harry and I put up a shield charm between your table and ours every class since the Veritaserum incident?”

“That’s probably not a bad idea,” she muttered sourly.

They had returned to work on their Veritaserum on the new moon and Weasley had been as inept as he’d been the first time. Hermione had tried having him stir while she prepared the ingredients this time but he hadn’t done a consistent job of it and halfway through their preparation, their cauldron had boiled over and left a noxious blue foam all over their work surface and the floor. Luckily Draco and Harry had had the foresight to put up a barrier between their tables and they were able to complete the work on their potion to perfection without any foreign matter finding its way into their cauldron again and no one got glued together.

“If Slughorn doesn’t go for it, just tell Weasley not to touch anything and do it all yourself,” Draco suggested. “You’d get it done a lot easier and if he pays attention, he might actually learn something. And save the rest of us from your foul smelling potion mishaps.”

“I’ve never before had this much trouble in Potions, even when I was partnered with Neville!” she exclaimed in frustration.

“That’s because Neville had the good sense to follow your directions, and then get out of Potions at the first opportunity. He knew where his strengths laid and it wasn’t Potions. Weasley would do well to follow that example.”

Besides wolfsbane potion, Harry was working on some other kind of personal project he wasn’t sharing with Draco. Hermione seemed to know what it was but she wasn’t talking and he knew he’d never get it out of her. If anyone could keep a secret it was Hermione and you’d never even know she had a secret to keep either. She hadn’t let on to Harry the depth of Draco’s feelings for him and she wasn’t letting on whatever this personal project of Harry’s was. Harry would just keep assuring him that when it was finished, he’d let him know.

Draco had always been terrible at waiting patiently for surprises. As a child he’d sneak around all the hidden spaces of the manor looking for wherever his parents had stashed Christmas or birthday presents because he just couldn’t wait.

He kept trying to catch Harry off guard to get him to let slip whatever it was he was keeping a surprise but he was always prepared for it and had been very tight-lipped despite how he was obviously bursting to tell him.

“You’re just going to have to be patient and wait,” Harry teased. “I’ll be worth it, I promise.”

“At least tell me why you taste like that,” Draco pouted. “What have you been eating?”

In the last few days Draco had had to refrain from kissing Harry on the mouth as his lips and tongue had come to taste very bitter. Harry had told him it was unavoidable for the next little while but promised it was temporary. Draco had noticed the change right after the full moon but couldn’t figure out what its source could be.

“Sorry, can’t tell you that yet,” Harry had said regretfully but his eyes danced teasingly like he was enjoying making Draco squirm.

Draco assumed it was some kind of potion he was working on that he was for some reason tasting. He would be concerned if it hadn't been for Hermione's assurances that what Harry was working on was perfectly safe and he was taking all the proper precautions.

It was driving him mad not knowing.

Now it was Hallowe'en and Harry had become somewhat melancholy. Draco wasn't sure why. He wondered if something had happened last Hallowe'en that he didn't know about that the date was bringing up bad memories for him. He thought about the date in past years and while an unnaturally high number of bizarre incidents had occurred at Hogwarts over the years on that date, he couldn't think of one that would cause this mood shift in Harry.

"Will you go somewhere with me after breakfast?" Harry asked him while they were getting dressed. Harry had taken his advice and moved all of his belongings into Draco's dorm and only used his own for potion brewing and sleeping during the full moon.

"Like Hogsmeade?" Draco asked. "Like a date?"

Harry smiled but it didn't quite reach his eyes.

"A bit further away than Hogsmeade," he clarified. "There's something I want to do and I don't really want to go alone."

Whatever this was it seemed really important to Harry. It was the weekend and there was nothing in Draco's probation terms that forbade him from leaving Hogwarts grounds when he didn't have lessons so he didn't see a reason why he shouldn't support Harry on this outing, whatever it was.

"Sure," Draco shrugged. "You okay? You've been a bit down since yesterday."

"I'm alright," Harry assured him. "This time of year is just a bit difficult."

He didn't elaborate and Draco didn't ask but he couldn't fathom what he meant by "this time of year". He wouldn't have long to wait though.

"You should dress in muggle clothes," he added without further explanation.

They had a quiet breakfast while their peers were significantly more exuberant. Except for Hermione who seemed to know exactly what was up with Harry but had decided that it was for Harry to share and not her place to spread his business.

"Are you going this morning?" she asked him gently, observing how they were dressed.

He just nodded quietly in response and continued to pick at his food somberly.

A few people questioned them on their attire but they brushed them off, saying they were going on an outing for the day. People probably assumed like Draco originally had that they were going on a date, but were too oblivious to notice Harry's mood.

They walked out the front gates hand in hand and when they reached the outside of Hogwarts' wards, Harry took Draco's hand tightly in his and after a brief confirmation that he was ready, disappeared.

They appeared in an alley between two brick buildings in a quaint little village. There were candles and jack-o-lanterns in the shop windows and small children running around on the nearby street wearing costumes and squealing in delight at some game they were playing, jumping out from around parked cars and getting underfoot of the adults they were with. There appeared to be some sort of Hallowe'en festival happening.

Harry silently blended them into the crowd and led the way up the street to a village square where the majority of the activity seemed to be concentrated.

"Where are we?" Draco asked him when he was sure no muggles would overhear.

"Godric's Hollow," he answered somberly. "I was born here."

Realization hit Draco like a brick. If this is where Harry was born, then this must also be where his parents had been killed.

Draco became aware that some of the villagers were looking in their direction and held their attention on them longer than others as they walked through the square. Some stared at them with open mouths before turning and whispering to their companions.

"Am I mad or are some of these people watching us?" Draco asked.

"You're not mad," Harry said in a flat voice. "Muggles live here but a lot of the residents are wizarding families. The ones staring are probably wizards and they've probably recognized us."

He brought them to a halt in front of a memorial in the middle of the square. When they had first entered the square it had been a plain black monument with names carved into it, probably some sort of war memorial from decades ago. But now that they were closer it had transformed into a statue of a couple and a baby.

Harry stared up at the statue with a painful sort of longing in his eyes. Draco looked at it properly and recognised the man half of the couple. He was a dead ringer for Harry. He could kick himself for not figuring it out sooner; this was a memorial to Lily and James Potter, the baby in their arms was Harry. They looked happy.

People were really staring at them openly now and it was starting to make Draco feel uncomfortable. Harry seemed to sense his discomfort and gave his hand a squeeze and silently led him away from the square and away from prying eyes.

He led them to a quieter part of the village where there was a church standing beside a cemetery. Now Draco knew why Harry had wanted company. Visiting his parent's graves had to be an emotionally taxing thing, made only worse by half the villagers knowing exactly who he was and why he was there.

They entered the cemetery and walked directly to a plot near the back. On the way Draco recognized several surnames belonging to old wizarding families including one that made him do a double take.

“Did that headstone say Dumbledore?” Draco asked in disbelief.

“Yeah,” Harry said quietly. “That was his mother and sister. He grew up in this village. Come on, it’s this way.”

A few rows behind the Dumbledores they found their destination.

James Potter and Lily Potter. They were buried together in one grave with a large headstone for them both. Their date of death stood out to him; 31 October 1981. They were killed exactly seventeen years ago somewhere nearby.

“I came here last year with Hermione,” Harry told him, that same flat tone as before in his voice.

He sat down in the grass after wandlessly drying the ground. Draco sat down next to him. He put his arm around Harry’s shoulders and Harry leaned in to the embrace, resting his head on Draco’s shoulder and letting out a shuddering sigh.

“It was probably Christmas eve,” he continued. “We’d come looking for clues and to talk to Bathilda Bagshot because we thought she might know something to help us. It turned out to be a trap though. Voldemort had guessed that I’d come here and had left Nagini to wait for me to turn up. We barely made it out alive and I broke my wand in the escape.”

“I remember that,” Draco realised with a shudder. “He’d been out and had come back in a blind fury that you’d escaped. He cursed about half a dozen of his followers just for being in his line of sight. I was hiding in my room at the time but he was screaming so angrily I could hear everything. I was terrified.”

“He missed us by about a second,” Harry informed him. “He got there right after we disappeared. I could feel how angry he was, could see what he was doing.”

Harry shuddered and shook his head.

“You could feel his emotions?” Draco asked, horrified. “Was that from being a horcrux? You knew what he was thinking?”

“I couldn’t usually tell what he was thinking,” Harry corrected. “But sometimes I could see through his eyes what he was doing, most of the time though I just felt his emotions when he was really angry or really happy.”

“That must have been horrible.”

“It was,” he confirmed. “Sometimes it was useful though. I saw things I know he didn’t want me to know. Though I usually preferred it when he was angry to when he was happy because it usually meant he wasn’t getting what he wanted. When there was that mass breakout of

Azkaban in fifth year, he was so deliriously happy that *I* burst out laughing. Made me feel really sick after.”

“It’s a wonder you didn’t go mad,” Draco sighed and Harry hummed in agreement.

“I saw the things he imagined sometimes too,” Harry continued. “Like his dreams and memories. When I sprang his trap here I was almost caught because I was distracted by a vision. It was his memory of the night he killed my parents. He knew by then that I sometimes saw the things he saw, it’s how he lured me out to the Department of Mysteries. He must have shared that memory with me on purpose to slow me down.”

“But it didn’t work,” Draco reminded him. “You escaped.”

“Thanks to Hermione,” he agreed, nodding. “She pulled me out of there, and apparated us away.”

“Where was Weasley during all this?”

“He’d ditched us by then,” Harry sighed.

“Fucking wanker!” Draco cursed. “Why in Merlin’s name would he do that?”

“We’d been carrying around one of the horcruxes,” Harry explained. “The locket. We had no idea how to destroy it, we’d tried everything we could think of and nothing would leave a mark on it. So we kept it with us so that whenever we eventually found something that would do the job we could get rid of it straight away.

“Problem was, it had this weird aura or something. It sort of got into your head and made you think negative thoughts. We had taken turns wearing it so no one of us would be overly affected by it. I wore it the most. I don’t think it affected me as badly as Ron and Hermione, probably because I’d been exposed to a horcrux every day of my life for sixteen years at that point. Like an inoculation.

“Well, I guess it got in Ron’s head the most. He wasn’t used to rough living and missed his mum’s cooking and whatnot. He also seemed to think Hermione and I were somehow secretly hooking up behind his back which is the most absurd bit, especially when you consider all three of us shared a tent the whole time we were on the run and couldn’t have hidden anything from each other if we wanted to.”

Draco snorted at this. Years ago he too had thought that Harry and Hermione would one day start dating. It had seemed so obvious at the time, but now upon closer examination of their dynamic, nothing could be more ridiculous.

“Anyway,” Harry continued. “He took off in a huff and didn’t come back. We never stayed in one place very long and were always careful to leave no trace of us being there, so once we apparated away from that place, we knew he’d never find us again. We even stayed longer than we usually did in the hopes that he’d come back.

“According to him, he regretted leaving almost immediately but was caught up by snatchers and by the time he made his way back to our camp site, we’d left.”

“Funny,” Draco said bitterly. “Hermione wore the horcrux as much as he did and never once thought of abandoning you did she?”

“No,” Harry sighed. “I’ve never seen her so furious as when he found us and came back, though. And she once set a flock of enchanted birds to attack him. I thought she’d never forgive him even though he *did* save my life.”

“Save you from what?”

“I made the idiotic mistake of diving into a body of water while still wearing the locket. It almost drowned me.”

Draco really hated how Harry described his near death experiences. He was much too casual about it. He’d obviously had experienced so many close calls that they were commonplace now. The only time Draco noticed him have an emotional reaction to a near death experience was when someone else had died in the same incident. Cedric Diggory, Sirius Black, Albus Dumbledore, Dobby, and all the people at the Battle of Hogwarts. Harry only cared when it was other people in trouble.

They stayed at the Potters’ grave for about an hour longer, just sitting in contemplative silence until Harry was ready to go.

They got up, dusted themselves off, conjured a bouquet of flowers to leave at the headstone, and moved on. Thankfully the villagers had left them alone in the cemetery, but once they stepped out onto the street, the staring and whispers began again. But Harry ignored them with practiced ease and continued leading Draco on.

As they walked he spoke up again.

“Before last Christmas, I didn’t even know what day my parents had died,” Harry confided. “I learned that information by reading their headstone.”

“Why didn’t—” Draco started but stopped.

“What?” Harry asked curiously.

“I almost asked why your aunt wouldn’t have told you but then I realised that it’s because she’s a bitch,” Draco said dryly.

That got a laugh out of him. Draco was relieved to hear it. He hated to see Harry so sad and quiet.

“Come on,” Harry said, a much brighter tone in his voice now. “Let’s go somewhere people don’t know who we are and do something fun.”

Draco didn’t have a chance to ask questions before Harry had grabbed his hand and pulled him along down the street and into an alley. He held him close and disappeared them both.

Chapter 29: Miss Maple

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Harry took him to a Hallowe'en festival somewhere in Surrey. Draco guessed it was near where he grew up because he mentioned always wanting to go when he was younger but his aunt and uncle believed that the holiday had too much magic in it and so was forbidden. Draco suspected that even if Hallowe'en had nothing at all to do with magic, Harry still wouldn't have been allowed to go to the festival anyway because it was much too fun.

Harry bought him mulled wine and they sipped it while navigating a maze made of stacked hay bales with decorations of magical creatures that were made to jump out at them at the dead ends. Draco even embarrassed himself by screaming when a giant spider made of fake fur and metal armature wire leapt at him right as they were exiting the maze.

"How did they make it do that?" Draco demanded, his heart still in his throat while Harry laughed himself silly at his embarrassment.

"There's a motion sensor that triggers the arm it's attached to to extend," he explained through giggles. "You triggered it when you walked close to it."

"How do they sense the motion?" he asked curiously.

"No idea," Harry shrugged.

"You grew up in this world and you don't know?" Draco said doubtfully.

"I'm not an electrical engineer, Draco," Harry said condescendingly. "It takes years and years of study to know that sort of thing."

Draco shouldn't be surprised, he reasoned. There were plenty of magical artifacts whose function he knew nothing about. And muggles had to go to much more creative lengths to get their devices to do things wizards could do with a wave of their wand. It *was* a little unreasonable to expect Harry to know how it all worked.

"I'm assuming eklektical engineer is a profession?" he asked.

Harry snorted so hard he inhaled his mulled wine and he had to double over coughing.

"God, that burns!" he said when he finally got his breath back and just beamed at Draco in amusement, eyes bright with unshed tears from both mirth and his coughing fit.

"What did I say that was so funny?" Draco wasn't sure if he should be offended.

"It's '*electrical*,'" Harry corrected, pronouncing the word carefully.

Draco repeated it back a few times until satisfied he was saying it mostly correctly.

“It’s not *that* funny,” he pouted.

Harry insisted that it was and linked arms with him and guided him around. Most of the attractions at the festival seemed to be for children but Harry was delighted by it all. Small kids ran around in costumes, carrying buckets with things like jack-o-lantern faces, bats, black cats, or a wolf howling at a full moon printed on them. They ran around, weaving in and out of the legs of adults and stopped at stalls holding out their buckets to the stall owners.

“What is it those kids are doing?” Draco asked.

“It’s called Trick-or-Treat,” Harry explained. “Kids dress up in costumes and go around and ask people ‘trick or treat’ and people give them sweets. Usually it’s done at night and they go around neighbourhoods knocking on doors, but parents like to take the really little ones to places like this during the day because it’s safer.”

“They just go up to strangers’ houses and demand sweets?” Draco asked, baffled.

“Yeah,” Harry shrugged. “Only people who feel like participating and have bought sweets to give the kids will put on their outdoor lights to signal that they have sweets. It’s an unwritten rule that you don’t disturb people in houses with their lights off. The Dursley’s always kept ours off.

“It’s originally an American tradition but it’s gotten pretty popular over here too. Uncle Vernon always complained every year about Trick-or-Treaters polluting our culture with Americanisms, and ‘harassing ordinary folk at ungodly hours of the evening’.” He said this last bit in a deep voice to imitate his uncle and rolled his eyes to express how he felt about that sentiment. Draco snorted.

“So the sweets are the ‘treat’ part, what’s the ‘trick’?” he asked.

“Sometimes teenagers will go around and throw eggs at cars and houses and mess up decorations or cover a garden in loo roll,” Harry said casually.

“Why would *anyone* like a holiday like that?” Draco asked, baffled.

“It’s not very common,” Harry said dismissively. “You want a toffee apple?”

They walked around, ate probably way to many sweets, and played some carnival games, one of which Draco was sure Harry had used wandless magic to cheat at because Draco had been eyeballing the largest teddy bear he’d ever seen.

“They rig those games so people can’t win anyway,” Harry said, justifying his trick.

“I didn’t say a word,” Draco said with a broad grin, holding a toffee coloured bear that was almost as big as he was.

“He needs a name,” Harry said brightly nodding at the bear.

“Excuse you but Miss Maple is a lady,” Draco corrected in mock offence.

“Pardon me, Miss Maple,” Harry said regally to the bear with a dramatic bow, making Draco laugh. “I shouldn’t have assumed.”

Once they were tired of junk food and wandering around, they decided to finally head back to Hogwarts for the Hallowe’en feast.

“I’ve never had so much fun on Hallowe’en in my life,” Harry remarked as they made their way back up the lane towards the castle.

“Really?” Draco said, surprised, still hefting Miss Maple the giant teddy.

“Well let’s see,” Harry started ponderously. “I don’t remember my first one, because I was three months old. My second one, my parents were murdered in front of me. Then, between then and my first year at Hogwarts I wasn’t allowed to celebrate it.

“Then there was all the disastrous Hallowe’ens we had here. First year, a troll was released. Second, I spent the entire feast at a deathday party for Nearly Headless Nick (I don’t recommend attending one of those by the way, they’re dreadful) and then the Chamber of Secrets was opened and I got accused of petrifying Mrs Norris. Third year, Sirius broke into Gryffindor Tower and we all had to sleep in the Great Hall. Fourth year, my name came out of the Goblet of Fire and I had to compete in the Tournament. Fifth and sixth year didn’t leave any impression on me at all cos I had other more important shit to worry about. And then last year I was on the run.

“So overall, there isn’t much competition,” he finished, shrugging.

They reached the castle and carried on up to the Astronomy Tower and even though they used Harry’s second floor shortcut, they still passed several students who stared at them uncomprehendingly as they walked through the school in muggle clothes and carrying a giant teddy bear.

“This was also the best date I’ve ever had,” Harry added when they reached their floor.

“This was a date?” Draco clarified hopefully.

“What did you think it was?” Harry asked with a laugh. “I took you to meet my parents and then we went out for the day to a carnival. I even won you a giant cuddly toy.”

Draco chuckled softly. He knew Harry was making light of their trip to Godric’s Hollow to ease awkwardness, when in reality they’d gone there to genuinely pay their respects.

“Do you think they would have liked me?” Draco asked, feeling vulnerable.

“I like to think so,” Harry said uncertainly. “I don’t really know them at all, only what people have told me. But I did know Sirius and Remus, and I think they would have liked who you’ve become. They didn’t exactly like you much when they were alive though.”

Draco snorted. That was fair, he supposed.

They entered their common room and found the usual crowd of people, many of whom looked like they too had recently returned from outside of the castle wards. Many of their peers were similarly dressed in muggle attire, others in more traditional Samhain regalia.

“Oh you’re back!” Hermione called enthusiastically. “Where in the world did you get *that*?”

She regarded Miss Maple with a mixture of confusion and awe.

“We went to a Hallowe’en festival in Little Whinging,” Harry told her.

“I’m surprised you went back to that town,” she said with a frown. “I would have thought you’d never set foot there again.”

“What’s he done that the entire town is off limits?” Theo asked with interest.

“*Nothing*,” Harry snarked with a roll of his eyes. “It’s just where I grew up. Not a lot of fond memories there, but I’d always wanted to go to the Hallowe’en festival when I was growing up and I was never allowed. So I took Draco so he could see how muggles celebrate.”

“Apparently it involves, loads of rigged games, small children dressed as magical creatures getting underfoot, and enough sweets to make you puke,” Draco said enthusiastically, placing Miss Maple in an armchair like she was people. “Harry won me a teddy by using magic to cheat at ring toss.”

Blaise and Theo cheered in delight at this news, clapping Harry on the back. Neville and Ginny laughed and Hermione tutted.

“You shouldn’t use magic to cheat at muggle games, Harry,” she scolded him.

“Well they shouldn’t rig games to make them unfairly impossible to win just to pocket everyone’s money,” Harry countered, unbothered.

“Lighten up, Hermione,” Ginny told her. “No one saw, right?” she added to Harry.

“Of course not!” he rolled his eyes. “I’m not stupid. I used a wandless levitation charm right as I threw the rings. No one saw a thing.”

“I love this thing!” Theo said enthusiastically, petting Miss Maple’s arm. “It’s brilliant! You should leave it right here and it can be our mascot!”

“We should enchant it to run around the room giving people hugs!” Ginny exclaimed, taking out her wand to make good on her suggestion.

“Woah, woah, hold it!” Harry exclaimed, placing his hand over Ginny’s wand. “Miss Maple belongs to Draco, it’s up to him if anyone is going to enchant her.”

“*Miss Maple*?” Blaise exclaimed, laughing.

“I think it suits her,” Neville said, grinning.

“Okay *fine*, ” Ginny mock-grumbled. “Draco, can I *please* enchant Miss Maple to run around the room and tackle-hug people?”

Their whole group turned to Draco with wide pleading eyes. They all clearly thought this was a brilliant idea and Draco really couldn’t fault that logic.

“Okay fine,” Draco sighed dramatically after pretending to give it some thought. “But she’s coming home with me at the end of the year and she’d better be in one piece.”

“Which means you can’t harass Ron with her,” Neville pointed out to Ginny. “He’d probably vandalize her if you piss him off too much.”

“*Ugh*, ” she whined. “You lot are no fun.”

She enchanted the teddy anyway and Miss Maple sprang to life and immediately tackled Neville to the ground.

“I think you overdid it, Ginny,” Hermione remarked, suppressing a giggle.

“She’s a little over enthusiastic,” Neville critiqued from the floor, his voice muffled through Miss Maple’s fluff.

It took a little tweaking but between Ginny, Hermione and Draco they managed to get the spellwork just right. Miss Maple released Neville and got to her feet and started wandering around. She was a little floppy and Hermione suggested making her a bit steadier but Blaise argued it added to her charm.

As Miss Maple toddled around the room, her head flopping from side to side, the other eighth years watched her warily, unsure what she was going to do. Then, without warning, she leapt at Susan Bones and buried her in a giant teddy hug.

Susan squealed in alarm then burst out laughing and gave the teddy a cuddle.

They had to adjust the enchantment a few times because once she latched on, it was hard to convince her to let go. Hermione had also suggested that they have her only target people who are standing or walking as it would be very annoying if she constantly tackled students while they were studying. They also had her do rest periods where she would find a chair or sofa and sit down for awhile.

The creativity and suggestions kept flowing not just from their little group but from the other students in the common room. Miss Maple quickly became universally adored by their whole year and talk of what they could make her do flowed through the room.

Draco quickly vetoed any suggestion that she leave the common room and Harry backed him up. He just knew she’d get damaged or dirty running around the grounds trying to hug Hagrid’s chickens or wander into the Forbidden Forest or the lake or get beaten into threads and stuffing by the Whomping Willow. Even if she was confined to the castle, he didn’t like the idea of younger students – or more likely Peeves – possibly vandalizing her.

“I bet Mrs Norris would shred her to bits,” Dean Thomas added to the many reasons why it was a bad idea.

“What if she wandered into the Owlery?” Lisa Turpin fretted. “She’d get covered in poo and feathers and the owls would freak out on her.”

“Or if she wandered into Moaning Myrtle’s toilets and tried to hug Myrtle,” Parvati Patil added with a shudder. “She could get soaked in toilet water!”

So it was agreed. Miss Maple would live in the common room.

Eventually it was time to go to the feast so they all started filing out and several people gave Miss Maple a hug or a pat on their way. They all chatted happily about their new mascot and some of the girls, like the Patil twins and Susan Bones, discussed dressing her up in different cute outfits every day.

“The important question is what house is she in?” Sue Li proposed to the group.

“As she’s mine, she should be in Slytherin,” Draco pointed out.

“Harry won her though,” Seamus Finnigan pointed out. “So maybe she belongs in Gryffindor.”

“Guys, she’s obviously a Hufflepuff,” Hannah Abbott declared. “She’s so loveable and cuddly.”

“Are you saying Slytherins aren’t loveable and cuddly?” Tracey Davis accused, pretending to be offended.

The group laughed at the notion.

“You’re all wrong,” Harry declared. “Miss Maple transcends house divisions. Her house is Eighth Year.”

“That’s so sweet I think I just got a cavity,” Daphne Greengrass remarked sarcastically.

Everyone laughed at that and Neville ruffled Harry’s hair good-naturedly.

All of the eighth years crowded at the end of the Hufflepuff table instead of dividing into their houses and the table was so full that some Hufflepuffs moved to sit with their friends at other house tables. Some seventh years joined their group as well, including Ginny of course, and Luna.

Their section of the Great Hall was by far the loudest and most exuberant group. The teachers gave up trying to control their volume pretty quickly and Draco could have sworn he saw McGonagall smiling fondly in their direction.

Someone – probably Ginny – had slipped some Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes products amongst the food and students in their vicinity occasionally turned into canaries for a minute before turning back and spitting out yellow feathers. Terry Boot bit into a biscuit and

immediately grew the most magnificent beard Draco had ever seen, which he then paraded around like he was a model on a runway until the spell wore off and it disintegrated leaving bits of hair everywhere.

Technically Wheezes products were contraband but none of the teachers did anything about it. Draco suspected it was because no one was being pranked maliciously and everyone was having a good time and they didn't want to spoil the fun.

After the feast, many of their group didn't want the fun to end so soon which prompted Blaise to jump up onto the table to address the whole hall.

"Over-seventeens afterparty in eighth year common room!" he shouted and cheers went out over the hall from all tables.

Teachers looked exasperated but since only students who were of age were invited they didn't object. McGonagall stood up to add a caveat.

"All non-eighth years must be back in their houses by midnight," she said sternly. Then turned her attention to their group. "If I find any underage students have been admitted to what I assume is a party involving alcohol, there will never again be a party of this nature at Hogwarts while I am Headmistress, and those who allow it to happen will find themselves in detention with me every night for the rest of term."

With that warning in hand, anyone over the age of seventeen who wanted to attend the party joined the throng of eighth years headed up to the Astronomy Tower. Blaise, Theo and Seamus Finnigan broke off from the group to go out the front entrance to the castle calling that they'd be back with provisions. Draco assumed they were headed to Hogsmeade to acquire alcohol and several students passed them gold to contribute to the purchase.

Ginny declared that she had to grab something from Gryffindor Tower and she'd join them in a bit and ran off entirely too excitedly for Draco's liking.

"I'm not eating anything she offers me," Draco remarked to Neville who was closest, and he snickered in agreement.

The party turned out to be an extension of their celebration in the Great Hall with the addition of firewhiskey and butterbeer once their alcohol purveyors returned from Hogsmeade. House elves had also brought up tables filled with pastries and sweets while they were on their way up and Draco wondered if they'd done it independently or if someone had requested it without him noticing.

Those who had been present for the enchanting of Miss Maple had all come to the silent agreement not to tell their guests about her and the seventh and sixth years that had come were surprised and delighted when she glomped the first of them through the entrance to the common room.

It became a sort of drinking game that every time Miss Maple hugged someone, they had to do a shot of firewhiskey. Some people who appeared to have the ambition of getting plastered would hover in her vicinity to entice her into hugging them.

Draco only drank enough to feel a little warm, but Harry had enough that he had become *very* handsy and kept hanging off of Draco and whispering drunken gibberish into his ear which was completely incomprehensible but made him blush anyway at the contact and the feel of his warm breath on his ear and neck.

When Ginny came back, it was with an armload of Wheezes fireworks which she let off one at a time to delighted cheers. Someone worried aloud about the sparks hurting Miss Maple and even though Ginny assured them that the sparks were heatless and wouldn't set anything on fire, Hermione cast a fire resistance spell over their mascot just in case.

By the end of the night, they had kicked out five under seventeens, six sixth years and three fifth years who had tried to gate crash. Hermione had been the one leading the charge on that but a few seventh and sixth year prefects including the other Head Girl all helped her police the underaged students to keep them out. Every one of them were taking McGonagall's warning very seriously and none of them wanted to be responsible for a new school rule being made.

When midnight rolled around, there were only a few stragglers left and some of them were so legless that a few slightly more sober eighth years volunteered to walk them back to their common rooms.

McGonagall came up a short while after midnight to check that only eighth years remained in the tower and the second she stepped into the room, Miss Maple – who was now wearing about fifteen differently coloured house ties – tackled her in a hug and exclaimed “I wuv you!” in a deep baritone. Draco had no idea who had enchanted her to talk but it surprised him so much he couldn't stop the bark of laughter that escaped him and had to clap a hand over his mouth to stop himself from completely falling apart.

Everyone stared in silence, unsure how their tightlaced Headmistress would react.

She blinked down at the oversized teddy in confusion and looked around the room at their wide-eyed and hesitant expressions. Then, incredibly, the tiniest smile appeared on her face.

“This is some very clever spellwork,” she complemented them, patting Miss Maple delicately on the head. “Who did the enchanting?”

“It was a group effort, Professor,” Harry volunteered cheerily, slurring slightly. “But most of it was done by Hermione, Draco, and Ginny.”

“Very well done,” she praised. “Twenty points to each of you for your cleverness. Now I know none of you have a curfew,” she added, her stern expression returning. “But I expect you all to be in class tomorrow *on time* no matter how tired and hung over you all are. And Miss Granger, I want you to change the password to the Tower by morning.”

Hermione had been designated their head prefect as McGonagall trusted her to be the most responsible of all of them. She essentially had the same powers as the Head Girl and Boy, so it made sense for it to be her job to handle things like their password. She even had a Head Girl badge of her own.

The party continued after McGonagall left but Draco was worn out from their outing, the feast, and now the party. The alcohol had also begun to make him sleepy so he said farewell to the group, gave a stern warning that he would have his revenge if anyone harmed Miss Maple in his absence and made his way upstairs.

Harry caught up to him at the bottom of the stairs, grabbed him by the front of his jumper and slammed their lips together clumsily. He tasted of treacle tart, firewhiskey and just a hint of that bitter flavour he always tasted of now. Heedless of their audience, Draco buried his hands in Harry's hair and returned the kiss with enthusiasm.

"Oi, get a room you two!" Seamus Finnigan shouted and threw a sofa cushion at them.

They broke their kiss and simultaneously flipped him the bird which caused the rest of their yearmates to burst out laughing. They took Finnigan's suggestion however, and took their snogging session up to Draco's room.

Draco had thought they would finish the night off with sloppy drunken sex but the second Harry's head hit the pillow he was out. Draco just stared down at his sleeping form with adoration and amusement.

Harry hadn't even gotten his trainers off. He'd managed only to pull his jumper half off and it was hanging from one arm but he was entirely still dressed otherwise. Draco just shook his head in fondness and began unlacing his boyfriend's shoes.

He removed his trainers and socks, carefully removed his glasses and set them aside, finished removing his jumper, unbuckled his belt and shimmied him out of his jeans, before tucking his splayed limbs into bed and pulling up the covers. He diligently put all of Harry's discarded clothes into their shared basket, taking care to remove anything he found in the pockets of his jeans like sweets wrappers, muggle money, and his wand.

Then he undressed himself, doused the torches, and climbed into bed. As soon as he was situated, Harry immediately snuggled up to him and rested his head on Draco's chest and continued sleeping. Draco wrapped his arms around him and kissed the top of his head.

"I love you," he whispered into his hair.

Harry didn't respond, completely unconscious. One day, Draco would tell him when he was awake and could hear him.

Chapter End Notes

This was my favourite chapter to write. I love Miss Maple so much and when I came up with the idea of the giant enchanted teddy I had a clear image in my head of her hugging Professor McGonagall and saying "I wuv you" in a voice like those toys with the speakerbox with dying batteries, and McGonagall would be all stiff but amused. If someone wants to do fanart of that scene I would be eternally grateful 🙏

I wanted this chapter to be all fluff. Harry and Draco haven't had a proper date until now and I wanted them to have a day without drama that was just for them.

Chapter 30: November

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Harry Potter and Unknown Companion Seen Visiting His Parents' Graves on The Anniversary of Their Deaths

Hallowe'en and Samhain for the village of Godric's Hollow is a time for both celebration and remembrance. Many of our readers will remember that tragic event that occurred there seventeen years ago.

The deaths of James and Lily Potter are remembered each year in this small hybrid wizarding and muggle village. Though the muggle population has no idea, there is a memorial in the centre of the village square in memory of the happy family whose lives were cut short. Their son, Harry Potter, then known as the Boy Who Lived, now Saviour of the Wizarding World, sent away to live with muggle relatives in secret for his own safety.

In the years that followed this tragedy, Harry Potter has never been seen in the village where he was born and where the course of his life was redirected. Until yesterday morning when he arrived, apparently to pay his respects at his parents' grave.

Potter and an unidentified male companion visited the memorial in the square first before going to the cemetery where they were seen sitting at the grave for some time. Witnesses stated that Potter was melancholy and leaned on his companion while he was in the village.

This was perhaps the first time Potter has been able to visit his parents' grave and it is unknown if he has yet seen the ruins of his family's home that stands preserved in monument, untouched since that fateful night. The villagers express their wishes to Potter that he visit again, perhaps under lighter circumstances.

“Unknown companion?” Neville remarked after finishing the article. “It’s not like people don’t know who you are, surely someone recognized you?”

Draco shrugged. It *had* felt like people had been staring at him just as much as at Harry.

“Maybe you *were* identified and people thought it didn’t make sense so brushed it off as maybe you weren’t who they thought you were,” Hermione said thoughtfully.

“What like they were like ‘Hey isn’t that Draco Malfoy walking with Harry Potter?’ and someone else said ‘Don’t be ridiculous, why would they be here together?’” Blaise asked, taking the paper to read the article himself. “They don’t even have a photo!”

“Maybe that’s why they didn’t print that it was me with him,” Draco suggested. “They didn’t have proof other than a few witnesses who may not be correct about who they saw so they left me as ‘unidentified’.”

“That seems unlikely,” Theo remarked. “It’s not like the Prophet not to print complete speculation with little or no evidence. They do that shit all the time.”

“Oh wait, I’ve figured it out!” Hermione exclaimed.

“What?” they all demanded at once.

“Look at the byline,” she pointed. “It was written by Rita Skeeter. That’s why they haven’t published who Harry was with.”

“Why would Skeeter be inclined to keep something like this to herself?” Neville asked, baffled.

It was true. It was very unlike her not to print this juicy bit of gossip immediately.

“Because I have dirt on her and she knows I’ll release it if she writes rubbish about Harry anymore,” Hermione said smugly.

“You’ve blackmailed her?!” Theo exclaimed. He sounded very impressed.

“What’s the dirt?” Blaise demanded.

Neville and Draco both leaned in too, wanting to hear it.

“No, no,” she denied them. “Part of being able to hold it over her head is not letting other people know it. But I will say, if it gets out, she stands to spend some time in Azkaban for it.”

Draco realised in that moment that he already knew what the dirt was. He’d known for years that Skeeter was an unregistered Animagus. He used to pass information to her during the Triwizard Tournament about Harry’s social life. Not all of it was truthful. Actually most of it was nonsense he’d thought sounded good and humiliating.

He had no idea Hermione knew or that she had blackmailed the journalist to prevent her writing about Harry in a bad light. She was more cutthroat than he’d thought.

“Holy shit, Granger, you’re magnificent!” Theo exclaimed.

Hermione blushed brightly and sheepishly tucked her hair behind her ear.

Harry groaned from his spot next to Draco, his head down on the table with his arms being used as a makeshift pillow. He’d been in that position since they’d sat down for breakfast and hadn’t so much as flinched when the post arrived.

“Why do you all have to be so *loud*?” he grumbled at Theo who only laughed.

“What’s the matter, Potter? Can’t hold your liquor?” he teased.

“Fuck you,” he mumbled into his arm.

“At least we have double Defence first thing,” Draco said, giving him a sympathetic back pat. “Dawlish probably won’t care if you sleep through it.”

“Merlin, last night was brilliant!” Blaise exclaimed. “We should throw more parties.”

“Okay, calm down, Zabini,” Neville chided wearily. “Let’s recover from the last one before we start planning the next.”

Many of the over-seventeens were in a similar state to Harry; their heads down or being barely propped up by their hand, some of them picking listlessly at their breakfast, looking queasy. Justin Finch-Fletchley already had to run urgently from the hall to go throw up and he didn’t look like he would be the last.

Ginny looked like she’d be next and had informed everyone in her immediate vicinity that she’d hex the next person who even *mentioned* the word “firewhiskey”. Something a smartassed fifth year decided to test and had to flee the hall from her vicious Bat-Bogey Hex. She lost Gryffindor the twenty points she’d earned for enchanting Miss Maple for that but didn’t seem to care.

“Maybe the next party we have should be on a Friday or Saturday,” Draco suggested. “A few people may have overdone it.”

“Yeah maybe in hindsight, having a party with alcohol on a school night was probably not the most responsible idea,” Hermione agreed. “Harry you should hydrate, that’s why you’re not feeling good.”

“Your face is why I’m not feeling good,” he retorted petulantly.

Draco and the others snickered while Hermione rolled her eyes and shook her head. Harry sat up a bit and sipped some pumpkin juice anyway while looking faintly green.

“You look awful,” Draco observed.

“Gee, thanks, dear,” Harry said sarcastically.

The others laughed but Draco felt his face heat and his heart leap at the pet name.

“Aww look, you made him blush!” Neville teased, trying to ruffle his hair.

“I am *not* blushing,” Draco denied petulantly, swatting Neville’s hand away before he could touch his hair.

“You *are*,” Harry insisted with a grin, sitting up straighter and some colour returning to his face. “Do you like when I call you ‘dear’?”

He wanted to deny it to save face in front of their friends, but he also wanted Harry to keep calling him that. And besides, they’d promised to always be honest with each other.

“I don’t mind,” he finally hedged, face heating further. He knew he was definitely blushing now.

When they eventually went to Defence Against the Dark Arts, most of the eighth year was moving listlessly and in a rotten mood. Very few of them had refrained from getting completely sloshed. Dawlish seemed to find this extremely amusing but didn’t comment. His face did all the commenting for him, however, as his normally stoic expression kept flitting with little grins every now and then.

No one wanted to work on spells. Most of them sat in desks with their heads down or flipped unenthusiastically through the textbook. Draco and Hermione seemed to be two of the few who were not hung over at all, her because she hadn’t drank more than butterbeer, and him because of his powerful werewolf metabolism. The one and only highlight of lycanthropy that he’d found so far.

So while everyone else was either taking a nap or pretending to work, Draco and Hermione quizzed each other on their past defensive spells. After they got bored of that, Draco took to practicing his patronus.

It had gotten a lot easier for him in the last month. He could easily conjure up any number of wonderful memories he’d shared with Harry to produce a bright silvery falcon. The falcon in question was now standing proudly on the desk in front of Draco, occasionally preening its incorporeal feathers.

Harry tilted his head to one side on his arms which rested on his own desk to observe the bird.

“I always thought falcons were much bigger birds,” he murmured.

“They can be,” Draco confirmed. “They come in all sorts of sizes. Some are really massive, and others are small.”

The patronus hopped over to Harry’s desk to examine him and Harry tried to pet it like he would an owl but his hand passed right through it. He pouted.

“It’s not a *real* bird you know,” Draco teased with a laugh.

“I *know*,” Harry retorted petulantly. “I just didn’t know if I could touch it. I’ve tried to pet Prongs before but he always disappears right when I try to.”

“Prongs?” Draco asked, baffled, remembering the name from the Marauder’s Map. “Your dad?”

Harry just smiled at him like he was an idiot, then took out his wand, closed his eyes briefly, an enormous smile lit up his face and he waved his wand.

“*Expecto Patronum!*” he incanted.

A silver stag erupted from the end of his wand and cantered around the room before returning to its master and stopping in front of them. A few students glanced up curiously before

quickly losing interest and returning to their naps and books.

“Draco, meet Prongs,” Harry said, introducing him to the stag.

Draco had never seen it up close before. It was a magnificent creature. If he looked closely he could see a faint outline of glasses in the markings of its silvery fur around its eyes. It really was Harry’s father. Draco’s falcon patronus took flight and perched on Prongs’ antlers. The stag didn’t seem to mind and continued to look around and paw the ground idly.

“Aww look,” Harry cooed. “They’re friends.”

Draco smiled happily. A patronus was essentially an echo of your soul. If theirs got along then it was a good sign of their own compatibility. The falcon glowed brighter with the intensity of his joy, and a moment later Prongs glowed brighter too. Harry was happy that Draco was happy.

He looked over at Harry and found that he was staring at him with an odd look on his face. Like he was the most incredible thing he’d ever seen. He felt a swarm of butterflies in his stomach take flight.

The Daily Prophet wasn’t the only news source to mention Harry and Draco’s visit to Godric’s Hollow. Witch Weekly also did an article, only theirs mentioned that the villagers had observed Harry holding hands with his unknown companion, and later leaning his head on his shoulder when they visited the Potters’ grave. They speculated that there might be something of a romantic nature between the two.

Draco had found it astonishing that it had not yet hit the news that Harry was dating an ex-Death Eater. He knew that McGonagall had the castle completely locked down from any journalists visiting. Something he’d heard from Harry and Hermione had been very necessary as they’d all wanted a chance to harass the students on their return following the Battle. She had done an excellent job of protecting her students.

She’d also somehow managed to have the press banished from Hogsmeade on weekends where Hogwarts students would be present as well, though he suspected it was the villagers who had rallied to that arrangement more than the Headmistress’ involvement.

With that all in place, the only way the press would find out was either through contact with parents who’d received owls from their children containing the latest gossip, or from eighth years who’d left Hogwarts grounds on their own. Unless a parent was especially scandalized by Harry Potter’s dating choices, it was likely to be slow moving news.

By the end of the week, all the magazines and papers were speculating about “Harry Potter’s mysterious companion.”

Draco was glad he'd told his mother ahead of time at any rate. He'd hate for her to find out from the Prophet that her son had been caught snogging the Saviour in the corridors.

What she'd written back to him had actually shocked him, though.

Dearest Draco,

My love, I am so delighted to hear that you have found love. It is every mother's dream for her child.

I always knew there was something special between you and Harry Potter. You wrote about him so often and spoke of all the things you hated about him so vociferously that I knew you must be compensating for your feelings for him. No boy talks about a boy they hate quite that much, my love.

I have not read anything in the papers about your relationship but if it is as public as you say, I have no doubt that it will happen sooner or later. It will be quite the controversy once it gets out.

You know I love you no matter what, but you should be prepared for when your father finds out that you are dating a man, let alone Harry Potter. I know you do not wish to correspond with him but I suspect he'll find a way to get the message across regardless.

Please give the Weasleys my thanks for the invitation to their Christmas celebration and tell them I would be delighted to attend. Do let them know that they can owl me directly if they wish as well.

Please give Harry my regards and tell him that I look forward to seeing him at the holidays.

Love,

Mum

He'd almost cried at the casual acceptance from his mother. He knew his father would be furious at the news but he couldn't give less of a shit, and it wasn't like he could do anything to him from Azkaban. And with how he would immediately destroy any letters he received from him, he was doubly glad Azkaban didn't allow their prisoners to send Howlers as he could only imagine what one would say.

It wasn't particularly popular to send Howlers in high society as it was an extremely uncouth form of communication. It was usually preferred to handle family business much more quietly. Public admonition just wasn't done. However since Draco would refuse any other attempt at communication from his father, he wouldn't put it past him to resort to such methods as it was a method which was impossible to ignore. So it was a good thing magic of any kind wasn't permitted at Azkaban.

That was one of the biggest changes to Wizarding Britain post-war. All of the dementors had been banished from Azkaban so new methods of controlling the population inside had to be considered. It was an extremely controversial decision. Many preferred the dementors' presence at the prison as they had been an extremely effective deterrent to crime but also prevented prisoners from even *considering* escape, let alone accomplishing it. But it was decided that not only was it inhumane and even *evil* to allow such creatures to torture the inhabitants of the prison, but it was also impossible to ensure control over the creatures.

Azkaban was by no means the horrifying hellhole from which no one returns unchanged that it once was. Draco wasn't completely sure what changes had been made exactly but he knew that the Ministry had hired outside contractors from other countries who had set up prisons abroad to improve Azkaban's security without the dementors. All he knew was that there were new wards that would prevent magic from being used by the inmates and alert the guards if one even attempted it anywhere on the island. Wands were forbidden, and any attempted use of magic by any of the prisoners was severely punished.

As he had no intention of ever ending up there, he had no interest in learning all the various ins and outs of their new security. The only way he'd ever find out is if his father told his mother and she elected to tell him. But he doubted that occurrence as his mother had so far been very respectful of his desire to hear nothing about his father.

When he'd been initially arrested after the Battle of Hogwarts, he'd been held in a Ministry holding cell. The trials had been swift and his was one of the earlier ones on the docket so he'd only spent a few weeks in that cell. After his trial and release, he was ordered to house arrest until the school year began. So he'd been very fortunate to have never set foot in Azkaban, and he intended it to stay that way.

Two weeks into November was the first Quidditch match of the season between Gryffindor and Slytherin.

It was a strange feeling to be sitting up in the Gryffindor stands with Harry and all their friends dressed in red and gold.

"You *have* to support Gryffindor," Harry had insisted.

"Oh I *have* to, do I?" Draco drawled with a challenging eyebrow raise. "And why would I do that when they're playing against my house?"

"Because you're not on the team anymore and one of your friends is on the Gryffindor team and you don't give a shit about the people on the Slytherin team," Harry pointed out, cheerfully wrapping a Gryffindor scarf around Draco's neck.

So there he was, surrounded by lions, wearing red and gold, cheering for Ginny and only Ginny because he couldn't give a shit about anyone else playing. It didn't take long for him

to get into the energy of the match, though. Every time Ginny scored, he leapt up alongside Harry, Hermione, and Neville and cheered her on.

He was also impressed with Gryffindor's new Keeper, Vicky Frobisher.

"Angelina originally wanted Vicky on the team back in fifth year," Harry told him after she made a rather spectacular save. "She was many times better than Ron but she was in a load of clubs already and was unwilling to prioritize Quidditch."

"Looks like she's rearranged her priorities now," Draco remarked then cheered excitedly after she made another close save by punching the quaffle off its trajectory to the left hoop.

"There's the snitch!" Harry exclaimed suddenly, leaping to his feet and grabbing the barrier as if to restrain himself from attempting to go after it.

Draco followed his eyeline to the tiny golden ball on the far other side of the pitch from them, flitting back and forth in front of the Hufflepuff stands. It was so far away that Draco couldn't figure out how Harry had seen it at that distance. Even as he watched, the little ball zipped away and he lost sight of it but Harry seemed to still have his eyes locked on it, though Draco could not locate it again.

"Harry, you're going to miss the match if you keep watching the snitch," Draco pointed out.

"I hate not playing," he huffed sitting back down and returning his attention back to the action with the quaffle.

After Gryffindor had scored their eighth goal, taken by Demelza Robins, their new Seeker, a tiny waif of a third year boy called Eli Foster suddenly made a steep dive. Everyone in the stands leapt to their feet as he closed in on the snitch, the Slytherin Seeker too far away to catch up in time. A bludger shot towards Foster and Draco thought he would be hit for sure, but he flattened himself against his broomstick and performed a tight barrel roll to avoid it without taking his eyes off the tiny fluttering ball which he clasped in his hand a moment later.

