

Title: [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 01)

Author Name: [Purple Flame](#)

Owl the author: [here](#).

Rating: R

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

Genre: Drama, Slash

Era: The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: It's Harry's sixth year at Hogwarts. When Draco begins to learn what Voldemort really wants from his followers he begins to resent his father and everything he represents. He realizes Harry Potter's fight has been the right one all along, and only now does he begin to do something about it. Rated 'R' for future chapters. Will be H/D Slash.

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Author's Notes: This is my first proper attempt at slash..so please be nice, but also honest! It WILL develop into H/D Slash eventually.

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## Chapter One-The Dam

He had never been allowed in there. The room was sealed with jinxes, curses and other magic he knew he could not break, and had Imperturbable charms on the door. The brief glimpses he caught of the inside when it was opened to allow someone to exit did not tell him much; the room was long, and dark, with many empty shelves lining the walls. He had often wondered what the purpose of this room was, but knew better than to ask. Sometimes he would wait for hours outside the door, when his father and his 'guests' were inside, hiding either on the stairs or in the shadows. He would never hear anything. Although once or twice, on the rare occasion someone opened the heavy studded door, he thought he had heard a high, cold voice in its depths. No sooner would this voice reach his ears than it was gone, as quickly as Voldemort could kill a Muggle.

"Draco!" a sharp, cold voice snapped him out of his trance. "I have told you to stay away from here at all times. What do you think you're doing?"

"I was looking for Mother." He watched his father slip out of the door, followed by Nott. Draco didn't look at Nott; those features always seemed to make him feel ill. Instead he looked defiantly into the disbelieving eyes of his father. "To-to take me to Diagon Alley."

"Liar," breathed Lucius, "I am a skilled Legilimens, Draco, did you really think I would fall for that? You mother left for Diagon Alley fifteen minutes ago! You were trying to listen! It seems you will never learn. Leave at once, go to your chambers. Nott, go to my drawing room I will meet you there," he added, without looking at the other Death Eater. Eyeing Draco's progress up the staircase he quickly retreated back into the room behind him, moving as gracefully, and with the same ugly manner, as a spider. The door snapped shut behind the hem of his long black robes.

Draco slowed down as he reached the corridor of his private chambers. Releasing the breath he had been holding he closed his eyes gently. He would pay for his attempted eavesdropping later, he knew. He was thankful, however, that his father did not know his real reason for eavesdropping; if he did his punishment would be far worse.

Draco wanted, more than anything, to escape the hell he'd been living in for the last 3 weeks. He had seen his father come back from Azkaban with a new fire, a new hatred in his eyes. After the Dementors had abandoned the Gaol, his father and the eleven other death eaters that had been imprisoned with him had swam to land and fled. His father had come back to the Manor because he

had a base for meeting other Death Eaters, and some of the most powerful and dark protective curses on the building. Not even Dumbledore would be able to reach his father here. He doubted if Voldemort himself would be able to do it.

Since his return from Hogwarts, he had known a brief happiness with his mother. He had felt as he had never felt before. Always he had thought of Narcissa Malfoy as the cold-hearted bitch to his father's cold-hearted bastard. But with his father locked up in Azkaban, she seemed to have come out of a shell, which had enclosed her and trapped her, unbroken until now. Neither had shown any more emotion than they usually did, but the stiff politeness was gone. And for the first time, both mother and son had found themselves enjoying life at the Manor.

But then his father had returned, and with him, immediately, so did the stiff conversation and formal language between mother and son. That was three weeks ago. And since then he had felt trapped inside his own mind. Before he had felt that not speaking was good. He had enjoyed it. To some extent he still did. He liked to keep his feelings and thoughts private. They were his thoughts after all. *His*, and no one else's. Somehow though, opening up to his mother was the release he needed. He realised he needed to let out his feelings sometimes. Already he felt he was going mad. His mind felt like a ferocious, raging river, pushing at the dam restraining the water. It could not be long until that dam burst. With despair he realised that the dam would have to hold on for the rest of his life. He could not talk about it to Crabbe and Goyle, they had had the same rubbish pounded into them from their own fathers as he had, and Draco doubted whether they would ever get the outlet their minds needed. In fact he doubted they would even recognise it for what it was. There was no one else he could confide in. He wouldn't trust any of his Slytherin 'friends', he hated everyone outside of his own house and the feeling was returned. He didn't believe in love. That was the only thing his father had ever taught him which seemed to make any sense at all any more. Love was just an empty word, a made-up emotion. An excuse to keep the human race going. There was no outlet in love.

Since his return, Lucius had seemed even more determined to drum his 'lessons' into his son. Draco felt sick after each one. Before he had been taught to hate Muggles, and Mudbloods. And he had. He had hated them with every fibre of his being. He still despised them. But what Lucius was teaching him to do was sickening. To deal with Muggles and Mudbloods, Draco thought, just kill them. Who wanted to see them naked? Who wanted to see them perform acts under the Imperius curse that no person in their right mind would choose to do? Lucius was telling Draco stories of what it had been like 'last time'. By that, he knew, Lucius meant when Voldemort was last powerful. He told him of how he had sent Muggles to slaughter their own pets, sometimes their own family, and friends, and then drive them to believing that they were filth. That they should die. He told of how the Muggles killed themselves in horrific ways under the Imperius curse. *Under Lucius's Imperius curse*. And now he wanted Draco to do the same. The 'lessons' would always end in the same way; in Draco learning the unforgivable curses, and dark magic Draco would never had imagined existed or were even possible. His father would charm Draco's curses to deflect the Ministry of Magic's detectors.

He hated the 'lessons'. Every night he would drag himself to the drawing room, and act his part impeccably. His father may be a skilled Legilimens, but Draco had learned Occlumency from Snape. He hadn't known at the time why his head of house was teaching him this magic. Snape had just said, "It will be useful" and left it at that. *Well*, Draco had thought fiercely, *it's coming in useful now...*

Draco's face would be a blank canvas, waiting for emotion to wipe across it, but it never did. That was the act. To act as though he was enjoying his lessons as much as a Malfoy was allowed to enjoy anything. And all the while, Lucius fell for it.

There, beneath all the hidden emotion, and all the sick feeling in his heart, he was feeling a fierce joy that he was deceiving his father. For years he has suffered at the hands of Lucius Malfoy. He'd lost count of the amount of time's he'd passed out after the Cruciatus curse had finally been lifted by his father. Now Draco was winning a battle. His father was fool enough to actually *believe* that Draco was *enjoying* the sinister, twisted lessons.

Draco stumbled into his room later that night. As he had been expecting, his father had punished him. The knowledge that it would happen, however, had not made the pain any easier to bear. He had suffered the Cruciatus curse four times. It had left his body feeling terrible. His very bones were aching, his hands and knees shook, and he wanted nothing more than to be let free. He resented his father, and hated the curses he endured silently. Though not as much as he had hated the rest of the lesson, the stories he was forced to listen to, and the magic he was forced to learn which had, once again left him feeling ill.

Collapsing onto his bed with its silk bedclothes, his body crumpled. After resting for a few moments, in which he regained his composure, Draco picked up a glass vial filled with a bright green something from his bedside table and tapped it with his wand. It disappeared and a large, dusty, leather-bound book appeared in its place.

He had found it in his mother's room on the third day of the holidays. She had sent him up to get her shawl. Under the chest of draws he had seen a spider skirting something square and brown. He had picked it up. It had no title. Ever since it had been hidden in his room, the thing that stopped Draco from going insane.

Now he removed a bookmark and let it open. He only read a few pages. It was a book about Muggles. At first he had been disgusted that his mother owned such a thing. With more tuition from the book though Draco had become fascinated with Muggles. He still hated them, of course he did. That would never leave him. But he had learned that they were just creatures. Like animals, they were different to Witches and Wizards, but not worthy of death. They hadn't actually done anything wrong...

Draco stopped and looked at a (still) picture of a Muggle. It looked similar to Professor Sprout... he remembered the lesson he had just received. Throwing his book down he ran to his bathroom as fast as his body would allow and vomited violently into the toilet at the memory of the story. Yes he hated Muggles, but he was beginning to hate his father more.

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Harry Potter rolled over in his sleep and gave a gentle snore. His eyelids flickered as their occupants experienced REM. A scar on his forehead showed up a little more clearly than it usually did. The room about him was cluttered with many odd things, most notably a large, empty birds cage with a few droppings and morsels of food littering the newspaper on the base. Through the open window a gentle August breeze rustled the thin, ragged, curtains. Suddenly, something far bigger and stronger than any breeze swooped through the window and, with a soft *thud* landed on Harry's chest. The boy gasped, and woke from his slumber with a start. A great silhouette was visible by the mist of the yellow light creeping into his bedroom from the streetlamp outside. Staring at the thing before him, he realised it was a particularly large owl. Stretching out his arms he put on his light and placed his glasses onto his nose. "What?" He said sleepily. The owl just rustled its handsome feathers in a dignified sort of way. He reached out and touched the letter in the owl's beak, ready to read it. Instantly he felt a jerk behind his navel and the world around him began to spin.

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"I still don't see wh-"

"Oh, *Harry*!" said Mrs Weasley in an exasperated tone, "We had to get you away from there! You were in danger!"

"I *know*!" he said, almost yelling now, "I just wish I could know why! I can't protect myself from a danger I know nothing about! I'm not a child! I'm 16!" He was angry now. He had arrived at three in the morning. Now, sitting around the dinner table, he knew no more than he did when the portkey had taken him.

"You know," said a calm voice from the dark corner of the kitchen, "He's right Molly. He will know sooner or later anyway. I really see no point in trying to hide it from him."

Mrs Weasley went slightly pink. Once again she was being overridden. "Right. OK Remus. Have it your way. You're his guardian after all now that-um, now," she finished in a small voice. Harry said nothing.

Lupin stepped out of the corner. "Thank you, Molly," he said.

"Yes, yes. Sit down Harry," she replied.

"No," he said, defiantly.

"What? Why not?" Mrs Weasley couldn't comprehend Harry's decision.

"You know why," he pointed hopelessly at the kitchen table. At the seat that had been Sirius's. The only seat available. Lupin stepped forward and sat Harry on a kitchen stool instead, ignoring the boy's protests. Finally settling, Harry turned and allowed Lupin to begin talking.

"You heard about the breakout of Azkaban?" he asked Harry, who snorted. Lupin took that as a 'yes'. He continued, "All of the inmates have been recaptured, and are being held in a more secure unit. All of the inmates that is, apart from the twelve you faced before term ended. They are still at large. We- that is, the Order- believe that they have been meeting at Lucius Malfoy's Manor."

"Well why can't you set a trap for them? Catch them there?" Harry asked.

"Malfoy isn't stupid, Harry. He knows that's the obvious course of action for us. He has put so many dark curses around his property it would be impossible to break them all. And besides, some of them not even Dumbledore has heard of. It's not possible.

"But, of course, they, and Voldemort are still looking for you. That's why we had to get you out of Privet Drive. They knew you were there."

"But Dumbledore's put charms and spells there, he can't touch me while I still live there! It's my mother's blood or something-" said Harry, desperately.

"No," agreed Lupin. "Voldemort can't. But the Dursleys can."

"What?!"

"Avery lured them, in a very similar way to the way we lured them out last summer, away from the house. Then he put a memory charm and the Imperius curse on each of them. They could try to kill you themselves, or, as is more likely, take you away from Privet Drive, to a place where you have no protection." Answering the question he saw on Harry's face he said, "We know this because Nymphadora-"

"It's *Tonks*, Remus."

He nodded in Tonks's direction. "*Tonks* has been following them, in the same way as Dung and Kingsley are tracking you. She saw what happened between them and Avery, but had no time to act. That Portkey was unauthorised, but Dumbledore didn't seem to care. If it had been intercepted it would have just acted as a normal letter, reading '*Meet you on the Hogwarts Express. Ron*'. Only when it got to you was it able to act as the portkey."

Harry saw Ron in the corner, nodding vigorously. Next to him sat Ginny, Fred, George, Bill, Charlie and Arthur Weasley. He still didn't fully understand, but at least now he was able to see that he couldn't have stayed at Privet Drive any longer.

"What about Voldemort?" He had to know. Once again the desire to know had been burning in his mind, until he wanted to scream with frustration.

Lupin shot a quick glance at Arthur Weasley. "We don't, actually know. We think he may be hiding in Malfoy's Manor, but we can't be sure. He hasn't done anything yet. We think he's trying to.... ah...*wait for the right time, if you will...*"

Suddenly there was a great clattering sound, and Pigwidgeon rose up into the air, circling Lupin's head and hooting loudly. At the same time, two figures appeared. As they straightened up one of them spoke.

"That's the worst Disapparation I've ever been a part of. Did you have to go to the Hog's Head before we left?" It sounded annoyed, but was as slow, calm and deep as ever.

"Sorry, but, see, there was this chap see...and he kept on-" a scraggy ginger head was coming into sight, disentangling itself from many patched and torn robes.

"Finally!" Lupin interrupted, "Where have you been, you left hours ago?"

"We were...held up," said Kingsley Shacklebolt, the man who had spoken first, throwing a dirty look at (an obviously outrageously drunk) Mundungus Fletcher.

Now, for the first time since their arrival Harry noticed that they had each deposited a handle of his heavy, wooden trunk, and between them carried Hedwig's cage, his broomstick and his wand.

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That night, Draco Malfoy didn't sleep well. He knew from his father's bellowing at the Death Eaters (who had begun to treat the Manor as their home) that Harry Potter had escaped, and was no where to be found. His father had forgotten to place the imperturbable charm on the door of the secret room. So Draco had not only discovered the plan to have Potter destroyed by his own family, but also that it had failed. Somewhere, in the pit of his stomach, he felt pleased. He knew that what had happened could only be for good.

As he lay in bed, trying to tempt sleep and ignore the sick feeling in his stomach and throat he suddenly realised something that he had been threatening to realise for almost a month now. *Potter was right. Everything he fought for. Voldemort's the one who deserves death. NOT Potter, and NOT Muggles.* Suddenly it was clear. Though he hated the idea of Muggles and Mudbloods, Draco Malfoy was not cruel, not as he had always believed he was, and not as his father had always taught him to be. Nothing Voldemort wanted made any sense to Draco any more. He was sick of being bullied, cursed and generally mal-treated by his father, while all his mother could do was stand and watch hopelessly, unable to do anything to help her son, for fear of her own life. The aches in his young bones only served as a reminder of this. Now he knew, the only one he could possibly talk to was Potter. He felt an odd feeling in his chest; something which he knew had nothing to do with being sick.

The Dam had burst.

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Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: Finally it's September the first, and school has started again. Draco has escaped the last three months, and has a plan...

But with Harry Potter ignoring him that won't be easy.

First suggestions of H/D ;)

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Author's Notes:

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## Chapter Two-Familiar Faces

The swaying motion of the train was making him feel so drowsy. His eyelids felt as though they were made of lead. He curled up into the very corner of his seat, against the cool window, his body in a defensive posture. Closing his eyes gently, he submitted to sleep. Ron and Hermione were performing their prefect duties. So was Ginny. Luna and Neville were sitting on the other side of the carriage. The sound of giggling woke him up, and Harry opened one eye to look at them. Neville had his arm around Luna's shoulder and was whispering something in her ear. She immediately blushed and giggled again, before enclosing him in a hug. Harry turned away. As much as he wanted to see this, as a lesson in romance (because he hadn't exactly had much success in his first relationship), he didn't want to intrude, or be seen.

As the light dimmed Harry rose and lit the torches in their carriage. The flickering orange and yellow light was relaxing. He heard Luna sigh and say something to Neville, which sounded like "*Oh, how romantic!*"

Harry felt the jealousy bubble inside the darkness of his heart like a simmering cauldron down in the dungeons of Hogwarts.

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Crabbe was talking. Or was it Goyle? He didn't know or care. It was a struggle, at the moment, to keep his face that trademark blank canvas that was so essential to his survival. He had to fight to keep the emotion off it. The muscles at the side of his mouth were twitching, pulling, bullying his lips, trying to get them to curve upwards in a graceful arc, something not often displayed on his coarse face. He wanted so desperately to smile, but he knew he mustn't. He battled with his mouth, until it was subdued enough. *He must not smile.*

The truth was, that he was ecstatic. Finally, after two months of what he could only describe as sheer Hell, he had escaped his father. He could hardly believe it. He felt like those two months had been his whole life, they seemed longer than his entire Hogwarts career.... and now.... at last.... it was behind him. He felt he could live again. He needn't face the Cruciatus curse again.... for a while at least. The feeling swelled inside him like a giant balloon, making him feel like he was walking on air.

And of his outlet? How could he possibly talk to Potter? After all, he'd acted like a sadistic bastard the last five years, and he didn't think anyone, least of all Potter, would accept his change. And he needed Potter's trust...and to trust Potter not to tell anyone the things he wanted desperately to siphon off...The trouble was, if he was honest enough with himself, he didn't deserve anybody's trust, least of all Harry Potter's.

An idea suddenly formulated itself in his mind, and he sat bold upright. Soon it had blossomed into a plan. It was almost foolproof. He had to congratulate himself on his genius. Soon he could resist the urge no longer, despite himself he hid his mouth behind his hand and, pretending to cough, Draco Malfoy smiled.

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Dumbledore's calming voice was echoing around the Great Hall. He was giving a speech about Professor Umbridge's replacement in the Defence Against the Dark Arts post. Once again it wasn't Snape. To the students' amusement, however, this year he didn't seem at all bothered by that fact.

"I would like to welcome our new Defence Against the Dark Arts Teacher, Professor Jupiter. She joins us from the Ministry of Magic at both her, and my request. Professor Jupiter has been a Ministry of Magic Employee for the last four years, working in the Department of Mysteries, before joining us today. She is an excellent teacher, and a wonderful young woman. She has asked me to inform you that if you have any worries, or have anything to ask, perhaps if you need help, she will be only too happy to come to your assistance. You can rely on her."

As the Great Hall erupted in enthusiastic applause for the new arrival (many of the boys looking up at the new Professor with a hungry light in their eyes) Harry felt comforted knowing that there was an ex-Ministry of Magic worker at Hogwarts. The Ministry may not have been exactly kind to Harry over the last year, but at least this woman seemed to understand what was going on. He had heard Moody mention Jupiter before now. He always spoke very highly of her. Apparently she was in the Order of the Phoenix, though he himself had never seen her at the headquarters.

Jupiter had sleek dark red hair, which cascaded down to her shoulders like a graceful waterfall. Her eyes were no colour in particular; sometimes they seemed blue, sometimes brown, and sometimes green. She had pretty features and clear, creamy skin. Although not very tall, she gave the impression of power. She wore robes of a deep, blood red, which complemented her hair, and seemingly added to her beauty. As she smiled around at the students filling the great hall, each of them felt that she was looking at *them* in particular. It was though she was cross-examining their minds.... it was a very peculiar sensation indeed.

Dumbledore had then gone on to announce some more new rules (as well as repeating some of the original rules for the benefit of the older students) which the squib caretaker, Argus Filch had decided to impose upon the students this year, thus preventing them from enjoying themselves as much as was humanly possible. Despite the slightly amused tone of the great headmaster's voice, Harry felt himself losing his concentration. He took to looking around his fellow students. His eyes met the terrified faces of the new first years, perched almost precariously on the edges of their benches, drinking in every word Dumbledore said. He saw the older students; their familiar faces glowing in the light from the suspended candles. Some of them smiled at him, or waved. Others his eyes skipped and he chose to ignore. People like Cho.

His eyes reached the Slytherin table last. He scanned it quickly, not interested in the slightest with anyone seated at it. Until he reached the end of the table, that is. Draco Malfoy was there. *Nothing unusual*, Harry thought, coolly. But there *was* something unusual about his archenemy. Harry tried to stare discretely at him to see what was wrong. His face was the same, all of the right features in their right places (*unfortunately* Harry thought angrily). Yet there was definitely something *odd* about it...it still had the same cold, and arrogant look fixed onto it that was for sure, so...*what was so damn wrong?*

It was a few minutes before Harry realised that *Malfoy was staring back*.

The boys realised, simultaneously, that each was staring at the other. Harry's stomach gave an enormous jolt of realisation as he tore his eyes away from the Slytherin's face cursing himself silently, and, more unusually, for the first time ever, he noticed no powerful surge of acid hatred filling his veins.

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He wanted nothing more than to sleep. To be up in his comfortable, warm bed, to be in Gryffindor Tower, with his sheets and hangings hiding him from view of the critical world. Harry dragged his feet laboriously along the corridors, up the many flights of stairs, through secret passageways and large tapestries. All the while Hermione's voice droned in his ear like a mosquito he longed to swat. He wasn't taking in a word of what she was saying.

"-of course I knew we'd get someone else from the ministry again, especially after what Moody said, but I'm glad Dumbledore chose her. I didn't think it would be a woman though, after what happened with Umbridge and all, did you Harry? Harry? Oh, never mind. She looks really nice, doesn't she? I hope she's as good as Lupin was, though he said he didn't know her." She was talking very fast, once again. This was a habit Harry and Ron had had to grow used to over the five years they had known her.

"It looks as though we can trust her, too. After all she is Dumbledore's niece-"

"*What?*" Harry jerked his head up, startled at this new, intriguing piece of information.
"Dumbledore's...what?"

"Niece, Harry. Niece. Dumbledore's niece." Hermione sounded exasperated, but there was a note of humour to her voice also.

"What?" said Ron, "How the hell did that happen?"

"Do you really need me to explain Ron? I'd have thought with Bill and Fleur sleeping in the very next room to you at The Burrow, then you know all about *that*-"

Ron cut her short, "Oh, ha-ha, very funny, Miss Know-it-All. You know exactly what I meant".

Trying hard not to laugh at the look on Ron's face, Hermione continued, "Apparently, ages ago Dumbledore's brother, Aberforth had a short-lived fling with a Lady Seer called Orbah, and then...well, as you can see, the result was Swan Jupiter."

Ron was utterly disgusted, "Urgh! That's absolutely gross! Aberforth's got to be about the same age as Dumbledore, right? Isn't he a bit old to be having kids? And Jupiter can't be older than 20! And how do you know? And what the Hell's a 'Lady Seer'?"

"Oh, for God's sake, Ron! Get a grip! People are allowed to have sex if they're older than twenty-five you know!" Ron looked somewhat surprised at this piece of news, but Hermione ignored him. "Swan's 23 for your information. Lady Seers are true seers, not like that fraud Trelawney, and they can live for hundreds of years. They're very beautiful and...well...more *mythical* than your average witch. They carry children for 3 years before giving birth in a lake. They are far older than wizard-kind. Jupiter has probably got some of her mother's traits in her blood as well...And I know because Kingsley told me last night when you two idiots were blowing *Droobles Best Blowing Gum* in each others' faces!"

Harry was astounded. As they stepped through the portrait hole entrance to Gryffindor Tower (Hermione giving the new password to the Fat Lady, *Porlock*) Ron was still insisting he felt ill

imagining someone older than thirty engaging in those kinds of intimate relations. Harry slumped down in an old and battered armchair near the roaring fire, knowing that this year's Defence Against the Dark Arts lessons would, at least, be far more informative than the last.

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Harry was pondering over what had happened between him and Malfoy. As much as he tried to deny it, he could not ignore the fact any longer that he and Malfoy had been staring into each other's faces *without hatred*. This was what confused him the most. He had always hated Malfoy. Always. And vice-versa. So why had it suddenly stopped? Hatred could not be present in its entirety one moment and gone with no trace whatsoever the next. Especially between him and Malfoy. That was just impossible. They'd hated each other ever since they first clapped eyes on each other in Madam Malkin's. He knew it had something to do with Malfoy's feelings. His hadn't changed one jot. At least...he didn't think so. Why would Malfoy's feelings towards him change? He, Harry, had got Malfoy's father locked up in Azkaban only three months ago! Okay, it hadn't been a very long stay in the gaol, but that was no reason for Malfoy to start *liking* him for Christ's sake!

Harry didn't know what to feel. The idea that Malfoy's feelings towards him had changed for the better (or, in Harry's point of view, changed for the far, *far* worse) made him feel sick.

"Are you OK Harry?" Hermione sounded concerned as she broke his train of thought. He must look really bad; she had actually broken off an argument with Ron to see if he was feeling well. "You look awfully pale."

Harry looked at her with a somewhat surprised expression and tried to fix a convincing grin onto his face, "Oh, um, yeah, I just feel a bit ill...that's all. Must've eaten a bit too much at the welcome feast..." And without further ado, he got up and marched to the boys' staircase, looking for nothing other than sleep.

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Draco lay in bed, fighting the sleep that was so desperately trying to engulf him, and which he was equally desperately desiring. But he *had* to sort it out. Potter had seen him looking. He cursed himself under his breath. It could ruin everything. Potter was not stupid, as Draco had always maintained to anyone who was foolish enough to listen. Potter would know something wasn't right. Since when had his archenemy looked, no *stared* at him avidly like that?

And then there was the jolt in his stomach. He could tell the same had happened to Potter by the odd look on his face.

Draco was worried; there was no denying it. Harry almost certainly knew something was up. Or at least that something had changed. And the problem was, after this evening, Potter would most probably avoid him at all costs. Which meant that his plan was now completely and utterly worthless. The chances of it working were now almost nil. He would have to think of a new plan, and fast.

Sighing, Draco turned onto his side, resolved to sort his problem out in the morning and let the drowsiness surround him. As he dropped off into a deep sleep, his last thought was the rather pleasurable feeling he had felt in his heart when he had realised he was being watched by none other than The Boy Who Lived...

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Sleep came to Harry very easily that night. He dreamt that he was walking in a circle around the lake. Over and over again he circled. He saw the huge tentacles of the giant squid in the distance massaging the surface of the glassy water.

Suddenly there was a blinding flash of orange light and he was standing in the middle of the dark charms classroom alone. He didn't move, but saw that he had his wand in his hand ready to strike. He noticed that his breathing was slightly irregular and heavier than normal.

Hearing a movement he looked up and saw, out of the dark shadowy corner, a tall figure approaching. It was overbearing, the power almost radiating from its body, and whatever it was, was wearing robes blacker than the room itself. And- Harry registered the fact numbly in his mind- it was holding a wand up high. He could not see who it was in the dark, but knew instantly that he did not want to know.

The figure advanced towards him, its face hidden in shadow. His scar began to burn, and although it was sheer agony his composure did not waver.

In his sleep Harry writhed like a snake.

Raising its wand, the thing cried "*Cruc-*"

"NO!" a voice screamed from somewhere behind him. Without turning to see who it was, Harry raised his own wand and shouted at the same time as the other voice, "*Protego!*" The two spells together did what one alone could not, and deflected the powerful and complex curse. Momentarily the room was lit with sparkling purple and red light. In that brief moment Harry saw that his aid had their arms wrapped around his body, binding them together. And he recognised their attacker. The tall figure was walking towards them. "*Avada Ke-*"

Two voices shouted two different spells,

"*Pantamera!*"

"*Expelliarmus!*"

Voldemort was blasted off his feet into the wall where he lay crumpled for a moment. Then, defeated, he dissolved into the solid stone wall with a defiant *hiss*. He left no trace of having been there only seconds before.

Harry turned around and looked at his ally, who still had their arms around Harry's waist.

It was Draco Malfoy.

He wanted to get away from there, away from Malfoy's touch, away from the dream. But something was keeping him there. They were close. Very close. As he looked into Malfoy's eyes he saw something moving. Shadows, glowing like embers in a fire, and then dying only to be reborn. They were in the boy's mind...as Harry watched the embers faded, until, finally, they had disappeared, leaving behind them only the cool silver of Malfoy's eyes.

The boys looked deep into each others' eyes, and when Malfoy spoke, Harry felt his cool, gentle breath playing about his own face, the boy said simply, "Murderer's Aid, Potter."

Harry woke up with a yell and twisted and turned in his sheets until he was completely entangled. His hand brushed his crotch accidentally. To his dismay he found that he was aroused. "*Shit!*" he yelled in disgusted panic, trying to find a way to deter the other boys in his dormitory now trying to free him from his bed. He heard Neville light one of the lamps, and scramble off his bed. Ron's voice was audible over his own struggling efforts. "What? Harry?! Is it-are you-are you seeing You-know- what again?"

Harry managed to shout back, in a high-pitched voice, "No! No it's nothing like that, go back to bed, I just had a nightmare!"

"Harry! Stop being a stupid git and let me help you!"

He managed to stand up and free his head from the hangings, artistically covering his groin, "I'm OK, just had...had a nightmare. Honestly Ron, it's OK!" but he knew he was a bloody liar.

He had, in fact, been enjoying the dream; although he felt sickened by it now, but what had woken him up was the shock that Malfoy had said "Murderer's Aid". Did that mean he knew? About the prophecy? The whole thing? And what did the "Aid" bit mean?

His last comforting thought before he closed his eyes again, was that it was just a dream...Malfoy couldn't possibly know...

Across the castle, wondering why he had said "Murderer's Aid", Draco Malfoy was experiencing exactly the same.

**Title:** [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 03)

**Author Name:** [Purple Flame](#)

**Owl the author:** [here](#).

**Rating:** R

**Spoilers:** PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

**Genre:** Drama, Slash

**Era:** The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

**Main Character(s):** D, G, H, Hr

**Ship(s):** D/H, Hr/R

**Summary:** As the first week of the new term begins, Draco's worst fears are confirmed. his plans are in tatters, and Harry Potter is doing his best to ignore him. he needs to do some serious thinking...and fast! H/D.

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**Author's Notes:** I know this chapter moves quite fast, but the issue WILL be dealt with in further chapters :)

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Chapter Three-Sixty Seconds

Draco had been quite right when he had thought that Harry would avoid him after the

welcome feast incident. The first week of term went by without the two boys clapping eyes on each other at all. In Potions both carefully averted their eyes, and concentrated on their potion making.

The first Friday of term dawned wet and cold. As Harry stepped into the Gryffindor common room the first thing he saw was a gaggle of sixth years gathered around the notice board.

"What's happened?" he asked Dean Thomas.

"Greenhouse four's flooded. Sprout's called this morning's Herbology lesson off. We have to sit with the third years who aren't doing Care of Magical Creatures because they're afraid their hair'll get damp," Dean pulled a face as he said this.

"Oh," a small voice said. It was Neville, looking rather dispirited, "I wanted to tell Professor Sprout what I got for Herbology in my OWLs..." his voice trailed off.

"Go on Neville," urged Harry, "what did you get?"

"Um...well, I got, um...an 'E'," he finished in a small voice.

"Neville! Well done!" Harry exclaimed, while Dean clapped him on the back to congratulate him. Neville went beetroot red.

"Luna gave me some special fertilizer for my Mimbulus Mibletonia as a well done present! Do you want to see?"

"Er," said Harry, "OK..." not at all sure whether he wanted to or not.

Ten minutes later Harry was regretting seeing the new fertilizer. It smelled like a cross between a troll and heavily scented dragon dung. He had almost passed out when he smelt it. Now it was clinging to his clothes and making him feel very sick. At first people had skirted him in the corridors because of it, until Hermione had performed a quick-clean jinx on him. Now you could only smell it if you were really close. Or if you were Harry.

After a hurried breakfast the Gryffindor fifth years hastened up to the fourth floor and into classroom 18. About twenty third years were running riot. The noise levels were tremendous, several desks were upturned, and giant gold and blue bubbles were skirting the walls and people. Occasionally one would pop, covering everyone within a four-foot radius with slimy silver goo.

Hermione was livid. Slamming the classroom door behind her she screamed "*Finite Incantatem!*" At once the mess disappeared. Storming up to the front of the room behind the teacher's desk she got into her flow, "What the Hell do you think you're doing? You're in a classroom! If you want to be childish do it in your own dorms! I'm in charge now, and if I see one more spell performed that shouldn't be I *will* put you all in detention, OK? It's not my choice to be looking after you!" she looked so threatening that even Ron was cowering. Hermione carried on with her lecture as the rest of the Gryffindor and Hufflepuff sixth years filed into the room.

Harry didn't feel like sitting here with an irate Hermione for a double period. He stood up and said to Ron, "Look, I've got a bit of a headache. I'm going to go to the Hospital Wing. Tell Hermione, will you?"

Ron opened his mouth in protest, but Harry was already gone.

He had no intention of going to the Hospital Wing. He didn't even have a headache. He was shattered though ... He had an idea in his head of just going back to bed. He'd been having more dreams over the last few nights, all of them featuring Malfoy trying to tell him something, but Harry not listening. It always ended up in a duel between the two boys, during which Harry's scar would burn and he would wake up with the pain.

He was actually quite pissed off with Malfoy (more than normal) when he woke up. The dreams the blond interrupted were usually nice ones.

A strong icy breath of wind forced itself between a crack in one of the long, high windows along the corridor he was walking. Immediately the lamps flickered, spat and died. Harry was reminded forcefully of his journey on the Hogwarts Express in his third year when the train was invaded by Dementors.... *it couldn't be though*, he reasoned with himself, *they can't get past the gates...and I don't feel suicidal either*.

He took out his wand to light it; he knew it would be a few minutes before the lamps re-lit themselves.

He whispered "*Lum-*"

Crash

He collided with something very solid. Both Harry and whatever he had crashed into fell onto the stone floor with an "Oof!" of breath.

"*Lumos!*" said two people at the same time.

Directing the beam of his wand to what he assumed would be the face of whoever it was he rubbed his grazed hand on his robes to ease the stinging.

A beam was directed into his own face. Once again, for the second time in a week they realised simultaneously that they were looking into each other's faces. Draco Malfoy and Harry Potter.

"Shit," Harry muttered, painfully aware of his glowing cheeks. He remembered his dreams, especially the one where he'd woken up aroused. He got up angrily and started to walk away. "Watch where you're going next time-" he hissed at the other boy.

"Potter! Wait!"

Huh? Why should Harry wait? It was Malfoy's fault. He was the one who's appeared from no-where. When the torches were lit there had been no one at all down that corridor. "Why should I? No." He said forcefully.

"Potter, please?" Malfoy was going red, probably with the effort of being polite for once...

"Why?" Harry repeated.

"Because... I ...come in here Potter," Malfoy held open a classroom door. Harry didn't want to. He hesitated; Malfoy was the enemy, yet...he was eager to find out why Malfoy didn't seem to hate him any more.

"You've got sixty seconds Malfoy."

Malfoy nodded. As he closed the door behind them the lights in the corridor flicked back into life.

"I want ...I mean, I *need* you to listen to me. You're the only one I can talk to."

"And why's that?" Harry said at once.

"Because...you've got the right fight." His plan had gone out of the window. He hadn't meant to talk to Potter so soon, but the way Potter was behaving it wasn't looking as though he would get another chance too soon...he had to grab it while he could.

"What? What does that mean?"

"Against You-Know-Who!"

"What? But you've always...oh no Malfoy. I'm not falling for that one. You're the son of a Death Eater so, I'm sorry, but if Voldemort wants to get information about me he's going to have to think of a smarter plan. I'm not stupid."

Draco hesitated, he'd spent so long thinking about this, about what he was going to say, making up irrelevant plans which he no longer needed, but now it came to it, he wasn't sure he could tell Potter.

The cut on his hand he had as a souvenir from his recent fall pained him. As though through flashes of a Muggle camera Draco saw again, and experience the pain from the torture he'd been put through that summer. In less than a second it was gone. But it had made up his mind for him.

"Potter, I-I have no father." He said helplessly.

"What?" Harry exclaimed. "That's bullshit! Lucius Malfoy you prick! I don't need to listen to this if you're just here to waste my time-"

"Stop saying 'what?' like that!" Draco was getting irritated.

"Well if you'd just explain-"

"I'm trying! It's difficult. I don't know where to start! You *need* to listen though. Really. I-I guess it's when the summer holiday's ended, and I went home to my mother..."

And he told Harry everything. About talking to his mother, how he'd felt when his father had come home, the 'lessons', how they made him physically sick, and about his mother's book.

When he'd finished Harry stared at him, not sure what to think. "What's all this got to do with me though?" He asked finally.

"Damn, Potter! I thought that was obvious! I've never met a Muggle, but... I-I've met you, and-I know you're not a Muggle!" He added hurriedly, seeing the look on Harry's face, "But, I just...I feel like I've changed. Yeah, I hate Muggles, and Mudbloods too but only because they come from Muggles! It's not like You-know-Who and the Death Eater's think. The reason they hate the Muggles is purely racial-"

"Oh, and hating Muggles isn't?" Harry said sarcastically. This was just random rubbish Malfoy was talking.

"No, I mean, well, you've read the books. About how the Muggles tried to burn us at the stake in the Middle Ages." Malfoy kept the desperate tone out of his voice as much as he could. Harry remembered the History of Magic homework he'd done under his sheets at the Dursley's house..." *That's* why I hate them. Because they hate us. I don't hate them just because they're different. But my Father does. That's the difference. I realise that the Middle Ages were a long time ago, but...well...because I'm a Pure Blood my ancestors go back to well before the Middle Ages, and some of them were tortured. Some of them were drowned some of them were beaten...they weren't all burned you know...."He shuddered.

"So, remind me again what it is that's changed your mind?"

"This summer. Learning what my Father wants me to do, learning what Muggles are like, opening up to my mother, the book and.... you" Malfoy finished in a small voice.

Harry was silent for a second, then, "Bullshit! You expect me to really believe that you've changed? People don't change like that Malfoy! Least of all you! You've always been a cruel bastard, you've always hated me, always hated Muggles and always hated Muggle-borns!"

"NO! Well, yes, I suppose that's true. But people can change. The way I've behaved the last five years...yes I was cruel, and yes, I was evil. *Because I'd been brought up like that.* It was the only way I knew. I didn't know any different. Now I do-"

"These are just crap excuses Malfoy!"

"They're not! Listen to me?! It's like you. For eleven years you acted Muggle, for all intents and purposes you *were* Muggle. Because you didn't know any different. If you'd known about being a wizard you would never have behaved like a Muggle. But then you learned about Our World and you *changed*. You knew that you had to be a wizard, because that was what you were, you were not a Muggle. See, with me it's like that, but I was always brought up as a Muggle hater. This summer I've learned about Muggles, and their suffering because of the ways people like my father have treated them! That's what made me change! Learning about something new, which you cannot avoid because you know that's where you belong. I was only ever cruel because that's the only thing I knew. Just like the only thing you knew was to be Muggle. Doubtless I'll still have some evil streaks in me, but I can't change too much at once you know."

Silence greeted this speech. Harry was speechless. He couldn't say anything. Everything Malfoy said made sense yet...how could he be sure?

"How do I know you aren't lying, Malfoy?" He asked, "How can I be 100% certain you're telling me the whole truth?"

"You can't. There's no way I will ever be able to prove it, unless you give me Veritaserum...The only thing I can do is to protect you."

"Protect me? I've got plenty of people to protect me thanks! Dumbledore, Snape, McGonagall, Ron, Hermione. *Myself*." He added as an afterthought.

"Of course you do. And they do a very good job at that. I'm not suggesting that I take their place, but what is it we've always been told? Ah, yes: *Prevention is better than Cure*."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm on the inside Potter. I hear things. Things that could save your life, and Muggles lives. My father still trusts me, still thinks I'm his loyal sadistic son... he writes me letters Potter. He doesn't tell me everything. He's not that stupid. He writes enough though. And sometimes he gets me to help him." Malfoy sounded ashamed, "and I hate him for that. For using me. Even then I knew it was wrong, but I couldn't stop it. I didn't know how. So, if you can trust me then I can save you."

"Why should I trust you?"

"I've just explained, Potter! But if you don't want to then fine, I'll just have to-"

"But you're a Slytherin! I can't trust you, can I! The only way I could trust you is if Dumbledore does so-"

"No. I'm not going to see Dumbledore. This is a private thing between you and me. You are the only one I can talk to. For-for now anyway. And as for me being Slytherin, that doesn't matter. We're not all bad."

"Er, yes you are!"

"Snape's a Slytherin. And you trust him. You trust him because Dumbledore trusts him. You pretend not to trust him, you pretend to hate him, but deep down, you trust him."

"I do hate Snape! But...yes. Yes I do trust him. How do you know Dumbleodre trusts Snape?"

"I have my way's Potter. It's because I'm on your side now. Please, Potter, let me prove it."

"It's OK. I still want you to prove it but...I trust you.... for now." He didn't know why he believed the boy. But somehow, he knew Malfoy was telling the truth. He'd never seen this side of Malfoy before. He was showing just how vulnerable he was...this wasn't an act either. The boy was sincere. He knew it was out of character for Malfoy, though he knew that everyone had two sides he'd always thought Malfoy was the exception. Yet, here he was, spilling his heart out to Harry. Harry realised that this was the side of Malfoy that needed to escape occasionally, and even then only in private and to a trusted confidante. The strong determine unwavering side of him was...well...normal Malfoy. But why had he crumbled so quickly? And why to Harry? Harry didn't know why, and probably never would, but right now all he knew was that, unbelievable though it was, Malfoy had convinced him that he was trustworthy.

"Thank-you, Potter," Malfoy whispered.

Harry moved forwards and was about to leave the room when he turned. Malfoy had his hand extended. Harry looked at Malfoy's pale face before taking it, and they shook hands.

They were so close.

Harry looked into the other boy's eyes. He had to stop himself from yelling. Behind the eyes, which he knew should be silver grey, were shadows. Dark shadows that grew red and then died, before being reborn. Harry knew what it was: Voldemort was in Malfoy's thoughts. It was the same thing which had happened to Harry last year, which Dumbledore had seen as he looked at Harry.

Still with their hands clasped Harry said, "Malfoy..."

"It's OK. I know. I can see what he's thinking. He's been there for weeks. I know practically every emotion he feels." He saw the terrified look on Harry's face, "Oh, don't worry. He can't see what I'm thinking. He hasn't recognised the bond yet..."

"But.... Malfoy! How do you know? You've got to find a way of getting rid of it! I can't get rid of it, my scar will always be there connecting us but...shit Malfoy how did that happen?"

"Snape told me. He noticed it when I was in his office on Tuesday about my Occlumency; he said it was because...Voldemort has been living in the Manor over the summer. In my quarters."

Harry gasped. Voldemort was living in Lucius Malfoy's Manor?! But the information was useless, Snape had told Malfoy that, so would have told Dumbledore as well, and there would be nothing that the Order could do anyway, because of the spells on the Manor.

And since when did Malfoy learn Occlumency! That wasn't important right now though. It would have to wait.

Malfoy was paler than normal. The Shadows were glowing red again, and Malfoy started to bend over suddenly. Clutching his chest. There was nothing Harry could do. Malfoy was in front of him, panting hard with the pain, bent double. His face contorted with pain.

Malfoy gave a shriek of agony and then it was gone. Harry steadied Malfoy to stop him from falling.

"What was it?" He asked quietly.

"He's annoyed. Says-says things aren't happening fast enough." Malfoy panted back, the pain in his heart receding now. "I wish I could stop it."

Malfoy's head was bent down towards his chest. Harry felt a rush of emotion. He knew how Malfoy felt. Even he still wasn't used to the experience. *It must be worse for him though, Harry thought, because he can do Occlumency.... it's because he's been so close to Voldemort* He suddenly felt a rush of hatred towards Lucius Malfoy, for letting this happen to his son. If Malfoy really was on Harry's side now...it looked as though Harry would have to do some protecting of his own.

Then, something Harry hadn't quite registered invaded Harry's thoughts.

"Malfoy," he said, urgently, "When you saw he's been there fore weeks, could you be a bit more precise?"

"I suppose...about a week after my father came back from Azkaban," he moaned,

"Of course, " said Harry, " He'd have taken Voldemort back to the Manor with him, and then he would have been so close to you that it affected you...but it took time to become a proper connection between you...I haven't had any of those...images since just before my Birthday. That's about the same time. You must have invaded *our* bond, and intercepted all the images or something! Shit...." He understood now.

He took Malfoy's head in his hands and raised it, so that they were eye to eye. They were closer than ever, staring into each other's eyes. The ugly shadows, dancing behind Malfoy's otherwise handsome eyes still visible. Malfoy began to fall forward slowly. Harry caught him in his arms to stop the boy from collapsing. Steadied, Malfoy raised his head.

"Thank-you," he whispered gently. They were so close his lips brushed Harry's. Each could feel the others heartbeat, as well as their own, thumping madly, fighting for escape...yet...

"It was a...pleasure," Harry whispered back. Again their lips touched.

They pulled each other into a kiss. Both were nervous. Harry opened his mouth to allow Malfoy's tongue to slip next to his own. The kiss got deeper. Harry's knees went weak; both boys were now supporting each other. Harry gave a moan. In both of their heads explosions were going on. Guilt. Fright. Worry. Both felt them all. But most powerful of all was the sheer *pleasure*.

Malfoy ran his hands through Harry's soft hair and licked his lip. Slowly and gently, he began to run his teeth along Harry's lower lip. Biting occasionally, and nibbling. The pleasure for both was intense.

Harry sensed, rather than saw, the shadows in the depths of Draco Malfoy's eyes disappear. Voldemort was gone. It was this that truly made Harry realise that Malfoy had changed.

Harry had never known kissing could bring this much pleasure...his whole body was tingling as Malfoy's tongue met his own again.

Harry detached himself from Malfoy's mouth, afraid of what he'd done. He knew neither of them had intended that to happen. It was a total accident. But he knew it shouldn't have happened.

Breathing heavily, his lips swollen, Harry whispered, "I'm so sorry," and fled from the room.

Title: [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 04)

Author Name: [Purple Flame](#)

Owl the author: [here](#).

Rating: R

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

Genre: Drama, Slash

Era: The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: 'Harry whispered "I'm so sorry", and fled from the room'

After last chapters *events* Harry feels he just can't handle life. It's time for a chat and some new revelations...

Disclaimer: This story is based on characters and situations created and owned by JK Rowling, various publishers including but not limited to Bloomsbury Books, Scholastic Books and Raincoast Books, and Warner Bros., Inc. No money is being made and no copyright or trademark infringement is intended.

Author's Notes:

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#### Chapter 4- Stop Running

Harry ran all the way up to the North Tower, up the boys' staircase and flopped onto his bed. When he had managed to draw the hangings with his shaking hands, he curled up to his headboard, rocking backwards and forwards in panic.

What the hell have I done? He thought, Shit, I kissed Malfoy! That's not only wrong it's sick! For a start it's Malfoy, but he's a boy! And so am I! Oh shit, what the hell have I done?

He didn't understand what had happened. One minute they'd been talking, the next...he could barely think about it. He ran his hand over his mouth. The swelling had gone down but he still felt dirty. He had kissed *Malfoy*! He had no idea what to do. He was lost.

He got up tentatively and walked to the stone basing in the corner. With a tap of his wand it gushed a steady stream of water. He splashed his face, felling it's icy cold hitting him, slapping him. He scrubbed his teeth, and his tongue, and his lips. He needed to get Malfoy off him. He only stopped when he felt the taste of blood on his tongue.

Almost crawling back onto his bed, he looked at his watch. It was one thirty already. He'd missed lunch. But somehow, he wasn't hungry. Hideous thoughts raced around his mind. *What would his parents say if they knew? What would his friends say if they found out? What was he going to do now? Why did Malfoy kiss him? What did he want? How could he ever face him again? Was it a plan? What would Malfoy do now?*

The thoughts were getting jumbled in his head, like a giant ball of wool. He needed a pensive or something...