The stands erupted in cheers and applause and Draco found himself swept up in the excitement. He didn't even mind that he was cheering for his rival team, especially when Harry swept him up in an excited hug that lifted him off his feet. Gryffindor had won 230 - 50. Pathetic showing from Slytherin if he was being honest.

"You've been training that kid, haven't you?" Draco asked Harry when they escaped the din of excited Gryffindor supporters and started heading back up to the castle.

"How could you tell?" Harry asked in surprise.

"That barrel roll," he answered. "You've been using that move to avoid bludgers since second year."

"Eli's a decent Seeker," Harry said contemplatively. "But he's jumpy about collisions. He's really scared of being knocked off his broom, so I offered to drill with him. Ginny loves it,

cos she figures her best chance of winning the cup is if I can get Eli halfway to my level. So I had one of the Beaters train with us during training and the other would train with the Chasers and Keeper. I usually had them firing bludgers at us and we'd have to dodge, then we started adding the snitch into the mix, and then we drilled weaving in and out of the Chasers while they played without interrupting their play.

"It's a great way for me to get back into playing form too. And it seems to be paying off in Eli's playing as well, though I think we need to work on his scouting ability, because I spotted the snitch five times before he did."

"Slytherin's Seeker didn't see the snitch either," Draco pointed out. "I don't think it's reasonable to expect everyone else to be on your level of Seeking ability. *I* didn't see the snitch until you pointed it out."

"Yes well..." Harry said, a funny sort of smirk on his face.

"What?" Draco demanded.

"You've never exactly been a very good Seeker," Harry said with a wry apologetic look on his face.

"I'm a perfectly fine Seeker!" Draco retorted, outraged.

"Fine isn't *good*, Draco," he argued. "I think you only decided to be a Seeker to try and one-up me."

"Not everything is about you," Draco grumbled.

He wanted to be annoyed but Harry was right. He'd demanded to be Slytherin's Seeker because Harry had made Gryffindor's Seeker in first year without ever touching a broomstick before. Every match the two teams had had since Draco joined the team, they had lost to Gryffindor and Harry had outflown him by such a wide margin it almost looked like Draco had no idea what he was doing. He'd caught the snitch before in matches against other teams but his playing had always been inconsistent.

"You should have played Chaser," Harry continued. "You're a brilliant flier, but you don't have the proper amount of patience to be a *really* good Seeker."

"You sound like my mother," Draco sighed. "She said I lacked the observational skills but I had a really strong throwing arm, not to mention being left-handed would have given me an edge."

"Your mum likes Quidditch?" Harry asked curiously.

"Oh yes," Draco said dramatically. "We didn't attend the World Cup because *father or I* wanted to go, though I absolutely did. She played for her house team back in her Hogwarts days. Chaser. She was brilliant. Really disappointed that I wanted to play Seeker instead of following in her footsteps."

“Brilliant!” Harry exclaimed delightedly. “We’ll have something in common to talk about at Christmas. We’ll commiserate about your inexplicable decision to waste your talent as a Chaser in favour of slagging off the boy you had a crush on.”

“I did *not* have a crush on you in second year!” Draco denied.

“Are you sure about that?” he teased. “Because from where I’m standing, you were obsessed with me.”

“I wasn’t *obsessed*,” Draco corrected. “I was jealous. There’s a difference.”

“Sure, dear,” Harry said with a grin, making Draco blush and splutter.

He always got flustered whenever Harry called him “dear” and he took full advantage. He just loved watching Draco squirm but Draco couldn’t bring himself to mind.

“Speaking of Christmas,” he continued when they reached the castle and started making their way up to the Astronomy Tower. “You want to come Christmas shopping with me in Diagon Alley tomorrow?”

“It’s a bit early for Christmas shopping isn’t it?” Draco asked. “And Diagon is going to be a madhouse the second you set foot there.”

“I’ve always left shopping to the last minute in past years,” he explained. “It’s always such a rush and the stores are packed. I’d rather do it all early so I don’t have to go into the crowds of other last minute shoppers.”

“Makes sense,” Draco shrugged. “But why Diagon? Why not shop in Hogsmeade or do owl orders?”

“Oh I plan to do owl orders for most of the presents, but I’m getting Ginny and her parents owls so I have to choose those in person, and Hogsmeade doesn’t have a pet shop.”

“And you want me to come with you?” Draco asked hesitantly.

“I always want you with me,” Harry confessed, making Draco’s heart stutter. “You don’t have to come if you’re worried about how the news will probably finally figure out that you’re my ‘mysterious companion’.”

Draco *was* worried about that, but weirdly not because he was afraid of how people would take it. He’d been officially dating Harry for almost two months now and he’d started to get anxious for the moment when the Prophet finally put the pieces together. He almost wished they’d just figure it out so he could get the fallout over with.

Going to Diagon Alley hand-in-hand with Harry was sure to finally make it all click. Someone was sure to snap a picture, and since the Daily Prophet’s offices were in the Alley, the news would hit the front page in time for the evening edition. What Harry was essentially suggesting was a public statement.

“I’ll go,” he said finally.

“Really?” Harry’s face lit up in delight and that was all it took.

Nothing would stop him going to Diagon Alley with him now.

Chapter End Notes

A little bit of a filler chapter I suppose. Next chapter we'll return to some drama, I promise 😊

Chapter 31: Diagon Alley

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Draco had not been back to Diagon Alley since the summer before his sixth year when many of the businesses had been boarded up, their owners having fled or been killed. The only businesses that had looked to have not suffered much from the war had been located in Knockturn Alley. It had bounced back significantly since then.

He knew Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes had been hit at some point about this time last year and it was clear that George Weasley had managed to rebuild it rather magnificently on his own in the last few months. Harry steered them past the brightly coloured shop though, mentioning that he had to get some gold out at Gringotts before they could begin their shopping.

Already, they were attracting a lot of attention. Draco kept himself very close to Harry's side out of fear of some of the nastier looks he was receiving as they passed.

"Ignore them," Harry murmured to him, giving his hand a comforting squeeze.

"That's easier said than done," Draco replied anxiously. "Some of these people look like they'd like to curse me."

"I'd like to see them try," Harry said darkly.

Draco shivered. He could feel a brush of magic surrounding them like a cocoon. Was Harry casting a constant shield charm while they walked?

They reached the regal marble building at the end of the alley and let themselves in through the gilded doors.

"Oi!" an angry goblin voice hollered when they stepped through the second set of doors. "You can't be in here, you've been banned for life!"

Draco's shoulders went up to his ears defensively and he stepped reflexively behind Harry as the goblin security guard approached them. Harry had gone rigid and flinched away from the guard when he pointed a furious clawed finger at him.

"Did you hear me, Potter?" the goblin snapped. "You've been banned from Gringotts! You're not permitted on the premises!"

Wait, what?

Harry was banned for life?

What in Merlin's name had *he* done?

“My gold is stored here!” Harry said impatiently at the guard. “What am I meant to do?”

“You’ll do what every wizard who is banned does and send a representative,” the guard snapped. “Now out!”

He aggressively and with a surprising amount of physical strength for a being so small, pushed Harry physically backward through the doors.

“You tell Weasley and Granger they’re banned too!” the guard growled and slammed the doors in their faces, leaving them standing on the steps of the bank.

Harry looked perturbed and annoyed.

“What the bloody hell did you do to piss off the goblins?” Draco exclaimed.

Harry turned to look at him with a sheepish expression and rubbed the back of his neck.

“I kind of robbed them,” he admitted awkwardly.

“What?!” he exclaimed in astonishment. “You *robbed* Gringotts?”

“Yes, do please shout about it in this public street,” he retorted sarcastically.

“When did this happen?” he asked, lowering his voice slightly, conscious of nearby onlookers.

“Like the day before the Battle of Hogwarts,” he explained. “One of the horcruxes was in the Lestrangle vault and well... Long story short, we broke in, stole it, released a dragon and escaped on its back.”

Draco just stared open-mouthed. He would have been at Hogwarts for all of that and then would have had much more important things to worry about what with the Battle and then subsequent arrest. No one had seen fit to inform him that Harry Potter had robbed Gringotts nor that he’d *ridden on the back of a dragon!*

“We kind of smashed up the place pretty badly,” he continued in a somewhat embarrassed tone. “Or rather the dragon did most of the smashing. They’ve done an excellent job on the repairs, you wouldn’t even know. But I get it,” he added with a shrug and a solemn expression. “Not only did I rob them, but once Voldemort found out, he came storming in here and killed a bunch of goblins for failing to stop me.”

“That’s not your fault,” Draco offered, trying to ease his boyfriend’s guilt.

“Doesn’t stop me from feeling like it is,” he sighed.

“How are you going to get your gold now?” Draco asked, hoping to redirect to something a bit more businesslike to get Harry out of his funk.

“I suppose I’ll have to send Kreacher in the future,” he sighed, then looked at Draco thoughtfully. “You could always go for me today though?”

He said it like a question, slightly hopeful.

“You’d trust me with your vault key?” Draco asked in astonishment.

“Yeah,” he shrugged. “Why shouldn’t I?”

“You’re mad, Harry,” he said, shaking his head.

“Come on, please!” he wheedled. “I need money to do my Christmas shopping and they won’t let me in, and you’re right here and they don’t seem to have any issues with you.”

The fact that the goblins had no personal issues with Draco and seemed to really hate Harry was a bizarre flip of the roles that he was used to experiencing from wizards up until now.

So he agreed, albeit reluctantly, and Harry handed over a coin pouch and his vault key and told him to take out however much he thought they’d need for shopping.

It was so strange to walk into the bank with someone else’s key to take gold from their vault. The goblins paid him no mind as he approached one of the teller desks, but a few wizards glanced in his direction and shot him suspicious looks.

“How can I help you?” the teller asked him as he stepped up to the desk.

“Er…” he hesitated, unsure how he was supposed to do this. “I’m here on behalf of Harry Potter to make a withdrawal?”

The goblin narrowed his glittery black eyes at him. Draco wasn’t sure if it was out of suspicion for the unusual request, or in distaste at hearing Harry’s name.

“Do you have Mr Potter’s key?” he asked tersely.

Draco presented the key and the goblin examined it carefully before returning it to him and calling for a vault escort to take him down to the Potter vault.

“Will you be accessing the family vault or Mr Potter’s trust vault today?” the escort asked him politely.

Harry hadn’t specified which one but Draco assumed the trust as it was likely the one he’d been accessing himself for years. The vault his parents would have set up for his personal use. Draco wondered if Harry even knew about the family vault since he wouldn’t have had access to it until he’d turned seventeen, and since he was on the run for a year after turning seventeen...

Harry’s trust seemed to be nearly as large as Draco’s was, and while Draco knew Harry could comfortably live off of this gold for the rest of his life, as could his children and grandchildren, Draco knew this had to be but a small fraction of the Potter fortune.

He took what he figured was a suitable amount of galleons, sickles, and knuts for purchasing a few owls and whatever else Harry might purchase impulsively between now and Christmas.

He also stopped by his own trust vault and picked up some spending money of his own before returning to where he'd left Harry standing on the marble steps outside.

"Everything go okay?" Harry asked him.

"Fine actually," Draco said with a bit of surprise, handing over the now full coin pouch and vault key. "They *really* don't like you in there. Anytime I said your name they sneered."

"I guess smashing through the floor on the back of a dragon leaves an impression," Harry said dryly, pocketing the gold without counting it.

They decided to hit up Wheezes first and Harry pointedly took Draco's hand and pulled him close as they walked up the street. People stared openly. Some called out to him excitedly and he waved awkwardly back, but most just stared in wonder and confusion.

"Harry!" a familiar voice called out to them the moment they entered the garishly orange and purple shop.

"George!" Harry called back brightly in greeting.

The store wasn't as packed as Draco remembered it being but there was a fair few customers shopping for joke products and other interesting Weasley inventions. Draco supposed the bulk of George's clientele was Hogwarts aged and so probably didn't make as much business during the school year.

George, dressed in a hideous purple suit, nearly sprinted through the shop and scooped Harry up in what was probably a bone crushing hug.

"You don't write, you don't visit," George scolded teasingly when he set Harry back on his feet. "And the first time you do, you bring this troublemaker into my shop."

"Thought you liked troublemakers, George," Harry shot back with a smirk.

"Indeed I do," he agreed.

George turned his attention to Draco and sized him up. Draco resisted the urge to squirm. This was a man Harry greatly respected, a man he considered to be family, a man Draco had already gotten on the wrong side of. If he couldn't make George like him, he doubted he'd stand a chance with the rest of his family at Christmas.

"So this is the boyfriend," he said finally.

This caused several shoppers to jerk their heads around and make various noises ranging from confused to alarmed.

"You've met him already," Harry said rolling his eyes and ignoring their audience.

"Yes," George agreed, levelling him with a stern look that was rather uncharacteristic of his usually jovial face. "But that was before he was your boyfriend, back when he was a twatty little git. I remember all those fond Quidditch days of pelting bludgers at his smarmy face. I

particularly remember one occasion when you insulted my family and received a very well deserved arse kicking from Harry and I for it.”

Draco remembered vividly that particular arse kicking. He’d crossed a line. He’d known that the second Harry had pounced on him. Harry rarely resorted to physical violence.

“I’m sorry,” Draco said weakly. “I was an ass. I was a terrible little shit who was sore we’d lost the match and I crossed the line. I’m sorry I got you thrown off the team and I’m sorry for all the shit I said about your parents and your home. I was wrong and an idiot.”

Draco was not very happy with the location in which this apology took place but he felt a heavy weight leave him as he spoke the words. He’d felt the same with each new apology, first with Harry, then Hermione, then Neville and Ginny, and now George. The guilt had been eating him alive and now it was gone.

George just regarded him with narrowed eyes for a long moment without saying anything. Draco suspected he was trying to decide if he’d meant it and whether or not he would forgive him. Draco never expected people to forgive him so it was always a surprise when they did. He’d definitely deserved that arse kicking back in fifth year, and probably several more he never received.

He was silent for so long that Draco started to become antsy. He regarded George back, trying to figure out what he was thinking. There was something odd about his face, like it wasn’t quite symmetrical. Maybe it was the lack of his twin brother at his side? It took him a minute to realise he was missing an ear. He’d probably lost it in the war.

“George, stop screwing with him,” Harry said after what felt like several minutes of silent staring but was probably just one. “It’s not fair to fuck with people who are trying to be sincere.”

A teasing smirk spread swiftly across George’s face. That expression was much more familiar and suited him far better than the stern scrutinising one he’d had on before.

“Ginny said you’d changed,” George said finally, a satisfied note in his voice. “I should have known better than to doubt her. Come have a look around, I’ve got a few new products on the shelves. Oi, you lot!” This he directed at a small group of people who had been peering over the nearby display to spy on their conversation. They jumped when he addressed them.

“Mind your own business!”

“In fairness, we were the ones having a reunion in the middle of a crowded shop,” Harry pointed out.

“Which people are entitled to do without being stared at,” George countered.

“There hasn’t been a single day of my life since discovering I was a wizard that I haven’t been stared at,” Harry said with a self-deprecating sigh.

“I suppose I should get used to that,” Draco said wryly. “So long as I go anywhere with you, we get double the looks. People staring at you, people staring at me, people who would have

otherwise left you alone wondering why on earth you're with me."

"Well they should mind their business like George said," Harry said in a pointed tone, looking at a younger looking man no more than a year or two out of Hogwarts, though Draco didn't recognize him. The man ducked his head in embarrassment and shuffled around a display and out of sight.

"I'm amazed it hasn't hit the papers yet," George remarked while they perused the shelves. "It's been what? A month?"

"Almost two," Harry corrected.

"Two months next Tuesday," Draco added idly, picking up a box of Skiving Snackboxes and examining the flavours and their effects.

"You're keeping track?" Harry asked in astonishment.

Draco felt his face heat up.

"It was rather memorable," he said defensively. "You had a massive row with Weasley in the middle of the common room and told our whole year I was your boyfriend and challenged them all to have a problem with it. A thing like that stands out. Anyway isn't that what boyfriends are meant to do? Remember anniversaries?"

Now it was Harry's turn to go red in the face.

"Ah the infamous row," George said in a strange tone. "When I get my hands on my little brother, he's going to regret using that word he used."

Draco almost felt sorry for the youngest Weasley brother. Almost. He couldn't wait to see what George would do to him at Christmas.

"I've been trying to figure out if he meant it or if he only said it to hurt me," Harry said hesitantly. "We've had a bit of a falling out recently. He doesn't like some of the friends I've been making."

"He'd better *not* have meant it or I'm disowning him," George growled. "So will Bill and Charlie; half their friends from Hogwarts are queer!"

"Well it sounds like Christmas is going to be a treat," Draco said sarcastically.

"Oh yeah," George agreed. "We're all gonna take turns kicking Ron's arse."

"Ginny can't wait to see his face when Draco comes round on Christmas Day," Harry added. "I think it'll be the biggest Weasley drama showdown of all time."

"Oh you're coming?" George asked.

"Just Christmas Day," Draco assured him. "I wouldn't want to overstay my welcome and I don't trust your brother not to curse me in my sleep."

“Brilliant!” George exclaimed. “I’m assuming Ron doesn’t know?”

“No,” Draco confirmed. “And if you tell him beforehand, Ginny will hex you into next week.”

“Oh trust me, I know better than to get on my little sister’s bad side,” George assured him. “And besides, why would I ever spoil such a prime opportunity to ruin Ron’s day?”

Draco snorted.

“Luna and her dad are coming too,” Harry added. “And Neville and his gran in the afternoon. Oh and Theodore Nott and Draco’s mum.”

“Oh this just keeps getting better and better!” George exclaimed delightedly then sighed sadly. “Merlin, I wish Fred could be there.”

“You’ll just have to prank everyone double for him,” Harry said gently, patting the much taller man on the shoulder.

They chatted more as they carried on shopping. George occasionally stepped away to help a customer but would return and continue their conversation where it had last left off. Harry filled their baskets with loads of interesting products and at least one each of the newest inventions to try out and advertise at Hogwarts since George wouldn’t let him pay for it.

“The ingenuity of this stuff is pretty incredible,” Draco remarked.

“I appreciate the complement,” George said with uncharacteristic humility. “My side of things was always transfiguration. Fred and I split up our OWLs, I focussed on Transfiguration and Charms and he focussed on Potions and Herbology. We figured as long as one of us knew what we were doing at any time, we’d be fine. Things have been a little lopsided since his death.”

“You know, Draco’s pretty brilliant at Potions,” Harry said idly.

George raised an eyebrow in interest.

“What are you doing, Harry?” Draco asked, knowing damned well what Harry was doing.

“I’m just saying, once we graduate, you’ll need a job, and like you said, there won’t be a lot of people willing to hire someone with your past.” Harry looked at George imploringly. “You could use a brilliant potioneer.”

“That’s a super unsubtle hint you’re laying at my feet there, Harry,” George teased. He appraised Draco. “Let’s revisit this after graduation, we’ll see what your options are then.”

“You mean we’ll see if this change in me sticks?” Draco deadpanned.

“Exactly,” George grinned.

After they finished their shopping – Harry arguing with George over paying and losing – they decided to get lunch before getting the owls.

“Say George hires me as his in-house potioneer,” Draco said over sandwiches from a new deli that hadn’t been there before the war. “What will I do about my... problem.”

“You could just tell him,” Harry suggested. “He won’t care, and he won’t spread it around either.”

“Not every problem can just be solved by telling people the truth,” Draco snarked.

“I beg to differ,” Harry argued. “Most can, and this one definitely can. And besides, how many people can you think of that would not only hire you with your history but the other thing too?”

“I suppose beggars can’t be choosers,” Draco sighed. “Do you think he’d hire me part-time so I can work on my potions mastery too?”

“Definitely.”

After lunch they went to Magical Menagerie to look at owls.

“I want something sturdy,” Harry was telling the shop keeper. “It needs to be able to travel long distances on occasion. I’m talking Romania and Egypt. Ideally I’d like a young one and with a long life span as the people I’m buying it for won’t be able to replace it when it gets old so I’d like them to be able to keep it as long as possible. Their current one is liable to drop dead any minute.”

“I have just the bird for you, Mr Potter,” she said delightedly.

She led him over to a perch which held a short-eared owl that stared at them with wide yellow eyes.

“This one is only a year old, only just reached maturity, and with proper care could live another forty,” she explained. “She’s a short-eared owl which are known for their ability to fly very long distances. They’re also ideal for wizarding families because they are diurnal, unlike most species of owl which I’m sure you know are nocturnal.”

The shop keeper called the owl down and she flew down to perch on her arm so she could allow Harry a closer look. He took the owl from her and looked her over. She was a beautiful shade of brown that shimmered slightly in the light like her feathers were made of bronze.

“She’s perfect,” Harry said. “I’ll take her. I’ll need another as well.”

“Another of the same species?” she queried, taking the short-eared owl from him and placing her in a transport cage.

“It doesn’t have to be the same,” he replied shaking his head. “This one is a gift for a friend as well. She’s never had an owl before, so something low maintenance would probably be best.”

“In that case, I recommend a barn owl,” she suggested. “They’re extremely popular as first time owls, and very self sufficient.”

Harry perused the many barn owls on the perches around the shop before deciding on one that tried to nip his finger when he went to pet it.

“I’m surprised at your choice, Mr Potter,” the shop keeper said, taking the biting bird down. “He’s been refused by most customers for his attitude.”

“I think he’s perfect,” Harry said with a grin. “He’s feisty like Ginny, she’ll love him.”

Draco had to agree. He could imagine Ginny siccing her owl on her brother and the image made him grin and have to stifle his laughter.

They walked out with the two owls in cages and supplies for caring for them.

Draco was about to wonder aloud how the owls would feel about being apparated or whether they should release them to find their own way to Hogwarts when they were suddenly beset by a number of people, several of whom had cameras.

“Mr Potter! Mr Potter!” several voices called insistently.

Harry recoiled in alarm and a crackle of magic emanated from him, erecting a barrier between them and the hoard of reporters which they pressed against regardless. There were multiple flashes as the photographers snapped photographs.

“Mr Potter, what can you tell us about the companion you took with you to Godric’s Hollow?”

“Mr Potter, do you have any remarks about the article published by Witch Weekly that suggested your companion in Godric’s Hollow was a romantic acquaintance?”

“Mr Potter, what do you say to the rumours that you’re homosexual?”

“Mr Potter, why are you out shopping with Draco Malfoy?”

Their voices overlapped each other incessantly, each trying to have Harry answer their question first. Harry looked at Draco with wide pleading eyes. He clearly had no idea how to handle this.

“The truth solves most problems?” Draco suggested, offering Harry’s own advice back to him.

Harry nodded firmly, took a deep breath to steady himself, then held up a hand to the clamouring reporters for silence. They immediately quieted, waiting with baited breath for what he would say.

“Firstly,” he said with a steadier voice than Draco had expected. “Not that it’s anyone’s business, but I’m *not* homosexual, I’m *bisexual*.”

There was a clamour of voices at this but Harry held his hand up again for silence and they quieted. Draco was amazed at how easily he managed to control the crowd. It rather reminded him of how Dumbledore always commanded a room.

“As for my companion in Godric’s Hollow.” He took another deep breath here, bracing for their reaction. “It was Draco Malfoy.” Here he gestured with one hand at Draco who’d been slightly creeping behind Harry for protection. “And we *are* romantically involved.”

There was an explosion of noise as the assembly began asking questions so loudly and trying to talk over each other that it was impossible to decipher any one question. Many seemed eager for more details, some seemed almost angry in their questioning. Draco was glad for the shield Harry was still maintaining.

Harry held up a hand for silence again which didn’t come as quickly as before but he waited patiently for them all to shut up, which they eventually did.

“We’ve been seeing each other about two months now,” he said, evidently answering a question Draco had been unable to understand over the din. “No I have *not* been enchanted.” He rolled his eyes at this. “The details of our relationship are none of your damned business. I assure you he’s not the man people believe him to be. I’ve known him half my life, trust me when I say I know him better than anyone. As for his allegiances during the war, you’ll find his Wizengamot trial transcript very illuminating on that subject. He is no more now a Death Eater than I am. No further questions.”

With that, he released the owls, instructing them to fly to Hogwarts, then took Draco by the arm and disappeared them both from the Alley with reporters still clamouring to ask more questions.

Chapter End Notes

Now the whole of wizarding Britain will know!

Chapter 32: Fallout

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Scandal! Harry Potter Dating Ex-Death Eater Draco Malfoy

Shoppers in Diagon Alley this afternoon were shocked to see Saviour Harry Potter doing his early Christmas shopping hand-in-hand with Ex-Death Eater Draco Malfoy. The pair were seen visiting Gringotts, Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes, Wycroft's Delicatessen and Magical Menagerie together.

Patrons at Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes overheard conversation between the unlikely duo and the owner of the shop, George Weasley, in which the latter was heard referring to Malfoy as Potter's boyfriend.

"People need to let Harry live his life in private," Weasley said when asked for comment. "I'll never understand why you lot are so obsessed with his every move."

Weasley declined further remarks.

When stopped outside of Magical Menagerie for comment about the status of his relationship to Malfoy, Potter had this to say:

"I've known him half my life, trust me when I say I know him better than anyone... He is no more now a Death Eater than I am."

Potter also confirmed that Malfoy was the companion who accompanied him to Godric's Hollow on Hallowe'en and that they have been in a romantic relationship for the last two months. Potter insists there is no enchantment of his person at work but this reporter knows that there is no way for him to know that.

Is Malfoy a changed man as Potter insists? Since the Battle of Hogwarts, Potter has been championing Malfoy's pardon and release. Transcripts from Malfoy's trial following the Battle indicate that Potter believes Malfoy to have saved his life last spring and he insisted at trial he could not have defeated Lord Voldemort without his help.

Could Potter be right about Malfoy? Only time will tell. It is this reporter's wish that he guard his heart closely in the meantime.

"They're making it out like I've enchanted you!" Draco said in outrage, slamming down the special evening edition of the Daily Prophet.

Hermione picked it up to read it and Ginny crowded into her space to read over her shoulder.

“Hey they talked to George!” she observed.

“That’s hardly the takeaway I give a shit about, Ginny,” Draco sneered in annoyance.

“Just ignore it,” Harry said with a sigh. “It’s all bullshit anyway and we knew this would be the reaction. They’ll all get over it by New Years.”

“At least they got a good picture,” Hermione offered, always looking for the bright side.

Thankfully they had not used any of the photos that had been taken outside Magical Menagerie. Instead someone seemed to have snapped a photograph of them having lunch outside the deli. They were eating sandwiches and chatting, then Draco said something and Harry burst out laughing and Draco stared at him like he’d hung the stars. Then the scene repeated. He had to admit, it *was* a good photo.

The article was only the tip of the iceberg, though. The next morning was when the real fallout began.

Their group was sitting at the Slytherin table this morning and it had expanded since Hallowe’en. Blaise and Theo now made regular appearances at mealtimes, as did Hannah Abbott. Though Draco suspected the latter had more to do with Neville than anyone else in the group. Sometimes Susan Bones would join them too but only if Hannah was already there. Finnigan and Thomas sometimes joined them as well but usually preferred their own company or that of whichever pretty girls they were flirting with that week.

Today it was their usual group of five plus Blaise and Theo.

“Hell of an article last night,” Theo remarked. “You two sure like to shake things up.”

“Oh yeah,” Harry said sarcastically. “It’s my favourite activity; getting harassed by reporters in public.”

“What happened to ignoring it?” Draco asked him with a smirk.

“I’m allowed to want my privacy, Draco,” he replied, sticking his tongue out at him.

Draco was just about to tell him what he could do with that tongue when the post arrived and he missed his chance.

The usual flock of owls flew in from the rafters bringing parcels and letters to their recipients, but a large number of them flew directly at their section of the table. About a dozen owls landed at once in the middle of their group, spraying them all with various breakfast foods and feathers. They all exclaimed in disgust and Hermione cried something about it all being unsanitary and Draco couldn’t help but agree.

The owls hopped and marched all over their breakfast, completely ruining it. The first dozen deposited letters and flew off and then several more swooped in to fill the gap.

Harry snatched up one of the letters and went pale.

“What is it, Harry?” Neville asked, spotting the look on his face.

“Yeah is it fan mail?” Blaise teased, picking up one of the letters.

“They’re all addressed to Draco!” Ginny exclaimed, holding several.

“What!?” Draco exclaimed.

He picked one up and sure enough, it was addressed to him. He went to open it but several voices shouted at once.

“DON’T OPEN THAT!” Harry, Hermione, and Ginny all yelled at the same time.

He dropped it like it was on fire.

“What? Why?” he shouted in alarm.

Harry quickly started gathering letters and stacking them together.

“Don’t you remember in fourth year when the Prophet wrote that rubbish that Hermione was two-timing me?” he asked in a haunted tone. “*Anything* could be in these.”

“Yeah, it’s never a good sign when you receive this many owls in one day,” Neville said with a grimace.

“Oh shit!” Theo cried, pointing upwards.

The bombardment of owls hadn’t stopped while they talked and shuffled together all the letters but the flock was starting to thin now, revealing five owls bearing Howlers bound for Draco.

“Don’t touch those either, they could be cursed” Harry warned just before the owls landed and deposited their red envelopes in Draco’s ruined breakfast before flying off in a hurry like they knew what was about to happen.

All five Howlers erupted at once and started yelling abuse at him, their voices overlapping and making it difficult to make out what they were saying.

“... SHOULD BE ASHAMED...”

“... LEAVE HARRY POTTER ALONE...”

“... DEATH EATER SCUM...”

He could only make out snatches of phrases but soon he couldn’t hear much more than the ringing in his ears. Harry was gripping his left arm but he could only distantly feel the contact.

The air felt too thick, his breathing came in short, sharp bursts. His chest felt tight and he imagined something like a giant snake was constricting around his midsection. He couldn’t

breathe.

His vision started growing dim and hazy and spots started blooming in front of his eyes. The noise in the Great Hall was starting to sound like it was coming to him from down a long corridor, the roaring of his pulse in his ears drowning out everything else. His skin felt cold and clammy like when a dementor was present.

"... Draco..." someone called to him from a great distance.

Then everything went dark.

"Was he cursed?" a voice asked nearby.

"It doesn't appear to be the case," a second voice spoke. "I believe he had a panic attack. Do you know if he has a history?"

"Yeah definitely," the first voice replied. "I suspect he's had them since sixth year."

"He'll be okay, physically anyway," the second voice continued. "It's good that he has you looking after him. He should be coming around soon. I'd like him to try taking it easy for the rest of the day. You'll make sure he does, won't you?"

"Of course, Madam Pomfrey, I'll make sure he rests."

There was some movement, footsteps walking away and then silence.

Draco felt like his consciousness was swimming through treacle. He struggled to open his eyes and when he managed it he had to slam them shut again. He knew he had to be in the hospital wing; it was so bright and sterile, and everything was white.

"Hey, you're awake!" the first voice spoke again and he realised now that it was Harry.

He opened his eyes again and turned to look at him. Harry's face was a mixture of worry and encouraging smile.

"I fainted," he groaned. "In front of the whole school."

"I wouldn't worry what they all think," Harry assured him. "I've fainted loads in front of everyone."

"And I took the piss out of you for years for it," Draco reminded him.

"They'll all forget about it by next week. I'm sure half of them get panic attacks too. We *all* went through hell last year. No one is going to think you're weak."

“No but they might think I deserve it,” Draco sighed.

“You’re gonna be a lot happier if you learn to stop giving a shit about what people think of you,” Harry said dryly.

“Take your own advice,” Draco rolled his eyes.

“Touché.”

Madam Pomfrey returned and after a quick checkup, he was allowed to leave.

“There’s not really anything I can give you to make it all better,” she said sadly. “This is just one of those things that takes time. If you want my recommendation though, I would suggest you see a mind healer. They may be able to provide you with coping strategies that will help.”

They thanked her for her help anyway and left the hospital wing.

“We’re late for Defence but Dawlish won’t give a shit,” Harry said conversationally as they climbed the stairs.

“I don’t really feel up to going to class right now,” Draco sighed.

“That’s fine, we’ll just go back to the dorm and rest a bit,” Harry agreed easily.

“What happened to all the letters?” he asked.

“Chucked most of them,” Harry said. “Some of them had curses in them, most were just angry letters slagging you off for dating me, one was a request for an exclusive from Witch Weekly, I got one of those too. And one was from your dad. I chucked it too, I know you don’t want to hear from him.”

“Did you read it?” Draco asked.

“Yeah I did,” he admitted.

“Do I want to know?”

“Probably not,” Harry sighed. “He seems to think you’ve duped me somehow and had some congratulatory things to say about that.”

“Bloody hell,” he sighed. “Merlin forbid I date you because I fancy you.”

“I *did* save one letter I thought you might like to read,” Harry said, digging the letter out of his back pocket.

Curious, Draco took it from him and instantly recognized the handwriting on the front. It was from his mother. It wasn’t opened.

“How did you know I’d want this one?” he asked.

“It’s from your mum,” Harry shrugged.

“But it doesn’t say that on it anywhere and you didn’t open it,” Draco observed. “How did you know it was from her?”

“She’s written me before, I recognized her handwriting.”

Draco whirled around in shock.

“When did my mother write you?”

“This summer, after the trials,” Harry shrugged again, continuing to walk. “She thanked me for testifying and for returning your wand.”

“I never knew,” Draco murmured.

He carefully broke the seal on the envelope and drew out the letter inside to read as they walked.

Dearest Draco,

You have no doubt read the article about you and Harry in the newspaper last evening. We knew this day would come soon so it was not terribly surprising. I am glad you told me before it made the news as I do not believe I would have enjoyed finding out in that manner.

The article could have been worse, all things considered. It seems to have been written with some attempt at neutrality in any case, and the photograph that was included was very charming. You make a very cute couple and you looked so happy, darling.

I know having this much scrutiny in your relationship must not be easy for you. I advise you take Harry’s lead in navigating these waters as he undoubtedly has much experience in this matter and can help to guide you.

I love you, my darling. Keep your head up and I will see you at Christmas.

Love,

Mum

The week that followed was tense. Several more owls delivered many more nasty letters though thankfully anyone inclined to send Howlers had evidently gotten it out of their system and no more had arrived.

“You should set up post screening at the post office in Hogsmeade,” Hermione had advised. “That’s what I did back in fourth year. They collect all of your mail and then, depending on your requests, only send on anything from preapproved senders, or they could just screen out the dangerous ones for you and have them destroyed and send on the rest if you really want to read them. But if you want my advice, don’t bother. Just bin them all.”

He decided he would take her up on that advice the following weekend as they weren’t allowed to leave school during the week except with special permission.

But first he had to get through the next full moon which was Friday night.

Hermione had kindly copied her notes from all of their classes for the day which was greatly appreciated as Draco had had enormous trouble paying attention in class. In Transfiguration, Draco sat between Harry and Hermione and had surely driven them batty with how much he’d fidgeted.

He’d kept tapping his feet and drumming his fingers on the desk. Several of their classmates had shot him irritated looks multiple times, but he couldn’t make himself stop. That unquenchable urge to run was crawling up his spine as it always did on the run up to the full moon and being confined to a desk made it nearly intolerable.

When they were finally let out of Ancient Runes, Draco had to resist the temptation to sprint back to the common room. He had no doubt that it would make him feel better but it would definitely attract unwanted attention.

“I wish there was something more that could be done,” Hermione sighed as they walked back together.

“You and me both,” he grumbled scratching his scalp incessantly. “It feels like my skin is crawling.”

“You should stop scratching before you break the skin,” she chided. “And someone might think you have nits or something.”

“I’ll just tell them Ginny put itching powder in my robes,” he quipped. “They’d believe that.”

“And when it gets back to her?” she challenged.

“Fine I’ll say *someone* did it and I don’t know who.”

“Or you could try to stop scratching before you injure yourself.”

“Easier said than done, I assure you,” he sighed.

They reached the Astronomy Tower and Draco made a beeline for his dorm without telling her bye.

Harry was already inside waiting for him and offered him a hug when as soon as he stepped inside. Draco accepted the embrace and nuzzled his nose into Harry's neck.

"That tickles!" he chuckled, but didn't pull away.

Harry's scent filled his nostrils and made his head spin. The urge to run was now replaced with a new sensation that he'd never experienced in connection with the moon before. He felt himself growing hard and he pressed himself closer to Harry, instinctively trying to get some friction.

"Draco?" Harry murmured uncertainly. "You okay?"

"Want you," he growled into his throat and licked a stripe over his pulse.

Harry shivered and a gasp escaped him.

"I thought you were worried about being too rough," he asked, his voice cracking slightly.

"You like it rough," Draco reminded him and began laying kisses up his jaw. "I'll be careful. I won't hurt you. Harry please," he whined. "I need you."

Harry groaned at the desperate note in his voice.

"*Fuck*," he uttered lowly. "Okay but no biting."

Draco could work with that. He immediately got to work stripping Harry of his clothes faster than he'd ever done before and Harry was just as eager in stripping Draco.

They had only an hour until the moon rose so this would have to be fast. It was risky but the edge of danger made it all so much hotter.

"We don't have time for a lot of prep," Harry said breathlessly, climbing onto the bed completely naked. "You'll have to go in cold."

"That's going to hurt," Draco warned, some of his good sense breaking in to tell him this was a terrible idea.

"I can take it," Harry assured him, running his hand down his abdomen towards his lower regions.

Draco watched, mesmerized as Harry's hand bypassed his quickly hardening cock and beyond. He pressed two fingers into himself without any warmup and moaned at the sensation. He'd evidently used a wandless lubrication spell as his fingers disappeared up his arse without resistance.

"I'm ready," Harry said after only a few seconds of pumping his fingers inside of himself.

He withdrew his fingers and spread his legs invitingly, but the wolf in Draco had other ideas.

"Turn over," he ordered, prowling closer.

Harry's eyes widened a fraction before he scrambled to comply. He turned over onto his hands and knees and presented his arse to Draco, his puckered entrance on full display.

Draco grabbed his hips and roughly yanked him closer to the edge of the bed. Harry made a small noise of surprise but didn't complain about the manhandling. Draco lined himself up and slowly pressed into his boyfriend's tight heat.

Harry grunted at the intrusion but didn't protest. The wolf wanted Draco to thrust all the way to the hilt in one stroke but he managed to hold back, conscious of the fact that Harry hadn't had much prep. Once he was fully seated he held himself still, breathing heavily and waiting for Harry's go-ahead.

He was so tight and hot that Draco had a difficult time holding still. After what felt like several minutes but couldn't have been more than one, Harry started canting his hips back and forth an inch or two. His grunts of discomfort soon changed to pants and tiny moans.

"Move, Draco," he gasped.

He didn't need telling twice. He pulled out almost all the way and then swiftly slammed back in. Harry let out a cry that was half pain, half pleasure and Draco paused again.

"You okay?" he grit out, trying to maintain composure.

"Yes," he choked out. "Again. Go again."

He pulled out and thrust back in again. This time Harry's cry was all pleasure.

Encouraged, Draco grabbed his hips in a bruising force and began pounding Harry's arse over and over. Draco used his grip on Harry's hips to pull him down onto his cock in time with his thrusts.

Harry just allowed himself to be manhandled, screaming in time with each thrust, his hands fisting tightly in the bedsheets.

"Fuck, Draco!" he cried. "Fuck... harder!"

So he thrust harder. Draco could already feel himself approaching the edge and he desperately wanted Harry to come with him. He couldn't get quite the right angle from this position to strike Harry's prostate, though.

His eyes roved over his boyfriend's body. He admired the way his back muscles flexed with each thrust. He especially enjoyed watching his dick disappear into his tight hole over and over. He had the sudden impulse to bite him.

He couldn't have that. He pressed a hand on Harry's back between his shoulder blades and pushed him down so that his chest and face were pressing into the mattress. If no part of him was in range to bite, it would be easier to resist the temptation.

This prone position also had the added benefit of changing the angle of his thrusts so that on his next downward stroke, he struck something that caused Harry to moan loudly and utter

profanities. Draco struck that spot repeatedly until he began to unravel.

His cries began to pitch upward and Draco felt his already very tight hole tighten further.

“Fuckfuckfuckfuck!” Harry babbled. “Fuck, Draco! I’m coming!”

He needn’t have told him, Draco could feel Harry’s climax as it happened. He probably didn’t do it on purpose, but at the moment of his orgasm, Harry had used wandless magic to share the experience with Draco.

He screamed his own release as he spilled into Harry’s tight arse and had to bite down on his own arm to stop himself from biting Harry instead. It was a good thing he did too, because he immediately tasted blood and knew he’d broken the skin.

It took a minute to come down from the high but when he did, the urgency of the approaching full moon made him come back down to Earth instantly.

He pulled out and they both groaned at the sensation. Come dribbled out of Harry’s arse and dripped down his balls. Draco groaned again at the sight of it and he felt himself growing hard again.

“Fucking hell,” he exclaimed softly. The wolf was insatiable!

“Hnnn,” Harry mumbled, falling over onto his side. He was still panting heavily, trying to get his breath back.

“You have to go,” Draco told him reluctantly.

“Is it time?” Harry asked, drunkenly trying to sit up.

“Soon,” he sighed. “But we shouldn’t push it.”

Harry got unsteadily to his feet and started looking for his clothes. After magicking himself clean and dressing himself messily, he approached Draco with warmth in his eyes. He enveloped him in a hug, squeezing very tightly like he always did, like he was afraid to lose him.

“I’ll see you in the morning,” he murmured into Draco’s neck.

He kissed him swiftly on the lips before turning to leave, looking back once before shutting the door and leaving Draco to transform alone.

Chapter End Notes

Finally everyone knows, but not everyone is very pleased with it.

Happy Monday! Things are gonna move fast from here. I also have a chapter of Harry's Choice ready to go on Wednesday as well, so have a look out for that, and I'll see all of you back here Friday for the most anticipated chapter so far when Harry finally reveals his secret project! Make your bets now what it's gonna be 😊

Chapter 33: Merlin

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Hogsmeade was not as much of a circus as Diagon Alley had been but Draco decided that it was probably not a good idea to visit wizarding hubs for awhile. He was thrown out of nearly every shop on the high street and there was a photograph of his face with the word “BANNED!” over it pasted on the front window of the Three Broomsticks.

Draco stared at the poster for a long time. What he’d done to Madam Rosmerta was unforgivable.

“Hey,” Harry nudged him to snap him out of it. “We can go somewhere else.”

“Do you think she’d let me apologise?” Draco asked after Harry managed to steer him away.

“Rosmerta? I dunno,” he sighed. “Maybe you could try a letter?”

Draco nodded. If he wasn’t even allowed inside, Rosmerta probably wouldn’t want to talk to him. A letter wasn’t the ideal way to apologise but it might be the only way. He didn’t expect her to forgive him though; he *did* use the Imperious Curse on her to make her curse a student to pass a cursed necklace to Dumbledore in the hopes of killing him, only for that student to nearly die in the process of carrying out the task. It was pretty messed up.

They stopped at the post office to set up post screenings and then tried wandering around and window shopping since Draco wasn’t allowed in many of the shops. It was only a bit chilly but the wind was especially bad and they kept being pelted with random falling leaves and getting their hair in their mouths when Harry eventually suggested the Hog’s Head.

“If this weather keeps up, Quidditch practice is going to be miserable,” Harry remarked, brushing his hair off his face when they entered the sanctuary of the grimy pub.

“Wind storms like this usually come before massive rain storms,” Draco commented. “I think this wind will be the least of your troubles at practice.”

“Massive rain storms like the kind with a load of thunder and lightning?” Harry asked with a funny tone that sounded way too casual.

“Yeah...?” Draco said, staring at his boyfriend suspiciously. “Why?”

“Oh no reason,” he returned too quickly.

“You’re a rotten liar, Harry.”

“Don’t worry about it,” he said swiftly. “I’ll tell you another time.”

Draco frowned. He'd been saying that a lot. Could this bizarre behaviour have something to do with Harry's mysterious project? What did potion brewing, late nights, a funny taste in his mouth – which was now mysteriously gone – and thunderstorms have in common? He wracked his brain and just couldn't come up with anything.

This obsession with thunderstorms carried on for the rest of the week. Draco noticed Harry distracted by the rain which had steadily started to fall since that weekend. He kept glancing at the enchanted ceiling at mealtimes and out of windows during classes. Draco had even come back to their dorm after Muggle Studies on Thursday and saw him just sat at the desk and staring out the window. He was so fixated on the pouring rain that he hadn't even noticed Draco come in.

He was starting to become concerned that it was ruining his sleep as well because he was always up before dawn and when asked he would just say he'd gotten up to get a jump start on the day. Draco had found this rather fishy as Harry was not normally a morning person. He had also started to hole up in his dorm in the early evenings and wouldn't come out until after sundown. Draco never went in there anymore because Harry was cultivating a large amount of wolfsbane in his dorm for potion brewing so he never saw what it was he was doing.

Hermione would only keep assuring him that Harry was fine and since she wasn't worried, he tried very hard not to worry too.

That Saturday, Harry's fixation came to a head.

They were sitting at the Gryffindor table for breakfast like they so often did. Everyone was excited about the Ravenclaw-Hufflepuff Quidditch match later but many of their group were discussing possibly not going.

"No one I care about is playing," Draco said petulantly. "It's been getting colder every day since last weekend and with the pouring rain I'm going to be frozen down to my bones. Why in Merlin's name should I go?"

"And here I thought you liked Quidditch," Ginny said in a mock disappointed voice and shaking her head. "Not even willing to get a little wet to watch a match."

"It's a lot more than a little wet, Ginny," Hermione said, backing Draco up.

"I expect this from you, Hermione," Ginny tutted. "You don't even like to fly."

"Yeah I'm gonna pass on this match too," Neville said.

"You too, Neville?" she huffed. "So am I watching this match alone, then?"

Draco expected Harry to want to watch but he was spacing out on his breakfast instead. Draco nudged him and he shot his head up sharply.

"What?" he asked bewildered. "Someone ask me a question?"

"Ginny was wondering if she's going to this match alone," Draco told him.

"Oh, er..." he looked up at the ceiling and the rain coming down hard and fast. "I'm not sure about that one, Gin."

"I'll go with you, Ginny," Blaise piped up. "*Some* of us have a proper appreciation for Quidditch."

"I have an appreciation," Harry argued back. "I'm gonna play professional, I just have better things to do than freeze my arse off to watch a match that ultimately won't matter when Gryffindor takes the house cup at the end of May."

"You just hate that you're not out there freezing your arse off on a broomstick with them and have to watch other people do it instead," Blaise said challengingly.

"Well, you're not wrong," Harry admitted with a shrug and a smirk.

"Well then I guess it's just Ginny and me," he said, throwing an arm over her shoulder.

"Just so you know, I'm not looking for a date," she told him pointedly.

Harry and Draco both snorted loudly at this and Blaise just gave her a condescending smile.

"Oh honey," he said with a chuckle. "You're not my type."

"What's that supposed to mean?" she demanded, clearly trying to figure out if he'd just insulted her.

"You don't have the right equipment," Draco drawled teasingly.

Ginny just stared at him blankly.

"He plays for the other team," Harry offered, snickering.

"What the bloody hell are you two on about?" she snapped, getting irritated.

"He's gay, Ginny," Hermione said bluntly.

"Ooooh," she said, comprehension dawning on her for a beat, then her face began to turn red. "Now I feel stupid."

The rest of the group burst out laughing at this.

Just then there was a brilliant flash of light across the enchanted ceiling followed by a deafening crack of thunder and nearly everyone leapt a foot in the air in surprise and several people screamed.

"On second thought," Ginny said hesitantly. "Maybe let's not risk getting struck by lightning and skip this match."

Draco snorted.

Harry suddenly leapt to his feet.

“What’s with you?” Theo asked.

“Er... just remembered I have to... do... something,” Harry hedged and then after a quick glance up at the teachers’ table, took off at a swift walk out of the Great Hall.

“What the bloody hell was that all about?” Ginny demanded.

“I don’t know, but he’s been weird for over a month now,” Draco said distractedly, looking where Harry had before leaving.

Professor McGonagall was getting up from the teachers’ table and making excuses to her fellow teachers. Then she too headed out of the hall. No one else seemed to notice or pay her any mind.

“I wouldn’t worry,” Hermione said idly. “If all goes well I’m sure we’ll all find out really soon what he’s been doing.”

“You say that like you don’t know what he’s doing when I know for certain you do,” Draco accused her.

“I *do* know what he’s been doing and that’s why I know you don’t need to worry about it,” she said authoritatively. “I’m saying I’m sure the rest of you will find out really soon. Probably even by tonight if things go well.”

“And by ‘things’ you mean...?” Neville prompted.

“Things you will learn about really soon,” she said, continuing to be infuriatingly cagey.

Really soon didn’t feel soon enough. Harry was mysteriously absent from the usual places he could be found for the rest of the morning. Not the common room, Draco’s dorm, or the library. Draco had even dared to peek in Harry’s dorm while holding his breath against the smell of wolfsbane but he wasn’t in there either.

Ginny and Blaise had ended up going to the Quidditch match anyway and came back soaking and freezing but told him they hadn’t seen Harry there either. Draco had also gone down to the kitchens to ask Kreacher if he knew where he was. He said he didn’t but Draco couldn’t be sure if he was telling the truth as house elves were allowed to lie to other wizards to keep their masters’ secrets.

When he didn’t return by lunch, Draco got really concerned. He went back up to their shared dorm and dug into the bedside drawer and pulled out the Marauder’s Map and spread it on his desk.

“I solemnly swear that I’m up to no good,” he intoned, pointing his wand at the middle of the worn parchment.

He scanned the map all over, trying to find the little dot marked “Harry Potter” but found the search difficult as many dots and names overlapped in crowded places like the library and the five common rooms.

He remembered what Harry had said about the Room of Hidden Things being unplotable and roved his eyes over the seventh floor corridor. If he was there, Draco would probably not be able to get in if Harry didn't want anyone to. He also didn't fancy going back to that room of nightmares any time soon. He wasn't even sure the room still existed given that Fiendfyre tends to completely destroy everything it touches.

Just when he was gearing himself up to having to go down there and see for himself if Harry was there, a dot moving swiftly across the grounds caught his attention. It was labelled with Harry's name, but it was moving way too fast. Was he on his Firebolt?

Draco looked around the room and found the broomstick propped against the wall by the wardrobe with the rest of Harry's Quidditch kit in a duffle bag next to it. So not on his broom.

He turned his attention back to the map. Harry's dot was doing something quite bizarre. It seemed to be jumping from floor to floor without accessing any stairwells or secret passages. What could he be doing? Was the map malfunctioning?

Harry's dot finally came to a rest somewhere in the vicinity of the Astronomy Tower but wasn't on the top where Astronomy classes were held, and nor was it in any of the rooms or corridors. It was outside the tower, on the side that had a nearly two hundred foot drop to the grounds below.

There was a sudden rapping at his window and Draco nearly leapt out of his skin. He whirled around, expecting an owl but what he saw was a different bird altogether.

It was a small bird of prey with grey flight feathers and a speckled white and brown chest. Its clever black eyes watched him intently and it snapped its sharp, curved beak then scratched at the window with its deadly yellow talons. There was something oddly familiar about this bird.

He hesitantly approached the window and as he did, the bird let out a high pitched cry and clawed at the window again.

"You want me to let you in?" he asked, wondering if the bird could understand him.

It bobbed its head in what was unmistakably a nod.

Carefully and very conscious of the bird's very sharp talons and beak, he unlatched the window. The bird sidestepped on the ledge so Draco could swing the window open wide enough for it to pass through. He stood back and the bird stepped through then spread its wings and took flight.

He ducked instinctively as the bird swooped around the room before alighting clumsily on the back of his desk chair and staring intently at him. Draco edged closer to it hesitantly.

"Hello...?" he tried, unsure.

The bird let out a high pitched screech and turned its head towards the map which was still open on the desk. He cast his attention to the map, wondering if maybe he should clear it

when his eyes snagged on Harry's name again. It was inside the tower now and no longer moving. As he edged closer he noticed his own name and dot move closer to Harry's. According to this, Harry was in the room with him.

He snapped his eyes back to the unnaturally intelligent bird of prey. It stared back at him intently.

"Harry?" he asked in a small, choked voice.

The bird shrieked and flapped his wings to take flight again but immediately alighted on the ground instead and began to grow bigger and taller until there was no longer a bird but his boyfriend with the biggest shit-eating grin on his face.

"You're an animagus!" Draco exclaimed in astonished delight.

"You love me!" Harry exclaimed back apparently equally delighted.

"What?" Draco's face fell and his eyes went wide.

"You love me," Harry repeated, voice softer now and full of warmth, eyes shining.

He stepped in reach of Draco and placed both his hands on his face and bore his green eyes into Draco's own. Draco trembled. How had he found out?

"Your patronus," Harry explained gently, seeming to read his mind as he always did. "It's a small falcon. I remembered it when I transformed and realised *I* was a small falcon. A patronus takes the form of your truest self. But sometimes when something makes a big enough impression on you and becomes an essential part of your truest self, your patronus will change. Falling in love is the most common reason for the change. Tonks' changed to a wolf when she fell in love with Remus, and Snape's had always been a doe, same as my mum's. A patronus changes form when you love someone so much that they become a part of you."

He'd always suspected that his falcon patronus represented Harry, he would just never in a million years have guessed that he'd become an animagus and that his animal form would match.

He remembered all the odd things Harry had been doing for the last month and a half and realised that they'd likely all been leading to this. He'd been cagey but excited and had repeatedly told Draco that he was excited to tell him what it was he was working on but that it was a surprise. He'd wanted this to be a surprise.

"You became an animagus for me," Draco whispered in realization, his eyes widening in awe. "You did it so you could stay with me on the full moons."

Harry nodded, beaming excitedly.

"You wanna know what kind of falcon I am?" Harry asked, a broad grin splitting his face. "McGonagall told me."

“Since you’re obviously bursting to tell me, why don’t you go ahead,” Draco drawled, rolling his eyes affectionately.

“A merlin,” he said in a conspiratorial tone, still grinning like an idiot.

“No way!” Draco exclaimed.

“Way!” Harry insisted. “She said Merlin himself was an animagus who could turn into a falcon and the species was named after him. I have to admit, though,” he continued sheepishly, finally releasing Draco’s face so he could rub the back of his neck awkwardly. “I was kind of hoping for a larger animal. Like a dog or maybe a bear, or a lion!”

“Lion’s not exactly subtle,” Draco muttered distractedly. Harry was a *merlin*! How very fitting.

“True, and maybe a little too on the nose.”

“Why did you do this?” Draco asked suddenly, staring at Harry in disbelief.

“Like you said,” he answered, frowning in confusion. “So I can stay on the full moon.”

“But *why*?” Draco insisted.

Harry stared at him in disbelief. Was the answer so obvious? Why would Harry dedicate so much of his energy and sleepless nights just to spend more sleepless nights with Draco when he wasn’t himself. For that matter, why was Harry so dedicated to perfecting the wolfsbane potion?

“You really can’t think why?” Harry asked, perplexed.

Draco just shook his head in confusion.

“Because I love you,” he said simply.

Draco felt his heart stutter and his breath caught in his throat.

“Did you hear me, Draco?” Harry asked when he didn’t reply. “I said I lo—”

Draco smothered the rest of his sentence by smashing his lips into Harry’s. Harry made a small noise of surprise before melting into the kiss. He only broke the kiss when he finally needed to come up for air.

“I love you!” Draco exclaimed breathlessly. “Merlin! I’ve wanted to say that for months!”

He stared at Harry in adoration. This was the most spectacular wizard he’d ever known. He’d become an animagus for him! Who does that? Well James Potter and Sirius Black did that now that he thought about it. Like father like son.

“Why did you never say it before?” Harry asked softly.

“It was too soon,” Draco explained. “We were still glued together and I didn’t want to freak you out or make you uncomfortable. And then when we were unglued I didn’t want to move too fast and scare you off.”

“I’m not scared,” Harry said, smiling.

“Maybe not, but I was,” Draco confided. “When this all started, you were experimenting and I didn’t want it to stop. I thought you’d pull out if you thought I was getting too attached to try and protect me from getting my heart broken. So I pretended this was casual for me too, but then you told everyone I was your boyfriend and I realised we were getting serious. I was ecstatic! But I was also afraid you would realise I’m terrible for you and eventually leave and I didn’t want to do anything that might hurry that realisation along. I guess I just thought if I kept following your lead, everything would keep working out.”

“And you say *I’m* the disaster,” Harry quipped. “Let’s both stop being idiots and just be honest with each other like we promised.”

“I’d like that,” Draco agreed.

Chapter End Notes

I have been absolutely bursting to post this chapter for over a month! Most of you probably guessed what Harry's secret project was but I think only one of you specifically stated that he'd be a falcon.

If you haven't already, I encourage you to read [Chapter 6](#) of Harry's Choice which tells when he first got the idea to become an animagus and takes place during the first full moon of term. Also, if you want to read about the process Harry took to become an animagus, please read [Chapter 7](#) which details his entire journey of becoming a merlin.

Also, if you're interested in what Harry's animal form looks like, you can have a look [here](#). And if you're interested in what its cry sounds like, you can listen to that [here](#).

Chapter 34: The Wolf and The Falcon

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Did you do it?” Hermione asked eagerly when they finally came down from the dormitories.

Harry just beamed at her and nodded vigorously. She squealed in delight and clapped her hands.

“Do *what?*” Ginny demanded in irritation. “Is someone going to finally tell us what in Merlin’s name you’ve been doing?”

Their whole friend group was staring at Harry expectantly. Several other eighth and seventh years in the common room were also staring, their curiosity piqued by Hermione’s outburst and the shit-eating grin on Harry’s face.

“You wanna see what I’ve been working on?” Harry teased.

“Yes, damnit!” Blaise exclaimed.

Draco chuckled. Harry wasn’t usually one for showing off but this was quite the accomplishment and he was rightfully pleased with himself. Harry just grinned bigger and took a step away from Draco who also stepped back, unsure how much room he’d need to transform.

A slight look of concentration crossed his face then a small wince before his form started rapidly shrinking. Many voices cried out in excitement and delight. When the transformation was finished, there was a merlin where Harry had stood, which immediately took flight and began wheeling around the room and chirping in that high pitched cry.

“Merlin’s balls!” Seamus Finnigan exclaimed.

“He’s an animagus!” Neville cried.

“What kind of bird is that?” Parvati Patil asked.

“A hawk?” Susan Bones suggested.

“No a falcon,” Terry Boot corrected.

“Falcons are bigger than that,” Stephen Cornfoot argued.

“He’s a merlin,” Luna informed them dreamily. “It’s a small variety of falcon known for their agility.”

“A *merlin?*” Zacharias Smith asked doubtfully. “As in *Merlin*, merlin?”

“That variety of falcon is named after him, yes,” Hermione informed him coolly.

“I *told* you he was a falcon,” Boot said snootily.

Harry wheeled over their heads one more time before turning sharply and heading back to Draco, who instinctively held out an arm the way he would for an owl. He winced as Harry landed roughly and dug his talons into his arm to stabilize himself.

“You need to work on your landings,” Draco told him.

Harry chirped and butted his head into the side of Draco’s in apology.

“Does he have any interesting markings?” Hermione asked, coming close to examine him.

Their peers also clustered closer to get a better look at Harry the merlin. Draco noticed Weasley hanging back, pretending not to be interested or impressed.

Hermione had Harry spread his wings so they could look for markings.

Draco also turned to look his boyfriend over for distinguishing marks. McGonagall had markings around her cat form’s eyes like glasses and so did Prongs and Rita Skeeter’s beetle form, so he expected there to be the same around Harry’s but he didn’t see any. There was, however, a darker cluster of speckles on his chest that stood out from the other brown speckles. There was also one stand out feather on his head that was white while the others were all grey. These marks stood out to Draco as matching Harry’s scars.

Hermione remarked on the white feather but either didn’t notice or didn’t wish to call attention to the marking on his chest which was a bit more subtle.

Draco scratched the spot on his head with the white feather with the tip of one finger and Harry pressed his head into the touch.

“Hey, Malfoy, isn’t your patronus a falcon?” Dean Thomas asked. “Hell of a coincidence.”

“I don’t think it’s *that* coincidental,” Hermione said softly so only Draco and Harry heard her. She gave him a knowing look and he beamed at her in return.

Harry took flight again, brushing Draco’s face with the edge of one wing. He soared over their heads and dropped unceremoniously onto a couch and transformed back.

“I definitely need to work on my landings,” he joked, righting himself on the couch from the heap he’d landed in and got up. “I would have thought flying would be harder since I’ve never had wings before, but it’s the landings I’m finding a bit challenging.”

“You’ve always been a natural flier,” Draco reminded him. “I guess you were born for the air.”

The eighth and seventh years all crowded around Harry to ask him loads of questions. He noticed Weasley at the edge of the crowd scowl and pointedly turn away and leave the common room in a huff.

Ginny came up to Draco who was hanging back, a little uncomfortable about the crowd.

“Funny thing, your patronus matching Harry’s animal form,” she said slyly. “Reminds me of Tonks’ patronus changing into a wolf after she fell in love with Remus.”

“Yeah,” he sighed, fondly watching Harry explain the long and complicated process of becoming an animagus to their peers. “Funny thing indeed.”

“Does he know how much you love him?” she asked softly.

He looked down at her and searched her face for signs of jealousy. There was something complex in the emotions on her face that he couldn’t decipher but she showed no signs of jealousy that he could see.

“Yeah,” he said, a note of awe in his voice. “Yeah he does now.”

She chuckled softly.

“I guess it’s pretty hard to compete with that, isn’t it?” she said in a funny tone that wasn’t quite sadness.

“I wasn’t trying to compete with you,” he told her.

“I know,” she sighed. “I guess some part of me thought we’d get back together eventually even though he was with you for now. But I wasn’t ready, and it wasn’t fair to make him wait until I was.”

“He still loves you,” Draco said. He had no idea why he was telling her this. “He told me so.”

“And I still love him,” she said fondly. “But it’s not enough. All I want though, is for him to be happy, and you make him happier than I’ve ever known him to be. It was never a competition, he just loves you differently than he ever did me. I’m not bitter, I promise, I’m just mourning something we lost.”

“He’ll always consider you family,” Draco assured her.

“Me too,” she said smiling brightly now. “I hope one day I find someone who loves me enough to do something this grand for me.”

“What are you talking about?” he asked, perplexed. What led her to believe Harry had done this for *him* and not out of some other academic reason?

“He’s obviously done this so he can help you,” she said in a conspiratorial whisper. “You know, for that monthly problem of yours.”

Draco jerked away from her and stared at her in alarm.

“Relax,” she scolded him quietly. “I don’t actually care and I’m not going to tell anyone.”

“How did you *know*?” he asked nervously.

“I didn’t *know*, ” she denied, then turned a sly smirk on him. “Until you reacted to what I said, I only *suspected*. You need to be way better at reacting to that accusation if you want to keep it a secret, by the way.”

She was right. It was like he’d left his Slytherin cunning in the dungeons when he moved up to the Astronomy Tower with the rest of the eighth years.

“How long have you suspected?” he sighed.

“Oh since September,” she said smugly.

Merlin! Did he just have “werewolf” printed on his forehead?

“Who else knows?”

“That I know of? Just Harry and Hermione,” she shrugged.

“And here I thought I was hiding it well,” he grouched.

“I think you’re hiding it fine,” she assured him, patting him on the shoulder. “I just know how to recognize the signs better than most.”

That was reassuring at least.

The cluster of nosey eighth years was broken up then when Miss Maple decided this gathering was sorely lacking in teddy bear hugs and glomped Harry unexpectedly before diving at the next nearest person who happened to be Zacharias Smith who was not at all impressed.

By dinner the whole school knew and for the next several weeks Harry had people asking him to demonstrate his new ability everywhere he went. Even those who had seen him do it already.

He’d shown it off so many times he had gotten really good at transforming and taking flight mid-stride and nearly gave Draco a heart attack at Quidditch practice when he leapt off his broomstick a hundred feet off the ground and transformed mid-fall, pulling up only a few inches from the ground.

“You’re going to be the death of me, Harry,” Draco chided him after practice, his heart still in his throat.

“Ah but you love me for it,” he teased back.

“Hey, boys, wait up,” Ginny called, hurriedly running after them, broomstick over her shoulder.

They turned to wait for her to catch up.

“So Christmas holidays are coming up in a few days,” she said, trying to catch her breath. “What’s the plan?”

“What do you mean?” Harry asked. “We’re coming to the Burrow.”

“For the *whole* holiday?” she asked clarifying. “Because I know you haven’t forgotten the train leaves on Saturday and that’s a full moon.”

Harry’s eyebrows twitched together briefly but it was the only outward reaction.

“What’s the moon got to do with it?” he asked casually.

“Now see, Draco,” Ginny exclaimed, giving his arm a swat. “*That’s* how you effectively deny being a werewolf.”

Harry rounded on Draco with a confused and expectant expression.

“Oh I forgot to tell you,” he said casually. “Ginny knows now.”

“Oh you *forgot*?” Harry exclaimed incredulously.

“Yeah I mean with all the excitement around you becoming an animagus and everyone bugging you to show off every thirty seconds, I forgot,” Draco said sheepishly.

Harry just stared at him like he’d lost his mind. To be fair, Ginny announcing that she knew he was a werewolf had been such a nothing exchange and it didn’t change their dynamic nearly as much as her learning how much he and Harry loved each other did. Since it had had virtually no impact on his life, it had entirely slipped his mind to bring it up to Harry any time in the last two and a half weeks.

“*Anyway,*” Ginny prompted. “What’s the plan? Since the first day of the holidays is a full moon, you obviously can’t come to the Burrow. We don’t have anywhere suitable.”

“I was only planning to come on Christmas Day,” Draco hedged. “I was going to spend the rest of the holidays at Hogwarts since you couldn’t pay me enough to go home.”

“Don’t be stupid,” she said impatiently. “You’re staying with us, right, Harry?”

“Er... I don’t mind,” he hedged. “I was sort of worried about causing too much drama.”

“Oh because of Ron?” she asked like her brother was an afterthought. “Don’t be ridiculous. Mum will control him, don’t worry.”

“I wouldn’t want to overstay my welcome,” Draco said hesitantly. “And I already told George I was only coming for Christmas day.”

“Oh well if you’ve told *George,*” she said rolling her eyes. “Come on, change your plans. Please?”

“You just want to stir up trouble for your own amusement,” Harry accused her.

“So what?” she asked, not denying it. “It’ll be fun!”

“Where will we be sleeping then?” he asked. “It’s not like there’s a surplus of space and I’m not sharing with Ron.”

“Me neither, for the record,” Draco added.

“That’s fine,” she said carelessly. “I’ve already owled George to ask if he’d bunk with Ron and he agreed. You two can stay in the twins’ old room. Bill’s staying at his with Fleur for most of the holidays so he won’t need a place to stay, same goes for Percy. And Theo can share with Charlie in Percy’s old room.”

“Wow it sure sounds like you got it all worked out,” Harry said in amazement. “Though I’ve noticed you’re the only one not sharing a room with anyone.”

“Well Hermione’s not getting back to Britain until New Years Eve so yes, I’ll have my room to myself this year. At least until she gets back. Mum would have a cow if I bunked with a boy,” she said smirking. “Though I don’t think I’d say no if Theo wanted to pop in.”

“George would kick his arse,” Harry snorted.

“I wouldn’t worry about that,” Draco drawled, smirking. “Theo’s only interested in Hermione.”

“What?!” Harry and Ginny both exclaimed incredulously.

“Don’t tell me you haven’t noticed him mooning over her every chance he gets,” Draco replied, equally shocked that this was news to them. “Frankly I’m shocked he hasn’t made a move on her already, he’s fancied her for months now.”

“He *told* you this?” Ginny pressed.

“He didn’t have to, I shared a dorm with him for six years. He couldn’t be more obvious if he tried.”

“Why hasn’t he said anything?” Harry wondered.

Draco wondered that too. Theo was not the sort to hold on to a crush without doing something about it. This was new territory. He seemed perfectly content to just be near her or talk to her about the obscure muggle things he learned in his year among them. He seemed entirely smitten.

“He must really fancy her,” Draco decided.

“Well damn,” Ginny said in mock disappointment. “I guess that makes him off limits.”

“Are you looking to start dating again then?” Harry asked casually.

“Nothing too serious,” she told him. “I’m not really ready for a big commitment yet. But I figured a little casual fling here or there might be okay.”

“Good,” Harry said, pleased. “I’m happy for you.”

All of the anxiety Draco had had about Harry possibly one day going back to Ginny evaporated in an instant. Some small jealous corner of Draco’s mind had been concerned that Harry might still be holding out hope for Ginny to want to get back together and with the knowledge that Ginny had felt that way, he couldn’t help the slightly anxious feeling that told him he wasn’t good enough for Harry and that he’d be better off with her. Now, seeing how pleased Harry was that his ex-girlfriend was moving on, that jealousy was able to finally die.

They’d reached the castle and started heading up to the upper floors so Harry and Ginny could change out of their Quidditch things before dinner.

“D’you reckon Dean might like to have another go?” Ginny asked cheekily.

“Didn’t you break up with him for laughing at me when McLaggan broke my skull with a bludger?” Harry asked her.

“That was ages ago,” she said dismissively.

“Wasn’t McLaggan a Keeper?” Draco asked. “What was he doing hitting bludgers?”

“Being a fucking dumbass,” Harry said darkly. “Even Ron in the middle of an anxiety attack was a better Keeper than that walnut. He could play for Scotland and I still wouldn’t want him on my team.”

“McLaggan fancied himself a better captain than Harry,” Ginny explained. “In the middle of the match, he took Peaks’ bat from him to show him how to swing it better and knocked a bludger right into Harry’s head while he was yelling at him to give the bat back and guard the goal posts. He let in so many goals ‘cause he wasn’t paying any attention at all to the quaffle.”

“I don’t remember this match,” Draco said frowning, wracking his brain for the details. He realised he couldn’t ever remember actually *seeing* McLaggan play.

“Er... you missed that match,” Harry said awkwardly. “We ran into each other in the corridor before it remember?”

“*You* almost missed that match too,” Ginny accused Harry. “You were barely on time because of your obsession with this one.”

Now Draco remembered. He’d been using the match as a cover for fixing up the Vanishing Cabinet and had run into Harry on his way. He grimaced.

“I wish I’d been at that match rather than what I was actually doing,” he sighed.

“You didn’t miss a good one,” Harry grumbled. “After McLaggan knocked me unconscious we lost that match three hundred and twenty to sixty.”

“Four of those goals were mine,” Ginny said proudly. “The other two were Demelza.”

“Dean didn’t score at all?” Harry asked.

“Not a one,” she confirmed smirking. “I’m sort of glad eighth years can’t play for the house team. I didn’t fancy having to tell him I didn’t want him as a Chaser. Nigel is much better.”

“Nigel was a second year and couldn’t throw for shit when I was making the team,” Harry reminded her.

“Yeah well when compared to me, Demelza and Katie,” Ginny rolled her eyes. “What’s Katie up to these days anyway?”

“She’s a Quidditch pundit I think she said.”

Katie Bell was another person Draco owed an apology to. He hadn’t yet had the opportunity to talk to her and was starting to think the longer he waited for one, the less sincere it would sound. He wondered about writing her a letter, Harry would know where to address it.

“Anyway our team’s alright this year,” Ginny continued. “Foster’s no match for you as Seeker but who is?”

“Eli’s improved a lot,” Harry argued. “And he’s only a third year, he’s got loads of time to get really good.”

“Helps that he’d got you training him,” she remarked.

“Isn’t that an unfair advantage?” Draco asked. “No one else has an eighth year training members of their team.”

“You’re welcome to train Slytherin’s Seeker if it bothers you,” Ginny said slyly. She was obviously very confident that there was no way Draco could train Slytherin’s Seeker well enough to be much competition.

“Nah, I don’t give a shit about the Slytherin team anymore,” he said dismissively.

“You’re just sour cos you don’t get to play,” she teased.

“We should make a team of eighth years for some friendly matches!” Harry suddenly exclaimed.

“Oh that would be good training!” Ginny enthused. “Who would you put on your team? Obviously you’d play Seeker.”

“Yeah,” Harry nodded eagerly. “And I’d have Draco, Dean, and... ugh, Smith I suppose as Chasers. I guess I’d have to put Ron as Keeper since no one else has Keeper skills and he’s halfway decent when he can get out of his own head. Who would be good Beaters though?”

“Blaise has played Beater before,” Draco offered. “He was a Chaser on Slytherin’s team but he originally tried out for Beater.”

“That’s one Beater short of a full team,” Ginny remarked. “I wonder who else would be good?”

“I wonder if people would be interested,” Harry pondered. “We could hold try outs.”

They reached the landing where they would part ways, Draco and Harry to the Astronomy Tower and Ginny to Gryffindor Tower. They stopped there to continue their conversation.

“I think those scouts would rather see you actually play instead of just training,” Ginny added. “I think this would be a really great idea. You should bring it up to the year after the holidays.”

“Yeah,” Harry murmured, lost in thought. No doubt thinking about who else he would put on the eighth year team.

“Speaking of the holidays,” Ginny continued in a businesslike tone looking at Draco. “You’re staying at the Burrow for the whole thing, no discussion. You and Harry can come on Sunday after you’ve recovered. You can just apparate, Harry knows the way.”

And without allowing room for argument, she pranced away up the corridor in the direction of Gryffindor Tower, her long red hair swinging back and forth behind her.

“You ever notice how Ginny’s a little pushy?” Draco remarked, looping his arm in Harry’s and leading him towards their own common room.

“Oh yeah she’s always been like that,” Harry said idly, still thinking about Quidditch. “Probably from being the youngest and the only girl born in the Weasley family in like fifteen generations. She always had to fight harder to be taken seriously.”

“I often wondered what it would have been like to have a sibling,” Draco said thoughtfully. “But it’s not that common for purebloods to have more than one kid.”

“The Weasleys had seven,” Harry pointed out. “And the Blacks two and three across cousins.”

“I didn’t say it doesn’t happen,” Draco retorted shaking his head. “I said it’s uncommon. And it’s not generally a choice either. Pureblood families are having fewer and fewer children every generation. It’s becoming a bit of an epidemic. Try as they might, they just can’t get pregnant.”

“Weird,” Harry remarked. “I wonder why.”

“It’s not talked about much,” Draco said a bit uncomfortably. “Because it’s somewhat embarrassing. But basically there’s only so many pureblood families in Britain and Ireland. Relative to the rest of the world, we have an extremely small population. So when you have pureblood families insisting on arranging marriages with other pureblood families, you end up with a bit of inbreeding.”

Harry wrinkled his nose in distaste.

“Don’t look like that,” Draco teased. “You and I are distantly related too, you know.”

“What?” Harry demanded looking shocked.

“Merlin! Don’t you have a Black family tree somewhere in that house your godfather left you?” he sighed shaking his head. “I suggest looking more closely at it some time. You’ll find one or two Potters on it.”

“I seriously doubt that,” Harry said bitterly. “Walburga Black made a point to burn off any names of blood-traitors from the tapestry. Sirius isn’t even on it and he’s her son!”

“Well shit,” Draco remarked lamely. “Well, I’ll let you have a look at the one my family keeps sometime. And maybe there’s a Potter one in your family vault at Gringotts that you can peruse. A man should really know where he comes from.”

“There’s only gold in my vault,” Harry said in confusion. “You saw that didn’t you?”

“That’s your trust vault,” Draco informed him. “That’s an account your parents would have set up for you when you were born, and if they had a life insurance policy, it would have paid out to that vault too. And they’d have been mad to not have a life insurance policy knowing they were being hunted.”

“So there’s another vault?” Harry asked. “How have I never heard of it?”

“You wouldn’t have had access to it until you turned seventeen,” he explained. “You’re of age now so you should be able to see what’s in it now. Or you would if you weren’t banned for life from Gringotts.”

Harry furrowed his brow at this. He remained lost in thought as they proceeded up to their dormitory so he could change.

Draco was a nervous wreck that Saturday. He and Harry stayed behind at Hogwarts while nearly everyone was getting ready to leave for Christmas.

Weasley had shot them both with a smug smirk as he marched past them with his trunk.

“I can’t wait to see his face when you two turn up tomorrow,” Ginny said gleefully at Draco’s shoulder. “He reckons Harry’s been uninvited. As if mum would allow you to spend Christmas alone,” she added to Harry while rolling her eyes.

“I’m sorry we’re going to miss the look on his face when he realises Theo is going home with you,” Draco quipped.

Ginny laughed maniacally.

“It’s going to be fucking hilarious!” she crowed. “See you tomorrow!”

Then she hugged them both tightly, planted a kiss on each of their cheeks and skipped off.

“Do you think she might be a bit *too* excited about this?” Harry asked apprehensively.

“A bit,” Draco agreed.

His mind had already shifted back to the full moon coming up that night. Harry was planning to stay with him the whole night and he had been anxious about it for days. Harry was just a little bird, what if Draco’s wolf tried to take a bite out of him? At least Sirius Black and James Potter had been large enough animals that a small nip from Lupin wouldn’t severely injure them. But Harry assured him repeatedly that he’d be fine.

“Wormtail was a rat,” Harry reminded him. “Way smaller than a merlin and Remus never bit him even once. The only reason he ever bit Sirius was because they would play wrestle. I’m not planning on wrestling with you.”

This did little to quell his anxiety.

Harry wrapped his arms around Draco’s waist and slipped his hands up his shirt. The skin to skin contact made him shiver.

“Maybe we can do something to distract you,” Harry suggested seductively, inches from his lips.

“Tempting,” Draco sighed with a small amount of regret. “I’m a bit too anxious right now for that.”

“Then let’s go for a run,” Harry offered instead, putting a little distance between them without breaking contact with this waist.

“A run?” he asked, baffled.

“Yeah, you said before that you get this overwhelming need to run,” Harry remembered.

“Since hardly anyone is left in the castle, no one will notice or care if we go take a run around the Quidditch pitch to get some of that energy out.”

Draco had to admit, he rather liked the idea of running. So after changing into something more suitable, they both went down to the Quidditch pitch for a run.

“I used to be a much faster runner,” Harry panted next to him. “Used to run from Dudley and his little gang of delinquents when we were kids. They never could catch me.”

“I’ve never really run anywhere before,” Draco admitted. While Harry was clearly experiencing exertion, Draco was hardly breaking a sweat. “It’s not exactly a dignified way of getting around.”

“What posh nonsense!” Harry snorted.

Draco agreed. Running felt great! He didn't know if it was something he would have liked if he wasn't a werewolf but he certainly liked it now.

"One time," Harry continued in a somewhat reminiscent tone that was hampered by breathlessness. "I was running from Dudley and I tried to hide behind these rubbish bins that were out back of my school's kitchens and I have no idea what I did or how I did it, but when I went to leap behind the bins, I somehow ended up on the roof of the school!"

"How did you manage that?" Draco asked in amazement.

"No idea," Harry panted. "I assume I flew but no one saw. I got a note home from the headmaster saying I'd been climbing school buildings."

Draco snickered.

"I bet your aunt and uncle loved that!"

After awhile, Harry had to take a break from running to catch his breath but told Draco to carry on. Without having to keep pace with Harry, Draco picked up the speed and ran full out, pushing to try and tire himself out. After he made another lap of the pitch, Harry rejoined him but this time flew ahead of him in his merlin form.

Harry was an extremely fast flier and they were soon racing around the pitch.

Eventually they had to call an end to their run as the moon would be rising very early that evening. At around three in the afternoon they called an end to their race only for Draco to challenge Harry to a race back to their dormitory.

By the time Draco got back to their dorm, Harry was already there lounging in the desk chair and munching on a danish.

"Where did you get that?" Draco huffed, finally out of breath.

"Kitchens," Harry answered simply.

"You stopped for a snack and still made it before me?" he asked incredulously.

"Well yeah," Harry laughed. "I just flew up to the window."

At this he gestured to the open window behind him.

"That's cheating," Draco pouted.

"You said 'race you to the dorm'," he argued. "You didn't say I had to use the corridors to get here."

"That's Slytherin logic," Draco accused.

"I guess you've rubbed off on me," Harry said unabashed.

“You would have made a great Slytherin,” Draco remarked, undressing in preparation for the change.

“You’re not the first to tell me that,” Harry said finishing off the danish. “Would have made my life more difficult though, I bet.”

“Probably,” Draco conceded.

Around twenty minutes later, three house elves came up to remove all of the furniture from the room and Draco and Harry had to sit on the stone floor to wait out the rest of the time before the moon rose.

“Last chance to change your mind about staying,” Draco warned. “Just before moonrise, both the door and window seal shut and you won’t be able to get out. You’ll be trapped in here with me.”

“I’ll be fine,” Harry assured him for the thousandth time.

His anxiety climbed the closer to moonrise they got. Eventually it became too much and he was just about to beg Harry to leave when there was a sudden slamming sound from the window which had abruptly swung shut. Harry jumped a foot at the noise and stood to his feet.

The stones around the door and window all started to shift until both entrances to the room were completely sealed, no sign or seam of where they used to be. It was too late to back out now.

“It’s going to be fine,” Harry assured him.

Draco didn’t have a chance to reply because at that very moment the change began.

It started, as it always did, with a burning in his chest and he doubled over in pain. He glanced up at Harry and saw worry and sadness in his eyes. Draco had been so preoccupied with his anxiety over Harry being trapped in a small room with a werewolf that he hadn’t stopped to consider that he’d have to witness how much the transformation would hurt him.

He felt all of his bones breaking at once and even though he tried not to, he let out a blood curdling scream of agony which turned into a howl halfway through. In the last moments of his dimming consciousness before the wolf took over, Draco could see Harry’s eyes fill with tears before he transformed into a merlin and took flight to roost in the rafters.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter is the highly anticipated start of the Christmas holidays!

Chapter 35: The Burrow

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

When Draco returned to consciousness it was morning. He was used to waking up naked and freezing on the stone floor the mornings after full moons but something was different this time. He blinked his eyes open and took stock of his surroundings.

The stone was soft under him like someone had cast a cushioning charm on it, he had a blanket over him and something warm wrapped around him. He looked down to find Harry in his usual sleeping position, dressed in only his pants, legs tangled with his own and face resting on Draco's chest, arms flung around his midsection.

Looking around, Draco noticed a small pile of clothes folded neatly on the desk chair nearby, on top of which was Harry's glasses and wand. It looked like the house elves had returned his furniture sometime while he was asleep and Harry must have covered them with the blanket from the bed.

His movement must have woken Harry because he began to stir. As he usually did upon waking up, he snuggled his face into Draco's chest and tightened his arms around his middle.

"Good morning, love," Draco rasped.

"Hmmm too early..." Harry mumbled into his chest.

Draco glanced up to the window to see sunlight streaming in. It had to be nearly nine thirty.

"The sun's up," Draco informed him.

"So?" Harry continued to grumble, turning his face away from the light.

"So it's the middle of winter, which means if the sun's up it's not early."

"Uuuugh," he groaned and turned over onto his back, untangling himself from Draco.

"When did you go to sleep?" Draco asked.

"Whatever time the moon set and you changed back," Harry mumbled, covering his eyes from the sun with his arm.

"You didn't go to sleep until nearly five in the morning?"

"Kinda hard to sleep with you leaping around this place like you're trying to be an olympic gymnast," Harry accused.

"I didn't hurt you did I?" Draco asked nervously. He sat up and pulled the blanket away to examine him for injuries.

“I’m fine,” Harry assured him and sat up, rubbing sleep out of his eyes. “My arms are really sore though.”

“Your arms?” Draco asked in concern.

“From flying half the night,” he explained, stretching his arms overhead and wincing.

That was a good idea. Draco started his own stretching routine, beginning at his ankles and wrists and working towards his core, before standing and trying to touch his toes.

“Do you do that after every full moon?” Harry asked curiously, copying Draco’s arm stretches.

“Yeah,” he confirmed. “I always wake up stiff the next morning and stretching helps me not feel rotten for the following week. Though I’m not as stiff as I usually am.”

That wasn’t the only thing that was different this morning. He didn’t seem to have any obvious injuries and his nails weren’t cracked and bleeding from clawing at the walls like they usually were. In fact, his nails weren’t damaged at all.

“Did you heal my injuries before going to sleep?” Draco asked, perplexed.

“You didn’t have any injuries,” Harry informed him, slowly beginning to get dressed after finding his glasses.

Strange. He’d never woken up from a full moon without injuries except for the months that Snape had brewed wolfsbane potion for him.

“Weird,” he murmured.

“S’not that odd,” Harry shrugged. “Remus said that he believed he’d injure himself because werewolves don’t cope in captivity. But when my dad and Sirius were with him he didn’t hurt himself as much or even ever.”

“You’re saying because you kept me company, I didn’t feel inclined to hurt myself?”

“That *is* the reason I became an animagus,” Harry said, looking at him like he thought he was a bit thick. “What, did you think I did this to see a werewolf up close? ‘Cause I’ve already done that and I wasn’t super keen for a repeat experience.”

“Seeing me transform must have been really horrible,” Draco said with a grimace. Of course Harry didn’t want to witness that, it was horribly grotesque.

“I mean it wasn’t fun seeing you in so much pain,” Harry admitted with a pained expression. “But I was talking about Remus in third year. I’d only just learned about an hour or two beforehand that he was a werewolf and then we realised in all the excitement of finding out that Wormtail wasn’t dead and Sirius wasn’t a murderer, we’d all forgotten that he’d not had his potion that night and well... that was terrifying,” he finished lamely.

“A lot of shit you’re involved in is terrifying,” Draco said dryly.

Harry snorted and continued dressing without comment.

Draco also got dressed and after packing their trunks for the holidays, started heading down. They stopped in the kitchens for a late breakfast and Harry nearly fell asleep in his coffee while Draco devoured a full English breakfast, which had become his favourite thing to eat after a full moon ever since Harry had brought him breakfast the first time.

“Are you going to be okay to apparate us to the Burrow?” Draco asked. “I don’t fancy getting splinched because you need more sleep.”

“I’ll be fine,” Harry assured him through a huge yawn. “I’ve apparated in a worse state than this.”

“I don’t think I want to know,” Draco said wryly. “Your stories aren’t for the faint of heart.”

Harry chuckled sleepily at that.

He needn’t have worried about Harry apparating them. They arrived to the Burrow in one piece just before eleven o’clock alongside their trunks. Harry had instructed the two owls he was gifting the Weasley parents and Ginny to come along in their own time and planned to present them to their recipients on Christmas Day.

Harry led the way up the lane from the apparition point and when they rounded a bend around a stand of trees, Draco got his very first look at the Weasleys’ home.

It looked like someone had stacked three or four bungalows haphazardly on top of each other and held them together with magic. The garden surrounding the house was overgrown and turning colour with the changing season and Draco could see several gnomes among the browning foliage. Draco couldn’t stop himself from staring at the bizarre structure.

“I know it’s not what you’re used to...” Harry said nervously.

Harry was worried Draco wouldn’t like it. He shouldn’t be surprised, Draco had shit all over the Weasleys’ living situation for years. If he was being honest, he’d pictured a very different sort of house. Something slightly more ordinary and more cottage-like. But he didn’t hate the house, it was weird but fascinating.

“It’s so...” he searched for the right word. “Excentric.”

Harry snorted.

“It is that yeah,” he agreed, a small smile on his face. “I love it!”

Draco grinned at that. If Harry loved it, then that’s all he really cared about.

He tried to look at the Burrow the way twelve-year-old Harry must have. He'd seen the sort of neighbourhood Harry had grown up in; rows and rows of identical cookie-cutter houses with perfectly manicured lawns and carefully sculpted shrubbery. Coming to the wizarding world must have been a massive culture shock. The Burrow wasn't the typical wizarding home but it would have been the first one Harry had ever seen. Might he have imagined all wizarding homes to be this bizarre? It must have felt like he'd walked into a story book.

He looked again at the house and imagined that he'd stepped into a fantasy world vastly different from the one he'd grown up in. In that light, the slightly teetering house with haphazard levels held up by magic and surrounded by an overgrown garden teeming with magical creatures suddenly became fantastical and delightful. A strange sort of excitement began to rise inside of him.

"It's brilliant," he breathed finally.

Harry's smile was blinding.

As they approached the house, Draco noticed movement in the front window and recognised Molly Weasley peering out at them. Their arrival had been observed. He saw her call out to someone else in the house and a moment later Ginny came running out, her face bright with mischief.

"You're way later than I was expecting," she greeted them.

"Harry had a difficult time getting out of bed," Draco tattled. Harry stuck his tongue out at him in response.

"Not you?" Ginny asked a teasing lilt to her voice. "I would have thought waking up after a full moon would have been difficult for the one of the two of you who's a werewolf and not the one who's a *bird*."

"Harry's not really a morning person," Draco told her.

"I wake up in the morning just fine, thank you very much," Harry snarked. "But you try being awake after only four hours of sleep after someone has been doing backflips off the walls all night."

Ginny gave Draco a quizzical look.

"Don't ask me," he shrugged. "The whole night's a blackout. Don't remember a thing."

"I think your wolf was excited to have a playmate," Harry explained. "You kept running around the room and then literally bouncing off the walls."

Ginny snickered and Draco could only give a bemused grin.

"Sorry I kept you up all night," he smirked.

"I'll live," Harry said dismissively. He turned to Ginny. "Ron know we're coming yet?"

“Not yet,” she said with an unsettling grin. “You missed the most gormless look he’s ever had when Theo came with us, though. It was hilarious!”

Draco bit his tongue to refrain from saying something mean about how high the bar was set for Weasley’s gormless face. He was sure it was okay for Ginny to be mean to her brother but it probably wouldn’t endear him to her family if he followed suit. Since the ferret incident, he’d adopted a policy of not saying anything at all if he had nothing nice to say about Weasley and it had served him well so far.

She led them into the house and they were immediately met by her mother.

“Harry!” Mrs Weasley said delightedly, engulfing Harry in a motherly hug. “Ginny said you’d be a day behind the others, is everything okay?”

“I told you, mum,” Ginny interrupted in a weirdly scolding tone. “It’s personal. They’re fine.”

“You look a bit peaky, dear,” Mrs Weasley tutted, looking Harry over. “Have you eaten?”

“I just didn’t sleep that well,” Harry said self-consciously. “I’m fine, Molly, seriously.”

“We had breakfast at Hogwarts,” Draco added awkwardly.

Mrs Weasley turned to him and gave him a soft smile.

“And you’re Draco,” she said warmly. “It’s lovely to meet you properly, dear.”

And to Draco’s shock, he was suddenly enveloped in a hug similar to the one she’d given Harry. Draco’s eyes went wide in alarm and he shot a pleading look at Ginny over her mother’s shoulder.

“Mum’s a hugger,” Ginny said with a shrug and a smirk that said “suck it up”.

Mrs Weasley let him go finally and stood back to give him a proper look. He shifted uncomfortably under her scrutiny. This woman was like a mother to Harry, so naturally he wanted her to like him. This was also the woman who killed his aunt in the most heated duel Draco had ever seen. This was not a woman to be trifled with.

Whatever she saw, she seemed to be satisfied because she broke into a bright smile and clapped her hands together.

“Harry, dear, you and Draco will be staying in the twins’ old room so why don’t you show him where that is. Ron, George and Theodore are down playing Quidditch I think, if you’re interested in joining them.”

“I’ll grab my broomstick and wait for you in the garden,” Ginny called, already headed out the door.

Harry led Draco through the house which, while somewhat cramped, had a warm and comforting feel to it. It was much more welcoming than his cold and austere manor with its

horrid memories, its walls soaked with pain and misery. It felt as though no harm would ever come to a person in this house.

They passed through a lounge stuffed full of couches and armchairs and there was barely enough room for a single person to navigate between them. Over the fireplace in the centre of the room was a clock which showed not the time but hands depicting members of the family and their various locations. Draco noted there was even a hand labelled "Harry". The Weasleys definitely considered Harry one of them. The hands labelled for Ginny, Ron, George, Molly, and Harry were on "Home". The hands for Arthur, Percy, and Bill were on "Work", the hand labelled "Charlie" was pointing at "Travelling" and one hand that bore the name "Fred" was mounted horizontally below the clock on the wall.

"Does your family have a clock like that?" Harry asked, noticing him examining it.

"No," Draco answered. "Clocks like these are pretty rare. I'd guess it's been in the family several generations."

Harry continued to lead him on and they proceeded up a narrow and slightly winding staircase. At about what Draco guessed was the middle of the house, Harry stopped and opened a door. The room was small, not much bigger than his dorm at Hogwarts, and there was a single bed on either side of the room with a nightstand between them.

Harry exchanged a look with Draco and smirked before holding his hand out into the room. The two beds and night stand rearranged themselves so that the beds were together and the night stand was to one side. It made the room feel larger and more open. Harry nodded, apparently satisfied with his handiwork and finally entered the room, levitating both of their trunks in behind him. He set both trunks side by side on the wall opposite the beds and immediately opened his and started rummaging around inside.

"Fancy some Quidditch?" Harry asked, withdrawing his Firebolt.

"Isn't there a muggle village over those hills?" Draco asked, pointing to the hills visible from the window. He could see smoke from several chimneys floating away over the hills, the houses they belonged to just out of sight.

"Yeah, but we're completely hidden by the treeline and there's muggle repelling charms all over the property," he explained. "We just can't fly too high and we can only play with a quaffle in case a bludger or snitch go flying off on their own."

So Draco retrieved his Nimbus 2001 from his trunk which he'd not had an opportunity to ride all term. It would be great to go flying again.

After they retrieved their broomsticks and put on jumpers against the cold, they hurried back through the house to meet Ginny in the garden.

"Took you two long enough!" she complained when they arrived.

"We couldn't have been more than a minute or two, Gin," Harry said, rolling his eyes in exasperation.

“Whatever, come on!” she insisted and hurriedly led them through a small grove of trees at the edge of the garden.

“She’s definitely too excited,” Draco remarked and Harry snorted.

Ginny reached the small pitch ahead of them and called out to the three men flying overhead.

“Hey boys,” she called brightly. “Look who’s just arrived.”

Draco saw George whip his head around and grin in delight at seeing them before immediately turning his attention to his brother to see how he’d react. Said brother turned to look over his shoulder to see what his sister was talking about. His face went from curious to scowling in an instant.

“What’s *he* doing here?” Ron snapped, glaring daggers at Draco.

“Mum invited him,” Ginny explained gleefully.

“Bollocks!” he denied, swinging his broomstick around and making beeline for the ground so he could dramatically stomp over to them.

George and Theo exchanged a look and followed after him.

“Draco!” George called jovially. “I thought you said you were only coming Christmas Day?”

“Yeah well Ginny was persuasive,” Draco snorted.

“She demanded you come and didn’t take no for an answer didn’t she?” he asked snickering, already knowing he was right.