He was getting a headache. He needed to know what had just happened. He was getting desperate. He needed...he didn't know. All of a sudden his eyes felt heavy, and his head was drooping. Stress and tiredness overcame him, and he slept fully clothed, on his bed.

~~~~~

As the light around Hogwarts castle began to fade, and starts begin to force their way out of the veil of deep-blue in the sky, Harry Potter could be found lying face down on his bed. The more he tried to not think of Malfoy, the harder the arousal between his legs seemed to throb. He was so confused! He didn't understand anything, and he needed to. He hadn't eaten a thing, or spoken to anyone at all since it had happened. He didn't know when he would ever dare to get of his bed, or even if he would.

He needed to talk to someone. He knew who he would have talked to. Sirius. He was the obvious choice. Harry wasn't sure if he would have told Sirius everything, but even just being able to siphon off some of his confusion would have helped him right now.

If Sirius hadn't been dead.

He felt tears prickling in his eyes as he thought of his Godfather, but wiped them away immediately, angry. He could have told Lupin, but he didn't feel he had the closeness of the relationship he'd had with Sirius with Lupin. Not yet, anyway. Not to tell him something like this.

Suddenly, the door of the dormitory opened, with a slight creak, and then closed again. Harry lay still. He didn't know who it was, but right now he didn't want to talk to anyone. *Maybe, he thought, if I stay still long enough, they won't know I'm here, and they'll piss off.*

"Harry?" said a strange voice. He didn't recognise it. It wasn't one of the fifth years. He held his breath.

"Harry?" it repeated. He wanted to scream, to tell them to leave him alone. But he didn't dare. "Oh, Harry for Christ's sake, I know you're there, and I know there's something wrong. Stop being a prat and tell me. I'm not stupid you know!" Still he didn't move. "Right! Fine! Be like that, but I'm telling you Harry, I won't leave you alone."

A small hand shot through the hangings on his bed and, before he could stop it, had ripped them apart. For a split second they stared at each other.

"NO!" Harry yelled, covering himself with his pillow.

It was Ginny.

Harry was fully aware that his face was bright red; he didn't know what to say. Ginny just stared at him, with one eyebrow raised.

"Shit," he muttered finally. "It's-I-um... well..."

"You're not making much sense Harry," she said gently. "I didn't come here to embarrass you. I came here to talk."

And I want to talk, he thought, but not with you! Not about this!

When he didn't say anything Ginny carried on speaking. "We know there's something wrong Harry. Ron says you've got a headache. He said you left him in the morning. Why did you leave? You didn't have a headache, did you?"

Silence.

Unperturbed she continued, "Where did you go when you left Ron?"

He couldn't not speak. It was clear she wasn't going until she got some answers.

"I came straight up to bed. Didn't fancy going to the hospital wing."

"Don't lie Harry. I know that's not true. Tell me the *truth*"

What? How the hell could she know he was lying?

"I...met someone on the way. How do you know I didn't come straight to the tower?"

She smiled, "Because I wasn't going to lessons today either. I felt ill, and the sight of Snape's face would have made me feel worse, so I took the day off. I was sitting by the fire in the armchair. You looked terrified. And you were crying."

"I was NOT!" He yelled.

"Yes you were, I saw you, remember? You were all red, and crying and you looked like you had just escaped from you-know-who or something. You looked awful."

"Oh. But I didn't-why have you come here? Did Ron or Hermione send you?"

"Oh, no of course not. They're perfectly capable of coming to see you themselves. No, they just think you really do have a headache."

"So why are *you* here then?"

"Because I'm worried. You leave Ron, turned up crying an hour later, aren't seen all day, haven't eaten and won't talk to anyone and then I find you-"

"Big Deal! It's none of your business...I'm just...don't...I mean...leave me alone."

"I'm not going until you give me a reasonable excuse Harry. It's your call."

"Yeah? Well, this is my Dorm. So get lost, Ginny or I'll-"

"Or you'll what Harry?" Ginny was getting upset now. "I have come here because I'm concerned, you obviously need to talk, I'm your friend and I don't care what you say there is something serious troubling you!"

Harry lay down on his bed, curled in a foetal position. "I can't tell you," he whispered, "I just can't."

Ginny sat down beside him and laid a hand on his shoulder. It's okay, Harry, honesty. You can tell me, I promise. It'll be completely confidential. I won't tell anyone-not even Crookshanks."

Harry smiled weakly. "I don't think I can tell you everything," he began, "But I'll try and tell you as much as I can!" he added, noticing the look on Ginny's face.

They sat in silence for a minute longer.

"Go on then," said Ginny patiently.

"When I left Ron, I wasn't ill. I didn't have a headache, I was just really tired, so I wanted to come back to bed. I was a bit pissed off with the world to tell you the truth. No reason why. I juts was.

"So...I...I started to walk back to the tower, but...I bumped into someone."

"Who?" Ginny said when Harry didn't continue, "And how the hell did you bump into them? Were you walking with your eyes closed?"

"The lights went out!" he replied indignantly, "And it was...um...Malfoy," he finished in a very small voice.

"Oh shit," whispered Ginny.

"Yeah, that's what I thought," Harry said, almost bitterly, "But he...he was different. Kind of...nice."

"Well that's a load of rubbish, Harry, because the words 'nice' and 'Malfoy' do NOT go well together..."

He smiled, "I know, but, not this time. He said he wanted to talk. Wanted to take me into a classroom to talk privately."

"You didn't," her voice was almost pleading, "please say you didn't, Harry."

"I did," he replied, hopelessly, "I gave him sixty seconds to explain what he wanted."

"But then how come you didn't get back up to the tower for another hour?"

"Because...I was interested in what he had to say."

Ginny's mouth fell open. "Are you under the Imperius curse?" she asked, incredulously.

"Of course not! But...I *was* interested...at first I thought he just wanted to get information out of me...you know, for Voldemort."

Ginny flinched, but Harry ignored her and went on. The memories were so clear and sharp in his mind; each scene was played out in his head, like a Muggle film...

"But then he said that he had no father-" Ginny opened her mouth to protest, but no words came out, she could tell this was important to Harry. She'd have to save any questions until the end. But she *was* wondering what crap Malfoy had been saying to make Harry go like this. She couldn't help it.

Harry repeated the conversation he had had with Malfoy to Ginny. Though he could see the disbelief in her face, the words he said made more and more sense to him as his voice spoke them. There was no doubt in his mind now: Malfoy was telling the truth.

He was reaching the end of his tale, "And then, just as we shook hands I saw...what...what was inside *me* last year. Voldemort was behind his eyes, because his bastard of a father had let Voldemort live near Malfoy all summer, and Malfoy didn't have any idea. But...he...left when...we...shook hands. And I trust him" He finished. His voice shook. He didn't want to say about the kiss. There was no way on Earth that he could tell *Ginny* about *that*...

Ginny said nothing. She had her head in her hands. Her body looked to be shaking slightly.

"Oh, *Harry*," she said. Her eyes when she looked up at his face were shining with unshed tears. "What the hell have you done? You can see what he's done can't you? It's such a load of *bullshit* Harry! He's not on our side. He isn't going to help you! What the hell could have made him change his mind?"

"Have you ever had Cruciatus cast on you?" Harry said quietly, "Because Malfoy has. His *own father* cast it on him, Ginny, and then he found the book and-"

"I know, Harry, I know. I *want* to believe it but...I can't. You can see can't you? Why I can't trust him? How can you be so sure?"

"Because...." He wanted to explain, about what he had felt during the kiss...about how he knew that Voldemort had left Malfoy...along with his father. But what was he meant to say? *I kissed him and then I knew Voldemort was gone*. No way. But somehow he had to explain. "Well...I still want him to prove it but I *know*, I just *know* he's telling the truth. Please Ginny, you have to trust me."

"Harry, I want to. I really, really do! But...now don't take this the wrong way," she said hurriedly, "At the moment you're so *vulnerable*. It would have been so easy for Malfoy to make you think he was trustworthy. There's all this stuff with Voldemort, and then about...um...Sirius, and you're worried...your mind is going to be so weak after all the things you've had to deal with!

"You were too quick to trust him, Harry. It's not your fault I know but, oh it will just have been so easy to manipulate you!"

Harry looked at her. Her tears were streaming down her face as she spoke, but she wiped them away determinedly.

"You need *more*, Harry. It's just so...so stupid! I'm not saying *you're* stupid, of course I'm not, but...Oh God, Harry, *why* do you believe him!"

"I-" he wanted to tell her so much, "I can't say."

"HARRY!" she stormed, "This is so ridiculous! WHY can't you tell me?"

"Because...you wouldn't believe me," he lied.

"Fine." She said. She didn't believe him one bit. GOD she hated boys. How could Harry do this to her? After all they' been through? He had to tell someone... "Harry, please, *please* tell someone. Tell Professor Dumbledore-"

"NO! No way! Malfoy made me promise I wouldn't...I shouldn't even have told you. You won't tell anyone, will you?" his voice was so strained and anxious. He had tears shining in his eyes now. "I'm so sorry Ginny. I know you don't believe me, but I can't tell you everything. I want to but I can't. You just have to trust me...that *he* is trustworthy.... please Ginny, don't tell anyone."

She looked into his eyes. "Oh, Harry of *course* I won't! God knows, I want to. But I promise I won't. But you have to promise me something."

"What?" he said, nervously.

"That you tell me *everything* he says to you. Please? Promise me?"

He thought, how could he promise? He hadn't even told her everything now so how could he in the future? But then...it wasn't as though he was intending what had happened that morning to happen again...

"I promise, Ginny." He reached out, and brushed a lock of hair out of her face. She leaned forward, and they embraced each other. Harry collapsed in her arms, shedding the last remainders of his tears. "Thank-you."

As they broke apart, Ginny said, "I still don't know why you really had to hide yourself up here all day...all term come to think of it. You've been so funny since the Welcome Feast...Why?"

He couldn't get over it. He would have to tell her if she was ever going to trust him again. She'd noticed something was wrong. And how many other people had? Maybe if he had someone to share it with it would be easier...but he *couldn't*.

She saw the hesitation on his face, "Harry please. I promise what you tell me will go no further. I'm a big girl now. I can deal with it, and I'm not going to judge if that's what you're afraid of. Please."

He looked at her. His emotions were battling with each other...so ferocious in his mind.... he could almost see the battle before his eyes. Flashes of red...blood...war...he realised what he was seeing...pain overcame him, and he wanted to see no more. Slowly...very slowly...he died.

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He could hear a girl sobbing, close to him. A cold but comforting hand was resting on his cheek. His body was aching. He felt sick. As he opened his eyes, a voice broke through the sobbing.

"Harry! Oh God, Harry!"

He felt his head being lifted and a hot potion trickle into his mouth. As he swallowed his vision became clearer, and he was able to breathe freely and easily again. His body and mind both seemed light.

Resting his head back down on the pillow he lay for a moment with his eyes closed. "Ginny?" he said, "Ginny, are you there?"  
"Yes, Harry. Yes of course I am."

"What-what happened?"

"I- you...um...you seemed about to tell me...something, and then you just went all cold and pale, really suddenly. And you blacked out. God...I was so scared. It was as though...as though you were *dead*."

"Dead?" Harry repeated, "I couldn't possibly be dead....I'm alive. Tell me, Ginny!"

"After you went cold, you just lay on your bed. I was so scared...I put a protection charm around your bed, and I ran to my dorm to get the potion I just gave you-it's like a stronger version of what Madam Pomfrey gives out when people have got colds. Anyway, when I came back, you weren't as cold, so I put you in bed to keep you warm...then, when you came round, I gave you the potion."

"How long have I been out?"

"About an hour. I've been here all along, Harry, no one knows what happened, and no one saw me go into my dorm. Don't worry. You'll be Okay, Harry. I promise."

"Shit," Harry said. He had no idea what had happened. He was even more confused than before.



"Harry, it's okay. It was probably just one of those things you had last year...like...like Malfoy has been having, too. It might even just be a repercussions on what's been happening to you over the last year.... it can't have been easy..."

"No," he agreed, "it hasn't. But you're probably right...I'm not saying I can understand it." There was something about Ginny's bedside manner that made him completely calm. He trusted her...

"Of course not-" she began, but he cut her off.

"Ginny- I'm going to tell you."

"Oh, no, Harry...please...you don't want to-"

"I *do*. I want to tell someone, and I can trust you, I know I can, so that person's you. Okay?"

"Okay..."

"The reason I've been so funny since the welcome feast is...well... something changed between me and Malfoy. At the welcome feast...something happened, I don't know what, but since then I haven't felt like I hated him. And I had a dream...with him in it. And...I enjoyed it," his face went crimson. Ginny remembered the awkward situation she had found him in when she came in the room, a possibility flashed through her mind, but she dismissed it straight away, and remained silent. Harry continued, "We haven't seen each other all term until this morning. But I didn't tell you everything that happened," there was no way he could get away with not telling her now. He had no choice. He had to. He took a deep breath, and braced himself, "The reason I trust Malfoy is...I *felt* that I could trust him...when he kissed me."

Ginny gasped, "He did *what*?!"

"He kissed me. And I kissed him back."

"Why?"

"I don't know. It just sort of happened...I don't think either of us meant it to happen. But it did. And I enjoyed that too...just like the dream. And I don't know why, because I'm not...well...he's.... he's a boy, and I'm a boy and I don't know what the hell to do, and I'm so embarrassed and so confused but I know I can still trust him! SHIT!" he yelled.

"Harry, slow down! Damn, I'd never have thought...but...oh God.... are you gay?"

"NO! I'm not gay I'm straight! At least...I think I am-"

"If you are, that's okay, you know? It's nothing to be ashamed of."

"I know but...how can I be gay, I've never had feelings for another guy before, this was just a one-off incident! It wasn't meant to happen!"

"*Au contraire*, Harry. Everything is meant to happen."

"I guess... I just don't know why I did it. It's not *me*!"

"Well, whether you're gay or not, it doesn't matter, what matters that it's with Malfoy. And before you say anything I *know* you trust him, but that doesn't stop me being suspicious.... you need to sort out your own head first."

"I guess...are you okay with the fact that I'm possibly gay?"

"You might not be gay. You might be bisexual..."

"Hmm...I suppose..."

"Don't be embarrassed, don't be worried, just give it time, and it'll sort itself out in your mind, don't worry. And promise me you won't worry too much about anything else too...you've got me to help with that now!"

"Thanks Ginny. God, you're so good at this! How... I mean, why are you so accepting about all this?"

"What, about the fact that you kissed another boy? Because it's like me, Harry."

"What? I don't-"

"I'm bisexual."

Harry didn't know what to say, he'd only ever known Ginny to have boyfriends... but then it wasn't likely to be something she'd broadcast...

Ginny smiled. "I've only recently realised that what I was feeling for some girls was more than just friendship. I was a bit scared at first, but then I thought, why the hell should I be? I've done nothing wrong and it's nothing to be ashamed of. So I'm bisexual and anyone who has got a problem with that can answer to me."

Harry laughed a little. Despite the confusion and shock revelation about Ginny's sexuality, and perhaps about his own, he was contented. More, in fact, than he had been in a long while.

"Don't worry, Harry," Ginny mused as she stood up off his bed, handing him a large slab of Honeyduke's Chocolate, "Our secrets will go with us to the grave."

She leant over, and kissed his forehead lightly, before tweaking the four-poster's hangings shut, and leaving the room.

He flopped back onto his bed, a small smile playing about his lips. As he ate a piece of chocolate, he somehow felt broadly satisfied.

**Title:** [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 05)

**Author Name:** [Purple Flame](#)

**Owl the author:** [here](#).

**Rating:** R

**Spoilers:** PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

**Genre:** Drama, Slash

**Era:** The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

**Main Character(s):** D, G, H, Hr

**Ship(s):** D/H, Hr/R

**Summary:** Now let's take a look at how Draco handles things....\*wink\*

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**Author's Notes:**

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Chapter 5-Who You Shouldn't

Before Draco knew what was happening the kiss was over. He heard Harry whisper something in his ear, then the door slamming, and then silence.

He remained with his eyes closed for a long while. His insides were writhing and cringing. He had no idea what he had just done. Or was it Potter who had done it? He had no idea.

As his heart's rhythm returned to normal, he opened his eyes at last. The torches were flickering seductively in their brackets, casting the relief of Draco's face into greater effect. Draco slid his tongue over his lips. He could still taste Harry on them, his sweet scent still lingered in the air, and his touch still tingled on Draco's hand.

Before Draco knew what was happening he was sitting on one of the desks littered around the room, his hands fumbling for the opening of his trousers underneath his robes. Once again he was hard...

The robes were getting tangled around his fingers, and his nails were snagging on his trousers. He searched frantically, every time his fingers brushed his crotch he let out a slight moan, and each time he thought of what had just happened he felt himself growing more and more aroused....

Crack.

One of the torches sputtered, and died. The room was darker. It brought Draco back to his senses so abruptly that he yelled out in shock.

No, he whispered to himself, No, what the hell am I doing? What have I just done?

The shame was washing over him like a tidal wave. It was overcoming him. He didn't know what to do next, or even what he had just done.

The room around him seemed so much smaller than it had done before. The walls seemed to be closing in on the teenage boy bent over fully on one of the desks. It seemed to mirror what he felt inside—he was trapped.... trapped inside himself. His thoughts, already, were filling his head, his chest heaved as he tried to breathe, the weight of what had just occurred settling itself upon him.

He pushed himself off the desk with such force that it crashed to the floor. He didn't care. What was happening inside him was far more important. He rushed for the door he had heard slam not long ago...the one through which Potter had left. It was locked.

"*Al-Alohomora*," he managed to gasp, through rasping breaths, which were splitting his lungs open. He threw himself out of it, kicking it shut behind him, and ran away from that room as fast as he possibly could. He ran through portraits, up stairs, along corridors, down secret passageways and into secret doors. He had no idea where he was going; all he knew was that he needed to get as far away from that room and Harry Potter as fast as he possibly could.

Finally he reached a deserted corridor. It was dark and dusty, with huge tapestries riddled with moth holes hung all along its walls. Along the outside wall tall stained windows let musty shafts of noon light in to highlight dirty corners, or strands of fine thread upon the tapestries.

Draco had only been here once before. It was the highest place in the castle, save for the towers and turrets, and was a place most people avoided, for the simple reason that the ghosts of Hogwarts told tales of it...countless centuries ago it had been the platform where many men and women had been taken. They had been gagged and bound. They would lay their heads on the block. And then they would be silenced. In most cases, one swipe of the axe would have been sufficient to remove their heads.

Over a thousand years ago, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry had been built upon it. Now, in the present day, it still stood, a disused part of the building. A part, needless to say, that even Dumbledore avoided.

Looking around him tentatively, Draco could see specks of dried brown blood on the stone floor, which further along became stained wooden planks. He chose not to look at the gruesome tapestries.

Instead, he leaned his back against the icy stone wall, its coolness penetrating his black robes like a sharp knife. He dropped his head back, and as the heat beneath his hair reduced Draco's head began to swim. He became dizzy, and lost all sense of where he was or how he had got there. The only thing filling his mind was how the hot sweet touch of Potter's lips on his had made him go weak, and the guilt he had felt afterwards...the guilt he felt now...His knees really were beginning to give way now, as he collapsed onto the floor, he heard a thud, and felt his cheek come into contact with stone.

Silence echoed around the corridor like a death knell. The boy lying on the floor was the only source of sound; a light but ragged breathing was audible from him.

Draco blinked his eyes open in the dusk light. Every part of his body was aching as though his father had been cursing him again. At the thought of his father Draco gave a small whimper, and curled tighter into a ball. He knew he was showing a weakness, but right now he didn't care. There was no one here to see him anyway.

His father's voice filled his head, filling it with hideous sentiments, threats, curses and words that made Draco cringe. He couldn't bear to think of what his Mother and Father would say to him now, if they knew what was troubling him. Not that he valued his father's opinion, of course, but he was scared of the action he would take against both Draco and his mother.

His arms were numb with the cold and the weight of his body. He gulped a breath desperately and then stood up. As his feet took the weight of his body, his mind once again took the weight of his emotion. He staggered forwards in the general direction of the Slytherin common room, leaning on walls and doorways for support.

He felt like shit. All he felt like doing was sleeping and never waking up. He didn't want to face his problems.

He uttered the password to the blank stretch of wall, which led to the common room, and stepped through. *I'm a coward*, he thought, *a bloody coward. First I kiss a boy, and then I act like a sodding COWARD!*

There was a time when Draco Malfoy would have been more disturbed about the fact that he had kissed Harry Potter than about the fact that he had kissed another boy, but not any more. He *liked* Potter now- he was on his side. *Ah*, said a nasty little voice inside his head, *but do you really just like Potter? Or is it more? Do you fancy-*

With immense difficulty Draco managed to choke back a huge yell. Although the common room was almost empty, he could see a fifth year staring at him from the corner and didn't feel much like answering to anyone else at the moment. He had enough to deal with answering to *himself*.

He tripped up the stairs almost continuing right to the top of the tower, and flung himself into his room. Only his area was tidy, the rest of the boys in his dorm were slob. Draco eyed the dirty laundry and rubbish that lay on the floor around the other three beds. As he sank onto his own bed he drew the dark green hangings, and wrapped his duvet over his shaking torso. He felt sick. Closing his eyes he tried not to think of what had happened, but it was impossible. No matter from which angle he looked at it, there was no denying the fact that him and Potter had somehow become attached to each others' mouths, both kissing the other back.

It was no one's fault.

Or was it?

Was that it? Was it Potter? Was he gay? Surely not-after all, wasn't it Potter who had run? But maybe- just maybe- it was because Potter knew that Draco would be angry about it...

But I kissed him back, Draco thought miserably, Even if he is gay, and if he did kiss me first, I still kissed him back. Why did I do that? I'm not-

But what if he was? What if he was gay?

Draco had never even considered feeling attracted to another boy. From as far back as he could remember he had always fancied girls, even if they were just childish crushes.

He was becoming paranoid now. The more he thought of it, the more possible him being gay seemed. He'd never had a girlfriend, not a real one anyway. He had only gone to the Yule Ball in his fourth year with Pansy Parkinson because she had asked him. And if he was really honest with himself it was a matter of pride that he took a girl to the ball. He was in competition after all...in competition with Harry.

He knew that just because he hadn't had a girlfriend it didn't mean he was gay. He just hadn't met the right person yet. He couldn't even consider going out with someone in another house-he was certain his father had far worse things than Cruciatus up his sleeve...He'd thought about it of course. Whenever another girl walked by the Slytherin table at meal times, or during lessons, he had stared at them, sized them up- even if he had done it subconsciously. The only girls he could even consider

going out with were girls from his own house...that was so he could be sure they were pure blood (though he didn't care so much about that-he was only worried because his father was one of Voldemort's most trusted servants). But even before last summer, he had known that these girls weren't right. Apart from him not being attracted to them (though they seemed to be quite attracted to him), they were always so obviously different to him. They acted like he did-only they did it out of choice rather than necessity.

While he had been thinking of this, Potter had wandered out of his mind. Soon, though, the Boy-Who-Lived had wandered right back in again. Draco suddenly found himself having to laugh. He laughed at the sheer absurdity and irony of his situation. All his school life he had been worried about not being able to fancy girls from other houses. Now he was finding himself wondering if he fancied a *boy* from another house.

His laughing stopped as abruptly as it had begun. "NO!" he screamed, sitting bolt upright in his bed, "No! I don't fancy him! It was a mistake, it wasn't meant to happen! It just felt right!" his voice died into a slight sob, "It just felt right at the time"

The silence pressed upon his ears. It was unbearable, but he didn't dare to move. He hadn't noticed he was shaking again, heaving tearless cries from his chest. He failed to realise the good that had come out of his meeting with Potter. Since their kiss he had entirely forgotten the reason why he and Potter were alone in the same room in the first place.

I trust you.

Potter's gentle, whispering voice repeated itself inside Draco's mind. But he didn't hear it. It was being blocked out by the grotesque thoughts in his head, which felt to the boy as if they were a ferocious fire, burning through his thought path. Determined to destroy the mixed feelings in Draco's head about Harry.

As Draco's voice failed, and his heaving breaths died, the fire inside his head went with them. He leant over the edge of his bed, and opened the first drawer in the chest beside him. He shifted some parchment, and some long, black quills before carefully removing a large, square object: his mother's book.

Kneeling back down on the bed, he placed the book on its spine, and let it drop open. Draco inhaled sharply. The page the book had opened at was the same one he had looked at back at the Manor in his room. When he had first decided he was not one of Voldemort's servants. He looked at the picture of the Muggle. He saw the features, hair and clothes, so like Professor Sprout's. The only difference was that the person in this book was lying down. Although these were Muggle pictures, and therefore did not move, it was obvious, by the open mouth, shocked eyes, and slight pool of red where the woman's head had hit the floor, that this person was dead.

Draco's heart leapt, and then he took a second to recover from the shock, as he always had to. He stared unblinkingly at the picture. Somehow it heartened him. He remembered now about Potter's promise of trust. And he remembered how he had felt when Potter had said the words. Everything Draco had said was still true, and Potter could still trust him. He wasn't stupid or pathetic enough to not be able to cope with confusing feelings. What was he meant to do? Just because he and Potter had kissed was he meant to turn back to the dark side? No he was not. Draco Malfoy was bigger than that. His teenage angst was nothing compared to what the world would have to face if Voldemort had back his full power over everything and everyone again.

This issue resolved, he put the book gently back into its place and locked the drawer, as always, with a spell a little more powerful than an ordinary locking charm.

Lying back on his bed, and feeling considerably calmer, he closed his eyes. If he was gay then...he didn't dare think about it. But he had to. It was a thing facing him right then and there. There was not hiding from it.

I've done nothing wrong, he thought, being gay isn't wrong it's just.... different to a lot of other people. Who's to say that being gay isn't right? It's perfectly OK, and if I want to be gay, then so be it. I am gay. Or maybe I'm bisexual? How can you tell? His thoughts were confusing, but at the same time, so much calmer since he had looked at the book. I don't have to decide right now, do I? I'm only 16...I've got plenty of time to...work it out. I don't need to tell anyone. It's not like I fancy anyone right now...The nasty voice was back. Aahhh...don't you though? So, what was that thing between you and Potter then, a friendly gesture between two new friends? I think not. You kissed him and you fancy hi-! His other thoughts interrupted, I DON'T! It was an accident! It just felt right at the time, I don't know why we did it. I don't know why it happened it just DID! And it'll never happen again. Even if I am...gay, I'm not attracted to Harry Potter, and I never will be. I don't even like him that much...we're just on the same side against Voldemort. I have a little more class than to fancy him...

Somehow though, despite the fact that he had resolved the small possibility that he might be gay, and decided that if he was then it was OK, and if anyone else didn't like it then it was their problem.... he wasn't sure. He knew it was right yet he didn't believe it. And no matter what he said, he had to admit that Potter was good-looking...and he *did* like him. Though that day was the first time they had ever spoken to each other as equals, Draco already felt as close to Potter as he ever could feel to any of those in Slytherin...

He knew that he'd decided not to talk to anyone, but it didn't stop him wanting and *needing* to. Who could he talk to? Crabbe and Goyle? Even Draco could see that was an absurd idea.... they'd just laugh at him and then blurt it out in front of everyone...they would probably desert him anyway. He didn't want to imagine what they would call him if they thought he was gay...

Okay, he couldn't talk to any of the Slytherins...so how about a teacher? Snape? No way, he'd be just as bad as Crabbe and Goyle. He didn't want to talk to any of the other teachers either. He wasn't even telling them that he was on Harry's side now, so the idea of going to them and telling him his problems was laughable.

Obviously, he couldn't tell his father. He'd just go apeshit and then curse him into oblivion.... and his mother couldn't take the stress of a revelation like that...

As he knocked off the people on the list one by one, he became more and more miserable and depressed. He had no one he could talk to. He was stuck inside his own head forever.

An idea struck him so fast that he gasped. "Of course," he said out loud, his tone crossed with wonderment and bitterness, "Why not? It can't hurt more than it already has.... why not go to the source of the problem? He can't exactly be feeling thrilled about this-can he?" He became silent as he cursed himself for not realising the obvious. The only person who he could possibly talk to was Potter. Not about everything of course. He couldn't say about how confused he was...about how he was thinking he was possibly gay, that would be ridiculous, but he *could* sort out the kiss.

The idea hardly made him feel any better though...if anything it made him feel worse. The idea of having to face Potter again was almost more than he could bear. He felt mortified at the prospect. In some ways, talking to Potter about this was going to be so much harder than talking to him about leaving the dark side could ever have been. Although he did not believe it, Draco Malfoy was not a coward. He would talk to Potter-no matter what lengths he had to go to to speak to him.

He stood up and undressed. The emotions and feelings he had felt during the day were still milling around in his head, confusing him more than ever. A dull misery settled itself upon him, but he ignored it.

Once in bed he defensively drew the covers tight around him like a shield. He shivered as the last of the light able to penetrate the thick hangings around his bed disappeared, and inky darkness fell upon him.

Very soon he lonely figure of Draco Malfoy became limp as his body rested, his face wet and shining with tears.

Title: [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 06)

Author Name: [Purple Flame](#)

Owl the author: [here](#).

Rating: R

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

Genre: Drama, Slash

Era: The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: So Harry ahs to have a talk with Draco...as the big day approaches there are more than just a few surprises in store....

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Author's Notes:

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## Chapter 6-Stern Words and Tria

Harry awoke early the next morning to find his four-poster's hangings were open and the early morning sun blazing through the gap. He blinked groggily for a few seconds before rubbing his eyes. When he opened them again he saw none other than a fully dressed Ginny Weasley sitting on the end of his bed.

"What the hell?" he yawned, "What are you doing up so early? More to the point what are you doing *here* so early?"

"Good morning yourself, Harry!" she said, indignantly, "I've come to take you for a walk."

Harry groaned. He knew that by saying 'a walk' girls usually meant trekking three times around the lake and chatting about his problems. "Why?" he asked, "We said all we needed to last night, didn't we?"

"Yes. We said all we needed to last night. But not this morning. This morning we need to talk again."

Harry didn't ask her to elaborate; he knew that even if he objected there was no way of getting Ginny to change her mind.

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He met Ginny in the Entrance Hall fifteen minutes later. She gave him a stack of toast to eat on the way, and they set off. At first they walked in silence. The air was cold, and an icy breeze was pushing its way through the forest to reach them. Harry could hear their feet crunching the frozen dew on the grass beneath them.

"So?" Ginny said after a while.



Harry was bewildered, "So what?"

"What have you decided?"

"I haven't decided anything. Like you said, I'll sort it out in my own time, and when I do you will probably be the first to know."

"So you're not going to tell anyone else then?"

"I thought I told you last night? There's no way I can tell Ron or Hermione, not yet anyway. I mean, I know they'd understand, at least...I think they would...but I need to sort it out first. In my own head, you know?"

"I know." She said, bending down to scratch the giant squid that had just appeared, floating on the surface of the lake, "But isn't there anyone else you can talk to?"

"Like who? My Aunt and Uncle? That'd be a fun letter,

*Dear Aunt Petunia,*

*Sorry to drop an owl on you like this but I have a problem. I think I might be gay. But I might not, I don't know yet. Can you help me through my teenage trauma please?*

*Harry.*

*PS, has Dudley ever been confused about his sexuality?*

No Ginny...I don't think so somehow!"

She laughed, and then said, "OK, point taken. Perhaps not them. And I don't suppose you'd be willing to talk to anyone else in Gryffindor? Or...the teachers?"

"You'd be damn right in supposing that Ginny, Hell will freeze over before I go to Snape with my problems...."

Both now fell silent, and continued munching on their toast. Harry seemed to be deep in thought, whereas Ginny looked as though she was daring herself to say something else.

She took a deep breath and said, "And...what about...well, what are you going to do about Malfoy?"

Harry stopped dead in his tracks. Swallowing his toast he said, in a quiet voice, "What about *him*?"

"What are you going to do about him?"

"I don't get what you mean."

"Well...what are you going to say when you see him?"

He closed his eyes. "Ohhh.... do I *have* to see him?" he moaned.

"Of course you do, don't be stupid you go to the same school and have half of your lessons together. *And* you're saying he's your sort-of friend now. If you are...well...if you do get attracted to guys then you might not be able to..." she tailed off.

"What do you mean?" Harry said, dangerously.

"Oh...Harry, I don't mean anything like that I just mean...well...he *is* attractive even I have to admit that and I hate the bastard-I know you say he's on our side now, but I have to see it for myself Harry, so don't yell like that-and you did kiss each other and that's usually a sign you like someone so maybe...I don't know. Maybe you are attracted to him..."

"I am NOT attracted to him!" Harry yelled. Several birds were scared out of their hiding places in the reeds and went skidding across the lake. "I don't hate him any more, but there is no way I'm attracted to him!"

"Well I'm sorry, Harry, but it doesn't seem that way to me! Just tell me what you're going to say to him."

"Why can't he say something to me first? How do you know he isn't gay?"

"I don't. He might be for all we know. Someone's got to make the first move. Do you want him to go back to the dark side?"

"No," he replied at once, "Of course not, but-"

"Well then. You're going to have to talk to him then, aren't you?"  
Harry clenched his teeth. Girls had a way of manipulating you to say what they wanted you to. He had to admit they were bloody good at it.... he couldn't stay angry with Ginny for long though.

"So go on then, Miss Clever, what do you propose I do? How do I get him to talk to me?"

"I've already thought of that, mate."

God, she was quick.

"Go on then."

"Well, this term he doesn't seem to be as...well...*attached* to Crab and Goyle as before-"

"That'll be because he's realised what they are" Harry interjected.

Ginny glared at him until he was quiet. "So because he isn't with them anymore he seems to like spending time in the library. Reading. I don't know what, but always the same book. Anyway, I am there almost every night researching something or other for these OWLs, so I know what goes on. There's only ever him and me in there. Never anyone else, unless Hermione comes to get some peace from you two."

"Very nice, Ginny. But what's that got to do with me?"

"Well...say...on Monday night if you go there and pretend to be revising, you're sure to catch each other's eye sometime. It's not like he will have forgotten what happened between you. And he will want to know if you still trust him or not."

"I do trust him. And what about you? You said you go every night?"

"I'm sure I can miss one night's work, Harry. I don't intend to become like Hermione this early on in the year..."

Harry laughed, nervously. They had circled the lake four times now, and were almost frozen to the inside of their cloaks. Ginny grabbed his arm and steered him towards the castle.

Once inside the warmth of the Great Hall Harry put the plan for Monday night to the back of his mind. *After all, he thought, it's only Saturday now, I've got two whole days of fun filled homework before I have to worry about him.*

~~~~~

Draco woke up late. He looked at his watch, whose display read "09:54".

"Shit," he said, flopping his head back onto his pillow as everything came flooding back to him. He was hungry. He'd not eaten anything the day before and he could feel his stomach churning, longing for food, just as he longed for his problems to be gone. After a few more minutes with only his growling stomach for company he heaved himself off his bed and began to dress.

Something was different.

At first he wasn't quite sure what. But then he realised. He was lighter. The worry about whether Potter would believe him, and about his father had left him. He also suspected that it had something to do with the fact that Voldemort was no longer inside his mind-he had felt the bastard's feelings within him evaporate completely as soon as his lips touched Potter's....

"Piss off," he said out loud to the thought. "I don't need you. I need to work out my problems."

He had somehow resolved, in his sleep, that whatever happened would happen. If he found himself attracted to another boy then so be it. He was attracted to him. If it was a girl, then that was fine too. As long as the boy wasn't Potter...his dreams that night had been full of questions last night. I had been as though he were being examined by himself. He was asking himself questions. *Why did you kiss Potter? Do you fancy him?* Over and over again. Each time he had answered, "I don't know!" because he didn't. But he had managed to convince himself that he didn't fancy Potter. That they were just colleagues in their fight against Voldemort. And that was all they would ever be.

Harder to answer was why he kissed the boy in the first place. He had no idea. Maybe he was desperate...maybe he was confused? That was the only explanation, that his emotions had confused him and somehow what had happened happened. All that really mattered to Draco was that it never happened again.

Like Harry, though, Draco was dreading the time when they had to come face-to-face. It was inevitable.

When he had dressed he exited the common room and walked up the three flights of stairs to the Great Hall. At its entrance he stopped abruptly, as though he had just walked into a wall. What if Potter was in there? What if they saw each other? What if they passed each other? Would they speak?

"No, Draco. Stop it," he told himself firmly, under his breath, "Don't be so pathetic. There are *certain* Malfoy trademarks it *would* do to hang on to." He steadied himself mentally, and then took a step forward into the Hall. He couldn't help it- he had to look. His eyes swept the Gryffindor table.

Draco gasped in horror and leaped back. Potter was in there with Granger and Weasel and Weasel's sister. They were standing up.

The second he registered in his head who he was seeing a massive shock travelled the length of his body, and all the blood drained from his face, making him look paler than ever.

He hid from view of the Hall, leaning his hand on one of the huge oak doors that had been thrown open. Taking a steadying breath he tried to regain his composure. *Damn*, he thought, *this is so ridiculous. I can't even go in to get my breakfast without him being there...bastard. I'll have to wait until he comes out. Bloody Hell!*

He did not have long to wait, just minutes later Harry strolled out of the Hall, his three friends by his side. Draco looked at his face. He looked okay...but Draco saw deeper than that. He saw that Harry was feeling almost exactly the same as he was. The same guilt, the same panic, the same frustration about the day before was present in his eyes.

What Draco didn't notice, of perhaps refused to notice, was that when he had seen Potter, his heart had given a small leap of excitement, and his knees had gone weak.

He strolled into the Hall, fixing his trademark arrogant look on his face. He flicked his robes out behind him as he sat down at the table in between Crabbe and Goyle.

"Morning boys", he drawled.

"Hi. Where've you been?"

"In bed. *Sleeping.*"

"Oh." That seemed to satisfy the huge thugs.

Draco pushed Potter to the back of his mind as he loaded jam onto his toast. Potter was history, as far as he was concerned. Gone. The memory was erased. All he had to worry about was finding a lover now...

When he pushed Harry to the back of his mind he forgot to erase one thing: The thing that he was now most pissed off about was that his first proper kiss had been with Harry Potter.

~~~~~

The weekend seemed to speed by for Harry. He got most of his homework done, including a long and very boring essay on Porlock blood for Snape, and an equally trying set of calculations for Flitwick.

He had chosen to take Charms, Transfiguration, Potions and Defence against the Dark Arts for NEWT level. Professor McGonagall had suggested that these would be most helpful in his pursuit of a career as an auror. For their first year studying NEWT courses, all the students also had to take Herbology as a compulsory subject. Harry was not complaining, it was a fairly interesting subject, and besides, he was quite good at it.

Although he had only just scraped an "E" in Potions (due, in Harry's opinion, to his fame earning him extra marks from the examiner), he had still managed to get into Snape's potions class. The whole school was in uproar about it. No one knew why Harry had got into the class; it was traditionally a very small class, not due to the fact that very few people got "O"s, but due to the fact that no one liked Snape. Harry, though, had thought it best not to argue when Professor McGonagall had told him that he would be in the lesson. After all he needed the qualification and he also suspected that Dumbledore and McGonagall had had some sort of input in persuading Snape to take an "E" student.

Late on Sunday evening, after dinner, an owl fluttered on top of Harry's finished Transfiguration homework and deposited a letter. Harry ripped it open, somewhat unenthusiastically.

*Dear Mr Potter*, [it read]

*Please come and see me in my office immediately. You are not in trouble.*

*Prof. M. McGonagall.*

"Oookay..." He said to Ron and Hermione, "I have to see McGonagall...I don't know how long I'll be..."

Ron looked thunderstruck, "Oh no! What if it's about that exploding eraser I gave you? I didn't expect the blast to be that forceful...I mean, Neville wasn't hurt was he?"

Harry laughed, "No, don't worry, she reckons I'm not in trouble..."

Despite the written assurances of this, he still approached the Deputy Head's office with caution. He smoothed his robes and tried (and failed) to persuade his hair to behave before knocking twice on the door. At once Professor McGonagall's sharp voice called out, "Come in."

He opened the door and stepped inside.

"You said you wanted to see me, Professor?"

"Yes, Potter, I did. Please sit."

He obeyed. She did not hesitate before saying, "Now, Mr Potter, as I am sure you are aware, the new Quidditch season is almost upon us."

"Yes," he replied, "Who's the new captain?"

"Well, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. You have been a member of Gryffindor Quidditch team since your first year here, and only once have you failed to catch the snitch-" Harry's insides squirmed, he didn't need reminding of that. "-Your loyalty and dedication to the team has been somewhat outstanding. The small glitch with...*that woman* last year was only a minor setback.

"As you have so kindly pointed out to me, Gryffindor Team currently have no captain. I would therefore like you to follow in your father's footsteps, and would like to offer you the job."

Harry sat in silence. He didn't know what to say. He opened his mouth a few times, before spluttering, "I-I don't...um, well...I've got a lot-" a happy bubble was trying to inflate inside him, but it kept getting punctured by thoughts of Voldemort and his NEWTs.

"I realise this, Mr Potter. You have enough on your plate at the moment, and Professor Dumbledore agrees with me. I have therefore taken the liberty of dividing the captaincy of the team. Miss Weasley?"

Suddenly, out of the shadows, the small figure of Ginny Weasley stepped, a grin across her face. "Hi, Harry," she said.

"Hi," he replied, astonished.

"I am aware that Miss Weasley has only been on the team for a year, however she is an excellent player and has the skills needed for captaincy. As you are now part of the team again, Miss Weasley is now a Chaser. Will you accept, Mr Potter?"

Harry looked at Ginny, who smiled. He grinned back and said, "Of course I will!"

Professor McGonagall beamed at him, "Congratulations, Harry," she said, leaning over the desk and shaking both his and Ginny's hands.

\*\*\*\*

McGonagall briefed the two new captains on their new position. Ten minutes later they exited the room, broad grins on both their faces.

"Wow," Ginny said.

"Wow indeed! I can't believe it!" Harry exclaimed.

Ginny caught his arm and said, "We've got a lot of work to do, Harry..."

"I know, but we can be partners in crime." He grinned.

"Sure, why not. After all, we come as a package professionally and personally now!"

They laughed and embraced each other tightly before Ginny said, "Party? Gryffindor common room?"

And Harry replied, "Hell, yeah!"

~~~~~

He woke up with a thumping headache. Butterbeer may not be strong but 'special deliveries' from Fred and George Weasley were obviously not what they first seemed. He dragged himself out of bed, got dressed and washed, and traipsed to the Great Hall for breakfast.

He had just taken a huge gulp of coffee when someone hit him on the back and sat down next to him.

"Gooooooooood Morning!" they said.

Harry looked, his eyes watering, to see who it was. "Oh, hi, Ron," He choked through the coffee.

"How are you today?"

"Crap. There is not one part of today worth being alive for...Potions, Transfiguration, Herbology and a Potions Study Period. Great. And then I-" he stopped, aware he was just about to reveal his secret about meeting Malfoy.

"Then you what?" asked Ron, suspiciously.

"Then I.... have to go and do some Potions homework in the Library later."

"Oh..." Ron looked down, "Want me to come and keep you company?"

"No, thanks, but it's a really hard potion and I won't be able to concentrate with you blasting fart charms at anyone who comes past the table." Harry lied smoothly, with a small grin. "Why don't you get Hermione to help you with your Transfiguration essay? She's done hers, and you say you can't do it. It might get you more than an "A" if she helps!"