Draco was about to agree that that was exactly what had happened when Ron cut in again.

“Hello?” he barked. “What’s wrong with this picture? Why are you here, Malfoy?”

“Your mother invited me,” Draco said slowly and carefully enunciating each word.

“Well *I* don’t want you here,” he snapped.

Draco rolled his eyes.

“Well that’s not really your call, Ron,” Harry said in exasperation.

“It’s *my* home!” Ron pointed out aggressively. “And I don’t really want *you* here either.”

“Actually it’s mum and dad’s home,” George said idly. “You want to have a say in who comes over, move out and you can invite or not invite anyone you like. And Harry’s always welcome here, it’s his home as much as it is ours.”

“Harry has his *own* place,” Ron reminded his brother angrily. He rounded back on Harry. “Why don’t you take Malfoy there and leave us alone. And take Nott with you too.”

“What did I do?” Theo asked, affronted.

“Oh that’s cheerful,” Ginny said sarcastically. “Christmas at Grimmauld Place. Those three and Kreacher with Old Walburga Black screaming about half-bloods and blood-traitors.”

George snickered.

“I thought we were getting on,” Theo pretended to pout, making George snicker some more while patting him jovially on the shoulder.

“Look, Ron,” Harry said impatiently. “Your mum invited us, we’re staying, and if you have a problem with it, I suggest you take it up with her. But you and I both know that’s not going to get you anywhere and you’ll just end up de-gnoming the garden.”

Draco was surprised at Harry’s tone. He’d so far been avoiding conflict with his former best friend and had not been inclined to have a proper argument. Draco wasn’t sure if it was because he was at home that it made him more comfortable snapping back at him or if he’d just finally had enough. Either way, Draco was really proud of him for finally standing up for himself.

Ron, for his part, didn’t seem to have a response to that. He only seethed, angrily working his jaw like he was struggling to come up with something to say but coming up blank. Eventually he huffed furiously, shouldered his broomstick and stormed off back towards the house.

“Well that was fun,” Ginny quipped.

George snorted.

“You have a strange idea of fun, Gin,” Harry sighed. “This is going to be a long two weeks.”

“He’ll get over it,” Ginny said dismissively, picking up their discarded quaffle.

“Or he’ll spend the whole holiday moping in his room,” George suggested. “I’m beginning to regret agreeing to bunk with him.”

“Maybe you can trade with Charlie before he gets here and realises what a foul mood Ron’s in,” Ginny offered, smirking. She held up the quaffle. “We playing Quidditch or what?”

“Technically it’s not Quidditch,” Theo pointed out. “Without the other balls and positions it’s just football on broomsticks.”

“Whatever,” she said dismissively. “Who wants to play flying football, then?”

They ended up having a great time playing what they now affectionately called “flying football”. Draco and Ginny were clearly the superior Chasers in the group and with the odd number they got a little unconventional with positions. Eventually Ginny declared that Draco had an unfair advantage with the superior broom so he traded with George who had the same model as Ginny who was flying on Fred’s old broom. Harry and Theo played Keepers and George rocketed around like a human bludger to try and get in both Draco and Ginny’s way.

Ginny and Theo eventually won due to a combination of Ginny's excellence as a Chaser and Harry's abysmal Keeping. George just had a grand time flying on Draco's broom.

"Next time we play flying football Harry's on your team," Draco told Ginny on their way back to the house.

"Hey!" Harry exclaimed.

"Sorry, love," Draco said grinning. "It's only fair. You're a rotten Keeper and Ginny's a brilliant Chaser. We have to even it out somehow."

Harry stuck his tongue out at him and Draco slung his arm around his boyfriend's waist and pulled him in range for a swift kiss to appease him.

"You two are so cute it's fucking sickening," George remarked.

"You don't have to share a common room with them," Theo told him with a faint grimace. "You'd think they were still glued together with the way they're practically on top of one another all the time."

"Not *practically*," Ginny said teasingly. "Draco's *literally* on top of Harry every chance they get aren't you?"

"Ginny, don't you dare," Harry said threateningly.

"Oh Ginny, do please enlighten us," George instigated grinning broadly.

"Ginny," Harry warned.

"Harry's a screamer," she stated cheerfully, grinning challengingly at Harry. "And a bottom."

"How did you know *that*?" Harry squeaked, eyes wide.

Draco just sighed in exasperation as a gleeful smile spread across her face. Harry fell for the same trick Draco had. This girl should have been in Slytherin.

"I didn't," she beamed. "But *now* I do."

"I'm gonna kick your arse," Harry said flatly.

"Gonna have to catch me first!" she crowed and ran off towards the house laughing madly.

Harry just let her run.

"Aren't you gonna chase her?" Theo asked.

"I'm giving her a few seconds headstart," Harry said, a sly smirk spreading on his face. "Otherwise it just wouldn't be fair."

He calmly handed Draco his Firebolt, gave him a swift kiss, then turned and started running towards the house, transforming into a merlin and taking flight mid-stride.

Theo and Draco just laughed at their antics while George stared agape.

“Since when is Harry an animagus?” George demanded, awestruck.

“Since about three weeks ago,” Theo chuckled.

“That’s incredible! Wonder what made him decide to do that,” George wondered aloud, eyes still wide in amazement.

“I heard his dad was one,” Theo shrugged. “Maybe that’s it.”

George made a noise of thoughtful agreement.

“Hey, Theo,” Draco said casually, suddenly deciding something. “Do you think you could give me a moment alone with George?”

Theo looked at him critically for a second before apparently deciding whatever it was wasn’t his business. He shrugged and continued on back to the house while Draco and George hung back. Once he was out of earshot, George turned to Draco expectantly.

“What’s up?” he asked suspiciously.

“I’m a werewolf,” he blurted before he could talk himself out of saying it.

George’s eyebrows shot up in surprise and his mouth fell open to say something but Draco continued before he could.

“That’s why Harry became an animagus,” he explained in a rush. “The same reason his father and godfather did for Lupin. It’s also why we were a day late for Christmas break; last night was a full moon.”

Draco could feel his pulse in his throat and his hands trembled. His adrenalin was racing like he was preparing to run or fight.

“Okay...” George said finally, looking baffled. “Why have you told me this?”

“Because Harry trusts you,” he answered tremulously. “And I’ve been trying to learn to trust people too. Which is not easy to do when you’re a werewolf, believe me. But Ginny knows now and it went really well even though she takes the piss about it because I acted like an idiot when she figured it out.

“And when we were in your shop and Harry made that really unsubtle suggestion that you hire me as your in-house potioneer, I had asked him what I was to do about my... condition. And he said I should just tell you. So now I’ve done that.”

“Who else knows?” George asked hesitantly.

“Hermione, my parents, McGonagall, and Madam Pomfrey,” Draco listed.

“And Ginny and Harry,” he clarified.

“And now you,” Draco sighed. “Anyone else who knew is dead now.”

“Dead?” George asked warily.

Draco nodded.

“The Carrows, Bellatrix, Snape, Greyback, and... *him*,” he said the last in a significant tone, still unable to say his name.

“*Fuck*,” George breathed.

“Look, I’m not telling you all this to illicit sympathy,” Draco continued. “I just think that if you’re gonna consider hiring me after graduation, you should have all the facts.”

“I appreciate that,” George said slowly. “But it doesn’t have any bearing on my decision. All I care about is whether or not I can trust you.”

Draco nodded in understanding.

“Harry must really care about you to do all this,” George commented. “It’s not easy to become an animagus. Fred and I looked into it years ago but between the complexity, how long it would take, and how disastrously wrong it could go, we decided our time was better spent elsewhere.”

“He loves me,” Draco agreed, still always feeling a bit awestruck anytime he thought about it. “And I love him. So fucking much it hurts sometimes.”

“Ron reckons you’re playing him,” George informed him cautiously. “That you’ve got some angle. He thinks you’re using Harry to improve your reputation.”

Draco sighed.

“That’s because Ron won’t listen to Harry when he talks,” he said frustratedly. “I can prove it, by the way. That I really do love him.”

“How do you prove something like that?” George asked skeptically.

Draco held up one finger for a moment of patience. Then shouldered both brooms on one side and took out his wand, turned away from George so he was facing empty space, and closed his eyes to think of something happy. His mind filled with Harry’s beaming face as he declared “you love me!”

“*Expecto Patronum!*” he cast and a shining silver merlin soared out of his wand.

The patronus wheeled around them briefly before alighting weightlessly on Draco’s left shoulder. George never took his eyes off it for an instant.

“You probably didn’t get a good look at Harry’s animagus form, but they’re identical,” Draco informed him. “My patronus has been this form since before Harry became one. I never could cast one before this past September so I don’t know if it was ever a different animal.”

“*Merlin’s pants!*” George exclaimed softly. “You don’t just love him, you *love love* him!”

“Yeah...” Draco sighed tenderly, then fixed his face to something more serious. “So Ron doesn’t know what he’s talking about, and if he’d just *listen* he’d know better.”

“Yeah well my little brother can be a bit stubborn,” George frowned. “Have you tried showing him your patronus?”

“It’s not a secret,” Draco said impatiently. “We have Defence Against the Dark Arts together – not to mention every other class – our whole year knows what my patronus looks like. And Harry’s registered; his animagus form isn’t a secret either. Literally *everyone* knows!”

“Well then he’s being an idiot,” George said in resignation.

“You said it, not me,” Draco agreed. “Last time I insulted his intelligence, he tried to turn me into a ferret again. Would have succeeded too if not for Harry’s shield charm.”

“So you’ve taken to not insulting him to avoid a repeat performance?”

“Not out loud anyway,” Draco smirked. “I’ve decided it’s not going to endear me to your family to say the things I’m thinking about your brother out loud.”

George snickered.

“Well *I’m* allowed to call my brother an idiot when he’s being one,” he said grinning.

“Not around your mother though, right?” Draco said slyly.

George laughed in agreement and clapped Draco on the shoulder, and they finally started making their way back to the house.

All in all, Draco thought this conversation had gone extremely well. He couldn’t help but feel he’d made an ally in George Weasley. Maybe Ron’s big brother could convince him to pull his head out of his arse and, maybe not make up with Harry, but finally accept that Draco was here to stay and that he had no ulterior motives.

Chapter End Notes

The long awaited Christmas holiday is here. I hope it makes sense why I've started to refer to Ron by his first name in this chapter. With the presence of seven other Weasleys, calling him by his surname could get confusing. And even Draco wouldn't refer to Ron as "Weasley" to George who by all accounts is also "Weasley".

Chapter 36: Muggle Things

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Life at the Burrow was a very different experience than Draco had ever had. Every meal was filled with loud chatter and the occasional mischief from either Ginny or George. When left to their own devices, the younger members of their group usually decided to play flying football, a phrase which had initially confused Charlie who'd shown up around dinner time the same day Harry and Draco had.

Charlie had flat out refused to switch rooms with George, stating that if George wanted it, there was obviously some very good reason he shouldn't accept. Ron had taken enormous offence at his brothers not wanting to share a room with him and pitched a fit about it, which caused Theo to offer to switch with George. This Ron refused more adamantly than Charlie had and Theo pretended to be offended, but Draco knew he'd only offered because he knew Ron would never agree.

It was the most chaotic house he'd ever set foot in and, despite being warned by both Harry and Hermione, he believed they had understated things a bit.

Two days into the holiday, Mr Weasley turned up with Percy, carrying a massive fir tree which required much rearranging of the already cramped sitting room to fit it.

The two of them were just discussing possibly temporarily extending the room into the garden when a bizarre chiming sound started emanating from the walls.

"Oh that'll be the telephone," Mr Weasley said, still holding up the tree. "Harry would you mind going and answering it?"

"Sure, Arthur," Harry said easily. "It's probably Hermione anyway, I don't know who else would be ringing."

"You have a telephone?" Theo asked excitedly.

"Oh yeah, come see," Harry said brightly.

Curious and also not wanting to be present for whatever disaster would occur in the sitting room from stretching out the walls, Draco also tagged along.

The telephone was located out in the small garage behind the house which Draco discovered was enchanted to be larger on the inside and had been arranged into some kind of workshop filled with muggle things. Draco didn't have the vocabulary to name the majority of the objects he could see, many of which were in various states of having been taken apart, bits of wire and material that Draco had recently learned was called "plastic" littered every surface. On a small table by the door was a telephone ringing incessantly.

Harry picked up the receiver and put it to his ear.

“Hello?” he answered and paused for reply then grinned. “Hi Hermione! I knew it had to be you calling. Hang on while I figure out the speakerphone, Draco and Theo are here too.”

He picked up a device from under the small table and fiddled with it for a second then placed the receiver on a cradle on the second device and spoke into the grating on the front.

“There, can you hear me?” he asked.

“It’s a bit static-y but yes I can hear you,” Hermione’s voice came from the device, sounding like she was crinkling a paper bag while she spoke.

“Merlin’s tits, that’s brilliant!” Theo exclaimed.

“Hello to you too, Theo,” Hermione said dryly.

“Sorry, it’s just that I’ve seen a speakerphone before and they don’t look like this,” he said brightly. “This looks like Mr Weasley made it himself! That man is a genius!”

“Oh really?” she said interestedly. “I’ll have to have a look when I come round. I just wanted to ring and make sure you all were doing okay there and that Ron wasn’t giving you a hard time.”

“Well he is doing that, yes,” Draco said idly. “But we’ve been finding ways to avoid him.”

“Not easy to do in a house like this, I assure you,” Theo added. “But he doesn’t seem to have as big a problem with me as he has with Draco and Harry.”

“He’s been spending most of his time in his room,” Harry informed her. “We’ve mostly been spending time with George and Ginny.”

“That’s too bad,” Hermione sighed. “I rather hoped he’d defrost a bit with the forced proximity.”

“Not much hope in that,” Harry said. “More likely we’ll all end up in the garden pulling weeds for getting into a fight.”

“Well there’s still nearly two weeks of holiday left,” she said optimistically. “He could come around?”

“My bet is it’s only gonna get worse,” Theo said cynically.

Theo had no idea how right he would turn out to be, though not straight away.

In the next three days leading up to Christmas they continued to hang out, relax, or play flying football. Theo ended up spending a lot of time in the shed with Mr Weasley who was delighted to show Theo what he'd been tinkering on. Which, with the addition of Charlie to their matches, left them at an odd number again.

"If Ron would relax a bit, he could join us and even out the teams," Charlie said on Christmas Eve after they had wrapped up another match.

"Maybe best he doesn't," George scoffed. "I think if he and Draco have to spend too much time close together, someone's getting hurt."

"Or turned into a ferret again," Ginny quipped.

Draco scowled at her for that.

"I meant him!" she exclaimed defensively. "Though if you're not quick enough with a shield charm..."

"Merlin! It's too bad I wasn't there to see that!" George exclaimed.

"Well don't get any ideas about egging him on to make it happen again," Draco grumbled.

"Aw come on, you're the king of egging Ron on," George teased.

"Not anymore," Draco said flatly. "I'm not that person anymore and I'm not trying to give him more excuses to hate me."

"Why do you care if he hates you?" Ginny asked. "You never did before."

"Yeah well things change," Draco said carefully. "You all are Harry's family, you matter to him, so you matter to me. I can't help but worry that this shit with Ron could end up driving a wedge either between Harry and me or between all of you and him. Either way I don't want that. I don't expect us to be friends, but I'd rather like for him to finally accept that I love Harry more than anything in the world and I'm staying as long as he'll let me."

He turned to Harry who had been curiously silent the whole exchange. All three Weasleys turned to Harry to see what his response would be.

There were unshed tears in his eyes and he was looking at Draco with a strange sort of intensity. He took three quick strides towards him, grabbed a fistfull of his jumper and slammed their lips together.

Draco responded immediately, dropping his broomstick carelessly on the ground and bringing his arms around to hold Harry tightly to his chest and clutched at the back of his jumper.

Someone wolf-whistled – probably George – and they broke apart, blushing.

"I'm gonna work it out with Ron," Harry said breathlessly.

“What?” Draco was having a difficult time piecing his brain back together after that kiss.

“This has all gone on too long already,” Harry explained, turning back to talk to all of them at once. “I’m gonna make Ron see sense. He wouldn’t let me talk the last time, well this time I’m not going to let him cut me off. He’s going to listen this time.”

“You want some backup?” Ginny offered.

“Yeah we’re behind you, mate,” George agreed.

“I don’t want it to look like we’re ganging up on him,” Harry said shaking his head. “But thanks for the support.”

So Harry went back to the house without them.

“Five galleons says we get back to the house and Harry and Ron are de-gnoming the garden,” George quipped.

“Why would they be de-gnoming the garden?” Draco asked.

“Because that’s mum’s favourite way to punish us when we’ve misbehaved,” Ginny said grinning. “Any takers it comes to a duel?”

“Knowing Harry, it’ll more likely be fisticuffs,” George snickered.

“That won’t make things better,” Charlie sighed.

“Regardless, I’m not making bets on my boyfriend,” Draco drawled.

“I will!” Ginny chirped. “Five galleons you said? My bet is Ron’s gonna lock himself in his room and refuse to talk at all.”

“Harry’s pretty good at getting what he wants,” George reasoned. “You’re on.”

Ginny and George shook hands on the bet, and Charlie exchanged an exasperated eye roll with Draco who smirked at the exchange.

After what the four of them determined was enough time for Harry and Ron to have an argument and (hopefully) resolve it, they returned to the house. Only for them to run into Harry on his way back to them in a towering fury.

“Oh shit,” George exclaimed faintly at the look on Harry’s face.

“What happened?” Ginny demanded.

“Bill’s here,” Harry said shortly.

“And how has that made you this angry?” Charlie asked warily.

“Because when I got to the house, Ron was already talking to him and saying how he thinks I’m under some kind of enchantment and that’s why I’ve ditched him and started going out

with Draco!” he exploded.

“He believes that rubbish the Prophet’s been printing?” George asked, outraged.

“He probably has all this time!”

“If he genuinely believed that, then he’s been a terribly rotten friend,” Ginny growled.

“Bill didn’t believe him though, right?” Charlie pressed.

“I don’t know,” Harry sighed, defeated. All of the fight left him in an instant. “I left without talking to either of them after Ron asked Bill to check me for enchantments. They didn’t see me.”

“You should let him check you,” Draco said, his mind racing.

“What?” Harry asked incredulously, staring at Draco like he’d lost his mind.

“Think about it,” Draco reasoned. “If we just humour Ron and let Bill check you for enchantments or love potions or whatever else he thinks might be influencing you, he’ll prove once and for all that this is real. Bill’s a highly respected curse breaker, right? His assessment has to count pretty highly.”

“I shouldn’t have to prove shit!” Harry argued angrily.

“*You* don’t,” Draco assured him. “I *do*.”

“You don’t have to prove shit either,” Harry grumbled.

“That’s a little naïve, Harry,” George said gently.

Eventually they were able to convince Harry to let Bill check him for curses in order to finally settle the debate once and for all, and all five of them returned to the house.

Draco had been pretty interested to meet Bill since the holidays had started. He’d been very curious for months what the man looked like to have Harry drooling over him so noticeably for an entire summer. As it turned out, he was very fit indeed. Draco could clearly see what Harry had found so attractive about Bill Weasley; he was tall, muscular, tan, roguish, and with his long hair and massive scar running the length of the left side of his face and down his neck, he looked incredibly badass. If Draco wasn’t head over heels for Harry, he might find himself drooling over the man too.

Bill’s wife was even more beautiful than he was and it took a moment before he realised he knew her.

“Wait, you’re Fleur Delacour,” Draco said in surprise.

“Actually, eet eez Fleur Weasley now,” she corrected, smiling a dazzling veela smile. “I know you as well. You must forgive me, I cannot remember your name.”

“Draco Malfoy,” he introduced himself, holding out a hand to shake. *“Enchanté.”*

“Ah, vous êtes français!” she exclaimed delightedly, shaking his hand.

“Oui, un peut. Mon père est français et ma mère est anglaise,” he explained.

“You ‘ave very leettle accent,” she complemented, returning to English so as to not be rude to the others in the room.

“Thank you, yours is very good too,” he returned.

“I didn’t know you spoke French, Draco,” Mrs Weasley said curiously.

“Oh yes, I’ve had French tutors since I could talk,” he said idly. “My father’s side of the family came over from France during the Norman Conquest in the service of William the Conqueror. Mother thought it would be proper to be able to speak the language of my ancestors. She’s always believed it important to know where one comes from.”

“William the Conqueror?” Harry asked. “As in King William the first? Your family served a muggle king?”

“Oh yes,” Draco confirmed. “Quite loyally too. Though he probably had no idea that many of his soldiers and knights were in fact wizards. And as reward for my many times great grandfather’s role in assisting the Norman king in winning the throne, our family was given the land our manor now sits on.”

“Hermione would love this,” Harry said in amazement. “Your family played a pivotal role in the creation of what we now know as Britain!”

Draco shrugged.

“I think you’ll find if you go back far enough, that can be said of virtually anyone. History always looks more significant when you’re looking backwards.”

It wasn’t until after supper that Harry was able to pull Bill aside. Draco felt it would be best not to involve himself in their conversation, lest Ron think he was doing something to throw off the tests.

Speaking of Ron, the youngest Weasley brother would not take his eyes off Draco since Bill and Fleur had arrived. Even when Theo convinced Draco to play a game of Exploding Snap with him. Draco tried to ignore the attention but it was difficult as it felt like his eyes were burning a hole into the side of Draco’s head.

“If looks could kill, mate,” Theo murmured over their game. He too had noticed Ron’s unusual amount of attention.

“Oh I’d have been dead years ago,” Draco said carelessly. “I’m trying to employ Harry’s method of pretending it isn’t happening.”

“Harry’s rubbish at that though,” Theo pointed out. “He always snaps eventually when he gets too fed up and angry.”

“True, but I have rather a lot better control over my emotions than he does. And certainly more patience than Weasley.”

And, as he expected, Ron eventually lost his patience with waiting for Draco to react and huffed loudly and stormed out of the house. Probably to spy on whatever Bill was doing with Harry.

He wasn’t gone long and when he returned, he went straight upstairs with a look of frustration. A moment later, Harry and Bill returned as well.

Harry threw himself onto the couch next to Draco and flopped over onto his side, placing his head in Draco’s lap with a sigh.

“It went that well, did it?” Draco asked sarcastically, abandoning his game with Theo in favour of carding his fingers through Harry’s hair.

“It went fine, of course,” Harry sighed. “No sign of any malicious enchantments of any kind. As we knew. But Ron’s still doubtful and thinks there’s something afoot still.”

Bill sat down in the armchair opposite their couch and sighed as well.

“Ron’s sure you’re behaving outside of your norm,” he explained diplomatically. “He’s also resistant to change. He’s having a difficult time accepting that you’re not always going to be the person he’s known up until now. The war changed a lot of us, we’re not all the people we used to be.”

“Is there anything else we can do to convince him?” Draco asked.

“I can try talking to him again,” Bill proposed. “But my belief is that this is going to take time. Probably more time than you’d like.”

“Thank’s anyway, Bill,” Harry murmured. Draco could hear a note of defeat in his voice.

“It’ll work out, love,” Draco said gently, continuing to stroke Harry’s scalp with his fingertips.

“I feel stupid wanting him to accept this,” Harry sighed. “He’s been fucking awful to me for months but he was my best mate for seven years. And sure, he wasn’t always a very good friend but he was always there for me when it really truly mattered. And maybe he’s shit at apologising when he’s fucked up, but he always tried to make it better through his actions. And he was often jealous of the shit I had that I didn’t even want, but...”

“But you love him,” Draco concluded. “He’s family and he means everything to you, I understand that, believe me.”

“Yeah,” he said, his voice cracking at the beginnings of a sob. “I love him but I don’t think he loves me and it fucking hurts.”

He turned his head into Draco's legs to hide his tears.

Draco wished he could just wave his wand and make everything better but there wasn't any magic in the world that would make Ron Weasley care about Harry as much as Harry cared about him. All he could do was stroke his back and pet his hair and be there for him. Harry had plenty of real friends who actually *did* care about him, who didn't think of their relationship with him as a transaction.

Christmas morning dawned with a little less excitement than it usually did, though with quite a bit more than it had last year.

Harry had cried half the night about Ron and all Draco could do was hold him.

He woke rather early and the sun was just barely peeking over the horizon and the dim dawn light filled the small bedroom. Harry was curled around Draco like he always was, his face relaxed in sleep, no longer pinched with heartbreak. He stroked his face gently and carded his fingers in his hair. He wished Harry could be this relaxed all the time.

Harry shifted at the touch, his eyebrows scrunching together briefly before he squinted his eyes open.

"Good morning, my love," Draco murmured, continuing to pet his boyfriend's hair. "Happy Christmas."

"Mmm, happy Christmas," he sighed against his chest and snuggled closer, tightening his arms around Draco's midsection. "What time is it?"

"Around eight or so, I think," Draco estimated. "I can't reach my wand to do a *tempus* to be more precise than that."

"Your mum's supposed to get here at ten," Harry reminded him while yawning and stretching. "And Luna and Neville are coming in the afternoon."

"Do you think the Weasleys will get on with my mother?" Draco asked anxiously.

"It's going to be fine," Harry assured him for probably the thousandth time.

There was suddenly an excited scream from across the hall and Harry sat up urgently in alarm. Draco put a calming hand on his shoulder to prevent him from leaping out of bed.

"It's fine," he soothed with a grin. "I think Ginny's just opened her Christmas presents."

"What did you do?" Harry asked narrowly.

Draco didn't have an opportunity to answer because there was a sudden thunder of footsteps followed by their bedroom door being slammed open. Harry hurriedly grabbed their blanket to cover them both as they were mostly undressed. Ginny stood breathlessly in the doorway in her pyjamas, hair mussed from sleep, broomstick in hand.

"Ginny!" Harry exclaimed. "Haven't you ever heard of knocking?"

"Nevermind that!" she exclaimed impatiently and thrust out her new broomstick. "Draco, Theo, Blaise and Neville have gotten me a *Firebolt*!"

"What?!" Harry exclaimed, whipping his head around at Draco. "How did you afford that?"

"The four of us split the cost," Draco said casually. It had still been quite costly even split amongst four. He grinned at Ginny. "You didn't expect to play in the professional circuit on that old Cleansweep Seven of Fred's did you?"

"Well, no," she admitted. "But a *Firebolt*?!"

"If you're going to be the best Chaser in the league, you'll need the best broom," Draco shrugged.

"You're brilliant you are!" she exclaimed. Then she dove on top of him and hugged him fiercely, planting a kiss on his cheek and then climbing off of them and heading for the door with her new broom. "I'm going to go thank Theo and then rub this in Ron and George's faces!"

With that, she was gone, shutting the door a little too loudly behind her. Harry laughed and looked at Draco fondly.

"I think that's overshadowed my gift a little," he teased.

"I'm sure she loves the owl you picked out for her," Draco assured him. "Speaking of gifts..."

He nodded at the pile of gifts at the foot of their bed waiting to be opened.

They decided to get dressed in something presentable in case anyone else decided to burst into their room without knocking. Once they were appropriately covered, they began dividing up the large pile of gifts into two so they could open their own.

"Open mine first!" Harry exclaimed delightedly, holding out a rectangular parcel that Draco was sure was a book.

Sure enough it *was* a book; *A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams.

"It's a science fiction comedy," Harry explained. "I know you've been enjoying the books Hermione's been lending you and this was one of my favourites as a kid."

Draco beamed. He had become quite taken with science fiction since beginning his muggle fiction journey. Hermione tended to favour fantasy though, and had few recommendations for

the other genre. He was very eager to read one of Harry's favourites.

"Open mine," Draco offered, holding out a small package.

Harry took the parcel delicately like it was something very precious and meticulously unwrapped it. Inside was a handsome jewellery box the size of his palm clothed in dark blue velvet. He opened it up to find a beautiful gold pocket watch chain with a pendant bearing a coat of arms. The shield on the crest bore the image of a sparrow in flight with a sprig of impatiens in its beak.

"It's beautiful," Harry murmured. He ran a finger over the pendant with the crest. "What's this crest?"

Draco often forgot that Harry didn't know anything about his family.

"It's the Potter family crest," he explained quietly. "I had the jeweler recreate it exactly."

"I love it," he said wetly, tears in his eyes and kissed Draco tenderly in thanks.

He then got up and started rummaging in his trunk for something. Draco was just about to ask him what he was digging around for when he made a small noise of triumph and withdrew an old pocket watch. Draco had wondered if Harry had one and had considered getting him one but had been unsure if that would be an overstep as it was normally a gift given for a wizard's seventeenth birthday by a family member. The watch was clearly secondhand as it had much scuffing and a few small dents in the back.

Harry clipped the chain to the watch and dangled it to observe the look of it with a giant grin on his face and tears still sparkling in his eyes. The new chain managed to make the watch look older somehow but that didn't seem to bother him.

"Molly and Arthur gave me this watch when I turned seventeen," Harry explained. "It used to belong to Molly's brother Fabian. I know it's pureblood tradition that a wizard get a pocket watch for his seventeenth from his parents, so this was really special to have because it meant that Molly and Arthur saw themselves as parents to me."

Draco was glad Harry still had people he could call family after all the wretched things that he'd had go wrong in his life that caused him to lose the others.

After gathering themselves from the touching moment, they dove back into their presents. Draco and Harry had both received sweets from Neville and Ginny, and they both appeared to have identical gifts from Mrs Weasley.

"You got a Weasley jumper too!" Harry exclaimed, tearing open his own parcel and revealing an emerald green hand-knitted jumper. He immediately pulled it over his head and Draco was bemused to see a huge gold letter H on the front. "You *have* to wear yours at breakfast, it's tradition," he instructed him seriously.

Draco had to tear his eyes away from the look of his boyfriend in his new jumper. Green was definitely his colour and it brought out the colour in his eyes which shone with delight. He

opened his own parcel to find a periwinkle blue jumper with a silver D on the front. Conscious of Harry's patient eyes on him, he pulled the jumper over his head and found that it fit him perfectly and was quite warm and soft. Harry beamed.

"Now we match!" he exclaimed delightedly.

The rest of his gifts were rather different from the usual. The first he opened was from Hermione which at first he had guessed was a book as it was the right shape but when he picked it up, he found it to be much too light and made a slight rattling noise when he gave it a shake. He tore the paper off to find an object that, while book shaped, clearly wasn't a book but also wasn't anything he'd ever seen before. It was clearly muggle in origin, being made of plastic. He turned it over and looked at what he presumed was the front of the object. The plastic object was sleeved in card stock and the cover depicted a dragon flying overhead of a man riding on horseback, a title over the image read "DragonHeart".

"What is this?" Draco asked Harry, hoping this wasn't one of those rare moments where Harry's isolation in childhood prevented him from identifying something muggle-made.

Harry looked over from his own pile of gifts to inspect the object.

"That's a tape," he said with some surprise. "It's used to view a film, did Hermione give you that?"

"She did," he confirmed. "So this is the title of the film? DragonHeart? How do you watch it?"

"Er... you'll need a VCR and a television," he said hesitantly. "I wonder if Arthur has one kicking around his garage."

"I guess Hermione has stepped up my education on muggle fiction," Draco said mildly, turning the tape over in an effort to glean some sort of plot summary but only found a list of actors, which was entirely useless. "What did she get you?"

Harry sorted through his gifts to find one from Hermione. His, too, rattled when he lifted it. He opened the parcel to discover not one but three tapes bound together in one sleeve. The cover read "Star Wars Trilogy" and had a creepy black mask under it, and a spherical object and a slim aeroplane-like machine with four wings instead of two underneath that.

"Brilliant!" he exclaimed. "I've always wanted to see these films. You'd like it since you have that thing for sci-fi."

"Now we just need that CVR thing and a television," Draco remarked.

"VCR," Harry corrected.

"Whatever."

He placed the tape on top of Hitchhiker's Guide and returned to the rest of his gifts. The one from Theo was quite large and heavy and when he tore the paper off it, he could only stare in confusion.

“Hey, I guess we only need a telly after all,” Harry remarked. “Who gave you that?”

“Theo,” Draco said distractedly. “This is a VCR?”

“I wonder if Hermione and Theo co-ordinated their gifts,” Harry pondered. “I can’t imagine why else he’d...”

Harry trailed off unexpectedly. Draco looked over to see what had distracted him and found Harry had just opened another gift and was staring at it with a furrowed brow.

“What’s the matter?”

Harry just continued to frown and presented the gift to Draco to examine. It was a book, *An Expert’s Guide to Wolfsbane Potion* by Damocles Belby. Draco sucked in a surprised hiss.

“Who’s that from?”

“Luna.”

“Why has she sent you that?” Draco murmured, disquieted.

“Maybe she’s noticed I’ve been working on it?” Harry suggested. “She tends to notice things other people don’t.”

Draco suddenly felt uneasy, and scrambled to find the gift he’d seen from Luna. His was also a book. He tore the paper off and gasped in alarm. The book was *Hairy Snout, Human Heart* by Anonymous. Draco had heard of this book, it was the true autobiography of a werewolf, depicting how his life was altered by his bite.

“She knows,” Draco uttered, his heart in his throat.

“How can she know?” Harry asked, his eyes wide.

“Like you said, she notices things other people don’t,” Draco reminded him breathlessly. “She comes off as daft but she’s obviously really clever. And don’t forget she was held prisoner in my house for six months, she might have known all along and never said anything.”

“That sounds exactly like something she’d do,” Harry chuckled fondly. “I doubt she’ll tell anyone but we can talk to her about it when she gets here this afternoon.”

“What if she doesn’t actually know and this book choice is just a coincidence?” Draco asked anxiously. “And by asking her about it, we end up telling her more than she knew in the first place.”

“That seems unlikely,” Harry frowned.

There was a sudden knock at their door and Draco hastened to stuff the book into his trunk and tried to look casual when Harry opened the door. He needn’t have bothered, however as

it was only George. He was clearly on his way to breakfast, his hair still mussed and dressed in tartan pyjama bottoms and a dark blue jumper with a yellow G on the front.

“Did you seriously get my sister a Firebolt?” George demanded at Draco, partly awed and partly peeved.

“It was a group gift,” Draco admitted sheepishly. “I promise I didn’t empty my vault to pay for it.”

He knew the Weasleys were often uncomfortable when people spent a lot of gold on them, but he knew Ginny worked extremely hard and he’d hate to see her talent wasted if she failed a tryout because of a poor quality broomstick. Her Cleansweep was perfectly serviceable for school matches but it would never hold up to the professional leagues.

George sighed in exasperation.

“She’s going to be insufferable,” he complained. “And Ron’s going to be so much worse. He’s already pissed off and jealous over it.”

“Tell him when he makes a professional team, he can have a professional broom,” Draco drawled in irritation. “Hasn’t he got the latest Cleansweep anyway?”

“Yeah I made that argument already,” George sighed, letting himself into the room and perching on the end of their bed. “I reckon he’s mostly pissed that a pack of Slytherins are the ones who bought it for her.”

“And Neville,” Draco pointed out. “Don’t forget him.”

“You masterminded this, didn’t you?” George accused.

“Guilty,” Draco shrugged with an unrepentant smirk. “You can’t tell me she doesn’t deserve it.”

“I’m just sorry I never got a chance to play with her at Hogwarts,” George sighed. “Maybe I’ll come by the next time Gryffindor is playing and see how she flies on the new broom. When’s Gryffindor’s next match?”

Harry opened his trunk and pulled out a diary and started flipping through the pages to find the right date.

“I have Gryffindor versus Hufflepuff on the fifth of March,” he informed him.

“Brilliant!” George exclaimed, slapping his knees and standing. “I’ll be there. You two should come down to breakfast soon. By the way, Draco,” he added, stopping in the doorway and smirking. “Nice jumper. That colour suits you.”

Enchanté = Enchanted (popular polite greeting)

Ah, vous êtes français! = Ah, you are French!

Oui, un peut. Mon père est français et ma mère est anglaise = Yes, a little. My father is French and my mother is English

I probably did more research than was strictly necessary for the Potter crest.

Canonically, there is no stated description of the crest but since it is a very old pureblood family, they most certainly would have had one. So I selected a sparrow which is a symbol of joy, and community. I thought it was fitting since canonically Potters have always been the sort to help out their community. Impatiens is also called Jewelweed and is a primary ingredient in Pepperup Potion which was invented by Linfred of Stinchcombe who was the first Potter. He used to brew cures for his neighbours who were muggles. People called him The Potterer because he was always pottering around in his garden. Harry comes from a long line of successful potioners.

For the youngsters in my comments section, I remind you that this story takes place in 1998 and 1999, so all references to muggle technology will be contemporary to that time. As such, I invite you to read the following glossary if you are unfamiliar with some of the tech.

Speakerphone: A speakerphone used to be a separate piece of technology or a very specially designed phone (land line of course as mobiles were uncommon). Putting a phone on speaker was not something every phone was capable of doing at the time.

VHS tape: a means of watching films. They had plastic casings with two spools. Around one spool was a thin tape with millions of frames that an optical reader would view and transfer to the TV into one smooth image. VHS stands for Video Home System.

VCR: A player for VHS tapes. It spins the spools to view the frames at the appropriate speed. Sometimes it was necessary to change the speed at which the film was read. VCRs in some cases could also record onto blank tapes and it took some programming but they could be scheduled to record specific shows that would come on TV but you had to know at what time they came on and for how long, and you also had to make sure you weren't recording over an already recorded tape. VCR stands for Video Cassette Recorder.

Chapter 37: Chiara Lobosca

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Christmas breakfast was a madhouse. Everyone was wearing a differently coloured Weasley jumper, even Theo (plum with a slate grey T) and chatting exuberantly about the gifts they'd gotten. Ginny was especially boisterous and had brought her new Firebolt to the table for which her mother scolded her.

"Oh Harry, thank you for the owl, by the way," Ginny said beaming. "I've named him Chomper!"

"Of course you have," Draco drawled. "That bird nearly bit Harry's finger off in the shop."

"Why would you buy a biting owl?" Charlie asked in amusement.

"He reminded me of Ginny," Harry shrugged with a smirk.

"Well I love him," Ginny said brightly. "And he hasn't bitten me."

"Yet," George offered.

"Oh Harry, dear, thank you for our owl too," Mrs Weasley said warmly. "You shouldn't have, really."

"It was nothing, Molly," Harry said modestly. "I just thought you might be retiring Errol soon and could use a new one. The shop keeper said she should live another forty years or so and can fly great distances so you don't have to worry about how she'll fare sending letters to Charlie in Romania."

"That's really thoughtful, Harry," Charlie said, clapping Harry on the shoulder. "What are you going to name her, mum?"

"I was thinking we should name her Penny," Mr Weasley suggested. "Because she's copper coloured like the old muggle pennies."

Harry and the Weasley siblings all exchanged amused smirks at this. Draco had noticed from his time at the Burrow that Mr Weasley was more than a little obsessed with muggles. He'd known that before, of course, but to see it first hand was another matter entirely. He was muggle mad.

"Speaking of muggle things," Draco said conversationally and several heads turned to him curiously. "Mr Weasley, you wouldn't happen to have a television in that garage would you?"

"I believe I do, why?" Mr Weasley asked curiously.

“Only Hermione’s sent me a film tape and Theo’s given me a – what was it called again, Harry?”

“VCR,” Harry and Theo both supplied together.

“Right, that. To play tapes and I was wondering if we could use it to watch the film.”

“You have a film?” Mr Weasley asked excitedly, practically bouncing in his seat. “What’s it about?”

“I’m not completely sure,” Draco said thoughtfully. “But it’s got a dragon on the cover.”

“A film about dragons?” Charlie asked, sounding just like his father in his excitement. “What do muggles know about dragons?”

“Nothing, really,” Harry said in amusement. “But they’ve got stories and legends and things. I seriously doubt it’s at all accurate to reality and in what little muggle fiction I’ve read containing dragons, the dragon can usually talk which is interesting.”

“Yeah, like The Hobbit!” Draco exclaimed. “The dragon in that story, Smaug, could talk!”

“You’ve read muggle fantasy books?” Mr Weasley asked in surprise.

“Hermione’s been educating me,” Draco said sheepishly. “She prefers fantasy, but I prefer science fiction.”

“I’ve also got some films for Christmas from Hermione,” Harry added. “They’re a sci-fi trilogy I’ve always wanted to see but the Dursleys never would let me.”

“Let’s save the films for tomorrow,” Mrs Weasley cut in. “Make a day of it. Today we’re having guests and I won’t have you all transfixed with that muggle picture box all day.”

Everyone decided this was fair and after breakfast, Mrs Weasley sent them all back up to their rooms to get dressed properly to receive their guests.

Everyone kept their jumpers on but changed into warm trousers and underthings as it was expected that they’d likely be spending most of the day outside given the fact that the Burrow was simply not large enough to accommodate the group of guests that would be arriving over the day.

Once dressed, Mr Weasley asked for volunteers to help set up a massive canopy over the garden which was enchanted with warming charms. While Harry, Draco, and Mr Weasley were attempting to straighten out the canopy, Charlie and George began engaging in the promised table wrestling competition.

Theo and Ginny were on the sidelines shouting advice and cheering on their chosen table as the two tables galloped around the garden and smashed into each other like posturing goats.

“Sweep the leg!” Theo shouted.

“Go high!” Ginny advised. “Stomp on it from above!”

Eventually, George’s table managed to lock its legs with Charlie’s and flip it onto its top. Charlie’s table flailed its legs around like a turtle on its back and was unable to flip back over.

“Poor form!” Bill’s voice joined the group.

Bill and Fleur had just arrived and right behind them was Percy.

“Sweet Merlin, you’re not all still obsessed with this barbaric game, are you?” Percy said imperiously.

“Merlin forbid we have a little fun, Perce,” Bill chided.

“Yeah, lighten up!” George crowed.

“Rematch,” Charlie called to George. “And no flipping, that’s not sportsmanlike.”

Draco and Harry finished helping Mr Weasley with the canopy and came over to where Theo and Ginny were stood cheering on the table fight. Charlie and George reset their tables and set them on each other again while their audience cheered them on.

There was much crashing and banging and the sounds of splintering wood but eventually Charlie’s table won the fight by catching one of George’s table’s already splintering legs and with a rending of wood and a loud bang, the leg split right off.

Draco, who had favoured Charlie to win let out a cheer alongside Harry and Theo while Ginny booed obnoxiously.

“No one likes a poor loser, Ginny,” Bill scolded her and she stuck her tongue out at him.

“My my, this is rather exciting,” a familiar delicate voice spoke.

Everyone went silent and turned to face the new arrival.

Draco had been so wrapped up in the commotion of the table wrestling match that he’d entirely missed the arrival of his mother. He felt his face heat in embarrassment that she had probably seen him jumping around in a rather uncouth manner. He fixed his posture and straightened his jumper.

“Mother,” he greeted stiffly.

She looked better than he had last seen her during the summer. She had been wan and tired, overly thin with bags under her eyes poorly concealed with glamour charms. Though she had spent the last several months alone in the manor with no one but the house elves to keep her company, she had clearly been taking better care of herself now that there were no more unwelcome visitors in the house. Her face had filled back in and there was a healthy rosy glow to her cheeks. She smiled warmly at Draco.

“Don’t stop on my account, darling,” she said with some amusement in her tone. “You looked like you were having so much fun.”

“It’s nice to see you again, Mrs Malfoy,” Harry greeted her politely.

There was a certain tension in the group and everyone seemed to be waiting for the thing that finally broke it.

“Well this is awkward,” Theo quipped.

Ginny snorted loudly then burst into a fit of giggles.

That did it. The tension lifted and the Weasleys began offering their greetings to Draco’s mother. Charlie set about repairing the tables and putting them in place under the canopy while Mr Weasley approached Draco’s mother with some amount of awkwardness. Draco could hardly blame him; he’d once witnessed him engaged in a fistfight with his father over an insult to the company he was keeping and whether he could afford the school supplies he’d been buying.

“Glad you could come, Narcissa,” he said stiffly. “Molly will be pleased you accepted the invitation.”

“I’m pleased to be here,” she said primly. “Draco speaks quite highly of your family.”

“*Does* he now?” George remarked with a smirk, throwing an arm over Draco’s shoulder. “That’s new.”

“Yeah well, you’ve grown on me,” Draco admitted with a shrug. He exchanged a smirk with Ginny. “Like a fungus.”

Ginny and George burst out laughing and Harry beamed.

Narcissa smiled delightedly at Draco’s antics and Draco found himself preening with pride. He was glad his mother approved of his new friends. He suspected she’d be satisfied with anyone who made him happy anyway and, with one notable exception, he found he rather liked the Weasleys once he got to know them.

Draco dutifully went around and introduced his mother to each of the Weasleys in turn who all politely greeted her back.

“And you know Theo and Harry of course,” he finished.

“Of course,” she nodded smiling. “Good to see you again. I wonder if I might have a word with you, Mr Potter?”

Harry looked surprised but nodded and walked a ways from the group with Narcissa out of earshot. Draco burned with curiosity but knew that if it was for him to know, Harry would tell him.

“Looks like your mum is sizing up Harry’s intentions with you,” Theo said teasingly in Draco’s ear.

Draco scoffed.

“As if Harry’s intentions with anyone or anything could ever be anything but honorable,” he drawled.

“Besides, what’s not to love?” Ginny remarked. “He saved your life a few times and kept the both of you from Azkaban. Any mother should thoroughly approve of a boyfriend that goes above and beyond like that.”

“And if anyone should be sizing intentions it’s us,” George added and then grinned slyly at Draco. “Just what *are* your intentions with our Harry?”

“Oh I think I’ve made my intentions plenty clear already,” Draco smirked.

The others laughed at this and broke off to socialize with Bill and Fleur while Draco hung back, waiting for Harry to rejoin him after his talk with Narcissa.

Harry returned to Draco’s side with an odd look on his face, cradling something small in his hands. Draco couldn’t decipher the expression on his boyfriend’s face as it wasn’t one he was used to seeing. It was like he was miles away.

Meanwhile, Mrs Weasley had joined them outside and Draco’s mother had gone to exchange pleasantries with her. Draco couldn’t glean from her expression what she had discussed with Harry that put him in this odd state.

“Harry, are you alright?” Draco fretted. “What did she say to you?”

His mind flew to all the things that his mother might have discussed with his boyfriend and none of them explained the faraway look in his eyes.

“She gave me this,” Harry murmured quietly and held the small object out to him, that distant look still in his eye.

Draco took the object from him and examined it. It was a ring. A signet ring, in fact, with a crest bearing a hand holding a wand underneath which were three ravens. Draco knew this crest very well; it was the crest of the House of Black.

“What did she say?” he asked again.

“She said that since I’m head of the Black family I should have this,” he murmured. “She said she’d always intended for you to have it but since Sirius named me his heir it actually belongs to me, that it should have belonged to him since he was never properly disowned. She thinks Sirius would have wanted me to have it.”

That explained the faraway look. Harry always got distant and mournful whenever Sirius was brought up. He never got this choked up when his parents were mentioned but Draco supposed that was because he’d never actually known his parents. But Sirius he’d known for

too short a time and even now, several years removed from his death, still thought of him as a father figure.

“Are you okay?” Draco asked gently, returning the ring to him.

“I’m alright,” he assured him. “It’s sort of strange, you know?”

“What is?”

“Sirius would have hated to wear this,” he explained, waving the ring about. “He rejected nearly everything about his family. When he took over Grimmauld Place, he gutted it. Chucked nearly everything in the bin, especially if it had this crest on it. Kreacher used to sneak stuff out of the bin bags and hide it in his nest to stop Sirius from throwing it all away.”