"Yeah, I suppose so..."

~~~~~

He was trembling all over. There was no denying it, he was terrified. He was heading towards the library to try and talk to Malfoy. His heart was beating painfully fast as he place his hand on the door handle of the library. Taking a deep breath he turned it and stepped inside. He walked through the rows, to the set of tables near the far corner. He caught sight of Madam Pince leaving her office towards the staff room.

The he saw him. The boy. The guy who had been haunting his dreams more than ever since last Friday. Draco Malfoy was sitting at one of the wooden tables, pouring over an old volume, his hands gripping his silky blond hair.

Harry's heart began to beat even faster. He put his books down on a desk and opened them. Every now and then he would steal a look at Malfoy. Still the other boy seemed not to have noticed him.

They sat in silence for what seemed like hours to Harry, but in reality it was probably only about twenty minutes. With each second that passed Harry grew more and more nervous, not daring to speak, wishing Malfoy would look up. All the time disappointed.

A violent gust of wind rattled the windowpanes. Harry saw Malfoy was agitated, he was failing in his quest to concentrate on his book, every so often he would sigh. The wind creeping in through gaps in the old windows rustled his hair. Malfoy shivered, and looked up. Their eyes met for a second before Malfoy shut his book with a slam. Both their hearts were pounding in their mouths.

"Potter!" Malfoy whispered.

**Title:** [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 07)

**Author Name:** [Purple Flame](#)

**Owl the author:** [here](#).

**Rating:** R

**Spoilers:** PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

**Genre:** Drama, Slash

**Era:** The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

**Main Character(s):** D, G, H, Hr

**Ship(s):** D/H, Hr/R

**Summary:** After last chapters cliffhanger Draco and Harry continue their chat...how far will it go, and will they get what they want?

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**Author's Notes:** Okay..after this chapter you can all stop complaining that i need more slash! \*wink\*

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Chapter 7- Never Regret

As Malfoy spoke, Harry's heart leapt into his mouth. He wasn't ready for this. Not ready at all.

No, he thought firmly, *Just imagine what Ginny will say if you go back without sorting this out...*

He sighed gently, "Potter," he said in grim agreement.

Malfoy just glared back into Harry's eyes. But he couldn't do it. He broke his gaze, scared of his emotion at seeing the only person he'd ever kissed, scared about all the things he wanted to say and shout and do.

"What?" Malfoy said rudely after a moment of silence in which Harry forced himself to stare defiantly back into Malfoy's eyes.

Harry didn't know what to say. That was exactly the question he wanted to ask-but Malfoy had got there first. "I... you...we need to talk," he forced the words out of his mouth, somehow.

"Do we? You see, Potter, I don't think we do. We both know what happened and even if you don't regret it, I do, and I think we'll leave it at that, OK?" Malfoy knew he could be twisting Harry's thoughts, knew he could be making a fatal mistake that would cause Harry to mistrust him once again. But he didn't give a damn. Right now in his heart his emotion were far more important and urgent than the fight to lead the world to victory, to rid it of the darkest wizard in a century. *Put like that*, the little, unwelcome voice in his head that had planted itself there, and which had interrupted his train of thought more often that not over the last few days, *it seems reasonably that he wants to talk. You want to...you know you do...you want his trust more than anything, you need it, you crave it, without it, you fall along with the rest of the world...do you want to be the one responsible for the deaths? You're just scared.*

His stomach leapt in anger at the accusation. He knew he should deny it, but he couldn't. He wouldn't admit it, but it was true.

"No," Harry said, very quietly, "no, it isn't OK. We need to talk, you know we do."

Malfoy sighed, trying to make it look ironic. "Fine. Fine, talk away then."

Harry wasn't prepared; he'd no idea what to say, or where to start. Logically it would have been the beginning-but where was the beginning?

"Er..." he said, "We...um...we kissed." He finished, almost in a whisper.

Draco wanted to admit it all, he wanted to pour out his emotion, or at least be able to talk like a normal wizard, but he couldn't. Something inside him forced him to keep the arrogant, self-assured, uncaring look on his face-maybe it was because he didn't completely trust Harry yet, or maybe he did trust Potter but didn't trust himself. He said, "Yes. Well done Potter. New experience for you?"

Hypocrite, the voice said, scathingly.

"Shit, Malfoy, why can't you just talk about it? Would it really kill you to do that? To act human for once? I know you want to. I know you've been avoiding me, I saw you that day in the great hall! I KNOW YOU CARE!" he yelled.

Malfoy's cheeks went slightly pink, to Harry it looked like a small blush, but Malfoy felt the blood pounding and burning in his cheeks, it was almost painful. He'd have to give in...a little way anyway.

"OK," he sighed, "I do care. How can I not care? My first ever snog was with a lad...and a lad I've grown up hating for the last 15 years and only just learned to like. Not even you, Perfect Potter, would be able to not care about something like that."

Harry smiled slightly, despite himself. He had the impression that Malfoy wanted to return it, but resisted temptation.

"Well, it was the first time I ever-er- snogged another guy as well you know." *And the first time I ever enjoyed a snog...*he thought guiltily.

"Oh. I wasn't sure you see. I thought maybe you were...oh...you know..." Malfoy trailed off.

"Gay?" Harry suggested. He knew he should have been angry with Malfoy for suggesting that, but that was, after all, what he had thought about Malfoy. And...he wasn't quite sure...but maybe it was true. "Yeah...I know. I thought you might be."

"WHAT? How could you-? Oh, I suppose I can't talk."

Harry laughed. So did Malfoy. It was as though they were friends. For that brief moment all the hatred between the years was, unbelievably, forgotten.

Harry stood up and took his possessions over to Malfoy's table, sitting opposite him. His eyes were gleaming with a slightly embarrassed tint. "Malfoy?"

"What?" came the answer, slow and almost suspicious.

"Are you?"

"Am I what?" came the reply after only a moment's pause. Malfoy knew perfectly well what the question was asking, but he didn't want to have to face the time when he would have to answer it.

"You're so bloody hard to talk to!"

"At least I'm not easy like you!" Malfoy said back. He had meant it to come out bitterly, but it hadn't sounded like that. They looked into each other's faces, smirks playing at their mouths, then, simultaneously, burst into laughter.

"Was that an intended innuendo?" Harry asked, wiping tears from his eyes with the back of his hand.

"Not exactly..." Malfoy said thoughtfully. *Shit*, he thought, *I'm going to have to answer the damn question*. "And er...I might be."

Harry's eyes shot up towards Malfoy's face. "*What?*"

"Don't act so surprised. Oh God...this is so hard. We're not even friends for God's sake...you've got to understand that I'm only talking to you because you're the only person I can talk to? Not because I want to, because I have to."

"Sure. Same here. I didn't come to find you out of personally want I can assure you."

"You came to find me? Bloody hell.... you are keen.... *I'm joking!*" he added quickly, catching the glare that erupted in Harry's eyes as he said the words. "As I was saying...I might be gay. I don't know. You can't tell me that you didn't think about it after...after Friday? I thought of nothing but...I was scared shitless. I mean, what if I was gay? Mind you...it doesn't really matter any more...I don't care what people think, never have done...and I don't give a flying shit about the 'Malfoy honour'. No...the only person I was worried about was my Mother.... she's the only person I care about now." He finished speaking somewhat sadly.

Harry hesitated before reaching across the wooden table and putting a comforting hand on Malfoy's shoulder, expecting it to be shaken off angrily. It didn't happen. Slightly shocked, Harry realised that it was his turn to speak. "I-well, no I can't say that I didn't think about it. I went straight to bed. I just couldn't get my mind around what had happened. I tried to find who to blame but...truthfully I don't think either of us was...not really."

"No," Malfoy agreed, "I thought that too. It was an accident right?"

"Yeah, sure! Anyway...I tried to work it out...why would we have... kissed? It took me ages to realise...weather I'm gay or not who cares? I mean, it's not important....I've got plenty of time to find out, haven't I? I might be bisexual..."

"Weird...I thought exactly the same! Anyway, I don't believe that anyone's one hundred per cent straight...I mean, think about it, Potter..."

Harry thought. And the more he thought the more it made sense. *It's just*, he realised, *and some people have stronger feelings than most... and some act on it* he smiled at Malfoy.

They sat a while longer in silence. Neither would ever have believed that it would have been this easy. Both had opened up to each other more than they would ever have thought possible. Although both, especially Harry, were embarrassed about the revelations they had made, they were important. They had had to be made and there was no beating about the bush.

"Potter?" Malfoy said after a while.

"Mmmm..." Harry responded, not paying proper attention to what Malfoy was saying; he was still deep in thoughts.

"You know on Friday?"

"What kind of a crap question is that?" Harry asked sarcastically. They were almost back to how they used to be.

"Haha, very funny. When we went into that room, and I asked for a word...and you said I had sixty seconds? Why did you listen to everything I said?"

Harry was bewildered. He didn't have an answer. "Um..." he said, "I don't really know. I was a bit...worried I think. And I was interested."

"Oh. And, Potter?"

"Yes, Malfoy?"

"Why did you trust me? What I said...it must've sounded so bloody stupid...far fetched, unbelievable. Why did you believe me? We've not exactly been friends over the years, have we?"

"No, Malfoy. You've been a complete bastard to me over the years. It was your fault we weren't friends-"

"Not true. I offered to be your friend, on the train, remember?"

"Of course I remember. But do you remember why I rejected your offer? Oh, don't look so flaming innocent Malfoy. I was coming to Hogwarts completely alone, as you well knew, and then just as I looked to be making a friend you came and...and...assaulted us!"

"Oh...come off it! Don't exaggerate! Assault my arse!" he yelled. *Fuck!* He thought angrily, but at the same time with a hint of delicious yearning, which he pushed away angrily, *more sexual bloody connotations! Shit Draco...keep your mind on the right track. Potter isn't even a friend...* "Potter, answer me. Why did you trust me?"

"I don't know. I have absolutely no idea.... I guess it was a sort of intuition.... but other than that I-"

"I *need to know*," Malfoy stressed, "Do you still trust me? Does that handshake still count?"

"Of course it does," said Harry at once, "I still believe you, and the handshake still means something."

"Oh," Malfoy breathed. Then- "Does that mean that we're...that we can be...friends? Sort of! I mean- I don't mean-"

"Yes," Harry fought to stop himself laughing. "We can be. I doubt we'll ever be best friends...we're too different. But, I think we can be friends."

"Thank-you, Potter. Shit, I never thought I'd say that! Oh...there's one more thing."

"What *now* Malfoy?" Harry said, through a huge, fake sigh.

"Not in public."

"Huh?"

"Not in public."

"I know, I heard I'm not deaf. But not what in public?"

"We can't...you know, act like friends in public. If my Father...or Voldemort for that matter, ever found out...And I'd need a story to cover up in Slytherin...mind you they're all so stupid that wouldn't be difficult. It's not that I'm ashamed to be your friend or anything...not at all. I just think it's best all round if we don't make a big-"

"Shhh," Harry said, hiding a laugh, "You really do talk to much, you know?"

"Really?" Draco blinked, stunned.

"Yeah! You've barely shut up! For someone who didn't want to talk you've certainly got a lot to say, but yeah. Of course we can keep it secret! Could make it more interesting."

Draco eyed Harry, with one eyebrow raised.

"We probably should talk some more but I really have to go. Wouldn't want anyone walking in and seeing us talking rather than tearing each other to pieces!"

Then something amazing happened; for the very first time in Harry's whole life, he heard Malfoy laugh. It wasn't a cold, mean, forced laugh; it was a natural laugh, from the heart and full of relief. "I guess so. I'd better go as well...I think I can miss one night's study."

Remembering the heavy book Malfoy had been reading Harry opened his mouth to ask what it was-it hadn't looked like a schoolbook. But Malfoy looked even paler than normal, and slightly ill too. The situation seemed to have taken all the energy out of him. He resolved to ask another time.

Gathering up their belongings they left the library together because, they reasoned, it was too late for anyone to be out of bed. Madam Pince would probably be the only teacher not in her office, waiting to lock the library.

They walked in comfortable silence for a while along the warren-like corridors of the castle. The portraits whispered as they went by, gossiping about the friendship that seemed to now connect two boys who infamously hated each other. This matter was resolved however when, every now and then, Draco would point his wand at one and threaten "Mention this to anybody, and your canvas ass gets blasted." Only a few of the portraits were stupid enough to complain. The rest just made disgruntled or disapproving noises before eyeing the boy's wand nervously.

They had reached the marble staircase.

"You leave me here, don't you?" Harry asked.

"Yeah, I go down to the dungeons. How about you? You know...come to think of it, of all the years I could have been here, all the opportunities I've had, I've never even found out where the Gryffindor common room is."

Harry smiled. "Bye, Malfoy" he said, turning on his heel.

A hand reached out and grabbed the sleeve of his robes. "Wait!"

Harry, bewildered, turned. Malfoy was staring at him. A grin was fighting on his lips.

Malfoy went on, "Don't I even get a goodnight kiss?" he said, seriously.

Harry stared at him, too shocked to say anything. Then-

"*What!?!?*" he laughed. "What the Hell are you talking about?" through his confusion, the laughter was still forcing its way out. The same was happening to Malfoy.

"The- the look on your face!" Malfoy stuttered finally, regaining some composure.

As the laughter died slowly away they looked at each other.

Harry noticed how the candlelight was playing on Malfoy's face. It brought it into sharp relief, hid defined cheekbones standing out more than ever. The skin was pale, but alive, barely flushed from Malfoy's laughing. His skin was smooth and flawless. In his eyes a light seemed to shine. Somehow it reached out to Harry, and felt immeasurably calmer than he had ever done, possibly in his life. Malfoy's mouth was set, seriously. Each strand of his hair glistened like droplets of water on his head. It was so...beautiful.

Draco, for his part, noticed how the burning candlelight was reflected in Harry's eyes. They themselves seemed to be burning with something that looked very much like desire. The green was intense, almost black. Harry's skin looked so perfect...as though it had been untouched-it bore no sign of the internal agony Harry had had to face. The light had picked out highlights in Harry's hair; these shone a perfect, electric blue.

And each remembered how it had felt to be attached to each other's mouth.

The few moments in which they stared into each other's eyes seemed to last an eternity. Neither seemed to want to break whatever it was that was keeping them where they were.

"I...it was meant to be a joke..." Malfoy whispered softly.

Harry swallowed. As he spoke his voice shook with nervousness, "And now? What is it now?"

Malfoy didn't answer. He knew Harry was thinking the same as he was; *It couldn't happen again. He wasn't even sure if he was gay...never mind who he fancied...it must NOT happen again...*

And yet to both it seemed so right.

"I'm not sure," Malfoy breathed in Harry's ear.

Harry swallowed again, not sure why he was doing what he was doing. Hardly even aware that he was doing it. Turning around slowly he gestured for Malfoy to follow him. He led them into the nearest room. It was a small room, with no windows, and no furniture whatsoever. The only thing in there was the torches, which shone in their brackets on the walls.

As Malfoy followed Harry into the room, he locked the door. Just in case.

They stood in the very centre of the room. Not sure what to do.

"Potter, I just-" he cut off abruptly. Unbeknown to the boys, their bodies had moved closer together. As Malfoy has spoken his soft lips had brushed Harry's, more gently than anything either of them could remember feeling in their lives, a shiver went down their spines.

Harry moved his lips past Malfoy's mouth, towards his ear. Barely a centimetre away from it he breathed "Please..."

Slowly Malfoy's hands found Harry's waist. He held Potter's hips in his fingertips, as though they were the most fragile things.

Facing the floor Harry moved properly in front of Malfoy. Still in his mind were threads of doubt, pushed away by feelings of curiosity. Malfoy took one of his hands and placed it around Harry's cheek. He lifted it, slowly, carefully, until once again their eyes were interlocked.

They were almost touching as Harry's hands moved to Malfoy's body. He felt the boy's chest beneath his robes. Moving down he felt the boy's torso. He didn't dare to go any further down. He had a good idea of what he would feel if he went there. He knew for certain what Malfoy would feel...

They stood for an eternity holding each other like that, staring into the eyes of the enemy, who seemed far in the distant past.

Then, ever so slowly, Malfoy eased Harry forwards, leaning himself as he did so. Harry's mouth opened a fraction as he allowed Malfoy to savour his appearance for once last second. They could feel each other's breath. Gentle and seductive it pulled them further together.

As their nervous lips met all doubt was cast, for the moment, from the boys' minds. Inside their head's explosions seemed to be showing the kiss for what it truly was. As their mouths opened together the kiss seemed to bother like ecstasy. Harry slid his tongue inside Malfoy's mouth just as Malfoy's own began to move. As their tongues met both gave soft moans.

Inside their robes both felt their arousals pleurably tight against the material.

The kiss was, to both, so deliciously slow and perfect. They seemed to move gently in perfect unison, and it felt as though they had all the time in the world. If they had thought their first kiss was good, then there was surely no word for how wonderful this one felt.

As their arousals met for the first time they only broke apart for a second as they gasped in pleasure and surprise before they continued.

The kiss continued, deeply. The light touch and slow rhythm of the other boy made it so perfect. Soon, as their bodies were so close that each could feel the other's hardness as it became more urgent, it seemed as though it would be impossibly to find where Malfoy ended and Potter began.

As the kiss slowly died Malfoy his tongue along Harry's lower lip, making him moan once again with pleasure. Nothing had ever felt that good. They touched their foreheads together, still with their eyes closed.

Neither protested that the kiss was over. Both undeniably wanted it to continue, but they knew they mustn't. Soon, Malfoy spoke.

"We can't, Potter."

"I know. I know."

"We'll have to...um...finish it off ourselves, somewhere else. We can't do it here. Though...I almost did." Malfoy admitted, thankful that Harry's eyes were still closed as he flushed furiously again.

"Really? Me too..." Harry's voice showed an involuntary tone of shame.

Malfoy gripped Harry's arm, gently but firmly. He's already run off after one kiss. He wasn't going to let it happen again.

"Thank-you," he breathed.

"What for?"

"For this. I still can't believe we did it...or how...how *perfect* and *right* it seemed."

"I know. It did. Malfoy..."he asked uncertainly.

But Malfoy knew what he was going to ask. "No, it doesn't," he said firmly, though his groin was telling him a different story, "We're still just friends, Potter."

Silence.

"Thank-you."

They held each other a little while longer, and then, as the torches began to fail, they left the room and separated. Not saying anything, because there was nothing that needed to be said.

Title: [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 08)

Author Name: [Purple Flame](#)

Owl the author: [here](#).

Rating: R

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

Genre: Drama, Slash

Era: The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: Draco and Harry are only just beginning to realise the full effect their actions will have on the world, and have decided the need to make some serious decisions...because they certainly won't be able to worry about the consequences later...

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Author's Notes:

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## Chapter 8-Finishing

Harry lay in his bed with a contented smile on his face. Although he did feel like crap with all the repetitive emotions and confusion whirling around like fireworks in his tired head, he had ignored them and done as Malfoy said: finished it off himself.

And it had been fantastic.

He heard the deep breathing of his Gryffindor friends through the darkness. The hangings of his bed rustled as he turned over, trying to find a position that was comfortable enough to allow him to sleep. He tried to expel the juxtaposed thoughts to somewhere he couldn't find them; for now at least, but it didn't work. He knew it must be about 2am, and he also knew that he would be in serious trouble if he fell asleep in class tomorrow. He considered the idea of putting a sleeping spell on himself but thought the better of it; last time he had tried that he'd fallen into such a deep sleep he hadn't woken until lunch-time, and moreover his head had fallen onto his bedside table, so that when he woke up he had a corner-shaped dent in his face.

He sighed and turned over again, trying to straighten his bed sheets with his feet as he did so, which were twisted like some kind of giant snake. As he settled once more, the hangings twitched again.

He hadn't done that.

He hadn't made them move.

His heart began to thud under his duvet. There were no windows open in the room to allow a breeze, and he had locked the door behind him-he always did. His paranoia that Lord Voldemort would walk into his room unexpectedly one night refused to leave him alone. The fact that The Dark Lord could easily just mutter *Alohomora* and step silently into the room didn't deter this habit.

The floorboards creaked and Harry sat up as silently as was humanly possible, a lump of fear rising in his throat.



*Creak.*

He positioned his hand carefully on the hangings preparing to rip them open suddenly. He was horribly aware that he was unarmed, and whoever it was creeping around the Gryffindor sixth years' dormitory at 2am would almost certainly have a wand with them.

*Creak.*

Harry ripped open the hangings and leapt deftly onto the floor looking wildly around to find the source of the noise.

Nothing. Then-

"*Harry!* What the bloody hell do you think you're doing? You nearly made me shit myself, you bastard!"

"G-Ginny?" he stuttered, uncertainly.

"Yes! What were you doing?" said Ginny stepping lightly out of the shadows and into the thin rope of moonlight that lay across the floor.

"I was...um...I thought you were...bad," he finished lamely.

"Well, I'm not. I'm me. Now get back into bed."

Harry obeyed, praying that none of his roommates had heard the noise and woken up. He didn't want anyone thinking he was getting late-night visits. Especially from a girl. Or would it be worse if that visitor were...a boy?

Ginny perched on the end of his bed, reminding Harry of the night when they had first spoken about Malfoy and the events over the summer. He remembered how he had felt then.

"So," she said swiftly, without delay, "how did it go?"

"How did what go?" Harry asked innocently, immensely glad that it was dark, for his face was glowing.

Ginny didn't reply. Harry could sense her staring at him. Probably with her eyebrows raised...typical of her ways.

"Right, right, fine. You win. We talked. And.... we agreed."

"Agreed? Agreed on what?" Ginny pressed, urgently.

"On the fact that we're still friends."

She didn't say anything. Neither did he. The silence was so tense, and Harry was beginning to sweat- he knew he couldn't keep this act up for long. He didn't want to say anything but, being a girl he knew that Ginny would probably squeeze it out of him somehow, anyway. She knew he was lying to her.

"Don't fuck with me, Harry," she said quietly and dangerously, knowing it would have a far greater effect on him than simply begging. "Tell me everything."

Sighing resignedly he said, "Again. We did...*it* again."

"Again? Bloody hell, Harry".

"I know. It just happened."

"Don't give me that crap," she snapped, "these things don't just happen by accident, and you damn well know it. How did it happen, Harry?"

"We were saying goodbye...and he, Malfoy, he said 'Aren't I getting a goodnight kiss?' and...we did. In a classroom"

"What?! He provoked you into kissing him?"

"No, of course not! It was...mutual. Sort of. We didn't mean it." He sounded so pathetic that Ginny softened.

"Are you sure you know what you're getting into?"

"No. Not really. All I know is that I like him as a friend and he's a fucking good kisser."

"Harry!" Ginny hissed, half way between embarrassment and anger.

"Sorry," he grinned in the dark, "But it's true!"

Ginny smiled back at him. "You bastard," she said, lovingly.

He wrapped her arms around her and she returned the hug.

"But I love you, all the same," she whispered.

"Me too..."Harry said, astounded. He couldn't remember anyone saying that to him with such sincerity before...

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Harry felt a sharp poke on his arm. "Argh...what the-huh?!"

Ron was looking at him with a smirk on his face. "Tired are we?" he asked, in a gloating voice.

"N-no...course not." Harry blinked and re-adjusted his glasses to bring Ron and the rest of the Potions class into clearer focus.

"Don't lie! I heard...last night. You came back really late, and then you had a *girl* in your bed!"

"No I-" he began loudly, earning himself a glare from Snape. He lowered his voice, "No I didn't. You were dreaming. Okay, I came back late but...no...no girl."

Snape stood up dangerously. "Do you really think, Mr Potter," he spat, "That I cannot tell when one of my students is asleep in my class? I doubt even you would be that stupid. I would have given you the benefit of the doubt. But I heard every word you and you little sidekick here spoke. You will serve detention with me tomorrow, at 6 pm in my office. I will make sure that you have no more late-night meetings with young ladies in your *bed*. Clear?"

Before he could stop himself, Harry said "Tomorrow? Why not toni-"

Snape glared at him, giving him such an evil look that Harry shut his mouth immediately. Whatever it was Harry was sure that it wasn't good. Something to do with the Order. He swallowed hard.

Ron glared at Snape, but said nothing. Once the potions master had sat back down the Slytherins' smirks turned into full-blown laughter. Snape didn't bat an eyelid.

Ron waved his wand towards them dangerously.

"Don't," warned Harry. "It's not worth it, Ron."

Reluctantly Ron put his wand down on the stained desk again and returned to his purple, foul-smelling potion.

Harry couldn't help noticing that Malfoy hadn't been laughing. In fact he didn't show any signs of noticing a confrontation at all. He looked deep in thought.

"So, who was the girl then, Harry?"

Harry gave Ron his worst look, and said "Say that one more time and that potion goes over you fucking head, *okay?!'*"

But Ron went on about it all day.

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Draco Malfoy was in bed feeling very satisfied. Like Potter he wasn't sure what had happened or if it was a good thing, but for now all he cared about was that it had been fantastic.

Both before and after.

He didn't give a damn if he was gay, or bi or straight or any of it right now. He just knew that he was damn happy to be a teenager with a lust that seemed to be returned.

He tried to sleep, but it was useless. He was still buzzing from his encounter with Potter. And, if he was completely honest with himself, there was one, just one thing that was bothering him.

The fact that his lust was for Harry Sodding Potter.

Okay, they were friends. But that wasn't the point. You weren't meant to fall for your friend....moreover the friend you had hated for 16 years of your life...moreover again the friend who was certain to get you killed if anyone found out about the friendship.

*Bollocks*, he thought.

If his father was to ever find out about the...events...and the circumstances surrounding those events he would go mad. He'd blame his mother, as much as Draco himself. Draco didn't know what he would do, but it would be far worse, he would probably be angry enough to tell others...Death Eaters...possibly even Voldemort himself. Would he do that?

Draco knew the answer to that question almost immediately.

*Yes, because he's a sick, unforgiving BASTARD!* Draco thought wildly, trying his hardest not to shout it out in the middle of the night in his Dorm.

And if Voldemort himself found out...he couldn't bare to think of it. Torture...then, eventually death. And it would be something far, far worse than Avarda Kedarvra...for his crime at least. Not only was he possibly gay...but the lust within him was for the very worst person imaginable.

And what would he do to Potter? Worse? Or just simple death?

There were far too many questions for Draco to answer right now.

Before his conscious-self noticed, his mind began to wander...

He imagined what it would be like if he and Potter were...boyfriends. He imagined all the secrecy...all the lies, all the stolen moments in classrooms. His mind played out a sequence.

They went up some stairs to a long corridor which Draco recognised, and then through a door- it was the Room of Requirement. There was a roaring fire, and a large bed. Harry shut the door and kissed Draco, groping at his body. As the moved onto the bed their clothes were suddenly in piles on the floor and Draco felt ravenous...they touched each others' nervous bodies...

Through the haze of the vision in front of his eyes Draco became aware that, once again, he was growing hard. He tried to ignore it, but with the vision refusing to leave him it was impossible.

And before he knew what was happening there he was once again.

Finishing off.

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Harry sat in the great hall pushing the remains of his dinner around his plate. He was vaguely aware of Ron and Hermione talking to him, their voices droning on in his ears. They seemed not to notice that he wasn't paying attention to them, that he didn't care about his homework and that he didn't, in fact, care about anything.

The happiness and satisfaction he had felt the night before had now all but drained from his body. The overwhelming feeling of guilt was upon him once more, but this time coupled with the weight of boredom.

Only Ginny seemed to notice his mood. She kept glancing over the table with concerned looks-she guessed what was going on in his mind. She remembered the emotions she had felt when she first realised she had feelings for girls as well as boys, and as a result felt desperately sorry for Harry. *But, she thought, I didn't have to face falling for Malfoy...*

She caught Harry's eye and gave him a small smile, which he tried to return. He could see Malfoy take his wand from his sleeve as secretly as he possibly could. He waved it once and muttered something under his breath. Nothing happened. No sign of magic.

Harry looked down and went back to his task of pushing his food around. But he noticed something strange. Slowly and subtly the food was *moving itself*. He watched, stunned, as it formed itself into a pattern, then, incredibly, into words. Words which read:

P,

Meet me in yesterday's Room 15 minutes,

M.

Harry stared in amazement. "Yesterday's room" obviously meant the room at the top of the marble staircase they had been in the previous night....meet Malfoy there in 15 minutes...

Shit! He thought desperately. How could he possibly face him? What if it happened again? But he'd have to go...how could he not...it wouldn't be fair.

Suddenly, he stood up from the table, interrupting Hermione mid-flow. He turned on his heel and strode from the hall, his face set.

From across the hall Malfoy looked after him, an inconceivable expression on his face, and his mind now riddled with worry.

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Draco was slumped against the wall in "yesterday's room" with his robes wrapped around him for warmth. Harry hadn't turned up. And it didn't look as though he was going to—he was over half an hour late. Draco was cold and miserable, denying his tears freedom across his cheeks.

He knew it was no good waiting for Potter—he had made it clear that he wasn't going to turn up. Standing up slowly he cursed Potter for being such a bastard and screwing with his life. He walked purposefully towards the door, and reached for his wand to unlock it.

But before he had even extracted his wand the door flew open with a loud *Crash!* and Draco was thrown backwards into the solid wall. The door slammed shut again, and in front of it now appeared a haze, as that of a heat-haze, and suddenly Harry Potter materialised from nowhere, and threw something into the dark corner of the room where Draco couldn't see.

"Where the fuck have you b—"

Before Draco could finish his sentence Harry had walked towards him, embraced him and kissed him fiercely on the lips.

Draco was taken aback. His breath caught in his chest and his eyes closed in ecstasy, his mind was filled with visions, as his whole body began to tremble. It lasted only a matter of seconds, but to Draco it seemed like a fabulous eternity. When Potter pulled away Draco's eyes remained closed—wishing to save that moment forever—Potter had kissed him...of his own free will.

"This has gone far enough Malfoy. We need to sort this out now."

Draco didn't speak for a moment, but then— "I know. But I don't know what you want."

"I want a friend. A male friend. But not necessarily a lover."

Draco swallowed, "I-I don't know what I want. But...it wasn't what I used to want. I used to want to get a girl, to please my father and live up to my family's name. But since.... you know, the summer, I've changed my mind about that. And then there was what happened between us. That's changed things too."

"In what way?"

Draco didn't answer. He looked determinedly at the floor.

"Are you gay?" asked Potter.

Draco didn't answer. He was still in denial.

"Malfoy? Answer me. I need to know. I don't care weather you are or not, it doesn't affect our friendship. What I've found with you is great, I never knew I could trust you, as far as I was concerned you were always the bastard that screwed up my life, day-in, day-out. Do you really think that after we've made promises to each other, and shared what we have, that I'd give a flying fuck what sexuality you were? I'll accept you either way. It doesn't change who you are, and it doesn't change our relationship. We're what we are and no guy or girl will ever change that, I hope. Please Malfoy, just tell me. I need to know."

"Why? If it doesn't affect us why do you need to know?"

"Because what happened happened to me too."

Silence.

"Malfoy?" Potter urged.

"Uh...I don't...I mean...maybe. I think...both?" Draco stuttered. Ashamed of himself.

"Right..." said Harry quietly. He didn't know what else to say. What do you say when someone admits something like that to you? How do you reply?

"What about you?" Draco glanced at potter, "Are you?"

Potter seemed to be scared of his answer, he didn't want to talk. "No," he said finally. "No, I'm not. But it doesn't mean that I don't have feelings for you...in a friendship way."

"Are you sure? I mean...why did you just kiss me?" Draco choked.

"I...don't know," said Potter, astounded, "I just...it felt like the right thing to do. Malfoy, I don't know if I'm ready to decide who I fancy just yet. I need more time. Do you understand?"

"Yes," Draco breathed. "But-Potter, you can always um...talk with me. You know that?"

"Of course. And I take it you will talk to me?"

"I don't know if I want to tell anyone else just yet..."

"I understand."

They looked at each other, their eyes meeting in the shadows of the room. Potter embraced Draco again, before summoning something from the corner of the room and disappearing through the door.

Draco backed against the wall, breathing heavily. He had tried to deny what he felt, but it was too much, his back met the wall and he slumped down. "Thank you," he whispered. Burying his face in his hands he wept.

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Harry Potter was climbing into bed, just as Draco Malfoy was wiping the last of the tears from his cheeks.

Neither was content, and neither was looking forward to their next meeting, whenever that might be. Harry pulled his bedclothes around him more tightly, as a comfort blanket against the pain of what he had just had to do. Draco raised his wand to perform the Alohomora charm to open the locked door. Suddenly something clutched at both their hearts-something cold, yet which, at the same time, burned so deeply it made them want to scream. They couldn't breathe, they were dizzy...they were on the floor writhing in sheer agony.

Harry suddenly knew what Snape's business involved, and he didn't like it. No sound escaped his mouth, he was unable to call for help.

As suddenly as it had reached out to them the grip was released, and both boys became aware of their life once again. The pain was still unbearable, but both staggered to their feet, and ran as fast as they could. They had to find each other.

It looked as though their next meeting would come sooner than either would have wished.

Title: [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 09)

Author Name: [Purple Flame](#)

Owl the author: [here](#).

Rating: R

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

Genre: Drama, Slash

Era: The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: Okay, so here comes their next meeting sooner than they would have wished...This bit is now focussing on plot, but I assure you it leads to far greater things in the H/D department later on in the tale...Also, if read please review :)

Disclaimer: This story is based on characters and situations created and owned by JK Rowling, various publishers including but not limited to Bloomsbury Books, Scholastic Books and Raincoast Books, and Warner Bros., Inc. No money is being made and no copyright or trademark infringement is intended.

Author's Notes:

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### Chapter 9- Repercussions

Harry threw himself against the Gryffindor entrance portrait and out into the dark corridor beyond. Sprinting back towards where he had left Malfoy he panted, and clutched at his aching chest-willing the pain to disappear.

He needed to find Malfoy. Somehow, though he had no idea how it could have happened, he knew Malfoy had felt the same as he had done. He had felt the three-way connection-between himself, Malfoy...and Voldemort.

He sped round the corner and down a narrow flight of stairs, ripped through portrait after portrait, all the while clawing at the pain in his heart.

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Draco had stumbled to his feet and sped out of the door as fast as he could-his heart thudding painfully. He had no idea where he was going, all he knew was that he needed to find Potter. But where would he be? He was sure Potter had felt it too-but would he come looking for Draco? Where was the Gryffindor common room? He'd never been there before.

He rounded a corner, expecting danger or death at every turn, but meeting nothing other than coats of armour shining in the moonlight. His whole body ached terribly, though he knew he must ignore it and go on-something had happened. Something terrible.

He reached the third floor and began to thud up the next flight of stairs. Suddenly an extra pain was added to his aches-his foot had become trapped in one of the stairs. He thrust himself forwards desperately but to no avail-all he succeeded in doing was twisting his ankle and pushing himself further into the stairway.

He cried out in pain and sank onto the banister.

Fuck! he screamed internally. He knew that his only hope now would be for Potter to somehow find him...

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He reached a long stretch of landing and stared around. He didn't recognise this place. *But that's a load of shit!* He thought, *I've been here for 5 years...how can I not know where the hell I am? I can't lose my way! Not now!* Looking around there were no doors, and no other corridors leading away except for the one he had just come down.

As if by instinct he decided to turn left. He started off quickly, but as he neared the end of the corridor he slowed-he wasn't entirely sure what he was seeing.

In the wall ahead a shape had appeared, like a large arch in the wall. Only, there was nothing on the other side, it was like a great black abyss. A slight humming seemed to be coming from it. He walked towards it slowly, intrigued. He reached out his hand, subconsciously, as though to touch it...

Suddenly a scream of agony came from the direction of the black arch, bringing Harry back to his senses. He stumbled backwards and almost tripped on the hem of his long black robes. He gave the arch one last, wary look and ran as fast as he could towards the corridor he had come down. As he reached the end of it he saw, out of the corner of his eye, a door that he had not noticed before. Deciding to take the chance he flung himself into it, turning the handle as best he could using his sweaty hands. Finally, after what seemed like an age of his hands slipping over the cold metal the door clicked, he pushed, and it swung open slowly. He forced his way through the narrow gap it made, and the second his robes had snapped away from the opening he heard a click and the door had shut to become a solid wall once again.

He was bewildered but he had no time to ponder the mysteries of Hogwarts right now. He ran along a short corridor, sure he was hearing voices in his mind as a distant panting sound made his head throb. He found a staircase and swung himself up it, before he heard-

"Potter! POTTER!"

He stopped dead and turned sharply, fear etched all across his face.

"Potter, thank God! Thank *God!*"

It was Malfoy. Harry's heart entered his mouth, and Harry, telling himself it was with relief, ran towards the blond boy. "What are you doing here?" he asked, breathless.

"I was looking for you...and I got stuck in this shitty staircase. I can't get out! I feel as stupid as Longbottom looks...."

Harry frowned slightly, but bent down all the same to pull Malfoy from the staircase. It took a lot of effort but after a few seconds Malfoy's leg slid painfully out of the stair and he was able to clamber to the top.

Harry grabbed Malfoy's arms and shook him, before embracing him tightly, protecting him. "So you felt it too." He said simply.

"Yes," said Malfoy. "I felt it. And I knew you had too."

"I know. I had hoped you hadn't. This isn't your responsibility."

"What? What do you mean?" Malfoy's brow creased in confusion.

Harry flushed and said "Never mind. We need to find out what the hell's going on here."

Malfoy didn't argue, but gave Harry a calculating look. "Do you know what it was?" he asked.

"No. But I've got a pretty good idea about what it was *about*." He took a deep breath. "Snape, before, in potions. He gave me a detention. But he told me to come tomorrow...why then? Why not tonight? It's a bit...well suspicious."

"But...where would he go? Would he be going to the manor? To met Voldemort? Or are the bastards doing something else tonight."

"No. I mean...maybe. I don't know where they've gone, but I'm pretty sure Snape's with Voldemort. But he isn't a Death Eater, Malfoy, he's on our side."

Malfoy gave a derisive snort and started to complain about how dumb Harry was, but Harry interrupted.

"I know he isn't Malfoy. I can't tell you how but you'll have to trust me. Please. You've got no choice-we're friends, remember?" Harry couldn't help but give a little smile in the dark.

"I suppose so," said Malfoy sulkily. "So, why's he with Voldemort then if he's not lickin' his ass?"

"Because he's getting information. I don't know what's gone on. And there's something else. When I was coming to find you there was a...thing...in the wall. Like a crappy Muggle portal or something...it was weird...It was like an archway in the wall, it was black-

"Shit, Potter," said Malfoy quietly, "I think I know what this is. I've heard of them. But if it is...this is bad. *Really* bad. You didn't touch it did you?"

Harry hesitated a moment, "No. Almost, though."

"Fuck. That's too close, Potter. I think it's a Death Arch."

"What?!" yelled Harry, forgetting it was the middle of the night. He had never heard of one, but he definitely didn't like the sound of it.

"It's a really powerful Dark Spell. It has to be there for years before it was used. And it has to be created by the wizard using it. Most of the time it's dormant, except when the wizard or witch needs it. So it's possible that over 50years ago when Voldemort was at Hogwarts he cast the spell...he must have been bloody brilliant because it's some of the most advanced magic possible. Basically it's like a warning, and as it's warning it gathers power. When it's got enough power-from both the place where it's cast and the place where the spell-caster is then it comes into action. Anyone who touches it has a really horrible death...hey kind of get sucked in. And their bones sort of...appear at the spell-casters feet. And dead things can come out of it. Evil things. And when it goes dormant, the place where it is will just...disappear. I don't know much about them though..." Malfoy broke off and shuddered.

"Shit. So what is it doing now? Why now? And what's that got to do with Snape?" Harry breathed.

"I don't know. Voldemort might have asked him to do something....sacrifice something. Or maybe he punished him. That'll be the pain. If someone makes a sacrifice-say, a pet or something, then they become bound to the place where it was made. And if Voldemort was really, really angry then the Arch would have recognised that, if it wasn't dormant."

"But how did we feel.... that?"

"I don't know...we're both sort of connected to him, aren't we? Maybe we've both got that, in the extreme?"

"But I thought that had left us?"

"Obviously not. Looks like it's come back. Or maybe...maybe it's changed or something. But how could that happen? We've stopped the visions, haven't we? Or maybe he's just stopped feeling stuff. FUCK!" He yelled. "What the hell is going on!?"

"I don't know, but I don't think there's anything we can do. We probably won't be able to find the Death Arch again. It'll be gone now."

"We must be able to do something, surely?" Malfoy said, desperately.

"Well, I don't think-"

*CRASH!*

One of the oak doors of the entrance hall had just swung open with the force of a spell, crashed into the wall, left someone inside and swung closed again. Malfoy and Harry backed into the wall behind them, not sure what to do.

"*Luminous Areus*" whispered Malfoy, and the entrance hall lit with a faint glimmer.

Immediately Harry recognised the gaunt skin, greasy hair and hooked nose of the figure lying on the floor;

It was an unconscious Professor Snape.

The two boys looked at each other before jumping over the banister and running, at top speed, down the stairs. Harry could hear Malfoy muttering, fast, under his breath. The panic in his voice was obvious. Although he had never exactly been fond of Snape, Harry still didn't want him to be harmed- he may be a complete bastard, but he was finally coming to accept that Snape was on their side.

Malfoy flung himself onto the hard stone floor next to Snape, felt his pulse and began to slap his face.

"Snape! Snape! Severus! Wake up you stupid git!"

Harry looked at the boy in some surprise before setting himself down onto the floor too, and conjuring cold flannels onto Snape's forehead. His skin was damp with cold sweat, and his lips were purple.

"Malfoy," he said gently, getting no response. "*Malfoy*."

"What?" the response was barely a whisper.

"We've got to move him. We can't leave him here. He needs to be in the hospital wing."

"I know. But how do we move him? He's going to be too heavy to lift...for us anyway. Us little weakling seekers..."

"Are you being deliberately stupid?" Harry teased in effort to cheer him up. "You're a bloody wizard, dumbass."

Malfoy gave a coy, embarrassed smile and stood up, waving his wand as he did so. The unconscious form of Snape rose with him, and hung in the air, his limbs swinging.

"We have to move quickly, Malfoy."

Malfoy nodded, dumbly. He seemed to be in shock. His legs, however seemed to be in perfect working order as he and Harry ran up the many staircases to the hospital wing. And Harry couldn't help noticing as they ran that when Draco ran it was very...very...sexy. But he wouldn't admit it to himself.

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They reached the hospital wing in five minutes flat and were soon hammering on Madam Pomfrey's door. She opened it looking sleepy, pulling a thick gown over her nightdress.

"Whassup?" she muttered, rubbing her eyes.

"It's Sn- Professor Snape. He's...not very well."

Madam Pomfrey rushed from her office and along the narrow room to the bed where Malfoy was gently lowering Snape onto a bed. Madam Pomfrey felt his temperature, forced open his mouth and poured a jet-black liquid into it with her wand. It took a few seconds to take effect, but suddenly Snape sat bolt upright in his bed and began to shake violently. Madam Pomfrey restrained him and pushed him into bed where he soon calmed. He didn't speak for a moment, but Madam Pomfrey closed her eyes, muttered something, and continued her work.

Malfoy and Harry looked at each other, their eyebrows raised.

For a few minutes, Madam Pomfrey worked in silence, no one else present making a sound.

A small noise behind him made Harry jump. Turning around he saw Albus Dumbledore framed in the light of the corridor outside. The Headmaster closed the door and strode sombrely across the room.

"Ah, Headmaster. You received my summons?"

"I did, Poppy," he said, and without further hesitation bent over Snape and said something very quietly, so that no one else present could hear. Snape said something back, in a hoarse voice, which Harry couldn't quite catch.

Dumbledore straightened up and looked to Malfoy and Harry. "Thank you." He said simply.

This was not at all what Harry had expected. He didn't say anything, but looked into Dumbledore's eyes.

"Professor Snape, as you can probably guess, has just had a meeting with Lord Voldemort. It was not a happy meeting, and Professor Snape has suffered some serious repercussions. He tells me that Voldemort has set up a Death Arch in the school. If this is true, it will have been accessible tonight. I need to know, Harry and Draco, did you see it on your wanderings? I know the connection would have brought it to your attention."

They looked at each other. "Yes." Said Harry finally, "I saw it. Nothing came out, though."

Dumbledore sighed, and closed his eyes in relief.

"Thank-you, boys. You must leave, go back to your respective dormitories and please, keep what you have witnessed tonight between yourselves. Goodnight."

They bade Dumbledore goodnight and hurried out of the hospital wing. They walked in silence until they reached the staircase where they were to split up.

"Well done tonight, Malfoy."

"What?" he said, jerkily, "What for?"

"You were brave. But...why? Why do you care so much for him?"

"I thought he was a bastard," he said after some time. "I saw him sometimes at the manor. He didn't come round often, but...what you said tonight. I don't know why but I believe it. I really do. And...I just.... I dunno, I guess I care more for him. I understand him. God this sounds crap..."

"No it doesn't, go on."

"Well...I felt sorry for him. I mean, face it, we give him some tough shit...before the summer when I was...you know...I liked him. I thought it was fantastic that he was a Death Eater, and the only person I knew at Hogwarts who supported Voldemort, but since I've come back I've felt nothing but hatred. I feel bad about that now-he didn't deserve it, did he?"

"I suppose not. But it's still not excuse for how he treats us like shit..."

Malfoy smiled, *that is just typical Potter, really...* he thought.

"What!?" said Harry at the look on Malfoy's face.

"Nothing! I never said anything," Malfoy said, "I was just thinking how typical of you it was to still hate him..."

Harry didn't say anything, just raised his eyebrows ironically, which Malfoy copied sarcastically.

The strong wind outside blew through an open window and rattled the heavy door to their left, making the locks and chains clang angrily. Remembering they were meant to be going back to their dormitories Harry turned back to Malfoy and said,

"You look dead on your feet. You should go to bed-you're eyes are all swollen and red..."

Malfoy scrubbed at his eyes in annoyance with his knuckles, clapped Harry on the shoulder and whipped back around to return to the Slytherin common room-no intention of going to bed.

"Oh, Malfoy?" Harry called after his back.

Malfoy turned again and said, "What?"

"Good luck on Saturday-we'll flatten you, you're crap!"

Malfoy looked confused for a second, then his face cleared and he said, "Don't speak too soon, cocky!" *Shit! Done it again!* He scalded himself, as he ran down the stairs to the dungeons, twisting round just in time to see Potter's back retreating up the steep staircase, his robes billowing.

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Draco Malfoy was sat on the floor of the Slytherin common room in front of the embers of the dying fire embracing his knees. Every now and then a flame would creep around the edge of a burnt log and

flicker for a few seconds, interrupting Draco's train of thought with erotic images and ideas. As the spark died his mind quickly fell back to the more urgent matters at hand, though.

He was totally confused. He no longer knew his position, or how he had got there. All he knew for certain was that Potter had got him here, and he was the only one who could get him out of this position. Or did he want to get out of it? He was sure he was-he needed certainty, not guilt and bloody confusion.

But how to get it?

\*

Around four in the morning Draco dragged himself to his feet and down the stone staircase to his bedroom, stumbling over his robes. He didn't bother undressing, just threw himself on the bed, and under the covers, before magicing the green hangings closed and attempting to sleep.

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As soon as Harry reached the safety of the common room once more he ran up to his dormitory, snatched up a goblet, filled it with water and drank deeply until the feeling of nausea left his shaking body. He contemplated waking Ron to tell him what had happened, and was almost at his bed when he changed his mind. Telling Ron would mean breaking his word to Dumbledore, and then there was the small matter of explaining about Malfoy...no, he couldn't do it. But he would have to at some point...

Instead he stripped his clothes off and slid, naked, between his sheets. Laying his head onto his soft pillow he immediately fell drowsy, but it was a long time before Harry Potter got to sleep that night....

Title: [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 10)

Author Name: [Purple Flame](#)

Owl the author: [here](#).

Rating: R

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

Genre: Drama, Slash

Era: The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: Hmm.... sexual tension in a Quidditch match...only they don't seem to be able to see it. Fighting, screaming, admissions, worry, Harry putting his foot in it and a lot of hints for the slash. It's getting very close to the crunch time for Harry-he's going to have to make up his mind sooner or later.

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Author's Notes:

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## Chapter 10- The Match

The Hogwarts grounds were lit with a weak, autumn morning light. It shone on the castle, peeked through the leaves and branches of the trees in the forest and lit the Quidditch pitch up.

Harry rolled over in bed and opened his eyes cautiously, attempting to shield them from the light that penetrated his scarlet hangings. His stomach leapt as it always did when he remembered that he would be facing a Quidditch match in a few hours time. He was nervous, but not only for the usual reasons. No, this time it was different. Gryffindor, as was the tradition at Hogwarts, would be playing Slytherin in the first game of the season. Only this time, Harry would not be facing seven brutal enemies. He fell to wondering about Malfoy, and about any tactics he might take advantage of given their current situation. He doubted very much whether Malfoy would give him an easy ride- his pride would not fall far enough to let him lose to his -okay friend, but also, and more importantly-rival. He'd want Slytherin to win as much as he ever did, though perhaps now not for the same motives.

He got up and dressed in his robes, waking Ron in the process who followed suit. They traipsed down to breakfast with the rest of the team-new members and all- and Hermione. As they entered the Great Hall Harry looked around for Malfoy. He was already there, shoving a piece of bacon around his plate, sitting slightly removed from his fellow team-mates, though not enough to arouse suspicion. Harry sat down with his back deliberately to Malfoy, the last thing he needed before the match was a distraction...

Hermione loaded Harry's plate with food and insisted he eat. He obliged, gratefully, avoiding thoughts of the coming match.

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"Malfoy!" called a sharp voice.

"Hmph?" he replied, looking up. It was the Slytherin captain, Kierre, who had spoken. Draco jumped up quickly, knocking over a goblet as he did so.

Kierre ignored it and said, "Get you fucking act together, Jackass, I don't know what the hell's been with you lately but I'm fucking tired of it, got it? I don't give a shit *who* your father is if you're going to lose my team this match!"

"Whatever, shit-face," Malfoy retorted, "Don't fuck with me, you might be older but face it, me and you in a duel? I'd win *hands down*". Malfoy only spoke quietly, but he hadn't lost his touch. He was still in charge, whoever challenged to him. Kierre said nothing, just turned away and called the rest of the team into order to head for the pitch.

Okay, he was nervous. And he knew it. He hadn't faced Potter since the night their connection with Voldemort had become apparent once more. He wanted to win the match badly, as usual, but not for the same reasons as before. This time it was just to keep his pride intact, to avoid arousing suspicion and, most importantly, to prove to himself that he was still the same person he had always been.

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"Right, team," Ginny said, nervously, "We won the cup last year, but narrowly," she glanced at Ron before letting Harry continue.

"We know we're the best team in the school, Oliver Wood hasn't replied to my Owls begging him to come back, but that doesn't matter. We can win because we're as good as we were three years ago when the old team was still here." Harry looked around at his new team. He and Ginny had held trials for the new positions, she had taken on position of chaser, and they had trained them hard all year. The team was indeed, as Harry said, as good as that which was under the command of Oliver Wood. Ron had worked hard to become just as skilled in the air as anyone, and was the fiercest Keeper in the school, almost rivalling Wood. The Beaters who had been given the positions last year had left the team, and this time when trials were held two superb young Gryffindor boys were found to replace them. All three Chasers were, once again, girls. And Harry remained faithful to his position as Seeker.

The team was nervous, but, Harry reasoned, that only made them more determined than ever to play well. He himself felt as though he had a Hippogriff in his stomach.

"Okay," Ginny said, "It's almost time. Slytherin are a hard team to play, but we can win, it's a tradition." Her eyes sparkled dangerously as she said this and Harry repressed a smile.

"Let's go," he said.

They walked onto the pitch at almost exactly the same time as they Slytherins. Malfoy was behind Kierre, looking paler than normal but determined all the same. Harry's heart leapt.

"Are you sure you're okay?" Ginny asked him.

"Yeah. Of course I am. It's just a bit weird that's all; I mean...it's an important game. We have to win. And just because he's my friend now...anyway, I'm not beating him, I'm beating Slytherin."

"I'm proud of you," Ginny said sincerely.

She didn't know the half of it thought, Harry had kept his word to Dumbledore and not told anybody.

Madam Hooch stood in the centre of the pitch, mounted on her broom a few feet above the ground. As the teams approached her she ordered the captains to shake hands. Ginny reached forward first and took Kierre's hand. He deliberately looked away from her face-he hated girls playing Quidditch. Harry leant forward to shake hands too, glancing in Malfoy's direction as he did so. Kierre looked at him oddly, then to Malfoy, and then back. He seemed to decide to make nothing of it, however, as his expression cleared when he mounted his broom.

Madam Hooch blew her whistle and fifteen brooms rose into the air. Apart from the wind the conditions were good, though the new Ravenclaw's commentary was being blown away by the wind.



Harry took his Firebolt high into the air, Malfoy, employing his usual tactics, trailed him. Usually this would have annoyed Harry, but not any more. Instead when they were too high for anyone to see what they were doing he called, "Are you sure this is a good idea, Malfoy?" "What? Talk sense, Potter!"

"You know what I mean!" he yelled, though he was smiling, too.

"I thought it would be best-we don't want to arouse suspicion now, do we?" Harry laughed, and scanned the stadium for the snitch.

"So, um, how have you been?" He asked Malfoy, tentatively.

"Oh...okay, I guess. I mean I can't really get it out of my head. Snape...and the Death Arch. And what Voldemort is planning."

"No. Me neither. I doubt we'll ever know, unless someone from the Ord- um, someone in charge tells us what's going on."

Malfoy seemed not to notice his slip, because after a moments silence he said, "Your team is so crap, Potter."

"What!?" Harry stormed, "Actually we've got the best team in the school, and you damn well know it! We've got the best captains anyone could wish for, and what've you got? A fucking bull!"

Malfoy laughed and said, "Actually one of your captains is a bit odd. I mean, she'd rather be down there 'scoring goals' than up here talking to me."

"Ha! Oh really? Odd is she? Get over yourself!"

Malfoy winked and flew in the opposite direction for a while. A snippet of the commentary reached Harry's ear, Gryffindor were winning 80-60. He wanted to get the match over with as quickly as possible, he and Malfoy may have been laughing, but the atmosphere had still been tense, the conversation forced.

Harry looked down and his heart leapt; hovering only feet above the centre of the pitch was the Golden Snitch. He pushed his broom into a dive, muttering to it as he went, encouraging it. Malfoy had also seen their target now and he, who had been hovering lower than Harry, was leading the race to get to it.

"Shit!" Harry screamed, "Come on, hurry up, hurry up!"

As the Ground and the Snitch hurtled closer the two boys drew level. And suddenly the snitch decided on a change of direction- it sped off to the left. Harry and Malfoy were both flying at top speed-too fast, at that distance, to pull out of the dive. Malfoy hit the ground first, his broomstick rolling off along the smooth grass. Harry's own Firebolt slipped from underneath him, hit the ground and bounced a few times before Harry, in a terrible twist of irony, landed on top of Malfoy.

Both were too dazed to realise the impact of this, for a moment. But it soon hit them both with full force very soon. Harry went bright red, and Malfoy's face burned. "Bollocks," muttered Harry.

"Well...for someone who insists they're entirely straight you're pretty damn keen..."

"Shut up!" Harry whispered, urgently, "We don't need everyone to hear!"

Ginny landed next to the tumble of boys and lifted Harry off Malfoy. "Are you okay Harry?" she asked, and to keep the fact that Harry had confided in her a secret she added, "What about you slimeball? Broken anything important?" to Malfoy.

"Piss of, Weasley. We don't need your interference."

"We?" she teased.

"PISS OFF!" Malfoy yelled.

"Malfoy!" Harry glared at him. And muttered under his breath, "We have to get this over with Malfoy, we...we can't....we need....it's...fuck." he finished lamely.

And they all mounted their brooms once more Ginny muttered, "Are you sure you're okay? That was a really bad thing to happen. You went bright red. I take it you were remembering you kisses?"

"Of course not, don't be thick," Harry said, almost snappily. But he was lying.

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Half an hour later the score was 130-120 to Gryffindor. Malfoy and Harry were deliberately flying apart, and only occasionally snatching shifty looks in each other's direction, hoping not to be seen.

There had been no further sign of the snitch, so Harry had had nothing to do but fall back to thinking of his Malfoy problem.

Suddenly a glimmer at the Slytherin end of the pitch caught his eye-the Golden Snitch! He whipped his broom around and streaked towards it, dimly aware of Malfoy doing the same. His heart began to thud-it was so important to him that he win! They were level pegging...

Just as the snitch came into perfect view and was almost within reaching distance something slammed into Harry-it was Kierre.

"BASTARD! What the fuck are you doing!" Harry yelled, but kept his eye on the tiny snitch as it fluttered upwards-he was so determined. As him broom span off-course it became more difficult to keep it in sight. He smashed into Malfoy who went spinning towards the ground.

Harry ducked and swerved around Kierre and flew through the air like a javelin, his arm outstretched. He made a grab and missed. Malfoy was on his tail again. He made a second grab and- he thought he'd missed for a second time but as he withdrew his hand he saw that in the tips of his fingers he was holding one fragile wing of the Snitch. He held it in the air at the same moment as Madam Hooch blew the whistle for a penalty-but the game was over.

And Gryffindor had won!

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The crowd had dispersed back into the school, leaving the Quidditch players to get changed. Once the rest of the team had left the changing room, Ginny saying "well done" in his ear, he walked slowly back to the pitch and sat in the centre for a while. A few minutes later he was joined by Malfoy, who sat next to him.

"What are you doing here?" Harry asked him.

"I could ask you the same thing. I wanted to be alone. To think. Well done, by the way." There was no resentment in Malfoy's voice, but Harry knew he was disappointed.

"Look," he said, "You did really well. If Kierre hadn't fucked it all up, you'd've probably caught the thing!"

Malfoy looked at him, "That's exactly what I told him myself," he smiled.

Harry looked at Malfoy, shocked, for a moment, before throwing back his head and laughing.

"You didn't?" he choked.

"I bloody well did! And the git deserved it, Potter, and you know it."

They fell silent after a while, and then Malfoy said, "I *should* have won though! I mean, I just should've done!"

"Hmm? What?" asked Harry, not really paying much attention.

"The match! I should have won! I've worked so hard for it, it's been hell these last few months! All this stuff I've had to do, shit I've had to put up with! Lads are so gullible..."

"What?" said Harry again. Was Malfoy saying what Harry thought he was?

"Stop saying what like that! I-"

"What do you mean, 'it's been Hell'?" Harry interrupted quietly, anger beginning to surface. "Do you mean your so-called friendship with me? Is that it? You've been trying to make me look like an idiot, make me look foolish, all for a stupid game of *Quidditch*?! Or was it something else? Did you just want to make me look like an arse?!"

"What? No! I-"

"Don't lie! You're not in this situation at all! You're not gay, and you don't want to be my friend or be on my side!"

"I'm not lying! For Christ's sake, Potter, do you really think I could do something like that for fun or...or a...a bet or something? That's sick! What's wrong with you?!"

"What's wrong with *me*?" Harry retorted, "I think you should ask yourself that question, Malfoy!"

Malfoy didn't understand what was going on, why had Harry suddenly turned against him? What had he said wrong?

"I was talking about the Slytherins! About at practice how they've been giving me all this shit about how I'd better win! Not-"

"DON'T LIE!" Harry yelled.

"I'M NOT LYING TO YOU! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?"

"I should've known it was too good to be true-a Malfoy turning good? Since when did that happen? GOD I've been so bloody stupid! Ginny was right all along!"

The silence seemed to ring through the stadium.

"What?" asked Malfoy, quietly, angrily.

Harry went red. "Nothing," he said. "Nothing. It's not important."

"Yes it is. Have you been saying something to someone about-about any of this? Have you been telling my...our secrets to someone else? And Ginny sodding Weasley of all people?"

"I- I'm sorry. I had to tell someone. I can't keep things like that to myself. I was happy for a start, that you finally seemed to have come round. I was confused, I needed to talk to someone. And I was flattered about what you apparently felt for me, and scared about what I might have felt for you." Malfoy stopped for a moment, contemplating Harry's words, abashed and a little surprised at his admission that he might have felt something for him. "But why did you tell *anyone* let alone her? Why couldn't you talk to me?"

"I tried. It wasn't working. Anyway, I know something about her. One of her secrets."

"What secret?" asked Malfoy, becoming more interested.

"I can't tell you. And before you start on at me about being fine to let go of your secrets and double standards and crap like that, don't forget I'm seriously angry with you."

Malfoy laughed, ironically, almost grimly. "And why would that be, Precious Potter?" he snapped nastily.

"Because you've been lying! Ginny didn't trust you, she tried to make me see reason but I wouldn't listen! I was too thick to listen!"

"HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU, YOU STUPID BASTARD? I'M NOT LYING! WHY WON'T YOU LISTEN TO *ME*? I'VE TOLD YOU, I WAS TALKING ABOUT THE SLYTHERINS!"

"Prove it," said Harry dangerously.

"Fine. Fine, I'll prove it. Our connection, Potter. Isn't that proof enough?"

Harry faltered, it was true.

Malfoy, who had risen when he shouted, sank back down to Harry's level. "Look," he said, "You know I'm not one for begging but just this once I'll make an exception, seeing as it's you. Please, *please* believe me. It doesn't make sense not to. Remember the last two months?" Harry remembered. This was typical Malfoy, fighting his corner with determination.

"How do we know the connection is that type of connection? How do we know it joins us to Voldemort? What reasons are there?"

"Because of who we *are*," said Malfoy, with his eyes shining. "You...we'll, you're Harry Potter, enough said. And my father is one of the most prominent Death Eaters, Voldemort has been living with me for the whole summer, and..." Malfoy stopped, but then continued, his words falling out in a tumble as though he was ashamed of what he was saying, "My father is related to Voldemort's mother."

"*What?*" said Harry. He felt suddenly sick, "How?"

"I don't know. My father was never really explicit. Only told me what he though I needed to know, no more, no less. You have to trust me."

Harry thought for a moment. He was ashamed of his outburst, but still wasn't sure. Then he remembered the kisses again.

"Yes," he said. "Yes."

Malfoy closed his eyes in relief. "Finally," he said. "You're talking sense at last. Come on, let's go. It's obvious I won't get any talking done here, you're in the way."

And with that he got up and left the pitch, entering the tunnel to the Slytherin changing rooms. Harry shook himself and left through the Gryffindor changing rooms, meeting Malfoy at the other side.

"You again!" Malfoy yelled. "Bloody Hell, anyone would think you were stalking me."

Harry looked at him, for some sign that it had been a joke, but saw none. Malfoy's face was deadly serious. He was wearing his mask again. Harry didn't really know what to say in reply, but he said lamely in reply,

"Thanks."

Malfoy looked at him as they got to the top of the marble staircase, stopping before he opened the front doors. "Thanks, Potter. And...well done." He clapped his hand onto Harry's shoulder (though inside, although it didn't show, he longed for it to be more), and entered the entrance hall.

He called without looking back, "I should've won the fucking match, Potter, and you know it."

Harry was left standing, stunned on the staircase.

**Title:** [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 11)

**Author Name:** [Purple Flame](#)

**Owl the author:** [here](#).

**Rating:** R

**Spoilers:** PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

**Genre:** Drama, Slash

**Era:** The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

**Main Character(s):** D, G, H, Hr

**Ship(s):** D/H, Hr/R

**Summary:** As the chapter title suggests there are many "conversations" in this chapter. And-at last!- something we have all been waiting for. Especially Draco!

Read it, you know you want to!

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**Author's Notes:**

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Chapter 11-Conversation

Dear Harry,

I hope school's okay, and that you, Ron and Hermione haven't run into any trouble. I'm sorry I haven't written for a while, it's been very busy around Grimmauld Place, and the Order has been having a meeting per night. With Severus incapacitated and unable to make the Wolfsbane Potion it's been like a living hell here, you have no idea. Dumbledore has charmed one of the rooms so I can lock myself in there at full moon...

Anyway, enough about me, how are you? I hope you're keeping out of trouble, (I sound like Molly now) and that you're happy. If you have any problems whatsoever please call on me. I may not be Sirius but I hope you can talk to me. Send me a letter, speak through the fire, I don't mind-I'm always here.

As it's nearly Christmas I was going to ask you what you wanted to do? You could come back here, but it's a bit crowded at the moment. We have so many extra guests and the meetings take over the place...Ron is going back to The Burrow but Molly asked me to tell you that she sends her sincerest apologies but it would really be impossible to have Harry over too. Hermione is going back to her parent's for Christmas-they insisted on taking her skiing, no doubt making up for last year. And I have a feeling Dumbledore would like you to stay at Hogwarts where you're safest...

It's your choice, though, mate.

Speak to you soon hopefully, and Merry Christmas!

Remus

Harry read the letter in his dormitory, smiling slightly both at the letter and the memory of Sirius. He got out a quill straight away and loaded it with ink. He was about to start writing a reply when he paused. Could what he wanted to say really be said in a letter? It was far too important for that, surely? He wasn't even sure what he wanted to say, exactly. Perhaps if he wanted to discuss things they would come out easier if the conversation was face to face...

He bent over and put his quill, parchment and Lupin's letter back inside his bedside cabinet, and instead took out a small, red cloth bag. He got slowly out of bed and looked around the room. All four boys were asleep with the bed hangings drawn shut; he could hear Neville snoring slightly, and Dean muttering in his sleep.

He crept to the small fireplace and used his wand to conjure up a squishy mat to kneel on comfortably. Crouching down he threw a pinch of what was in the bag into the fire and immediately the flames turned green, and began to roar like a waterfall. He stuck his head in the fire, welcoming it's gentleness.

"Grimmauld Place, Lupin" he said clearly.

He closed his eyes while he was transported, only opening them again when he was sure it had stopped. He found himself looking at a fairly large room with a double bed, and shelves full of books. A tatty suitcase beneath the bed held peeling letters reading "P...r...s...r R...J...up...n". In the bed Harry could see the form of a man, breathing shallowly.

"Er...R-Remus?" he called uncertainly, "Remus?"

The man snorted but did not wake up.

"Remus!" he said a little louder. The man stirred and sat up, rubbing his eyes.

"Mgh?" he grumbled.

"Remus...it's me. Harry. I got your letter."

"Harry!" Remus jumped silently off the bed and sprinted to the fireplace, kneeling down to come face-to-face with Harry. "How are you?" he sounded slightly shocked to see Harry, after all he's had no word from him since they had parted at the end of the Summer.

"I'm fine," said Harry, "Just...you know."

"No..." Lupin said.

"Well, just, teenage problems. Junk like that. So, how are you?" Harry asked, spinning the conversation round. "Are you okay? How's the Order?"

"Everything's fine here, nothing to worry about. Are you coming back for Christmas?"

"Well, obviously I wanted to, but I think it's best if I stayed here. If Dumbledore thinks it's best..." then he said, "I wanted to see you though, at Christmas."

Lupin looked surprised but at the same time rather pleased. It seemed that Harry was finally beginning to accept him as his new guardian, and stopped resenting him taking Sirius' role in his life.

"I wanted to see you too. Still, never mind, plenty of time for that, eh?"

"Yeah."

"Harry, are you sure you're okay?"

"Yes! I'm fine honestly. Just a bit stressed. And that whole thing with Snape and the Death Arch is kind of worrying."

"Yes, Dumbledore told me about that. What were you doing wandering around school alone at night?" He sounded suddenly serious.

"Oh...it's like a connection. It connects me, Voldemort and- me and Voldemort. Anyway, I thought it had gone but obviously it hasn't. It came back...painful."

Lupin looked at him curiously, Harry cursed himself for almost letting something slip.

"You look ill," said Lupin. "Are you sure there's nothing else?"

"Positive," stressed Harry. Lupin didn't look convinced however, but he let it go. They spent the rest of their time talking about Quidditch, and the defeat of Slytherin. At half past two Lupin insisted Harry leave, so Harry reluctantly said goodbye and snuck back into his bed, thinking of Lupin's last words:

If you ever need advice on anything, talk to Swan Jupiter. Trust me.

~~~~~

Harry got up late the next day, and spent most of the afternoon yearning for his bed. Professor McGonagall came round in the evening with the list of who would be staying for Christmas. It was a surprisingly short list, no doubt brought about by the fact that the Wizarding Community had finally accepted Lord Voldemort's return. He could only see six other names on the list.

Professor McGonagall closed the Fat Lady's portrait behind her as Harry sunk into a chair.

"Are you sure you'll be okay here by yourself? There's no one else from Gryffindor staying, Harry," asked Hermione in a worried voice.

"I'll be fine. It's only two weeks; I'm not completely unable to look after myself. Anyway, I'll have Dumbledore for company."

"And Malfoy," said Ron.

"WHAT?" yelled Harry, making most of the common room swivel round to stare at him. "Since when? How do you know?"

"I heard him telling Crabbe and Goyle this morning, seems his Daddy wants him to keep an eye on Dumbledore or something. Crabbe and Goyle's Mummies want them at home so they can be all safe."

Harry had gone very white, why was Malfoy staying? They needed to talk...

"Are you OK Harry?" persisted Hermione.

"Yeah...yeah, I'll be fine. Don't worry..." but he wasn't sure if he was telling the whole truth.

~~~~~

Harry wanted to find Malfoy. He had been looking for him all day, but the git was nowhere to be found. His search was hindered by the fact that he couldn't go anywhere without Ron or Hermione. He made frequent excuses to get away from them, but they always seemed to be with him, wherever he went. He loved them dearly, and enjoyed their company, but right now he wished they would give him just a few minutes to himself.

By Dinnertime he had given up, deciding that he would see him the next day in Potions. He loaded his plate with Lamb, Gravy, Potatoes, Vegetables, Mint Sauce, and the traditional Mint Humbug.

"Where's Ginny?" said Ron, "I need to talk to her, mum's sent a letter about Christmas."

"I don't know," said Hermione. "She said she was going to see Hagrid about half an hour ago...she's probably just not hungry yet."

Ron snorted, "Ginny? Not hungry? Come off it."

Harry ignored the ensuing bickering about food and greed and took to his usual activity of looking around the hall. Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, Slytherin...Kierre, Crabbe, Goyle. No Malfoy.

"What?" Harry muttered under his breath. No Ginny, no Malfoy...and Malfoy knew that she knew. "Shit!" he exclaimed, and began to shovel food into his mouth. He cleared his plate quickly and stood up.

"Harry, wait, where are you going?"

"Er.... I need...loo. I'm desperate, unavoidable I'm afraid!"

He grabbed the mint humbug, sprinted out of the doors and up the marble staircase. He had a bloody good idea where they'd be. He put the mint in his mouth just as he skidded to a halt outside the door. He listened but couldn't hear a sound inside. Raising his wand he bellowed "*Alohomora!*" and burst into Yesterday's Room as the door swung open.

Inside were Malfoy and Ginny, having a blazing row.

"-because I know how FRAGILE HE IS!" Malfoy screeched.

SHIT! Harry thought.

Malfoy and Ginny stopped yelling simultaneously and turned to look at him.

"Oh, look Weasley, it's your little friend," Malfoy spat.

"Be quiet, Malfoy," said Harry, locking the door behind him. What the hell is going on?"

Both Ginny and Malfoy burst into speech at the same time and didn't stop until Harry fired a Light-Head jinx at the two of them and they sank onto benches looking dizzy.

"Ginny?" asked Harry, "Talk."

"I was going down to see Hagrid and sadly I met Malfoy in the entrance hall. He started yelling at me, I couldn't make out what he was saying. Anyway, he told me we needed to talk and practically dragged me in here. He said you accidentally let slip that you told me and Malfoy seems to think I forced it out of you. He wants to know my secret," here she gave Harry a reproving glare, "but I've told him to fuck off, it's my business."

"I'm sorry," said Harry, ashamed of himself. "I shouldn't have told him-it was a complete accident, Gin, believe me."

"I believe you but I'm still angry!"

"Right. Malfoy?"

"What?" he said, sulkily.

"Oh for God's sake, Malfoy stop being a baby. Why did you do it?"

"Because I wanted to know why she was brainwashing you! She said she didn't trust me because of who I am- a Malfoy, which is a load of bollocks. She won't believe that I don't *feel* like a Malfoy."

"This is ridiculous! Look, let me explain then if either of you two have any problems then you can ask me at the end. Right?" he got no answer, so continued anyway. "I told Ginny about what happened, Malfoy, because I needed to speak to someone other than you and my own fucking head-"

"Great, so now you're fucking schizophrenic..." Malfoy muttered under his breath, but Harry ignored him.

"I told her what I needed to, not everything, but what I felt comfortable with. Now I've made my own decisions and I have my own feelings. She doesn't know about them."

"But why couldn't you tell me?!" Draco shouted.

"Because I knew you'd behave like this!" Harry said, exasperated, "Like a bloody baby!"

Malfoy stared at him, sulkily.

"I shouldn't have to explain myself for talking and confiding in a friend, OK!"

"S'pose," grunted Malfoy. Then, after a pause, "She says you want me as a friend..."

"I do! I really do, because I like you a lot, now you've finally come to your goddamned senses! But being like this isn't going to help anyone, Malfoy..."

"I know. It just pisses me off."

"Well I'm sorry, but I don't know what to say. Are you all sorted now? It's not Ginny's fault, she didn't make me tell her and she is the only one that knows. Ginny, I know you don't particularly like him but you have to trust him, and accept the fact that we're friends. I don't want to fall out with either of you over this. It's over now. All that's important is that we're still friends! Are you two going to stop arguing?"

"Fine," both Malfoy and Ginny said sullenly.

"Right. *Thank you*. You people are pathetic."

"Whatever, Potter. I'm going," Malfoy stood up.

"Bye, Malfoy," he said as the door was opened once again.

"Right. See you soon."

It seemed as friendly as Malfoy was going to get right now.

"Weasley, I hope I don't see you for a long time."

As the door swung shut again Harry yelled, "I'M NOT FRAGILE!"

Ginny sighed.

"He doesn't mean it," said Harry, "About not wanting you to see him. He's just acting in the only way he knows how. He's just miserable because he's been defeated."

"I know. It's not exactly like I want to see him either though..."

"But do you trust him now?"

"I...I *accept* him," she said carefully.

Harry smiled slightly as he hugged her tightly.

~~~~~

The next Defence Against the Dark Arts lesson took place on Tuesday afternoon. Professor Jupiter was showing them how to block unfriendly spells-something Lockhart had never quite managed successfully.

They were having fun learning the charm and accompanying wand movement, and Hermione, Ron and Harry had all mastered it quickly. Hermione sent a Jelly Legs jinx at Ron at the same time as Professor Jupiter called "All right everyone, pack up-the bell's about to go," and he forgot to block it. He promptly fell over, landing in a heap on the floor. Jupiter laughed and waved her wand so he was able to stand again. "Nice one, Ron," she said, "Graceful, as always."

"Ha-ha," he replied sarcastically shoving his books back into his bag.

They made their way to the door to dump their bags in the tower before dinner, but before they could leave Professor Jupiter called out, "Harry, could you wait behind for a few minutes, I need to have a word with you about something."

"Er-OK," He said, confused.

"Want us to wait?" asked Ron.

"No, it's OK. I'll see you in dinner. You can take my bag, though. Thanks," said Harry.

Jupiter waited for the rest of the class to exit before crossing to the door and shutting it behind them. "Please sit, Harry," she said in her gentle voice.

Harry sat in a chair in front of her desk and she seated herself opposite him.

"Would you like a drink?" she asked. This seemed to be a fashion among Defence Against the Dark Arts teachers, Harry had noticed.

"OK," he said awkwardly, wondering why he was there. He couldn't recall doing anything wrong...

"I bet you're wondering why you're here, Harry?"

"Well...yeah," said Harry, could she read minds?

"Remus came to see me last night. He seems to think you have a few...worries."

"Apart from the usual..." he said, bitterly.

"I know all about 'the usual', Harry. You won't tell him everything though, will you?"

"Well...I can't. It's...personal," he said.

"I know teenagers harbour a lot of things inside their heads. I was one not so long ago. You can tell me Harry- maybe you can't talk to Remus because he was so close to your father, I don't know. But maybe you will be able to tell me because I knew your mother and father less well."

"You knew my parents?"

"I knew all the Marauders, Harry.

Harry sat shocked, saying nothing. The something stirred in his mind, "Hang on, Professor," he said, "Hermione told me that Lupin had never known you, so...how does that work?"

"I met the Marauders when I was very young, two years before you were born. When James died I lived through the emotions of the others, and then Pettigrew disappeared, and Sirius was imprisoned. Well, that left only Lupin. No one really knew we were friends, but we were. We were like best friends, both misfits, both hiding secrets. And, recently, when the Order became active again, we began to see each other more frequently than before, and...we grew close. Closer than before. We wanted to keep it secret, and I ask you not to tell anyone, but I suppose it will come out soon, anyway...my Uncle always was a nosy man," she smiled. "So, can you tell me?"

"Um.... I don't know."

"Well, if you don't I will be forced to retrieve it from you Harry, though that is never the best approach," her voice bore no sign of threat, just soft warning, "Remus is not the only one who has asked me to talk with you. Though he would not say why, the Headmaster has also asked me to have a chat."

Harry swallowed. But he couldn't tell.

"It's nothing to do with Voldemort, or the Order. It's my problem, and I need to sort it out myself."

"That is where you're wrong. I know you have a connection with Voldemort-and my sources tell me that the connection is shared with another person. And my own female intuition tells me that it is this person who is causing you the problems. We need to sort the problems out, Harry, but with only two known members of the connection that is currently impossible."

"I can't tell you though! I want to tell you, to help the connection, but I just can't, it's a shared problem!"

"Harry, you do not understand. I realise completely that you may not want to tell, *but* if you don't we cannot use this connection to effect. Currently the connection is a painful experience for you, you do not like it. We could prevent that-you'd still have it, it's a very useful tool, but others could be aware of it and we could use it to great effect. You, Voldemort and the other member will only be vaguely aware of it-if The Dark Lord is aware of it at all."

This speech was followed with silence.

"Let me tell you a story, Harry. When I was at school I was not the same as most of my classmates. I had a secret which no one but my closest family knew. I couldn't tell the few friends I had, I certainly couldn't tell a teacher. Only my uncle knew. Eventually, as I knew it must my secret came out. The whole school knew I was a Lady Seer. Magical beasts and creatures are common in our world, but Lady Seers are especially rare. People became fascinated with me, and because I was so different they didn't understand. They began to hate me. I only had one friend, and that was Remus Lupin, 15 years my senior. Once I left school I joined the Ministry of Magic, but I didn't particularly enjoy the job. Last summer when the Order reformed I joined straight away, partly at my Uncle's request. There, over the last year I have made many true friends, and Remus and I are rock solid. The revelation of my secret was not at all nice, but I knew that the more I denied and hid it the worse it would be when it came out. The repercussions were huge, but people got over it eventually. There were still those who disliked me, as there will always be when you seem a minority, but most accepted me. In the last few years the prejudices of this world have been tested to their limits, but I think now that people are more willing to accept you for who you are, if you're open and honest. You have to do it for yourself Harry, even if you only tell a select few people."

"Someone knows. I know, the person concerned knows, and so does someone else. She's in almost the same situation as me. Only, she's more open about it, she doesn't shout it but she doesn't deny it either."

"A friend knows, and that is good, Harry but you have to tell someone else-someone who can help the connection. Once I know I will tell no one Harry, I promise."

"I can't!" he cried helplessly, desperately.

"You know you must, Harry. You can't keep it to yourself. Denial will only make it worse, because you're denying it yourself too. I doubt you have admitted it to yourself yet. Follow your heart, do what you want to do. Live your life, because that's what it is-*yours*. Who gives a fuck what anyone else says? If it feels right then chances are, it is right."

Harry blinked at her in shock-no teacher had ever sworn in front of him before...Jupiter smiled at his confusion.

"I'm not sure if there even *is* anything to admit to myself..."

"What triggered the feelings inside you Harry? What triggered what you're not admitting?"

"Something happened, it's happened a few times."

"And did you enjoy it?"

"Yes..." Harry admitted, almost guiltily.

"Good. And did it feel right at the time?"

"Yes..." he breathed.

"Is there anything wrong with what you did?"

"Some people think so..."

"But do *you* think so?"

"I...n-no."

"Well then there you go. It's not wrong, you enjoyed it, and it felt right. What more is there to say? Sometimes you can even enjoy the guilt. You may be ashamed of what has happened, but you will

come to terms with it sooner or later as long as you admit it to yourself. Once you have done that you can tell the world. From thereon in it's their problem, not yours"

"But people will think I'm a freak! Because I'm famous everyone will know! I don't want to be seen as a freak! Not only am I famous but I'm also g-" he stopped short. Jupiter was looking at him, he could not tell if she had registered his mistake or not.

"You won't be called a freak Harry-I am perfectly willing to bet that there are hundreds of millions of other people in your situation right now. And you can keep it between your close circle of friends, for a start there are spells you can perform-illegal spells, but spells all the same-" her eyes twinkled cheekily, "And you can ask them to be discreet-you can be discreet yourself. Your secret need never be known if you don't want it to be."

Harry looked up. "I just can't-" he croaked, but Jupiter cut him off.

"You *can*, Harry, believe in it. Believe in your companion."

Slowly, at last, Harry nodded.

"Yes."

Jupiter waited. "I promise." She said, though something seemed wrong. He couldn't figure out what it was. It hit him at the same time as Harry said the words.

She hadn't moved her mouth.

"I think I'm bisexual, Professor."

**Title:** [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 12)

**Author Name:** [Purple Flame](#)

**Owl the author:** [here](#).

**Rating:** R

**Spoilers:** PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

**Genre:** Drama, Slash

**Era:** The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

**Main Character(s):** D, G, H, Hr

**Ship(s):** D/H, Hr/R

**Summary:** Harry is confused. Whom does he love? Not even he knows the answer, he's only certain of one thing and that thing is something he \*hates\*.

This chapter is a necessary one to precede what's coming in the next few chapters- a serious H/D slash-fest ;) (and I'm throwing in some femmeslash, too)

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**Author's Notes:**

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Chapter 12-Admission

"Please, Harry. Call me Swan. Professor sounds so...unfriendly."

Harry was shocked, not only did this woman seem to be telepathic, he had also just revealed a huge secret to her and she had come up with that.

"Yes, Harry. I am telepathic-it was a little something extra I received from my mothers side. Not all Lady Seers are telepathic. It's a very rare gift, and not always one I exactly welcome. You have guessed that it is how I would have retrieved the information from you?"

"Um...y-yes," Harry stammered.

"Harry, please relax. I know you've just made a huge revelation to me as well as yourself, but I am not disgusted, or ashamed, and nor has my opinion of you changed one jot-except to think that maybe you are even braver than I thought. That's a big revelation you've just made, and I'm guessing it's scared you?"

"Yeah, yeah it has. I'd forced myself to believe it wasn't true. I was telling myself it was his fault, and that I only kissed him because I wanted to see what it felt like. And I tried to ignore the fact that I'd enjoyed it" said Harry. "Prof- er, I mean, Swan, I don't have to tell you who it is, do I?" he pleaded.

"Harry, you know you do," she said softly, her low voice full of sympathy for him. "No one else need know except me. I can deal with the connection myself, it won't take anyone else. You know you have to, I really don't want to have to retrieve it myself, I want you to keep your dignity."

"I can't tell you. He'd kill me!"

"No he wouldn't. He'd understand if he's worth his salt. He needn't know, for a while at least. And we could tell him together, so he didn't have a chance to be angry with you."

Harry nodded, happy for now to let someone else take over the situation for him.

"So..." she asked. "Who's the lucky guy?"

"You're going to hate me."

Swan said nothing, only blinked her beautiful eyes.

"You have to understand," Harry went on, "I have reasons. He's not bad anymore. He's...more human now. I still hate myself for liking him. He's such a bastard..."

He took a deep breath and braced himself, holding onto his belief in Malfoy as he did so.

"It's Draco Malfoy."

Swan had prepared herself for a shock, but not this much of a shock. Her eyes widened and she suppressed a gasp.

"See," said Harry quietly. "I told you you wouldn't like it."

"You said you could explain, Harry," she said breathlessly, "Please do."

Harry told her of when Malfoy had described to Harry the events of the previous summer, where Voldemort was living, how they had kissed and how the connection had grown, faded and then seemingly gone before returning again. He told her of the kisses, and the secrets and the trust between them, even though Malfoy was still the same arrogant bastard he always had been.

"So you see, Professor, I hate him but I can't stop myself liking him. No matter how hard I try..." he finished sadly. Swan still didn't look happy, but seemed to have accepted it more readily than Ginny had done.

"We'll leave it until after Christmas. We can't do anything about the connection before then. You and Mr Malfoy will be able to enjoy Christmas in peace..." she still looked slightly shocked.

"Thank you, Swan."

"Not at all Harry. I'll keep it secret. Do what your heart tells you. If Malfoy feels the same then go for it."

"Thanks," he said again. He drained his cup and set it down.

"Goodbye, Harry," she said, "come to me if you need to talk."

"I will do. Bye."

~~~~~

"So, you know what his problem is, Swan?"

"Yes, Uncle. It's-er...sensitive. Teenage stuff. And very personal...I think he only told me because he knows I am so young...I promised him I wouldn't tell, it's his secret." And she added in an undertone so that Dumbledore couldn't hear (at least he made no sign that he had heard her words) *"and he knows one of my own secrets..."*

"Oh, no of course not. You mustn't tell! You didn't have to use...less than desirable methods, did you?"

"No. He did well. He told me willingly-he's braver and stronger than people give him credit for."



"Oh yes, I know that. Do you know the third party in the connection?"

"Yes."

"Good," said Dumbledore, closing his eyes and relaxing back into the high-backed chair, "Good. I knew you'd do it, Swan. Harry is a great asset to us, but we need to protect him. We all owe it to James and Lily."

"Yes. We do. Uncle, could I ask you something?"

"Mmm?"

"Once the spell is performed, and we have the connection diverted to the Order, no one will find out the third member, will they?"

"Not if he or she does not wish it to be known, no," Dumbledore smiled.

"Good, I promised Harry. I don't want to break the promise-he a great kid. The perfect mixture of his mum and dad and yet so bloody individual..."

Dumbledore raised one eyebrow, despite the fact that his eyes were still closed. "I think there's something else you wanted to say, Swan?"

"Well...yeah," said Swan, smiling. Sometimes it felt more as though it was Albus who was telepathic, not the other way around. "If I was to, er, aid someone in a certain way...a certain *illegal* way...would you protect me?"

"Swan, I know you well enough and trust you such that I know the spells you perform are not dark magic. The law has some very harsh rules on certain spells that are, unfortunately, beyond anyone's power to make legal. Of course I shall protect you because I know the spell should *not* be illegal."

Swan hesitated before saying, "I will not betray your trust, Uncle."

"Thank you," the old wizard's voice sounded almost amused. He opened his eyes at last and looked at Swan before pouring her a cup of tea from an invisible kettle. "Will you be able to perform the diversion spell alone?"

"Oh, yes. I don't think there's a witch or wizard alive who could perform it more effectively...even if I do say so myself."

Dumbledore's eyes twinkled. "You look sad, my dear," he said suddenly.

"Sad?" Swan repeated, "N-no Albus. I'm not...I'm perfectly happy."

Dumbledore ignored this and said, "Am I right in thinking that this has something to do with...*love*?"

Swan frowned and turned pink, "I have no idea what you are talking about, Uncle. Stop making preposterous suggestions like that or I will be forced to put a semi-lock on your mouth!"

Dumbledore sighed an amused sigh and muttered under his breath, "Just like her mother..."

"What?" Swan shot at him.

Dumbledore just laughed at the expression on her face, and she showed him her tongue.

"Ah, my dear niece. So innocent, yet so wise. Second-to-none. Well, if you absolutely refuse to tell me your secret I will just have to bide my time and wait patiently I suppose... you will crack eventually my dear. You cannot hold it forever."

"I can!" she said indignantly, "I daresay you will find out eventually but rest assured it will be when *I* decide to tell you!"

"Oh, of course, my dear. When *you choose* to tell me. Of course."

Swan frowned at him, but could not remain angry. Once again Dumbledore's only reply was to chuckle at her expression.

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As Christmas grew closer and Hogwarts was drowned in a flurry of snow, excitement rose inside the castle. On the very last day of term a banquet was held in the Great Hall with it's swirling silver ceiling, and Harry and Ron filled the common room with Drooble's Best Blowing Gum, knowing full well that Harry would pay for it dearly if Filch found out before he could clean it up.

Most of the students piled out of the front doors at 10am the next day and, fighting against the snow-storm, made their way towards Hogsmead and the Hogwarts Express which would take them home. Hermione gave Harry a hug that almost stopped him breathing and a kiss on the cheek. "You'll be OK, Harry. We'll write every day!" she said, sounding as though she was leaving against her better judgement.

"Yeah," said Ron, looking sincere.

"Look, I'll be fine you two, stop fussing! Bugger off home and have a bloody good Christmas!"

He smiled at them, and waved to them from the stone steps until they rounded a corner past Hagrid's hut and were of sight. He sighed heavily and turned to go back inside, alone. He walked slowly up the many staircases towards the North Tower, feeling the same as he had when Ron and Hermione had first gone to Hogsmead without him. He had an idea in his head of eating all the toasted marshmallows he could, whilst lying in bed...

"Potter..." called a voice.

He jumped and looked up, startled. He couldn't see anything. It must've been his imagination; he carried on climbing the stairs.

"Potter!" there it was again...what was it? He looked all around, and over the banister. *Probably* Peeves he thought bitterly.

"Oy! Potter!" the voice shouted.

He looked up to see Malfoy leaning over one of the banisters above, calling his name. Back to his old tricks.

"Hi," said Harry walking to the landing, where Malfoy was now standing, he frowned slightly as he said, "I haven't seen you for ages. I wanted to talk to you."

"Well, let's go and talk. We've got all the time we need now. The whole of the holidays...no one else around..."

"I know. That's what I wanted to talk about."

"Oh, yeah?" said Malfoy, steering him into an empty classroom, his eyebrows raised expectantly.

They sat down and Harry, deciding he might as well come right out and say it, said, "How come you're staying for Christmas?"

"My Father asked me to. He wants me to 'keep an eye on things'. God knows what the hell that means...I was going to refuse but I thought, what's the alternative? Going home? To hell? To him? To *Voldemort*?"

"I suppose so. So, are you the only Slytherin left behind?"

"No. There's some first year git. But he spends most of his time in his dorm, so I'll be left to my own devices for two weeks...lovely."

Harry laughed. "Who else is staying?" he asked.

"Well, there's us two, then there's two Ravenclaws and all the Hufflepuffs have gone home...and I think that's it. Six of us. How jolly this holiday will be..." he said sarcastically.

Harry laughed again, and after a silence he said, "Shall we go somewhere more comfortable? I feel all exposed in here..."

"Yeah," said Malfoy, "Where, though? I could take you to the Slytherin common room if you like. The Kid will be in his dorm...and I think Snape's too busy trying to get Jupiter's attention to bother about checking we're being good and staying in our own common rooms." They started walking down the stairs that Harry had just climbed.

"OK. It is still as horrible as it was last time I went in there?"

"What? When did you ever go in there?"

"Oh...never mind. But I did, and it was horrible."

"Oh, thanks, Potter!"

"Sorry, but it's true!"

"I know, I know. But it's home," he seemed almost sad to say this.

*

They were outside a stretch of blank stone wall, deep in the Dungeons.

"*Hairy Beasts*," said Malfoy flatly.

"Oh, how very original!" teased Harry.

"Hey, don't complain at me! I don't make them up.... though whoever does should be sent to Azkaban...last month it was '*Green Curse*'."

They went into the dimly green-lit room beyond as the wall split smoothly into two. It was exactly as Harry remembered, with the same hardened features, uncomfortable wooden furniture, and strangely cold fire.

They sat down opposite each other, and Malfoy conjured up two glasses and a jug of icy pumpkin juice out of mid air.

They had a proper conversation-the first one they had had without it being about feelings, or the situation they had found themselves in. It was a nice feeling, as though they were becoming closer with every word. They fell silent after a while, and drank, enjoying the quiet.

"Malfoy?" said Harry suddenly.

"What?" Malfoy sounded slightly worried.

"Why did you say 'You're dead, Potter' at the end of last year?" Harry demanded.

"Because..." Malfoy hesitated, "Because firstly I was pissed off at the time about you getting my dad sent to Azkaban, second, I was expected to, and third...I honestly thought it was true."

Harry sat, stunned for a moment. "And now?" he asked.

It looked as though it was taking Malfoy a lot of effort to reply. Finally he closed his eyes, screwed up his face and said in what was barely a whisper, "I don't know...maybe. Yes."

Harry looked away.

"I don't mean it like that!" Malfoy said quickly. "I just mean there's a lot of danger out there, Potter. You've got to be careful...we both have. Everyone has..."

"I'm not going to worry my life away, Malfoy," said Harry determinedly; he held his head up high as he spoke, "I need you to know that. I know what I want."

"And what's that?" asked Malfoy, tensely.

Harry stood up and walked over to Malfoy. He bent over slowly and kissed his lips softly.

"I can't tell you yet," he said. "Soon." And he walked over to the wall and left Malfoy sitting alone and confused, his lips tingling.

~~~~~

Harry was sitting on the floor in the Gryffindor common room in front of the fire, staring into its blue-ish heart. He couldn't decide whether he was happy or miserable. He'd had barely a moment to think about what he'd told Jupiter, and now he wasn't sure what he should be thinking. He supposed he was happy that he'd finally been able to admit his feelings. He wasn't sure he had accepted it yet but as Jupiter said, admission was a start.

And as for who the feelings were for?

Draco Malfoy...prize git. They may be friends now, but it didn't stop Malfoy being an arse. Maybe that was one of the things Harry found attractive about him? He didn't know. In fact, for all Harry knew he might not have had feelings for Malfoy at all, he might simply have been in the right place at the right time.

One thing was for sure: he had to work it all out. OK, so he'd made a big step admitting it to himself, but he still hadn't told anyone other than Swan-not even Malfoy. *But what if the object of my affections isn't Malfoy? He kept thinking, What if it's someone else? What if I don't even know who it is yet? It could be a girl...*

He tried to imagine kissing another boy...Dean, or Justin Finch-Fletchley...he tried so hard but he couldn't do it-every time he did his mind would just wander back to the memories of his and Malfoy's passionate kisses, as it so often did these days.

And eventually his body began to respond to the images his mind was conjuring up.

He made no effort to stop it any more.

\*

Harry had tossed and turned for hours in his bed before finally getting to sleep that night. It was a strange sensation having the whole tower to himself, and if he was honest with himself he didn't particularly like it; it felt wrong.

*Tap, tap, tap!*

Harry's eyes snapped open in the dark, he could see nothing.

*Tap, tap, tap!*

The noise was getting louder...

*Tap, tap, tap!*

"What the f-?" He muttered angrily as he reached for his glasses in the dark. He stuck his head through the split in his hangings and squinted around. At first he didn't see anything unusual, but suddenly he noticed the light distributed across the floor was twinkling and flickering slightly. He looked at the window opposite his bed and shouted out in relief; a large owl was hovering in the air outside, beating its huge wings, and tapping on the window with its squat beak.

Harry got out of bed, crossed the room and opened the window. Immediately he recoiled as a sharp blast of freezing air entered the room along with the spirals of snow the owl brought inside with it.

As soon as Harry had retrieved the letter the owl flew out of the window and up towards the moon. Harry sent a spell at the window and it shut with a bang. He settled on his bed to read it by the light of a flaming torch. The handwriting looked as though it should have been tidy, but it was slightly shaky.

*Dear Harry, [it read]*

*We thought we'd write to you now, just to check you're okay and not feeling too lonely without us! We've been on the train for a few hours, but it's so boring...you're not here to talk to, and Ginny went to the toilet about an hour ago and hasn't come back yet.*

*Anyway, I just wanted to say we miss you already, and that we'll see you soon! I-oh, hang on, the trolley's just come round and Ron wants to borrow a Galleon.*

Harry smiled at Hermione's fussiness. The handwriting changed now, and became almost illegible, so Harry had to guess at a lot of the words:

*Hi Harry, don't get too depressed by yourself. If you get bored try and sneak into the girls' bedrooms without getting caught out-ow! Hermione just hit me- or you could always set fire to Snape's office...*

*Don't let Malfoy get you down, you know what he's like. If he gives you any shit just throw it right back at him-he hasn't got his ickle fwends there to save his sorry ass. Give him hell from us if he tries anything.*

*We'll write to you soon, have fun!*

*Ron & Hermione*

*xxxx*

Harry laughed, but couldn't help thinking what a completely pointless letter it was. And it had woken him up...

He yawned and crawled back into bed, hoping they weren't going to bother him constantly...he had better things to be getting on with...

**Title:** [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 13)

**Author Name:** [Purple Flame](#)

**Owl the author:** [here](#).

**Rating:** R

**Spoilers:** PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

**Genre:** Drama, Slash

**Era:** The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

**Main Character(s):** D, G, H, Hr

**Ship(s):** D/H, Hr/R

**Summary:** Okay...the big one. That's all I can say. H/D. Muahahaha...

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**Author's Notes:**

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Chapter 13- Christmas Gifts

Dinner on Christmas Eve was a noisy affair. Most of the teachers had stayed behind for Christmas, including McGonagall, Snape, Flitwick, Hagrid, Trelawney, Jupiter, Sinistra and of course Dumbledore. Firenze was living in his classroom on the first floor of the castle, and remained there at all times, only venturing out to speak to Dumbledore. Apart from Harry and Malfoy the other remaining pupils were all first years, meaning the excitement around the single table that had been set up was palpable.

Harry left dinner early to go to bed; he wasn't really looking forward to tomorrow. Without Ron and Hermione there to enjoy it with him it wouldn't seem right. And there was something else...when he had been in Hogsmeade buying presents (a wizard stationary set for Hermione, a load of joke stuff from Dervish and Banges for Ron and Dobby's usual pair of socks) he had seen the perfect present for Sirius...he had had to run all the way up the long lane and past the Shrieking Shack so that Ron and Hermione hadn't seen how upset he was.

As he walked into the Entrance Hall somebody grabbed his arm and pulled him behind a large statue.

"All right?" Malfoy was smiling shyly at him.

"Er...yeah. Hi...how are you?"

"I just wanted to say Happy Christmas to you before tomorrow," Malfoy ignored Harry's question. Perhaps this was because the answer was *I'm dying inside and I feel like shite*.

"Oh...yeah. You too, Malfoy."

Malfoy smiled at him. "Thanks," he said.

"Hang on," said Harry, "why can't you wait until tomorrow to tell me that?"

"I...um...never...I can...never mind," Malfoy stuttered. He clapped Harry on the shoulder and said, "Yeah. Bye," turned, and ran down towards the dungeons.

Harry stood behind the statue for a moment, completely stunned, before he remembered that he was meant to be in bed. He slipped out from behind the statue and ran upstairs.

~~~~~

Draco sat on the end of his bed with a small, shiny box in his hands. He opened it carefully and examined the contents, prodding them with his wand. A low whooshing noise came from the box. Draco smiled softly, and snapped the lid shut again. He put the box in a black bag, and wrapped the whole package in delicate paper. He stretched himself out on his bed, put the package on the table and closed the hangings.

He cursed himself for his performance in front of Potter before.

What the fuck was I doing, I must be dumb. He probably thinks I'm a freak! Well he'd be right I am a sodding freak, look at me! He hates me.... he has no reason to like me. I hate me, for Christ's sake!

In his frustration he punched his pillow in the dark.

"Bastard!" he called out in the dark, to nothing and no one in particular.

~~~~~

Christmas morning was cold and grey, and the snowstorm was growing stronger outside. When Harry woke up he found his feet being crushed by a pile of heavy presents. He groaned as he sat up and a large number of them went cascading down onto the floor.

He sat on his bed in his pyjamas to unwrap the presents. He bent down and picked the first one up off the floor. On the front was a scribbled '*Harry*' in large letters. He tore the brown paper off and a large bar of Honeydukes chocolate fell onto his lap, followed by three huge bottles of Butterbeer and a note.

"Ow! Shit!" yelled Harry as they hit his legs. He wasn't sure whether the loud cracking he heard was the chocolate or his legs breaking. The note read,

Dear Harry,

Happy Christmas! See you later,

Hagrid.

Harry heaved the gifts under the bed and stored them next to his trunk.

Next was a small present wrapped in silver paper. He ripped the paper off and saw inside was an intricate wooden frame, with a photograph inside. It showed his mum, with Harry in her arms, and his dad standing outside their house. The ground and house were both covered in snow, and a pond outside the house was glassy-it had frozen over. Harry had never seen his parent's house before. It was a beautiful house. It was large, but not as large as the tree behind it who's trunk was almost as thick as the house itself. It was like a large, gothic-style cottage.

Harry smiled, and looked at the picture longingly. He turned the frame over and saw on the back the words:

Harry,

Happy Christmas. We hope you like it; we knew you hadn't seen your house before.

Love Ron, Hermione and Remus.

Harry gasped, and felt a sudden, overwhelming rush of love for all three of them. He placed the present very carefully on top of the cabinet next to his bed, looked at it for a moment and turned to

the next gift. Ron had sent him a box of Every Flavour Beans, Hermione a giant sized box of Honeydukes toffee, Mrs Weasley his usual jumper, this time with a large Gryffindor Lion on, and the Dursleys a note (telling him that Dumbledore had written to them, and informed them that Harry might not be back home for the first week of the Summer, which was fine by them because they were finally able to shop for a holiday home in Majorca) and an empty biro pen. That was odd, thought Harry, why wouldn't he be home until late? He resolved to put it out of his mind, and write and ask Lupin.

His pile of presents gone he stood up and stretched to get ready to go down to the Great Hall. Something fell onto the floor. He stooped down quickly to pick it up. It was a letter written on ordinary Muggle paper. Harry looked at it suspiciously for a moment before slitting it open with his wand. The letter inside was not long. It was written in a very neat hand.

Harry,

Dumbledore has written to me about why you aren't coming home for the summer as usual. I know you don't know why, but it's for the best.

You have probably guessed my situation, somewhat. I know more than Vernon knows I do, and I am ashamed of that. However, events in recent months have forced me to rethink my position. I will explain when you get back for the summer, but for now DO NOT write to me, I don't want Vernon getting suspicious.

I just want you to know that I didn't hate your mother, though I told myself that I did. And I don't hate you either.

Have a good Christmas,

Aunt Petunia.

"Oh my....*fuck*," said Harry. He felt faint, "no way.... this...this is mad."

If he was honest with himself he had realised that Aunt Petunia may not be letting on all that she knew, especially after her performance the summer before last...

"Shit..." he muttered to himself.

~~~~~

Draco was surrounded by litter from all of his presents. He felt ill. His gifts from fellow Slytheirns had been the usual...chocolate, sweets, joke presents, quills...but he had received a present from home. It was not large, but oddly shaped and heavy. The note with it said,

Draco,

You will find this useful. Do not abuse it. I will contact you soon.

Mother and Father.

*Not even a 'Merry Christmas'...*Draco had thought bitterly, though he hadn't expected much more. And so formal-*'Mother and Father'*.

He had opened the present without much enthusiasm. What had fallen out of the paper made his jaw drop and his stomach turn.

A small crystal ball, on a solid gold stand, and a book of dark curses-his father wanted him to use it to learn curses that only Voldemort's followers used...

His father was a total bastard. What the hell did he want Draco to use it for? He was trying to train him into a little copy of himself. *Well it's not going to happen!* Draco thought, chocking on tears, *I'm not your son-I have no father!*

He had thrown the present into the very bottom of his trunk, and covered them with old clothes. The only thing which made it slightly easier to bear was the note which he had opened last;

Draco,

I am so sorry about what your father has sent you.

Merry Christmas, son.

Mum

Draco gulped when he read that, and he cursed himself for being so Goddamn sentimental. But he couldn't help feeling happier as he slipped the note in between the pages of his mother's book.

~~~~~

The table in the Great Hall looked amazing, and in front of each place was a large gold candle in a base of holly. The candles would burn all day.

In Harry's mind the only thing he could think was to get the day over with as soon as possible. He took a seat next to Swan Jupiter.

"Merry Christmas, Harry," she said.

"Thanks, you too."

Opposite him, he noticed, sat Malfoy. They smiled at each other.

"Merry Christmas, Malfoy," Harry mouthed.

"You too."

Harry thanked Hagrid for his present as dishes and bowls and tureens began to get passed around the table. The food was delicious, and during the first helpings nobody spoke much at all. During the second helpings Swan took the opportunity to speak to Harry.

"So," she said, "how are you?"

"I'm fine. No different really."

"And how's he?" her eyes slid over to Malfoy for a second, who was eating slowly and seemed to be staring at the table with a blank look in his eyes.

"As far as I know he's great."

"He's not," said Swan suddenly.

"What?"

"He's not great. He's not happy at all. He tries to be brave, and keep his 'I'm-a-bastard' face on, but it's all a lie. He's confused, for a start, about you. He wants to know what you want. He knows what he wants, he just doesn't know he knows."

Harry frowned as he worked out what she was saying.

"Secondly," Swan went on, "he's received some things from home today. One thing made him very happy, one made him angry and upset. And thirdly, he's lonely. He has distanced himself from all of his old friends, the only person he feels at all close to at school is you, and he doesn't know if you want that. At home he only has his mother but they're both scared of his father."

"Wow..." Harry breathed, "that's a lot of stuff...too much emotion..."

"Indeed it is, he needs looking after, Harry, and you know who the only one who can do that is, don't you?"

Harry sighed. "Me," he said at last, "Me." *Poor git...he thought, having to rely on me of all people...*

~~~~~

Finally, at last after four hours of Christmas lunch, Harry was able to go back to his dormitory. He climbed the stairs slowly. It hadn't been that bad after all. He had a lot to think about but the food had been good...

He was on the fifth floor about to climb another staircase when he heard a noise. It was a kind of sobbing crossed with rustling. He stopped dead. Looking from left to right he saw a classroom with the door closed-all the other doors in the corridor were open. He crossed over to it and grabbed hold of the handle. He tried to turn it but it wouldn't work, perhaps it was because it was locked or perhaps because his hands were sweaty. He took out his wand, tapped the door and muttered a spell. The door opened noiselessly, and Harry stepped inside making no noise at all. Draco Malfoy was leant against the wall, his forehead against the stone, and his fists raised against it. His hands were red and there was blood on his robes and the wall. He was sobbing in dry, angry bursts.

Shit, thought Harry, look at the poor bastard.

He stepped forward cautiously and put his hand on Malfoy's shoulder.

"Malfoy," he said quietly.

Malfoy jumped and spun round, his eyes wide. Rain had begun to pour on top of the snow outside. Thunder clapped and at the same moment the room, with its surreal scene, was lit up with lightning.

"Noooo, no, go away, Potter. Leave me alone!" he moaned.

"No. I'm not leaving you like this. What's wrong?"

"I can't tell you."

"You have to."

"Piss off, Potter! I was getting along fine without you! Everything was fine until you came along!" he screamed.

Harry didn't move.

"Shit! Why does it have to be like this?!" he yelled, and collapsed forward into Harry's arms.

Harry held him close as Malfoy sobbed into his shoulder. "I'm sorry, Potter," he whispered, "I'm so, so sorry for ruining your life like this."

"Don't be stupid, you're not ruining anything," Harry said. He held Malfoy tighter, his arms around his waist.

After a few moments Malfoy pulled away, hiding his face in his bloody hands. "Thanks, Potter."

"That's OK, Malfoy."

"I'll just-"

"You're not going anywhere. Let me see."

Malfoy turned away.

"Stop it, Malfoy-let me see!"

He swivelled Malfoy around and pulled his hands gently away from his face. He was very pale, and looked dizzy. A sliver of blood was running down his temple and cheek onto his neck. His hands were grazed and still bleeding freely.

"Fuck, Malfoy, what the hell have you done to yourself?"

"I don't know," the boy sobbed.

"Let's get you out of here."

Malfoy didn't complain but didn't seem to be able to walk either. Harry put his arm around Malfoy's waist tenderly to help him walk.

"We went to your common room last time, it's time you paid a visit to mine..." he said as he steered Malfoy out of the room and up the two flights of stairs.

As they reached the Fat Lady she looked at them suspiciously.

"Repeat what you're seeing to *anyone* and I'll bring the Knight and his Pony back, is that understood?" Harry warned.

"Wouldn't dream of it!" she replied.

"Sure...Golden Star"

"And you...you said *Slytherin* was unoriginal..." Malfoy managed to gasp.

Harry laughed as he heaved the other boy into the room. He placed him gently in a chair by the fire, and ran upstairs. A few minutes later he was back, with a large chunk of chocolate. He forced it into Malfoy's mouth. As he chewed Harry bent down and healed Malfoy's hands and face with his wand. Malfoy looked and felt immediately better.

"Thanks, Potter," he whispered before falling asleep in the chair.

Harry smiled, "It's okay, Malfoy. Any time."

~~~~~

They had missed Christmas tea, but Harry didn't care. He had sat in the common room all afternoon examining his presents, and then had fallen to watching Malfoy sleeping. It was a beautiful sight.

He woke at about 6 o'clock.

"Oh, God, I'm sorry!" cried when he found out the time. "I should go-"

"Don't even consider it, Malfoy."

"Huh?"

"You're staying."

Harry got up and pulled Malfoy back down onto a chair. He sat opposite him.

"How are you feeling?"

"I feel fine now...a bit stupid but fine."

"Good," Harry said. "Look, Malfoy I've got something to give you..."

"Oh...yeah. Me too."

Harry raised his eyebrows; Malfoy didn't strike him as the generous type.

Harry took a parcel from the deepest pocket of his robes. "Merry Christmas, Malfoy," he said.

Malfoy took it, looking suspiciously at it. "What is it?" he asked.

"Malfoy, have you ever received a gift before?"

"Of course I have!" Malfoy said, frowning. He wasn't thick.

"Well then open it and find out."

As Malfoy took the paper off Harry closed his eyes, praying he would like it.

"Fuck, Harry!" he breathed. "It's...beautiful."

Harry opened his eyes to see Malfoy hold the fine metal chain up to the firelight, where it glinted impressively. On the end was a light stone figurine, depicting a snake wrapped around a wand. Malfoy put it around his neck immediately.

"Thank you, Potter. Here," he handed Harry a parcel.

Harry took it, marvelling at its beauty and the obvious care that had gone into wrapping it. He took the paper off carefully and found a black bag inside. In this was a heavy black box, which Harry took out slowly, glancing at Malfoy.

"Go on," said Malfoy, a slight smile on his face.

Harry flicked open the clasp and looked inside. Immediately his face was lit with a warming glow coming from whatever was inside the box. It was a light liquid, which reminded him of the substances in a pensive, and was a translucent blue-black. The strange thing was it gave off an odd light.

"Oh, shit, Malfoy...what is it? It's beautiful..."

"Thanks," Malfoy blushed. "It's Carmol. Basically the substance is the most calming thing known to man-no one really knows what it is. But if you look at it, then it sorts out your head, and calms you down. And it's meant to show you things...it helps you make decisions and if you want to see something *badly* then it will show you..."

"Wow, Malfoy, this is amazing. Really- it's fantastic."

Malfoy turned even more pink, and said "Not as good as your gift-"

"It's far better than my gift, Malfoy."

Malfoy shook his head, but he still flushed more than ever. Harry closed the box gently and the light went out immediately.

The lightning outside lit up the room again.

"Are you going to tell me what all that was about?" Harry ventured.

"I... I can't. It's so stupid. It's nothing. It doesn't matter."

"It isn't nothing and it does matter, Malfoy. You can't lie to me."

"I...I can't, Potter..."

"You can. Believe in yourself, you can tell me. We're friends, remember? You have to trust me."

"I do trust you."

"So tell me."

"No."

"Malfoy! Look, is it something about Christmas...something about what you received for Christmas?"

Malfoy looked at him almost sulkily. "How did you know?" he asked.

"I guessed," said Harry. "Now spill."

Malfoy sighed. It looked as though he would have to tell...

"I got something off my Father, no doubt he thought I'd like it. Well I don't..." he told Harry about the crystal ball, the book, and both the notes. When he finished Harry was stunned.

"So...so your dad wants you to be a proper Death Eater, then?"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?"

"Yeah...yeah. God that's so sick!"

"I know. That's what I thought. I hate him!" he burst out.

After a minutes silence Harry said, "I'm going to tell you something but you have to promise me that you will keep this secret, I want you to swear *on your life*, Malfoy."

"Okay...I swear, Potter."

"Right...." Harry took a very deep breath closed his eyes and began to talk. He started with the fact that Sirius was his Godfather and that last year Harry had been there when he died in the Ministry of Magic, and how he had seen it all. Then he told Malfoy why he had been there in the first place: because of the prophecy.

When he had finished Malfoy didn't say anything.

"Promise you won't tell anyone? No one else is meant know to."

"Of course I promise, Potter but....*damn!*"

"I know. I'm only telling you because I trust you. And I think you have a right to know."

"Thank you, Potter. Jesus, I still don't believe it...that's so horrible..."

"I know. But you have to deal with it I suppose...."

"Yeah...yeah, I guess you do. What's happening about it?"

"Nothing. There's nothing anyone can do."

"What, not even Dumbledore?"

"No. It's out of our hands..."

"Fuck, that's so harsh..."

"I know. But hey, it's Christmas, let's not talk about it now..."

"Oh, yeah. 'Course."

They fell silent and Malfoy reached into his robes and pulled the chain out. He examined the snake, whose black eyes were glinting. As Harry looked at his the snake seemed to say something to him in a series of hisses that Harry understood.

Do it now.

Harry sat still for a moment. Then- "Yes," he replied.

"What?" Malfoy asked.

"Oh, nothing," he had spoken to the snake in parseltongue, but averted his eyes from the snake and switched back to English again. "I was just thinking..."

Malfoy smiled, "This is amazing you know. Thanks-"

"But-" he stood up defiantly, "-I have something else for you too."

"Oh?" Malfoy seemed wary.

Harry motioned to him to stand. Malfoy obeyed immediately.

"I've wanted to give you this for a while. This is what I want. This is what I've always wanted. I've wanted this my whole life, I just didn't know it..."

He stood in front of Malfoy, and very slowly he pulled Malfoy's waist towards him. His heart was beating faster and harder than it had ever done before. He could barely breathe. They were so close...He could feel Malfoy's warm breath on his lips. His eyes closed for a moment in ecstasy.

"*This is what I want*," he whispered, their lips brushing together.

He wrapped his arms around Malfoy's waist and brought their lips together. Harry opened his mouth and Malfoy's tongue slid in gently. They kissed slowly, and Malfoy brought his own hands up around Harry's neck, his fingers nestling in Harry's soft black hair. As their tongues met again and again they moaned softly, yet with a repressed urgency.

Malfoy tipped his head down, breaking the kiss. Harry moaned, but Malfoy put a finger over his lip.

"Shhh," he said. "Potter, are you *sure* that this is what you want?"

"Yes. I am. Please, Malfoy..."

"Thank you, Potter. Thank you so much."

They kissed again, deeply and faster than before. Every time their tongues met moans escaped from between their locked lips.

When they finally broke the kiss, their lips swollen, both boys were smiling.

"So," said Malfoy, "since when?"

Harry knew what he was asking.

"I don't know. I guess I've always known really, I just wouldn't admit it. And then.... something happened and I made up my mind."

They sat down, and Harry looked at Malfoy. It clarified what he already knew: Malfoy was gorgeous. His hair was silver-blond with darker flecks, adding maturity to him. His face was perfect, his eyes a piercing dark grey, his lips red and sexy, his pale skin was perfect with no blemishes, and his

cheekbones were so sharp you could cut yourself on them. His body was covered by his clothes, but Harry already had a picture of *that* in his head...he wasn't tall, but he was damn sexy.

"What?" asked Malfoy after a while.

"Huh?"

"Why are you looking at me like that?"

"I'm not," said Harry, immediately turning away, embarrassed.

Malfoy laughed. The sound was wonderful. "Have it your way then..." he said.

"Fine. I will do."

"You do that."

"I will,"

Malfoy smirked and leant over to Harry, putting his hand on his thigh. Harry looked up.

"You do that."

"Malf-"

He was silenced with a kiss. When Malfoy moved away he said, "What does this mean, Potter?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well...what are we?"

Harry didn't understand.

"Oh for God's sake it's not difficult, Potter. What. Are. We? Are like a...a...couple?"

"Oh...yeah...yeah, I suppose we are..." Harry looked at Malfoy and smiled. "God you're hot..."

"I know. You're not so bad yourself."

"Gee, thanks."

"Any time."

"You're hopeless."

"Am not."

"You are!"

"No I'm not!"

"You damn well are!"

"I'm not! I feel hurt Potter!"

"You-oh never mind," Harry sighed. He stood up and walked towards the stairs leading up to the dormitories.

"Hey! Where're you going?"

"I'm going to get changed, I'll be back in a minute."

He disappeared up the stairs.

"Oh, will you now?" Malfoy muttered, grinning. He left it for a few minutes, then raised his wand and muttered, "*Internus Mobilus*." There was a loud BANG! and suddenly Harry was in front of him once more.

"You bastard," Harry said calmly.

"Nope. Not bastard."

"Er...yes, I think you'll find you are."

"No I'm not."

"I'm leaving, Malfoy. I'll be gone minutes. You can survive without me that long," he headed towards the staircase again, unbuttoning his shirt as he did so. Malfoy caught his arm.

"No you're not," he said quietly.

"What?"

"I said-no you're not."

Harry blinked at him. Malfoy moved him back to the middle of the room.

"You're staying here," he said. He walked closer to Harry and slid his arms between Harry's now open shirt and his trembling body. Malfoy himself was shaking, but he hid it well. Harry moaned as Malfoy hugged him around the waist.

"On second thoughts..." Harry breathed.

Malfoy kissed his lips delicately, before moving his mouth down to Harry's neck. He licked it, and bit gently. Harry moaned with need.

"Sshh..." said Malfoy. "Are you okay with this?"

Harry gulped and tried to speak, but nothing came out. Eventually he managed to croak, "I'm more that OK, if you are. I need this."

"Good," said Malfoy, straightening up and putting his hands on Harry's shoulders. He stood close to Harry as he slid the shirt over his arms and let it drop to the floor. Harry's body was immaculate. It might look skinny through his clothes but it certainly was not. The years of Quidditch had toned it perfectly, without too many muscles, yet with just the right amount of strength.

Harry reached out and clicked his fingers. Immediately Malfoy's robes disappeared, and he was standing in front of Harry wearing only a pair of dark jeans and a black tee shirt. Malfoy lifted his arms as Harry took the shirt from him. The scene below was amazing. The skin was creamy-white, and smooth.

"My God..." Harry breathed. He leant forward and kissed Malfoy, wrapping his arms around his waist as before.

They stood like that for a while, like the perfect handsome couple, kissing gently by the light of the fire, topless. Malfoy leant his forehead against Harry's, taking in the beauty. The eyes were closed at the moment, but beneath they burned a deep, alluring green. The skin seemed untouched, and was slightly tanned. The messy hair was, as always, adding to the features throwing in a scent of mischief. Harry's lips were red and swollen, just waiting to be kissed again. His face was slender and delicate, but sexy as hell.

The eyes opened. Malfoy's heart stopped for a moment at the sight. He moved his hand down Harry's back, stroking it gently, bringing it to rest on his backside.

"Do it," Harry said in a low voice.

Malfoy gave him a wet, lingering kiss before undoing the buckle on Harry's belt. He unzipped the jeans and Harry helped him pull them over his waist. They repeated the action on Malfoy, Harry moving slowly...seductively.

They stood there in the middle of the Gryffindor common room in nothing but their underwear as they kissed, entwined in each other's embrace. Malfoy broke off the kiss. He was nervous, they both were, but he wanted to do it. He had been more turned on than he ever had been in his life. He forced Harry onto the floor, kissing him, their tongues meeting, both groaning softly all the while. Malfoy moved his tongue down Harry's neck slowly, onto his chest. He kissed the boy's chest, exploring his body with the tips of his fingers. As he licked each of Harry's nipples he heard a desperate moan from somewhere above him.

Malfoy took in every detail, every crevice, every bump, Harry's wonderful scent, and all the contours of his delicate body. He had never wanted anything so badly in his life...and it was his. One of Harry's hands was in Malfoy's hair, the other was stroking his chest gently, making Malfoy gasp with pleasure. He moved back up to eye-level with Harry.

Harry touched Malfoy's neck delicately with his fingertips before sliding them down his chest, past his stomach and finally coming to rest on his boxer shorts. He stroked, feeling a large bump similar to his own. They smiled at each other as Harry slid his hand through the waistband, into the place beyond. His hands were cold, the feel of them almost made Malfoy come on the spot. But Harry wouldn't let him. He deliberately didn't do enough. Instead he pulled first Malfoy's underwear off, and then his own.

They lay naked on the floor, stroking each other's bodies with nervous fingers, which quickly became more confident. As they kissed Harry moaned in pleasure, each time their tongues met a new wave of pleasure broke over them like the crashing sea.

Malfoy stopped the kiss to follow a trail down Harry's chest with his fingertips. As he grasped Harry's erection he heard the boy let out a yell of pleasure. Malfoy moved his hand slowly at first, but then sped up as Harry's noises became louder as the boy savoured every touch.

"Oh shit..." gasped Harry, between quick breaths, "Oh *shit*..."

Malfoy gave in at last, his other hand moving to his own arousal, moving in rhythm. The noises the two boys made became tangled, indistinguishable, and louder.

With a loud cry of sheer ecstasy Harry came at last, shouting Malfoy's name. Malfoy himself followed a few moments later.

They held each other closely, while their breathing and their hearts relaxed, kissing each other gently every now and then. The common room was still and silent, reflecting what was in their minds.

"Fuck, Malfoy," Harry said, "You are so good...where did you learn to do it like that?"

"I didn't," Malfoy said lazily, his eyes closed. "I've picked bits up over the years and I've had enough practice on myself so...it came naturally..."

"I'll say..." Harry muttered. Malfoy laughed and poked him in the ribs.

They didn't know how long they lay in each other's arms, but it was a long while whilst they listened to each other's satisfied breathing.

"I should go," Malfoy said at last, kissing Harry's cheek. "It's late."

"No," said Harry. "Stay. Please."

"You know I can't, if I don't go back now I'll get caught and then we'll be in so much shit."

"Exactly. If you don't go now you can't go at any other time. So stay."

"What?"

"Stay with me. All night."

"Are you serious? You can bear me that long?"

"I could bare you forever, Malfoy."

"No you couldn't. But, OK. I'll stay with you," he kissed Harry's lips lightly, only a quick kiss.

"No," said Harry. "Don't stop."

"I have a better idea," said Malfoy mischievously.

Harry narrowed his eyes, "What now?"