“I understand that sentiment,” Draco murmured. He felt an odd sort of kinship with his cousin; a need to reject his family name out of disgust and shame.

“Sirius would have hated this ring and what it meant,” Harry whispered, staring down at it, holding it with both hands, pinching it between all of his fingers like it was precious to him. Then, coming to a decision, Harry slipped it onto his left pinky finger, right where it was meant to be worn.

“You don’t hate it too, then?” Draco asked warily.

Harry shook his head.

“I don’t have the same history with the Blacks as Sirius had,” he explained. “With one notable exception, I care a great deal for every Black I’ve ever met. I even have some sympathy for Regulus.”

“But he was a Death Eater,” Draco breathed.

“So were you,” Harry reminded him. He finally lost that distant expression in favour of meeting Draco’s eyes. The expression there was adoration and Draco’s stomach did a flip. It never got old remembering that Harry loved him.

Harry leaned in and gave him a soft, chaste kiss that made his head feel light.

“Oi, loverboys!” George hollered, interrupting them. “You gonna snog all morning or are we playing flying football?”

“George!” Mrs Weasley admonished. “Leave them alone.”

“Yeah,” Ginny piped up with a smirk. “It’s rude to interrupt a snog!”

Harry turned scarlet and Draco shifted his eyes to his mother. Despite the fact that it was *not* a snog as George and Ginny mischaracterized, he felt a small amount of embarrassment that his mother had likely seen, and the two mischievous Weasleys had felt the need to call attention to it. He’d half expected disapproval at the public display of affection but when he met his mother’s eyes he saw only shining amusement. Draco felt himself turning pink.

“What is flying football?” Narcissa asked Mrs Weasley curiously.

“Oh I think that’s just what the kids are calling Quidditch without the bludgers or snitch,” she replied.

“Draco’s an excellent Chaser,” Harry informed her brightly, mischief in his eyes. “Too bad he spoiled that talent trying to one-up me as a Seeker all these years.”

Ginny and George snickered while Theo smirked.

“I’m an excellent Seeker,” Draco pouted.

“And yet you’ve never won even one match against me,” Harry teased.

“Yes well not all of us can have your inhuman talent,” Draco drawled, folding his arms petulantly. “If any of us tried to fly the way you do, we’d probably break our necks.”

“Is he a particularly reckless flier?” Narcissa asked.

“Harry? Reckless? *Never!*” George exclaimed teasingly.

“Let’s put it this way,” Draco said with a grin. “After seeing Victor Krum perform the Wronski Feint at the World Cup, he wasted absolutely no time successfully employing it against a *dragon!*”

“I wasn’t fainting,” Harry denied. “I was diving for the egg.”

“I was there!” Charlie exclaimed excitedly. “It was the most incredible thing I’ve ever seen!”

“I don’t think you can include the Triwizard Tournament in a list of my reckless flying manoeuvres,” Harry rolled his eyes. “Everything about the Tournament invited recklessness. And what else was I meant to do? I was fourteen! How was I meant to get past a dragon any other way?”

“How did you get past that dragon at Gringotts?” Draco asked and immediately regretted it when Harry’s eyes went wide and he shook his head frantically.

The Golden Trio robbing a Gringotts vault was clearly not common knowledge to anyone outside the Goblin Nation.

“I beg your finest pardon?” Bill cut in. “You’re not suggesting that Harry broke into a high security vault at Gringotts?”

“I *may* have...” Harry muttered, rubbing the back of his neck awkwardly.

“Is *that* what you needed Griphook’s help with?” Bill asked incredulously. “I find it difficult to believe that you convinced a goblin to help you rob Gringotts.”

“So that *was* you then?” Narcissa asked. “The Lestrangle vault was broken into. That was *you?*”

“Who else?” Draco drawled rolling his eyes.

“I’m astounded that the Goblin Nation isn’t pressing charges!” Bill exclaimed.

“Well I have been banned from setting foot in the building ever again,” Harry shrugged. “So have Ron and Hermione.”

“Of course Ron was involved,” Mrs Weasley sighed in exasperation.

“So how *did* you get past the dragon?” Charlie asked eagerly.

“Clankers,” Harry said simply.

“They’re devices that make a noise the dragons have been trained with,” Bill explained to the assortment of blank faces.

“It’s pretty barbaric actually,” Harry said with a scowl. “The dragon was trained to expect pain when it heard the noise and would shy away when they heard it.”

“How awful!” Charlie exclaimed in outrage.

“Tell him how you escaped!” Draco urged gleefully.

“Oh well we were surrounded by security and didn’t really have a way out so…” Harry trailed off for dramatic effect. “We climbed onto the back of the dragon and freed it from its restraints. It flew to freedom and smashed through the floor of the lobby to get out.”

Stunned silence followed this.

“You *rode* on the back of a *dragon*?!” Charlie shouted, his expression a mixture of awe and jealousy. “You actually rode a dragon! How is this the first I’m hearing about this? Ron!”

He shouted his brother’s name in frustration and ran into the house. Undoubtedly to ream his brother for not telling him about riding on a dragon.

Charlie’s reaction was exactly what Draco had hoped for. He knew the dragon tamer would be dripping with envy that his little brother rode a dragon.

“Well that was fun,” George remarked.

“How are you not more flabbergasted at this news?” Theo asked in astonishment.

“Cos it’s Harry, innit?” George shrugged. “I mean sure, my flabbers are well and truly gasted but this is all pretty par for the course for him and Ron and Hermione.”

“Bloody *Gryffindors*!” Theo exclaimed.

“My sentiments exactly,” Draco remarked with a smirk.

Things settled after that and everyone was more relaxed with Narcissa around. They managed a few rounds of flying football and Bill even joined them, making the teams even again,

though Draco continued to insist that Harry be on Ginny's team to make the matchups fair. At lunchtime Ron was cajoled out of his room by his mother and he sat at the end of the table in the garden scowling into his meal and shooting dark looks up the table at Draco and his mother while the both of them did their best to ignore him.

An hour after lunch both the Longbottoms and Lovegoods arrived with an unexpected addition.

At first, when Draco saw the woman with dark curly hair holding a baby with a tuft of turquoise hair sticking out from under a tiny knit cap, he had to do a double take. For one heartstopping moment he had mistaken her for his aunt Bellatrix – the resemblance was uncanny – but after looking a second time he relaxed, seeing a softness in her features Bella never had.

“Andy!” Harry exclaimed when she appeared. He sprang up to greet her and the baby. “Molly didn’t tell me you were coming.”

He held out his hands for the baby and she carefully deposited him into Harry’s waiting arms. He immediately adopted a posture favourable to holding a baby and began bouncing slightly and swaying back and forth.

“I didn’t plan to initially,” she said quietly. “I thought a quiet Christmas was what I wanted because of Ted and Dora...” she trailed off, a catch in her voice. She collected herself for a moment then resumed. “But then I realised that it wasn’t really fair to Teddy to be excluded from a big family do. He deserves to know how many people love him. I hope it’s not too much trouble?”

“I’m sure Molly doesn’t mind,” Harry assured her. “She’s always delighted to have more people running around here, and she loves Teddy as much as I do.” Now it was his turn to hesitate. “Your sister is here,” he added gently. “I don’t know how you’d feel about seeing her?”

Andromeda looked around with trepidation, probably looking for Narcissa who was currently enjoying a tour of the Weasleys’ garden with Mrs Weasley and Augusta Longbottom. Her eyes fell on Draco who blushed at being found eavesdropping. He stood to greet her like the gentleman he was raised to be.

“Good afternoon, Aunt Andromeda. Happy Christmas,” he said politely, if a bit awkwardly. Honestly, how *did* one greet an estranged aunt one had never met?

“Shit, where are my manners?” Harry said hastily. “Andy, this is your nephew, Draco. Draco, Andromeda. And this is your cousin, Teddy,” he added bringing the baby closer to Draco so he could meet him.

There was something a bit odd about being introduced to one’s own family members. He wondered if Harry found it strange too, to be doing the introductions.

“It’s very nice to meet you, Draco,” she said cautiously. “Have you been well?”

Draco detected the same posh pureblood manners in her tone as he had been raised with. She spoke to him stiffly, unlike how she had spoken to Harry, and if Harry's perplexed expression was anything to go by, he'd never heard her speak this way to anyone else.

"I've been good," he said, trying to squash some of his own stiffness. "The Weasleys have been very welcoming."

"Most of them," Harry added to Andromeda almost conspiratorially. "Ron's still having a go at me every chance he gets."

"It's difficult when your family can't accept who it is you love," she sighed knowingly, probably remembering her youth when she fell in love with her husband and was disowned for marrying him. "I'm sure Ron will come around, though," she assured him gently. "How has everyone else taken it?"

Draco thought he detected an added layer of meaning in her tone. She was clearly a good friend to the Weasley family and, given that she was apparently welcome to drop by unannounced, close enough that she would probably already know how the rest of the family was taking his and Harry's relationship. He suspected she was hinting to ask how his mother felt about it.

"Oh everyone else has been really supportive," Harry assured her.

"Mother is just pleased that I'm happy," Draco added and the slow and hopeful smile he received from his aunt confirmed that was the answer she was hoping for.

"Andromeda!" came the delighted greeting of Mrs Weasley, on her way back from the tour of the garden.

Draco turned swiftly to see if his mother was with her and how she would react to seeing her estranged sister. As it happened, she *was* with her and had halted abruptly in her tracks, staring transfixed at Andromeda.

"Hi, Cissy," Andromeda said hesitantly, using the same nickname his other aunt had call her. It was probably an old childhood moniker the sisters had always called each other by.

"Romy!" Narcissa cried tearfully and flung herself at Andromeda and hugged her tightly like she thought she might drift away.

Andromeda looked stunned, but quickly recovered and wrapped her arms around her little sister in return.

"I've missed you so much!" Narcissa cried into her sister's shoulder.

"I thought you wouldn't want to see me," Andromeda murmured. "Mother and father..."

"Were fools!" Narcissa finished, pulling away so she could look her in the eyes. "We were all fools, Romy. I'm so sorry!"

At that moment, the baby in Harry's arms had evidently decided he wasn't receiving enough attention and let out an irritated shriek, causing Andromeda to turn and begin fussing over him.

"I've got him, Andy, it's fine," Harry assured her, then glanced uncertainly at Narcissa. "Do you want to say hi to your great-nephew?"

"I have a great-nephew?" she said in a small voice, leaning in to get a better look at the baby. "Goodness that hair!"

Teddy giggle delightedly at the attention and his turquoise hair suddenly turned silver blonde as he reached up to her with his tiny hands.

"He's a metamorphmagus like his mother," Harry informed her.

Narcissa looked up at Andromeda questioningly.

"Your daughter?" she asked.

"Nymphadora, yes," Andromeda said with a catch in her throat. "This will be our first Christmas without her."

"And his father?" Narcissa asked cautiously.

"Dead also," she replied softly.

"Teddy's not lacking in family though," Harry said optimistically. "He's got Andy and me, and all the Weasleys, and we'll make sure he knows who his parents were. We'll make sure he knows where he comes from."

"Harry's Teddy's godfather," Draco told his mother helpfully.

"Goodness!" Narcissa exclaimed. "That's quite a big responsibility for someone so young."

"So's being the Chosen One and saving the whole world from a madman," Draco drawled and Harry snickered.

"Once I graduate, I'll be able to spend more time helping Andy raise him," Harry said brightly. He shifted the baby from a cradle to balancing him on his hip and bouncing him slightly, beaming down at him when his hair turned jet black. "I don't mind being a parent already. I honestly never thought I'd live long enough to have a family at all. And even if Remus hadn't asked me to, I'd have spoiled Teddy rotten and made sure nothing bad ever happened to him anyway."

Draco was struck by the image of Harry holding the baby like a bludger to the gut. Harry was a *parent*. Eighteen years old and already a father. It didn't matter that Teddy wasn't Harry's blood, that child would grow up looking to Harry like he *was* his father. Draco had a wild thought, not for the first time, of marrying Harry, this time the image included a blue haired child running around underfoot. He imagined himself taking Teddy to Harry's Quidditch matches and sitting in the family box. He pictured himself and Harry teaching him to fly on a

child sized broomstick. He imagined seeing him off to Hogwarts in ten years time with Harry at his side and tears in his eyes like his mother had when she sent him off for the first time.

“Draco?” Harry called through his reverie. A mildly concerned look crossed his features. “You okay?”

Draco gave himself a little shake and felt his face become hot with embarrassment when he realised his mother and aunt were staring at him. He coughed once and cleared his throat.

“Fine,” he said eventually but winced internally when his voice cracked.

Harry raised a challenging eyebrow at him. He knew he was accusing him of not telling the whole truth in that one look. He plastered a smile on his face and hoped Harry wouldn’t press.

They’d developed this sort of shorthand since their ungluing; if one of them thought the other wasn’t telling the truth and they were in public, they’d have this silent communication about it and then discuss it properly later. He wondered what he would tell Harry when he asked later what he was thinking about just then. Would he tell him he was fantasizing about a future with Harry and Teddy as a happy family? It was the truth after all and they *had* promised to be honest with each other from now on.

He was saved from further awkwardness when Bill approached.

“Hey, sorry to interrupt,” he cut in politely. “I was wondering if I could steal Harry away for a second?”

“Oh sure, Bill, what’s up?” Harry replied, handing Teddy off back to Andromeda.

“It’s about what we discussed yesterday,” he said meaningfully, and Harry’s expression hardened.

“Right,” he said flatly, then took Draco’s hand and started to lead him on.

“Shouldn’t I maybe wait here?” Draco asked uncertainly.

“No,” Harry said firmly. “We’re settling this nonsense with Ron right now and either he will finally see reason or blow up in our faces and we’ll never speak to him again. Either way, we’re settling it.”

Draco glanced back at his mother and aunt who had identical bemused expressions. Andromeda called a hopeful “good luck!” as they walked around to the back of the house.

“Chiara’s just arrived,” Bill told Harry as they walked. “And I thought, just for thoroughness sake we could have her look you over too, and hopefully settle this fight with Ron.”

“Who is Chiara?” Draco asked.

“A friend of mine from my Hogwarts days,” Bill explained. “She’s a healer with an expertise in dark magic.”

“She’s the healer I told you about,” Harry added. “She checked me to make sure the horcrux was completely gone.”

“You told him about that?” Bill asked in astonishment.

“We tell each other everything,” Harry shrugged. “I know just as many secrets about Draco as he knows about me.”

That settled it. Draco was going to tell him about his happy family fantasy. A warm bubble swelled inside him, a mixture of love and excitement.

Then a scent hit his nostrils that sent the hackles raising on his wolf. The scent was unfamiliar but made the primal part of him feel cautious and territorial. It brought to mind something wild and dangerous.

They came around the corner of the house to meet a woman around Bill’s age with silver shoulder-length hair and piercing blue eyes. She had a cheerful smile and a welcoming demeanor but the dangerous-smelling scent was coming from her and Draco found himself on guard.

“Hiya, Harry!” she greeted brightly.

“Hi, Chiara, nice to see you again,” Harry replied. “I didn’t know you were coming for Christmas.”

“Oh I was in the country and Charlie invited me,” she explained. Her eyes slid from Harry to Draco, her eyebrows pulling together slightly in curiosity.

“Oh, Chiara this is Harry’s boyfriend, Draco Malfoy,” Bill introduced them. “Draco this is my friend Chiara Lobosca.”

“Bill, you didn’t tell me Harry was dating a werewolf,” Chiara remarked curiously.

Harry’s eyes went wide and Draco felt him stiffen beside him. Draco was similarly stunned by the unexpected declaration.

“Er...” Bill hesitated, looking between Draco and Harry and taking in their alarmed expressions. “That’s because I didn’t know that, Chi.”

Now it was Chiara’s turn for wide eyes. She stared for a second, then winced, offering Draco an apologetic expression.

“Whoops,” she uttered in a small voice. She looked hastily at Harry with a stricken expression. “Please tell me you already knew that.”

“I did,” Harry said hesitantly, looking at Bill helplessly.

Bill for his part only looked awkward. Draco was relieved at least that the Weasleys had raised their children with more liberal views about werewolves than was typical for wizarding families, even so-called blood-traitors.

“How did *you* know that?” Harry demanded tensely.

Suddenly it all made sense. The scent. She smelled wild and dangerous.

“Because she’s also a werewolf,” Draco said coldly, glaring at her. He briefly wondered if Bill knew that already but decided he didn’t care. If she wanted to go spilling his secrets, it would be the least she deserved.

“It’s the scent,” she explained in a small voice. “I’m so sorry, Draco, I don’t know what I was thinking.”

Draco thought about holding a grudge. His younger self would have. But she really did look sorry, and at least it was only Bill that had heard it.

He had just opened his mouth to offer his forgiveness when there was a sudden rustling in the bush on the side of the house. They all turned sharply to investigate the noise. Draco’s heart fell into his stomach when a familiar freckled face emerged from the bush.

Ron Weasley stood in front of them with a shocked look on his face. For a moment, no one moved, then Ron bolted.

Chapter End Notes

Whoopsie! Now Ron knows! Here comes that drama I promised! 😈

Chapter 38: Weasley's Final Mistake

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Ron!” Bill shouted and sprinted after his brother.

“Oh no, he’s not taken that well has he?” Chiara fretted.

Draco felt like the floor was falling out from under him. His life was over. Ron would tell everyone, starting with all the Weasleys, three of whom already knew and seemed fine with it but the rest he suspected would be fine, and Andromeda’s son-in-law had been a werewolf so she probably wouldn’t care, but then there was Neville and Luna. Neville would probably take it okay, bloody Gryffindor that he was but Luna, he couldn’t be sure. He remembered the many times Greyback had crooned through the door to the cellar that he’d like to tear poor Luna’s flesh from her bones with his teeth. She might have some strong opinions about werewolves, but then she *had* sent him that book. But all that was to say nothing of her father and Neville’s grandmother. And then there was Theo. There was no telling where he would land.

But none of that would compare to what would become of Draco’s life when they got back to Hogwarts and Ron told the whole school. And he had no doubt that he would. It would eventually make it to the press because he’s dating Harry Potter and then all of Wizarding Britain would know. He’d have to register and he’d never get a job, unless he wanted to work for George for the remainder of his life. He’d be shunned from wizarding society and Harry along with him if he stayed by his side. He’d never be allowed to marry him either! Werewolves were not permitted to marry. That beautiful image he had dreamed up of being a happy family with Harry and Teddy evaporated right before his eyes.

Harry squeezed his hand and he turned numbly to meet his urgent eyes.

“I’m not going to let him ruin your life,” he promised. And then he tore off after Bill and Ron, transforming mid-stride to catch up with them.

Draco had no idea what Harry planned to do but this was all so reminiscent of when they had been caught snogging. Harry hadn’t been able to stop Ron from spilling the beans then and he had little hope that he would succeed this time.

“We should go after them,” Chiara said hesitantly. “I’m so sorry, Draco! I’m such an idiot!”

He didn’t bother with a reply. He had been set to forgive her for her misstep when it had only been Bill. After all, she probably knew he was alright with werewolves and had made assumptions. But now the last person Draco had wanted to learn of it finally had, and he was less inclined.

He did take her advice and hurry after the others, though.

They came around the house just in time to see Harry in merlin form catch up with Ron after overtaking Bill and, after transforming back into a human, tackled him to the ground.

“Geroffme!” Ron shouted, struggling with his former best friend. “People deserve to know!”

Harry slapped a hand over Ron’s mouth and snarled.

“If you tell even one person, we are done forever, Ron,” he growled. “You understand me? You will have betrayed me. Do you get that?”

“What is happening here?” George exclaimed, hurrying over to try and intervene.

“He knows,” Draco said faintly, his hands trembling.

“Knows?” George looked around at Draco and took in the stricken look on his face and immediately put it together. “Oh. Oh fuck.”

Narcissa rushed over to Draco’s side and clutched his arm.

“What’s happened, love?” she asked urgently.

He couldn’t reply, he just shook his head mutely. He felt that if he opened his mouth again, he’d throw up. Tears had begun to stream down his face.

Ron was still struggling with Harry on the ground.

“If you ever cared about me, you’d keep this to yourself, Ron,” Harry continued to urge.

“Boys!” Mrs Weasley cried anxiously. “You must stop this fighting at once!”

“Mum, don’t get involved,” Bill urged her.

Ron managed to wrestle Harry off him, using his superior size to his advantage, and got his hand off his mouth so he could make his grand declaration.

“Malfoy’s a—”

“Ron don’t!” George and Bill shouted at the same time.

“—werewolf!” Ron finished, ignoring his brothers’ warnings.

A deafening silence fell over the gathering. Every single Weasley and guest had gathered to investigate the fight between Harry and Ron and so all of them had heard the announcement. Several pairs of eyes were all suddenly on Draco, some shocked, some horrified, some pitying.

Ron’s eyes were both angry and triumphant. He’d finally found something to hurt Draco with. He wondered if this was appropriate payback for six years of bullying. Draco didn’t ruin Weasley’s life; he only made fun of him, tried to land him in detention or lose house

points, sabotage his potions, be a general nuisance. Granted, he *had* been a Death Eater, but that hadn't been personal.

Not everyone was looking at Draco though. Ginny, George, and Bill were all glaring at their brother. Harry wasn't glaring. In fact, he had nothing but cold indifference on his face as he got to his feet and dusted himself off.

"We're done, Ron," he said coldly. "We're not family anymore. I will *never* forgive you for this."

Ron's expression flickered from triumph to uncertainty and maybe a hint of regret before slamming into rage.

"For the record, Ron," Ginny said furiously. "I've known for months and I had the good grace to keep it to myself."

"I've known for over a year now," Luna said airily as if remarking on the weather.

"You did?" Draco asked, his voice cracking. "You never said..."

"I didn't think you wanted people to know," she shrugged lightly. "I thought if you wanted me to know, you'd tell me."

He'd never had any intention of telling Luna. This confirmed her reason for getting him that book for Christmas. If she'd known for a year, that meant that she had known ever since her imprisonment at the Manor. She was deceptively clever, he'd learned, despite all of her assertions to the existence of fanciful creatures that only she could see.

"Suddenly, so many things make sense now," Neville said thoughtfully. "Harry's recent obsession with wolfsbane potion and becoming an animagus for starters."

"Not to mention all of those days Draco nearly fell asleep in class or drove us all batty bouncing his leg and tapping the end of his quill on the desk," Theo pointed out. "And why they were a day late for the holidays. Last Saturday was the full moon."

"Merlin!" Ginny exclaimed with a laugh. "I'm glad I'm not in your classes. Someone repeatedly bouncing their leg when I'm trying to concentrate is liable to get hexed just for irritating me."

Draco was relieved that they were joking about it. At least that meant they weren't shooting epithets at him and shunning him from their lives. He was especially relieved by Theo's nonchalance about the discovery; evidently his evolved opinion on muggles had bled over to creatures.

Harry came over to him and cradled his face in his hands, swiping the tears off his cheeks with his thumbs. He rested his forehead on Draco's and stared into his eyes.

"We're going to get through this," he promised him softly.

“Have you all lost your minds?” Ron demanded, finally pulling himself to his feet and roughly dusting himself off. “Did you not hear me?”

“Of course we heard you, Ron,” Charlie scoffed. “So he’s a werewolf. Who cares? And how is it any business of yours to go around telling us?”

“If Draco felt so inclined to tell us this life altering secret, he would have done,” Percy said pompously. “As he did not, it wasn’t any of our business.”

“You don’t think we deserve to know?” Ron snapped impatiently. “He’s been staying in our house!”

“The full moon was *last* week, you numpty,” George shot back.

“And if you’ll remember, he wasn’t here for it,” Ginny reminded him.

“Have you got a problem with werewolves, Weasley?” Theo asked in a cool challenge.

Harry went stiff and Draco felt his brow furrow against his forehead.

“Of course he hasn’t,” Mrs Weasley piped up, a note of uncertainty in her voice. “You liked Remus, didn’t you Ron?”

“I didn’t have a problem with Remus,” Ron confirmed hastily.

“But you *have* got a problem with other werewolves,” Theo pressed. “Lupin was ‘one of the good ones’ is that it?”

Harry whirled around and levelled Ron with a steely glare.

“*Have* you got a problem with werewolves, Ron?” Harry said, warning in his tone. “Because if you have, I can’t let you see Teddy ever again. I can’t have you poisoning my godson’s mind and giving him the impression his father was a monster.”

“Some of them *are* monsters!” Ron shot back.

“Name two!” Harry challenged.

“Greyback!” he snapped.

Draco flinched at the name while a visceral shudder went down his spine, his mother gripped his arm tighter. Distantly, he noticed Chiara have a similar reaction to his, shifting uncomfortably and rubbing a spot on her abdomen. Merlin! Was Greyback responsible for all the werewolves in Britain?

“And a second?”

Ron had no answer to this.

“One man does not make a monster out of an entire race, Ron!” Harry snarled.

“But it’s *Malfoy!*” he stubbornly argued.

“SO WHAT?” Harry exploded, finally losing his battle with his own temper.

A sudden and vicious cold wind whipped through the garden, tearing at their clothes and hair, blowing leaves and other detritus into their faces and catching the canopy and nearly taking it away if not for the quick actions of Mr Weasley and Bill. Several people cried out in alarm, ducking their heads and covering their faces.

Harry clenched his fists and closed his eyes tightly, breathing deeply and carefully through his nose. As he did, the wind died and Bill and his father were able to right the canopy.

“So what?” Harry repeated in a calmer tone. “So you try to ruin his life? Like Percy said, this is a *life altering* secret and it wasn’t yours to share. You *saw* what it was like for Remus, how he couldn’t hold a job, how he had to marry Tonks in secret because werewolves aren’t allowed. Werewolves have no rights, you know that! You would go out of your way to utterly destroy his future for the sake of a childish grudge—”

“It’s not *childish*—” Ron interrupted furiously.

“*I’m not done!*” Harry snarled, cutting him off. “Nothing, and I mean *nothing* that Draco has ever done to you compares to this. Childhood rivalry, teasing, bullying, getting us stuck with detention by goading us out of bed after curfew, that’s *childish*, Ron. He’s apologised and made amends to everyone he’s hurt.”

Neville was nodding emphatically at this but Ron didn’t care.

“He’s not done any apologising to *me*,” he pointed out.

“That’s because you don’t want to hear it!” Harry snapped impatiently. “But *this*,” Harry gestured at their audience. “This is over the line. You want to get back at him for our childhood? Fine, then you carry on being an ass to him, but you *don’t* ruin his life, you *don’t* out him.

“I can forgive a lot of things, Ron,” he continued in a much calmer and somewhat defeated voice. “I can forgive being an ass to me for wanting to speak up for him at his trial. I can forgive you not wanting to forgive him. I can forgive you outing our relationship to the whole common room. Hell, I can even forgive you calling me a homophobic slur!” Ron flinched at this but Harry ploughed forward. “But I can’t forgive you outing him like this, because if you can do that, you’re not the man I thought you were. Instead, you’re the man you think *he* is.”

“He’s a Death Eater!” Ron shouted, refusing to back down.

“Was!” Harry snapped. “Past tense! The world isn’t divided into good people and Death Eaters. The real world is much more messy than that, and you’re going to have to get that through your head before you even *think* about the Auror Programme or it’s going to chew you up and spit you out.

“Draco is a good man with a difficult past and I think he’s suffered enough for his choices. You can’t just throw away every person who’s made a bad choice. The *law* determined to give him a second chance, so why can’t you?”

“Because people don’t change,” Ron argued stubbornly. “He’s messing with your head and you’re too forgiving to see it.”

“He loves me, Ron!”

Ron scoffed.

“When we were glued together, we couldn’t lie,” Harry said, finally revealing his trump card. “I’ve been trying to tell you for ages but you wouldn’t listen. When people asked us questions, we had to answer truthfully because of your failed Veritaserum that got on our skin. He told me he’s fancied me for years. *Years*, Ron, as in multiple. He’s not faking this. You’ve seen his patronus haven’t you? You can’t fake that.”

For the first time since the argument had begun, Ron was silent, an uncertain look on his face.

“He said he was sorry for everything,” Harry continued quietly. “He didn’t *just say* either; he couldn’t lie. He really meant it. And if you had let me talk months ago when you issued that ultimatum, I would have told you then.”

Speech continued to fail Ron, finally brought low by Harry’s rebuke. He looked around at all the disappointed and furious looks on his family’s faces and Draco was surprised to see his expression crumple into shame. He looked past Harry at Draco and for once his eyes didn’t show hatred, only regret.

Apparently unable to come up with any further argument, he swiftly brushed past Harry and entered the house. He half expected him to slam the door behind him but it only fell shut with a soft click. Silence followed his departure.

Harry stared distantly at the ground. Despite the attempt at cold indifference he placed on his face, Draco could see the underlying heartbreak. Even when Harry said he was done with Ron, he wasn’t done letting him hurt him. The old Draco would have derided him for his naïvety, but all he could see was a man who desperately wanted to be loved.

He strode across the gap between them and threw his arms around his boyfriend. Harry returned the embrace immediately and buried his face in his shoulder. Draco ignored the discomfort of his glasses digging into his collarbone and stroked his back soothingly.

“I’m sorry,” Harry murmured against his jumper. “I tried to stop him.”

“It’s not your fault,” Draco soothed.

“No, it’s my fault,” Chiara said morosely. “Me and my big mouth.”

“It’s fine, Chiara,” Draco told her over Harry’s shoulder, finally finding it in him to forgive her. Her contrition made it easy. “You didn’t mean for him to hear.”

“Still,” she argued. “I shouldn’t have assumed Bill knew about you just because he knew about me. It was stupid.”

“Ron shouldn’t have been spying,” Bill argued.

“Should I maybe go speak to him?” Mrs Weasley wondered fretfully.

“Leave him, Molly,” Mr Weasley pacified her. “He needs some time to think about what he’s done and the consequences.”

“You don’t think he’ll tell everyone at Hogwarts that Draco’s a werewolf will he?” Ginny worried.

“I think all of our reactions to the news will give him second thoughts,” Charlie said thoughtfully. “We didn’t have the reactions he expected we would. That’s got to make him think.”

“I think perhaps I should have a word with him after he calms down,” Percy said, frowning up at Ron’s window. “I don’t want him to make the same mistake I did, turning on his family.”

“Oh Percy, you didn’t turn on us!” Mrs Weasley wailed, throwing herself on him in a desperate hug.

“Of course I did, mother,” he argued, patting her back. “And it was the biggest mistake of my life and I won’t let Ron make the same one.”

Draco thought there was some Weasley family drama that he was missing here, but decided it wasn’t his business.

“And here I thought Fred would be the thing to bring Christmas down,” George remarked in a sad attempt at levity.

“I think we all knew the first Christmas after the war would be the hardest,” Madam Longbottom said gently.

“I don’t think we were *quite* prepared for this kind of upset though,” Mr Weasley said with a sigh.

“Well I was promised a drama filled holiday,” Theo quipped. “I think everyone lived up to that expectation. I spent last Christmas drinking alone at a pub with equally lonely muggles so this is quite the step up.”

“I spent last Christmas in a cellar,” Luna said mildly.

“I spent last Christmas visiting my parents’ graves for the first time and then nearly getting killed by Nagini,” Harry countered, finally lifting his head from Draco’s shoulder and releasing his embrace.

“You win,” Theo snorted.

This finally broke the tension and hesitant chuckles went around the group.

Theo marched over to Draco purposefully and placed a hand on his shoulder.

“Your secret’s safe with me, mate,” he promised him. “This doesn’t change anything between us.”

“Yeah,” Neville added. “We don’t care that you’re a werewolf. Right?” he added looking around the group for confirmation.

Every head nodded in agreement and several voices spoke up encouragingly, their words overlapping so he couldn’t understand any of it but he felt their support anyway. He was overwhelmed with emotion and couldn’t stop the sob that spilled out of him.

“I don’t deserve any of you,” he blubbered tearfully.

Harry pulled him back into a hug but this time it was his turn to cry into his shoulder. Theo surprised him by joining in on the hug, then Neville, Luna, and Ginny followed suit. He had never felt so much love and acceptance in all his life and it only made him cry harder.

Eventually everyone was able to pull themselves together and the festivities resumed. There was an underlying tension present amongst the Weasleys and Draco noticed several of them shooting glances up at Ron’s bedroom window.

At some point, Percy made good on his promise to talk to his brother and went up. He was gone for half an hour and when he returned, he had a quiet word with his parents before joining Charlie and Mr Lovegood who were discussing wyverns. Draco didn’t know Percy well enough to read from his face if the talk had gone well and felt it wasn’t his place to ask.

His mother and aunt had resumed catching up and were chatting happily like no time at all had passed since Andromeda was disowned.

Teddy was being passed around for everyone to coo over and occasionally allowed to crawl around in the grass and attempt to eat bugs. Harry and Andromeda kept one eye on him at all times but he was being well babysat by Ginny and Luna who were also crawling around in the grass next to him to keep him out of trouble.

Harry kept checking on Draco but he kept insisting that he was okay. He was sure they’d have a much more honest conversation that night when they were alone but he felt he was being mostly honest, all things considered. Despite being publicly outed as a werewolf, the warm welcome and affection he’d received from the Weasleys hadn’t been altered, and his friends hadn’t turned away from him. All in all, he was much better than okay. At least for now.

As the evening wore on and Mrs Weasley started assigning everyone jobs for setting up for dinner, Draco noticed a worried frown forming on her face. He had just come back into the kitchen from putting out silverware to ask how else he could help and spotted her staring forlornly up the staircase. Guilt squirmed in his gut at the tension he'd created in the Weasley family. She started when she noticed he'd re-entered the room and plastered a kind smile over her face that didn't quite hide the worry.

"Oh, Draco dear, did you need something?"

"Er, no, Mrs Weasley," he said shaking his head. "I was just going to the toilet."

"Oh of course, dear," she said with false cheer and returned her attention to the stovetop where she began stirring the gravy unnecessarily.

He bypassed the kitchen and headed upstairs. He didn't really need the toilet. He was going to make this right.

He went all the way to the top of the house where he'd not yet been but where he knew Ron's room to be. He hesitated on the landing outside a door with a Chudley Cannons pennant pinned to it, took a deep breath, and knocked.

"Go away, Percy," Ron's muffled voice came from the other side of the door.

"It's not Percy," Draco answered.

There was a lengthy pause wherein Ron undoubtedly battled with shock that Draco was knocking at his door and indecision over whether to open it or shout at him to fuck off. Then the door was unceremoniously wrenched open and Draco was face to face with Ron's scowling expression.

"What do you want?" he demanded with less venom than Draco had expected. He sounded depressed.

"Can we talk?"

Ron stared at him incredulously for a long time. Just when Draco thought he was going to slam the door in his face, he sighed and stepped back into his room and threw himself onto his bed. Taking this as invitation, Draco stepped gingerly into the room and forced himself not to comment on the unnatural amount of orange in the room (honestly, even the ceiling was painted orange!). He manoeuvred around the cramped space and sat down on the edge of George's cot.

Ron just watched him warily, arms folded, leaning against his headboard, waiting for him to explain why he was in his room. Draco took another steadying breath and forced himself to speak.

"I'm sorry," he said. It was usually a good place to begin these sorts of conversations, and this apology was long overdue.

Ron didn't interrupt, only raised an eyebrow. Whether it was in challenge, surprise, or disbelief, he couldn't say, so he carried on.

"I'm sorry for the bullying, the nasty comments about your home and your family – who are actually brilliant, by the way – I'm sorry for hexing you in the corridors, and getting you sent to detention. I'm sorry for 'Weasley is Our King' even though I found it very funny at the time, it was really mean and you didn't deserve it."

He took another deep breath for the hardest part.

"But more than all of that, Harry was wrong when he said I hadn't done anything to you that compared to what you just did out there. I'm so unbelievably sorry that what I did two years ago almost killed you. I was sorry then too but I couldn't say anything. I was under immeasurable pressure and my mother's life was on the line and I know that's no excuse but it's all I have. I never meant for you to get hurt. I don't expect you to forgive me, but I do hope you believe me. If I could go back and change who I was back then, I would in a heartbeat."

Ron continued to remain silent, just staring at Draco like he couldn't quite figure him out.

Draco was just about to give up waiting for a response and just go when he finally spoke.

"What did you say to Harry to convince him to speak for you at trial?" he asked.

"I didn't say anything," he replied frowning. "I didn't even know he'd be there."

"He forgives too easily," Ron sighed looking up at his orange ceiling.

"I agree."

Ron turned his head sharply to stare at Draco incredulously.

"You think he shouldn't have forgiven you?"

"I think he should have made me earn it more," Draco shrugged.

"Why did you do it?" he asked suddenly.

"Do what?" Draco asked, perplexed.

"Become a Death Eater," he clarified. "Work for... *him*."

Draco sighed and leaned back on his hands.

"I never wanted to," he confided. "I was born into it. My father was one before I was ever born, so when he came back, I was never given the choice not to. I suppose I could have refused, but then I would be dead. And if it ended there, I might have been brave enough to take that chance, but there was always the threat that if I didn't fall in line, my mother would pay for my disobedience. I think it's probably pretty easy to be brave with your own life but I wasn't able to do the right thing and sacrifice my mother along the way for it."

“You could have run,” Ron accused. “You both could have.”

“Not with this,” Draco sighed, placing his hand over his left forearm where his Mark was covered by the sleeve of his jumper. “It’s cursed. No matter where I ran, he’d have found me.”

“What about your feelings towards muggleborns?” Ron challenged.

“I was an idiot kid, parroting the beliefs my father put into my head since I was old enough to speak,” he explained. “The older I got, the less it made any sense but I carried on parroting my father because it was habit, and if I didn’t, I’d soon make an enemy out of far too many people close to me for it to be wise. But nothing makes one sympathetic towards downtrodden minorities quite like becoming one.”

“You’re saying becoming a werewolf made you rethink your views on muggleborns?” Ron asked doubtfully.

“In a roundabout way, I suppose it did,” he replied with a soft chuckle. “No, actually. After I became a werewolf I realised that my father was the fool that led me down the path that brought me to that moment, and it made me re-evaluate every lesson he’d ever taught me. See, the bite that turned me was intentional,” he wasn’t sure why he was telling Ron all this but the redhead was fixed on his explanation so he continued. “It was a punishment, see. For failing to kill Dumbledore. It didn’t matter that he was dead anyway, I was being punished because *I* was the one ordered to do it, and I didn’t.

“And I didn’t just fail to do it because it was too difficult a task. I had come but one curse away from success, but I couldn’t bring myself to utter it. Even with mine and my mother’s lives on the line, I couldn’t do it. I didn’t fail, I refused.

“This,” he continued, pulling the collar of his jumper back to reveal part of the bite scar on his shoulder. “Was punishment for my hesitation. A lesson not to hesitate in the future.”

“Did you learn from that lesson?” Ron asked in a small voice and a grimace, eyes fixed on the scar.

“I did,” Draco nodded. “Though perhaps not what he’d hoped I’d learn. I learned that he was a sick, demented monster who would never be satisfied with anything I or anyone else did on his orders. I learned that my father was a fool for ever following him in the first place and putting me in this position. I learned that he had to go down by any means necessary.

“So when you three turned up in the Manor and I was asked to identify you, I refused to do it. I knew Harry was our best chance out of the mess we were all in, but more than that, just like with Dumbledore, I couldn’t bring myself to be responsible for another person’s death. I really am very sorry for almost killing you.”

They were silent for a moment while Ron took it all in. Then he sat forward, planting his feet on the floor and placing his elbows on his knees. Draco took this change in posture for a good sign.

“Have you told Harry all of this?”

“I’ve told Harry everything,” he confirmed. “There isn’t anything about me he doesn’t know. Well there’s one thing but I’ll tell him later.”

That image of a happy family with Harry was slowly reforming in his mind.

“You really love him don’t you,” Ron sighed in defeat.

In answer Draco just smiled, drew his wand, and cast his patronus. The silver merlin flew about the room and landed on the bedpost next to Ron’s head. Ron stared at the patronus in awe. It occurred to Draco that he hadn’t yet seen it up close.

“I’d like to spend the rest of my life with him,” Draco confessed. “Don’t tell him that though, I’m not ready to tell him yet. Feels a bit too soon.”

“You wouldn’t do anything to hurt him would you?” Ron asked, still staring at the patronus. Draco was surprised that the question sounded more rhetorical than suspicious.

“Never,” he said firmly. “Why do you think I’m here talking to you?”

Ron frowned in confusion and turned his attention back to Draco.

“I don’t understand.”

“This conflict between me and you is hurting Harry,” he explained. “And I can’t bear for him to hurt. I’m burying the hatchet, Weasley, for Harry.”

“Harry’s done with me,” Ron said, shaking his head in defeat. “I’ve fucked it too badly this time. I’ve been a shit friend.”

“You really have,” Draco agreed. Ron glared at him and he returned with an earnest expression of his own. “Honestly! If you genuinely believed I was out to harm Harry somehow by getting close to him, how was giving him an ultimatum and then publicly ditching him the best way to help?”

Ron just gaped like a fish so Draco drove the point home.

“You’ve been so concerned the last few months that I was going to break his heart that you completely missed that *you*’ve been the one breaking it all along. He was up half the night crying over you last night for Merlin’s sake! Heartbroken that he loves you more than you ever did him.”

“But that’s not true!” he cried in denial. “He’s my best mate!”

“Well you’ve done a shit job acting like it.”

Ron buried his head in his hands, clenching his hair tightly in his fists.

“He’s never going to forgive me this time, is he?” he muttered morosely.

“I think you’d be surprised,” Draco shrugged. “Harry has a remarkably forgiving nature. You don’t need to look any further than me for the proof of that. I think, despite what he said, there’s every chance that he’ll forgive you if you actually apologise this time.”

“I’m rubbish at apologies,” Ron groaned at his knees.

“It just takes practice,” Draco smirked. “I’ve become a bit of an expert in it. You could practice on me if you like.”

Ron dislodged his fingers from his hair, leaving it spiked up haphazardly all over the place and stared at Draco with a stricken expression.

“I’m sorry I told everyone you were a werewolf,” he said tightly.

Draco wasn’t expecting that.

“I wasn’t fishing for an apology for myself,” he said hastily. “I meant you could practice what you wanted to say to Harry.”

“Oh,” he said lamely, then sighed. “Well I’m sorry anyway. It was a really shit thing to do. I really don’t have a problem with werewolves, honestly. And I’m not homophobic either. I shouldn’t have called Harry a poof and you by extension, I just wanted to hurt him and it was wrong.”

“That’s not a half bad apology, Weasley,” Draco said teasingly. He stood and stuck out his hand. “Why don’t we call it even and make nice for Harry’s sake?”

Ron stared at the offered hand for so long that Draco thought he might refuse it, but eventually stood and took his hand in a slightly firmer than necessary handshake.

“Fine,” he said with a smirk. “I forgive you for trying to kill me.”

“I never *tried* to kill you,” Draco denied.

“Almost accidentally killing me, then,” Ron amended.

“And I forgive you for outing me as a werewolf to your entire family and an assortment of guests which included Theo Nott which could have been a massive disaster and you’re lucky it wasn’t or I might not have been so forgiving.”

They released each other’s hand and stepped back as far as the small space allowed.

“You should come down,” Draco told him. “Your mother looks to be on the verge of tears, George is planning some kind of retribution, and Percy thinks you’re going to disown the family.”

“Like he has room to criticise,” Ron drawled, rolling his eyes. “You sure I’d be welcome?”

“It’s *your* family, what do you think?”

"I suppose it all depends on what Harry thinks," he sighed and led the way back out into the stairwell and downstairs where sounds of people gearing up for Christmas supper could be heard filtering in from the open kitchen door. "You ever notice how everyone always just does whatever Harry thinks is best?"

Draco laughed.

"Yeah, I had noticed that," he chuckled. "It's usually because what he thinks is best usually is."

"You think he ever gets tired of being right all the time?"

Draco snickered at that but then stopped abruptly when he noticed they had an audience.

At the bottom of the stairs was Mrs Weasley and Harry staring at them in confusion and disbelief. They both had their hands full, Mrs Weasley with a tray of roast turkey and Harry with a stack of plates.

"Hey," Ron said quietly.

"Ron," Mrs Weasley said hesitantly. "Did Draco convince you to come down for supper?"

"Er," he glanced over his shoulder at Draco and then looked back at his mother. "Yeah, he did."

"That's good..." she hedged, looking uncertainly between Harry and Ron. "I'm just going to go put this on the table."

Mrs Weasley hurried outside with the turkey but Harry remained rooted to the spot, staring at them. He was scrutinising them with a confused expression like he was trying to work out a difficult arithmancy problem. His eyes kept flicking back and forth between them, trying to piece together what had happened upstairs.

"Can we talk?" Ron asked tentatively.

"Er..." he glanced over Ron's shoulder at Draco with a question in his eyes. Draco nodded encouragingly. Harry frowned in confusion but shrugged anyway. "Sure, fine."

Draco squeezed past Ron on the stairs and took the plates from Harry. Ron went into the sitting room so they could talk alone and Harry used his brief absence to corner Draco.

"What did you say to him?" he demanded.

"I apologised," he answered simply. "It was long overdue as a matter of fact."

"He outs you in front of everyone and *you* apologise?"

"His wrong doesn't make mine right," Draco pointed out. "I also forgave him for outing me. I don't think he'll tell anyone else."

“You *forgave* him?” he asked incredulous. “Just like that?”

“Yeah,” he shrugged. “Thought I’d follow your example for once. Go talk to him. I’m betting he’ll listen this time.”

He gave him a swift kiss and carried the plates outside, leaving his boyfriend to hopefully come to a truce with his ex-best friend.

“Where have you been?” Ginny demanded, Teddy (now with ginger hair and looking like yet another Weasley) on one hip. She took the plates from him with a wave of her wand, sending them to their places on the table.

“Talking to your brother,” he said shortly.

Ginny looked around at the four of her brothers present at the table then back at Draco.

“You don’t mean Ron?”

George looked up at this.

“You talked to Ron?” he asked. “How is the house not burning down?”

“It was a good talk, actually,” Draco informed them. “We’ve come to a truce. Harry’s talking to him now.”

“You’re telling us you forgave him after what he did?” Theo asked incredulously.

“*Yes!*” Draco exclaimed exasperatedly. “Is that so difficult to believe? We talked, we came to an understanding, I apologised for past transgressions, he apologised for earlier and we shook hands and made peace.”

“Wait, hang on,” Neville cut in. “Did you just say Ron *apologised*? Like, he actually said the words ‘I’m sorry’?”

“Yes.”

“Yes?” Ginny demanded.

“Yes, he said those exact words,” Draco confirmed. “And some others but that’s between us.”

“Merlin’s balls!” George exclaimed.

“George!” Mrs Weasley scolded. “Language!”

George waved her off impatiently.

“I don’t think Ron’s ever apologised for anything in his life,” he said in awe. “Not unless mum was threatening him.”

“Oh don’t be so dramatic, George,” Mrs Weasley scoffed with a fond smile.

They continued setting up the table and socializing while the food rested under stasis charms. Stomachs were rumbling all around but Mrs Weasley insisted on waiting for Harry and Ron to join them before they began eating.

“Are you alright, love?” Draco’s mother asked him quietly after the sixth time he glanced back at the sitting room window of the Burrow.

“Oh, I’m fine, mother,” he sighed. “I just wonder if maybe it was too soon to put those two back in a room together to work it out.”

She made a thoughtful humming sound.

“I couldn’t help but notice that Harry was very protective of you back there,” she said idly.

“You mean when he threw his former best friend to the ground and threatened to never forgive him if he outed me? Yeah, I noticed that too.”