"Come with me," said Malfoy in a dark voice. He stood up, and Harry did the same. Malfoy reached out and took Harry's hand in his own, both were shaking.

"We're so crap at this..." he said.

"No we're not. We're beginners."

Malfoy laughed and pulled Harry towards the boys' staircase. He climbed slowly, Harry following. They stopped when they reached the door with a sign proclaiming "Sixth years".

"In here?" he asked.

Harry nodded mutely. As they entered Malfoy looked around. Though he tried not to show it Harry knew that Malfoy fell in love with the room. He saw him looking around. Malfoy caught sight of the only unmade bed in the room.

"This one?"

Again, Harry nodded.

Immediately Malfoy pulled Harry over to the bed and kissed him passionately. They fell onto the mess of sheets and covers, and the hangings ripped, but right now Harry didn't give a damn. He was too busy massaging Malfoy's tongue with his own.

Harry shifted their positions so that he was on top of the blond boy. As his tongue concentrated on Malfoy's mouth and neck his hand slid down between their bodies, resting between their hard cocks.

"Go on," panted Malfoy, "Make me come."

Harry obeyed. He rubbed Malfoy gently at first, and Malfoy became more and more wound up.

"Just do it, you bastard!" he yelled.

"Patience, Malfoy. You wouldn't want me to spoil it now, would you?"

Malfoy simply groaned in response as Harry started to move his hands faster. Harry could see Malfoy's body shaking-he was close. Without warning Malfoy grabbed Harry's excitement and started to work it.

"Maybe...maybe *this* will make you do it...faster," he panted.

It did. For the second time that night both boys came harder than they had ever done in their life, Malfoy first, and Harry seconds later, screaming into the night.

"You're such a bastard," said Malfoy after a while, "but I like it."

"You mean you like me. I like you too," said Harry as he poked Malfoy to make him move his arse so he could cover them up with his quilt and close the hangings.

They wrapped their arms around each other, warm in each other's touch.

Malfoy looked into Harry's eyes.

"Man," he said, "you're beautiful."

And then he kissed him.

Title: [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Not Just an Empty Emotion 14-15)

Author Name: [Purple Flame](#)

Owl the author: [here](#).

Rating: R

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

Genre: Drama, Slash

Era: The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: As the rest of the school return, Harry and Draco are having a few problems finding 'alone time'...and is Ginny in LOVE???!!!

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Author's Notes:

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### Chapter 14-Return

For the rest of the holidays Harry and Malfoy enjoyed each other's company, their words, their humour -and their kisses. It was sheer bliss for both. Now they were comfortable with each other the friendship that had developed between them blossomed. Though Malfoy could never be Harry's best friend-for he would never leave Ron, the experiences they had shared and the connection between them was too strong- he felt closer to Malfoy than anyone before him.

They did not speak of their Christmas day experience, for they did not need to. Each time they looked at the other the memories tore through their minds, sweet reminders of what had happened. They did not, however, repeat the experience.

At breakfast on the last day of the holidays the two were to be found in the Gryffindor common room by the fire, talking, teasing each other, and (though not a particularly cheerful subject) wondering where Voldemort and his followers were, and what they were up to. They skipped lunch, preferring instead to conjure up their own feasts. At around two o'clock when all of the food had been eaten, and both boys were feeling extremely full, Harry turned to Malfoy.

"You'd better go soon," he said dolefully.

"Why? What's the rush? Want rid of me do you?"

"Not at all. Anything but, as I'm sure you know..."

Malfoy smirked, and Harry grinned back.

"It's just," he continued, "the Hogwarts Express will be getting back soon, and people will be coming back...you know, Gryffindors might want to come into their common room."

"Ah, I see where you're coming from. But...if I didn't know better I'd say you were ashamed of me," teased Malfoy.

Harry's look of indignant horror and cry of, "It's for our own safet-" were enough to make Malfoy dissolve into a fit of giggles. Harry tried a frown, but couldn't manage it; the smile on Malfoy's face was too arousing to try to feign annoyance.

"Git," he said coolly.

"That's me!" sang Malfoy. "Well, if you really don't want me, I'll be off."

Harry said nothing as Malfoy moved towards the portrait hole. Then-

"Wait!" he called as Malfoy stretched out a hand to push the portrait forward. "Wait a second, I won't be long."

Malfoy frowned in confusion, but stayed where he was as Harry disappeared up the stairs back into his dormitory. He re-appeared a minute later, with something clutched in his hand.

"There, take this," he said, trying to push a small, tightly folded piece of parchment into Malfoy's hands.

"What is it?"

"It's...something. You'll find out when you get to your common room, don't read it until you get there, then destroy it."

"Why?"

"You'll see."

"Oh..." he sounded confused. "Well, by then," he said, reaching out to grip Harry's shoulder.

As they touched they each felt a ripple along their skin, and their eyes locked together, refusing to leave each other. They stared at each other for a moment before Malfoy stepped towards Harry suddenly, and embraced him in a passionate kiss. Harry responded, wrapping his arms around Malfoy's waist and opening his mouth. They stepped even closer, and Harry's hands began to move lower down Malfoy's torso.

Malfoy pulled his mouth away from Harry's reluctantly.

"No," he whispered. Harry could feel his breath. "We mustn't."

"What?" Harry whispered, pleadingly. "Why?"

"The...the train..." Malfoy gulped.

Harry sighed, "OK. OK."

Malfoy kissed his lips gently once more, before unwrapping their arms and moving towards the exit. Before he left he stopped, turned, and flashed the parchment Harry had given him to show he hadn't forgotten.

As the portrait closed, Harry sank into a chair; glad his friends were returning, but sad that his lover was gone.

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The common room was full and noisy once more. Ron and Hermione were chatting happily about their holidays, and laughing with Harry. One part of Harry wanted to do the same about his holidays, to tell of the joy he had found in Malfoy, and how their friendship had grown. But the other half knew he must keep it a secret for more than one reason. And besides, he enjoyed the secrecy.

"So," said Hermione, "what did you do over Christmas? Was it hell?"

"Yeah, was it awful? Or did you punch Malfoy as a bit of light-entertainment?" asked Ron.

Harry forced a laugh. "Oh...it was okay. Not too great, not too bad..." he lied.

"Harry, are you alright?" asked Hermione quietly. "You've been really quiet."

"Huh? Oh... um...yeah, yeah I'm fine."

"Are you sure, mate? You seem a bit.... weird."

"Thanks, Ron. So kind of you."

Ron laughed, and they left the subject alone to talk about lessons the next day.

But Harry didn't listen, because Ginny, sitting over in the corner had just caught his eye. He grinned at her, his look telling her that he had something to tell her, and she grinned back, but was unable to disguise the misgivings she had.

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Draco was sitting in a particularly uncomfortable chair in front of the fire in the Slytherin common room. He checked none of the bastards who were swelling around him like flies were paying attention to him before carefully and slowly unfolding the parchment Potter had given him.

A hastily scribbled note was presented to him, and it read:

*Malfoy,*

*I need you to meet me tonight. In the Gryffindor common room. Come at midnight and wait outside, I will come outside to open the portrait hole for you and tell you what to do. Trust me.*

*Love,*

*Harry*

He stared at the note, his heart thumping. What would Potter want to meet him about? And why so late- and in the Gryffindor common room, of all places. It would be difficult to do, risky with all the people around, but he'd do it. Anything to be with Potter again.

He looked at the signature with relish, unlike the rest of the note it was perfectly drawn, and it exuded sex.

He couldn't wait for midnight.

~~~~~

Harry's stomach was doing somersaults as his nerves grew about his meeting with Malfoy. It would be risky and he knew it, but he didn't care. Nothing would stop him from seeing Malfoy, *nothing*...and besides, the fear made it that much more exciting.

He looked at his watch. It was 11.15. His stomach gave a particularly uncomfortable lurch- Ron, Hermione, and a good deal of Gryffindors were still in the common room, and if they didn't go to bed soon his plans would be ruined.

He forced a laugh at something Ron had said, and looked over to Ginny. He caught her eye once more, and signalled to a corner of the room which was in darkness. She nodded once to say she had understood.

"Er...I'll be back soon, I'm just going...to...going...to the toilet," he told Ron and Hermione. Standing up he looked over again at Ginny, she also stood up and they walked innocently into a corner.

They checked no one was looking and then turned to each other.

"What's up?" asked Ginny.

"Well, look around you...there's still loads of people. No one's going to bed. I won't be able to get Malfoy in here if there are this many people about. I can handle one or two, but not this many! Ginny, what the hell am I going to do?"

"Calm down! Anyone would think it was the end of the world-"

"It might be, if people find out that Malfoy's...me and Malfoy...you know..."

Ginny grinned. "Well," she said carefully, "I might know...only you didn't tell me anything before. What *is* the situation with you two?"

"Shh! Not so loud! People'll hear!"

"Alright, alright, calm down. Go on, tell me."

"I can't," said Harry, blushing.

"Why?" demanded Ginny. "Are you embarrassed?"

Yes, thought Harry. "No. Don't be stupid, of course not. It's just...I have to go back to Ron and Hermione, I have to be quick."

"They'll get over it."

He sighed, "Alright, I...I might tell you if you help me. Will you?"

"Sure. And you're in luck, Mr Potter, because I have a fantastic plan..."

Harry gulped. "Go on..." he said cautiously. She leant forward and whispered something in his ear.

"Brilliant!" Harry whispered hoarsely.

"I know I am," Ginny said easily. "So we're sorted then? If there's more than a few people that's what we'll do?"

"Yeah. Great. Thanks Ginny." He turned to go.

"Er- no, no you don't. Aren't' you forgetting something?"

Harry gulped. "Uh...no, no, I don't think so..." he said, even though he knew damn well what she was talking about.

"Oh, come *on*, Harry, you're no good at lying to me. I know you too well. You have to tell me, go on."

"Fine! OK, well...on Christmas Day I found him...uh...."

"Naked?" She suggested. "With another man?"

"NO! Shut up and listen, you wanted to hear it!"

"I am very sorry. Do go on, dear," she teased.

He glared at her, "*Anyway*, I found him...a bit upset, and I brought him back here and we gave each other presents and that was it."

"What kind of presents?"

"Good ones."

"What kind?"

"It doesn't matter."

"It does."

"You just don't give up, do you?" he asked, irritably. She grinned at him.

"Nope."

"Well...we gave normal gifts...the wrapped kind...and then we...uh.... unwrapped...oh shit...." He went furiously red, "we unwrapped...and.... fuck...um...we unwrapped each other." He fell silent, screwed up his eyes, and felt his face burning red. "Bollocks," he muttered.

"Wow..." said Ginny.

He opened his eyes and looked at her. Her face was a mix of emotions. She looked stunned, amazed and worried all at once.

"What?" asked Harry.

"Well.... wow. Are you sure?"

"Yes," he said. "I know what I'm doing. You have to trust us."

"Us? So you're definitely an 'us' now are you?"

"Yes. I...I think so. Yeah."

"I suppose only you can be sure of that, Harry."

"You just have to believe it, Ginny, it's true. Aren't you happy for me?"

"Of course I am, idiot! What was it like? Is he good?"

He laughed, "Good? He's fucking amazing!"

"So, was it only on Christmas Day?"

"Yeah, but it was almost more...I think I've officially got a boyfriend...my God, that sounds so weird..."

"It probably will. I'm really glad you've sorted it out, Harry. Well, congratulations, I suppose!"

"Thanks, Ginny," he said, before giving her a warm hug.

"That's okay. So, give me the signal if you need the plan, yeah? What exactly do you want to see him for tonight?"

He raised an eyebrow. "Oh come on, Ginny. Are you seriously telling me you don't know?"

"Wha- Ohhhh! Oh! I see!" she laughed and turned pink. "Be careful, though, Harry."

~~~~~

He checked his watch for what must have been the hundredth time that night.

11.56.

Looking around him he saw four seventh years, a few fifth year girls, Ron, Hermione and Ginny. The common room was far too busy. He saw Ginny looking at him. She was eating a large purple and gold packet of chocolates. He grimaced at her, and then, reluctantly, he nodded.

Immediately she slipped something into the chocolate and turned back to her friend. Seconds later Harry saw the friend dive into the packet and put a little sphere of chocolate into her mouth. His heart began to beat faster as he waited, whilst trying to involve himself with Hermione and Ron's conversation.

11.58.

A loud squeal from the other end of the room caught his attention. Everyone turned to look. What met their eyes was a truly amazing (and slightly baffling) sight; they saw a giant hamster wheel on the wall with the same colour and pattern as the chocolate packet, and in it a giant hamster, with the same colour fur as the friend had hair. The wheel went round and round, squeaking slightly as the hamster ran faster.

A crowd had gathered by the wheel. "What is it?" asked Hermione, torn between horror and a kind of guilty amusement.

"Something Fred sent me..." replied Ginny. The crowd laughed. Harry saw her slip away, pick something up from a vacant chair, and slip towards the portrait hole.

~~~~~

Draco crept out of his dormitory and through the silent common room. He climbed stair after stair, almost struggling to remember his way to Potter's common room in the dark.

Eventually he found the corridor he needed. He ran along it noiselessly, and came to a halt outside the portrait entrance.

11.58.

He didn't have to wait long until the portrait swung open and a figure appeared.

"You! What the fuck? Why are you here?"

"Harry sent me," replied Ginny stonily. "And I can't exactly pretend I'm happy about this so let's get it over with. I know what's happened, OK, so we're going to have to at least be civil to each other-for Harry's sake."

"Fine. Fine by me. I will if you will."

"Shut up and put this on. No questions."

"Bitch..." muttered Draco.

"Be careful, Malfoy, *very* careful. When you've got it on just follow me into the room, and stand in the right hand corner nearest the portrait. Don't move. Wait until everyone's gone to bed, then Harry will come and get you, OK?"

"That's fine," he said stonily, though he could not suppress a smile at the thought of Harry coming to get him.

"Good, now come on."

He threw the thing she had given him over his body and head, and stepped into the common room before her, settled himself into the corner and looked around just in time to see her close the portrait.

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Thirty seconds later she was back and the portrait hole was closed.

12.01.

As suddenly as it had happened, the joke was reversed, and the girl reappeared, with a stunned expression on her face and her hair slightly ruffled. A packet of chocolates dropped onto the floor near her.

~~~~~

He looked around the room for Potter, he didn't see him at first-his attention was taken by a giant hamster between the two staircases. But then...the boy walked into view, and Draco sat back to enjoy the view.

~~~~~

At last the common room was quiet. All the Gryffindor's but Harry and Ginny had finally gone up to bed.

Ginny smiled at Harry. "Well, I'll leave you two alone then," she said. "I wouldn't want to keep you waiting."

Harry stuck his tongue out at her in response.

"Night, Harry," she laughed. "Good luck...." And then she added, somewhat coldly, "Night Malfoy." Harry watched her climb up the stairs to her dormitory, and heard a door slam. His heart began its familiar thumping, whenever he knew he would see Malfoy.

"You can take the cloak off now, Malfoy."

"Thank fuck," said a disgruntled voice from the corner, and seconds later Malfoy's head appeared, followed by the rest of him. His hair was messy from the cloak being on his head, and he had undone his top few buttons on his cloak. Harry blinked in amazement. "It's too damn hot in that thing...what is it?"

"Invisibility Cloak," Harry said simply.

Malfoy stood up, dropped the cloak and walked towards Harry. Harry opened his mouth to speak, but Malfoy got there first.

"Shut up," he ordered, before pulling Harry closer to him and locking their lips in a passionate embrace.

Harry sighed as their lips parted. "You don't know how much I like it when you do that..."

"Oh, I do," replied Malfoy, "because I like it just as much." He kissed Harry's lips softly. "Now, what did you want to see me about? And why so late?"

"Well, I wanted to see you because I couldn't bear not seeing you...tomorrow the rest of the school will be everywhere...we're not going to be able to get a moment to ourselves. And I wanted to see you this late because...well...look what I found."

He took Malfoy's hand in his own, squeezed it gently and led him up the boys' staircase once more.

"Uh...Harry, much as I like being in a bed with you, and much as the fear of getting caught is a big turn on, don't you think it'll be a bit too obvious if we go in your dormitory again with all the other guys in there?"

"Shhh."

They reached the door saying "sixth years", but Harry did not go in there. Instead he walked straight past it and continued on up the staircase. Malfoy frowned slightly at this, for a start he hadn't noticed this bit before, but he said nothing; he was too curious. They continued up the staircase, higher and higher, the steps getting narrower and narrower. Finally they reached a door. It was a very large door, with an intricate golden pattern on it. There was no handle, only a gold plaque with the words:

*When the slivers of silver come through the darkened windows,*

*Light me up!*

*Enter but keep my secrets safe*

"And what's that supposed to mean?" asked Malfoy sceptically, after reading it aloud.

"I'll tell you, if you'll shut up," whispered Harry. "It tells you about the room behind the door. You see those windows up there?" he pointed upwards. High in the slightly sloping ceiling above them were three narrow windows. "When the moon is full all three windows let light shine through, and that's the only way to see the door, and read the words."

"That sounds like a load of crap," said Malfoy. "How did you know the staircase was there? I didn't see it last time we came here."

"I know. I found it in my second year, but I didn't find the room until after Voldemort...after the third Triwizard task," Harry corrected himself. "I'm not sure how I found the thing though, as far as I know I'm the only one who knows about it. Like the door says, you're not allowed to talk about it away from the room. I don't know why."

"But how come no one else can see the staircase?"

"I don't know, maybe it's works on the same kind of theory as Thestrals..."

"Perhaps," said Malfoy quietly. "What's in the room?"

"I'll show you."

Harry placed his hand on the golden plaque and pushed gently. He muttered something, that Malfoy could not hear, under his breath, and suddenly the pattern was lit up with moonlight. The door creaked open and Harry stepped inside, pulling Malfoy in with him. It slammed shut behind them at once, and instantly the torches around the walls lit up, bathing the room in a dim, flickering light.

"Wow," breathed Malfoy.

"Do you like it?"

"I...it's.... wow," he repeated.

Before them was a circular room, with crimson walls and floor, and in the centre an enormous double bed. On one wall was a small fire, and a huge window took up the one opposite, with the same pattern woven onto it as on the door.

"I love this room. I looked for somewhere like this at the end of my fourth year because I needed a place to think. That's how I found this place, I think. I've come here as often as I could in the last year. Lots to think about..."

Malfoy nodded. He couldn't take his eyes off the bed. "So, um, why have you brought me here?" he asked hoarsely.

"Haven't you guessed yet?" said Harry, turning to him

"Well...I..."

"You're here because I want you to be. Because I can't stand the thought of not being able to be close to you until the Easter holidays without at least saying goodbye properly." He turned to face Malfoy, his eyes glinting in the faded light. Malfoy couldn't stop staring at him- he was so bloody gorgeous. Harry continued, "And because, of course, the fear of getting caught *is* a massive turn on."

Malfoy laughed. "Well what are we waiting for?"

Harry bent forward and kissed his neck, sucking a little. Malfoy moaned.

"Come and look at this," Harry muttered. He walked over to the enormous window, and pressed his hands against it. From here they could see almost the whole castle, the lake, the forest and most of the grounds. In the distance they could see the huge entrance gates.

"I love being here, at Hogwarts," said Harry. "I can't think of anywhere I'd rather be, to be honest."

"No," said Malfoy. "I used to hate it...it was simply a principle. But now...well, I've changed and so have a hell of a lot of my opinions."

Rain was thudding onto the window, and trickling down in large droplets, making everything beyond slightly blurred.

"Malfoy?" said Harry.

"What?" said Malfoy, turning to face Harry.

Harry said nothing, just took hold of Malfoy's waist, pulled it towards his own and pushed their lips together. They kissed slowly, savouring the moment. Malfoy's mouth opened and Harry slid his tongue in, massaging the inside of Malfoy's mouth delicately.

Malfoy moaned as he felt his heart speed up. His stomach seemed to have disappeared- it was a very nice feeling. He lifted his hand and placed it on Harry's chest as they kissed.

He felt that heart beating too.

They deepened the kiss, and kissed more frantically, more urgently, more passionately. Neither had ever felt so close to another person, physically or emotionally, as they did now.

Before they knew it they were both naked, kissing in front of the window, feeling the friction between each other's bodies as they moved slowly.

They paused for breath.

"Fuck, Malfoy. Don't ever leave me...don't you dare, you hear me?"

"Loud and clear, Potter."

They fell onto the bed, and pulled the covers over their forms. Lying side-by-side they looked into each other's eyes, being slowly seduced by the beauty before them. Malfoy touched Harry's face gently, and ran his finger down the silky skin, onto the neck and down the chest, which heaved as Harry gasped for breath.

Harry smiled slightly, and said, "I want to give you something."

Malfoy raised his eyebrows. "Oh?"

Harry slipped under the covers and turned Malfoy over gently. He smelled Malfoy's gentle scent, and felt himself stirring.

With his hand resting around Malfoy he kissed the back of his neck slowly, biting gently. Malfoy made a small noise of sheer pleasure.

Harry covered every part of his body in licks and kisses, turning him over onto his back once more. With his free hand he explored the smooth chest and body. He kissed down the middle of his neck, and pulled his tongue down the body, finally reaching his chest where he stopped, and sucked slightly. His mouth moved to Malfoy's nipple and began to lick circles around it, and over it. He moved quickly, and did not trouble to be gentle. Malfoy felt intense pleasure, and a huge need for more.

"Fuck...Potter...you're such a.... Ohhhhhhhh...my God..."

Harry stopped licking and smiled to himself. He shifted his position until he was lying on top of Malfoy, once more their erections touching. As he began to move the hand touching Malfoy, he resisted touching himself; he knew he would come before Malfoy if he did.

The fast strokes, the different pressures and the light touches made Malfoy's body quiver with pleasure. He tried to speak...to say something to Harry...but he couldn't get the words out.

Harry felt Malfoy buck his hips involuntarily and felt a strong urge to touch himself. But he mustn't.

Finally Malfoy came, Harry feeling his powerful orgasm. Screaming into the night.

As Harry rolled off Malfoy and they regained their breath Malfoy was, at last, able to say something.

"You...you are fabulous, you know that?"

"Really? Glad to please..."

"Oh you do that alright..."

Harry laughed.

Harry kissed Malfoy's forehead, and licked it delicately. Malfoy's fingers stopped suddenly.

"What?" asked Harry.

"You," he smiled.

"What?"

"Shh. Don't say anything. Just...enjoy."

Harry's eyes widened in wonder.

He felt Malfoy's hands close firmly around him, and he closed his eyes. But Malfoy did not move his hands, as Harry had done before. Instead he slid his body and head under the covers of the bed. At first Harry felt nothing, but then the fingers around him began to stroke lightly and Harry moaned loudly.

Malfoy stopped stroking and his head reappeared suddenly. "Don't stop me," he said simply. He cupped Harry's beautiful face in his hands, kissed him, and trailed his fingers back below the covers, down the body. The skin was now slightly damp with perspiration, which smelt so damn sweet. Malfoy felt his own self throb with desire.

As Harry felt the gentle stoking movement begin again he felt the only thing that could have made the moment better would be for Malfoy's face to be next to him.

He tried to repress his moans, but failed- it was impossible, the feelings were too strong. The feelings Malfoy was giving him, and the feelings he felt in his heart for the boy he was slowly growing to love.

The fingers were moving slower now, savouring what was beneath them.



Harry gasped in surprise as he felt a new sensation- something deliciously warm and wet had run up his excitement. Before he could decide what it could have been his whole erection had felt the same thing. It began to move slowly, up and down; Malfoy's mouth.

"Shit!" called Harry in amazement. The feelings he was getting were fantastic.

Malfoy was nervous, as he tried new things; he had never done this before- it was purely guesswork on his part, but from the noises coming from above him he was doing well.

Harry felt the boy run his mouth up him again, it was driving him wild. With each fresh movement came new levels of pleasure.

His breathing was heavier, and his loud groans were more frantic.

As Malfoy pulled up one more time he felt Harry quiver, his body shook and he came forcefully, yelling loudly.

Malfoy appeared again by Harry's side. Both were panting slightly.

"Thank-you, Malfoy. Thank-you so much," Harry said quietly. He kissed Malfoy, and put his hand on the boy's waist. He was avoiding Malfoy's eyes.

Malfoy seemed to know what was wrong. "It's alright," he said. "I don't expect you to return it right now. I don't want you for the physical side, anyway. I want you for you."

They wrapped their arms around each other, and soon they had soon fallen asleep in each other's arms.

The room was silent except for the slow breathing of the boys. The lights had died, and the fire was merely embers. The window was wreathed in steam, and as the rain battered outside, a large drop appeared on the inside and made a path through the vapour.

## Chapter 15- Dark Plans

The next few weeks were sheer hell for Harry and Malfoy; they met often in the corridors, but were not able to touch each other, talk, or even smile. They had to pretend as though there was nothing new between them, only the old bitter hatred. They did not dare meet, and the full moon was a whole month again, so they could not even meet in the Gryffindor common room. The boys were longing for each other, but the best they could do was fantasise as they pleased themselves; it was a poor substitute.

The only time they had got close to speaking was when their Quidditch practices had clashed. That time Ginny and Malfoy had come close to hitting each other over the argument about whose turn it was to practice (though in reality that was probably just the excuse) and Harry had had to separate them. As he had pushed Malfoy away in the chest he could not look at the boy in the face. He did, however, let his hand linger there on his body for a moment before taking to the air again.

During the third potions lesson of the term Snape, who seemed to be in a particularly grim mood, stood at the front of the class and announced that he wanted to see Hermione, Harry, Parvati Malfoy and Pansy Parkinson at the end of the lesson. Hermione and Harry looked at each other in trepidation. "Great," muttered Harry, "Just what I always wanted- to spend more time with Snape when I could be eating my dinner..."

Hermione laughed, but Snape flashed his eyes in their direction. Harry just rolled his eyes as soon as Snape had turned his back, thankful that he, unlike Moody, did not possess a magical eye. As they reached the end of the lesson, and the rest of the class gathered around the door, fighting to get away, Harry, Hermione, Malfoy, Parvati and Pansy gathered around Snape's desk. He didn't say anything for a while, just kept them in suspense while he pretended to be busy with his briefcase. At last he turned to face them.

"The careers you indicated an interest in at last year's careers interviews all require a NEWT in Potions," he said shortly. "However, they also ask for an extra exam to be taken, in which you are asked to make some of the more complex potions, and understand why specific ingredients do what. Therefore, if you still wish to partake in those careers once a week you will come down here and meet me, and we will learn potions together." Then he added, "What a jolly prospect.... now, I know it's only the Ravenclaws who have Quidditch practice on a Thursday, and as none of you are Ravenclaws I assume that would be a good day to learn. All agreed?" And without waiting for an answer, "Right. I will see you here at precisely 7.00pm on Thursday."

The five of them just stared at him with their mouths open, but at the look he gave them they closed their mouths once more in unison. "You are dismissed," spat Snape. "All except Potter and Malfoy."

"Oh, *Fuck!*" muttered Harry under his breath, and he was sure he had heard Malfoy utter something suspiciously similar.

Hermione raised her eyebrows. "Want me to wait?" she asked.

"No. No thanks. You go on to dinner," said Harry bitterly. "I'll catch up in a minute. Tell Ron for me, will you?"

"Sure," Hermione nodded and left with the other three, all complaining; strangely, the prospect of extra potions seemed to be the only thing that would let Gryffindors and Slytherins have a fairly civilised conversation together.

Once the door had swung closed behind them Snape turned to face the boys. "Right," he said quietly. "You two are the only two people in the school other than certain teachers who know my position with The Dark Lord. That position is very dangerous, and not just for me, so I intend to keep it that way, agreed?"

They nodded mutely in unison.

"Good. What I really wanted to speak to you about is The Dark Lord himself. I know you both know something went on that night.... when.... when I ...when I came back and had to go to the hospital wing," he forced the words out of his mouth in a rush, as though he were ashamed of himself for needed treatment for his injuries. "But I'm not about to tell you the details. All you two need to know is that something is going to happen again, meaning both of you, and especially you, Potter, will be in grave danger. We already know it's because of you that he summons the Death Arch into Hogwarts, and the only way we can avoid him catching you is for you to go *nowhere near* the place where that arch appears, you understand? You are to stay in Gryffindor Tower. Tonight, and all other night's, too, if possible.

"And there was something else, as well. That night...you two. Why? Why were you together? What's going on?"

"We weren't together," said Malfoy at once. "We just happened to be in the same place at the same time. It wasn't our fault."

Snape raised an eyebrow in disbelief. Nevertheless he ignored it and said, "We will have another chat soon, until then keep you noses out of everything, got it?"

They nodded once more.

"Right. See you on Thursday, 7 pm sharp."

Harry turned to go, but Malfoy said loudly, "Shouldn't Potter be coming on extra days too, Professor? After all he was taking *remedial potions* last year, *and* he didn't actually get the grades required to do NEWT level Potions...he needs more extra lessons surely, because he's so fucking crap at potions-"

"Shut up Malfoy!" yelled Harry. "What would you know? You know nothing! What the hell is wrong with you? What would you know about the extra lessons I'm doing? I was taking fucking occlumency, so don't give me that shit-"

"Excuse me," said Snape calmly, "Extremely entertaining though this little tiff between you is, I am hungry and would like very much to get into the Great Hall to find my dinner waiting for me. And Potter if you *ever* use language like that again in front of me we will be taking this to Professor McGonagall, do you understand?" Snape's voice was quiet and dangerous, and both boys knew he was not joking, though Malfoy still smirked. Harry considered complaining but knew it would only land him in even more trouble, so thought the better of it. Instead he just said, "Yes, Professor," sulkily and turned to go.

As he drew close to the door, Snape said, "And I think we'll make it...let's see...20 points from Gryffindor for your trouble, okay? I think you, Mr Potter, will be the Gryffindors' downfall this year, you see if I'm right..."

Harry just slammed the door behind him in response.

Seconds later Malfoy came out of the classroom, and Harry, waiting behind the door, caught his arm, refusing point blank to let go of him all the way down the corridor.

"What the HELL did you do that for, you bastard?!" he hissed furiously.

"Hey, hey, don't make me jump like that! No reason," replied Malfoy calmly.

"You arse! What is *wrong* with you?"

"Nothing. Potter, you really should just learn to control your temper, one day it will land you in deeper shit than twenty points lost from Gryffindor, you can be sure. Now, like Snape, I am very hungry so if you could please just let-"

"Oh no you don't," Harry interrupted. "In here *now*." He dragged Malfoy forcefully into an empty classroom and closed the door.

"Ahhh, at last!" said Malfoy.

"Don't mess me around Malfoy, and tell me why the fuck you did that. Why did you provoke me like that? I thought you liked me?"

"I do. I like you a lot. But we have to keep up the pretence, don't we?"

"No! Not like that, anyway!"

"Oh, calm down. You know I like you. And I'm telling the truth when I say I like you a lot. I don't know all the reasons why I did it, but one of the reasons was because I knew you'd do *this*."

"What are you on about, Malfoy?"

"This. Us. Alone. In a classroom. At last. I knew you'd make it happen, and if it took getting you in a temper to do it...then...so be it. And...I know it's a cliché, Harry, but you are *so fucking hot* when you're angry!" And with that he shoved Harry against a wall and began to kiss him deeply. Harry was taken aback, and at first he tried to resist, but soon gave in.

Malfoy trapped Harry's hands behind him on the wall back as they kissed, giving him total control as he rubbed their bodies together. But Harry was having none of it.

"Wanker," he panted as he swung his body around and reversed the situation; it was now Malfoy who was trapped, unable to escape, helpless.

"Oh yes," replied Malfoy. "In both our fantasies." He grinned mischievously.

"Shut up and let me kiss you."

Malfoy did as he was told, and soon they were both lost in the kiss again. Quickly they had forgotten their game of dominance and were stroking each other frantically, becoming more and more wound up as they moved.

Footsteps outside made them break off suddenly. The footsteps were sharp and curt; Harry recognised them.

"Shit!" he said. "It's Snape!"

They waited until the footsteps had rounded a corner before bursting out laughing.

"Fucking typical of him to spoil the mood," said Malfoy.

"I know...git. We should be going. We'll be missed at dinner."

Malfoy sighed. "I suppose," he said in a long-suffering voice, as though friends were the bane of his life. He kissed Harry once more before leaving the room with his robes hiding the lump on his crotch.

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Dinner was over and the Gryffindors were making their way back up the stairs to the common room. Tomorrow was Friday, and then, at last, would be the weekend. Harry, Ron, Hermione and Ginny were walking together, complaining about various teachers and the amount of homework they had been set.

"I'm just going to the loo," said Ginny, "I'll see you in a minute." She slipped off down the corridor towards the bathroom.

She emerged five minutes later and began to walk back towards Gryffindor Tower, drying her hands on her robes as she did so. As she rounded the corner she walked into something solid, which squealed as they hit each other.

"Watch where you're going!" Ginny said angrily.

"Same could be said for you! Look forward and you might get somewhere, bitch."

"Watch your mouth! Don't you dare call me-" Ginny yelled angrily as she looked up. But she stopped dead. The girl she had hit was a Ravenclaw 6th year who she hadn't paid much attention to before now. Her hair was long, straight, and dark, and fell around her shoulders. Her eyes were piercing blue, and her features were beautiful. Her mouth, Ginny could not help noticing, was full and red. She was not tall, but she was slender and elegant.

"Uhm...sorry." Ginny stuttered.

"It's OK," the girl said resentfully. She bent down to pick up the books she had dropped when they had collided. Ginny stared, mesmerised. As the girl straightened she saw Ginny looking. "What?"

"Huh? Oh, nothing. It doesn't matter. Sorry...I...bye then."

"Bye..." said the girl, her tone clearly showed she had noticed Ginny's odd behaviour. As Ginny walked up the corridor she screwed up her face in embarrassment and felt herself turn red. *Shit!* She thought, *Bollocks I am such a stupid cow!*

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Ginny flung herself into the common room, slammed the portrait hole closed and ran towards the girls' staircase.

"Ginny?" Harry called after her. She made no sign that she had heard him, however, she simply ran up the stairs as fast as she could. "What on *earth?*"

"Oh leave her, she's a moody cow. It's probably another one of her boyfriends getting bored again..." said Ron.

"*Ron!*" said Hermione sharply. "Don't be so horrible! I'm going to see what's up with her." And she stalked off up the stairs after Ginny.

Ron shook his head in disbelief and turned back to Harry. "Go on then. Open it."

Harry turned his attention back to the brown owl sitting patiently on the arm of his chair and removed the letter attached to its leg. Ron bent his head over to read it as well.

*Dear Harry,*

*How are you? Hope you had a good Christmas and didn't get too wound up with Malfoy [here, Harry had to fight back a laugh]. I just wanted to say that I hope to be seeing you soon, I don't know how soon, though.*

*In the meantime, stay aware of what's around you and be careful.*

*Snape told us that you and Malfoy found him after his mission for the Order. Well done, but I still don't want you wandering around school at night Harry, and with Malfoy!! Never mind, just be more careful in future, and especially now we know about the Death Arch.*

*Snape doesn't want to say anything to you about the mission tonight, but I think you have a right to know, especially after last time- there's going to be a raid on a Muggle village in the South, it's the first one since Voldemort returned. This will be the confirmation to the wizarding world that he truly is back it's their wake-up call, Harry. Snape has a dangerous mission- he has to present himself at the scene, but still be discreet in not killing anyone. He's expected to take part in baiting the Muggles, then torture and then kill them. He also has to prevent more death at the hands of other Death Eaters. Needless to say he could get found out tonight, but we just have to hope otherwise. The raid will be big news, because it will follow almost exactly the same pattern as those 16 years ago. It will be all over the Daily Prophet tomorrow.*

*It's dangerous and it's horrible, but it's still nothing to do with you, Ron, or Hermione (or Malfoy), so I don't want you getting involved.*

*I hope to be able to speak to you in the fire soon ,until then look after yourselves.*

*Remus.*

"Shit..." said Harry. "It's actually beginning. Just like it was all that time ago...Cedric and...and Sirius won't be his last victims, there will be *hundreds more*. And we know about it... Ron, we can't just sit here and do nothing while we know this is going on. We can't let it happen! We're the only one's who can do something because we're the only ones who have any idea about what it going to happen tonight! We have to do something."

Ron looked sorely tempted, but said, "Harry, we can't. It's too dangerous. You don't know how many Death Eaters will be there. And what the hell do you think we'll be able to do? Remus is right, there's nothing we can do. If there was anything to be done, the Order would be doing it, but there's nothing. Nothing at all."

"We can't just go to bed like nothing's happening tonight!"

"I know Harry! But we've got no choice! I'm sorry mate..."

Harry sighed. "It's alright," he said. "I know what you mean. I'm sorry..."

Hermione reappeared from the staircase. They turned to her. "Well?" they said.

"Nothing," she said. "She won't tell me anything. Only that she's 'a daft cow', and she won't listen to me when I tell her otherwise."

Harry nodded, but distinctly heard Ron mutter, "She *is* a daft cow..."

A noise in front of him caught his attention. He looked up. Ginny was standing before him, looking severely pissed off with Ron, but upset at the same time. "C-can I talk to you, Harry?" she asked.

"Yeah, 'course!" Harry replied standing up. Ginny sniffed, and scrubbed her eyes with her fist. He walked around the table and wrapped his arms around her. "C'mon, Ginny. Come up to the dorm."

Ron was staring at them amazed. "Harry? Are you and G-"

"Don't even think of it," Harry interrupted forcefully, as they walked up the stairs.

\*

They sat on Harry's bed and he drew the hangings around them. "So, what's up?"

"I'm so fucking stupid that's what's up," she replied miserably.

"No you're not. You're gorgeous and intelligent and amazing. Why do you think you're stupid?"

"Because I just saw.... shit...I just made a total arse of myself."

"Who says so?"

"I do. And when.... when she looked at me she did too."

"Uh.... no, sorry Ginny, you've lost me now."

Ginny told him about how she had walked into the Ravenclaw girl, and then screamed at her, before she had noticed who exactly it was she had walked into.

"-And she was bloody gorgeous Harry, and I made such an arse of myself, and I could tell she was thinking the same thing!" she finished, somewhat hysterically.

"Ohh, Ginny, not necessarily! How do you know she isn't in her dorm right now thinking exactly the same thing?"

"Because she didn't make an arse of herself and she didn't fancy me like I fancied her!"

Harry didn't say anything.

"You never know," he said. Ginny just sniffed. "Look, Ginny, there's nothing I can say that will make you feel better, you know that? The only way you can feel better about it is by talking to her."

"I can't."

"Yes you can. Look at Malfoy and I. The amount of times we've made arses of ourselves in front of each other! And we thought the other one could never possibly be feel the same...and now look at us! We'd be at it like Kneazles if we could be! We've come over the guilt, and the feelings of shame just because we're gay. Miracles do happen sometimes, Ginny."

"No. I can't. But...thanks anyway, Harry," she hugged him again. "I love you, you know."

"Yeah, me too," he said hugging her back. "And cheer up, yeah?"

She smiled grimly at him as she flung the hangings back and stood up.

And there, standing framed in the doorway with a look of utmost disgust on his face, was Ron.



**Title:** [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 16)

**Author Name:** [Purple Flame](#)

**Owl the author:** [here](#).

**Rating:** R

**Spoilers:** PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

**Genre:** Drama, Slash

**Era:** The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

**Main Character(s):** D, G, H, Hr

**Ship(s):** D/H, Hr/R

**Summary:** Oh dear....Ron seems to have heard more than he should have of Harry and Ginny's conversation. Will he take it well, or in typical Ron Weasley style?

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**Author's Notes:**

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Chapter 16- The Second Rising

"What-the-fuck-have-I-just-heard?" Ron stuttered. "Tell me it's not true. *Tell me* I heard it wrong."

"Ron...look, mate-"

"*Don't you call me 'mate'!*" he yelled. "Don't you dare! Explain to me what you have just said to each other!"

"Ron, look-" Ginny started.

"Shut up," he spat. He pointed at Harry with a shaking finger. "You. You explain."

"I...we..."

Ginny caught Harry's arm. "Look, what can we do? We're going to have to tell him. He's heard enough to guess. He'll find out eventually anyway."

"No!" said Harry, pleadingly. "No, not like this, *please*, Ginny."

She just shook her head at him. Harry sighed. "OK," he said resignedly. "OK. Ron, come inside and tell us what you think you heard and we'll tell you if you're right."

Ron looked as though he'd rather do anything but step into the room, but seemed to force himself to do it.

"I heard that Ginny *fancies* a *girl*. Is that right? Do you?" he asked her.

"Yes," she said. Her voice was shaking but she held his gaze. "Yes, I do. Ron don't be angry. I can't help what I feel."

"So you're gay?"

"Bisexual," she said. "I've known for a while. You can't be angry, Ron. Are you going to cast me out just because I fancy a girl?"

"Why not? Why shouldn't I?" he asked viciously. "Don't you think our family-don't you think *I* have been through enough? And now you...you're telling me you're Bi-fucking-sexual?"

"Ron, don't say that. What does it matter if I fall in love with a woman or a man? It doesn't change who I am, and it won't affect my relationships with anyone else- unless you decide you want it to. Do you want it to?"

"No. But I don't want a sister who has a girlfriend- people already give us shit because of who we are, this will make it so much worse!"

"OH WELL I'M SO SORRY, RON, TO BE AN INCONVENIENCE TO YOU! I'LL JUST CHANGE MY SEXUALITY THEN, SHALL I?" Ginny stood up and screamed at him, turning a deep shade of red. "I'LL JUST LIE TO MYSELF ABOUT MY FEELINGS, AND ONLY DATE BOYS EVEN IF I FALL IN LOVE WITH A GIRL? CHRIST, RON, YOU'D THINK YOU WOULD WANT TO KEEP YOUR FAMILY TOGETHER AFTER PERCY BUT OBVIOUSLY NOT!"

Ron blinked at her with his mouth hanging open. "Don't...don't be so *ridiculous*!" he stuttered.

Harry pulled Ginny back onto the bed next to him and stared at Ron.

"She's not being ridiculous. I'm sorry but it's you who is. Ron, you have to accept it. It doesn't change who she is, she's still Ginny, and you've still got to protect her because she's still your little sister. And you love her."

Ron said nothing.

"Don't you?" Harry pressed.

Reluctantly, Ron said, "Yes." And fell silent. He still looked furious, but the anger that had first presented itself to them did not seem present in his eyes any longer.

Was it possible that Ron had not realised what he'd heard about Harry being gay too? Was it possible that Harry was allowed a bit longer to decide how to break the news to his best friend in the way that he chose?

No.

"I don't know what you're grinning at, Potter," Ron spat. Harry was taken aback; Ron had never called him 'Potter' before.

"I-"

"Don't even try to make up an excuse. Ginny is one thing- I can accept that. Just about. What the hell were you talking about? YOU? You can't be gay- you'd have told me, I'm your best friend, surely you.... you can't be. It's not possible. *Harry Potter* can't be *gay*," his voice was raised, and his tone harsh.

"Ron..."

Ron shook his head. "Don't. It's *pathetic*. *You're* pathetic. Anything for attention, eh?"

"What?" shouted Harry. "How fucking dare you? You bastard! You don't even know what you heard Ron, what did you hear, eh? How much?" his anger was total, and he felt a rush of dislike towards Ron. But it could not disguise his fear that Ron had heard the part about Malfoy, too.

"I heard...." Ron was breathing hard as he recounted what he had heard, trying to remember everything, "you said...something like, 'we've made asses of ourselves ... we thought the other one could never feel the same...and we'd be at it like Kneazles if we could be! We're over the guilt, and the feelings of shame that we're gay.' That's what I heard isn't it? I heard right? Please tell me I didn't..." For the first time there was a note of plea in his voice.

Harry thought, for a fleeting second, about lying to him, but he wasn't a liar. He had tried lying to himself and he couldn't do that, so he wasn't about to start lying to Ron. He took a deep breath, and braced himself. He noticed also, how he had started to shake slightly with nerves.

"Yes. Yes you heard right." He deliberately avoided Ron's eyes. He didn't want to have to face him.

Ron was silent for a second, then, "How?"

"What do you mean 'how'?" asked Harry angrily. "By being attracted to M- to another guy, that's how."

He had almost slipped and said "Malfoy". He didn't think either Ron or himself could stand Ron knowing that just yet.

Ron stared at him with fury etched all over his face, mingling with a sickened look. "Since when?" he sounded as though he didn't want to know at all, as though it sickened him to think about it, but he seemed to be forcing himself to understand it.

Harry shrugged. "I guess...well, it happened just after we got back from summer, really, that's when it all started. And I realised that what I was feeling was more than just..." he gulped; a large lump seemed to be developing in his throat, "than just *friendship*."

"So, have you got a *boyfriend* then?"

Harry didn't say anything.

Ron frowned at him. "Yes or no, Potter. Just tell me."

"I don't have to tell you anything. It's my business."

Ron shook his head, and said, "No. That isn't good enough."

Harry didn't want to say. He hadn't expected Ron to take the news well whenever he found out, but this situation was probably the worst it could have been. In any case, it would have probably been better if both Ron and Hermione had found out at the same time- she was usually able to exercise some amount of control over Ron, even when she wasn't happy herself.

"Tell me." Ron's voice was quiet and dangerous.

"Yes. Yes I do. There, happy now?"

"Not really, no! Who the hell is it?"

"It's...I...I can't tell you. It's someone you won't approve of. You will find out in time though, Ron, I promise. Just...not yet. Let me get used to it."

"Whatever. So, it's final then?"

"Yes. I'm not going to change though Ron, no matter what you say. No, shut up; listen to me- I am not going to change. I am what I am and no one else can affect that. It's just my bad shit that I have to be so-called famous on top of it all. I-am-gay, Ron. OK? But it doesn't change the person I was 20 minutes ago, you seemed to like me then so why not now?"

Ron didn't have an answer to this; he opened his mouth and then shut it again.

"Ron?" asked Ginny tentatively.

He ignored her, and turned instead to Harry. "Why can't you tell me who it is?"

"For a start off it's none of your business. What I do and who I like is for me and me alone. Not you. And also because you'll hate me and you'll hate him. You're not ready and I'm not ready and he's not ready. And...well, it could be dangerous if I tell you. I know that sounds like bull right now but it's true, because of who he is. But I know that he is genuine, no one else will believe it. But he is a good person really, if a bit...well, you know what I mean. No one else will believe it. Not even Ginny."

Ron turned to his sister sharply. "You know who it is?" he demanded.

"She won't tell you. But she doesn't like it- she hates him. Thinks I'm mad. And I probably am."

"This is ridiculous. Stay there," Ron said. With that he stood up, walked to the door and turned to go down the stairs. Harry glanced at Ginny once before leaping up and following Ron's trail as quickly as he could. All the while curses and horrible thoughts going through his head.

He caught sight of Ron just as he reached the end of the staircase. Ron was leaning into the common room, looking around.

"Ron-" Harry began, but Ron did not seem to hear him.

"Oy! Hermione! Come here-*now*," he called. Harry could just see Hermione's frown as she stood up and walked towards the boys' staircase. Ron turned to go back up and pushed roughly past Harry.

"Ron, what do you think you're doing? I'm not some slave at your beck-and-call-you know!" she called after him. There was no reply so she turned to Harry and said quietly, "*What* is wrong with him?"

Harry shook his head at her in reply as they entered the dormitory.

Ron was slumped in a chair glaring at his sister and Harry. Ginny was still sitting on the bed, tears rolling silently down her cheeks.

Hermione took one look around the room, and seemed to catch the general mood straight away. "Oh, Ginny, come here, Hun," she said gently. Ginny slid off the bed and Hermione held her in her arms. Harry could hear a faint sniffing coming from near Hermione's shoulder. "What's all this about, Ron?" she asked, a trace of anger in her tone.

"I think it's *him* you should be asking," he replied violently. Hermione turned her head to face Harry politely.

"It's nothing-"

"Just tell her, she deserves to know the truth about you."

"There's nothing to know! For God's sake it's not like I'm a murderer or a-"

"JUST TELL HER!"

"ALL RIGHT!" he bellowed furiously. "HERMIONE, I'M GAY, OK? SATISFIED, RON? ARE YOU OK WITH THAT HERMIONE OR ARE YOU GOING TO CAST ME OUT, TOO?"

Hermione barely flinched. She just looked calmly at Harry, while Ginny let go of her and slumped down against the wall. Everyone in the room was looking at her.

"Oh," she said quietly. "Why does that make a difference? Gay or not it's your choice; the only relationships it affects are your sexual ones. You're the same as you were yesterday. It's no different to you getting a girlfriend. So, since when? Who is it?"

"Since last year and I can't tell you," murmured Harry. Enormous relief had swept across him; he could barely believe that Hermione had taken the news so well. It could not have been more obvious that Ron felt the same; though he did not say anything, was looking daggers at her.

"That's fine," she said, accepting his unwillingness to tell unquestioningly. "Of course it's a shock, I mean, I always assumed you were straight...well, you really liked Cho last year so...but I've noticed you've been a bit weird this year."

Harry smiled grimly. "Cho Chang is as bad as ...as...well, lets just say she isn't in my good books right now."

Hermione smiled. "I'm glad for you. Obviously it'll be hard, it's hard enough coming to terms with it anyway, but with your.... uhm...the way people know you so much...it'll be difficult...who else knows?"

"Just me, him and Ginny. And I wanted to keep it that way, too..." Here he glanced at Ron. Hermione looked around too.

"Ah," she said in a low voice, "I see. Could you and Ginny give us a minute, please?"

Harry was taken aback for a moment but said, "OK...sure," and led the way out of the dormitory, closing the door behind Ginny and himself.

Once outside he leaned against the wall, with Ginny next to him. "Are you OK?" he asked her.

"Yeah. I will be. I just can't believe he's being such an arse! Actually I can't believe he's found out.... oh God this is such a mess."

Harry nodded in agreement. "What do you think they're doing? Do you think he'll come round?"

"I hope so. Hermione usually talks some sense into him. I was surprised how well she took it- I knew she wouldn't react like him, but I expected her to be a bit more...disbelieving."

"Me too. She doesn't know about you yet, though does she?"

"No. I think she may have an idea though...I'm probably less subtle than you and no doubt Ron will tell her now."

Harry laughed bitterly, and they fell silent.

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They did not have to wait long for Hermione to open the door once again and allow them access. As Harry passed she deliberately avoided his eye and closed the door hastily.

Ron was still sitting on the chair, arms folded, and looking sulky. Eventually he began to speak. "What you are doing is disgusting, you know that? It makes me *sick*. You know what makes is so much worse? Apart from the fact that you're meant to be my best friend, and I thought we told each other *everything*, you have slept in my *room*! I sleep in the same dormitory as you every single night! How do you think that makes me feel, eh? Shall I tell you? I makes me want to either throw up or kill you, I can't decide which-"

"Ron!" said Hermione in a weak voice. "Ron stop it-"

"Why? Why the hell should I? Don't tell me you're OK with this, Hermione!"

"It's not up to us to decide what Harry can and can't do! I don't see the problem with it at all. I- no, shut up, Ron- I'm not talking sides in this, all I'm saying is I'm not going to fall out with Harry over who he kisses!"

"It's OK for you! You're safe! You're not what he wants Hermione! You aren't the one who has to sleep in the next bed to him every single night-"

"Well what do you want me to do about that, then?" said Harry, angrily. "If you think I'm going to go after you, fantasise about you, stare at you, then forget it! I'm not. Just because I like *some* boys, doesn't mean I like *all* boys. It's not like you fancy every single girl in existence, is it? And besides, after tonight if I'm going to fancy anyone then it certainly won't be you!"

"Well *good*! You know what, Potter? Stuff you! I'm not sleeping in the same room as you!"

"Ron!" Hermione was almost shouting. "Ron, that's ridiculous! What do you think he's going to do, come on to you in the middle of the night? Or do you think you'll turn gay if you're near him?"

"Don't be ridiculous," he spat.

"I'm not being ridiculous, Ron, *you are*."

"This is unbelievable! Are you not even slightly upset by this?"

"Of course I'm not saying 'wow, great, how fantastic, Harry's with a guy!', no! But I'm not being completely homophobic about it either, like you are!"

"I'm not a homophobe-"

"Really?" Harry interrupted. "Not what it looks like to me."

Ron faltered here; he couldn't think of anything else to say.

"Are you going to be this horrible to Ginny, too?"

"Of course not."

"Well then stop behaving like a complete arsehole towards me then."

Ron had had enough. He stood up and strode towards the door. When he reached it he turned around and stared Harry in the eye. "Be careful, Potter. *Very* careful. There's nothing to stop me telling this whole school about how the famous Harry Potter is a *queer*. And wouldn't we all just love to see the looks on their faces? Oh, and..." his face lit up suddenly, maliciously, "I wonder what Malfoy would make of all this, eh? I'm not joking, Potter. Got it?"

He walked out of the room, and slammed the door behind him.

Hermione's hand was covering her mouth, and Ginny was sobbing into her shoulder again.

"I'm sorry Harry," said Hermione. "I'm so, so sorry. I tried but he just wouldn't listen-"

"It's OK. It's not your fault. Do you think he will tell anyone?"

"I'm really not sure...I doubt he will right now, he can use it as a...a weapon against you or something...but you'll have to be careful not to upset him."

"I think I've already done that."

Ginny stood up straight and dried her face with her robes. "He'll be OK, Harry. But right now I am so ashamed to call him my brother." She glared at the door for a moment. "I'll see you tomorrow, OK?" She gave Hermione one last hug, and smiled sadly at Harry before leaving.

"This is horrible," Hermione said gently.

"I know. I wish I could have told him when I was ready...shit WHY does he have to do this? Why?" he burst out suddenly.

"I have no idea. Are you going to be OK?"

"Yeah...I'll have to be won't I?"

"Can you talk to your.... your boyfriend?"

"I'm not sure...I might be able to. Thank God Ron didn't hear the bit where I was talking about the guy..." Harry had only just realised how easy it would have been for Ron to have heard that...if he had come to the door a second earlier he would have heard the word 'Malfoy'...

"Thank you, Hermione. I can't believe you're just accepting this so well."

"I've got no choice, have I? And besides, I don't have a problem with it. I'm not jumping for joy, but at the same time it really makes no difference to who you are."

Harry nodded. "Thank you so much," his voice cracked with emotion.

"Oh, come here," Hermione held out her arms and held him, as she had held Ginny. "He'll come round..."

But her face told a different story.

Despite the arguments, Ron seemed to have persuaded himself to sleep in the dormitory as usual, though he completely ignored Harry. Seamus and Dean seemed to have noticed the tense atmosphere, but didn't say anything. Harry found himself wondering how long it would be before they, and the rest of his friends and enemies, found out the truth.

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Harry couldn't sleep. He was not tired in the slightest, and nothing he did could change that. He had been tossing and turning for what seemed like hours, and he knew it must be well past midnight.

Finally he grew bored of lying there doing nothing in bed and stood up, put on his cloak, and grabbed his invisibility cloak, and padded silently downstairs into the common room, which was deserted. He knew he shouldn't be doing what he was, but he couldn't help himself. He remembered the various warnings he had been given that day, and with a pang of guilt decided to ignore them.

He was running down staircase after staircase, moving almost subconsciously.

He stopped, suddenly. He realised that he must be near the staircase where the Death Arch had appeared. His heart began to beat faster. For a moment he was tempted, he wanted to see if it was there, to discover where it went, he considered moving to where he knew it must be.

*No*, he told himself firmly, *that's ridiculous and you know it. Don't think like that.*

Immediately he felt stupid, cursing his ridiculous thoughts, and began to follow a different, and safer, path.

He knew what he was going to do, though he hadn't planned it consciously. He was soon at the top of the marble staircase, and moved swiftly down the stairs and across the entrance hall to the large doors.

A grand marble statue stood right beside the door. Harry looked around to check the coast was clear and then darted behind the statue, ready to wait.

He peered around the leg of the statue, so giving himself a clear view of the whole Entrance Hall.

It was a few minutes before he noticed anything out of place. In fact, it was not until Malfoy spoke that he even realised he was not alone.

"Harry Potter: King of Subtlety," he said simply.

Harry started, and his head hit the marble robes of the statue's form, making him double up again in pain.

Malfoy didn't move, or say anything, just watched Harry with a slight smile playing about his lips.

"What are you doing here?" Harry asked, his voice, though surprised, showed clearly how pissed off he was about what had just happened.

Malfoy leant in closer. "And Good Evening to you, too, my dearest Potter."

Harry glared at him, "Thanks for that, Malfoy. So glad to see you haven't changed so much as to not be a pain in the arse as often as possible."

Malfoy simply smirked. "You know you love me," he said after a while.



"Yeah...that's the trouble..."muttered Harry. "Ron and Hermione know. I mean...they know about me, they don't know about you. That'd be too dangerous right now. It was hell, and before you start no I didn't do it voluntarily. It was an accident...Ron overheard me and Ginny talking..."

Malfoy had looked shocked, but composed himself immediately. "So, they know? Were they OK about it?"

"No. Well, Hermione was absolutely fine but Ron...well...he's threatened to tell everyone. He's not talking to me, being a complete arse."

Malfoy surveyed Harry for a moment, with an expression that, on any other face, would have been taken for pity. On Malfoy it was hard to work out. "It'll be OK. He won't tell...you've had arguments before, and anyway Granger will keep him on a tight lead...and hey, look at the positives!"

"There are positives?"

"Yeah. All that wasted time you spent with Weasel before...he's not talking to you so you can spend it with me now, can't you?"

Harry said nothing.

"Bit thick though wasn't it? Still, typical Potter, I must say..."

"SHUT UP-" Harry began, but Malfoy stopped him.

"Shh! Shut up! This is what I mean-you're going to get us caught!" Then he pulled Harry up so he was standing straight and they were staring into each other's eyes. He gave him a soft kiss before releasing him, and looking at him once more.

"Well, I'm assuming you're OK, since you're here and you have all your limbs, I am OK too, in case you were wondering. I won't bother asking what you're doing here because I think I'm right in assuming that you're here to see if you can follow Snape, just like me, yes?"

Harry stared at him amazed for a second or two. Then realising he must look stupid he nodded.

"Good. Well I've been waiting for half an hour and he's not here yet, so you can wait with me. Sadly I don't have any food or we could have had a nice little picnic..."

Harry looked at him with his eyebrow raised. "You are seriously weird, you know that?"

"It's been said," said Malfoy, his eyes flashing. He moved back to the wall and sunk down onto the floor, with his knees raised. His voice slightly muffled as he said, "You keep a look out for a bit-I'm bored."

Harry opened his mouth to protest, but knew it would be no good; instead he resumed his quiet surveillance of the Entrance Hall.

After fifteen minutes a cloaked figure swept out into the Hall from a side-chamber, and crept across the floor. Harry kicked Malfoy, who got to his feet reluctantly and looked at the figure. It opened one of the front doors the tiniest amount and left, leaving it to swing closed itself.

"Yep," said Malfoy, "that's him. Let's go."

They reached the door just in time, Malfoy sliding his fingers between it, and managing to force it back open enough to give them passage.

The cold air whipped their hair and their robes flew out behind them. They tried to keep to the shadows, but it was not always possible. They needed to reach Snape quickly, he was already far ahead of them and they needed to be close to him.

"Should we put the cloak on? The Invisibility cloak?"

"You can if you want, two of us under it would be too slow," panted Malfoy.

Harry did not put on the cloak, but kept it tucked under his arm as he and Malfoy followed Snape's silhouette, dodging in and out of cover.

They reached the front gates and saw Snape slip through them, barely opening them, and disappear into the darkness beyond. Malfoy darted forwards and folded his body through them, beckoning Harry to follow.

Once through Harry leant against the stone pillar of the gates, trying to catch his breath silently. Malfoy was scouring the landscape with his eyes, trying to find some sign of Snape.

"There's nothing there...I can't see him at all!" he whispered, panic evident in his voice.

Harry looked around for some sign of his teacher. "Look!" he said suddenly, pointing. "Look on the ground, over there."

Malfoy did as he was told. The mud around them now they were outside of the castle grounds was dense, and there, close to the wall, was what looked like a fresh footprint.

"It can't be him," he said at once. "Snape's too careful. He'd disguise them, wipe them out..."

"He has done," muttered Harry, bending down to examine the ground. "Come here, feel the air. It's warm, see? That means he has cast a spell recently-"

"Yes, thanks Potter, I know what warm air means," spat Malfoy.

"-he must have just missed this one..." he looked at Malfoy in the dark. "He must be in a hurry."

Malfoy frowned at him slightly in the dark. "Well come on then. We're going to have to follow him. We'll have to follow the warm air...damn, this is going to be hard..."

He pulled Harry upright and dragged him forwards quickly. They followed the trail at a slight run, panicking in case the wind got up and started to blow the warm air away. It seemed to follow very close to the high wall that ran along the east side of the castle, and they were glad of this, because at least here they weren't too exposed. They did seem to be gaining slightly on Snape, though, because after a few minutes their trail was noticeably warmer.

"I think we're close to him now," muttered Malfoy, as they drew close to a slight bend in their path. "I can feel-"

He stopped suddenly and Harry walked into the back of him, nearly knocking them both over. "What is it?" he hissed angrily.

"Shh! He's there. I can see him!"

Harry stuck his head over Malfoy's shoulder and looked to where he was indicating. Snape was standing on an elevated stone base protruding from the wall.

"What is it?"

"Shh! C'mon, quick!" Malfoy grabbed Harry's arm and pushed him against the wall silently, and then noiselessly manoeuvred them both towards the stone base, where Snape's eerie black figure was stood.

Harry resisted, he did not know what Malfoy was planning, but if they were caught...

As they reached the base Snape lowered his head and held his wand vertically in front of him. He began to speak words Harry could not hear.

Suddenly a low note began to sound, growing rapidly higher-pitched and louder at the same time.

"Come on!" yelled Malfoy, abandoning all attempts at subtlety. "He won't hear us until we're on there, COME ON!"

As Harry's ears began to hurt from the sound he felt Malfoy tugging at his arm, and he collapsed onto the base just in time as Malfoy heaved himself up after him. No sooner had they drawn their legs onto the base than a deep, bottle green strand of light had shot into the air from the edge of the base. It was followed by another, and then another.... soon they seemed to be encased in these strands of light surrounding the base. As the note reached a point where it seemed it would be impossible to get any higher or louder Harry felt his body growing weak. Suddenly a thinner strand than the rest had shot from the very middle of the front edge of the base. It seemed to draw all of the others into it within a split second, and the three of them were now within a pointed dome.

As the last light fell into place Harry felt his whole body cripple in agony; he felt as though he were on fire. He was screaming loudly, but he was sure neither Snape or Malfoy could hear him; they both seemed to be feeling pain too, though Snape bore it well. And then the world around him began to fade, and all Harry knew was the eerily silent world that had been created inside the strange stone base and it's light...

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The silence was as pronounced as ever, and the blur of the outside world had not changed; yet an odd stillness seemed to have entered the light-made cage. Harry had stopped writhing in agony, though the pain in his chest was still blinding, he clutched onto it, grasping, trying to pull the pain away from him.

Suddenly the blur outside seemed to grow clearer, it was as though he had put his glasses on and everything had come into focus. Before he could take in the details of what was outside Snape began to stir. He looked up and stepped forward. Still Harry could not hear, and it was obvious Snape had not noticed that two boys were in this structure also, but nevertheless Harry scrambled as close to the other edge as possible and pressed himself against it. He swallowed a cry of pain down, panting.

The green lights grew stronger for a split second, and then, suddenly, all at once, they retracted back into the base with a ring like that of a sword being unsheathed.

Sound had returned, and they were free to go.

Snape stepped away from the base, and jumped lightly to the ground to make his way down a dark path. He was still hunched over from the pain that remained in his chest.

Harry jumped as he felt a hand on his shoulder. He had almost forgotten that Malfoy was there.

"You OK?" Malfoy asked.

"I'm not too sure...what is this?"

"I don't know...something dark."

Harry winced as the pain surged through him again.

"Hurts, doesn't it?" asked Malfoy. "At least it's going... even if it takes its time...it'll be worse the longer we stay here, though, come on."

Reluctantly Harry stood up, helped by Malfoy. Supporting each other they jumped down, as Snape had done, onto the floor below. They looked around. They seemed to be in a dark, narrow alleyway, with high walls on either side. At the end of the alleyway they could see a light, it looked like the dim glow of a streetlamp.

"Where are we?" Harry asked quietly.

"No idea...way outside Hogwarts...looks like a Muggle village..."

"Yes," said Harry suddenly, remembering the details of Remus' letter, "it is. This is what Snape was talking about-the raid on a Muggle village-this must be the place! They want to kill...and...torture...the Muggles. Snape's got to try and stop it, without...arousing suspicion...or something..."

"No..." muttered Malfoy, sickened. "How do you know?"

"I was informed," Harry said shortly.

"But, why? Surely the safest thing would have been to not tell you? Didn't they know you'd just come looking?"

"I don't know...the person who told me said he thinks I have a right to know. And I suppose Snape told us because we were wandering around that night-we might have done it again. They couldn't risk it..."

"Come on then...walk."

They kept to the shadows walking slowly so as not to make any noise. Malfoy shivered.

"This is stupid," Harry said irritably. "Let's put the cloak on. It'll keep us warm AND they won't be able to see us."

Reluctantly Malfoy did as he was told and allowed Harry to throw the cloak over them both. It was an interesting moment; they hadn't been this close either physically or emotionally for what seemed like an age...

They reached the end of the alley, and a terrible scene met their eyes, shocking them into silence. They jumped into the shadows; somehow the cloak didn't seem trustworthy enough right now. At least sixty Death Eaters were grouped around Voldemort and a man who must have been a Muggle, while who knows how many more were prowling around the warren of lanes, their cloaks whipping in the wind. They could not see Snape.

They held their breath, watching silently.

"So," said Voldemort maliciously, not troubling to keep his voice down, "who are you Muggle?"

"M-M-Mike Freany," the Muggle stuttered. He did not sound older than 30.

"Well, *Mike Freany* would you like to tell me why you were wandering around this late at night? Why you felt it necessary to pry in my Death Eaters' business, why you asked us what we were doing here?"

"I-I didn't know. I'm sorry, I just- please, just can't I go home I'm-"

"Home? No, no, no I'm afraid not, Mr Freany. You see you could be a danger to us. You could open your mouth. And besides-someone needs to be the first!"

The Death Eaters around laughed heartlessly.

They heard Freany cry out in terror. "The first what?"

"Why should I tell you, when I can show you?" Voldemort said, his voice full of malicious joy. "My first victim...after almost 16 years...my first *real* victim...*Crucio!*"

Freany screamed in agony and they heard him fall to the floor. It went on relentlessly and all the while the Death Eaters were laughing insanely.

"I fell sick. I'm not watching this..." Malfoy said.

"Well, why are we here?"

"I- don't know...I thought...well, maybe..."

"I don't think there's anything we can do. We aren't heroes, we're not Aurors, we can't intervene, there's *nothing we can do*."

The realisation hit Harry hard. Why had he ever thought that him coming here would be any use to anyone? He had been stupid, as usual.

"No, there's a reason we're here...there's got to be," said Malfoy uncertainly.

Harry looked at him but didn't say anything.

"This is horrible, come on let's go. We're doing no good by just standing here..." Malfoy grabbed Harry's arm and pulled him into a fast walk. They moved quietly, but still Harry's heart thumped; any second now he expected Voldemort to turn around and send a curse their way...

As they passed the circle of Death Eaters that enclosed Voldemort and Freany Harry stopped suddenly, feeling dizzy. He staggered sideways into Malfoy, nearly knocking him over. He pulled him over to the wall, which he leant against, retching as waves of terrible, terrible pain engulfed him, as he felt his scar burn. Malfoy could do nothing other than pray that the Death Eaters were so involved in their own sick activities that they would not notice the odd noises. At last there was a moment of silence when Harry stopped moving, panting hard. Malfoy grabbed his shoulders and began to push him forwards, away from the crowd, as fast as he possibly could.

When they had reached a somewhat safe distance from the group he turned to Harry.

"What was that?" he asked. Harry frowned for a moment through his dizziness, before he realised; Malfoy had no experience of these effects of Harry's scar.

"It happens when.... when Voldemort is near me..." Malfoy resisted a small flinch, "-it...it's worse than it was before...I'm sorry," he panted.

"Don't be," said Malfoy at once.

Harry managed a small smile under the cloak and was about to say something when-

BANG!

The noise echoed thorough the narrow streets of the village, and several screams followed it.

"What the-?" said Malfoy.

They turned around just in time to see a new group of Death Eaters joining the original group. In front of them was a large group of Muggles, looking terrified, most wearing nightclothes. Several of Voldemort's followers threw a young woman to the ground. She did not move, just quivered with fright.

"Ahhh..." said Voldemort softly, "finally! The moment has come... I have been waiting for this for so *long*. You should feel proud Muggles. For *this* is the Dark Lord's Second Rising!"

He roared the last words into the night, and the Death Eaters cheers rang through the Village. Those grouped around where Freany had stood moved, to reveal the body of a young man, with brown hair, lying on the ground, an expression of twisted agony on his face and a thin trickle of blood sliding from his mouth.

Freany was dead.

"Nooo..." whispered Malfoy, his voice choked, "Noo..."

Harry gripped his arm to support him, trying to ignore the pain in his scar.

There was more noise around them now, and occasionally a light from a spell beam would flash from nearby streets.

"Let's go," Harry said, "we're not doing any good here."

Malfoy nodded beside him and they made their slow way toward the next street, turning into it just as there was a white flash and the woman who had been thrown to the floor was flung backwards a few feet with a scream.

It was quite quiet down here, and was not at all lit up.

"This isn't right..." said Malfoy warily. "Something's wrong..."

As he said the words three cloaked figures appeared walking towards them.

"Something like that," whispered Harry, pointing. The figures walked silently closer to them as Harry and Malfoy stood as still as possible, hardly breathing. The Death Eaters turned in unison when they reached a window of the only house in the street with a glimmer of light present. Harry saw three wands being raised under three cloaks, and only realised what was happening a split second before the spells were cast. He made a sudden movement, but Malfoy's hand shot out and stopped him-

"REDUCTO!" the Death Eaters called, and the glass in the window was shattered with such force that there was an ear splitting *crash* and a flash of bright light. Screams were heard from inside the house as two of the Death Eaters leapt inside the house as the first waited, motionlessly.

Within seconds the family, a father a mother and a young son, had been dragged through the window, cuts on their bodies, and shards of glass in their flesh. Malfoy was breathing hard next to Harry and now their roles were reversed; it was Harry trying to stop Malfoy from attacking.

Suddenly more swishing of cloaks behind them alerted Harry. He whipped around to see five figures walking toward the Death Eaters. They wore grey cloaks, which covered their heads, and on the left hand side of the cloaks was a large silver letter 'A'. On the other side was also a tiny golden 'O'.

"Who are they?" Harry whispered.

"Aurors," said Malfoy at once. "Do you see the 'A'? But I don't know what the 'O's are...I've never seen them before."

"O'...The Order!" Harry muttered. "Of course...the ministry's crap, it's down to Dumbledore..."

The Aurors strode straight past them, unnoticed by the Death Eaters, who were making the family do crude things under Imperius. One of them looked up, catching sight of the Aurors. Instead of attacking he gave the Aurors a tiny nod, and one of them nodded back. In an instant defensive spells were shot at the Death Eaters...but the one who had nodded was subtly doing the same. Harry didn't understand. Then-

"Snape!" whispered Malfoy. "It's Snape! He's pretending to help the Death Eaters but he's with the Aurors!"

Though Harry had his misgivings about Snape he had to admit that it certainly looked as though he were trying to help the Aurors...

"Come on then!" he yelled. "They won't notice us shooting defensive stuff at them with all the Aurors around!"

Malfoy nodded and ran forward, shooting stunners and Impediment Jinxes from under the cloak, Harry by his side. What with Harry, Snape and the Aurors against two Death Eaters they were soon defeated, the two and Snape lying motionless on the floor (Snape just pretending), and a figure who looked very much like Tonks bent down over the young boy. Before they could help, however, another five Death Eaters had rounded the corner at a run, and started yelling curses in the direction of the Aurors. From the other end of the street came yet more Death Eaters, some of them were dragging screaming women or children with them, others had men clawing the air, under the effect of some sort of spell. Yet more were duelling with several more Aurors, including Voldemort who was duelling with someone who was limping along, as though he had a wooden leg. The shouts issuing from the sickening crowd were mingled terror and hysteria. From the centre of the human mass a light flared, someone raised their hand and threw their fistful of fire at a house; it exploded, and the blaze engulfed the buildings. In thirty seconds the whole row of buildings was on fire, and it was spreading fast.

The mob of Death Eaters, Muggles and Aurors was surrounding Harry and Malfoy now, and though the two boys shot as many jinxes as they could think of into the crowd, it was not enough. The danger was getting closer, and all the time the fire was threatening to move in upon the crowd.

"We have got to get out- this is far too big, even for us!" called Malfoy.

"NO!" yelled Harry angrily. He had never given up on anything, he'd fought Voldemort, he'd fought Death Eaters, and he'd been in duels and never left without inflicting some sort of damage.

"We can't do this! We're not trained, we're restricted under the cloak and-!" Malfoy twisted his body suddenly to avoid a red beam as Harry yelled, "*Fructimensa!*" and the nearest Death Eater doubled up in pain.

"You're not listening, Malfoy! I can't just leave this!"

"You have to! We've got no choice! This is too dangerous!"

"I-" Harry began. But before he could finish his sentence a jet of orange light had shot through the cloak and hit Malfoy. He threw back his head and yelled, as the sleeve of his robe became soaked with blood. Malfoy was white-he was losing a lot of blood fast.

"Shit!" Harry cried. "Are you OK?"

"I'm fine...don't fuss...you're like a mother or something...but *now* do you see why we can't do this?" Malfoy panted through the pain.

"Come on," said Harry. He knew it was over, they could do nothing, it had all been totally pointless, and now Malfoy was hurt. He knew they had to go. He pulled Malfoy closer to him, so they had less chance of bumping into people. They moved slowly guiding themselves through the immense numbers of people, several with injuries, and trying to ignore the tormented bodies of Muggles on the floor.

At last they were able to break away from the crowd and make their way as fast and as far away as possible from the battle. They turned a corner- and stopped dead. Voldemort was crouched over a figure wearing a grey cloak. He was talking to it in a hushed voice.

"So...you work for Dumbledore? You thought- you *honestly thought*- you had a chance with me? You thought you would be able to beat my Death Eaters and I? You foolish woman. It isn't possible. However I would hate for you to die with the feeling that you have failed. I will send you away with something invaluable- something Dumbledore would love you to know. He would love you to tell it to him, too, but unfortunately you will be dead before Dumbledore even sees you again.

"You see, I know Dumbledore is looking for a reason of why I could possibly have put a Death Arch in the School- apart from the obvious explanation of wanting to cause as much devastation as possible. You see that Death Arch works both ways- not only does it bring the dead back to the living, it takes the living to the dead..."

Harry felt his blood run cold as Voldemort went on.

"That Death Arch is in that school for a reason- *Harry Potter*. If my plan works he will be taken via that Arch to the place I need him most. The place where he will be most vulnerable. The Arch does not kill- it simply weakens the victim. Do you know how? No. So I will tell you. It takes them to *the Land of Dead*, where I can finish him off. Just as I am going to finish you off now. You see why I told you, don't you? You have precious information...Dumbledore would be so pleased to hear it...you have done so well finding it out.... such a *shame* it's too late..."



Voldemort stood up and the face of his victim was placed suddenly in the light, the hood of her cloak was pulled down.

"Nooooo.." cried the woman. "Nooo, please don't...please I-"

And it was then, as Voldemort raised his wand that Harry realised who the woman must be. She had the sandy coloured hair, large blue eyes and an Irish lilt which was a carbon copy of that of Seamus Finnegan; it could only be his sister.

Voldemort raised his wand just as Harry darted forwards. "*Avada Kedavra!*" He screeched, and the jet of green light shot into her chest. Malfoy's fingers were tight on Harry's shoulder, restraining him once more.

They heard more footsteps and turned. Another Death Eater had appeared behind them, a Muggle child in his arms.

"My Lord," he said in a cold voice, "the child tried to escape...I thought-"

"You thought right, Malfoy. Well done."

Lucius Malfoy placed the child on the floor at Voldemort's feet. Voldemort raised his wand.

"You *bastard!*" whispered Malfoy, next to Harry, his voice choked. "You bastard!" He made to run at his father, but Harry tried to restrain him. Malfoy seemed too full of hatred though, and Harry was forced to follow him, barely hindering his progress. Malfoy stepped out in front of his father, still under the cloak and raised his wand, just as Voldemort brought his own swishing down to meet the child.

Harry, though, was in the way, and the spell which was meant for the child hit Harry with an even greater force instead. He tried to scream but found he couldn't. He staggered into Malfoy who steadied him, his own wand back inside his robes, and took him in his arms. He whispered a word of comfort and encouragement to Harry, before taking him away, heaving him as far away as possible. Voldemort and Lucius Malfoy seemed not to have noticed the spell had not fully hit the child, and that not far away Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy were panicking, for the child was still writhing in pain, even though less of the spell had hit it.

It felt to Harry as though his lungs were boiling, his eyes were aching with images flashing before his eyes, he could feel blood beneath his robes, seeping from his chest. He tried to breath, but the fire in his lungs was too intense. He made a rasping sound and then vomited all down his robes and Malfoy's.

There were tears in Malfoy's eyes and he could barely speak as he tried to cry out for help.

But no one came. They were too far away, too involved in stopping the Death Eaters.

"I'm sorry Harry!" Malfoy managed. "It's Dark but it's the only way.... I'm sorry! It'll take us back..."

He pulled from his pocket a black piece of metal, twisted like a rune. He put his fingers in the grooves around it, and held Harry tightly to him, before muttering the spell.

The last thing he saw as dark spells and symbols began to surround him was the glittering green formation of the Dark Mark, high above them in the sky.

**Title:** [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 17)

**Author Name:** [Purple Flame](#)

**Owl the author:** [here](#).

**Rating:** R

**Spoilers:** PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

**Genre:** Drama, Slash

**Era:** The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

**Main Character(s):** D, G, H, Hr

**Ship(s):** D/H, Hr/R

**Summary:** "Fine Lines"~Draco has managed to get a seriously injured Harry back to Hogwarts, but who will he go to? The person he chooses makes promises- but can she keep them? And while Madam Pomfrey tries her best to heal Harry she can't make any promises of her own. And Ron still hasn't changed his mind.

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**Author's Notes:**

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Chapter 17-Fine Lines

Draco was struggling to hold Potter upright; since he had thrown up he had not spoken or moved at all. Draco was trying not to let his emotion, and his terror that Potter was seriously hurt, cloud his judgement and his senses. He hoisted the boy into a more comfortable position, steadied him and then carefully freed one of his hands to knock on the door before him.

"Come on, woman..." he muttered through gritted teeth, glancing around the corridor, expecting a teacher to come along at any moment. He raised his fist impatiently to knock again, but was spared the trouble when the door opened.

"'Ello? Wassup?" said the woman, clearly still half-asleep.

"Oh thank God. Can we come in? We need your help."

The woman looked at him and blinked. "Uh...yeah...yeah...come in then."

"Cheers," said Draco, dragging Potter into the dark room as carefully as he could, and lowering him gently into a chair. He straightened up as the woman closed the door.

She scabbled around on a table for her wand, waved it once and immediately the lamps flared.

Swan Jupiter was standing before him looking very ruffled, in a red silk nightgown, her long hair slightly messy and a slight frown upon her face. She sat on the end of her bed and said, "So.... what?"

"Um..." Draco said. Now it came to it he wasn't sure how to start, he didn't know how much it would be safe to tell her. He knew she could be trusted, he hadn't ever spoken to her outside of the classroom, but her classes were some of his favourite, and she seemed to like him. Or at least she didn't hate him.

"I...we...look, Potter's injured."

"What?!" She stood up, shocked. It had only just hit her that Draco Malfoy had just come into her office at 3am supporting Harry Potter. It looked as though Potter had taken her advice and spoken to Draco...and it also looked as though he was right about Draco not being the bastard he was supposed to be; his face was pale, and he looked genuinely worried about Potter's health.

"Draco why didn't you go to the hospital wing? I can't help you with this- I dropped out of healer training after less than a year! Come on quickly this is serious-"

"We can't, professor!" said Draco. "We...well, I'm not exactly sure what's happened to him and...well...we were somewhere we weren't meant to be."

"Tell me," Jupiter said, urgency clear in her quiet voice.

Draco told her hurriedly what had happened. "We followed Snape, and he led us to the raid on the Muggle Village...there were Death Eaters there-dozens of them, fighting the Aurors! I'm so sorry Professor, it was such a stupid thing to do, but...well...sorry," he finished, lamely.

"I'm not going to pretend I'm not furious with what you've done, Draco, but there's no time for punishment now. We need to get Harry to the hospital wing and then I need to ask you some questions. I think it would be better all round if we just kept this to ourselves and Madam Pomfrey- we can tell anyone else that Potter is just ill. Flu or something, ok?"

Draco nodded dumbly.

"Right. Come on, quickly, let's get him up to the Hospital Wing."
She stood up and moved over to Draco who made to pick Potter up.

"Oh God!" she exclaimed. "You're injured, too! Oh Draco, what the hell have you done? You're going to have to tell me the whole story- I'm not satisfied with 'we followed Snape and got involved in the fight'. Firstly, who the hell did this to Potter?"

"Voldemort," said Draco grimly, closing his eyes for fear of her reaction.

"Oh shit. Right, well, you can't take him I'm afraid, if you're injured too."

Swan conjured a stretcher from thin air and magicked Potter onto it.

As they strode as fast as possible towards the hospital wing, Draco said, "Professor, why are you here?"

"What?" she muttered distractedly.

"Why weren't you there? Fighting?"

"We can't send the whole Order into the fight, Draco, even those that are Aurors. It's too much of a risk that we'd lose all of us. Secondly, the Ministry couldn't send me there; I took this teaching job on with the understanding that my Auror duties would be suspended for as long as I was a teacher. And thirdly we needed someone from the Order to be in the school. On this occasion it was Dumbledore, Flitwick and I who stayed behind."

Draco nodded, but didn't bother to ask what the "Order" was, though he had heard it mentioned by two different people already that night, and they didn't speak again until they reached the hospital

wing. Swan locked the door behind her, placed the stretcher onto the nearest bed and said, "Entrusnoc." A knock was heard on Madam Pomfrey's door, and seconds later she emerged, looking flustered but ready for business.

"What's the problem, Swan?" she asked, bringing the curtains around Potter's bed.

"Well, I can't say too much I'm afraid, Poppy" -Madame Pomfrey nodded, it seemed she was used to not being told the full story around Hogwarts- "but Potter has been badly injured by the Dark Lord. I don't know what he was hit with."

"Right," said Madame Pomfrey, beginning work on Potter immediately, though with a look that clearly expressed her feelings that students shouldn't be allowed to fight Death Eater's battles. As she worked Draco told her quickly, almost hysterically, exactly what had happened to Potter and what he had done. She magicked off his robes, and immediately the extent of his injuries became all too apparent.

"Oh shit," Draco and Swan said together. Potter's white t-shirt was stained deep red with blood, and the shining patches showed it had not stopped bleeding yet.

"This won't be pretty," Madame Pomfrey warned. She tore off his shirt quickly but delicately. There was a deep gash across Potter's chest which continued down to his stomach, bleeding freely. She waved her wand and a bottle of bright blue potion appeared next to her. She took a piece of some material from her pocket and wet it with the contents of the bottle. She dabbed at his wound for what seemed like an age, working in silence, the blue liquid mixing with Potter's blood. Eventually the bleeding seemed to slow and she set the bottle down.

"We will have to leave it like that for now. That needs to be re-applied once every two hours. It can slow the bleeding. Whether it will *stop* the bleeding is another matter...Now, that's our main problem sorted...you say he was sick, Malfoy?"

Draco nodded, "He made a funny noise-I don't think he could breathe either."

"Oh dear...it sounds to me as though his blood has been poisoned. These are classic symptoms of a magical poison. It will be a slow acting poison, you need a physical application of poison for the it to work quickly, however this is much worse if it's slow acting, they only occur through wand magic and it's very complex to do...most magical poisons target the lungs first, so that'll be why he had difficulty breathing...they burn the lung tissue. Don't worry, Mr Malfoy, in time we can repair that. But the poison is in his blood. There's only one thing we can do for that, and it isn't nice."
"What is it?" asked Draco, trying desperately to stop his voice trembling.

Madam Pomfrey didn't answer, instead she ran to her office and came back a second later with a bottle of green liquid and a needle.

"What's that?"

"Pure Dragon's blood," she replied grimly. "Not nice when taken intravenously, but it must be done I'm afraid...it's the only way to take this stuff...one of the only things we learned from Muggles, this practice..."

"Will he be OK?" Draco asked in a choked voice. "He'll make a complete recovery, won't he? *Won't he?*"

Swan put her arm around him, and he screwed up his eyes, '*Draco Malfoy doesn't cry*' he told himself firmly.

"We're not sure, dear," said Madam Pomfrey. "We can only hope for the best. He is a very sick young man."

She injected the Dragon's blood into Potter's arm. It took effect straight away. He became even paler than before, if that were possible, and he began to shake as though he were freezing cold and moan softly.

"It will take a few more injections and at least a week before he's in any sort of decent state, if at all, I'm afraid. For now all we can do is make him as comfortable as possible."

She laid a white sheet over his torso, and magicked it up so it did not touch his wound. The she spooned a small amount of pink liquid into his mouth after she had cleaned it free from vomit, to sooth his breathing.

Draco was reluctant to move from Potter, but had no choice as Swan held out his injured arm and Madam Pomfrey led them to a bed at the other and of the ward. She asked no questions, but managed to clean it up and mend it within minutes. As she fixed the bandage in place she said, "You won't be able to move it freely for at least a few days. I'd like you to stay here tonight"

"But- I- I can't!"

"You have no choice, I'm afraid, Mr Malfoy, you can and you will stay here. I'm sorry."

"Madam Pom-"

"Draco," Swan interrupted, "I would like you to stay here. You can go back to your dormitory tomorrow, OK? I need to have a word with you, too, if you're OK with that?"

Draco nodded sulkily, and glanced over at Potter's bed, which was being enclosed fully by the curtains by Madam Pomfrey, who then retired to her office, saying to Swan, "Good night, Professor."

"Night, Poppy," Swan replied. "Now, Draco. I did say before that I was furious, and I am. But no one need know, unless absolutely necessary. Did anyone see you?"

"No. No one knew we were there. No one made any sign they did, anyway."

"Good. We can tell a few.... white lies, then, to cover up the injuries. I will not punish you, Draco, because I think you being stuck in here with a bad arm, and your boyfriend fighting for his life is bad enough so-"

"He's not my boyfriend!" Draco said loudly. "He's-"

Swan raised her eyebrows. "Give me some credit, Draco! Look, don't be so panicky, it's only me who knows, and I don't think any less of you, OK?"

Draco nodded sullenly.

"As I was saying. I think that's punishment enough, so I won't be doing anything formal, not even points docked, or a detention. Now, I need you to tell me exactly what happened, tell me everything, no matter how bad it is."

It took all of his effort, but he told her everything. About how they had got there, the fight, the Muggle who was killed, the two Death Eaters and Snape, and how the Aurors had come to Duel with the Death Eaters...then he told her about the swarms of people, and how it was then that he got

injured. As he got to the part where he and Potter had escaped and rounded the corner to find Voldemort there, his throat became stuck.

"Who was there, Draco?" Swan coaxed him softly.

"*Him*," he said. "*The Dark Lord*."

"What happened?"

Draco had tears in his eyes now, but he brushed them away angrily with his good hand. He told her what Voldemort had said to the woman, as much of it as he could remember, and then how he had just killed her.

Swan's mouth was open in disgust. "Who was it? Do you know?"

Draco shook his head. "I'm not sure...but I know who I think it was. I think she was related to Seamus Finnegan."

"No," Swan said, choked by emotion. "Jane? Jane Finnegan?"

"Who?"

"Jane Finnegan," she repeated. "Seamus' older sister. She's an Auror, but for the last year she's been in the Order-her family didn't know, of course, they believed Dumbledore had gone barmy last year, so she couldn't tell them...but now you're telling me he just killed her, just like that?" Draco nodded, feeling desperately sorry for her. "She was your friend?"

"One of my best friends. We were in the same year at school-both in Gryffindor."

"I'm sorry."

"Hey, let's not talk about that now," she tried to compose herself as she went on. "We're going to have to do something about that Arch. At least one good thing came of tonight-we know why it's there. I'll need to tell Dumbledore. I'll try my best to make it sound like you weren't there...This is vital information...anyway, go on Draco."

"And then...then my...*Father*.... turned up. The fucking bastard. He brought a child. They wanted to torture it. They were going to, but-Oh God! It's my entire fault! I made to go for my Father-I don't know what I wanted to do but I ran at him! Potter tried to stop me, but I wouldn't let him! We got between them and Voldemort cast the spell, and most of it hit Potter! They didn't know he was there because the kid got some of it-Oh shit it's my fault!"

"Don't be ridiculous, Draco, none of it's your fault."

"But if I hadn't-"

"*Enough*, Draco. Tell me what happened then?"

"We managed to get us away from them, and back here."

"How?"

"How what?" he said innocently.

"You know what I mean. How did you get back here?"

Draco thought of not replying but knew it would be no good. "I've got a Corden."

"What?! Draco, how the hell did you get one of those? They're very dark objects! And how do you know how to use it?"

"My Father. I'd never used it before, that's why we arrived half way up the astronomy tower... and I hated having to do it, but it was the only way."

"Bloody Hell...how many people know you have it?"

"Just my Father. He thinks it's locked in my safe at home. I took out of there when I realised the Dark Lord was near me. I've carried it round ever since."

Swan shook her head. "This is *unbelievable*," she mused. "I'm not going to confiscate it, but I want you to promise me that you won't use it again, OK? Unless it's absolutely essential. Promise? I'm putting a lot of trust into you, and some would say unwisely."

Draco nodded. "Don't worry. I'm not going to use it again in a hurry."

"Good. Now get some rest, Draco. You can go back to the main school tomorrow after Madam Pomfrey's seen you. Good night Draco, and I want to thank you, too. You're a very brave young man- so is Harry."

"Yeah...brave maybe...but even more thick."

Swan smiled, but did not reply as she left the Hospital Wing.

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Draco had been let out into the main school, as promised, the next day. He walked through the corridors towards the direction of the Great Hall, ignoring the people bustling around him, with Gryffindors giving him hateful looks as usual, and Slytherins pestering him about why he had bandages on his arm. When he reached the entrance to the Great Hall, the first thing he saw was Crabbe and Goyle sitting at the Slytherin table, clearly at a loss for what to do without Draco there.

"Sod it, then," Draco muttered. He turned sharply and walked as fast as he could towards the Slytherin common room. When he muttered the password and stepped into the deserted room it did nothing to improve his bad mood. This room was everything he used to stand for, the hatred, the violence, and the arrogance that used to be his whole life. Now, however it signified everything he hated, with its cold furniture, and grand designs. He strode across it quickly and down the staircase towards his dormitory, where he flopped onto his bed.

He couldn't believe the trouble he and Potter were in. What had they been thinking, following Snape like that? And how would Swan cover up the injuries of himself and Potter, and at the same time make up a story as to why she knew about Voldemort's conversation with Jane Finnegan? It just wasn't possible, no one concealed anything from Dumbledore for long...

His mind wandered back up to the Hospital Wing where Potter was still fighting for his life. That wasn't exactly what Madam Pomfrey had told him as he left, but it was close enough; Potter was treading a very fine line between life and death. He hadn't been able to see Harry; Madam Pomfrey hadn't let him get too close. He'd only caught a glimpse of him through the gap in the curtains as she went in to reapply the blue potion. From what Draco had seen the bleeding still hadn't stopped and Potter was laying very still, his breathing not even obvious. His eyes had been closed and his lips were deep

purple, his skin a very pale white as though he were made of wax. Draco knew he wouldn't have been able to bear watching any longer, even if the curtains hadn't been closed suddenly.

He hadn't dared to ask how he was, for one thing he dreaded the answer, what Madam Pomfrey told him was enough information, and for another, the last thing he needed was people getting suspicious; it was a very well known fact that Potter and Draco were enemies, and Madam Pomfrey was a very intelligent woman. Draco knew she would work something out sooner or later.

He buried his face in his hands and tried not to think of Potter's state right now. He was as positive as he could be in that situation, but still his mind flashed the image of him lying as though he were dead in that bed before his eyes.

Once again he felt the tears pricking his eyes, and this time he did nothing to stop them. Their warmth as they coursed down his cheeks was comforting. He remembered Swans words, "your boyfriend". That's what he was. Potter was his boyfriend. Draco knew he was in love with Potter, but until now he had had no idea how much love he felt for the boy. Potter was the only thing he could truly say he loved, and now he was suffering so much the feelings became more pronounced.

*What if he goes?* Draco asked himself. *What if he dies? He's all I've got, without him there is nothing for me...* He had always told himself that Potter didn't really care about him, and that, to Potter, this relationship was just a bit of fun, but he had always been able to overlook that fact, because as long as Draco had Potter, it would be OK.

*And now I'm going to lose him....* he thought bitterly. Waves of guilt were breaking over Draco like waves.... he could not shake off the feeling that it was all his fault.

He rolled over onto his back and stared at the roof of his bed through a haze of tears, lost in thought. After a while, with no thought to his lessons, he felt himself sinking into slumber.

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Hermione looked along the table at the hordes of students shouting and yelling as they ate their breakfast. Still Harry was nowhere to be seen. She had wanted to speak to him that morning, to see how he was, but when she had entered his dormitory he was not there. Assuming he was already at breakfast she had raced down to the Great Hall. Now she knew he wasn't here, she realised he had no choice. She turned to Ron, who was sitting next to her, concentrating hard on the bowl of porridge in front of him.

"Ron?" she tried not to sound nervous.

"Mmm?"

"Er.... I was just wondering...have you seen....um...have you seen Harry toady?"

Ron froze for a moment, but recovered quickly. "Who?" he asked innocently, with a defiantly cold note in his voice.

Hermione glared at him for a moment, anger swelling up inside her, but before she could say anything there were hurried footsteps behind her.

"Miss Granger," panted a voice. Hermione turned to see who it was.

Professor McGonagall was wheezing slightly, as though she had run from the other side of the school.

"Professor?" she asked.

"I need you to come with me, Miss Granger, it's urgent. Never mind about your classes, girl, come on!"

Hermione had been spluttering but was silenced at McGonagall's words. "What is it Professor?"

"It's Potter. Come on, Mr Weasley, I want you there too, it involves you, after all you are his best friend."

Ron stood up suddenly, knocking a goblet over. "I have to get to Charms," he said shortly.

McGonagall stared at his rapidly retreating back, looking as though she would dearly like to call him back to shout at him.

"They fell out, Professor," Hermione said weakly.

McGonagall looked at her quizzically for a moment and then sighed. "Come on then, Miss Granger..." she said resignedly and led the way out of the hall. As they passed the end of the Gryffindor table Hermione caught sight of a small red-haired figure, breakfasting alone. Her hand shot out and grabbed the girl's arm.

"Wha-?"

"Shhh! Ginny, shh, I think you'd better come with us," Hermione said. She knew McGonagall would not protest.

They were led to the Hospital Wing, walking quickly and in silence. McGonagall stopped outside the Hospital Wing door, her hand resting on the handle.

"No..." Hermione said, suddenly, understanding. "No...please, don't tell me he's-"

"I'm sorry, girls, this will be a bit of a nasty shock. Last night Potter was injured. We're not sure how yet but his injuries are very serious indeed. He's not in a good way. Do you want to go inside?"

Hermione nodded. Ginny said, "Is he conscious?"

"No, I'm afraid not."

They entered the ward together and saw the curtains around the bed closest to Madam Pomfrey's office.

"I'm going to have to leave you, girls, I have a class to teach. Professor Jupiter is free, she is with Potter at the moment, she will stay with you for now."

They started to walk towards the concealed bed slowly, dreading what they would see when they reached it. They heard the door behind them close, and looked at each other, the dread clearly etched on their faces. Hermione reached out and took Ginny's hand, and squeezed it tightly. As they reached the end of the ward Swan appeared around the curtains, her expression sombre.

"Hi girls, look I need to explain something before you see him." Without preamble she began her, slightly modified, version of events in a quiet, hurried voice. "Last night Harry managed to get involved in a fight between Voldemort's Death Eaters and Aurors. It was Voldemort's first raid since he came back, it shows us he is ready to truly reveal himself to the world as what he is. Potter was

injured by the Dark Lord. As you can imagine his injuries are very serious, and Madam Pomfrey is doing all she can to make him well."

"How bad is it?" Hermione asked after a while. She had toyed with the idea of asking for more details about the events of last night, but somehow got the idea that Swan wouldn't be willing to tell her.

"It's very serious I'm afraid. Touch-and-go. No one can tell what's going to happen yet, we'll just have to see."

"Can we see him then?" asked Ginny, her voice uneven.

"Of course but I must warn you it's not good."

She was right. As Hermione and Ginny stepped around the curtains they gasped in horror, and Hermione had to swallow hard to stop herself from retching. Ginny clapped her hand over her mouth.

Harry was not moving, and looked as though he were more dead than alive. The blanket that covered his wound had been pulled back, and the wound was still bleeding freely.

"I'm really, really sorry girls."

They sank into chairs, too shocked to say a word.

The door of the Hospital Wing banged open again and two pairs of footsteps made their way over towards Potter's bed. Swan rose and went out to see whom it was.

"Ah...Professor Dumbledore, Severus," she said, somewhat coldly.

"Hello Swan," Dumbledore's voice was grave, "I received your owl. You wanted to see me?"

"Yes. But not-"

"And Professor Snape is here because he needs to speak to Madam Pomfrey about one of his students, who was injured last night."

"Right," Swan said stiffly. There was a pause, and then Snape's footsteps moved towards Madam Pomfrey's office. Swan and Dumbledore did not speak audibly again for a while. Snape knocked on Madam Pomfrey's door.

"Yes? Oh, it's you Severus. I need you to fill in this form for Mr Draco Malfoy...just routine." Ginny and Hermione heard a scratching of a quill on parchment. Then-

"What happened to him?"

"He came in last night to see me. His arm was injured. From what I can gather, Mr Crabbe had a bad dream and happened to snatch up his wand in his sleep...the result was a serious gash in Mr Malfoy's arm."

Swan coughed.

"Hardly surprising, the boy can barely spell his own name," Snape said smoothly. "How bad are his injuries?"

"Not too serious. He'll be fine in a day or two."

Seconds later they heard his footsteps leave the Hospital Wing. After a small pause Dumbledore stepped around the curtains, followed by Swan. He did not seem surprised to see Hermione and Ginny with Harry.

"Good morning, ladies," he said pleasantly.

He turned to look at Harry, a serious expression on his face. "We can only wait...." He said quietly. "Swan, I *need you to tell me. It is vital.*"

Swan avoided his eyes.

"Miss Granger and Miss Weasley know what has happened to Potter, I presume?"
Swan nodded.

"Then we can conduct this urgent conversation in their presence. Swan, please."

"But he *trusts* me. I can't-"

"I do not ask you to tell me everything. As long as I am told what I need then that will be enough. He will not be punished once he is better" -his voice faltered slightly here, but he carried on- "nor will any mention of this incident ever be made again. I will not ask more than is necessary."

Swan looked at her Uncle. She knew the best thing was to tell him, she knew that he needed the information Draco had told her. But she had made a promise, not only to Harry, but to Draco too. She had also told them she would think of a cover story- but even when she had told them that she knew it would not be possible.

"Swan?"

"OK, OK. I'm really sorry Harry... OK, what happened..." she sat down. "He managed to follow...someone," -Dumbledore nodded to show he understood that by "someone" she meant "Snape"- "he was with him when he travelled to the village. You know the details of what happened, but Potter was caught up in it all, under James' cloak. He stumbled upon Voldemort and Jane Finnegan..." she recited everything Draco had told her the night before, about what Voldemort had told Jane before killing her. And then how Lucius Malfoy had brought a child to be slaughtered by Voldemort but part of the spell had hit Harry.

"I see," said Dumbledore. "Thank you, Swan, as you know that information will be vital to the Order. I will thank Harry for his bravery when he wakes." He seemed to place special emphasis on the word "when", determined to show himself and everyone else that he believed Potter would recover. He asked no more questions, nothing about how Swan knew what Potter had heard, how he had got back, or even how she had found him.

"Thank you, Swan," he said.

She nodded, as he turned to leave. "Get well, Harry," he muttered as he left. He waved his wand and immediately the voices outside the perimeter of the curtains became oddly muffled.

At that point Madam Pomfrey came bustling in, brandishing another needle full of green liquid and another cloth, to try and uphold Dumbledore's belief.

Title: [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 18)

Author Name: [Purple Flame](#)

Owl the author: [here](#).

Rating: R

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

Genre: Drama, Slash

Era: The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: "Helpless"~Harry is still in the hospital Wing, and as each day passes it looks less and less likely that he's going to wake up. Draco realises the time has come, and he has no other choice but to say goodbye to him.

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Author's Notes:

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## Chapter 18-Helpless

Harry had been in the Hospital Wing for four days now, and was still showing no obvious signs of recovery. He hadn't moved, or opened his eyes, and though the wound had, at last, stopped bleeding it wasn't even starting to heal. Hermione and Ginny had been visiting him every day (Ron refused to listen to them when they tried to tell him that Harry was in the hospital wing, even when Ginny had cursed him in her frustration, and Hermione had screamed at him that he was a "selfish, pathetic bigot with stupid opinionated views"). Their visits were in vain, however, as talking to Harry was useless, and there was never any change in his state. They would sit in awkward silence for perhaps an hour each night, leaving only when Harry was given another dose of Dragon's Blood, or when one of them voiced what the other was thinking, that their time would be better spent persuading Ron to listen to them, which at least they got a reaction out of even if it wasn't pleasant.

Swan Jupiter also visited Harry daily, between classes, or late in the evening. She would talk to Madam Pomfrey and question her endlessly about his health, but the answer was always the same: "No change."

On the fifth night Jupiter, Hermione and Ginny were all with Harry together. As usual they sat in silence, staring at Harry, willing him to move, or make some sign that he knew they were there. But it was, as ever, hopeless. They were effectively staring at a corpse.

Madam Pomfrey came round the curtains, which were still up, to check on Harry.

"Has there been any-" Swan began.

"No. No change," Madam Pomfrey said softly, sadness in her voice. "It's been five days..."

"What does that mean, Madam Pomfrey?" Ginny asked. "Is it good that there's been no change, or bad?"

The answer did not come immediately, and when it did, Madam Pomfrey sounded as though she would really rather not say. "With injuries like this it is generally said that no news, is good news. So no change is good. However," she was choosing her words carefully, "in Harry's case he has so many injuries, and possibly there are things wrong with him that we have been unable to discover yet...it

could go either way. If his condition worsens it will be sudden. If he begins to get better we probably won't notice it until he wakes up. I'm sorry, but there is really no more I can tell you. It is just a waiting game, one way or the other."

Ginny nodded. She knew what Madam Pomfrey was meant, even if she didn't say it directly: with each day that passed it looked less and less likely that Harry would recover. They were all beginning to give up hope, though they kept up a brave front.

"Come on girls," Swan said heavily after a while. "We're not doing anyone any good by being here."

They got up in unison and followed Swan out of the ward silently, feeling worse than they had done when they had come in. It looked as though any hope that Harry would wake up was fading fast.

~~~~~

Draco listened to the conversation at the Slytherin table in hateful silence. He did not move, nor did he trust himself to speak. His face was white with fury, and he was gritting his teeth, willing himself not to react. In his mind, however, were insults and truths he was longing to spit out at those who surrounded him.

"-Potter's still not here! In the Hospital Wing with Dragon Pox my arse!" Pansy Parkinson screeched along the table.

"Yeah," said Millicent Bulstrode enthusiastically, "more likely he's got a spot he wants no one to see, just in case it makes him look bad!"

"Not hard..." grunted Theodore Nott, to much self-indulgent laughter along the whole length of the table.

Draco had heard enough. He stood up furiously, trying to make his face blank, as usual- to get the mask, which so often fell these days, back over his face. He turned and began to walk towards the door.

"Where are you going, Draco? You've got to come to-" asked Goyle bemusedly.

"I haven't got to go anywhere!" he snapped. "I'm going to bed. I feel sick."

It was true, but it was because of what they'd been saying and also...his worry about Potter...

He walked out of the Great Hall and headed down the steps towards the common room, almost in a trance. He passed the door to the room where he and Potter had had many a confrontation and stopped suddenly.

He opened the door and went inside, welcoming it's cool air. He leant against the wall, his eyes closed. Being here made him feel close to Potter, and here he could remember the sweet ecstasy of simply being with Potter, and those times they'd kissed.... the times they'd touched each other.

The memories may have been perfect, but Draco felt lost and scared as he realised that if Potter died then he would have no one to turn to. He couldn't talk to anyone else. Potter had almost become a part of him, and that part was being wrenched away from him unsympathetically...

They'd never speak again, let alone act as a couple.

Draco turned suddenly and kicked the wall as hard as he could, yelling in fear as he did so. He wrenched the door open again, and ran as fast as he could down the unlit corridors towards the common room.

*

Draco always hated going to Snape's extra lessons. It was Thursday and 7.00pm and he was sitting alone, detached from everyone else as usual, at the back of the dungeon while the others chatted noisily whilst waiting for Snape. Snape was always late- Draco knew it was just to make a point.

The door banged open and in strode Snape, looking even surlier than usual, if it were at all possible. He took a seat behind his desk and turned to face them all.

"Mr Malfoy, stop being ridiculous come and sit at the front. Such childish behaviour, to distance yourself deliberately..."

Draco stood up resentfully and moved to the front. He didn't *want* to be with anyone else, he had more important things on his mind than Potions, why was everybody always trying to force him to do things he didn't want to do, and at time when he *really* didn't want to do them? He really didn't need this right now... it was as though they were trying to make him miserable deliberately.

Hermione Granger moved her bag from the place next to her, looking questioningly at him. He hesitated for a moment. The other option was to sit next to Pansy Parkinson. He took the seat next to Hermione and said, "Thanks" awkwardly. He didn't know why she'd done it. She hated him, and he hated her- it was a well-known fact. So why was she behaving as though she were his friend?

Snape caught his eye as he looked up. It was only a split second but Draco was certain there was something different in the way his Head of House looked at him. He wasn't sure what it was, it was somewhere between fury, wonder, and confusion. Almost as if Snape knew that Harry had got his injuries from the raid...and almost as if he knew Draco had been there too...