“Indeed,” she said with a sly smile. “He seemed to take it quite personally. I recall he told him he’d be betrayed by the action. As if the secret was his own.”

“What are you getting at, mother?” he asked, turning and levelling her with a searching look.

“I just think it’s so lovely that you’ve found someone who would so faithfully bind his own fate with yours. It makes a mother wonder.”

“Wonder *what*, mother?” he sighed impatiently.

Before she could answer, Ginny came up holding Teddy and thrust the baby out at him.

“Here, babysit your cousin,” she ordered briskly. “I have to go get something from the house.”

“You mean you have to spy on Harry and your brother?” Draco drawled, but took the baby anyway. “You’re too nosy for your own good, Ginny.”

She smirked and winked at him but didn’t offer a reply and skipped off into the house.

Teddy babbled delightedly at Draco and his hair turned a pale blonde and his eyes turned from amber to grey. Draco’s heart skipped to see his own features mirrored on the baby’s face. Teddy giggled and reached a tiny hand up to fist into Draco’s chin-length hair and tugged on it. Draco winced and delicately untangled the tiny hand from his hair and offered him a finger to grasp instead.

“Now, none of that,” he chided gently.

His mother made a funny noise like a laugh and a sob at the same time beside him and he looked around at her, having completely forgotten what they’d been talking about. She was looking between Draco and Teddy adoringly, her eyes shining with unshed tears.

“Are you alright, mother?” he asked in concern.

“Oh, I’m just lovely, Draco,” she said wetly, a bright smile on her face despite the tears. “This is just the best day I’ve had in a very long time despite certain events.”

Draco knew the feeling. It seemed to be happening to him a lot lately. A day would start out normal or even nice and then go completely to shit in the middle and then turn into the best day of his life so far; when he and Harry first got stuck together, then when Ron discovered they were dating, and now today.

Just then, Ginny came sprinting out of the house and made a beeline for her seat at the table next to George without taking Teddy back from Draco, and fixed a nonchalant look on her face. He was just about to ask her what her deal was when Harry and Ron came out of the house looking wrecked with emotion. They didn’t look angry anymore but it didn’t look like they were back to being best friends either.

Draco went straight to his boyfriend, baby still on his hip. Ron veered off to go sit at the table without a word, looking contrite and resigned. He sat down between his father and Percy and didn’t speak to anyone.

“Hey,” Draco said softly to Harry. “Everything go okay?”

Harry heaved a massive sigh and reached to take Teddy from him who cheerfully reached out for his godfather without concern at their emotional state. The little metamorphmagus’ eyes turned vibrant green to match Harry’s but his hair remained blonde. A wild thought that the baby looked like he was their son with their combined colouring flew through his head but he banished it for the moment.

“We’re fine, I guess,” Harry murmured, allowing Teddy to grasp one of his fingers. “I don’t think we’ll be like how we used to be, at least not for a long time, but I think we’re fine.” He looked at Draco in awe. “He actually apologised for how he’s been these last few months. I’ve accepted his apology but I can’t forgive him. Not yet at least.”

Draco was surprised, though he supposed he shouldn’t be. Ron had crossed a line he’d never before crossed and Harry was all out of forgiveness for his oldest friend. While Harry had told him he’d never forgive him, Draco was certain he probably would in due time. But Ron would likely have to spend a good long time earning it.

“Take your time,” Draco told him gently. “But in the meantime, let’s have supper. Mrs Weasley is insisting we all wait until everyone is present before we begin and I’m afraid if we wait much longer, there will be rioting.”

That got a small laugh out of him and Harry leaned up to give him a chaste kiss on the lips which unfortunately put Draco’s hair in grabbing range of Teddy again. He winced and Harry laughed, taking Teddy’s tiny hand and dislodging it from Draco’s hair.

The scene was so domestic his heart ached. He wanted this life so badly. It was too soon to ask though. They’ve only been dating a few months, only told each other they loved each other less than a month ago. Everything was too soon but it all felt right anyway.

“Marry me.”

The words left Draco's mouth before he could manage to prevent them.

He heard several gasps from the assembled dinner guests. Of course they had been eavesdropping. Draco would roll his eyes if he hadn't had them fixed on Harry's, waiting anxiously for an answer.

Emerald eyes stared widely at him in astonishment. Harry's mouth had fallen open slightly. He was taking so long to reply that Draco's anxiety began to peak.

"It's too soon, isn't it?" he asked anxiously. "Never mind, forget I said—"

Suddenly Harry's mouth was on his, silencing him. His free hand cupped around the back of Draco's head, pulling him down to his level and he kissed him with a passion he'd yet to experience. He finally pulled away when Teddy started fussing from being cramped between them.

"Yes," he gasped when they parted.

"Yes?" Draco queried, his head spinning from the kiss.

"Yes, I will marry you."

Pandemonium erupted around them and they were suddenly surrounded by Weasleys and assorted other friends and family.

Christmas dinner was momentarily forgotten as everyone crowded around Draco and Harry to shout their congratulations and other celebratory remarks. But Draco could barely hear or see any of it. He only had eyes for Harry.

He'd said yes! He was going to marry Harry Potter!

Chapter End Notes

I know y'all wanted to eviscerate Ron but I couldn't let him be the bad guy forever. This is a story about redemption and making the right choices, it wouldn't be right for Draco to have a redemption arc and not give Ron one too. His and Harry's relationship will never be the same again though, that's for sure.

If you want to know what Ron said to Harry in private, you can read about it in [Chapter 8](#) of Harry's Choice.

Chapter 39: Fiancés

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“I can’t believe you asked first!” Harry exclaimed, clinging to him.

Someone had taken Teddy from him and they’d eventually managed to get everyone to settle down enough to start supper. All of their friends had crowded down on one end while the more grown up adults had taken the other. Ron hovered somewhere between them looking like he wanted to be included but seemed to feel out of place.

“I think hanging around with Gryffindors has rubbed off on you, mate,” Theo teased.

“It *was* a very impulsive thing to do,” Luna agreed. “I really thought Harry would be the one to propose.”

“Seriously!” Harry exclaimed louder than necessary, still leaning heavily on Draco’s shoulder.

George had been plying him with celebratory drinks and he hadn’t thought twice before downing several. Most had likely been alcohol, given his currently giddy behaviour, but at least one had been pranked as his hair was now flashing through a variety of lurid colours, which George had assured them would wear off in an hour.

“I was just telling your mum how I’d like to marry you but not to say anything cos I thought you’d freak out if I proposed so soon!”

“Wait, you what?” Draco exclaimed, looking down the table at his mother who only hid an amused smile behind her wine glass while Andromeda giggled next to her. That explained the odd remarks his mother had been making earlier.

“You’re both mental,” Ginny teased, shaking her head.

“I think this was inevitable,” Neville shrugged. “They’ve been circling each other for seven years. It might not have been the most conventional relationship but this was so obviously where it was headed.”

“You thought when we ended up doing detention in the Forbidden Forest when we were eleven, that this was headed towards marriage?” Draco asked him skeptically.

“No,” Neville laughed. “When we ended up in detention, I thought you were a wanker who got us all in trouble.”

“I’m *sorry*?” Draco shouted in mock outrage. “*I* wasn’t the one smuggling a baby dragon through the castle!”

Harry burst out laughing at this and even Ron gave a snicker.

“Hang on,” Neville said with wide eyes. “You’re not telling me there really *was* a dragon?”

“Yes!” Draco exclaimed, throwing his hands up in exasperation. “What an outrageous lie that would have been!”

Harry and Ron were now both completely doubled over in laughter.

Their conversation had drawn the attention of the others who were looking on with intense curiosity. Draco noted that Charlie seemed much too interested in his parsnips and was pointedly not looking either in their direction or at his mother, who seemed to have noticed the same odd behaviour Draco had.

“Do you know something about this baby dragon, Charlie?” Mrs Weasley asked pointedly.

“I have no idea what they’re talking about, mum,” he said unconvincingly.

Charlie, Draco recalled, had been the one Harry and his friends had written to for advice on what to do about the dragon. He was likely who they were sending the creature to when Harry and Hermione had been caught out of bed after hours.

Evidently not wishing to have any more family drama on this day, Mrs Weasley decided to let the matter rest for the moment and didn’t press her son on his obvious lie.

Harry and Ron were still snickering and apparently having a difficult time collecting themselves. The alcohol probably had something to do with it.

“I’m so glad you both find this so funny,” Draco drawled. “You cost me twenty house points that night.”

“We lost a hundred and fifty!” Neville exclaimed, outraged.

“So that’s how that happened!” George exclaimed. “Even Fred and I never lost that many points at once!”

“I had wondered how that had happened, myself,” Theo remarked. “Odd that we didn’t hear about the dragon. I would have expected that to be school-wide news.”

“McGonagall thought Harry and Hermione had been playing a prank on Draco,” Neville explained petulantly while Harry and Ron finally collected themselves. “And she thought I’d unfortunately gotten caught in the crossfire. So had I, as a matter of fact. For *years!*”

“Sorry, Nev,” Harry said through giggles. “We couldn’t exactly tell you we’d been smuggling a dragon out of the school.”

“Where did you even *get* a baby dragon?”

“Hagrid,” Harry and Ron answered at the same time.

“Of course it was Hagrid,” Theo rolled his eyes.

“And how exactly did you get it *out*?” Neville asked.

Neither Harry nor Ron offered an answer to that but their eyes flicked briefly down the table at Charlie who was doing a poor job of looking innocent.

“Dragon smuggling, Charlie?” Mrs Weasley sighed in exasperation. “Honestly!”

“The dragon’s egg had been smuggled in the first place, mum,” Ron said, defending his brother. “We were just... un-smuggling it.”

George snorted.

“Un-smuggling?” he mocked.

“Yeah,” Harry agreed. “Norberta is happy and safe on a dragon preserve now.”

“*Norberta*?” Draco asked incredulously. “Who names a dragon, Norberta?”

“Hagrid,” several voices answered at once and everyone dissolved into giggles once more.

There was much laughter and talking over the rest of supper and even Ron wasn’t unbearable. He was behaving himself and occasionally joining conversations but it was still very obvious that he remained a bit of an outsider to their group.

George had at some point, unbeknownst to all, spiked several drinks with the hair colour changing prank and nearly everyone’s hair had begun flickering a rainbow of colours. Fleur was particularly annoyed that her perfect silver-blond hair kept changing colours but Bill whispered something in her ear that made her blush and she stopped pouting. Luna and her father were especially delighted by it and kept admiring the effect in the backs of their spoons. Curiously, only Mrs Weasley, Madam Longbottom, and Draco’s mother seemed to have been spared. Evidently George was too wary of their wrath to attempt to prank those three formidable women. Even Andromeda hadn’t been spared from the prank and Teddy seemed quite delighted by his grandmother’s hair and kept trying to change his to match but by the time he got the colour right, hers would change again.

The sun had started to set and the air had begun to get chilly but the canopy had been outfitted with warming charms so that they were all comfortable in just their jumpers. Paper lanterns had been set to float about the garden and over the tables, lighting them all in a soft flickering glow. It all looked like something out of a children’s picture book.

Once pudding was served, George insisted they sing some Christmas carols and cajoled some of his brothers into joining in. The atmosphere was incredibly jolly and Christmasy.

Draco noticed that Harry wasn’t joining in the singing. Instead he just smiled and swayed or bobbed to the tune.

“You’re not going to sing, Harry?” Draco asked with a grin. “Is your singing voice really that awful? I promise I won’t make fun.”

“You would,” he teased, sticking his tongue out at him.

“I might,” he acceded, stealing a swift kiss in an attempt to catch his tongue but was too slow.

“I don’t know the words,” Harry admitted when they parted.

“The words?”

“To the songs,” he explained. “I don’t know these songs.”

“Everyone knows Christmas carols,” Draco insisted.

“I think muggles must have different carols,” Harry shrugged.

“And in the last seven years you never learned any?”

“I spent most Christmases at Hogwarts,” he said thoughtfully. “I know *God Rest Ye Merry Hippogriffs*. Sort of. Sirius sang it once.”

“What sort of Christmas songs do muggles sing?” he asked curiously. He mostly wanted to get Harry to sing. He had to know if he sang well or if he was shit so he could tease him.

Harry thought about it for a moment then grinned.

“Frosty the Snowman/Was a jolly happy soul,” he sang slightly out of tune.

The others turned to listen, though Draco doubted the many purebloods at the table had ever heard the song.

“With a corncob pipe and a button nose/And two eyes made out of coal,” Andromeda joined in. Her voice was much more musical than Harry’s; there was evidence in her cadence of singing lessons.

Harry beamed and continued singing with her.

“Frosty the Snowman/Is a fairytale they say/He was made of snow/But the children know/How he came to life one day,” they continued in unison.

“There must have been some magic/In that old silk hat they found,” Theo suddenly joined in. *“For when they placed it on his head/He began to dance around!”*

Draco had forgotten that Theo had spent time with muggles. He must have learned the song just last Christmas.

The three of them carried on singing, their voices not quite harmonizing but the joy quite evident. When they finished with the last *“thumpity thump thump”* everyone applauded like they’d given the performance of their lives.

Harry grinned sheepishly and looked at Draco for approval. He pulled him close by the front of his jumper and kissed him just enthusiastically enough for George to wolf-whistle but not so much that he scandalized all the parents at the table. When he pulled away, Harry leaned

forward to chase his lips then pouted when he found them out of reach. Draco grinned cheekily at him.

“You need singing lessons, love,” he teased.

Ginny let out a loud snort at that and the whole table dissolved into giggles again. Harry just gave him a dopey grin.

“Yes, dear,” he said indulgently.

“I just noticed something just frankly sickeningly adorable about you two,” Ginny remarked with an amused grin.

“Oh?” Draco queried. “What’s that?”

“You call Harry ‘love’,” she explained. “And he calls you ‘dear’.”

“Well spotted, Ginny,” Draco rolled his eyes with a smirk. “What’s so adorable about that?”

“Besides the obvious,” Neville added, snickering.

“It’s adorable because Draco’s mum calls him ‘love’ and my mum calls Harry ‘dear’,” Ginny said in exasperation. “You gave each other terms of endearment you’ve been called by your mothers.”

That *was* adorable, Draco had to admit.

“But Mrs Weasley isn’t Harry’s mother,” Theo pointed out.

“She’s as good as,” Harry argued.

This caused some kind of commotion up the table. Draco turned to see what had happened and saw that Mrs Weasley had apparently lost her grip on her spoon and it had clattered noisily into her bowl of sticky toffee pudding. She looked like she might cry.

She clambered to her feet and rushed Harry to engulf him in a hug which he returned sheepishly. She really did cry now, sobbing into his shoulder about how much she loved him and how much he’d always be a part of the family. Harry shot Ginny and George a helpless look.

“Don’t look at us, mate,” George snickered, no help at all. “You had to know this would be her response.”

“Mum, you’re going to suffocate him,” Ginny said, laughing, taking pity on Harry.

Mrs Weasley pulled away and sniffled. She fussed with Harry’s jumper, straightening it and tried to fix his hair which was hopeless.

“I’ve messed up your jumper,” she fretted, brushing a hand over the spot she had soaked with her tears.

“It’s fine, mum,” he said softly.

Mrs Weasley’s breath hitched, and for a moment she looked like she might throw herself on him again, but she managed to control herself, but just barely.

“Well then, Draco. You know what this means don’t you?” Theo remarked teasingly. Draco shot him a quizzical look, no idea where he was going. “Once you marry Harry, all the Weasleys will be your in-laws.”

“Ooh,” George crooned ominously with a grin. “The horror!”

Draco couldn’t help but laugh at his antics, his face heating in mild embarrassment.

“If your eleven-year-old self could see you now,” Harry teased, delight dancing in his eyes.

“He’d probably have a conniption!” Ginny crowed, laughing. “Surrounded by Weasleys and preparing to become a member of the family!”

“One of us,” Harry intoned like he had when Draco had voluntarily sat at the Gryffindor table.

Soon half the Weasleys were chanting “one of us, one of us!” Only their parents and Percy had refrained and while Ron didn’t join in the chant, he had a pained sort of amusement on his face.

The silliness allowed Mrs Weasley to retreat back to her seat without much awkwardness, though she still looked somewhat weepy. Mr Weasley gave her a warm hug when she sat back down next to him and clasped her hand of top of the table looking at her fondly while she continued to gaze at Harry like she’d never seen him before.

“There’s plenty about my life at present my eleven-year-old self would disapprove of,” Draco said when everyone settled down. “Though I suppose that’s fair as I don’t really approve of many things my eleven-year-old self did. I believe that’s what people refer to as growth.”

“Oh is that what the kids are calling it these days?” George snorted.

“Ooh that’s a fun game!” Luna said brightly. “What’s all the things about our lives now that our younger selves would be surprised about?”

“You have a strange idea of fun, Luna,” Neville said, laughing.

“Oh go on then, Neville,” Harry said brightly. “What would surprise eleven-year-old Neville?”

Neville looked around at Draco and smirked.

“Well there’s the obvious,” he said mischievously. “Remember when you got me with the leglocker curse in first year?”

“Remember when you tried to fistfight Crabbe and Goyle on your own?” Draco challenged back.

“I remember that!” Ron exclaimed. “You were brilliant, Nev!”

“They knocked me unconscious!” Neville denied.

“And Malfoy gave me a bloody nose, what’s your point?”

“My, you were a very rowdy bunch, weren’t you?” Luna said mildly.

“Still are,” Theo said dryly.

“You love it,” Neville accused. “Wasn’t it you who *begged* Ginny for an invitation to Christmas after hearing how out of hand it could get?”

“I did not *beg*,” he groused.

“What about you, Theo?” Luna asked. “What would surprise your younger self?”

“Hmm,” he pondered. “Maybe how many friends I have now. I was always a bit of a loner as a kid, never thought I’d have a lot of friends.”

“We have that in common!” Luna said brightly.

“Me too,” Harry said grinning. “Before I came to Hogwarts, I didn’t have any friends at all.”

“Is that something that would surprise you first year self?” Draco asked curiously.

“I reckon, first year Harry would be most surprised to be engaged to your sorry arse,” George snorted. “How many times did you two get into it your first year?”

Draco and Harry exchanged a look then Harry seemed to consider it for a long while. Draco thought about it too.

“Well there was the train,” Harry said counting on his fingers. “You lot came into our compartment and immediately had a go at Ron and tried to steal our sweets.”

“Then there was flying lessons,” Draco added and Harry added another finger. “That one really backfired on me. I was trying to get you into trouble.”

“Instead I ended up on the Quidditch team,” Harry grinned. Then he added a third finger.

“Then you tried to challenge me and Ron to a duel but never turned up and we were nearly caught out of bed by Filch.”

“I think being caught out of bed was the least of our troubles that night!” Neville exclaimed.

“We could have died actually.”

“What?” Draco asked bewildered looking between Harry, Ron, and Neville. “What the hell are you talking about?”

“Fluffy,” Ron muttered ominously.

“That *thing* had a *name?!?*” Neville exclaimed.

“Yeah, it was Hagrid’s,” Harry informed him.

“Of *course* it was Hagrids!” Neville rolled his eyes.

“Am I to assume you three ran afoul of some creature of Hagrid’s in the middle of the night?” Draco asked impatiently.

“Four,” Ron corrected. “Hermione was there too.”

“Actually if she hadn’t been there, Filch would have caught us and we’d have never met Fluffy,” Harry said thoughtfully. “Cos she used *alohamora* to let us into the third floor corridor that was blocked off.”

“Will someone *please* tell us what the hell is a Fluffy?” Theo demanded.

“A cerberus,” Ron answered. “Giant three headed dog. Very territorial.”

“Merlin’s pants!” Draco breathed. “Who locks something like that up in a school?”

“Dumbledore,” Harry and Ron said at once.

There was a lengthy silence as they all pondered that.

“So what number were we at?” Harry asked, returning to their discussion. “Three?”

Draco’s head spun. Harry’s life was a fucking runaway broomstick ride and he acted like it was nothing. Bloody Gryffindors!

“There was Norberta,” Ron reminded him.

“Right,” Harry agreed shortly, adding a fourth finger. “I think that was it, really. Just four main incidents.”

“Oh *just*,” Theo rolled his eyes sarcastically.

“I think my first year self would be most surprised that I managed to get my brothers to respect my Quidditch skill,” Ginny said suddenly, bringing the topic back to their game.

“I think your first year self would be surprised you can string two words together around Harry,” Ron teased and George burst out laughing despite himself.

Ginny scowled and flicked her wand at her brothers so swiftly Draco had almost missed the movement. A sudden, invisible force knocked their heads together and they both yelped in pain and rubbed the spots where they had collided. Draco snickered.

“Surely you two know better that to mess with your sister by now?” he drawled.

“Oh you’re one to talk,” Ron scowled, still rubbing his head.

“Really?” Draco asked challengingly. “Because after that first Bat-Bogey Hex, I never messed with her again.”

“Yeah,” Ginny agreed haughtily. “*Some* people learn their lesson the first time.”

“I don’t know how many times I hexed Malfoy,” Ron griped.

“Well clearly it didn’t make a big enough impression,” Ginny snorted.

“Certainly not,” Draco grinned. “You were much too easy to rile up.”

Ron scowled at him.

“That’s not what it was,” Theo corrected. “You were so bloody obsessed with Harry that there wasn’t anything he could have done to deter you. Weasley was just in the crossfire because he was always standing next to him.”

Draco pondered that. Theo was probably right. He looked over at Harry who was smirking at him.

“You were obsessed with me?” he asked smugly.

“Like you can talk,” Draco rolled his eyes. “You went full stalker.”

Harry snickered unashamedly at that.

“I seem to remember you following Harry around everywhere he went in fourth year,” Theo reminded him. “Just so you could find a reason to start something with him.”

Harry smirked at him, eyes shining with delight at this news.

“I recall you saying that’s about when you started to fancy me, isn’t it?” he teased lowly.

“I’m not ashamed to admit that you taunting a dragon was the hottest thing I’ve ever seen,” Draco replied casually. “Terrifying, mind you. But very hot.”

“Gross,” Theo said dryly and Ginny snickered.

“Yes but following me around just to pick a fight?” Harry challenged teasingly.

“What can I say?” Draco said getting very close to him now, allowing his breath to ghost against his neck. “I like seeing you worked up.”

Harry’s eyes fell shut and he gave an involuntary shiver.

“Okay, you two,” Ginny chided. “Settle down before I douse you both with cold water.”

Draco withdrew with a satisfied smirk. Harry, on the other hand, was very red in the face and struggling to control his breathing.

Eventually they retired indoors when the warming charms could no longer combat the falling temperature outside and the rest of the evening passed without any more drama, much to Theo's mild disappointment. George seemed to find this amusing and had pulled him aside to discuss choreography for the New Years Eve fireworks show he was already planning.

The first to leave the party was Andromeda, stating that it was well past Teddy's bedtime. The child in question had fallen asleep in Mrs Weasley's arms an hour previously and hadn't woken no matter what sort of loud noises occurred. Draco's mother decided to call it a night at the same time and his aunt offered her a nightcap at her home so they could continue their long awaited reunion. He was glad they had each other; it was clear they were both very lonely and it relieved him immeasurably that his mother now had someone to confide in when he was unable to be there for her.

He hugged and kissed his mother farewell and promised to write while he was at Hogwarts. He was unsure how to part with Andromeda, though, and stammered an awkward "goodnight" when she decided to put him out of his misery and hug him too. She also offered Harry a hug and he gave Teddy a gentle kiss on his forehead before the three of them left together.

After that, the various guests left one after another until eventually it was just the Weasleys, Draco, Harry, and Theo remaining. Later in the evening after drinks and quiet chatting while Celestina Warbeck played on the wireless, Bill, Fleur, and Percy all left as well.

Finally Draco was able to lure Harry back up to their room like he'd wanted to do all evening. They'd been unable to keep their hands off each other since pudding. Ginny had threatened them with a cold *aguamenti* more than once, and Ron often looked like he might be sick. Draco had promised Harry not to kiss him with the sole purpose of upsetting Ron but it wasn't his fault if Draco enjoying the reactions Harry had to him laying soft kisses on his neck also disturbed Ron.

And Harry gave as good as he got. Sometimes throughout the evening, Draco would feel a phantom sensation of something rubbing up the inside of his thighs when Harry was nowhere near. He'd look up at him and Harry would just give him an innocent expression like he didn't know what he was doing to him. It was driving him wild.

Eventually they were both so worked up that they practically ran upstairs the moment the rest of the guests had left. They knew they weren't being very subtle as George and Ginny both catcalled them as they hurried up to their room but they didn't care.

The door was barely shut and silenced behind them when Harry pounced on Draco, tackling him to the bed and devouring his mouth in heated, starving kisses. Draco wasted no time in fumbling with the hem of Harry's jumper and the t-shirt he wore underneath it, pulling them both over his head at the same time and knocking his glasses askew. Harry impatiently removed his glasses and tossed them carelessly onto the side table.

“I can’t believe,” Harry murmured breathlessly between kisses trailing down Draco’s throat. “That you proposed,” he nipped at his collar. “In front of my whole family.”

Harry hiked up Draco’s jumper and shuffled down his body to begin trailing kisses, nips and licks up his belly. Draco threw his head back in pleasure and buried his hands in Harry’s curls.

“I can’t believe you said yes,” Draco gasped. “I didn’t even mean to say it, it just slipped out.”

Harry pulled Draco’s jumper and shirt up over his head and then dove down again to take one of his nipples in his mouth. A bolt of pleasure not unlike Harry’s pleasure spell shot from the point of contact with his lips down to his groin. He’d been half hard all evening with Harry’s antics and it didn’t take much stimulation to bring him all the way to full mast.

He pulled off Draco’s nipple with a soft pop and grinned up at him.

“You stole my move,” he said lowly. “Impulsively asking to marry me like that. How very Gryffindor of you.”

“You take that back,” Draco growled weakly.

“I’ve worn off on you,” he teased.

Draco’s retort was cut short when Harry took his other nipple into his mouth and sucked hard on it. He let out a somewhat strangled cry and fisted his hands in Harry’s hair.

Harry began fumbling with Draco’s belt while he continued to lave attention on his chest. He quickly managed to undo his belt and open his trousers then, abandoning his nipples, he began trailing kisses down his abdomen.

What had started as a hungry and frantic fumbling had at some point turned slow and methodical. Harry kissed his way down to Draco’s waistband and place soft, tender kisses to each slowly exposed inch of skin as he peeled away his trousers at an excruciating pace.

“Harry, please,” he gasped urgently. He desperately wanted his mouth on him right this second.

“Patience,” Harry chided. It reminded Draco of their first time, only their roles were reversed. “This is our first time as an engaged couple, it should be special.”

“Fuuuuck,” Draco uttered lowly.

Harry finally pulled Draco’s trousers and pants all the way off his hips and Draco’s aching cock sprang free almost comically hard and leaking precum down its length. With deliberate slowness, while laying kisses down the inside of his thighs, he peeled his trousers and pants all the way down his legs. Once fully removed, Harry returned to slowly kissing his way back up his legs.

Despite the slow pace of their activity, Draco was rather enjoying the pillow princess treatment. It was nice to give up control for once and it was obvious now why Harry loved being submissive in bed.

“I want you, Harry,” he moaned lowly.

“I’m yours,” he replied tenderly, placing a kiss just above his knee.

He wasn’t getting it. Harry always insisted that Draco be explicit in what he wanted in bed. So he caught his breath and tried again.

“I want you to fuck me,” he said clearly, voice dripping with lust.

Harry looked up from between Draco’s legs with a wide-eyed amazement. Draco thought he saw his pupils dilate further than they had already been in the low light.

“You want me to top?” he clarified, excitement in his voice.

“Yes please,” Draco moaned and he canted his hips up in invitation.

It would have been embarrassing to be so needy if Harry didn’t also look like he would combust with need at the thought of topping for the first time.

“You tell me if I’m doing anything wrong okay?” he said breathlessly.

Draco just nodded eagerly and then gasped when Harry dipped his head back down, trailing his tongue down the inside of his thigh as he went. Harry hiked one of Draco’s legs over his shoulder and dipped his tongue into the crevice between his leg joint and his groin, neglecting his cock and balls like the fucking tease that he was.

Draco whined and canted his hips into Harry’s face. Harry just laughed and suddenly there was an invisible force holding his hips to the bed. Draco tried to push Harry’s head down to where he wanted it but the same invisible force bound around his wrists and raised them over his head and held them there.

He had never thought about being tied up but suddenly it was happening and he found himself growing impossibly harder at the realization. He was completely helpless to Harry’s ministrations. The sudden rush of blood headed south left him feeling slightly dizzy.

“Holy shit!” he exclaimed breathlessly.

“This okay?” Harry asked hesitantly, his slightly concerned eyes peeking up from below him.

“Y-yeah,” Draco gasped. “I’ll let you know if I don’t like something.”

“Good,” he grinned back, and dove back in to lick and suckle at the area around his cock, tantalisingly close.

Draco just let his head fall back and he let out a soft groan.

As Harry continued to lick and kiss and nip at all of Draco's sensitive places, a new sensation started on his nipples. Almost like Harry was somehow working them up again. He felt like a thousand fingers were stroking gently up and down his sides. This wandless sex magic was going to cause Draco to come apart at the seams and he hadn't even touched his dick yet.

"P-please..." he gasped, struggling to form sentences.

"Please what?" Harry teased, sucking a bruise into the inside of Draco's thigh and driving him insane with want.

"Your mouth..."

"What about my mouth, Draco?"

Draco didn't need to look at Harry's face, he could hear the shit-eating grin in his voice. He strained fruitlessly against his invisible holds and whined piteously.

"I want... your mouth... on my dick," he ground out between whines and attempts to cant his hips.

"Well why didn't you just say so?" Harry teased.

Finally, mercifully, Harry ran his tongue up the underside of his cock and Draco let out a cry of relief. He couldn't believe how keyed up he was. He was so hard he thought he might burst any second.

Harry carried on, licking long stripes up Draco's cock and occasionally his balls, taking one at a time into his mouth and sucking gently before releasing it with an obscene pop.

"M-more, please, *fuck!*" Draco begged, the last word coming in a shout when Harry complied with his request before it had fully left his mouth.

Harry took the head of Draco's dick into his mouth with enthusiasm, saliva already trickling down the length of it. He took it in one hand, smearing the saliva around and slicking up his hand as he pulled the foreskin back, chasing the newly exposed flesh with his tongue. It was by far the sloppiest blowjob Harry had yet given him; slick, wet slurping noises filled the small bedroom and mingled with Draco's gasps and groans.

Suddenly Draco felt the familiar sensation of his entrance being cleaned and lubed up. He hadn't bottomed since he'd been dating Blaise but he would never forget that feeling. Harry had cast the spell nonverbally and without his wand as he usually did when he performed spells in bed. Usually because he couldn't be arsed to find his wand but often because he didn't know the incantation to cast it.

Distracted as he was by the spectacular blowjob and Harry's magical power that never ceased to amaze and arouse him, he was startled when he felt one of Harry's fingers prod tentatively at his entrance. He was evidently done teasing.

He let out a breathy moan when Harry's finger breached the tight ring of muscle, unaccustomed to the stretch but felt no burn thanks to how relaxed and turned on he was.

Harry didn't let up on his enthusiastic sucking of Draco's cock as he pumped that first finger in and out of him, neither did he let up on the magical sensations tingling all over his body, focussing on his erogenous zones.

"Fuck, Harry!" he cried suddenly when pressure began to build in his balls. "I'm gonna come!"

Harry just hummed around his cock and carried on with what he was doing. The moment he inserted a second finger alongside his first he felt himself losing his tenuous control on his orgasm but just as he thought he would burst, the feeling suddenly aborted, like climbing to the top of a slide and instead of going down it, he climbed back down the ladder.

He let out a wail of frustration. He had no idea what happened. He'd been on the verge of orgasm only for it to suddenly stop right at the edge.

Harry pulled off of Draco's cock and gave him a cheeky smirk.

"Not so fast," he said slyly. "I'm not finished with you yet."

"Fuck!" Draco cursed lowly, throwing his head back down and breathing hard like he'd just run a marathon. Harry had used some heretofore unknown spell to stop his orgasm in its tracks.

He dove back down on his cock and wasted no time in deepthroating him, continuing to pump his fingers in and out of him and scissoring them to open him up. His pleasure began building again, somehow more intense than before. He could tell already that when Harry finally let him come, it would be the most intense orgasm of his life.

Harry added a third finger and Draco keened, struggling against his invisible bonds.

"Ha-Harry," he gasped. "M-more, I need you now, I'm ready, please!"

He was not normally one for begging but he felt the situation called for it, and Harry probably wouldn't tease him for it. Not to mention what his begging seemed to do to Harry.

He withdrew his fingers and mouth from him – causing Draco to whine pathetically at the loss of sensation – and scrambled to his feet to remove his trousers and pants which he was somehow still wearing. In short order he was standing over him, gloriously naked and stroking his cock in preparation, slicking it up with a nonverbal lubrication charm.

He climbed back onto the bed and hovered between Draco's legs. The invisible force holding his lower half down vanished and Harry grabbed him by his hips and pulled him closer and lifted him a bit so he could line himself up.

Draco was so ready for him that at the first push of Harry's cock at his entrance, he slid straight in with little resistance. Draco moaned in delight at the sensation of being filled for the first time in years, this time by the man he'd always fantasised it would be with, the man he loved, the man he would marry. Tears sprang unbidden to his eyes at the overwhelming emotions and Harry stilled, fully seated inside him.

“You okay?” he asked worriedly.

Draco nodded frantically. He realised his tears might be cause for concern.

“I’m great,” he gasped. “I just love you so fucking much.”

“You’re sure?” Harry asked doubtfully. “I didn’t hurt you?”

“I’m sure, you haven’t hurt me,” he assured him. “Please move.”

With his hips now free of restraint, Draco shifted them a bit, causing Harry to slip out an inch or two. Harry groaned at the sensation and canted his hips forward, slamming himself back in. Draco let out a cry, his orgasm already building again.

“I’m not going to last,” Draco gasped breathlessly.

Harry pulled almost all the way out slowly and then thrust back in at an excruciatingly slow pace. Despite the pace of his thrusting, Draco felt himself quickly losing control again. Harry was savouring this new experience and Draco didn’t want to spoil it for him by coming too quickly but his body refused to co-operate with his desires. It didn’t help that Harry was still casting that low level pleasure spell that had every inch of Draco’s skin tingling.

He felt tension coiling up in his lower regions as Harry continued to drive into him. His head was thrown back so the long column of his throat was exposed and begging to be bitten and suckled but Draco’s wrists were still restrained and he couldn’t pull him down. Harry kept letting out small gasps and moans of pleasure with each thrust. He wasn’t close yet.

“Harry,” Draco moaned. “I can’t... I’m gonna...”

His orgasm halted again and he whined.

“I need to come Harry, please,” he begged breathlessly.

“Next one,” Harry promised.

He leaned down and supported himself over Draco’s head on his forearms, his unruly hair flopping down over his sweaty forehead. Draco tried to lift his head to kiss him but his restraints prevented it.

“I want to touch you,” Draco breathed against his lips which were tantalisingly close. He struggled to move his arms, still suspended over his head, to illustrate his request.

The invisible force vanished from his wrists and Draco immediately pulled Harry down to meet his lips, burying both hands into his thick, curly hair. At the same time, he wrapped his legs around his hips and pulled him flush against his body. The movement caused Harry’s cock to brush against his prostate and Draco let out a loud moan into his mouth at the shockwave of pleasure that shot up his spine.

They rocked against each other, mouths more pressed together than actual kissing, too preoccupied by sensation to do much more than pant into each other’s mouths. Occasionally

one of Harry's thrusts would make contact with Draco's prostate again and he would moan quietly against his mouth.

Then Harry changed their position. He lifted Draco up and leaned back onto his heels so Draco was basically sitting in his lap. The new position brought their chests together flush and Draco felt a sensation of overwhelming comfort and safety. He wasn't sure if it was the skin-to-skin contact that did it or something Harry did magically but he'd noticed that Harry loved simply holding him close when their chests were bare. It felt so much more intimate like this and he wondered if Harry felt the same and if that was why he did it.

Harry bucked under him and Draco rode him while maintaining that contact from their embrace. The new angle had Harry hitting his prostate with every thrust now and Draco's orgasm was building swiftly again, this time more powerfully than ever before.

He moaned continuously as he buried his face in the crook of Harry's neck and clutched tightly at his shoulders so his nails dug in and scratched at his skin. Harry didn't seem to mind though and held Draco's hips in a force that would certainly leave bruises in the morning which he would delightedly add to the collection of hickies undoubtedly covering his legs and much of his torso.

He felt himself approaching climax now and this time he was going to take Harry with him. He fisted one hand in his hair and pulled roughly just how Harry liked it. Harry moaned loudly at the action and allowed his head to be pulled back, exposing more of his throat which Draco could not resist biting down on. Harry keened loudly at this and his thrusts started to become erratic.

"Fuck, Draco!" he moaned.

That bolt of pleasure that Harry enjoyed taking Draco apart with struck at the same moment Draco felt Harry's hot release fill him.

Between all of the edging, the pounding of his prostate, the pleasure spell and Harry's hot come painting his insides Draco experienced the most powerful orgasm of his life. His every nerve was firing, his vision went white and he clutched at Harry so strongly that he was certain he'd left deep nail marks in his skin. His own release nearly *sprayed* out of him, coating both his and Harry's chests all the way up to their necks.

Harry continued to thrust shallowly into Draco, working him through his orgasm. Shockwaves of pleasure pulsed through him at irregular intervals and he began to shudder and gasp against Harry's neck, trying to catch his breath. Eventually, after what felt like hours, he finally came down and Harry eased him back down onto the bed and slipped out of him to flop down next to him with an exhausted but satisfied sigh.

Draco was absently aware that his chest had become clean of his release as Harry snuggled up to him and tangled their legs together, holding him close.

"I love you, Draco," he murmured sleepily.

"I love you too, Harry," Draco sighed back contentedly.

He quickly began to succumb to sleep after that, but just as he lost consciousness, he distantly noticed a metallic taste in his mouth.

Chapter End Notes

Some family bonding and fluff at the top and some spice at the end. Who knew Harry was so kinky with the bondage and the edging?

Chapter 40: Star Wars

Chapter Notes

This chapter is pure filler and contains spoilers for a 45 year old film franchise, and honestly if you haven't watched it at this point that's on you.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Draco woke late the next morning having slept incredibly well. Sunlight was streaming in through the window and had come to angle on his face which is probably what finally woke him. He squinted one eye open to discover that Harry was already awake, glasses on, and had his head propped up on his arm and was watching him fondly.

“How long have you been staring at me?” Draco mumbled.

“Dunno,” Harry shrugged. “I think since the sun started coming up.”

Draco looked at the window to try and gauge how long that might have been. Half an hour at least.

“S a bit creepy,” he slurred and stretched luxuriously, feeling a burn in his legs as he did.

“It’s not creepy, it’s romantic,” Harry pouted.

“Is that what we’re calling it?” Draco teased. He leaned up and stole a quick kiss. “What did you find so engaging about me sleeping for the last half hour anyway?”

Harry tenderly brushed Draco’s hair back from his face, his fingers trailing against his skin and stared at him with stars in his eyes.

“You’re so beautiful,” he murmured in an awestruck voice.

Draco felt his face flush at the complement and the tone that accompanied it.

“How are you feeling?” Harry asked when he didn’t say anything.

“How am I *feeling*?” Draco queried, confused. “About what?”

“You know...” he hedged awkwardly. “After, last night. How-how did I do?”

“Are you asking if you fucked me good and proper?” Draco asked incredulously and couldn’t help but laugh when Harry looked unsure.

“Don’t tease!” Harry huffed.

“Harry, you gave me the most mind blowing orgasm of my life and you’re asking how you did!” Draco laughed at the ridiculousness of the idea.

Harry grinned finally.

“Mind blowing, you say?”

“It was the best sex I’ve ever had,” Draco admitted.

“Does that mean, you’d prefer to bottom, then?” Harry asked hesitantly.

Draco shrugged.

“I like it either way, really,” he said in a sultry voice. He clambered on top of Harry so that he was straddling his hips. His own cock was already hard from morning wood and Harry’s twitched against his in interest. “One of my favourite things is making you become unravelled,” he crooned, rocking his hips against Harry’s. “I love all the sounds you make, and how you feel when I’m inside you. But I also loved being completely at your mercy. I rather enjoyed being tied down too, that was new and surprising.”

Harry was fully hard now and Draco continued to slowly frof against him, making him gasp and sigh quietly.

“What about you?” Draco asked softly. “Now you’ve had both, which do you prefer?”

“I... mmm... I prefer to bottom, I think,” he gasped, eyelids fluttering as he tried to remain coherent. “Last night was really good, but I – ah! – I missed letting go. I like it when you’re in charge, when you – when you take control.”

Draco liked being in control too; taking Harry apart under his hands, or his mouth, his teeth.

Draco dipped down to capture Harry’s lips while at the same time, he took both of their dicks in hand and began wanking them both together. Harry moaned quietly and bucked against him. It didn’t take long for him to be brought off and he came in Draco’s hand with a small cry which Draco swallowed down while he worked himself over until he too was coming into his hand and across Harry’s abdomen.

There was a sudden pounding at their door causing them to jump and Theo’s voice floated through the wood.

“Are you two decent?” he hollered.

“No!” Harry and Draco both blurted urgently, worried he would barge in.

Snickering could be heard through the door and Draco was fairly sure it wasn’t just Theo on the other side of it.

“Well get dressed and come down,” he instructed. “Mr Weasley got the telly set up in the sitting room so we can have our film day. Everyone’s really excited. Don’t forget to bring the VCR and the tapes and we can start the first film after breakfast.”

It was definitely more than just Theo as at least three sets of footsteps carried on down the corridor and to the stairs.

Draco hung his head over Harry's and chuckled.

"We're gonna hear it at breakfast aren't we?" Harry snickered.

"We're gonna hear it all day," Draco countered and rolled off him.

Harry cleaned them both up with a careless wave of his hand and they dragged themselves out of bed and got dressed in casual clothes and their Weasley jumpers before heading down, the smell of bacon drawing them in.

"Look who finally decided to join us!" George quipped as they joined them at the table. "Finally dragged yourselves off each other, then?"

"George, don't be so crass," Mrs Weasley scolded him and started piling eggs and bacon on Harry and Draco's plates.

"It's not crass," Theo argued mildly. "Those two have been joined at the hip since the start of term."

"Since we were *literally* glued together, you mean?" Harry corrected archly.

"I dunno," Theo shrugged. "Since the first day back you were following him around."

"I was not!" Harry exclaimed. "We all have the same classes, I can't help it if ninety percent of our days overlap."

"Ah but you *can* help if you're staring at him the whole time," Theo countered, smirking.

"You *were* staring," Draco added cheekily. "I specifically noticed you staring."

"You were obviously having a hard time coming back," Harry pouted defensively. "I was concerned."

"Aww that so adorable I might puke," Ginny quipped.

George snickered.

"Well now they're engaged I doubt very much it's going to cool off any time soon," he teased, patting Harry goodnaturedly on the shoulder.

Harry suddenly hissed and winced, jerking his shoulder away from George's touch. Draco looked around sharply at the reaction.

"You okay?" he asked urgently. "What was that?"

"Oh it's nothing," Harry said casually, rubbing tenderly at the spot where his neck and shoulder met. Draco's favourite spot to bite and suckle on. Harry's favourite too.

“You get a little too enthusiastic with the necking last night?” Ginny teased with a knowing smirk.

“Something like that,” Harry chuckled sheepishly.

Draco frowned. He hadn’t seen any marks when they’d gotten up. Harry must have covered them up before he woke.

“I don’t see anything,” George said, pulling Harry’s collar aside to investigate.

“I used a cover up charm, get off,” Harry griped, swatting George’s hands away from him.

“Harry’s pretty good at those,” Ginny remarked. “He showed me how to do them and they’re way better for hiding spots than the cream I’ve been using.”

“Isn’t that the cream from my shop?” George asked, offended.

“Indeed it is,” Ginny smirked.

George pouted.

“And how is Harry so good at cover up charms?” Theo asked narrowly.

“Oh, Draco’s a biter,” Ginny said casually.

George, who had just taken a swig of tea, choked and spluttered. Ron, who had been entirely silent since they’d sat down made a strangled sort of noise and fumbled his fork. Theo just roared with laughter and Harry and Draco both turned scarlet.

“Proud of yourself, are you, Gin?” Harry asked when she grinned delightedly at everyone’s reactions.

“Immensely,” she preened.

“Isn’t that like...” Ron started hesitantly. “Y’know... risky?”

Everyone turned to him expectantly. Ron shrank under everyone’s stares.

“I mean, like...” he tried again. “Even if it’s not a full moon... what if... I mean, look what happened to Bill.”

“Bill’s fine,” Harry argued evenly. “Aside from a few minor lifestyle changes, he’s completely fine. I’m not worried about it, so you shouldn’t be either.”

“Yeah,” George said delicately. “What two consenting adults get up to behind closed doors isn’t really our concern, right?”

“Oh because you’re so unconcerned about my sex life?” Harry challenged, rolling his eyes.

“I haven’t said a word,” he countered with wide innocent eyes that no one who knew him would buy.

“No, you just get Ginny to tell you all the juicy gossip,” Draco drawled.

Theo snickered.

“Why does Ginny know so much about your sex life?” Ron asked, looking faintly green.

“Because she’s nosey and likes watching Harry squirm,” Draco answered easily.

“Not you?” George asked, raising a suggestive eyebrow.

“I don’t embarrass that easily,” Draco smirked. “And really what’s embarrassing about always leaving my lover satisfied?”

“Is that true, Harry?” Ginny asked with a shit-eating grin. “Does Draco always leave you satisfied?”

Draco turned an amused and expectant look on his fiancé, whose face was redder than ever. He looked around at all the expectant faces; everyone except for Ron, who was staring at his half eaten plate of food with a faint grimace, and Mrs Weasley who was washing dishes and pretending her children were not discussing sex at the breakfast table.

“I don’t have any complaints,” he mumbled finally.

George, Ginny and Theo all burst out laughing and Harry buried his face in his hands in embarrassment.

After breakfast was finished and Harry and Draco were done being relentlessly teased, they all trooped into the sitting room where Mr Weasley and Charlie had been setting up the television and VCR. They’d evidently been struggling to figure out why the picture on the screen looked like a blizzard and made a horrible noise like nothing Draco had ever heard before. Harry quickly worked out that they’d plugged the wires into the wrong ports on the television. Soon they were arguing over which film to watch first.

“We have four to choose from,” George was saying. “How do we decide?”

“Actually three of these are a trilogy,” Harry corrected. “You’re meant to watch them in a particular order, so we only have two to choose from; DragonHeart or A New Hope.”

“I vote for DragonHeart!” Charlie crowed, shooting his hand up.

“You *would*,” Ginny teased the dragon tamer.

“I agree with Charlie,” Draco said. “We should watch the trilogy all at once so we should watch DragonHeart first as it has nothing to do with the other three.”

After a little bickering, they eventually all agreed to watch DragonHeart first and Harry put in the tape and fiddled with the controls to skip over what Harry called trailers. They all got comfortable on the couches and armchairs and Harry started the film and came over to Draco’s large armchair and cuddled up in it with him to watch.

“The dragon talks!” Charlie exclaimed after the dragon was revealed at the start of the film.

“I told you,” Harry said in exasperation. “Muggle fantasy often has talking dragons.”

“That dragon’s heart isn’t gonna save that kid,” George critiqued.