"Well," Snape's quiet voice snapped, bringing Draco round to the lesson, "as Mr Potter seems to be otherwise occupied fighting off....ah...*Dragon Pox*, we are one less today. We will be studying the effects of Thestral hide in potions such as the...."

*

"You were there, too, weren't you?"

He jumped. He had been the last to leave the dungeon and hadn't know anyone was there. "What? Oh, it's *you*."

"You were there," Ginny repeated as she stepped out from behind the door. "When You-Know-Who got Harry."

Draco didn't reply.

"I hope you're worth it, Malfoy I *really* do."

"Weasley, unless you've got anything constructive to say then shut up," he snapped. "It's not just you who cares, you know."

Ginny looked at him quizzically, a slightly surprised look in her eyes, but said nothing.

"What's with Granger?"

"What do you mean?"

"She was...nice...to me. Why?"

"Because, contrary to what you might think she isn't a horrible person."

"Does she know? About me and Potter?"

"No. But she knows something's wrong with you."

"There' nothing wrong with-!"

"There is. Since you and Harry followed Snape you've looked ill. And Hermione and I have both noticed how you are around the Slytherins."

Draco nodded but said nothing. He had dreaded Potter telling his friends about him being gay, but from all accounts Granger hadn't cared about it. Judging from that and her performance today maybe- just maybe- if the time ever came that Harry would have to tell her about Draco, it wouldn't be too bad. The only thing was troubling him now was *if* that time would ever come...

~~~~~

The only sounds were outside of the windows; occasionally the wind would cause a tree to creak eerily, or an owl would hoot indignantly if it were caught by the rain, which was falling heavily. Inside the Hospital Wing there was nothing but a peaceful silence. The only person in the room was in the end bed, closest to the Matron's office. He was totally still, with only his head and shoulders visible because of a white sheet covering him. His eyes were closed and his skin was pale. His lips were blue.

He may as well have been dead.

Suddenly the doors at the end of the Ward opened silently. A figure stood framed in the dim light of the outside corridor. It stood and looked around for a moment, before entering the ward and closing the doors behind it. It walked slowly up to the occupied bed, almost as if it were scared of what it would find when it got there. It hesitated for a moment when it got close to the bed, but strode up to it determinedly.

What he saw when he got there nearly made him walk right back away again. It was horrible. He had never seen anything more sad in his life. Harry Potter lying stock-still.... though he still looked beautiful.

He moved closer and reached out as though to touch Potter's body through the sheet but stopped short. He didn't dare. Instead he knelt down next to the bed. Now he was this close he could just make out Potter's shallow breathing.

"So you're still alive," he muttered.

He stayed knelt by the bed for a long while, staring at Potter's young, innocent face, willing the eyes to open. But they didn't. Just visible above the sheet, and in stark contrast to the pure white, was the top of the deep red gash on Potter's torso, still open. He shivered when he looked at it. It was the same colour as the scar that burned on the boy's forehead. This scar was the only thing that made him look alive.

"I had to come... I'm sorry...it's my fault..." he whispered eventually, standing up to go. He turned slowly and was about to leave when he changed his mind. He turned back hesitantly and reached out

slowly. This time his shaking fingers did touch Potter's arm under the bed sheets. His other hand rubbed tears from his cheeks furiously. He bent over Potter.

He had come to say goodbye.

"I'm so sorry", he whispered. His voice was almost inaudible. "I love you."

He moved closer to Potter and looked at his face one last time before bending over and kissing his cold blue lips softly. "Goodbye."

Without looking at Potter, for he didn't feel he could, he turned away at last and walked sombrely towards the doors again.

The voice was weak, but still it spoke...and he heard it. "Malfoy...Malfoy...!"

He stopped in his tracks. He didn't dare believe it...yet it had sounded so clear....Potter had *definitely* said his name...

He turned and looked at the bed, his heart hammering. Still Potter wasn't moving.

"Malfoy!" his voice was weaker than even before.

Malfoy stared in disbelief for a few moments and then ran, as fast as he could, back towards Madam Pomfrey's office.

"No..." said Potter. "No...Malfoy...I need...talk..."

Malfoy stopped helplessly. He didn't know what to do; he was torn between getting Madam Pomfrey, as he knew he should, and going to speak to Potter.

"Please, Malfoy."

He walked cautiously to Potter's bed.

"Thank you..."

"Potter, you need Madam Pomfrey- she needs to know you're awake!"

"No, I don't think I'll be away for long...need to speak to you...to.... thank you..."

"No," Draco shook his head firmly. "No, you can't thank me. There's nothing to thank me for, it's my fault you're like this-!"

"Shh...no...not...I want to say...thank you...for...getting me back...for waking me up..." Draco was still shaking his head, but Harry went on regardless, determined to say all he wanted to before he was stopped even though it seemed to take all of his energy to keep on speaking. "...and for...being there...for being my friend...for helping me...you made me...*happy*...thank you..."

He stopped talking and rested his eyes upon Draco's face. He was still looking deathly. Draco looked at him for a moment longer, undecided on whether to be happy that Potter had woken up, emotional at what he'd just heard, or terrified that Potter was right and that he wouldn't be awake for much longer...



He snapped back to his senses suddenly; he ran to Madam Pomfrey's office, not caring that she would know he was here in the middle of the night, visiting his worst enemy. He hammered on the door until she came to it, looking slightly disgruntled.

"What?" she demanded, sleepily.

"It's Potter-he's awake, he opened his eyes and spoke to me-!"

She pushed past him and raced to Potter's bed, bending over him.

Draco hung back. He was scared.

"Malfoy," she called, "go and get Professor Jupiter and Professor Dumbledore, *quickly!*"

\*

He returned ten minutes later, with Dumbledore and Swan at his heels.

"Poppy?" Dumbledore asked at once. "How is he?" He strode over to the bed and began to converse with Madam Pomfrey in hurried whispers.

Swan turned to Draco. "What happened, Draco?"

Draco told her. He was glad that she didn't ask why he was visiting in the middle of the night. When he had finished she pulled him into a swift hug.

"Poppy's doing everything she can for him. If anyone can help him now, it's her."

He nodded mutely, his eyes fixed on Madam Pomfrey and Dumbledore.

Five minutes later Madam Pomfrey turned to the room at large.

"Well," she said breathlessly, "he is still very sick but with the right potions and treatment there is no reason why he shouldn't make a full recovery."

Draco sank onto the nearest bed in relief.

"Thank God," Swan breathed.

"Thank you, Poppy. Admirable work," Dumbledore said. "But now, I think, bed for us all, now that we know Mr Potter is going to be OK. Goodnight." And he turned and left the room. Madam Pomfrey said goodnight, too, and retired to her own office, leaving Swan and Draco alone.

"Come on," said Swan, "bed."

"Oh, but Swan can't I-"

"No, Draco. I'm sorry. You have to get to bed. You can visit him tomorrow-during the day."

Despite himself he smiled sheepishly and allowed himself to be escorted out of the room with one last look back at the form of Potter, lying peacefully in his bed.

~~~~~

"What?" Ginny mouthed impatiently across the Great Hall to Malfoy.

He pointed outside and held up 10 fingers to represent "Meet me outside in 10 minutes."

"Fine," she mouthed back. She didn't want to do it, but something about the look on his face made her curious.

A few minutes later she saw him stand up, and walk out of the Hall, looking pointedly at her. She gave him a few minutes and then followed. He was across the Hall, standing in the open doorway of the room McGonagall had taken her too when she had first arrived at Hogwarts. She walked over and he pulled her inside and shut the door hurriedly. She frowned at him.

"*What*, Malfoy? What the hell's all this about?" she demanded impatiently.

"Potter," he said at once. "He's awake."

"What?! How do you know? When? Is he OK? What happened?"

"Calm down, not too many questions at once! He should be fine, he just needs the right treatment and potions and stuff... Madam Pomfrey said to give it a week before he's strong enough to sit up and in a few weeks he should be out in the main school. It happened at 1am this morning and...I know because...well...I was there," he admitted, feeling slightly guilty.

"What?" Ginny said dangerously. "Why where you there?"

"I had to see him. I needed to...I wasn't sure if..." he trailed off, not sure of how to finish his sentences..

Ginny didn't speak for a moment. "Thanks."

His head snapped up. "What?"

"I said 'Thanks'," she repeated. "For being there. For letting me know, for caring about him and...for not being a bastard. When can I go and see him?"

"Tonight, but Madam Pomfrey says no more than two people in there at once. And he'll probably be asleep."

She nodded. "Thanks Malfoy. Have a good day." She turned to leave, but at the last minute looked at Draco and gave him a swift hug before snatching up her bag from the floor and hurrying away to tell Hermione.

Draco simply stood, sunned at what had just happened, in the middle of the empty chamber before he remembered he was due in Potions.

Title: [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 19)

Author Name: [Purple Flame](#)

Owl the author: [here](#).

Rating: R

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

Genre: Drama, Slash

Era: The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: ♦Weaker♦~ Harry is finally allowed out of the Hospital Wing, to the relief of both himself and Madam Pomfrey. Ron still isn't talking to him, Harry doesn't want to be himself any more, and to top it all Swan wants to perform the Spell as soon as possible. Harry isn't sure how Malfoy will behave when he next sees him, and for the life of him he STILL can't remember what he said to him before he woke up.

If only Sirius were here♦. he♦d make it all OK. Harry can feel himself cracking under the pressure, and now, more than ever, he needs his Godfather back.

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Author's Notes:

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## Chapter 19-Weaker

Sure enough within a week Harry was able to sit up in bed, the gash across his chest had, at last, begun to heal, and Madam Pomfrey was calling his recovery "Quite remarkable." Hermione, Ginny and Swan were still visiting daily, and Malfoy-who was astounded that Madam Pomfrey and Dumbledore had asked no questions about why he was visiting Harry in the middle of the night- was being smuggled in with Swan as often as possible.

Of course this meant that Harry and Malfoy were not alone. This wasn't a problem at first- Harry had spent most of his time asleep or in a half-wakeful state- however, now he had the strength to talk he desperately wanted to speak to Malfoy.

"Please, Madam Pomfrey! I'm loads better, I even ate my breakfast this morning-and I kept it down-!"

"Absolutely *not*, Potter. You are still unwell! There is absolutely no way I would consider the possibility of letting you out-even for a few minutes. You are far too weak to do that; one does not recover from injuries as serious as that in a matter of days! It takes weeks, Potter!"

"When can I leave then?"

"When you're ready."

"But when-?"

"Oh, for goodness *sake*, Potter! I will get you out of here as soon as I can, for both our sakes, believe me! I'm hoping to have you out of here for Tuesday, will that do you?"

"Suppose," he grunted. Tuesday was five days away-how could he wait that long?

"Hey Harry, what's up?"

He turned, and saw Ginny and Hermione walking through the Hospital Wing doors.

"I'm not allowed out until at least next Tuesday! I don't see why I'm fine I..." he continued ranting. The girls looked at each other and smiled; Harry was well on the road to recovery.

~~~~~

Sure enough, and despite Harry's miserable predictions that time would stop and Tuesday would never come, the days crawled slowly by and eventually Tuesday arrived. Harry waited nervously for Madam Pomfrey's verdict as she examined him.

"OK, Potter, I think you're safe to go." She pointed at his main injury. "That will be tender for a while, and don't you dare mess with those dressings. You need to take it easy, no Quidditch practice- yes Potter, I know you have a Quidditch match in two weeks, you might well be able to play then but I'm making you no promises- and don't stress yourself out too much. You need to come back here after class every evening, so I can check up on you, OK?"

"Yes, can I go now?"

She looked at him with one eyebrow raised. "I suppose so."

He attempted to jump out of bed, but succeeded only in causing himself great pain. Madam Pomfrey just tutted and retreated back into her office, muttering under her breath.

He made his way down to the Gryffindor Common room. The corridors were cold and quite dark, and were devoid of students who were relaxing in their common rooms after Dinner. He reached the portrait hole.

"Password?" said the Fat Lady in a bored tone.

"*Broom Handle*," he said wearily.

The Fat Lady just blinked at him serenely.

"*Broom Handle*!" Harry said impatiently. "Why won't you let me in I'm giving you the password I-" Then he realised. "You've changed it!" he said angrily. The Fat Lady still smiled. "What is it?"

"Harry! Harry!" he turned and saw Ginny running towards him. "I went up to see if you were still there, Madam Pomfrey said you were gone! Are you alright?"

"Yeah, 'course," he said, smiling. "Calm down, it's not that exciting."

Ginny flung her arms around his neck.

"Oww...Ginny...be careful..."

"Oh God, I'm sorry, Harry! *Dragon Pox*," she added, and the Fat Lady opened. He climbed up into the room. Not many people noticed his arrival, because someone had just given Neville a Canary Cream, for which he was grateful. Hermione saw him, and stood up swiftly, leaving Ron, who she had been talking to, to glower at them. She gave him a gentle hug.

"Come and sit down, Harry, how are you? Are you feeling alright?"

"I'm fine," he said. It wasn't quite the truth. "But I...I just want to go to bed. And I don't think Ron would be very happy..." he smiled at them, turned, and finally was able to climb the staircase up into his dormitory. He undressed and lay down on his bed. He tried to sleep but it was no good. Whatever position he lay in he was not comfortable. Every time he did fall asleep he was awoken, either by the pain in his chest or one of the other Gryffindor sixth years coming up to bed.

Eventually, at about midnight, he grew bored of trying to sleep. He wasn't tired anyway, all he had been doing since he had woken in the Hospital Wing was rack his brains constantly to try and work out what it was that Malfoy had said to him...it was driving him mad.

He stood up carefully and went down the stairs into the, mercifully deserted, Common Room. He sat in the armchair by the still blazing fire and stared into its heart. He remembered the times Sirius' head had appeared there...he willed it to appear again, but it was no good. All that happened was a shadowy memory of Harry's made him think it was there.

Since he had returned to Hogwarts he had been too preoccupied to think much about the dangers Voldemort was posing to the world, and his grief at losing Sirius wasn't constantly on his mind. He had thought it was beginning to heal. But now, as he thought of his Godfather he felt the sadness, as raw as it had been on the day he had lost Sirius, well up inside him again. He felt as though, if he could just see him he would feel better, Sirius would make it alright-he always had done. But that would never happen again. His cheeks were wet with tears suddenly, but he did nothing to stop them. When he had been able to talk to Sirius he had felt safe, he had felt he could handle things...but not anymore...He was facing things he never thought he would have to face...and now, more than ever, he needed the advice of his Godfather. If he had spoken to Sirius about his relationship with Malfoy he knew Sirius would have given him a straight answer. He was still feeling guilty about it...and if Sirius had told him it was OK, then Harry knew, it would be...And Sirius could make him feel better about Voldemort....

It's not fair, Harry thought, why is he gone? I need him! He had no right to leave me like that!

His thoughts turned to Voldemort. He hadn't given the prophecy much thought either since the summer. He had told himself there was no point worrying about it...and besides he'd had more urgent things to worry about. But he didn't want to be a murderer. Hadn't he stopped Lupin and Sirius killing Wormtail because he knew his dad wouldn't want them to be murderers? Well, now James' own son was facing the unavoidable prospect of becoming a murderer...he, Harry, would be a criminal...why did it have to be him? Why couldn't someone else have got this enormous challenge facing them? What did Harry have that no one else did that made *him* the unlucky one?

Of course, there was always the possibility that he wouldn't become a killer...because he would be killed...he hadn't truly understood what that had meant before now. But he *had* nearly been killed...his fifth encounter with Voldemort was his most serious yet and this time he really had faced death. He couldn't remember much about it except that he was constantly cold, occasionally he would feel as though a breeze were whipping past him, and that with the terrible pain he felt, he was also aware of an odd peacefulness...he had been tempted to give in and to fall further into Death, to find out what was beyond it, but just as he had resolved to let go of life he had felt Malfoy next to him...heard some of his words, though he didn't know what they were...felt his lips...

His face was now drenched in tears, but he didn't care. The feelings of hating himself, and not wanting to be Harry Potter any more were overwhelming, and suddenly he wished he *had* fallen into Death.

~~~~~

"Mr Weasley, *stop* whatever you're doing and *sit down*, for goodness sake!" Professor McGonagall snapped.

Ron, who had been standing at the front of the classroom looking for a spare seat threw a dirty glance at McGonagall and sat down with a very ugly look on his face next to Hermione. Harry was on her other side.

"Back are you?" Ron said viciously.

"Looks like it."

"Over the *Dragon Pox*, then? Not left any scars on your precious face?"

"What?"

"Ron, *shut up*!" Hermione hissed.

"No.... let him have his say," said Harry furiously, bracing himself.

Ron laughed meanly. "Forget it."

Harry shook his head in disbelief. Any idea that Harry had had of Ron mellowing whilst Harry was ill were dispelled. Hermione had told him about Ron's stubbornness in refusing to listen, but still Harry had managed to convince himself that Ron might just have had some sympathy for him. Obviously not.

They went through the rest of Transfiguration without Ron acknowledging, even once, that Harry was present. The rest of the day followed suit. Ron didn't take Potions any more, but if Harry had thought he was in for a break here, he could forget it because, what with both the Slytherins and Snape there to make snide comments, it was just as bad as ever. However, Potions did bring Harry and Malfoy together in the same room. Harry carefully avoided Malfoy's eye, though it was difficult to restrain himself. Instead he contented himself with scribbling a short note on his parchment.

*Malfoy,*

*I need to see you. Meet me in Firenze's classroom at 8 o'clock tonight.*

*H xxx*

He placed his wand-tip onto the parchment, drew a box around the words with it, then tapped it and said "*Harpus!*" The words he had written dissolved into the page. He looked over at Malfoy who was staring at his own parchment, which had suddenly glowed blue. Harry was sure he saw Malfoy direct a small, sexy smile his way.

The bell rang, signalling the end of the lesson, and Harry put his things into his bag gratefully.

"Do you want me to come to the Hospital Wing with you?" Hermione asked.

"No, I'll be OK. You go back to the Common room. I'll see you at Dinner." He headed towards the door and joined the mass of students desperate to escape the classroom. He ran upstairs as fast as he could; he wanted to get this over with as soon as possible- as far as he was concerned he'd seen

enough of the Hospital Wing to last him a very long while. Madam Pomfrey looked up from treating a first year Hufflepuff's broken arm when he stormed into the Wing.

"Ah, Potter. Sit down, I won't be a minute."

He flung himself onto the nearest bed impatiently, causing pain to shoot through his body as he did so. He cursed himself silently.

"Right, let's take a look at this dressing..." Madam Pomfrey bustled over to the bed. She made Harry take his tee shirt off. He was uncomfortably aware of the first year looking at him with great interest. Madam Pomfrey saw his face and waved her wand; a screen of what looked like shimmering water surrounded Harry's bed, distorting everything outside.

"Ow!" He yelled, as Madam Pomfrey lifted one of his many bandages up.

"Yes, I think we can leave that until tomorrow...now, I want you to drink this-" she waved her wand and a goblet of blue liquid appeared on his bedside table "-this-" this time she produced a steaming goblet of crimson liquid "-and *this*-" a goblet with what looked like crushed ice appeared.

Harry frowned at her but took up the first goblet and drained it. It tasted of fish. Undeterred he took up the next goblet, which tasted more like stinking mud. He retched a little as he swallowed the thick liquid, and inwardly prayed that the final goblet would taste better. He screwed up his eyes as he put it to his lips...it tasted pleasantly like mint.

*Oh well, he thought as he left, at least I'll have fresh breath when I see M-*

"Harry! I thought I'd find you here. How are you?"

He turned and saw Swan striding towards him. "I'm fine," he said, almost truthfully. "Why were you looking for me?"

"Well...it's...er...come here, I don't want anybody else hearing this, you know before Christmas, we discussed the spell which would give us access to the connection between yourself, Draco and Voldemort? Well, Albus-I mean, the Headmaster and I feel that after recent events we really must perform it as soon as we possibly can. Are you still OK with it?"  
Harry nodded. "Of course. When are you going to do it?"

"Tomorrow, I'm going to have to set it up tonight. Can you come to my office, about 6 o'clock tomorrow?"

"Yeah. Do you need Malfoy there, too?"

"No, there's no need for Draco to be present. For the spell to work it only requires one of the involved. I've got to dash, Harry, I need to speak to Albus- er, the Headmaster. See you tomorrow!"

~~~~~

Harry checked his watch again. 7.45. *At last*, he thought.

"Er...Hermione...I'm going out for a bit, OK?"

"Oh...OK...where?"

He raised his eyebrows. "I'm going to meet someone."

"Wha- Ohhh!" Her face cleared suddenly. "Good luck."

"See you later."

He left the common room without looking back, beginning to feel nervous about seeing Malfoy again. He walked slowly, pondering what he would say, his heart beating painfully hard. What do you say to someone who saved your life?

To make things worse he still couldn't remember what it was that Malfoy had said to him before he had woken up; the words were blurred and messed up inside his head, and fading fast.

He began to panic as he descended the marble staircase; what if Malfoy didn't turn up? What if he had changed his mind? What if he didn't want to be with Harry any more?

Finally he reached Classroom 11. With a shaking hand he opened the door and went in.

"Malfoy?" he called softly, shutting the door behind him. He waved his wand once and the stars brightened above him, lighting up the room. He couldn't tell if Malfoy was here or not; the trees were far too thick. "Malfoy, are you here?" He walked cautiously between the trees, straining his eyes for any sign of life.

He looked at his watch again-it was gone 8 o'clock. Where the hell was Malfoy? Harry's nerves increased. He went back into the clearing at the front of the room and sank down onto a tree stump, his insides writhing.

Something scampered across the ground a few feet away, making Harry jump. Then something much bigger happened.

"Potter!" The door slammed behind him, and Harry whipped around to face Malfoy.

He felt weak when he saw him standing there, at the door, looking almost as nervous as Harry felt. "I... I...don't..."

Malfoy walked towards him and embraced him. Harry leant on him, glad for someone to support him. Malfoy felt strong and safe and warm...Harry didn't trust himself to speak- he was already gulping back sobs.

"You're shaking," said Malfoy softly. "Are you cold?"

"No," he replied, smiling weakly. "Not cold." Malfoy sat him back down on the stump and then sat on the floor.

"How are you?"

"I'm OK. How are you?"

"I've been better, but I've been worse, too. You're not OK. Tell me honestly."

"Honestly? You really want honesty? In that case I feel like utter crap. Ron isn't talking to me, still, I still don't exactly feel well, I still feel sick about...about that night...about what we saw...and I don't want to be me anymore. I just *wish* I could be someone else...anyone else."

"Jesus..." Malfoy whispered. "Why not? I like you the way you are."

"Because I don't like being Harry Potter. I want to be normal, like everybody else. I don't want to have had my future decided...I told you about the prophecy, didn't I? But I still can't believe this is happening to me. Why me?" He was pouring his heart out to Malfoy, who was listening in silence.

"Potter, you *can't* give up."

"Why not? Who says? I don't want this responsibility I never asked for it!"

"I know you didn't. But you're Harry Potter. You're stronger than that prophecy, and you're stronger than Voldemort."

Harry smiled reluctantly. "You think so?"

"Of course I do."

"I-I thought...maybe...you wouldn't want to know any more," the words tumbled out of his mouth as he forced himself to say it. "I thought it might have made you think twice..."

"If anything it should be *you* thinking twice. You should hate me," Malfoy's voice cracked, but he made himself go on. "I would never leave you like this. Whatever's happened in the past between us is gone-I don't care about that any more. All I want is for Voldemort to be gone and- and I want...*you*," he whispered, almost as though he were ashamed.

Harry stared at him astounded. "But...*why*?" he said at last.

"I don't know," said Malfoy seriously. "I must be mad..."

Harry laughed as he saw the grin spreading across Malfoy face, which he was failing to hide. He hadn't laughed for weeks, but it felt good.

Malfoy stood up again and took Harry's hand in his.

"I know it's going to be hard to do this but you can't live your life like you are now. You have to forget about the Prophecy. Don't think of it as murderer or victim. Whatever happens will happen, and we can't change it, and worrying about it will do nothing to help anything. We can't change when something happens. You'll face Voldemort again, and you can beat him-*again*. I want you to be happy Potter, you can't dwell on this all the time, it'll kill you, even if Voldemort doesn't. Promise me, you'll try not to do that? Please?"

Harry stood up. He knew it would be almost impossible to do what Malfoy was telling him, but at the same time knew it made sense. He'd just have to do his best. He nodded. "I promise."

He stood closer to Malfoy; he could feel his warm breath on his face. They looked into each other's eyes and it was as though an invisible force was drawing them together.

"Potter..." Malfoy muttered, his voice low and husky. Harry felt Malfoy's lips brush softly against his own, sending shivers throughout his body.

Malfoy was holding Harry in his arms, embracing him fully...Harry slid his hand around the back of Malfoy's neck, feeling the soft skin...he entwined his fingers in the dark blond hair as Malfoy cupped Harry's face in his free hand...their lips met at last and something seemed to explode inside Harry's head; he was aware of only the two of them and the kiss...and at the same time something hit him with such force and power that he felt weaker than ever before-it was as though he had been hit by a train.

He remembered.

He broke apart the kiss and stared determinedly into Malfoy's eyes, his chest heaving.

"I love you, too..." he whispered.

Title: [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 20)

Author Name: [Purple Flame](#)

Owl the author: [here](#).

Rating: R

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

Genre: Drama, Slash

Era: The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: ♦ The Diamond of Fire ♦ ~ Draco is on cloud nine after what Harry has just told him but, as ever, it won't last for long. Swan has decided that something must be done about the connection with Lord Voldemort, but the effects of the spell aren't too great for Harry. He wants to share it with someone but he knows this is a burden he must bear alone- for everyone's safety. And also, Ginny is feeling down about the mystery girl.

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Author's Notes:

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## Chapter 20-The Diamond of Fire

Draco stared at him. His heart seemed to have inflated very fast indeed, and was now rendering him unable to breathe.

Potter was staring defiantly back at him, but he was failing to disguise the nerves which engulfed him. Draco looked deep into the green eyes for a second longer and then shut his own. He struggled to take a deep breath. His mind was numb-it had registered one fact: *Potter felt the same way*. He could barely believe it-the months of worrying that Potter didn't really like him, that their relationship was just a teenage fling...everything that had descended upon him was lifted. He knew, from the look in Potter's eyes that the words had been sincere.

He felt Potter shift uneasily.

Without opening his eyes Draco said, "You meant it." It wasn't a question.

Potter gulped. "I meant it, Malfoy. I don't say things I don't mean. I couldn't remember what you said to me when I was in the Hospital Wing but when we...when you kissed me...I remembered."

Draco opened his eyes. "I meant it, too. I thought...I thought I'd lost you. Promise me that we'll never lose each other..."

"You'll never lose me. I can promise you that. Whatever happens, I'm not letting you go...not now."

"Thank you, Potter..."

"It's my pleasure, Malfoy. Now shut up and kiss me..."

Draco did as he was told. And it felt all the more wonderful because he knew that the kisses meant something-they were *real*.

\*

He walked along in a kind of trance. He was torn between two feelings; half of him was floating on air as he thought of Potter, the other half was becoming concerned about the consequences and effects of being involved in a relationship with another guy...with *Harry Potter*.

*Don't think of that*, he told himself sternly. *We don't have to face that for a while...just enjoy it for now, until you come to it...*

But still he could not shake off his fears; he had always been a natural worrier. And he knew that he and Potter had to be careful *now*, and all the time...they couldn't take more risks than was necessary...

*Well ,SOME risks....* he thought, and he couldn't resist allowing a grin to spread across his face.

Suddenly a powerful hand grabbed hold of his shoulder, spun him round, and smashed him against a wall.

"What the-!" Draco started.

"Where the fuck have you been?"

Draco looked up at the face of the person who was pinning him roughly against the wall; it was Kierre, the Slytherin Quidditch captain. Draco twisted slightly to move himself into a more comfortable position, but was shoved back into an even more painful one.

"I told you, it's personal," Draco snarled.

"And I told you that *that isn't good enough!* I want answers, Malfoy, and I want them now."

"And why the hell do you think I should tell you?"

"Because I'm your captain and I've got a lot of influence..."

"And so have I, Kierre, and you know it... if it wasn't for me and my father there would be no Slytherin team...You wouldn't dare," Draco said dangerously. He knew Kierre would think twice before he said anything now; Draco's father had his uses, even if he was a bastard.

He was right. Kierre hesitated for a second. He seemed too incensed, however to ponder for too long. "*Fuck you*, Malfoy. I'm fed up of your bullshit, you can't do this. I want to know where you keep disappearing off to, and why you left my practice early today."

"Too bad then, isn't it, because I'm not going to tell you."

"Tell me!" Kierre yelled angrily, slamming Draco into the wall again as he did so.

Draco bit back a cry of pain. "No way! I've told you before- mind your own business. It's nothing to do with you, it's for *me* to know, where I go and who I see so *get off my case, asshole.*"

"I know you've told me that before, but it's not good enough!" Flecks of Kierre's spit flew at Draco. "I want answers!"

"Tough shit, you're not getting them!"

Kierre roared in anger. He tightened his grip on Draco's shoulders and moved closer to him. Draco could smell his stale breath as Kierre began to speak in a low voice.

"You listen to me, Malfoy. You may think you're great because *daddy's* rich, but believe me, I *will* find out what you're up to. And I don't care what it takes. I'm not going to leave you alone until I know...and that's a *promise*."

Draco closed his eyes, trying to ignore the pain. Finally Kierre let him go and turned away again. Draco waited until he had rounded the corner before sinking to the floor shaking. He knew Kierre was no more intelligent than either Crabbe or Goyle, but Kierre was more dangerous than both of them together. Draco knew he would keep that promise...

*But how the hell does he know there's something to find out?* Draco asked himself. *I thought I'd been careful...but then Kierre has always hated me.... I wouldn't put it past him to be watching me...he must have noticed how often I'm going out...and how I'm not talking any more...*

Was it his fault? Would the blame lie with him if he and Potter were caught and had to face the terrible consequences? And what exactly would Kierre do when he found out?

*He's not going to find out,* Draco told himself firmly. *I'll make sure of that...*

He resolved not to tell Potter about Kierre, he had enough to worry about without that too. He stood up and steadied himself against the wall for a minute.

More to calm himself that anything else he said out loud in a very quiet voice, "Kierre's not my main problem.... as long as I'm careful he won't know anything about it.... my main problem now is when I'm next going to see Potter..."

Besides, if they really were in love then they could stand whatever curses were sent their way...With a slight smile on his lips, despite himself, Draco set off after Kierre back to the Slytheirn common room.

~~~~~

"Hi Harry, come in and sit down. I'll just be a few minutes."

Harry entered Swan's office and dodged around the items on the floor to get to a chair.

"What's it all for?"

Swan looked at him and smiled. "You'll see in a few minutes. Right I think that's done..." She stood up and strode across the room towards him. "Harry, the spell we're going to cast tonight is very powerful. It's not a dark spell, but you couldn't exactly call it light either...tonight, and probably tomorrow as well you're going to feel very weak. You will be particularly susceptible to any legilimency...in other words, any connection between you, Draco and Voldemort will be especially clear tonight. That's not going to be nice so I've got a potion for a dreamless sleep here, which I'll give you before you go. We'll still see what you would've seen though."

Harry nodded. "Who's going to be able to see the connection? Will it be just you, or other people too?"

"It depends. I'll get everything directly, because I'm the one performing the spell. I've got the Book, you see. But if I chose to let someone else see an image, I can allow them access to the Book, too."

"The Book?"

Swan bent down and picked up a heavy green book with a black spine from the floor. It looked very old. "This isn't a common spell, so the Books are rare. There's only four in existence. This one's been in my family for generations. When you, Draco or Voldemort experience the connection what you see will be written here in the Book, word for word. It happens automatically. When I wish to see what you saw all I need to do is read the Book."

"But then how will you be able to see what I see? You could imagine a place to look one way, when in fact it looks another."

"This Book isn't like any other book Harry. When I read what is written in here the book takes over my imagination. It shows me exactly what I need to know."

Harry nodded, but he still didn't understand.

Swan continued. "If you see something, say in the middle of the night you saw Voldemort speaking of his plans, this Book will give me the warning. And even if I'm not in my office, I've already cast a spell that will let me know." She paused. "I think we should start now. Are you ready?" He nodded mutely.

"Please come and stand in the middle of the Diamond, Harry. He did as he was told. On the floor was a roughly drawn line which glowed bright blue. At two of the four points of the Diamond there were dark objects Harry couldn't make out. In the centre was a small raised platform, which Harry stood on.

"Can I have your wand please, Harry?"

He handed it over apprehensively, noticing that, as Swan took it, she didn't actually step inside the Diamond. She took out her own wand and placed its tip to Harry's. She then closed her eyes and muttered some spell Harry could not hear. There was a brief moment when a flash of gold light lit up the connection between the wands, but other than that nothing else happened. Swan then laid her wand at one of the Diamond's bare points, and placed Harry's on the other. Immediately the blue line began to glow and shimmer, as though something was moving through it.

"The connection is now complete," Swan said in a deep voice. She began to chant something in a language Harry did not understand with her eyes closed. She opened her eyes a minute later, and now the silence in the room was absolute. She raised her hand and waved her fingers. The torches around the room went out, so the only light now came from the blue line on the floor. As this light surged, Harry felt a strange sensation in his spine, as though the light and the power it held were surging through his own body, too.

"Harry," Swan said, "do you give me permission to come within the Diamond?"

Harry was confused for a moment at this odd request, but then he realised that this must be a part of the spell.

"Yes," he said quietly, trying to stop his voice from shaking.

Swan stepped over her own wand to get inside the Diamond. "Please remain on the stage, Harry, or the connection will be broken." She strode over to the point behind Harry and returned with a bronze Goblet, whose intricate carvings reflected the blue light. She handed it to him. "Please drink the contents of the Goblet in three sips, to represent the three members bound to this connection."

Harry took the Goblet and drank its watery contents as he had been instructed. Swan took the Goblet from him and replaced it on its point. She then picked up the object on the point directly in front of

Harry. It was a small glass sphere which reminded him of a Remembrall or...the Prophecy. Inside was a dense black fog. Swan gave it to him; it was small enough for him to hide it in his hand.

"Please look into the Sphere, Harry, and repeat the words I am going to tell you..."

She told him what to say, and he lifted the Sphere to eye-level and said, "Three shall be bound to the connection. Harry James Potter, Draco Malfoy and Tom Marvolo Riddle: The Dark Lord Voldemort shall be bound together." As he said the words the black fog changed slowly from black, to grey, to white, and then back to black.

Again Swan took it and replaced it.

"OK, Harry. Now I'm going to open the Book." She picked up the green book at Harry's feet and placed her hand on the cover. Her mouth moved soundlessly, but suddenly the black spine burst into life with silver marks and what looked like runes wriggling across it. Swan opened it and showed it to Harry.

The first page had no title. Instead Harry saw a page of intricate writing. He began to read. *'This book was created to see into the mind. The power comes from a source where no living man has ever trod. It-'* as Harry finished reading the first line the world changed. He knew he was still reading, but instead he could now see the source of power the book was describing, as clearly as though he were really standing there.

There was a great arch ahead of him, made of huge stones. He somehow moved through it into a long room, which was reminiscent of a dungeon. Along the length of the room, for as far as he could see, was a path of jet-black stone, surrounded by a tiny stream of water on either side. He began to move down it. As he did so he noticed that the walls were covered in the same runes and marks as those of the spine of the Book, all moving frantically.

He looked up and saw no ceiling to the room, just an endless black. As he finally reached the end of the black path he saw another arch, identical to the first. He went through it...

He became aware of the world again and read the last line of the page, *'-the same stone.'*

He finished reading and looked up at Swan, feeling slightly shaken. She smiled at him.

"Harry James Potter," she said in the same low voice, "as you are the Primary Binder, the seal of this spell lies with you. Only you can close the Book."

With that she stepped back over her wand and stood outside the perimeter of the Diamond once more.

Nervously, and being careful not to step off the stand, he sat down upon it and placed the Book open on his knees. He placed his hand on the cover as though to close it and felt the power surge through him once more. It was as though the runes had flowed into his hands and up his body. When the feeling had passed, concentrating fully on the spell and what he was doing, he shut the book. It closed with, not just a snap, but with an enormous thunderclap. Immediately the blue line burst into flames, surrounding him in a Diamond of Fire. He cried out-his wand was somewhere in that blaze!

As suddenly as it had started the fire was extinguished, leaving the Sphere, the Goblet and both wands looking completely untouched.

But no blue line.

Swan rushed forwards, took the book from his arms, and helped him up.

"Well done, Harry," she said breathlessly.

"What was that? Is it complete? Did it work?"

"It is complete, the flames were showing that. And, yes, it worked. As for the thunder, that's the Book's "warning" that it gives me when a connection is made between any of you. Don't worry, no one else will hear it, I've sealed it into my office. And as I say, even if I'm not here, I'll know."

"Is there anything else I need to do?"

"No, that's it now. Obviously you'll still get the...well, the *visions*, and we can't help that. Nor can we help what you feel or how you react, I'm afraid. But we'll know what they are."

"Will the other two be able to tell the spell has been cast?"

"No. They won't feel any different. They cannot know. They won't have felt anything tonight and they never will."

Harry nodded, and then asked the question he knew he must.

"When does the spell stop? How long before you can't see what I see any more?"

"Well...there are two ways...hopefully when we tell it to. We'd use another spell- though it is more complicated. But we can do it. That won't be for a while though- years, probably. But.... there is one other, less desirable way..."

She did not elaborate. She did not need to, for Harry, whether through instinct or something else, knew what she was talking about : *Death*.

"Professor?"

"Mmm?"

"Will it...will you...can the Book show you anything other than the true connection?" He tried not to let his face burn red as he said it, but she had to ask. He really didn't want anyone seeing the dreams he often had since Christmas...

"No. It can only sense things to do with the connection. Even if you and Draco had a connection about...well...something *private*...the Book couldn't pick it up. It would be nothing to do with Voldemort do the connection wouldn't be total-it has to involve all three of you in some way shape or form...the Book and I would see nothing."

He nodded in relief.