“You’re going to have to suspend your disbelief if you’re going to enjoy this film,” Draco drawled in faint annoyance. It was a lesson he’d learned from the fantasy books Hermione had lent him. He never had that struggle from sci-fi.

“There’s just no way the dragon’s heart made that brat evil!” Ginny cried out in annoyance.

“Why is Bowen blaming him? The dragon went out of his way to make sure Einon would be a good king before saving his sorry arse!”

“Brother Gilbert is gonna get his arse killed hanging around Bowen,” Ron snorted. “The man is hunting *dragons!*”

“That’s the dragon Bowen has been hunting for twelve years!” George crowed. “He has the same voice. Doesn’t he recognise it?”

“It’s been twelve years, George,” Ron rolled his eyes. “If you met someone one time twelve years ago, you wouldn’t be likely to recognise their voice the next time you saw them.”

“Just wait ‘til Bowen figures out who he is,” Charlie said darkly. “This little partnership of theirs is gonna crumble to pieces.”

“He’s called Draco!” Ginny cried in delight, spinning around to grin at Draco. “He’s got the same name as you!”

“It’s probably why Hermione got me this one,” Draco drawled. “Even though she knows I prefer sci-fi over fantasy. Like the dragon said, Bowen’s just called him ‘Dragon’ in another language.”

Eventually they finished the film and everyone was a little weepy, especially Charlie who’d grown rather attached to the fictional dragon.

“That Einon was a right bastard!” George growled.

“How did they make that dragon?” Ginny asked curiously. “It’s not like the muggles found a real talking dragon and got it to co-operate and act for them.”

“It’s called special effects,” Harry explained. “They use models and art and blend it all together so it looks real and then an actor records a voice for it. You’re gonna see a lot more of that in Star Wars since most of that takes place in space and has aliens and things.”

“The voice of the dragon sounded so familiar,” Theo mused. “I swear I’ve heard his voice somewhere before.”

Harry turned the tape back through to the list of actors and crew and stopped it on the list of cast. Second on the list credited the voice of Draco.

“The voice actor was Sean Connery,” Harry reported.

“James Bond!” Theo crowed. “Those films are brilliant!”

“You watch Bond films?” Harry asked incredulously.

“You don’t?” Theo retorted. “Your muggle relatives wouldn’t have had a problem with them, I imagine. Not an ounce of magic is so much as mentioned.”

“I’ve seen several Bond films,” Harry confirmed impatiently. “I’m just surprised *you* have.”

They all took a break to stretch and go to the bathroom. Mrs Weasley brought out a tray of snack foods and drinks and set them on the coffee table in easy reach of everyone. Once they all returned and were settled, Harry inserted the first Star Wars tape and they all settled in to watch once more.

“Right so that’s obviously the bad guy,” George declared when the man in black with the creepy helmet came on screen.

“What gave it away?” Draco drawled. “Was it possibly the way he choked out that man without ever touching him?”

“Okay, not to be dramatic, but I fucking love that little blue rubbish bin,” Ginny declared. “How did they make beeping sound so sassy?”

“I like the metal man,” Theo argued. “He’s such a worrywort!”

“He just shot that guy!” Charlie exclaimed. “This is who Luke and Obi-Wan are here to meet? They can’t trust this guy!”

“The little green bloke was obviously going to double cross him,” George argued.

“But he just killed him in cold blood!”

“He’s your classic outlaw character,” Draco remarked. “He’s probably going to have some kind of redemption arc.”

“You just think he’s handsome,” Harry teased.

“He is that,” Draco agreed with a grin.

“He just... blew up a whole planet??” Ron said in disbelief. “How many people were there? He just killed a couple billion people with the push of a button!”

“That’s why he’s the bad guy, Ron,” George said condescendingly.

“Obi-Wan! No!” George exclaimed in dismay.

“Is that what happens when you get hit with a lightsabre?” Ron asked, dumbfounded. “You just poof out of existence and leave your clothes behind?”

“Why didn’t he fight back?” George wailed.

“Because he knew that Luke would go back for him so long as he was alive,” Harry said solemnly. “Obi-Wan knew he’d never make it back to the ship without Vader right on his tail so he was holding him back so Luke and the others could escape but he also knew that so long as he was alive, Luke would risk his own life to try and save him and he knew Luke couldn’t beat Vader.”

“Merlin, some of this is hitting a little close to home,” Ron murmured faintly.

“Han’s back!” Ginny cheered!

“I knew he’d come back,” Draco said proudly. “He’s much too attached to Luke and Leia now. I knew he had a heart of gold.”

“You just fancy him,” George teased.

“Shut up,” Draco scowled.

Harry just laughed and snuggled closer to him.

They took a break for lunch after they finished A New Hope. Everyone was chattering excitedly while they enjoyed turkey sandwiches made from leftovers from Christmas dinner.

“I feel like they wrapped up that film pretty well,” Charlie was saying around a mouthful of his sandwich. “I can’t imagine where they’re taking it next. I mean they blew up the Death Star, beat the bad guys, had a party and everyone is happy.”

“In fiction there’s a rule about the villain,” Draco said reasonably. “If you don’t see him die, he’s not dead.”

“You think Vader will be back in the next film to go around blowing up more planets?” Ron asked incredulously.

“Seems on theme,” Draco shrugged. “Besides, Vader isn’t the only bad guy. There’s an entire Empire the Rebels are fighting. Vader isn’t even their leader, he’s just their attack dog.”

“So there’s an emperor out there that they’ve got to stop?” Ginny asked.

“There’s an entire system of government they have to overthrow,” Draco corrected. “Destroying one doomsday weapon and dethroning one corrupt leader doesn’t stop systemic oppression.”

“You’re starting to sound like Hermione,” Ron said with a weirded out expression.

“Yes well, we chat,” Draco said dryly.

Harry hadn’t said anything in awhile and was now picking at his sandwich with a distant look in his eyes. Draco nudged him with his shoulder.

“You okay?” he asked in concern.

“Oh, yeah,” he said casually. “It’s just a bit weird.”

“What is?” George asked.

“The film,” Harry explained. “You’ve got a main character who’s apparently expected to be the galaxy’s saviour, raised by his aunt and uncle far from the conflict because the villain killed his parents. Only for this old man to come into his life and tell him he’s special and teach him to use powers he never knew he had. It’s all a bit familiar is all.”

Ron let out a low whistle.

“You don’t think that’s why Hermione picked those films for you is it?” Ginny asked delicately.

“I dunno,” he shrugged. “I have always wanted to watch them, though, and she knew that. They’re really popular films and everyone I went to primary school with had seen them so I was always curious.”

“You see yourself in Luke,” Draco said gently. “You relate to him.”

“Hard not to.”

“We don’t have to watch the rest of them today if you want a break,” Ginny offered gently.

“Oh, but—” Ron started in disappointment but stopped when his sister glared at him.

“No it’s fine,” Harry said, plastering a smile on his face. “I want to see what happens next.”

“Yes!” Ron exclaimed. Everyone gave him exasperated looks. “What? I know you all want to watch the rest too.”

It was true. Everyone was very excited to see what came next and they started debating over their meal what they thought would happen in the next film which was titled The Empire Strikes Back.

“It’s obviously going to be the Empire finding and taking out the Rebel base,” Ginny predicted. “With that title, what else could it be?”

“The film isn’t going to just immediately kill off the heroes,” Charlie argued. “Who’s supposed to fight for the good guys?”

“Well obviously Luke, Leia, and Han will survive,” Ron offered. “They’re the main characters.”

“And Chewbacca!” George reminded him. “He’s my favourite!”

He made a gargled roaring noise that was a fair approximation of the furry creature’s speech. They all laughed at his impression.

“Mine is still R2-D2,” Ginny declared. “He’s just so sassy. And I bet he swears constantly.”

“He definitely does, based on how C-3PO reacts,” Theo agreed. “I love that neurotic droid. He’s such a coward, it’s so funny.”

“Draco’s favourite is Han Solo isn’t he, Draco?” Ginny teased.

“Yes, obviously,” Draco rolled his eyes and grinned. “What’s not to like? He’s a swashbuckling space pirate with a heart of gold.”

“And he’s fit,” Harry added.

“And he’s fit,” Draco agreed.

After lunch they settled in to watch the next film. Despite the subject matter and how much Harry was relating to it, even he was clearly eager to see what came next.

“Ugh, that’s disgusting!” Ron exclaimed when Han Solo used Luke’s lightsabre to cut open the tauntaun and stuffed Luke and himself inside to stave off hypothermia.

“I mean it’s either that or freeze to death,” Charlie said grimly.

“Those big walking machines are possibly the stupidest thing I’ve seen in these films so far,” George griped. “Look how easily Luke took them out! It’s like putting a car on stilts!”

“You thought that looked easy?” Charlie argued in outrage. “Those things are massive!”

“I knew Lando couldn’t be trusted!” Ginny exclaimed.

“You did *not*,” Ron argued.

“I did!” she insisted. “He was way too friendly. It was so suspicious. Bloody traitor.”

“I rather understand why he did it, though,” Draco said reasonably.

“He betrayed his friend!” Ginny said in outrage.

“He had a whole city to protect and Vader breathing down his neck!” Draco argued passionately. “And after what he did to Alderaan, he knew damn well he had to take those threats seriously. He’s responsible for the lives of millions of innocent people, he can’t sacrifice them for a handful of Rebels.”

Ginny crossed her arms and slumped in her seat, pouting and unable to argue with his logic.

“Okay, I’ve changed my mind,” George declared. “Yoda is now my favourite character.”

“You just relate because he’s annoying on purpose,” Theo teased.

“He’s not annoying,” George argued. “He’s wise.”

Theo snorted doubtfully.

“That’s stupid!” Ron declared. “So Luke’s not allowed to be angry because it’ll make him turn Dark?”

“I think it’s more like he can’t allow himself to indulge in his anger,” Harry argued reasonably. “Like he can be angry but he can’t act in anger, y’know?”

“‘There’s another’?” Charlie quoted Yoda. “Like another chosen one?”

“I bet it’s Leia,” Ginny declared. “She’s a badass but we haven’t seen her do anything really awesome yet. Plus, her whole planet and all her people have been destroyed and she still needs to seek justice for that.”

“Nah, I bet it’s Han,” George argued. “There’s a lot of potential there.”

“Guys, what if it’s someone we haven’t seen yet?” Theo suggested.

“We’re already halfway through the series, I doubt they’re going to introduce a new chosen one this far through,” Draco reasoned.

“‘I know’?” Ron quoted Han Solo with a snotty voice. “What a wanker! Leia tells him she loves him and he says *‘I know’*?”

Draco laughed and turned to Harry.

“Hey Harry, I love you.”

“I know,” Harry replied seriously.

Ginny and George burst out laughing.

“See!” Ron exclaimed like Draco and Harry had illustrated his point. “It’s bellend behaviour! Who does that?”

“Yes! I knew Lando was a good man!” Draco exclaimed when Lando came back to rescue Leia and Chewbacca.

“Okay, *fine*,” Ginny groused. “I suppose you were right.”

During Luke and Vader's duel everyone was at the edges of their seats, leaning forward tensely.

"Luke can't win," Theo murmured. "He's been training to be a Jedi for like five minutes, Vader's been at it for decades!"

"Maybe he'll get lucky?" George offered.

"Not this early," Draco argued. "There's a whole extra film still. It's more likely Luke will lose and barely escape with his life, get stronger and come back in the next film and finally defeat him."

"Quit bringing your logic into this!" Ginny grumbled, on edge.

They fell silent when Luke fell to the ground at the end of Vader's lightsabre.

"You are beaten," Vader rumbled. "It is useless to resist. Don't let yourself be destroyed as Obi-Wan did."

Luke smacked Vader's lightsabre away with his own and sprang to his feet.

"Yes!" George cheered quietly.

There was an exchange of blows and Luke was cornered out onto a catwalk. Then, with a swing of his sabre, Vader cut Luke's hand from his arm, sending it and his lightsabre careening into the abyss below while Luke screamed in agony.

"Holy shit!" Ron exclaimed.

"There is no escape," Vader growled as Luke slumped against the rail. "Don't make me destroy you."

Luke began to crawl backwards away.

"Where's he trying to go?" Ginny fretted tensely. "He's cornered."

"Luke, you do not yet realise your importance," Vader continued as he advanced on him. "You've only begun to discover your power. Join me and I will complete your training."

"Fat chance!" George shouted.

"Shhh!" Ginny hissed in annoyance.

"With our combined strength, we can end this destructive conflict, and bring order to the galaxy."

"I'll never join you!" Luke shouted back.

"If you only knew the power of the Dark Side," Vader countered. "Obi-Wan never told you what happened to your father."

"He told me enough! He told me you killed him."

"No, I am your father."

"WHAT!!!"

Everyone, Draco included, shouted in shock, outrage and disbelief. The reaction to this reveal was so loud and tumultuous that it drowned out Luke's reaction which, by the expressions on his face, was probably just the same as their own. Harry had to jump up to pause the film while they all found themselves on their feet and shouting.

"He's lying!" George cried. "He's trying to recruit Luke so he's lying."

"If he was really Luke's father, he would have known where to find him all this time!" Ginny agreed. "Luke was just with his aunt and uncle. Didn't his uncle say Luke's father was his brother?"

"Obi-Wan wouldn't have lied to Luke," Ron added. "This is obviously a trick!"

"I think he's telling the truth," Harry said thoughtfully. "No, think about it. Obi-Wan wanted to train Luke up because he thought he was the galaxy's only hope, so he lied about who his father was to convince him, to give him an enemy to fight, and also so Luke wouldn't be frightened to learn how to use the Force. Vader is trying to convince Luke that the Dark Side is more powerful than the Light by offering himself as an example. He's saying that he turned Dark and that's why Luke should too. It also explains why Vader keeps trying to capture Luke alive and recruit him instead of kill him."

Silence followed this explanation.

"Holy shit, you're right," Ginny murmured in horror.

They were all quiet as they took in this realization, staring at Luke's frozen, horrorstruck face.

"Can I resume?" Harry asked. "Only I think the film is nearly done."

So they all settled back down and Harry resumed the tape and returned to the armchair to snuggle back up with Draco. There were no further outbursts for the rest of the film.

Once finished and after a brief bathroom break, they began the final tape.

"That outfit of Leia's..." George said in an awed voice.

“Right?” Ron agreed.

“Okay does the desert have a *mouth*?” Ron exclaimed, disturbed.

“It’s a sarlacc, Ron, pay attention,” Charlie scolded.

“Oh I’m sorry I don’t know what this made up monster’s name is,” Ron snapped back.

“Fuck yeah, Leia, get his ass!” Ginny cheered when Leia managed to wrap her chains around Jabba the Hutt’s neck.

“Is it just me or has Luke suddenly become a badass?” Harry wondered.

“Well it’s been a year,” Theo reminded him. “I’d hope he’s been training all that time for this specific moment.”

“I can’t believe Yoda just dies!” George pouted.

“He’s old,” Ron reminded him.

“Yeah, but I liked him.”

“Harry was right,” Ginny added. “Vader wasn’t lying; he really is Luke’s father.”

A moment later.

“I knew it!” Ginny crowed. “Leia’s the other chosen one!”

“They’re twins?!” George exclaimed, looking horrified. “Didn’t she snog him in the last film?”

“Eurgh!” his siblings exclaimed at the realization.

“They’re so cute!” Ginny exclaimed at the Ewoks. “They’re like living teddy bears!”

“Cute but viscous,” George pointed out.

“I don’t care, I love them,” Ginny declared.

“*Another* Death Star?” Ron exclaimed. “Where are they getting the materials for these planet-sized machines?”

“Maybe they salvaged it from the wreckage of the last one?” Harry offered.

“Holy shit, I did not see that coming!” Ron remarked at Vader betraying the Emperor to save Luke.

“How could you *not*?” Draco asked incredulously. “Vader’s been unwilling to do Luke lasting harm for three films! He wasn’t going to let his master kill him!”

“He’s a murderous psychopath!” Ron argued.

“Murderous yes, psychopath no,” Draco countered. “Upon finding out he also had a daughter, his first thought was recruiting her. He wants his children on his side because if they’re his enemy he’ll be expected to kill them. He doesn’t want to do that so he keeps trying to turn them so he can protect them. He might be a bit delusional but he’s not a psychopath.”

“That’s so twisted!” Ron retorted. “Why doesn’t *he* change sides then?”

“He literally just did!” Draco exclaimed gesturing dramatically at the television.

The film ended and they carried on arguing over whether this counted as a redemption arc as they went to the kitchen to wash up and help set the table for supper.

“The film treats this one act like it completely redeems him,” Ron said as he washed his hands. “He gets this full service funeral and Luke sees his ghost stood next to Obi-Wan and Yoda and it’s supposed to be like uplifting or some shit. Never mind that he blew up an entire planet and killed billions!”

“I’m not saying he’s suddenly a good person,” Draco argued. “I’m saying it wasn’t a surprise that he saved Luke from the Emperor.”

“He cut Luke’s hand off!”

“And he got a new robotic one that was just as good,” Draco pointed out. “He’s also made up of a bunch of droid parts too, so he obviously knew disarming him – no pun intended – in that manner was merely a fleshwound.”

“A fleshwound!?”

“In the confines of that universe, yes,” Draco reasoned. “It was no more dangerous an injury than a broken toe. And the lightsabre cauterized the stump too so he wasn’t going to bleed out. Vader wasn’t trying to kill him, he was trying to recruit him.”

“It’s just bonkers,” Ron said, shaking his head.

“You’re just obviously incapable of appreciating fiction more complex than Martin Miggs the Mad Muggle,” Draco sneered.

“I appreciated it just fine!” Ron snapped in outrage. “All I said was that it was an unexpected twist.”

“Okay, okay,” Charlie broke in, stepping between them. “This friendly discussion is getting a bit unfriendly. Why don’t we cool it.”

Draco didn’t expect Charlie of all of the Weasley siblings to play peacekeeper but in the absence of Bill or Percy, Charlie was probably the designated one, being the eldest present. To be fair, George and Ginny were definitely not going to be the ones to break up this disagreement.

They decided to drop the subject for the moment in the name of their tenuous truce and helped Mrs Weasley set the table. Theo ran out to the garage to collect Mr Weasley and when they were all present, they sat down to a lovely supper where they discussed the various plot developments of Star Wars and their favourite aliens and characters from the films.

It was a simple, untroubled ending to a rather delightful day. Draco could get used to this.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for what amounts to a beach episode, this was a bit of self-indulgent silliness. I know most of you are anxious for the payoff of the cliffhanger from the last chapter and I promise it's coming.

Chapter 41: Everyone Knows

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Christmas break carried on without much further chaos. Relations between Harry and Ron continued to be tense but not explosive, and relations between Draco and Ron were curt but not confrontational.

Draco considered this a minor miracle since he'd previously believed that he'd never get along with the youngest Weasley brother no matter what. But it turned out that Star Wars was the common ground they'd needed to get along for more than five minutes at a time. They could occasionally be found bickering over plot or how the Force or lightsabres worked. The others weren't as invested in the series though they had enjoyed them.

The most amusing part of this was when Hermione joined them in the late evening on New Years Eve and they were talking about Storm Troopers.

"What is the point of an army that can't shoot the broad side of a barn?" Ron was complaining. "They never so much as winged the heroes even once, but Obi-Wan says they're elite marksmen or some shite."

"Well obviously Luke is protecting his friends with an unconscious application of the Force," Draco argued. "You're right that it doesn't make any sense for an army to be this inept, so clearly there has to be something else at work here."

"But they're even this rotten at aiming when Luke or Obi-Wan aren't even around!" Ron insisted.

"Ah but Leia was," Draco reminded him. "She's Luke's twin sister so she's got the Force too."

"No one ever said Leia had the Force."

"But no one said she didn't either."

"You're just making shit up!"

"It's clearly hereditary! If Vader has the Force and Luke has the Force, then Leia has the fucking Force!"

"No one said it's hereditary! It's not magic!"

"I didn't say it was. Leia knew Luke was going to say they were twins before he did, that's the Force at work."

"Well this is new," Hermione chimed in.

Draco and Ron cut off their discussion and turned to greet her as they hadn't noticed her arrive.

"Hermione!" they both exclaimed in delight.

"Did you have a nice break?" Draco asked. "It's summer in Australia isn't it?"

He noticed her already dark skin had gotten several shades darker. She'd probably spent much of her break at the beach.

"Oh it was lovely!" she said brightly. She looked at Ron. "You'd have hated it there, they have spiders the size of cats that are just everywhere! Even I was a bit disturbed."

"That's horrible!" Ron exclaimed faintly.

Draco shuddered and shook the image physically from his head.

"I don't like spiders," he muttered grimly.

"Oh that's something the two of you have in common then," she said brightly, then grinned slyly. "That and Star Wars apparently?"

"Oh those films were brilliant!" Ron exclaimed.

"I rather enjoyed them," Draco agreed. "Though I think everyone else has abandoned us because they're tired of talking about them."

Hermione looked between Ron and Draco with a bemused expression.

"You two are getting along suspiciously well," she said hesitantly.

"Well no one else wants to discuss Star Wars anymore," Ron pouted. "My choices were limited."

"We've buried the hatchet," Draco added. "Mostly."

"You know there's a new film coming in a few months that's a prequel to the trilogy you just saw?" Hermione teased, smirking.

"There is?" Ron exclaimed in excitement.

"A prequel?" Draco clarified eagerly. "Like something that happened before A New Hope?"

"Yep," she grinned. "The Phantom Menace. It's about Anakin Skywalker."

"Wait, isn't that Darth Vader's real name?" Ron pressed. "It's a film about the bad guy?"

"Well he wasn't always a bad guy," Hermione reasoned.

"So it's about the series of events that led him to turn to the Dark Side?" Draco confirmed.

“I’m not sure,” she shrugged. “Probably. I’ve only seen a trailer for it.”

“When can we see it?” Ron asked eagerly.

“July, I think it said. Though it likely won’t be out on tape for many months after its release in cinemas.”

“Then we’ll have to simply go to a cinema,” Draco said reasonably. Ron nodded in agreement.

Hermione giggled.

“Do either of you even know what a cinema is?” she asked cheekily.

Ron frowned, unsure and looked to Draco to see if he knew.

“I assume,” Draco considered. “From context that it is likely a place where the film is shown exclusively. Much like a play perhaps, and one must purchase tickets in order to view it.”

Hermione looked impressed.

“That’s it exactly,” she praised. “I’m surprised.”

“Surprised that I retained something from my Muggle Studies classes or that I have deductive reasoning skills?” he drawled with a teasing smirk. “Either way, I believe I should be insulted.”

She laughed brightly at this.

“Is that Hermione I hear?” Theo’s voice floated in from the kitchen door.

He had taken to spending most of the holiday out in Mr Weasley’s garage tinkering with muggle machines with him, even when the others would invite him out to play Quidditch instead. He and Mr Weasley had just come in, having finally decided to call it a day.

He came around the corner with a bright grin.

“You’re back!” he exclaimed delightedly and threw his arms around her. “Did you have a good holiday? How were your parents? What’s Australia like? My, you’ve gotten tan, did you spend a lot of time at the beach? I hear they have deadly jellyfish there, did you see any?”

“Goodness!” Hermione exclaimed, breaking through his tide of questions. “You’re a lot more chatty than usual. What’s gotten into you, Theo?”

It was true. Theo was typically a lot more pensive than talkative. He was always one of the best listeners that Draco had ever known. There wasn’t a lot that Draco had ever known to get him this excited.

“Oh I’ve just been having a grand time,” Theo explained carelessly. “I missed you is all, and I wanted to hear all about your holiday. I have about a million questions.”

“I’ve noticed,” she laughed.

Ron was frowning while his eyes flicked between them. He seemed to have finally noticed what to Draco had been incredibly obvious; that Theo fancied Hermione.

He opened his mouth and was about to say something when Harry, Ginny, George, and Charlie all trooped in and interrupted his thought.

“I assume Hermione’s arrival has finally cut the Star Wars chat off?” George queried hesitantly.

“For now,” Draco smirked. “The fireworks done being set up?”

“Yeah, all ready to go at the strike of midnight,” he confirmed. He turned to Hermione. “I have a bone to pick with you.”

“What did I do?” she asked, affronted. “I just got here.”

“You created a monster!” Ginny exclaimed, backing up her brother. “Two, in fact.”

“These two have not shut up about Star Wars since Boxing Day,” George explained, pointing between Draco and Ron.

“It’s a masterpiece!” Ron exclaimed defensively.

“It has an extremely rich and complex lore that begs to be discussed,” Draco agreed.

“You see!” George exclaimed. “It’s creepy when they agree on something.”

“At least they’re not fighting?” Hermione offered hesitantly, her statement sounding more like a question.

“Oh you think so?” Ginny challenged sarcastically. “Because these discussions sometimes get pretty heated.”

“Not nearly as heated as the last big fight around here, granted,” George qualified.

“The last big fight?” Hermione asked warily. “What have I missed?”

“Oh everyone knows Draco’s a werewolf now,” Theo said casually. “That’s the main thing.”

“What?!” she exclaimed in a squeaky voice, whipping her head around to look at Draco in alarm.

“Shit, did you not know that?” Theo asked anxiously.

“Of course I knew,” she waved him off impatiently. “What do you mean *everyone*?”

So they explained The Christmas Incident, as they’d all taken to calling it, while Hermione shot Ron several disapproving looks.

“So now the list of who knows includes all the Weasleys, Neville, his gran, Luna, her dad, Theo, and Andromeda,” Harry counted off on his fingers.

“And Chiara,” Charlie added. “Though I’m not sure she counts.”

“She doesn’t count,” Draco decided. “Any werewolf would be able to recognise another the moment they met.”

“Who is Chiara?” Hermione asked.

“Old classmate of mine,” Charlie explained. “She was in my year at Hogwarts. She’s been a werewolf as long as I’ve known her, though I didn’t know that until fifth year.”

“She’s also that healer I saw last summer,” Harry explained.

“Anyway,” Draco cut in. “All that is behind us and we’ve been trying to get along.”

“The films helped,” Ron added sheepishly.

“It’s behind you?” Hermione asked faintly and a little dubiously. “Just like that?”

“I mean, sort of,” Ron shrugged.

“We’re even, as far as I’m concerned,” Draco added. “We’ve declared a truce.”

“And Harry and Ron?” she asked, looking between them.

“Er...” Ron uttered, hesitantly looking at Harry who frowned.

“We’re fine,” Harry said shortly and pointedly averted his eyes from Ron’s.

“Right...” George said awkwardly. “Who wants to watch some fireworks?”

With that distraction handy, they happily crowded outside and down to the Quidditch pitch where the fireworks display was set up and ready to go. Mr and Mrs Weasley joined them shortly after and Mrs Weasley handed out hot cocoas while they settled in to watch George’s display.

He had been talking it up all day and it didn’t disappoint. It rather put the fireworks display the twins had set off at Hogwarts in fifth year to shame. Though George had had to omit some of the more lively ones out of concern that they might break containment and carry themselves off to the muggle village over the hills. Even without the swearing sparklers and screaming catherine wheels though, the display was rather spectacular.

They spent New Year's Day – their last full day of break before they'd have to return to Hogwarts – hearing all about Hermione's time in Australia which had involved, as they'd expected, rather a lot of time on the beach. She'd also apparently taken surfing lessons but had given them up quickly after, claiming that she didn't have the ballance and co-ordination for it, which also explained her attitude towards flying.

Also, with Ron's improved attitude, they finally had an even number of players for flying football, a name which amused Hermione greatly. In short order, Draco and Ginny were arguing over who would have Ron and who would have Harry for their Keepers. Draco had shocked everyone by demanding Ron be on his team, insisting it was only fair since Ginny was now riding a superior broom to his. Harry destroyed this argument by trading brooms with him so he could also fly on a Firebolt and Harry rode Draco's Nimbus. Eventually George settled it by declaring that he'd play Keeper for Ginny and Charlie while Ron played Keeper for Draco and Harry. This managed to even things out just enough that everyone decided it was a mostly fair playing field.

While they played, Hermione had taken to spending time in Mr Weasley's garage with Theo. She was especially interested in all the interesting things Mr Weasley had cobbled together to make muggle technology and magic work together, despite the devices' shaky legal standings.

That evening, they were all lounging in the sitting room, listening to the wireless and playing card games or chess. Draco and Ron had been forbidden from bringing up Star Wars for the evening so he had instead plopped his head in Harry's lap while he played three way exploding snap with Ginny and George and occasionally carded his fingers soothingly through his hair, and Ron challenged Charlie to a game of chess.

Hermione, meanwhile, had sat down next to Theo to grill him about some device he had been tinkering with all holiday. Theo was only so delighted to infodump on her about what he'd been working on.

"I want to take it back to Hogwarts with us to see if it still works surrounded by all that magic," he was saying.

Draco wasn't really paying attention though, too contented with Harry's fingers in his hair and starting to doze off.

He wasn't sure how much time had passed but he'd been nearly asleep when Mrs Weasley sent them all off to their rooms to pack for the journey to Kings Cross in the morning. They had thought about simply apparating to Hogsmeade in their own time but Hermione had convinced them to take the Hogwarts Express to school one last time for the nostalgia of it all.

So they all trooped upstairs. Even Draco and Harry who were already packed.

"I have to tell you something," Harry said seriously when they closed the door to their room.

Draco felt his stomach drop. He had no idea what was so serious but whatever it was couldn't be good. He sat down warily on the edge of the bed.

"It's okay, everything is fine," Harry added hastily. "I just... in the interest of being entirely honest..."

Draco tried to ask what the problem was but his throat had gone dry and his anxiety began to climb. Harry took a deep steadying breath, and then pulled the collar of his shirt aside and a mark on his neck that had been previously hidden with a cover up charm appeared. It was a clear impression of teeth marks, they had just broken the surface of his skin and had partially healed already.

Draco's eyes went wide and his skin suddenly felt cold and clammy. His heart rate shot up and a ringing began in his ears.

"I-I did that?" he croaked. "When?"

"Christmas night," Harry said gently. He released his collar and it only partially covered the bite. He placed a hand on Draco's knee. "I've been procrastinating telling you because I knew you'd freak out and I didn't want to cause any more drama for the holiday. But we're going back to school tomorrow and I don't want to keep this from you."

"I... I *bit* you," he said in a strangled voice.

"To be fair, you do that all the time," Harry tried to joke but Draco didn't find it funny.

"Not like that," he choked, reaching a hand out to gently brush against the slowly scarring mark. "I hurt you..."

"I'm not hurt, Draco," Harry said earnestly. He lifted Draco's chin with one hand so he could look him in the eyes. "I owled Bill after it happened. To ask him what to expect. Aside from a slight change to my dietary needs, I'm not going to be affected by this much at all. You don't have to worry."

"But—" he started, but Harry interrupted him by kissing him fiercely.

"But nothing," he breathed against his lips when he pulled away. "I'm just fine, and I'm going to continue to be just fine. This was bound to happen eventually anyhow."

Draco wanted to argue that no, he had been careful, but obviously he'd not been careful enough. Even the night they'd fucked a mere hour before the full moon rose, he'd nearly bitten him then too. He'd actually been somewhat careless when he thought about it. Perhaps he should never have been biting Harry at all, given the risk.

"Hey," Harry said softly. "You're spiralling. Stop it. Don't you dare wish to take back even one moment from the last four months. I love every single moment, don't you dare."

"Surely not *every* moment," Draco reasoned weakly. His heart rate had begun to slow back down to a reasonable pace and the ringing in his ears had ceased. Harry always had a way of calming him down.

"Yes, *every* moment," Harry insisted. "Every single one led us to right here. We're in love, we're going to graduate, get married, move in together, and we're going to be a family. You

change one detail of our past and none of it happens.”

“And Teddy?” Draco asked. “You mentioned before that you’d probably be adopting him.”

“Is that okay?” Harry asked uncertainly. “You mentioned before that you weren’t sure you wanted kids.”

“Merlin, Harry, you don’t need my permission to raise your godson,” Draco said in exasperation. “And I’ve changed my mind on that front anyway. I *do* want children, as long as they’re with you. And Teddy is already family.”

Harry beamed. He threw his arms around him and hugged him tightly. Draco adored Harry’s hugs; he always felt so safe and comfortable in his arms.

“I love you,” Draco breathed against his shoulder.

“I know,” Harry said with an audible smirk.

Draco burst out laughing despite himself.

“You fucking wanker!” he laughed.

“I love you too,” Harry said, also laughing. “Even though you’re a massive geek.”

Draco pulled away and looked Harry seriously in the eyes. He brushed his fingers over the still healing bite.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” he asked. “You’d tell me if you weren’t?”

“I promise, I’m alright,” Harry assured him for the fourth time. “I will never lie to you.”

Draco finally relaxed the rest of the way, tension he hadn’t realised he was holding in his shoulders finally loosened and he heaved a great sigh of relief.

“You do realise what this means though, right?” Harry asked him slyly.

There was a suggestive note to his tone that sent a shiver of anticipation down Draco’s spine. He offered Harry a quizzical look instead of asking and he smirked back.

“It means, you don’t have to be so careful with me anymore,” he purred, leaning into his space seductively. “You can be as rough as you want.”

Draco swallowed thickly, blood rushing south so quickly that his head spun.

“Is-is that something you’d like?” he stammered.

“Yes please,” Harry replied eagerly and pulled Draco down for another kiss which promised so much more.

They woke the next morning to an urgent pounding on their bedroom door.

“If you two want breakfast, you’d better come down now,” Ginny hollered through the door. “We’re leaving in an hour, so I hope you’re already packed.”

After dragging themselves out of bed and getting dressed, Draco and Harry headed downstairs, levitating their trunks behind them.

Somehow they’d managed to sleep through rather a lot of the last minute chaos. Despite being sent to bed early the previous night to pack, only Draco, Harry, and Hermione (who hadn’t ever actually unpacked after her arrival) were ready to go. Ron had been up and down the stairs four times already since they had woken up and Theo occasionally shouted if anyone had seen this or that object he had misplaced.

“Is it always this hectic on a travel day around here?” Draco asked as they entered the kitchen, where Hermione was sitting and reading the Daily Prophet while George and Charlie enjoyed their breakfasts without a care in the world for the whirlwind happening in the rest of the house.

“Yeah this is pretty normal,” Harry confirmed and winced as he sat down at the table.

George zeroed in on this expression and flicked his eyes to Draco with an almost eager questioning expression. Draco just smirked smugly.

“Had a good rest, Harry?” George asked with a wolfish grin.

“Er... yeah?” Harry answered hesitantly. “Why?”

“Oh no reason,” he returned airily, chuckling slightly.

Mrs Weasley came over and tipped several sausages and a pile of scrambled eggs on each of their plates.

“Thanks, mum,” Harry said casually, causing her to make a startled little noise but she otherwise played it off.

Draco wondered when she’d stop doing that every time Harry called her mum. So far he’d slipped it into conversation at least once a day since Christmas. At least she’d finally stopped dissolving into tears each time he did it.

Hermione’s eyebrows ticked up in surprise and she lowered her paper to look at Harry who was studiously digging into his breakfast, pretending she wasn’t scrutinising him.

“Oh yeah, he does that now,” Draco said to her while he started on his own breakfast.

“Have I missed anything else?” she asked archly.

“Have they told you they’re engaged yet?” Charlie asked casually.

Shit! Draco knew there was something he’d forgotten to tell her.

“What?!” she exclaimed, slapping her paper down and shooting incredulous looks between Harry and Draco, her expression a weird mixture of excitement and outrage. “How could you not have told me? When was this? Who proposed to whom? How did it happen? Tell me everything this instant!”

So Harry gleefully recounted Draco’s impulsive proposal in front of both of their families, which both delighted and frustrated Hermione in equal measure.

“I can’t believe I missed it!” she wailed. “I’d better not be missing the wedding too!” she added threateningly.

“Of course you won’t miss the wedding,” Harry said in exasperation, rolling his eyes. “You’re going to be my Best Woman.”

“I am?!” she exclaimed in disbelief and delight.

“Harry, you’re meant to ask her, not tell her,” Draco laughed at his ridiculousness.

“As if she’d turn me down,” Harry teased back, then turned to Hermione. “You *will* be my Best Woman won’t you?”

“Of course I will!” she exclaimed and tackle-hugged him in her best Miss Maple impression.

“Oh Merlin, I’ve just had the best idea,” Draco exclaimed, feeling somewhat giddy.

“What?” Harry asked, still chuckling and extracting himself from Hermione’s embrace.

“What if we have Miss Maple be the ring bearer?” he said excitedly.

“The Ring Bear! That’s hilarious!” Harry exclaimed. “I love it!”

“What’s hilarious?” Theo asked, finally joining them and looking faintly sweaty from all of his running around.

“Miss Maple being the ring bearer at our wedding,” Draco explained, grinning.

“That’s brilliant!” he agreed.

“Who, in Merlin’s name, is Miss Maple?” George asked, completely baffled.

“We haven’t told you about Miss Maple?” Ginny shouted from around the corner.

She and Ron hurried into the kitchen to join the conversation.

“Miss Maple as a Ring Bear is genius,” she declared.

“Will someone explain who Miss Maple is sometime today?” George demanded.

So the Hogwarts-aged among them explained to the others about the origins and enchantment of Miss Maple, the eighth year mascot.

"Everyone loves her," Ginny finished fondly.

"Is everyone packed and ready to go?" Mrs Weasley asked, cutting into their conversation.

A chorus of "yes, mum" and "yes, Mrs Weasley" satisfied her that they could have a brief break before they had to head out.

Despite insisting they'd be leaving at ten o'clock, and despite Ginny, Ron, and Theo all insisting they were packed, it had taken an additional half hour before they were actually ready to go and at that point they had no time to make it to Kings Cross by the means they'd originally intended (rented car).

"We'll just have to apparate to the platform," Hermione sighed.

So Ginny and Ron released Chomper and Pigwidgeon and sent them to Hogwarts ahead of them. Draco hadn't bothered to bring with him his eagle owl, Artemis, and so didn't need to do the same. They all said farewell to Mr and Mrs Weasley, Charlie and George, then all took firm hold of their trunks and apparated to Platform 9¾.

After a minute or two of locating each other as they had all apparated to different parts of the platform, they congregated until they found the compartment Neville, Luna and Blaise had taken and joined them for their final ride to Hogwarts.

Blaise regaled them about the wonderful time he'd spent in Italy with his mother and then demanded they all recount their own holiday. He soon regretted not having come to Christmas at the Burrow when they mentioned all the drama that had occurred and felt somewhat left out that no one would explain exactly how Draco and Ron had made peace.

"So what bullshit thing did Weasley do this time that set Harry off?" he asked, not caring that Ron was actually sat across from him.

All eyes fell to Draco. He realised then that Blaise was the only one of his friends who didn't know. He swallowed thickly, unsure if he should tell him. Unsure how he'd take it.

"I was having a go at Malfoy," Ron piped up suddenly. "The usual, you know. We're good now, we settled it."

Now all eyes were on Ron. Draco stared at him incredulously but Ron avoided his gaze and just stared off to one side, ears turning red.

"Must have been pretty awful shit for Harry to tackle you to the ground," Blaise remarked dryly.

"Oh, er..." Ron said haltingly. "Yeah, it was pretty bad. Really shit thing of me to do to be honest. I've apologised..."

"Is no one going to elaborate?" Blaise asked impatiently.

He looked around at everyone in the compartment. No one would meet his eye or explain. It wasn't right, him being the only one who didn't know.

"I'm a werewolf," Draco suddenly blurted.

Silence.

Everyone except Blaise shot him nervous and uneasy glances while Harry gripped his hand tightly. Blaise just stared dumbfounded at Draco.

"Weasley found out and told everyone at Christmas," he continued in a small voice. "That's why Harry tackled him."

More silence.

Blaise just continued to stare. His face contorted as he seemed to be working out a difficult train of thought.

"How long?" he asked finally.

"A year and a half," Draco muttered.

He noticed Neville and Theo working out the maths in their heads and saw them both realise at the same time what other event lined up to a year and a half ago and their eyes got wide.

"You've got it managed then?" he asked tightly.

"Yes," Draco confirmed. This was starting to feel like a meeting with his parole officer.

"Who else knows?"

"Everyone in this compartment, Neville's gran, Luna's dad, all the Weasleys, my parents and aunt, and McGonagall and Pomfrey."

"And everyone is cool with it?"

Several voices piped up that they were.

"You only told me because everyone else knew, didn't you?" he asked. The tension had left him and he slumped back in his seat in resignation. "You never wanted me to know."

"I didn't want *anyone* to know," Draco explained. "My parents were there when it happened. Luna found out when she was a hostage in my house last year, I had to tell McGonagall and Pomfrey because I needed somewhere safe at Hogwarts to transform. I told Harry after we got glued together because he deserved to know given we didn't know how long we'd be stuck. Then Hermione and Ginny figured it out after the first full moon of term. Everyone else found out at Christmas. Oh wait, no I told George Weasley at the start of the holidays."

"That's a lot of people you're trusting with a secret like that," Blaise said idly. "You sure they'll all keep it?"

“I don’t really have a choice but to trust them,” Draco sighed.

Actually that wasn’t entirely true. While yes, he had no choice but to trust the majority of those who’d found out on their own or were told by Ron, he’d made a conscious choice to trust McGonagall, Pomfrey, Harry, George, and now Blaise by telling them himself.

“But you’ve chosen to trust me?” Blaise asked, coming to the same conclusion Draco had.

“You’re my friend,” Draco said quietly. “If I didn’t think I could trust you, I wouldn’t be friends with you.”

“I can’t believe you’ve been a werewolf all this time and I didn’t notice,” Blaise sighed. “What kind of friend am I if I never noticed something like that?”

“To be fair, the rest of us didn’t know either,” Neville pointed out.

“But I’ve been friends with Draco far longer than any of the rest of you, even Theo!” he countered. “And we used to go out and all.”

“Most people aren’t going to notice because they don’t know what signs to look for,” Hermione offered gently. “People only take note of the things that are familiar and dismiss the rest unless it particularly stands out.”

“You and Ginny figured it out,” he pouted petulantly.

“We’ve both known a werewolf personally before,” she explained. “You notice the signs when you know what to look for. You’ll see them too, now you know. They’ll seem obvious and you’ll wonder how you missed them before.”

“The real question here is if you’re gonna keep this secret,” Neville cut in with a stern expression that didn’t quite suit his kind face.

“It’s not my secret to tell,” Blaise shrugged casually. He eyed Draco up and down for a moment. “I mean you’ve been this way all of last term and I didn’t notice. Which means it hasn’t changed you, you haven’t become some horrible monster. You’re just the same old Draco.”

Ron snorted at that and Blaise levelled him with a slightly annoyed look.

“Sorry,” Ron said sheepishly. “Just, he’s hardly ‘the same old Draco’ is he?”

“I would disagree with the notion that becoming a werewolf didn’t change me as a person,” Draco added, agreeing in some small part with Ron. “It’s given me a new outlook on life. I’m definitely a different man from how I was before I was bitten. But no, I wouldn’t say I’m a monster.”

There were several murmurs of agreement followed by the subject changing to more sharing of what happened over the holidays. Upon learning that Harry and Draco had gotten engaged, Blaise leapt up and demanded to see a ring but when there wasn’t one for him to fawn over, got into an argument with Theo over which of them would be Draco’s Best Man.

“Glad I’ve got that sorted already,” Harry grinned teasingly.

“Tell you what, gents,” Draco cut into their bickering. “You two can be groomsmen and Neville will be my Best Man.”

“Me?!” Neville exclaimed in alarm.

“Sure, why not?” Draco shrugged.

“What happened to *asking?*” Harry teased.

“Oh, right! Neville, will you be the Best Man at my wedding?” he asked like he was reading a script.

Neville burst out laughing.

“You can’t be serious!” he exclaimed, doubled over.

“I’m completely serious!” Draco insisted sincerely. “You and Ginny were the first people I wanted to tell that Harry and I had been seeing each other. You’ve been extremely patient and supportive of me despite our absolutely wretched past. You’re a good man, I consider you one of my best friends, and I would be honoured if you would stand up with me at my wedding.”

Neville stopped laughing and stared at him in astonishment.

“Well, damn,” Theo remarked dryly.

“Yeah,” Harry said, slightly put out. “Why did Neville get a better proposal than I did?”

“Yours was spontaneous, love,” Draco soothed, throwing an arm over his shoulder and pulling him close so he could speak into his ear. “I can prepare something more dramatic if you’d prefer?”

Harry blushed and ducked his head away.

“No, that’s fine,” he mumbled.

“You sure?” Draco asked him with wide, earnest eyes. “Because I’m sure I could arrange a nice public display with a marching band and ribbon dancers and Wheezes fireworks that spell out ‘WILL YOU MARRY ME?’ in bold letters over the Great Hall for everyone to witness. I’m sure George would be happy to oblige a custom order.”

“That sounds like my actual worst nightmare,” Harry said with horror.

Draco snickered and pressed a kiss to his temple.

“I wouldn’t do that to you, love,” he chuckled.

“Good, ‘cause if you did, I would say no,” he sighed shaking his head with a fond grin.

“And you’d do well to do so,” Draco agreed. “You shouldn’t be marrying anyone who doesn’t know you properly.”

“I’m still peeved I missed the actual proposal,” Hermione muttered sourly.

“I’m terribly sorry, Hermione,” Draco said dramatically with his hand over his heart. “The next time I want to do something impulsive, I’ll check to make sure you’re in attendance first.”

“That’s all I ask,” she tried to sound mollified but couldn’t help the amused grin that grew across her face.

“At any rate, I still haven’t had your answer, Neville,” Draco said busily, looking to Neville expectantly.

“Are you actually, genuinely serious?” he asked warily.

“Do I strike you as an unserious man?”

“That’s no answer.”

“Yes, Neville,” he sighed in exasperation. “I’m actually, genuinely serious. What do you say? Because if you turn me down, I think these two will have to duel for it,” he added, gesturing between Theo and Blaise who looked affronted.

Neville looked thoughtful for a long time.

“Yes, alright,” he finally said. “But you’d better not dress me in something stupid.”

“Excellent!” Draco cheered brightly. “That’s one thing settled. Only about a thousand more to go.”

“Mum will want to help,” Ginny informed him.

“My mother will want to as well,” Draco agreed. “I expect I’m going to be receiving about thirty owls a week from her for the rest of term asking for input on things like the colour and texture of table linens.”

“Now *that* sounds like a nightmare,” Neville said dryly.

“Well, you know Neville,” Hermione said idly. “You and I will have to do a lot of the co-ordinating on stuff like that. Being Best Man and Best Woman.”

“It’s too late to take it back now,” Draco drawled when Neville opened his mouth to protest, eyes impossibly wide.

Harry laughed.

“Would you be offended if I wanted to leave all the details to Molly and Narcissa?” he asked plaintively. “I’d be happy just wearing what I’m told and standing wherever I need to stand

on the day.”

“Oh, mother isn’t going to let you get away with that,” Draco chuckled.

From there, the subject turned to details about the upcoming nuptials. Where it would be, colours, themes, whether they’d get engagement rings at some venture.

“We haven’t even picked a date yet,” Harry cried in exasperation. “Can we graduate first before we start planning the next big thing?”

So it was agreed that they wouldn’t pressure the happy couple to choose all the details straight away. Instead they returned to discussions about what they did over break.

Luna and her father had gone on some kind of safari where they looked for creatures that Draco doubted were real. Neville had spent a relaxing holiday at home, up to his elbows in soil in his home greenhouse.

“You should have come over more, Neville,” Ron said when he told them how uneventful his holiday was. “You live really close, you could have just popped by on occasion.”

“Oh that’s alright,” Neville said hesitantly. “I know how mad it can get at your place. Christmas was enough chaos for one holiday for me. I liked having some quiet time.”

“Just as well,” Ginny told him. “If you’d come by after Christmas you’d have heard nothing but these two nattering on about Star Wars.”

“Ugh, it was non stop!” Theo agreed.

“What in the world is Star Wars?” Neville asked warily.

“A muggle film series,” Hermione explained. “I got them for Harry for Christmas and they had a film day and watched them all in one go and apparently Draco and Ron became obsessed and drove everyone batty.”

“Don’t get me wrong,” Ginny added. “It was a very enjoyable series, but these two would just not shut up about it.”

“Hermione said there’s a sequel!” Ron informed them delightedly.

Ginny and Theo both groaned in exasperation.

“Actually she said its a prequel,” Draco corrected.

And that set them off discussing the films again. At some point they launched into an extremely detailed summary for Luna, Neville and Blaise while the others tried and failed to get them to change the subject.

By the time the Hogwarts Express pulled into Hogsmeade Station, they were at the point where Vader revealed to Luke that he was his father and Blaise was riveted.

They all piled off the train while continuing to recount the films to Blaise while Neville and Luna extracted themselves from the discussion and broke away to walk with Harry and Ginny, not keen to hear any more about Star Wars.

It wasn't until they reached the thestral-drawn carriages that Draco realised Theo and Hermione had hung back. Looking around to see where they'd gotten to, he spotted them back on the train platform. Theo was saying something to Hermione with a somewhat vulnerable expression, she replied with surprise then seemed to become bashful. As he watched, he saw Theo gently tuck a curl behind her ear and lean in to kiss her very chastely on the lips before pulling away and giving her a questioning look. She said something back and smiled, took his hand in hers and turned to walk in the direction of the carriages.

Draco hastily turned around, not wanting to be caught spying on their moment. When he did, he caught Ron's eye. It was obvious he'd seen the same thing; his eyebrows were pinched together and there was a distant look in his eye. He wasn't angry or jealous as Draco had come to anticipate from the redhead, instead he looked sad and resigned.

"There are other girls," Draco offered.

"None like her," Ron sighed. "I never deserved her anyway. Nothing I ever did made her smile like that. If Nott makes her happy, then she deserves that."

"Hey, are we just going to hang around here all night?" Ginny called from inside a carriage. "Let's go! It's freezing out here and I'm starved."

So they piled into the carriage and Hermione and Theo joined them a moment later. Once they were all present, the thestral pulling the carriage seemed to understand that they were ready to go and began its journey up to the castle.

Chapter End Notes

I know a lot of you were hoping for a wedding chapter but I don't think I can oblige, sadly. I just hope this chapter is enough to satisfy you a little.

Just one more chapter and the epilogue left!

Chapter 42: Final Days

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The final four months of school were the most normal of all the ones that had ever come before in the last seven years, especially for the Golden Trio and their mad lives. And though Harry and Ron's relationship never returned to how it had been, the tension they'd had between them after The Christmas Incident had finally melted away.

This was perhaps helped by Harry making good on his intention to start a pickup Quidditch team of all eighth years because it meant he spent a lot more time with his former best friend who was the only qualified Keeper among them. It also turned out Stephen Cornfoot was a pretty good Beater and Harry was able to convince him to play for their team on a casual basis. They couldn't practice as often as the house teams, especially considering their upcoming NEWTs, but they did manage to play against all the house teams once each in a series of friendlies. It was during this time that scouts had witnessed not just Harry's spectacular Seeking, but Ginny's pro-level Chasing as well. Draco had made it a point to challenge her as much as he could on the day they played Gryffindor in order to showcase her talent to the scouts.

They didn't play for house points or a chance at any trophy but the actual rewards turned out to be much more exciting.

One morning, a week after the eighth year versus Gryffindor match, Ginny received an owl that had made her scream in excitement and leap up onto her bench at the Gryffindor table during breakfast and gave the people around her a bit of a fright.

"You're all looking at the new reserve Chaser for the Holyhead Harpies!" she exclaimed to everyone at the top of her lungs.

A massive cheer and applause erupted throughout the hall and several people stood up to shake her hand or hug her in congratulations when she stepped off the bench.

When everyone eventually settled down and returned to their seats, Ginny also sat down and leaned across to Harry.

"What about you?" she asked eagerly. "Any recruitment letters?"

Harry grimaced sheepishly and held up at least seventeen opened letters.

"I think every team in the league wants me," he said with faint horror.

"Not the Harpies," she offered consolingly with a wry grin. "They only accept witches."

"How am I meant to choose?" Harry wailed. "And what if they only want me because I'm me and not because they like how I play? And what if people say I only got on the team because

I'm famous?"

"You know the easiest way to put that idea to rest, right?" Ron offered. Harry looked at him expectantly. "Play for the worst team in the league."

"You just want me to play for the Cannons," Harry rolled his eyes.

"You could get me season tickets!" he exclaimed in defence.

"I could do that without being on the team," Harry pointed out.

Draco picked up the letters and shuffled through them.

"The Cannons haven't even offered," he pointed out. "They probably know they can't afford you."

"You're probably right," Ron sighed. "A Seeker of Harry's talent would cost them more than the entire club makes in a season put together."

Draco spotted one offer that stood out and grinned.

"What about this one?" he suggested, holding out the letter for inspection. "They're low in the league but they've played decently in recent years. If your skill brings them to the top of the league no one will ever question how you got the job."

Harry took it and grinned in spite of himself.

"A little on the nose don't you think?" he asked wryly.

"No way!" Ron exclaimed. "I think it's a brilliant play. You should do it."

"Definitely!" Ginny agreed, nodding vigorously.

"Alright," Harry agreed, nodding decisively. "I'll send them my reply this afternoon." He grinned. "I guess you're now looking at the starting Seeker for the Falmouth Falcons."

Other than Quidditch, the remainder of the term was mostly taken up by exam review. Hermione had cloistered herself in her dorm and rarely came out for anything but bathroom breaks and class. Theo had taken to bringing her meals in her room and occasionally reporting that he'd convinced her to take a nap.

As their NEWTs approached, all the eighth and seventh years buried their heads in their books. The eighth year common room became the place for all the seventh years to congregate to study when they weren't in the library, citing that their own house common rooms were much too noisy. Ron, Padma Patil, and Hannah Abbott had had to get together as

their year's prefects to put their collective foot down when the fifth year OWL students wanted to get in on their quiet space too. Hermione would have joined them but she was busier than all of them.

Unlike the rest of his classmates, Draco was forced to take breaks once a month. Though they didn't always feel like a break. Harry took these breaks with him, and despite his assurances that Draco's bite wouldn't affect him, Draco couldn't help but notice a pronounced agitation in him during the day the full moon would rise. Like Draco, he could be found drumming his fingers on the top of his desk or incessantly bouncing his leg all through class. On these days, when the timing allowed for it, Harry would take him out to the Quidditch pitch to have a run, which always made both of them feel better.

Besides his studies, Harry continued to work on perfecting the wolfsbane potion. He mentioned that the book Luna had given him for Christmas was immeasurably useful in that endeavor and on the second of April, all his hard work finally paid off.

He burst into their shared dorm with a beatific expression on his face, eyes shining and hair sweaty and sticking to his forehead as he gasped for air.

"Have you been running?" Draco asked incredulously, setting down his quill.

"I flew all the way up here from the dungeons," he gasped.

"Why?"

"I've just been to see Slughorn with my latest sample of wolfsbane," he informed him breathlessly.

A thrill went down his spine and Draco sat up eagerly.

"And?"

"He said it's the most perfect potion he's ever seen!" Harry exclaimed. "He said if he didn't know better, he would have thought a master brewed it!"

"It's safe?" Draco croaked. "Effective? He wasn't just gassing you up? He really meant it?"

"It's safe," Harry confirmed with the brightest grin Draco had ever seen. "If you want, you can start taking it on Thursday."

"Harry, you bloody mad genius!" Draco exclaimed and leapt up to pull him into an embrace that lifted him off his feet and swung him around while laughing in delight.

The following full moon, Draco was almost disappointed that he'd be locked in his room. He hadn't had access to wolfsbane potion for more than a year but he still remembered the desire to run wild and free in his wolf form. Despite not being able to run, however, it had been the most relaxing full moon he'd had in a very long time. He and Harry had spent a little time playing in their animal forms before curling up in the middle of the floor and falling asleep for the rest of the night.

Draco had nearly forgotten between all the excitement of Harry's successful wolfsbane potion, the Quidditch friendlies, and their approaching NEWTs, that the first Anniversary of the Battle of Hogwarts was upon them.

People were torn between celebrating the defeat of Voldemort and mourning the deaths of loved ones. In the end, all the over-seventeens decided to get shitfaced in the eighth year common room. This time the party was much larger as most of sixth year were now seventeen and could participate.

The mood in the room swung wildly between elation and pub songs sung at the tops of everyone's voices to clusters of full-body sobbing as fallen friends and family were remembered. A good half of those in attendance had been at the Battle and it was mostly these who sat and drank in silence. More than once, someone got belligerent due to a combination of grief and alcohol and tried to have a go at Draco but Harry put himself in between them while one of the offender's friends dragged them off with frantic apologies.

Draco didn't think it was fair that Harry had to spend this memorial defending Draco. He had his own grief and he deserved to remember Remus and Tonks and Fred Weasley without interruption just like the rest of them.

There was a monument of the Fallen Fifty out on the grounds but no one wanted to leave the common room, so people had put up pictures of them on the notice board. Whenever someone walked past it, they'd stop and stare at someone they knew for a time before moving on.

Hermione had initially disabled Miss Maple for the evening, stating that it was a bit inappropriate for the occasion, but several students convinced her to return her to her usual functions. It turned out more than a few grieving students could really use a hug from a giant teddy.

The next morning when most of sixth through eighth year were hung over in class, no one scolded them.

NEWTs were aptly named, Draco decided; nastily exhausting indeed. They put their OWLs to shame for how much knowledge they would have to demonstrate. The eighth and seventh years were all grouped together in the Great Hall which was converted into a testing hall where they had written exams in the mornings which were over two hours long, then the hall would be rapidly transformed back into their cafeteria for lunch, and then practicals after that

where each student was given half an hour to perform the required skills but not all at once so they were spaced out ten at a time.

Harry and Draco were often in the same practicals as everyone was grouped alphabetically by surname. Draco was glad he didn't have to wait until last the way Blaise, Ron and Ginny had to, he didn't think he could take the stress of waiting. Parvati Patil had already had a nervous breakdown once and had to be taken to the hospital wing. Luckily for her though, it was towards the end of a written exam and she was apparently recovered enough for her practical that afternoon.

Wednesday was their Potions exams and Harry was weirdly calm.

"You think you'll get a good score?" Draco asked.

"Good enough," Harry shrugged. "I'm not nearly as tense as Ron over there."

Ron, it turned out, was so pale his freckles stood out starkly against his skin as he paced back and forth, muttering things to himself, running over the curriculum in his head. It wasn't like him to fret over exams this much; that was usually Hermione's territory.

"Why's *he* so stressed?" Draco asked.

"He's still trying to get into the Auror Programme," Harry explained. "They won't even *look* at his application if he gets less than an E. Or that would be the case if he was anyone else. He's a war hero, so they'd probably make an exception."

"And Potions is his worst subject," Draco concluded. "Do you think he'll manage it?"

Harry shrugged.

"Dunno. Don't think it really matters, to be honest."

They were called in to the hall then and were unable to continue talking. For the next two hours they answered questions on the effects of potion ingredients and their interactions with other ingredients as well as short answer questions where they were given a prompt of a potion that had gone wrong at some stage of brewing and they had to give answers about what had been done incorrectly given their available information. It was all very complex and technical but nothing Draco couldn't handle. He finished early and after reviewing his answers for thoroughness and correctness, he let his gaze wander around the hall.

To no one's shock, Hermione had asked for more parchment and was still writing furiously in minuscule handwriting several seats up. Looking around behind him, he saw Ron and Ginny towards the back of the hall. Ginny looked like everyone else; concentrating, and Ron looked undeniably stressed, chewing on the end of his quill in thought with a worried frown. Looking three seats to his right, on the other side of Padma Patil, Harry had one hand propping up his chin while he doodled on some extra parchment. He seemed to feel Draco's eyes on him and looked over. When their eyes met, he smirked in satisfaction; he had finished early too.

When the exam let out, Hermione, as always, peppered them with questions about how they think they did and what their answers to this or that question had been.

“Sweet Merlin and Arthur, Hermione, give it a rest,” Blaise exclaimed. “I already did the exam once, I don’t need it a second time.”

“Hermione just likes to compare her answers,” Theo defended her.

“What for?” Ron grumbled petulantly. “It’s not as if we can change them now. I probably got a T on that one. They’ll never let me be an auror with scores like that.”

“I’m sure it’s not as bad as you’re expecting, Ron,” Luna offered gently. “And we still have our practicals after lunch.”

“Ugh, don’t remind me.”

“How do you think you did, Draco?” Hermione asked.

“If he doesn’t get an O, I’ll eat my broomstick,” Harry remarked with a snort. “He finished early.”

“As did you,” Draco tattled, smirking.

“You finished early, Harry?” Hermione asked in surprise.

“Why are you so shocked?” he asked, affronted. “I’ve been doing really well this year.”

“It helps that this idiot isn’t chucking shit in your cauldron anymore,” Ron offered, elbowing Draco in the arm.

“Or that you haven’t been his partner to fuck up his potions all year,” Draco retorted. “We haven’t forgotten the Veritaserum Incident.”

“One time my potion explodes and I never hear the end of it,” Ron rolled his eyes.

“It’s been way more than one time, Ron,” Hermione reminded him. “Harry and Draco had to erect a shield charm between our desks all year.”

“Ugh! I’m definitely failing this practical!” Ron wailed rather than argue with her salient point.

“I think Snape had a lot to do with Harry’s poor marks in Potions, actually,” Blaise suggested. “Anyone with eyes could tell he hated him.”

“Oh that’s not a secret,” Harry laughed. “He and my dad hated each other rather horribly growing up, but he was best friends with my mum. It’s just my misfortune that I reminded Snape more of him than of her.”

“This mop doesn’t help,” Ginny quipped, ruffling Harry’s hair as he tried to swat her away.

“Anyway,” he continued after wrestling Ginny off him. “I’d say it’s a fair argument that his hatred of me brought down my grades in his class. I mean if I got the sorts of scores I usually got in his classes on my OWLs, I wouldn’t have gotten that E that let me take it at NEWT level.”

“I got an E too,” Ron pointed out, then frowned. “Though I think most of that came from my written exam because I’m fairly sure I cocked up my practical.”

“Maybe that will be the case here,” Hermione offered.

“Maybe I’ll cock up my practical?” he asked, baffled.

“No, that you’ve done better on your written than you think you have,” she answered, rolling her eyes. “I always get stressed before exams but then I get my scores and I’ve always done really well.”

“That’s because you’re a genius and you stress for no reason,” Ron retorted.

Draco hated to agree but Hermione did tend to stress herself out unnecessarily before exams. He’d be very surprised if she didn’t come out at the top of their year as always, though he hoped he’d eke out a slightly better score in Potions at least. He still couldn’t help but compete with his old academic rival.

After lunch they were given a full three hours to work on any advanced potion of their choosing. Every advanced potion that they knew took multiple days but they were being scored on the level of precision in getting their potion to the stage possible in the time allotted. They could also start over their potion as many times as they liked but they still only had three hours total. All possible ingredients were made available to them and no recipes were allowed; they had to brew their potion from memory.

Draco knew which potion Harry would be working on the moment he chose a station at the very back of the classroom, as far from Draco as he could get. Draco decided to make the potion that started this whole thing; Veritaserum. For the next three hours, the room filled with the sounds of bubbling cauldrons, chopping knives, and pounding pestles. After only two hours, Harry had finished his potion’s first stage and ladled out a portion into a provided phial. Draco was just at the stage of filling his own phial and glanced up to see the examiner give Harry an astonished look when he handed him his phial of perfect wolfsbane potion. Harry just grinned proudly at the examiner before returning to his station to clean it thoroughly.

“If you don’t get an O I will be astonished,” Draco remarked to Harry after the exam. “Of all the potions we were allowed to choose from, you picked the hardest possible one.”

“Professor Toffee looked really surprised, didn’t he?” Harry asked in amusement.

“I missed it,” Theo said. “What potion did you do?”

“Wolfsbane.”

“I could have predicted that,” Hermione said fondly. “When they said we could do any potion we liked but had to do it from memory, I knew that would be the one you chose.”

“It’s the most complicated potion on the list!” Ron exclaimed.

“Yeah but I’ve had it memorised for months,” Harry shrugged. “I could probably brew that potion in my sleep by now.”

“Please don’t,” Draco said dryly.

“Which potion did you do, Hermione?” Theo asked.

“Polyjuice,” she grinned.

“I’m not the least bit surprised,” Harry laughed. “You’ve been able to brew that since second year.”

“You’re joking!” Theo exclaimed.

“Nope!” Harry confirmed gleefully. “Though it’s a bit of a long story.”

Theo didn’t bother to ask for further clarification. “It’s a long story” had become the Golden Trio’s shorthand for “we did something mad and maybe illegal and can’t discuss it in public”. So they learned not to press for details until they were in private.

Their Defence Against the Dark Arts NEWT was on Friday; nearly everyone’s final exam. Draco and Hermione still had Ancient Runes after but it was a written exam only and would be held after the Defence practicals.

Everyone was expecting Harry to be the one with the highest marks and if how swiftly he breezed through the written portion of the exam was any measure, he absolutely would. Like with their OWLs, Draco and Harry were performing their Defence practicals together. Also in their group was Luna, Neville and Theo, as well as the Patil twins, Sue Li, and two seventh years Draco didn’t know called Miller and McIntosh.

Draco knew he’d perform well; Harry had been helping him study, but he found what was most difficult wasn’t his performance, but his ability to pay attention to his own work. Harry was truly in his element and Draco found it immensely difficult not to watch him take his exam. Once they’d gotten to the part of the exam where they had to display their patronus, Draco wasn’t the only one unable to keep his eyes on his own work.

“*Expecto Patronum!*” Harry’s voice carried across the room, followed by an astonished “What?”

Draco, along with Luna, Neville, Theo and the Patils all stopped what they were doing to stare open-mouthed at the large silver wolf standing between Harry and the examiner.

“Mr Potter, you seem surprised by your own patronus. Is everything alright?” the examiner asked him.

"Y-yeah, it's fine only..." he trailed off and his eyes scanned across the room to lock with Draco's. "My patronus has changed shape. It used to be a stag."

"*Ahem,*" Draco's examiner cleared her throat expectantly.

Draco tore his eyes away from Harry's patronus and refocussed on his own task. He drew up an image in his mind, the happiest image he'd yet been able to think of; Harry and Draco seeing Teddy off to Hogwarts for his first year, tears of joy in their eyes.

"*Expecto Patronum,*" he cast and his silver merlin flew out of his wand and wheeled around his head several times before alighting on the table between him and the examiner.

After their practical, Draco locked eyes with Harry and they rushed out of the hall together, Neville, Luna, and Theo on their heels. They found Hermione in the courtyard revising for her Ancient Runes exam later and it was a testament to her experience with Harry's expressions that she actually put her books down.

"What happened?" she asked worriedly. "Did you not do well?"

"I did brilliantly, I'll probably get an O but never mind that," Harry said dismissively, beginning to pace. "My patronus has changed."

She sat up straighter, eyes wide.

"Should we get Ginny and Blaise for this?" Theo asked, casting his eyes back at the door to the entrance hall.

"They have their practical next," Draco reminded him. "We'll tell them what happened after."

"What sort of animal was it?" Hermione asked.

"A wolf," Harry said shortly. Hermione gasped. "And everyone saw it. The Patils were in the DA so they know what my patronus is meant to look like and Parvati never misses a chance to gossip so this will be all over the school by dinner. What am I meant to tell people?"

"Maybe you don't need to tell anyone anything," Hermione reasoned hesitantly. "I mean, most people don't even know that patronuses *can* change shape or what it means when they do."

"Most, but not all," Neville pointed out. "Our whole year knows that Draco's falcon patronus matches Harry's animagus form because he loves him."

"This is going to beg the question why Harry's is now a wolf," Theo agreed.

"Wait, hang on," Hermione quelled them, holding up her hands and lowering her voice. "Is it a *wolf* or a *werewolf*?"

Draco looked around to see if anyone was nearby. There were a few second years chatting on the other side of the courtyard. Harry waved a hand through the air and they felt a wave of magic tingle past their skin like walking through a curtain of incredibly soft silk.

“We’re in a bubble of silence,” he said. “No one should hear us.”

“Handy, that,” Theo remarked.

“So,” Hermione prompted. “A wolf or a werewolf?”

“What’s the difference?” Theo asked.

They all turned their eyes on him incredulously.

“I think you might have gotten a poor mark on your Defence NEWT just now if you don’t know the difference,” Harry said wryly. Then he turned to Hermione. “A wolf. I’m not sure what kind, but a normal wolf.”

“Then you don’t have to worry,” she sighed. “It’s not likely to give Draco away.”

“But why’s it changed to that?” Harry demanded, not satisfied.

“Probably because it was the same as Draco’s before his changed to a merlin. Before he fell in love with you.”

“I never knew what my patronus was until this year,” Draco reminded her.

“That’s why it’s just speculation,” Hermione said thoughtfully. “You could just lie if people ask, though. Say your patronus used to be a wolf and Harry’s has changed and now matches it. Anyone who doesn’t really know you won’t know the difference.”

“Maybe…” Draco considered.

“But why a wolf?” Harry insisted.

“Well, wolves are extremely loyal animals, pack oriented, fiercely protective, self sacrificing, and adaptable,” she listed. “In short, I think your patronus being a wolf is rather fitting for both you and Draco, but especially Draco. Wolves will do absolutely anything to protect their pack mates, even at the cost of their own wellbeing.”

Draco’s hand went unconsciously to his Mark. He had taken that Mark to protect his parents. He’d tried to kill Dumbledore and nearly killed Ron and Katie Bell in the process to protect his parents. He’d allowed himself to be bitten to protect his mother. And he’d lied to a room full of Death Eaters to protect Harry. He seemed to fit Hermione’s description to the letter.

There was a heavy silence following this analysis and all his friends were watching Draco warily. He hadn’t had a panic attack in months, nor had he clawed at his Mark in all that time. Maybe they all thought he was overdue another meltdown. He took a deep breath and dropped his hand from his arm.

“That description seems fitting,” he murmured finally.

After their exams, they had four days free to do anything they wanted as long as they packed up their things at some point during that time. After that, they would have their graduation ceremony and they would be leaving Hogwarts for the very last time.

Or most of them would be; Neville had secured an apprenticeship with Professor Sprout and would be returning the following September as her teaching assistant. And Harry would one day return to teach as well, though not for several years.

They wouldn't get their NEWT results until August so until then, they could just live in ignorance and enjoy an end to their studies.

Thanks to their exams, Draco had missed his birthday. He was nineteen now, but he still somehow didn't feel like an adult. Harry had promised to celebrate with him properly after graduation and Draco suspected he'd roped his mother in on some sort of surprise party but he was very tight-lipped on that notion. He didn't mind, though. The idea of celebrating his birthday with the two people he loved most in the world brought him immeasurable joy.

The graduation ceremony took place in the morning after breakfast on the grounds overlooking the lake. All the graduates' families were in attendance weeping with pride in their children's accomplishments. McGonagall gave an inspiring speech about looking towards a bright future and living their lives in a manner that would bring them joy and pride. Draco hadn't listened very closely to the speech though; his mind was far away as he stared out over the water.

After this day, his probation would be over, his record cleared, and he would be a truly free man. This time last year he had been in a Ministry holding cell facing a life sentence in Azkaban, but tomorrow he would be free. He looked down the line to where Harry stood. He was the reason Draco's future was so bright.

"I give you your graduating class of 1999!" McGonagall announced and if Draco wasn't mistaken, there was a slight shakiness to her voice as she fought with her emotions over the declaration.

Their families cheered and clapped as the graduates all threw their hats into the air in celebration.

Harry wove his way through the cluster of now former students so he could grab Draco around the waist and kiss him passionately in front of everyone. There were probably parents who still didn't know the Hogwarts scuttlebutt surrounding Draco and Harry, and there were definitely photographers present to snap this photo, but Draco couldn't bring himself to care as he wove his hands into Harry's hair and kissed him back.

Draco and Harry weren't the only graduates snogging in front of everyone. Draco spotted Neville kissing Hannah Abbott, and Hermione and Theo were also sharing a kiss as well. Even Ginny and Dean Thomas, and the biggest surprise of all; Blaise and Justin Finch-Fletchley. Draco wondered idly when that had happened.

A celebratory lunch was held after the ceremony and the whole Weasley clan had turned up to congratulate Harry, Ron, and Ginny. Draco's mother and Aunt Andromeda had also come and they'd brought Teddy with them, who had to have doubled in size since he'd last seen him. He was even walking now and occasionally mixing real words into his babbling.

There were even two people in attendance Draco couldn't mistake for anyone but the Grangers. They had to have come all the way from Australia to see their daughter graduate. Draco had seen them only once years ago in Diagon Alley and hadn't paid them any attention other than to sneer at the presence of muggles in a wizarding space. Hermione was the spitting image of her mother. Mr and Mrs Granger were in awe of Hogwarts and were peppering their daughter with hundreds of questions. He suspected there would be a tour in their very near future.

After their families had left to meet them at home, the graduates did one last walk about the school for the nostalgia of it all, house elves collected their trunks and pets to transport down to Hogsmeade Station, and they made their way back down to the castle's harbour.

The last time they had all been here, they were first years arriving for the first time before they had ever been sorted. And now the boats would return them across the lake, bookending their time at Hogwarts.

Nastily Exhausting Wizarding Tests Results

Draco Lucius Malfoy has achieved:

Charms: _____ O

Defence Against the Dark Arts: ____ E

Herbology: _____ O

Potions: _____ O

Transfiguration: _____ E

Ancient Runes: _____ O

Nastily Exhausting Wizarding Tests Results

Harry James Potter has achieved:

Charms: _____ E

Defence Against the Dark Arts: ____ O

Herbology: _____ E

Potions: _____ O

Transfiguration: _____ O

Chapter End Notes

I think a few of you predicted that Harry's patronus would change! I think this change is a bit more than just Harry's love for Draco manifesting, but also his evolution as more than just James Potter's son. He's more himself than he's ever been. No more battles to fight, no more legacies to live up to.

Just the epilogue left now!

Chapter 43: Epilogue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Potter and Malfoy to be Wed?

After the astonishing news back in November that Saviour Harry Potter had been dating ex-Death Eater Draco Malfoy since September, citizens could not have found themselves more shocked. Until just last weekend when an engagement party was held at the Longbottom Estate announcing the impending nuptials of the unlikely couple.

In attendance were several of the couple's friends from Hogwarts, including war heroes Hermione Granger, Ron Weasley, and Neville Longbottom, as well as Malfoy's mother, Narcissa Malfoy.

"I know they may seem like an odd couple," said Luna Lovegood in a statement to the Prophet. "But anyone who knows them isn't at all surprised. Ask any of their friends, we all saw it coming for years."

Lovegood, some of our readers may remember, was held hostage at Malfoy Manor during the war by Death Eaters wishing to silence her father, Xenophilius Lovegood, editor in chief of The Quibbler. Those who know her have remarked that she herself is a bit odd, and anyone who has read The Quibbler will see that the oddness doesn't stop with her. Perhaps during her imprisonment she developed a strange attachment to Draco Malfoy; a condition muggles call Stockholm Syndrome.

When Potter's closest friends were questioned, they had this to say:

"Harry and Draco are in love, and if you all weren't too busy trying to sensationalise their lives, you'd see that too," said Hermione Granger.

"I didn't get it at first either," said Ron Weasley. "I thought Malfoy had to have some kind of angle and Harry would come to his senses eventually. We almost fell out over it. But I get it now, they get each other, y'know? Like no one else knows what they've been through, not even me and Hermione, not even Malfoy's mum."

Potter and Malfoy are expected to marry this winter before the start of the Quidditch season when Potter will be playing starting Seeker for the Falmouth Falcons.

"I won't lie to you, a tattoo of this colour is going to be tricky," the consultant said grimly.
"The darker the ink, the harder it is. It'll take more sessions and several months at least, and

we charge by the session.”

“Money’s not a problem,” Harry said swiftly. “Do you think you can get rid of it entirely?”

“Well, I don’t want to get anyone’s hopes up,” he replied hastily. “We can do a test patch today and see how it takes it. But even if that goes well, there may likely be a shadow of the original tattoo where it used to be. Typically the skin looks greyish or blueish and you can see the outline of it.”

“What do you think?” Harry asked Draco, his eyebrows tilted in concern.

Draco looked down at the ugly Mark on his arm. He wanted it gone more than anything in the world and this muggle was the first to suggest that it might be possible. Though, of course, he hadn’t yet done the test patch, so it may well not be.

“Let’s do the test patch and see where that takes us,” Draco said softly.

So the tech got started.

“I’m just going to put some of this cream on your arm here,” he informed him. “It’s for numbing as the laser will be somewhat pinchy. And I can give you a tube of it to use at home as it heals.”

He went to smooth the cream on Draco’s arm but the second his hand touched the Mark Draco jerked his arm away reflexively.

“Sorry, it’s a bit cold,” the tech said apologetically.

Draco forced himself to hold incredibly still while the cream was applied. He wanted desperately to crawl out of his skin. Harry was holding his right hand tightly in his own, whether in support or to prevent him clawing at the Mark, he couldn’t say. Soon, whatever was in the cream began to make his arm feel numb and the tech got out his device and selected a corner of the Mark to do his test patch on.

“This may pinch or burn slightly,” he warned. “But you must hold still if this is to have the best chance of success.”

Draco just nodded stiffly, unable to make himself speak.

He noticed immediately when the procedure started. Despite the numbing cream there was a sensation like being poked repeatedly with a hot needle and the device made a repetitive static snapping sound. Draco gritted his teeth against the burning and told himself that if this worked, he’d never have to look at that awful Mark ever again.

“Out of interest,” the tech said idly as he worked. “What’s made you decide to get rid of it? Only most people remove tattoos because they were poorly done or have someone’s name on they no longer want on their body, something like that. And if you don’t mind my saying so, this one doesn’t look poorly done and not very old based on the crisp lines and saturated colour.”

“It associates me with a rather horrible person I don’t associate with any longer,” Draco said evasively.

“Ah, gang tat then, eh?” he said knowingly. “You get one or two of that sort in here now and again. Usually much older than you though. You know, typically after doing a stint in prison and they’re trying to turn their lives around.”

“I nearly went to prison, yeah,” Draco sighed. Talking was taking his mind off the discomfort so he didn’t mind it. And this muggle wouldn’t know him from any other client. It sort of felt safe, unjudgemental.

“Scared you straight then?” he suggested. “Your mate here help you do away with all that?”

“Yeah,” Draco huffed an ironic laugh. “Saved my life actually.”

“That’s brilliant, that,” the tech exclaimed. “Wish I had a mate like that. And that’s you done for now then. That came up a treat, have a look.”

He removed his device and allowed Draco to look at it properly. The area he’d been working on was significantly paler than the surrounding area, though it was becoming red and puffy from the procedure. Draco’s heart pounded hard in his chest. This was going to work!

“I can book you in for the next six treatments now,” the tech offered. “You’ll have to wait a month between treatments for the skin to heal before we do each one. Now I should warn you that your skin will never go back to how it was before you got the tat, but you could hide it with a cover up if you like once we get rid of the bulk of it. I know a great artist who specializes in cover ups. I can give you her details.”

Draco wasn’t sure he wanted another tattoo; he just wanted this one gone. Though he supposed the scars from all the times he’d tried to remove it by violent means would remain, regardless. Perhaps something bright to overwhelm the darkness of the Mark.

He let Harry handle the details of setting up appointments and ensuring none of them were during a full moon. He also paid ahead for them using a plastic card that evidently had some means of arranging a line of credit.

He couldn’t take his eyes off the small area of the Mark that was paler than the rest. Normally he couldn’t look at it without feeling sick but in this moment he was elated. One day, possibly within the year, he’d never have to see that horrible thing ever again.

“And playing for England we have Doyle, Johnson, Parkin, Weasley, Bean, Choudry, aaaaand Potter!”

“That’s Daddy!” Teddy shouted delightedly from Draco’s lap as he struggled to hold on to the squirming four-year-old. “They said Daddy’s name! And Aunt Ginny too!”

“That’s right, Teddy,” Draco said proudly. “Daddy’s the best Seeker in all of England. That’s why he’s playing this match.”

Draco had taken Teddy to nearly every single one of Harry’s Falcons matches and sat in the family box and cheered him on. He quickly became ranked the best Seeker in England and had been scouted to play for his country in the 2002 World Cup. Ginny, too had made major waves in a short time, and between them and the other five exceptional players on the English National Team, they had brought them all the way to the final match against Bulgaria.

As the players lined up in their starting positions, Draco saw Harry exchange a brilliant grin and a few words with Victor Krum through his omnioculars. Krum laughed and said something back to which Harry smirked and raised a challenging eyebrow.

This was sure to be a match for the ages.

Harry entered the crisp white room which smelled of antiseptic and was filled with the sound of beeping machines. He’d left Draco at home with the children, sure that this was an inappropriate place to bring two six-year-old boys and a toddler. Teddy would have behaved himself but he was away at Hogwarts.

The man in the bed didn’t look at all how Harry remembered him, though it had been many years since they’d seen each other in person, only exchanging occasional letters and perfunctory greeting cards on the holidays. In all honesty, Harry believed he’d never see his cousin again.

“Shit, Dudley, what happened to you?” Harry asked in horror, pulling up a chair to sit next to him.

Dudley had always been very large but the man in the hospital bed with a canula in his nose, IV drip and wires attached to beeping monitors looked very small indeed. It was as if all of Dudley’s bulk had been siphoned out of him and left his faintly yellow skin sagging on his bones.

“Liver failure, I’m told,” Dudley said weakly. “Suppose all those health counselors back at school had it right. Mum and dad always let me eat whatever I liked. Now I’m sort of wishing they’d made me eat a bit healthier, teach me better habits, y’know. You look good, Harry. Family good?”

“Y-yeah,” Harry said hesitantly. “They’re great. The twins just turned six and they’ve been complete menaces. I think their Uncle George has been teaching them tricks behind my back. And Lily’s an angel as usual. I’m just waiting for the other shoe to drop where she’s concerned.”

“Good,” Dudley sighed in relief. “That’s really good. Listen, you’re probably wondering why I’ve asked you to come.”

“I had wondered,” Harry nodded. “I’m sorry, I don’t know of any magic that could fix this. Maybe I could talk to a healer...”

“No no, Harry that’s not why I asked you here,” Dudley stopped him, holding up a feeble hand. “Listen, I’m on a transplant registry, but my lifestyle’s put me rather low on that list. Mum tried offering a living donation but we weren’t compatible and dad’s health is nearly as bad as mine so he’s ineligible.”

“I can see if we’re compatible,” Harry offered. “Though if your mum isn’t, I doubt I am since she’s who we have in common by blood.”

“No that’s not it either,” Dudley shook his head. “I wouldn’t ask you to give up part of an organ for me after how I treated you our whole lives.”

“I wouldn’t mind,” Harry assured him.

“I know, but even still, just listen Harry, because this is important.”

Harry shut his mouth and nodded studiously.

“They say I’ve only got a few months before this old liver of mine finally craps out,” Dudley continued. “And so I’m using this time to get my affairs in order. I’ve hired a solicitor to do up my will. Everything I own is going to my daughter in a trust until she’s eighteen.”

“Why are you telling me this?” Harry said quietly.

“Because I’ve also had papers drawn up over Daisy’s custody. You know her mother left after she was born, right?”

“Yeah, you mentioned in a letter way back,” Harry nodded. “You wanted to keep the baby but she wanted an abortion, so she had the baby and turned over full custody to you.”

“Right,” Dudley confirmed. “Now, if I don’t get that transplant and I go in a few months... I know it’s a lot to ask, and you’ve already got four kids but I know you’re well off financially, and well... I need you to adopt Daisy.”

Harry’s eyes went wide and he sat back heavily in his chair.

“Me?” Harry asked incredulously. “Why me? Why not your parents?”

“Because she’s a witch, Harry,” Dudley said seriously, and if Harry was surprised before, it was nothing compared to now. Dudley chuckled weakly. “I guess magic always ran in mum’s family after all, ‘cause my kid’s got it.”

“H-how do you know?” Harry asked breathlessly.

“Come on, Harry,” Dudley chided. “I may not have known for ten years but I grew up with a wizard. I know the signs. Bizarre and unexplainable things happening around her when she’s angry or frightened. Once, when she was having a tantrum, every lightbulb in the house exploded at the same time.”

“Do your parents know?”

“God no!” Dudley laughed weakly. “Could you imagine? No, they don’t even know I’m dying.”

“What?!” Harry exclaimed. “How could you not tell them?”

“Because they’d want to help by babysitting and then they’d inevitably see her doing magic eventually!” he fretted. “She’s with a friend right now. Even if she does magic around her, she won’t know it for what it is. Mum and dad will. They can’t find out. At least not until she’s safely with you.” He looked at Harry pleadingly. “The way mum and dad treated you when we were growing up was monstrous. I’m terrified how they’d react to Daisy’s magic. I know you’d treat her right, Harry. I know you’d love her like your own. Please, I’m begging you, she’s the only good thing I’ve ever done in this world.”

Harry found his eyes burning with unshed tears. He didn’t have much love for his cousin, but knowing he was dying and begging Harry to take care of his little girl was breaking his heart a bit. He sniffled and swallowed thickly before nodding grimly.

“I’ll have to talk to Draco about it but yeah,” he said carefully. “I don’t think he’ll have a problem with it. I’ll look after her. Have your solicitor contact me, yeah?”

“Thank you, Harry,” Dudley gave a tremendous sigh of relief. “You don’t know what this means to me.”

“I think I do,” Harry said sadly. “I’m a father too, remember.”

“Hurry up, Dad, or we’re going to be late!”

“The train doesn’t leave for half an hour, Scorpius, you’ll be fine,” Harry sighed and turned to Draco. “He gets this from you, you realise?”

“He just wants to be on time,” Draco teased. “We can’t all be late for things.”

“Papa, make Dad move faster,” Scorpius whined.

“Oh give it a rest, Scorp,” James sighed, rolling his eyes. “We’re not going to miss the train.”

“I want to get a good seat!” Scorpius exclaimed defensively. “Teddy’s already gone ahead, can’t I go ahead too?”

“You’ll wait for us,” Draco scolded. “Don’t spoil our opportunity to shower you both with love and kisses before you take off and leave us until Christmas.”

“Ugh, Papa don’t embarrass us in front of everyone!” James cried. “You’ll set us up to be social outcasts before we’re even sorted!”

“Oh alright,” Harry sighed indulgently. “But you’ll go together. Go on ahead and we’ll catch up and help you load your things. Mind the muggles.”

“Brilliant! Thanks Dad!” James cheered and grabbed his brother by the arm and steered their trolleys towards the barrier leading towards Platform 9¾ before their fathers could change their minds.

“Uncle Harry, I want to go too,” Daisy pouted from the vicinity of Harry’s elbow watching enviously as the twins ran off on their own.

“Three more years, Daze,” Harry assured her. “You and Lily will start together.”

Lily, at least hadn’t pouted or whined like her brothers or cousin. She was a very patient little girl and took after Draco more than she did Harry, despite her red hair and green eyes making her look like the spitting image of her namesake.

The four of them proceeded through the barrier together.

Draco and Harry helped the twins load their trunks while they ran off to find their other cousins so they’d have someone they knew to sit with on the train.

“Nice of them to help, eh?” Harry quipped.

“Eleven year olds,” Draco shrugged as if that explained everything. “They’ve got their own priorities that don’t involve such petty concerns as making sure their belongings actually make it to school with them.”

Harry snorted.

“Daddy,” Lily called from the platform.

Harry poked his head out to see her.

“What’s up, Lils?”

“Daisy is on the train,” she tattled.

“What?” he exclaimed, looking around frantically. “Where?”

“Right here,” came the familiar voice of Theodore Nott.

He came up the centre of the train carrying a wailing Daisy under his arm like a football.

“Put me down, Uncle Theo!” she shrieked. “I want to go to Hogwarts!”

They climbed off the train and Theo dropped Daisy on her feet on the platform and Harry took a firm hold of the eight-year-old's struggling hand. Lily just came up and stood stoically next to her tantruming cousin.

"Thanks Theo," Harry sighed. "Keeping track of this one is a full time job, I swear."

"No problem," he laughed. "It's probably just a phase, she'll grow out of it."

"One can dream," Harry laughed. "Where's Hermione at?"

"Oh she's fussing over Rosalin," he said carelessly. "She'll be along soon."

Draco came down off the train then and scooped a still crying Daisy into his arms.

"Look what the kneazle dragged in," Draco teased Theo. "You look a wreck, didn't you sleep last night?"

"Oh I did," Theo laughed. "Until Rose woke us up at the crack of dawn by leaping on top of us in bed – fully dressed and ready to leave, by the way – and tried to use sleep deprivation tactics to get us to let slip how the sorting is done. She's been badgering us all month about it."

Draco laughed. "Well the end is near."

"Tell me about it. Any guesses where your two spawns will be sorted?"

"I wouldn't want to speculate," Draco hedged. Personally he believed the twins had an equal amount of Gryffindor and Slytherin in them. Harry and he had been very careful not to push their children into believing any one house was better than the others. In another life, Harry might have been in Slytherin if not for the several people that had convinced him that it was a house full of dark wizards in the making.

"You just don't want to say something that later turns out to be wrong," Theo teased.

"I'm going to be in Slytherin," Lily piped up confidently.

"Brilliant!" Theo cheered. "So that's one for Slytherin."

"Not for another three years," Harry reminded him. "Let's focus on the ones being sorted tonight."

"Dad! Papa!"

Draco turned at the sound of James calling them through the crowd. He had Scorpius with him as well as Freddy and Roxanne in tow.

"Look who we found!" James crowed.

"Funny meeting you here," George quipped, coming up behind his kids.

“Oh yes, how unusual that all of us with Hogwarts aged children randomly ran into each other here,” Draco drawled with a smirk. “Where’s Angelina?”

“Someone had to mind the shop with the two of us here,” George sighed. “That leaves me with the incredible honour of escorting these two delinquents to the train.”

“Now you know how mum felt taking the lot of you here when you were thirteen and she inadvertently gave you and Fred the idea of blowing up a toilet,” Harry smirked.

“You blew up a toilet, dad?” Freddy said with wide, delighted eyes while Roxanne giggled.

“Thanks for that, Harry,” George said wryly. “Now when I get a letter from McGonagall telling me my kids are being expelled for vandalism, I’ll know who to blame.”

“Yourself?” Draco asked archly and Harry snickered.

“McGonagall is going to be beside herself receiving a whole mess of our kids in the same year,” Theo remarked. “The twins and Rose and Roxy. It’s sure going to be interesting.”

Just then, the train whistle blew, giving them the two minute warning and all the children on the platform made a sudden rush to get on board. Daisy wailed harder that she couldn’t go and struggled to free herself from Draco’s arms but he held her firm and ignored the tantrum. He would set her down after the train left and have a talk with her at home about patience and not expecting everything you want to be given out straight away.

Hermione hopped off the train and joined them while their children all hung out of the windows to say their goodbyes.

“Be good and study hard!” Hermione called out to her daughter. “And don’t let James rope you into any schemes!”

“Schemes?!” James pretended to be offended. “I’ve never schemed in my life, Aunt Hermione. That’s all Scorpius.”

“Is not!” Scorpius shouted.

“You two behave, alright?” Harry called to the bickering brothers. “Don’t give your heads of house any grief, and try not to get too many detentions.”

“Don’t get *any* detentions!” Draco corrected.

“That might be asking too much, papa,” James laughed.

Draco didn’t get a chance to reply as the train’s whistle sounded again and it began to pull out of the station. Daisy cried harder.

“Don’t cry, Daze!” Scorpius called as the train pulled away. “We’ll send you loads of letters.”

“Yeah!” said Freddy. “We’ll send you a Hogwarts toilet seat!”

This finally stopped Daisy crying and she began laughing instead and Draco was able to set her on her feet so she could run alongside the train waving at her cousins as they left for the next four months.

Harry looked over at George who had an astonished look on his face.

“You okay?” Harry asked.

“Yeah...” George sighed. “Just for a second I was taken back to third year when Fred said that same exact thing to Ginny when she was crying she couldn’t go with us.”

“I thought that was you?” Harry asked. “I distinctly remember mum shouting ‘George!’”

“Nah, she had us mixed up,” George said with a small, sad smile. “That was Fred.”

“Do you think Rose will keep them in line?” Theo asked curiously.

“Hermione never managed to keep me and Ron in line,” Harry shrugged.

“Scorpius will keep James from breaking any rules,” Draco said confidently.

“Scorpius will keep James from getting *caught* breaking rules,” Harry corrected with a laugh. “Assuming they can keep from bickering for long enough.”

“Assuming they’re sorted into the same house,” Theo added.

“That too,” Harry agreed.

The train had pulled out of sight by then and Daisy was walking slowly back to them.

The war had been over for sixteen years. Fifteen since they’d all left Hogwarts. Fourteen since Draco and Harry had married. Twelve since receiving the news that their surrogate was pregnant with twins. Eleven since James and Scorpius had been born, each a mirror of Harry and Draco respectively. Eight since Lily was born, and Harry was struck dumb with how much she looked like his mother. Five since Harry’s cousin had died and left three-year-old Daisy in their care.

Harry and Draco already both had teaching contracts ready to go in three years time when the last of their children went off to school. Harry was slated to take over the Defence position which would be vacated by the retiring Professor Dawlish who’d held on to the job for the last sixteen years without any sign of the curse. Harry would also be stepping into the role of Head of Gryffindor House as Neville had continued to refuse the position. As for Draco, he’d be taking the Potions position which had shuffled a few hands since Slughorn’s second retirement ten years ago. He would also be taking up Head of Slytherin House.

One year after that, Draco’s father would be getting out of Azkaban and they’d have to deal with the fact that he would be furious knowing that the only heir to the Malfoy line – Scorpius – was being raised by a half-blood alongside his half-blood siblings and a muggleborn unrelated to him. All three of Draco and Harry’s children had been conceived through artificial insemination. Ginny had donated the eggs and was therefore the children’s

biological mother. Draco's ancestors were likely rolling in their graves and his father was likely to combust when he found out. But that was a problem for the future.

For now, they had two little girls to get home and get ready for their own primary schooling. And then tomorrow, once the girls were off to school and the house was empty, as was tradition, Draco and Harry would have an entire uninterrupted day to take full advantage of the absence of their five children.

Chapter End Notes

I can't believe it's over! 😭

This fic took eight months to write from start to finish and all began with a simple scene in my head of Harry and Draco glued together by their hands, laying in bed and finally having an honest conversation. I thought this wouldn't be more than 20k words and now it's a 430 page google doc! This is the first full length fic I've ever completed and I couldn't be more delighted that so many of you enjoyed reading it!

But it's not entirely over! I've already started work on a sequel and I've posted a prologue for that fic already, so please go check it out! It's not quite the same thing, the sequel is more of a Next Generation fic and a bit of a coming of age story starring Harry and Draco's daughter Lily. If that sounds like your jam, go ahead and check it out!

It was absolutely wonderful being with all of you on this journey! Catch you in the next one!

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