It was some small comfort to know that others could see what he saw-even if they never could experience the pain, the terror and much else besides....

~~~~~

Ginny stared at herself in the full-length mirror in her dormitory. She was alone, for everyone else was in the common room, and she'd set a signal so she would be forewarned if anyone were approaching.

She was naked. She often stood like that, before the mirror, casting a very critical eye over her appearance.



Any onlooker would have seen a slender young woman, with a desirable figure and striking features. All Ginny saw was a frumpy fifteen year old girl with dark red hair-which she hated, not only because of the prejudices about red heads, but also because it made her stand out so much.

She had always failed to see the beautiful colour and texture of her hair, which fell gracefully around her delicate face, failed to see the perfect fair skin, which showed off her deep-red lips so well.

The girl was playing on her mind. She wished she knew more about her, but how could she when she had no idea what her name was? She didn't even know what *house* she was in, for God's sake! So why the hell did Ginny have to feel so strongly about her when she was unattainable?

*And even if she does know who I am, and even if we did become friends...there's no chance she'd gay. None at all...there's no chance she'll fall in love with me...*she thought miserably. Her thoughts were becoming more depressing still.

"Just go for it."

She remembered Harry's words. But she couldn't act on them- no way. If she did she would be risking everything- friends, total humiliation, coming out to the whole school not to mention her parents...and most of all she'd be risking her *dignity*.

The mirror in front of her suddenly frosted over: the warning.

"Shit!" she muttered, diving for her nightclothes. After a tense battle to free her head from the nightdress she finally managed to pull it on just as the door opened.

"Oh...hi Ginny. I didn't know you were in here. I've just come to get my quill," the girl said as she crossed over to her bed and began rummaging in her trunk. It was Jess Parkes. She was the kind of girl who was sweet and perfect to your face, but the instant you turned your back she became a total bitch.

"Hi Jess," Ginny said as naturally as she could; as she tried to reach her wand to wipe the mirror clear again. Finally she reached it and muttered "*Claritus!*" just a split second before Jess straightened up, quill in hand. When she had gone Ginny sat down on the end of her bed, deep in thought. Then, very suddenly as though she had come to some decision, she leapt up, out of the door, and ran down the staircase, trying to compose herself as she did so.

Harry looked up to see her standing in front of him, just as she had done the night Ron found out about him being gay.

"Harry, fancy a chat?" she said determinedly.

Something about her over-bright eyes told him that this wasn't a question. He led her upstairs to his dormitory.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Nothing...well.... something...I'm not really sure."

It didn't take Harry long to work out what she was talking about.

"Have you seen her since?"  
She shook her head.

"Not even in the Great Hall?"

"No. Even if she were there I wouldn't see her...I try to stick to my friends, really. And get out of there as fast as I can...in case Ron's there, you know."

"What! I thought he was OK about you?"

"He is...its just...well he's not exactly used to it yet. He's just being really civil to me, but not exactly friendly. It's getting better though, I think he's starting to accept it."

A hundred more curses aimed at Ron ran through Harry's mind, but he pushed them aside as Ginny went on.

"It just feels so horrible...feeling this way about someone, and not being able to tell them-ever. And knowing that it'll never get any better. And then there's all the stuff about thinking that I'm stupid because I feel like this. How can you be in love with someone you've only exchanged unfriendly words with? It's ridiculous. But I know I feel something...something big. I've no idea how or why, but I do."

"And is it?"

"Is it what?"

"Love."

"I'm not sure. It feels like it...or at least it feels like it *could* become love... but I know it's strong. I've never believed in love at first sight, though."

"You'll have to do something."

"I know that!" she snapped. "But what?"

"Try and find her. If you can't let her know exactly how you feel then at least let her know you'd like to start again- as in not hurl abuse at each other. Become friends first- no one can go straight from being strangers to being lovers, it takes time."

"I can't," she whispered hopelessly, "it'd be so much worse having a little but never being able to have more-"

"You don't know that," Harry interrupted. "She might give you more."

Ginny ignored him and went on. "-I'd rather have nothing at all than only a bit."

"Believe me," Harry said quietly, "*nothing* is worse than not having anything."

Ginny was quiet for a moment-she wasn't sure she did believe him. Then she said, "Anyway, even if she *is* gay, by some miracle, then there's no way she'd ever fancy *me*."

"How do you know that?"

Ginny spread her arms, inviting him to look at her. "Er...hello, Harry? Look at me...no one in their right mind would fall in love with this-let alone the most gorgeous girl I've ever seen!"

"WHAT?" Harry thundered. "What the hell are you talking about? You're gorgeous!"

They spent the rest of the evening arguing about Ginny's obvious beauty, which she failed to see. She tried to change the subject more than once, and though Harry was sorely tempted to tell her about the spell and the Connection, he refrained and continued talking about Ginny.

By the time Ginny had left and he had got into bed he felt totally exhausted, even though it was only early. This, he supposed, was the effect of the spell. He certainly felt weak and almost nauseous. He tried to summon up the energy to lift the Goblet full of potion for a Dreamless Sleep, but slumped back onto his pillow in weariness. As he made to sit up again he yelled in agony as his scar began to burn as though it were being branded onto his skin. He was aware of nothing around him- only the pain inside him. Seconds later a horribly familiar voice filled his head.

"Good," Voldemort crowed. "And so my plans progress...it will be a while before we go any further, but rest assured his day will come...we shall meet again... for the sixth and final time!" He began to laugh maliciously; a noise which made Harry retch. It was this that brought him back to himself.

His scar still burned as he tried desperately not to think of the words Voldemort had uttered...he must take the potion...

He drank it in one and as he fell back again onto his pillows again his last comforting thought was "Swan knows."

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Draco sat in the high-backed armchair rigidly, not joining in the conversation around him. He desperately wanted to go to bed, to be alone, but he knew it would look suspicious if he went straight downstairs-he was famous for being the last to go to bed, and one of the first to rise in the morning. And besides, that would mean Kierre had won.

Finally, though, he could stand it no longer. "I'm going to bed," he announced. "I feel sick." This was greeted by various grunts from those around him, which he took to be acknowledgement. As he passed Kierre their eyes locked, glaring into each other...the obvious hatred was almost pulsing between them. When at last he reached the empty staircase he took several deep breaths to steady himself, and virtually ran down the stairs.

Lying in bed he thought over his situation. It was potentially deadly, he knew. Firstly because he and Potter were now real- a true couple. They couldn't hide if forever, it would have to come out sooner-or-later. And what, then, would his father do when he found out? And Voldemort? Not only was he gay but also he would be seen as a traitor, he had picked the worse person possible to fall in love with and now he would become the enemy. In Voldemort's eyes he would be as bad as Potter himself. It would have to remain secret for as long as they could possibly keep it.

And of course, closer to home, was Kierre. He didn't like to think what Kierre would do if he found out-not congratulate him, that was certain.

The Prophecy was by far the worst, though. He didn't envy Potter one bit, and couldn't begin imagine what he must be feeling.... if Draco was honest with himself, he was terrified. He was terrified for Potter, but he knew he must not let it show. He was terrified for himself too- he stood to lose his best friend and the only person he truly loved and that was almost more than he could bear. He was scared for the rest of the world to, because if Potter failed, and Voldemort lived, what then would happen?

In the end, he thought, it all comes down to Potter...if it wasn't for him I wouldn't care that Voldemort is evil, I wouldn't be in danger, and we wouldn't have these problems.

Inside, though, he knew that Potter was the only thing that kept him going. He would rather have Potter and all these problems, than no Potter and an easy life.

As he realised that he remembered Potter's words...*I love you, too*...and he thought it was strange how four, small, everyday words could become the most important words he had ever heard, and would ever hear again. Suddenly, these words were what allowed him to live.

The kiss had felt different after Potter had said it. It had meant something and it was somehow so much more real, and felt the better for it.

Yes, thought Draco, I would so much rather have all these problems, which can be beaten...as long as Potter and I are side-by-side.

Title: [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 21)

Author Name: [Purple Flame](#)

Owl the author: [here](#).

Rating: R

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

Genre: Drama, Slash

Era: The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: ♦ Letters, Quidditch and A Figure ♦ ~ Harry meets someone very interesting in the Hospital Wing, but is she who he thinks she is? Madam Pomfrey is persuaded to allow Harry to play against Hufflepuff in the second Quidditch match of the season. And someone who has very dark plans for Draco Malfoy visits the school.

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Author's Notes:

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## Chapter 21-Letters, Quidditch, and A Figure

Harry entered the Hospital Wing for his daily check-up feeling totally drained. He had felt terrible when he had woken up that morning, at that feeling had only been worsened by Double Potions, Charms and a very complex Transfiguration lesson. As he walked across the room towards Madam Pomfrey's office he noticed the girl in the bed closest to the door, who had a large gash across her face, was looking at him with an ill-disguised look of concern.

Madam Pomfrey changed his dressings for him again and gave him his usual mixture of potions.

"The Headmaster wishes to speak to you, Potter. Wait here for him, please."

He didn't have to wait long. Ten minutes later Dumbledore, accompanied by Swan once more, arrived beaming at Harry.

"Hello, Harry," he said. "How are you?"

"I'm fine. At least I'm better than I was, anyway."

"Good, good," Dumbledore mused. "Professor Jupiter tells me that the spell was performed successfully last night. Well done, Harry. This is one of the most important things the Order has done, thus far, in this War against Voldemort. And of course in helping you-attempting to relieve you of some of the pressure that your situation places upon you. How do you feel now that the spell has been performed?"

"Relieved, I suppose. But I don't think it'll make the things any easier to experience. Right now I feel really weak and ill from it."

"That'll pass," Swan said. "You just need to relax tonight, and you should regain your energy soon enough."

Harry nodded again. There was silence for a few minutes before Dumbledore spoke again.

"I have written to your Aunt, outlining what happened to you. I felt it important that she was informed."

"OK..." Harry said slowly. Something was stirring in his memory-of course! The letter she had written to him at Christmas!

"Professor?" he said at once. "I have a question. My Aunt told me that I'd be home from school a week later than normal in the summer-why?"

Dumbledore deliberated for a while before giving an answer. Finally Swan said, "Come on Albus, he's got to know eventually. It won't scare him any less if you tell him in four months time, will it? Just tell him."

"Yes..." he said heavily. "I suppose he has. Very well. Harry, at the end of the summer term you will be taken to Kings Cross Station as usual by the Hogwarts Express. You will not be met by your family, you will-if you agree to our proposals which I am sure you will- be met by members of the Order, who will take you back to headquarters.

"Why?"

"There are two reasons. Firstly, Voldemort will expect you to return to your Aunt's house. We believe he would attempt to either hurt you on your way to the house, or else lay a trap, which you and your Muggle relatives would be unable to avoid. By delaying your return to number Four, Privet Drive, by approximately seven days, Voldemort should be thrown off your trail. By the time you return to the house any magic placed on or around it will have been removed, either by the passage of time of the Order. We are also hoping to place a guard from the Order at the house in case Voldemort or his Death Eaters are foolish enough to risk an attempt to harm you there, and also to ensure that all the Dursleys are in their correct state of mind."

"And the second reason?"

"We would like you to become more involved in the Order, Harry. You have done too much for us to not be allowed a more active role. This week will be a valuable experience for you." He did not elaborate. Harry was too relieved to finally know why his return to Privet Drive would be delayed, and was also very glad that the Order seemed to be taking him seriously at last, to ask for more details.

"Well," said Dumbledore cheerfully, "now that I am happy that you are healthy I shall depart, Harry. Good day." He turned to leave but Swan coughed pointedly. "Oh! Of course!" he cried. "I have been asked to deliver this to you, Harry." He handed him a letter sealed with green wax. Then he waved his wand, the watery screen around Harry vanished and he strode away, Swan at his side.

Harry looked down at the letter and slit it open.

*Dear Harry,*

*By rights I should be giving you a reprimand for doing what you did. However, I would then have to punish myself for giving you the details, so I'm not going to. And besides, you've had more than enough of a punishment already.*

*You were incredibly brave, doing what you did. Following Snape into the midst of a raid was probably not your brightest idea, but even Snape himself has had trouble denying your bravery.*

*The information you found out is invaluable Harry-the only good thing to come out of that night. We can use it to great effect and the Order has already started to investigate it.*

*Swan has been giving me regular updates on your health and I'm glad you're getting better. I'm sorry I couldn't come to see you, but I've been rather busy recently. I assumed Ron would have been with you (as usual) when you followed Snape, but Swan tells me you're not talking. She won't say why. I'm sure you'll resolve it-it can't be that serious. Molly wrote him a letter about it but apparently he just wrote back telling her to mind her own business and that he didn't want to be associated with you.*

*But if Ron wasn't with you, who was? I know there was someone, because though Swan is a very good liar she forgets that I grew up with the Marauders-I can detect these things. She says you'll tell me "when you're ready." So...?*

*Jane Finnegan was a very close friend of Swan's, and she's devastated about what happened to her. Look after her for me, will you Harry? I'll have to finish here but I hope to see you soon Harry. And don't worry about Ron.*

*Remus.*

Harry didn't know whether to smile or frown at the letter, so he just folded it up and put it inside his robes. He stood up and walked towards the door, thinking about dinner.

Suddenly he felt very light-headed, the world was lurching all around him and there were dark patches twisting in front of his eyes. He collapsed forwards towards the floor-but a pair of arms caught him gently and took him to the nearest bed.

He tried to see who it was, but felt far too nauseous to open his eyes.

"Just lie still for a minute, you'll be OK soon," said a soft female voice. He did as he was told and sure enough, he was soon able to see properly without pain. Standing over his bed and checking his temperature was a petite girl with long, dark brown hair which hung around her shoulders. She had very pale skin, dark eyes and blood-red lips.

"How do you feel?" she asked quietly. He found her voice very calming.

"Bit sick," he said thickly.

"You're very hot. Do you know why it happened?"

"Yeah, I think so," he said, attempting a smile. He tried to get up but the girl pushed him back down.

"No you don't. Not yet. Just rest for a bit. Madam Pom-"

"No! I don't need her, I'll be fine!"

"OK, but you're not moving yet," she said unperturbed. She conjured a goblet of ice-cold water. "Sip that. It'll help. I said *sip*! Don't gulp!"

"How do you know to do this?"

She smiled. "My mum's a healer. I've read her textbooks."

Harry managed to sit up a bit. "What's your name?"

"Jodie Hunter. I'm a sixth year. Slytherin. Don't worry; I'm not like them, I'm not a true Slytherin. That's why I've got this," she pointed at the cut on her face, "I'm only in Slytherin for the good qualities. I know your name, so I won't ask."

Harry laughed. Normally he'd resent recognition, but he couldn't help liking this girl.

"Well, thanks, Jodie. Am I allowed to go yet?"

She looked at him critically. "I suppose so. But be careful."

"I will." He stood up and tried to stop swaying.

"Bye then, Harry," she said and walked back to her bed as if nothing had happened.

He looked back at her with a slight frown on his face.

*Was it her?*

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There was a light breeze in the cool air around the Quidditch Stadium. Winter was dying and so the sun shone weakly upon the Hogwarts grounds. Fourteen players stood in the centre of the pitch, eager to begin the match.

Harry was with them. He had almost had to beg a reluctant Madam Pomfrey to allow him to play, but in the end -after promising he would play as carefully as he could, not strain himself too much, and take a special strengthening Potion beforehand-she had relented. In the end, though, it was Dumbledore telling Madam Pomfrey that he would be at the match to oversee things that really swung it for Harry.

Harry heard Madam Hooch's whistle blow and he kicked off hard. He rose higher than any other player, so the only thing he could see of the match were scarlet and yellow blobs. It was a wonderful feeling; here, away from everything, he felt free. He didn't feel the weight of the Prophecy, or his argument with Ron, and forgot about Voldemort. Now the only thing that mattered was this Quidditch match...

He saw a red figure shoot away from the rest of the crowd and a smaller red dot go through a hoop, then came a magnified voice, "And Ginny Weasley has scored the first goal of the match with an excellent shot! Gryffindor lead ten-nil!" Harry grinned, he knew that Ginny was concentrating on Quidditch to take her mind off the girl, and it seemed to have paid off. He hadn't mentioned anything about Jodie Hunter, he wasn't even sure if it *was* the right person...

He flew a little lower, the better to see the Snitch. He dodged a Bludger and watched Ron make a great save, but he did not celebrate. His feud with Ron may have been forgotten when he was away from everyone, but nearer to the ground it was still ever-present.

He scoured the stadium for the Snitch, but saw no telltale glint of gold. Over the other side of the pitch was the Hufflepuff Seeker, having no more luck than Harry. Ginny had soon scored another three goals, and each time Harry circled the stadium at top speed to celebrate, trying to work off his urge to yell and cheer in a most undignified fashion.

He was feeling better than he had in a long time; his injuries were hardly painful at all, he felt free and away from the pressures of who he was, and was focused on the thing he enjoyed most.

Then he saw it. A tiny glint of gold at the opposite end of the stadium. Right next to the Gryffindor goal posts. And Ron. But he couldn't let that stand in his way; he darted through the air on his Firebolt, his robes whipping out behind him, the wind streaking through his hair. It was an exhilarating feeling as he urged the Broom on, closer to his target.

Mere feet from the Snitch, though, he passed Ron. Their eyes locked, and feelings of mixed hatred and sadness filled the boys at the same time. Harry tore his eyes away to concentrate on the Snitch, but then came instead to face Malfoy who was sitting in the stands- Harry experienced every emotion possible this time; confusion, love, hatred, sadness, anger, joy and terror...all from seeing two of the people he cared most about.

The Snitch looked about to change direction, Harry lunged at it just as it moved to the right almost slipping off his broom. He yelled in frustration as his hands clasped around nothing. But then-

Something brushed against his knuckles. He looked down and saw that he had hold of the tip of one of the Snitch's long but tiny silver wings. He cupped it in his other hand and then held it up in celebration. Cheers erupted across the stadium, and he saw Dumbledore getting to his feet and trying not to applaud too enthusiastically. He let go of all his dignity and whooped loudly as he landed on the ground at a run. Ginny literally landed on top of him, and gave him an enormous hug.

"YES!" She yelled. "YES! We've won Harry! One Hundred and Ninety-Nil! We are going to win the Quidditch Cup again, I know it!"

Harry tried to move her from his neck so he could breathe again, and then shook hands and hugged the rest of the team. There was only one person not there- Ron was walking back to the hanging rooms alone, just as he had done after his very first match. Harry frowned after him for a moment, but soon his view of Ron was lost as the crowd around the stands invaded the pitch.

*

Much later on Harry had finally disentangled himself from the crowds and Ginny and was able to leave the changing rooms. He was the last to leave, and sealed the entrance to the Gryffindor area as he did so. He walked across the grounds, deep in thought. He wasn't sure what he was feeling. It was an odd sense of calm under the hysteria he knew he should be feeling- he seemed to be finally accepting what the Prophecy had told him. And Malfoy... he had never in his life been happier than when he was with Malfoy, he had managed to push all his doubts aside, and now, finally, he felt secure. He felt stronger with Malfoy on his side.

He grinned to himself, wondering if it would be possible to meet up with Malfoy tonight. He just wanted to see him. A pleasant shiver ran up his spine at the thought.

Before he could think of a plan to find Malfoy something distracted him. A shadowy figure was walking up through the grounds and towards the castle, making no effort to disguise itself. It was a fairly tall, slender figure with long sweeping robes, which brushed the grass as it walked closer to the castle. It was lucky Harry was hidden near the greenhouses; he didn't like the look of the figure, even though it was making no effort to be discreet. He decided to follow it.

Silently he followed the figure's progress towards the steps to the front doors, making sure he kept to the shadows. The figure walked up the steps and towards the door. He didn't bother to knock; instead he just tapped the handle with his wand and strode through. Harry managed to run up the stairs and squeeze his body through the door before it closed. He saw the figure retreat up the marble staircase and then turn left. He followed in a silent run as the person went up a further two flights of stairs, down a long corridor and through a tapestry, where he turned left and came to a stop. Harry hid himself behind a coat of armour to see what on earth this person was doing in the staff-room corridor.

Seconds later the staff-room door opened and out walked Snape. He stopped dead when he saw the figure.

"Can I help you?" Snape said stiffly, and Harry could see he was trying to work out how the person had got in.

"Yes, Severus, I'm quite sure you can."

Harry's blood ran cold as he recognised the quiet, arrogant voice of Lucius Malfoy. Why was he here?

Malfoy went on. "I wish to see the Headmaster."

"I'm afraid the Headmaster is busy...can I be of service?"

"I wanted to talk to Dumbledore about Draco's lessons...he doesn't seem to be coming on quite as he should. I believe he may need to be paid special attention...can you help me with that?"

"I am head of Draco's house, Mr Malfoy as I am sure you know. I can ensure that he will receive the attention he needs in class. I will discuss the matter with him and then with his teachers. However if Draco was falling behind then I'm sure his teachers would have noticed."

"Quite," said Lucius lazily. "However I do feel that Draco is a *special* case. Do you not agree?"

"Of course," said Snape courteously, trying to prevent his lip from curling. "I must ask however why you did not simply send your concerns in an owl? Why are you here personally?"

"Because, my friend, I also need to speak to my son," Malfoy's voice as barely a whisper now. "I wish him to follow in my footsteps...you were present at the meetings, yes? You know what the Dark Lord and I ask of you?"

Snape inclined his head slightly. "I do. I shall fetch him from the Slytheirn Common room at once. Would you like to wait in a classroom so I can bring him to you?"

"Excellent idea."

Snape showed Malfoy into an empty room on the right and then swept down the corridor with a very ugly look on his face. Harry was tempted to follow, but, he reasoned, Draco Malfoy would be coming along here pretty soon anyway, and he didn't want to let Lucius out of his sight...

Five minutes later Snape was sweeping back down the corridor, with a white-faced Draco Malfoy trailing him. Snape didn't see Harry crouching behind the armour, but the Slytheirn boy did. His eyes widened in shock, but Harry pressed a finger to his lips to show him to be quiet. Malfoy looked back at Harry as Snape held open the door for him, but soon lost sight of him as Snape closed the door and headed down towards the staff-room again, where he ran into McGonagall. They had a hurried whispered conversation, and Harry was sure he heard the words, "Malfoy...Dumbledore..." somewhere in there. Seconds later they had both disappeared in the direction of Dumbledore's office.

Harry waited a few seconds to make sure the corridor was empty, darted out from behind the armour and pressed his ear to the classroom door.

"Draco do not interrupt me when I am talking," Lucius Malfoy's cold voice said, slightly muffled through the solid door. "I have told Snape that I am here to talk to him about your lessons. But I know, you know and he certainly knows why I am here."

"Tell me," his son said, trying to keep the terror out of his voice.

"You pretend you don't know...I am here to find out if you have used the globe I sent you at Christmas? Read the book?"

"Some of it," he lied.

"How much?"

"It's complicated...just a bit."

"Well, it's a good job I'm here then. You *must* read that book Draco. It is vitally important. You are going to become of age soon...I want to be proud of my son...we are a family of Death Eaters, and the Dark Lord will expect the same of you. I know you are ready; you will receive lessons similar to those I gave to you last year from Severus Snape. There is...a Plan. I cannot tell you what; only The Dark Lord knows what is going to happen. I know only brief details. Snape knows nothing, so he will give you all of his broad range of knowledge, which will include everything you need to know for when the Plan is put into action. You start lessons with Snape tomorrow. Do you understand?"

"Yes. But what will I have to do?"

"Everything. You will be a true Death Eater, as Lord Voldemort and I have come to expect of you. By the time it happens, you will be ready. You will prove yourself."

"I don't-"

"Shut up, Draco. It's going to happen."

Harry heard footsteps coming towards the door and dived behind the statue just in time; Lucius Malfoy opened the door and strode out. He made to walk up the corridor, but found his way blocked by Dumbledore, McGonagall and Snape.

"Ahhh, Lucius! What a great pleasure. Professor McGonagall tells me you wish to speak to me about Draco's education?"

"McGonagall?" Malfoy spat. "I didn't speak to her."

"I did," Snape said. "Minerva saw you and wondered why you were here. Lucky, don't you think, that she happened to know that Professor Dumbledore was no longer busy. When I told her of your concerns for Draco she fetched the Headmaster at once."

Lucius nodded courteously, though Harry was sure he saw a disgruntled frown cross his face.

"Let us go to my office, and discuss this further, Lucius..." Dumbledore said, sweeping Malfoy, who was looking slightly pissed off, away down the corridor.

Snape and McGonagall hurried back towards the staff-room.

"What are you going to do?" McGonagall asked.

"I'll just have to do a botched job of teaching him. If I tell Draco I won't teach him, that'll get back to his father, and bang goes my cover..."

"Be careful, Severus..." she said as they disappeared inside the room.

Harry didn't wait any longer than necessary. He straightened up and walked into the classroom where the Malfoy's had been.

"Malfoy?" he called.

Malfoy was sitting on a desk with a chalk-white face and a look of sheer terror on his face. He looked towards Harry slowly. "He wants me to do it. He wants me to be a Death Eater. Snape's going to train me. I can't do it! I hate him!"

Harry walked to him and placed a comforting hand on his shoulder. "You don't have to."

"I do. If I refuse to learn then Snape will tell my father and what do you think will happen then? I'll be handed to Voldemort!"

"You don't have to. It'll be hard to keep it from your father but you could do it. Snape's not a Death Eater, though he's about as friendly as one..."

"I know. You told me that. But how can that help me?"

"Haven't you worked it out Malfoy? Snape's actually in the Order. He's helping Dumbledore, and that's why he still pretends to be with Voldemort-he's undercover."

"How does that make it better, though, if he's got to teach me?"

"Look," said Harry patiently, "he doesn't want to teach it to you, you don't want it to be taught to you. But he thinks you want to be a Death Eater. If you tell him the truth you can both get your way and fool your father. It'll be complicated but it could work."

There was a glimmer of hope in Malfoy's eyes. "Really? Are you sure Snape would do that?"

Harry nodded. Malfoy could hardly dare to believe it-but it was his only chance.

"I'll have to trust you then."

"You will."

Malfoy sighed. "I hate my father so much.... why does he have to do this to me? To us!"

"Because Voldemort has got him," Harry said simply. "There's nothing you can do that change that. He'll always be the man he is now, Malfoy. The important thing is, you realised what was right." Malfoy smiled at him and nodded. After a pause he said, "I haven't seen you for a while, Potter."

"I know. I've been busy..."

Malfoy wanted to tell Harry about Kierre and his threats, but knew he mustn't, it wasn't fair on him. Instead he just said, "We're going to have to be even more careful from now on you know...if we're serious."

"I know we are. But that doesn't mean we have to sacrifice our fun..." Harry smiled seductively and locked the door with a spell, and put an Imperturbable charm on it.

"Really?" Malfoy said as he moved closer and Harry placed his hand around his waist.

"Honestly." His lips brushed against Malfoy's as he spoke Malfoy leaned in towards him and their lips met in a very slow gentle kiss. It was heaven.... they felt as though they were falling deeper and deeper into each other, and further and further in love.

Title: [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 22)

Author Name: [Purple Flame](#)

Owl the author: [here](#).

Rating: R

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

Genre: Drama, Slash

Era: The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: ♦A Bond Made, A Bond Broken♦~ Kierre steps things up a bit in his plan to find out what Draco is up to. Harry begins to realise what his feud with Ron means to him, and Draco♦well, he isn♦t feeling too happy at all, right now.

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Author's Notes:

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## Chapter 22- A Bond Made, A Bond Broken

"Are you with me?"

"What's in it for me?"

"Exactly the same as what's in it for me. Don't you want to know what he's up to?"

"I'll admit I'm curious. But why does it matter?"

"There's something strange about this. Something not right. I want to know what it is."

"Is anything ever 'right' about a Slytherin? Maybe he's just getting more involved in his Father's business."

"No. No, this is something much bigger, I know it. This is completely different. *He* is completely different now. I'd *love* to get something on him...so...are you with me or not?"

"Of course I am. But I have a question: why me?"

"Because you're the only one who seems to hate the little rat as much as I do. You can see through him, unlike the rest of the idiots around here."

"OK. I'll admit to that." As he said it, though he knew it wasn't *quite* true. It was hatred, but not for the reasons everyone thought. "So what do I have to do?"

"Worm your way in. Make friends with him if you have to-"

"That'll never work. He knows how I feel about him. He'd get too suspicious."

"Why would he? He doesn't know you're working with me."

"Not the point. You're forgetting that the guy's intelligent-he's not stupid. He'd guess sooner or later, and I don't think either of us wants that."

"Fine. Blackmail him then, force it out of him, use you wand or your fists...anything...I'll be doing my own thing, trying to force him to tell. If there's two of us working at it, he'll crack before long."

"OK. But let me do this my own way. OK. I'm going to be subtler than you, all right? I'm not going to dive in there straight away and ask him what he's up to. Give me time."

"I will do. But not too long."

"Fine by me. Oh, and by the way."

"What?"

"No one is going to find out we're working together, understand?"

"Perfectly. OK. That's a deal then." Kierre extended his hand out towards the other boy, who hesitated for a moment before shaking it in his own, an odd glint in his eye.

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Professor Flitwick stood on his usual pile of books and beamed around at them all. "OK everyone, please partner the person closest to you so you can observe each other performing this Charm. It is quite complex, as we saw last lesson, so please do not distract each other. It's going to get very noisy in here, so I will lock the sound into the room. And please be *sensible*, we could really do without another major incident..."

Harry turned around. Hermione, who had already mastered this charm, was not in her seat. Professor Flitwick had got her to take Neville Longbottom up to the hospital wing because he had somehow set fire to his hair and robes already this lesson, when attempting to demonstrate the Charm. Seamus and Dean were working together, as always, Parvati and Lavender were partnering each other and so that meant-

The only person he could partner was Ron.

Shit, he thought. *Why? This is so bloody typical...and I can't get out of this one, either.*

Ron was feeling, if possible, even worse about this pairing. "Fine. Let's get this over with then. I'll go first," Ron said aggressively, deliberately not looking at Harry.

Harry had to fight hard not to hex Ron as he looked at his sullen face, full of hatred, and saw how Ron was deliberately staying as far away from him as he possibly could. *Just remember*, he told himself, *it's him who's got a problem, not you.*

"Fine," he replied coolly. "But don't worry, Ron. You won't catch anything, no matter how close you get."

Ron shot him an angry glare and said quietly, "Shut the fuck up, Potter. I'm not interested in what you have to say. And I'm not thick you know."

Harry watched as Ron directed his wand at his larynx and said "*Sonorous!*" A jet of silver light encircled Ron's neck. He swallowed and said, "Did it work, then?" His voice sounded oddly as though someone was messing with a volume dial.

"Not properly. Try again."

Ron scowled at him as he repeated his actions once more, still avoiding Harry's gaze. "How about

now?" His angry voice filled the room, bouncing off the walls and echoing slightly. The spell had worked.

Everyone in the room looked at him in amazement, including Harry and Professor Flitwick. Ron even looked stunned himself. "I did it," he said, sounding very confused. "I've done it already... only Hermione got it faster!"

"Well *done* Mr Weasley!" Flitwick squealed, clearly astounded that Ron had mastered such a difficult charm so quickly. "Quite amazing! Let's see what everyone else can do, now! Come on everyone!"

Ron smiled in a self-satisfied way.

"Well done," said Harry politely, though they both knew he didn't mean it.

"Sure," Ron spat. "Come on then, lets see how well the famous Potter can do on this one. You don't like to be beaten, do you? Can you get it *first* time round then? What if you don't? Will you go crying to your *boy*-"

"Shut up!" Harry yelled angrily. "Don't you dare talk about that! Especially with other people here, and *especially* with that spell on you!"

A few people looked around curiously, but turned away again when Harry glared at them.

"You're so touchy," Ron said lightly, knowing it would piss Harry off. "Go on then. Let's see how well you can do it. *Quietus*."

Harry snatched up his own wand, longing to punch Ron in the face. The room was beginning to fill with the sounds of different voices, magically magnified to different levels and pitches as the others tried to grasp the charm. He pointed his wand at his throat, remembering how Ludo Bagman had done the same at the Quidditch World Cup nearly three years go.... it seemed such a long time ago, when everything had been different. It seemed to be in a completely different lifetime. Voldemort was still gone, Harry hadn't known anything about the Prophecy or his future, Sirius had still been alive, Percy had been a real part of the Weasley family, he and Ron had still been the best of friends, and he didn't have to face all the problems that he did now.... suddenly a huge wave of sadness broke over him as he realised that with Ron not talking to him, he had lost almost every last part of the time when he had felt safe. There was nothing left any more.

"No..." he said hopelessly, lowering his wand. "It's all gone, Ron."

"What the *hell* are you talking about?" Ron hissed viciously. "I think you're having another *funny turn*, you're lucky Rita Skeeter isn't around."

Harry ignored him, gathered up his things and turned to leave. "Professor Flitwick," he said loudly, "I really don't feel very well. I think I'm going to go up to the Hospital Wing..."

"Oh, of course. That's fine, Potter, absolutely fine," Flitwick said, sounding concerned.

Harry left the room, trying to ignore the bitter look on Ron's face. He felt trapped in this new life he didn't want...there was not one shred of the life he had led before all this had happened left...he was suddenly feeling so claustrophobic...he needed some kind of release from the sheer torment of it all.

He broke into a run, his whole body feeling the harsh pounding of his heart. He wanted to run forever and never have to stop, he wanted to yell until all the pain was gone, and he wanted to blame Ron for all his problems.

But that wasn't fair. Not everything was Ron's fault. But if he could just have Ron back it would be bearable...life would be more normal...

He hadn't registered where he was running. He slumped against a door, trying to work out where he was. It was a few seconds before he realised that he was outside the door of the room where he and Malfoy had met so often. Yesterday's Room. He fumbled for the handle and entered the dark, cool room gratefully. He felt safe here; the warm memories made him feel comfortable.

He slumped into the corner feeling drowsy. Wiping his face on his robes he realised it was soaking wet- he hoped only with sweat. He tried to regain his breath, fought the fire in his lungs and willed the pains which made his wounds seem raw again to leave his shaking body.

*

Much later on Harry was still sitting in the same corner. He hadn't moved, but had just sat in a zombie-like daze all day, staring at the opposite wall, but hardly noticing it. He really did feel sick now, and he was still shaking slightly. The same thoughts, questions, and images were going round and round constantly inside his head, amking the whole thing worse...

The door creaked open. Harry looked up sharply, his heart beating fast once more. He couldn't see who or what it was. He stood up slowly and silently-perhaps they hadn't realised there was anyone in here? Pressing himself against the corner and into the cover of the dark shadows he waited.

A figure came around the door cautiously. Harry breathed deeply; bracing himself...he couldn't see their face...

"Potter?" said the figure.

"Malfoy?" whispered Harry, amazed. "Is that you?"

Malfoy moved further into the room, locked the door and lit the torches. "Yes, it's me! What are you doing in here?"

"I- nothing. How did you know I was in here, Malfoy?"

"Ginny said no one had seen you all day, but told me that Parvati told her that you were ill in Charms...I went and checked, but you weren't in the Hospital Wing, Madam Pomfrey looked a bit worried, to tell you the truth, so I thought you might be in here. What's up, Potter?"

"Nothing I- I just can't..."

"Come on. Tell me."

"I was thinking...about...about how it was before."

"Before?"

"Yes. Before any of this. And part of me wishes I could go back. Back to how it was. Without Voldemort, or the Prophecy, with Sirius alive and with Ron speaking to me-" his voice cracked with the emotion. Malfoy walked to him and embraced him.

"If you did that, you'd be going back to a time when we weren't together. You wouldn't have me. We wouldn't be together...you'd still hate me."

"I know. That's the only reason I'm not giving up."

"Look, you *can't* just keep going round in circles. It'll destroy you."

"I know," Harry whispered into Malfoy's shoulder. "I know that but it's so hard."

"You promised me, remember? You promised you wouldn't do this, because there's nothing you can do. Nothing. No matter what happens, you can't dwell on it. It'll be over one day, but no one knows how it's going to end yet, so you've got to enjoy the time before it happens, OK?"

Harry screwed up his eyes. "I just need something to remind me that it's not all bad. That there's something left. I need something good."

Malfoy didn't say anything for a moment. When he did his voice was slightly cold and distant. "Am I not good enough, then?"

"Of course you are it's just...I need something different as well. What we have is the best, but...it can't give me everything."

"Meaning what?"

"I need a friend. Just a friend with no love involved. I need Ron to speak to me again-"

"Listen to yourself," Malfoy said, though he sounded like he was trying to stop himself shouting. "What you *need* is irrelevant. We all *need* something we don't have. Sometimes I *need* to speak to you, just as a friend but I can't. And I can't be patient with you forever, either, Potter. If what we've got isn't good enough for you then fine, just tell me. Then you'll get what you, want, you'll get Weasley back-"

Harry interrupted him. "No! You know I don't mean that! I would *never* want us to stop loving each other. You know how much you mean to me. You're the only thing that has got me through the last few weeks-you're the only person who understands me, Malfoy. Why are you being like this?" His bewildered voice showed his confusion and panic.

"I'm being like this because I have tried my hardest to make you happy! I've tried to make you see that we can't change the situation, so we've got to enjoy everything we have, but you just won't listen! You're going on about it, and we can't get anywhere like that! I'm sorry, but if you can't be happy at least when we're together I can't go on! I can't live with it being like this! Do you understand? I was so happy when you told me you loved me, but I don't know if you meant it. I can't be sure that that's what you really feel. I need you to love me *totally*. And with the way you are, Potter, I don't think you do. You're still confused and so you're living in denial. I'm right, aren't I? You don't really love me, Potter, and you and I both know it."

"I do!" said Harry, confused and angry. "Malfoy I don't know what you... I... I just find it so hard!"

"I know you do, and I don't blame you! I find it hard, too! But by dwelling on it you're ruining my life as well as your own. Potter, you're all I have, and at the moment that's a pretty crap situation to be in!"

"What do you mean?"

"What we have is all that keeps- no, wait, what we *had* is all that *kept* me going. I've tried and I've tried, but it's just not working. I'm really sorry, Potter." He flung himself around, tried to compose himself and then strode out of the door determinedly, leaving Harry standing alone in the middle of the room, choking on his tears, feeling lonely, and totally lost.

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Draco pounded down the long corridors, wanting nothing but to be alone. The halls and stairs seemed to stretch on forever...denying him his wish...mocking him...he fought tears, he fought rage, and he fought sheer terror.

He had no idea why he had just done what he had. It had all become too much for him to bear. No matter what he said to Potter he just was not going to listen...and Draco knew he could not go on like that. Better that it destroy the relationship than allow it to destroy either of the boys...

But it *had* destroyed the boys. Draco's feelings towards Potter hadn't changed a bit. He still felt that enormous love for him, he still felt pain when he wasn't with him, and he still knew that Potter was the only thing he could live for. Now he had told Potter he didn't want to be with him any more he had ruined everything that had ever meant anything to him. He wasn't sure if it was the right thing to have done, but right now it felt so wrong- he had just thrown away the last remainder of everything he lived for.

So why had he done it?

He hung his head trying not to see the world, and attempting to block the world from seeing him. Had he ruined it all? Had he destroyed his only hope of happiness?

*No*, said a little truthful voice inside his head. *Potter would have destroyed the happiness in the end. There would have been no happiness at all if you had gone on like that.*

"Ow! Bloody Hell! Look where you're going, Malfoy!"

He looked up sharply, too see Ginny Weasley glaring at him angrily, rubbing her arm where they had collided with each other. As she saw his expression, though, her anger quickly faded into worry.

"What is it? What's up?" she asked, frowning in concern.

"Nothing," Draco lied, trying to get away from her. She caught his arm forcefully, and made him turn to face her.

"Tell me, Malfoy. What's happened?" she said, more urgently.

"Nothing!" he said more firmly. "Go and ask Potter why don't you? He'll tell you everything. And he won't be lying- it *is* my fault!" He wrenched himself from her grasp and strode down the corridors faster, breathing deeply, until he finally reached the entrance to the Slytherin common room. He leant his head against the cool stone wall, calming himself down and trying to summon the energy to say the password.

"Tro-" he began.

"Hey, Malfoy. What's wrong? Are you OK?" said a voice. Draco whipped around to face whoever it was, inwardly praying that his face was clear.

"Foster," he said quietly. "Why aren't you at dinner? What do you want?"

The other boys said the password, took him by the elbow and steered him into the Common Room. "Calm down, Malfoy. Look, lets go in here, and you can tell me why you're nearly in tears, OK? I thought Malfoy's didn't cry... come on." his voice was gentle, and Draco felt soothed by it. But he was determined to be by himself.

"I can't I just want to be alone. What do you want?"

"You," said Foster. Draco looked up, frowning slightly. "I want to talk to you."

**Title:** [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 23)

**Author Name:** [Purple Flame](#)

**Owl the author:** [here](#).

**Rating:** R

**Spoilers:** PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

**Genre:** Drama, Slash

**Era:** The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

**Main Character(s):** D, G, H, Hr

**Ship(s):** D/H, Hr/R

**Summary:** Promises ~ Foster and Draco have a conversation, which leaves poor Draco even more confused than he was before. And after Draco and Harry's argument it's up to Ginny to make them see sense; a difficult task when they're all as stubborn as each other.

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**Author's Notes:**

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Chapter 23-Promise

Foster sat in an armchair opposite Draco's. He was looking at him with what could have been a concerned and quizzical expression.

"Are you going to tell me what's up Malfoy?"

Draco was feeling too drained to put up much of a fight, he was too full of emotion to think properly...

"I can't," he muttered.

"Why not?"

"I just can't. You wouldn't understand."

"Why not? Why don't you try me?"

Draco frowned. Something wasn't right.

"Since when did you or anyone else in this house care about other people? And especially me? You've never said more than two words to me before now, what's changed?"

"I have," Foster said simply. It sounded like an admission. "I realised everything around us...this house...this life...it isn't what life's about. I can't *enjoy* living my life like this. I'm still a Slytherin, don't get me wrong but...I'm not who you think I am. I've realised certain things." Foster's cheeks were tinged with pink now, but Draco didn't notice. Foster couldn't stop himself from continuing. "And you've changed as well."

"What?" Draco snapped. "No I haven't."

"You have. Not many people have noticed-they haven't got the brains for a start- but I can see it. You and me, we're more similar than either of us realised. We seem to have finally begun to understand that we can take a different path in life."

"You'll never understand what I do," Draco said shortly.

"Maybe not," Foster said patiently, "but surely it's worth a try?"

"Not really, no. This is my business. And even if I *did* tell...well, I couldn't say if I wanted to."

"Why not?"

"I just can't!" Draco yelled. "Look, just leave me alone will you!" He stood up and made for the staircase at a run, but Foster was too quick for him; he stood up and caught his arm tightly.

"I'm sorry," he said lightly. "I didn't mean to offend you. It's just that we seem to be in the same boat...the only two people who understand."

"The only two who understand *what*?" Draco asked angrily, trying to get out of Foster's grip.

"That we can break away from it all."

Draco looked at him, stunned. "You're talking utter bullshit! I'm a Slytherin through and through, and if I *have* changed, my views of Mudbloods haven't, OK? I'm a Malfoy, does that mean nothing to you? There's nothing that I want to break away from." Draco fought to keep his face blank as he lied.

Foster looked away. "Fine," he said quietly. "Have it your way. But you'll realise eventually. I know you will."

Draco shook his head and pulled his arm from Foster's grip. Without another word he walked away into his dormitory, to be alone at last.

He was thoroughly confused. First he breaks up with Potter, and then Foster extended what seemed to be the hand of friendship.

Dominic Foster was a seventh-year. He had never really got on with Draco. They didn't talk often, but when they did the conversation was strained. At times, however, Draco had caught Foster staring at him with an expression that looked suspiciously like hatred on his face. He didn't much like Foster; though intelligent he was very self-important and opinionated. Draco knew he had been brought up by Muggles, but that didn't stop him being a supporter of Voldemort. Or at least it hadn't. Had what Foster had just told him meant that Foster no longer supported Voldemort?

And had Draco really been that obvious? Had everybody realised he had changed?

No, don't be ridiculous, he told himself. Only two people have. Foster himself said he was the only one to notice-he wouldn't know about Kierre's threats to me, Kierre's been so secretive- I'm panicking over nothing. Just because one person has noticed that I'm behaving differently it doesn't mean my that cover's blown. I wonder why he's changed though?

But Draco didn't have the energy or the will to ponder over the new mystery of Dominic Foster. Inside he was in agony over his row with Potter. He felt guilty; he had yelled at Potter when he needed Draco most. It wasn't as though he'd done anything wrong which meant he deserved what Draco had said. At the same time, though, Draco knew that he had needed to tell Potter how he felt. Draco needed Potter, and with Potter being as he was Draco had felt trapped. It would have been impossible for him to go on like that. He didn't want to lose Potter, but it looked as though he'd thrown him away...had he done the wrong thing? Was it his fault? Had his own selfishness caused the relationship to die?

He still loved Potter as much as he had ever done, he knew that. Nothing had changed there. But would Potter still love him, after what he'd said?

He'll hate me, Draco thought desperately, I've been a bastard, how could I say those things when he needs me so much? I've ruined everything. The relationship. Our friendship. The trust...it's my fault!

And what about Voldemort? Draco still wanted to help Potter and the Order as much as he could in the War. But would he be able to? He wouldn't blame Potter if he never trusted him again. What would Draco do then? He could never go back to Voldemort, back to his father...

Draco curled up into a tight ball on his bed, wanting to yell out in agony. In a few short minutes, he had lost *everything*.

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"Harry! My God, Harry, where have you been?" Ginny squealed desperately.

It was well past midnight and Harry had only just left Yesterday's room. He had thought everyone would be in bed, but Ginny had evidently been waiting up for him to return.

"Oh, Harry you look awful." She grabbed his shoulders and steered him onto a chair by the dying fire.

Harry didn't say anything. He couldn't. He wanted to be alone, he needed to sleep and never wake up. Nothing could compare to what he was feeling now.

"Harry?" Ginny prompted delicately.

He just shook his head in response.

"Oh, Harry, *please*! We've been so worried about you, please talk to me. Where have you been?"

At last he unstuck his throat and croaked, in a hollow voice, "By myself."

"Why?"

"I needed to be. I just...I wanted to think. I needed to be alone."

"But why were you there for so long? And why do you look so bad? You look as though you've been crying all day..."

"It's over Ginny. I've got *nothing left*."

"What do you mean?"

He couldn't tell her. Telling her would make it real. Make it irreversible.

"Please, Harry. I want to help."

"You can't help. No one can."

"Harry, has this got something to do with Malfoy?"

Slowly he nodded.

"Oh no, Harry, what's he said?"

"It's my fault...if I hadn't been so...I made him do it, really."

"What do you mean?"

"He's...he's...we..." he couldn't say it. But Ginny had suddenly realised.

"Oh, no, Harry! Oh God, I'm so sorry! Why did he do it? The bastard!" she added forcefully.

"He wouldn't have had to if I hadn't been so..." he took a deep breath, willing himself not to cry.

"What did he say, Harry?" Ginny prompted again. Harry didn't want to tell. He resisted as long as he could. But eventually he told her. He told her exactly what they had both said and done.

Ginny was silent for a moment. She was mad at Malfoy for behaving as he had, but at the same time she could see his point. But did they really need to split up over it? Harry and Malfoy were so good together. She may hate him, but she could see how happy he had made Harry.

She hugged him tightly. "Is there nothing you can do? Can't you talk to him?"

"No, I can't. I've ruined it, Ginny. I'm not going to get another chance at this."

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Draco managed to drag himself off his bed late the next day. He avoided everyone, and didn't speak a word. He worked on his homework in silence all day, and didn't bother going to lunch or dinner.

His meeting with Snape to begin his sick 'lessons' was tonight. He couldn't face it. He didn't have the energy to explain to Snape that he didn't want to be a Death Eater.

He took out his quill and wrote a short note to the teacher.

Dear Professor Snape,

I know I am meant to be starting extra lessons with you this evening but I will not be able to make it. I am not well. Could we please reschedule.

Sorry for the short notice.

D. Malfoy.

He slid the note under the door of Snape's office, praying Snape wouldn't ask too many questions.

A large brown owl delivered a note to him later that day.

Mr Malfoy,

I am disappointed at your lack of enthusiasm. However I am prepared to reschedule as I have other plans for tonight. Come to my office, Monday, 7.30.

Professor S. Snape.

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They hadn't seen each other for three days. Harry had spent a lot of time shut up in his dormitory, not talking to anyone. Malfoy had been walking around in a kind of miserable daze. Both felt as depressed as the other, and both believed they were the one in the wrong.

Ginny had left Harry to himself; he didn't want to talk and wouldn't listen. He didn't do any work or go to any lessons and she felt so sorry for him that she didn't try to persuade him to do it.

She was walking back to the common room alone when she saw him.

Draco Malfoy.

She hadn't planned on talking to him but she wasn't about to pass up on a chance to, either.

"Malfoy", she called angrily.

He stopped short and glared at her.

"Fuck off, Weasley."

"Don't you dare talk to me like that, you asshole."

"Weasley, do you want something or are you just going to call me names? I haven't got the time or the energy to waste just hurling abuse around a corridor thanks so unless you-"

"You know damn well what I want."

"Look Weasley, it's nothing to do with you! This is between me and him, so keep your nose out."

"Oh isn't it? I'd say it is my business, when one of my best friends is so damn miserable he won't eat, and it *is* my business when I'm the only one who knows anything about all this and so I'm the only one who can bang your bloody heads together and make you see sense!"

"Look, I fucked up, alright, there's no need to rub it in. It's over and that's that. Now you can be happy. Potter's finally got rid of the evil Malfoy who ruins everyone's life."

"Look! I'm trying to help you! I'm not happy, how the hell can I be? And I don't think you're evil."

"You don't?"

"No, I don't. But I think you're giving up too easily. Is that it? Are you seriously telling me you aren't going to even try getting back together?"

"What's the point? He hate's me!"

"What do you mean, what's the point?! The point is that you *love* him, I know you do! I can understand why you weren't happy with the way he was feeling, but it's all been blown out of proportion."

"Yeah, but he still hate's me."

"Oh for God's sake! What is it with guys? This is why I prefer the female variety! Malfoy, he does *not* hate you. You can't possibly know that because you walked out on him the other day before he'd even had a chance to respond! He *loves* you, you stupid git!"

"No he doesn't. How can he after what I did?"

"He *does*. Look, I think you're both in the wrong. Talk to him. How can it hurt? Have you got anything to lose?"

"No," said Maloy quietly, "I've got nothing."



Ginny suddenly felt so sorry for him he leant forward, placed a hand on his shoulder and said, "Well then talk to him. He'll meet you tomorrow, at eight o'clock, in the same place you last spoke, OK?"

He nodded glumly and she leant forwards and hugged him. Just be careful. He's fragile. You both are."

Malfoy made a noise of protest, but she silenced him with a look and walked off, to try and knock some sense into Harry.

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Draco gave the password and entered the Slytherin common room, thinking vaguely how stupid it was that he had just spoken to a blank wall. The first thing he saw when he entered the room was Foster, sitting in a chair, removed from the rest of the room. Draco tried to avoid his eye, but Foster looked up as he passed and gave him a small smile. Draco nodded at him. *Maybe Foster had changed...*

He went down to his dormitory and put his bag away, wishing he had gone to dinner as his stomach rumbled loudly.

There was a hesitant knock on the door.

Draco looked up. "Yes?" he called. Foster appeared around the door, looking apprehensive.

"Hi," he said.

"What now?" said Draco exasperatedly.

"Just thought I'd see how you are. Are you OK?"

"I'm fine, why shouldn't I be?"

"Well, you weren't fine the other day."

"I'd just had a bad day, that's all," Draco said. "My father's been pressuring me to...to work harder."

Foster nodded. "OK." Draco didn't catch the disbelief in his voice. "Just making sure you were OK. As I said, we're the only two who really feel the same. We've got to stick together."

"I've told you-!"

"I know you have. But I've told *you* that you'll realise soon enough."

"There's nothing to realise," Draco said shortly.

"OK then," Foster said calmly. "You didn't go to dinner did you? Here." He waved his wand and a large plate of sandwiches appeared next to Draco. Draco frowned at him as he disappeared around the door again.

What the hell? There was something weird going on here...was it possible that Foster had turned against Voldemort, too? He picked up a sandwich and peered at it suspiciously before taking a bite.

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At last Harry left the common room nervously. It had taken hours but Ginny had finally managed to convince him to go and speak to Malfoy. She smiled encouragingly at him as the Fat Lady's portrait swung forward and blocked him from view.

He reached Yesterday's room and opened the door nervously, feeling very sick. He was full of dread about what was going to happen, but he knew Ginny was right: they had to talk to each other. But what would he say?

When he opened his eyes he saw Malfoy standing in the centre of the room, looking even paler than normal. Harry tried to avoid Malfoy's eye, but finally allowed himself to lock their gazes together.

"I'm so sorry," they said together.

"Look, Potter, we...we need to talk."

"I know," Harry said hoarsely. "Malfoy, I-"

"Shh, let me go first. Please?"

Harry nodded and let Malfoy talk.

"I shouldn't have said what I did. It was so selfish of me. I know you're having a really hard time, and I don't know what it must feel like to be going through that. I had no right to say those things."

"It's me who should be sorry!" Harry said. "I know I went on about it. I was too consumed in my own problems to care about yours. I've been really self-centred, I don't blame you for what you did. I was driving *myself* mad, never mind anyone else.... It's made me realise, Malfoy, I *can't* keep going on the way I was. Otherwise there will be nothing for me. I've lost you and it's all because I was being so pessimistic."

"Aren't you angry with me? For saying those things to you?"

"Not really. I was at first. I thought you were being totally unreasonable. But then I thought about it and I realised that you were right. I was angry you had split up with me, but I wasn't angry with *you*, if that makes sense. I suppose I was more angry with myself." Malfoy smiled slightly; that was the Potter he knew, with all the mixed up feelings.

Harry continued. "I thought you really hated me. I've been so self-centred. I thought you really wanted to end it. "

"You haven't been self centred. I never wanted to end it at all, I just couldn't go on the way we were. Do you see? And Potter- you haven't lost me," Malfoy said, blushing.

"What do you mean?"

"I didn't really mean those things. I do want to be with you. I want that more than anything."

"You mean it?"

"Yes. But I can't blame you if you hate me. I'm such a bastard to say those things to you like that. I just wanted you to know, Potter, that I'm sorry I said it."

"Do you love me?" Harry asked, trying to stop his voice from breaking.

"Yes..." Draco whispered after a pause.

"And I love you. And so that's all that matters." Harry thought his nerves would have settled by now, but he was wrong. His insides were writhing in terror-what if Malfoy rejected him?

"Potter, if we...you know...get back together, I...I need you to be happy."

"I will. I've learned that I need to be happy. I finally understand. Losing you made me realise how much I've still got to lose. If we split up then that means Voldemort is winning, Malfoy, and that can't happen. If we are together then, believe me, I'll be happy."

"You promise?"

"I promise."

They looked at each other for a second, before Harry walked over to Malfoy and embraced him tightly.

They agreed to start things again and take it slowly from then on. They knew it would take a while for things to become totally perfect between them again, but they were both prepared to wait. They knew the relationship would be stronger though, now that they had been honest with each other, and better for it.

**Title:** [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 24)

**Author Name:** [Purple Flame](#)

**Owl the author:** [here](#).

**Rating:** R

**Spoilers:** PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

**Genre:** Drama, Slash

**Era:** The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

**Main Character(s):** D, G, H, Hr

**Ship(s):** D/H, Hr/R

**Summary:** ♦Turning Points♦~ Kierre tells Foster to pull out all the stops to get the answers he wants out of Draco, who, meanwhile, is preoccupied with trying to work out how to tell Snape that he doesn't want lessons in becoming Voldemort's favourite Death Eater♦

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**Author's Notes:**

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Chapter 24-Turning Points

"So, what's going on?"

"Give me a chance, Kierre. I've tried speaking to him. I think he's a bit suspicious, but don't worry; I'll work on him."

"What have you said to him?"

"I've told him I've seen the light, basically."

"Seen what light?" Kierre snapped.

"Exactly. I've been a bit cryptic. I've just told him that I've noticed how he's been acting, and said that I feel distanced from my 'old life'. He didn't like it at first, but give me time."

"Good. But I need to know how much time?"

"As much as I need! I can't tell you how long it'll take, just that I will do it eventually! Right?"

"Fine. But don't get like that with me, Foster. You'll regret it."

"Whatever," Foster snarled back.

"I think it's time I paid our dear friend Draco another little visit..." Kierre muttered menacingly.

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Draco had left Yesterday's room feeling a lot happier than when he went in. The damage he had caused was not totally repaired but it was getting there. He had wanted to stay and talk it through some more, but Potter had insisted that they return to their common rooms, saying that in time it would work itself out. Draco smiled; he knew Potter was right. As usual.

"Out *again*, Malfoy?" said a voice. "Where to this time?"

Draco's heart sank as he looked up and found himself staring into the face of Kierre.

"What do you want now?"

"That's a bit *rude*, Malfoy. Maybe I should teach you some manners. Like how to answer questions when you're asked. *Where have you been?*"

"I've been out! Look what does it matter to you? I don't understand why you're so interested in me all of a sudden!"

"Because I know how Malfoys act. I know that only something seriously big could make a Malfoy behave the way you are. Got me? I want to know what it is...what's changed so much in your life, eh?"

"Nothing," snarled Draco. "I'm still Draco Malfoy and don't you dare suggest otherwise. I'm not up to anything."

"Yeah? Well I'm sorry but I'm not buying that crap! I'm not letting this rest, Malfoy. If there's something going on I want to know."

"Fuck off!" Draco yelled angrily. "I've had enough of this! Why the hell should I tell anyone what I'm doing? Don't mess with me Kierre, or *you* will be the one to regret it!"

He had gone too far. Kierre didn't even bother reaching for his wand; he just punched Draco as hard as he could. Draco tried not to yell out in pain but he couldn't help it; Kierre had a powerful fist. Draco writhed to try and avoid the blows, but to no avail. Finally he managed to get to his wand. He directed it at Kierre and moaned, "*Expelliarmus!*"

Kierre was thrown away from Draco into the opposite wall with a grunt of pain. He glared at Draco and looked as though he might quite like to resume the fight, but thought the better of it. He stood up and said dangerously, "See you soon, Malfoy."

Draco leant against the wall for support, clutching his stomach and trying to wipe the blood from his face. He knew he would have to move; he couldn't explain his injuries if he was found by anyone. He dragged himself to his feet, trying to ignore the pain, and made his slow way back to the Common Room.

The room was half empty, yet, once again, Foster was in there.

"Jesus, Malfoy!" he said when Draco came through the wall. "What the hell's happened to you?"

"What do you think has happened?" Draco replied darkly.

"Who was it?"

"It doesn't matter. It's nothing..."

"Doesn't look like nothing."

"Well it *is* alright?"

"Fine...fine. You should go to the Hospital Wing you know."

"I'm not going to Madam Pomfrey, I don't need to. I'll be fine."

Foster looked at him doubtfully. "Malfoy...is this...has this got anything to do with...what we were talking about the other day?"

"What?" Draco snapped. "What are you on about?"

"Well...maybe I was wrong...maybe I'm not the only one who's noticed you've changed. I'm right aren't I. Someone's-"

"I haven't changed!" Draco said heatedly. A few people glanced in their direction, and he lowered his voice. "I haven't changed and it's nothing to do with anything like that, alright?"

"Whatever you say, Malfoy," Foster replied in a calm voice that was full of disbelief. "But something's up with you."

Draco said nothing, just dabbed at his black eye with the back of his sleeve.

"You can talk to me, you know. When you're ready," Foster said. He got no reply again so he picked up his bag and walked out of the common room with a frustrated sigh. Draco thought for a minute, a slight frown on his normally blank face. He wished he *could* talk to Foster...he really needed to talk about Kierre and his problems about that with somebody. He'd already decided he couldn't talk to Potter about that so who else was there? Ginny Weasley? Hermione Granger? Crabbe? Goyle? He didn't think so somehow...

Yet here it was, the chance to talk, being offered to him on a plate, and here he was, refusing. Was he doing the right thing in refusing Foster's offer of friendship? Or would it be too much of a risk to confide in someone who had, as yet, provided no evidence that he really had changed?

~~~~~

Hermione held up the *Daily Prophet* with a shaking hand, attempted to ignore the grotesque picture of hundreds of bodies beneath the menacingly glittering black-and-white Dark Mark, and began to read what it said, attempting to control her trembling voice.

"FIRST RALLY OF YOU-KNOW-WHO AND HIS SUPPORTERS

Last night, just weeks after You-Know-Who's first raid on a Muggle village, the Dark Lord, miraculously restored to his body after a fifteen-year absence, held his first "Death Rally". He was flanked by his supporters, known as "Death Eaters", as they paraded around the streets of London.

"Since the Minister for Magic, Cornelius Fudge, announced last June that You-Know-Who was back, the magical community has lived in terror of when and where he will strike. The first real confirmation that he had, indeed, returned, came four weeks ago when You-Know-Who and a select band of Death Eaters raided a Muggle village, killing over 100 people. On that occasion Ministry Aurors were able to act swiftly, reducing loss of life. Yesterday, however, they met resistance from Death Eaters, and other supporters of You-Know-Who, so were unable to recover the situation for some time.

Muggles who stood in the path of the mass of hooded and cloaked Death Eaters were killed instantly; any Wizard attempting to oppose them was tortured.

"A Ministry spokeswizard said, 'Unfortunately on this occasion the Aurors had received no prior intelligence about the rally, so it took quite a while for them to break up the crowds around the Death Eaters, and then to disperse the followers. Before we could capture anyone they disappeared, leaving destruction behind them. It is believed that last night's rally was successful, and You-Know-Who has captured some of our community's most prominent wizards, using all sorts of illegal curses in the process. There seem to be more Death Eaters than ever before, and it seems as though while You-Know-Who has been relatively quiet since his return he has used that time to drum up support.'

"We do not have any detailed accounts of the events of last night, just that from 7 o'clock until past midnight You-Know-Who and followers chanted anti-Muggle slogans, killed and tortured hundreds of people-Muggle and Wizard alike- and burned property. The exact number of dead is, at present, unknown, but it believe that more than 180 Muggles were slaughtered, along with over 130 Wizards. According to the Ministry of Magic seven Ministry Officials also lost their lives.

"The Daily Prophet can exclusively reveal that the Ministry of Magic is considering allowing Aurors to use the three Unforgivable Curses to capture Death Eaters, as they did in You-Know-Who's first reign of terror. The magical community will no doubt wish to know more details of these plans to ensure their own safety, and the Daily Prophet has written to ministry officials requesting more information."

"Cornelius Fudge said at a press conference this morning, 'We would beg the community to remain calm, and consult the information sent out to you lat summer for reassurance.'

"It's really started, hasn't it?" said Ginny quietly.

"It's the same as it was last time. This is a proper war now. Doesn't sound like they can do much more about it now than they could the first time round," Seamus Finnegan sighed bitterly.

"Only because they haven't been working on ways to improve the defences they already had!" Harry said. "If they'd listen to people once in a while...if they hadn't been so stubborn in the first place then maybe they could have things to defeat the Death Eaters!"

"And You-Know-Who!" Dean Thomas chipped in hopefully. Harry didn't say anything; no amount of preparation on the Ministry's part could stop Voldemort.

The crowd that had gathered to listen to Hermione read the article dispersed, muttering darkly.

"It's going to get worse, isn't it?" Harry muttered glumly.

Hermione put a comforting hand on his arm and said, "It's inevitable. Everything has to get worse before it can get better, Harry."

"I know..." he muttered. He knew better than anyone.

~~~~~

"Why did you hit him like that?"

"I would've though that much was obvious. I wanted answers. He wasn't giving them to me."

"But people are going to notice he's been in a fight! Couldn't you be more...secretive about it? Less obvious?"

"It's not happening fast enough!"

"That doesn't mean you can go around beating the guy up! Because he doesn't answer the question right now, you resort to Muggle duelling? It's ridiculous when there's so much more we could do...more effective things. Beating him up is worthless. That's not going to get answers, don't you know that by now?"

"Well you do something about it then!" Kierre retorted angrily.

Foster was silent for a moment, then, his eyes over bright and an odd expression on his face he said softly, "OK. I will. Don't worry...I will..."

Kierre frowned at him slightly before deciding that it didn't matter what Foster was going to do as long as it got him the answers he wanted. "Are you sure? Then go out and do whatever it is."

Foster stood up, a slightly twisted smile on his face, nodded to Kierre and then strode away. It was time to get what he had been wishing for for so very long...at last he would be able to do it...and there would be *nothing* Malfoy could do about it...*nothing at all*...

~~~~~

"So everything's OK now?"

"Yes, how many times do I have to tell you? And why can't you ask Potter?"

"I already have," Ginny said, "I just wanted to hear it from you, too."

"Well you've heard it now so..."

"Malfoy, are you *sure* everything's perfectly OK?"

"Yes!"

Ginny raised an eyebrow.

"Fine...it's just going to take a few days to get really comfortable with each other again, but *that's all*!" he said hurriedly at the look on Ginny's face. "I promise. I love him." He avoided her eye, and his voice was shy, almost as though he were still ashamed to admit it.

Ginny couldn't help but smile as she heard the infamous Draco Malfoy saying those words so sincerely, about Harry Potter.

"What?" Draco asked suspiciously.

"Nothing," Ginny replied innocently. "I'm just pleased, that's all."

Draco shook his head. "Whatever..." he said puzzled, and turned to walk down the staircase towards Snape's office, raising his hand as a goodbye.

He knocked three times on the door, his stomach twisting slightly in nerves.

"Come" Snape's brisk voice said from inside the office.

Draco entered the office feeling he'd rather stick his head in a barrel of rat intestines than face what he was about to, but he walked in and closed the door behind him anyway.

"Ah, Mr Malfoy. At last we reach our *lesson*. Are you fit to take it?"

"Yes sir," Draco said tensely.

"Good...we shall begin with-"

"Professor?" Draco cut in suddenly, willing himself not to throw up. Snape's eyes flashed in anger.

"What?" he spat.

"I...er...well, someone said you didn't...and I..."

"Spit it out, Malfoy! I haven't got all day!"

Draco took a breath-

"Idontwannabeadeatheater."

"Pardon?"

"I don't...I don't want to be a Death Eater," he repeated quietly. He looked at Snape's face and waited for the blow. But Snape's face did not alter. He did not flinch, nor did he make any other sign that he had heard Draco's admission.

"What?" he said coldly, at last.

"I don't support Voldemort. I don't want to hurt Muggles. I'm on the Order's side."

"How do you know about the Order?" Snape asked swiftly, his eyes narrowing furiously.

"I...can't say," Draco said apologetically.

To his surprise Snape accepted this without question. "Since when, and why have you decided this?"

"Since last summer when my Father first started to try and involve me in Voldemort's activities. I realised what they were doing."

"I see," Snape muttered. "I cannot deny that I have noticed a change in you, Malfoy, but I could not have imagined the extent...can you give me details?"
Draco blushed. "No sir," he said, "I can't. I've made a promise..."

Snape nodded again. "And why have you chosen to tell me this? When your father had asked me to teach you since I am a Death Eater myself?"

"I've told you because I don't want to learn it, and you don't want to teach it," Draco said defiantly.

Snape stood up swiftly. "What do you know? What do you mean I 'don't want to teach it'?"

Draco thought he detected a slight note of fear in his teacher's voice, something he'd never heard before. "I know you're in the Order. I know you've changed.... just like I've changed."

Snape sat down again, breathing hard. "I'm not going to ask you how you know, Malfoy. But I am warning you to keep this strictly secret. Understand?"

"Yes sir. I don't want anyone to find out about me, either."

Snape nodded. "Well, I suppose that's it, then, Malfoy. You are dismissed."

"Sir!"

"Yes?"

"I was thinking...well.... if my father finds out I'm not being taught..."

"I see..." Snape repeated. "What do you suggest? Lie? Would you lie to you father, and ask me to do the same?"

"No. Not really. I don't want to be taught to be a Death Eater...but I *do* want to fight Voldemort. It wouldn't be lying, not really."

"So I would still be teaching you..." Snape whispered. "Your father need never know the content of the lessons..."

"Not yet," Draco said. "He will eventually, but not yet."

Snape looked up, and stared at Draco for a minute.

"Well?" he snapped suddenly. "What are you waiting for? Wand out, let's begin."

*

The lesson passed in a haze for Draco. Snape took him through the basic defensive spells and jinxes, taught him about the way Voldemort and his Death Eaters worked, and began to teach him the tactics of the enemy-so he could avoid them. Draco left the lesson an hour later, with the promise that Snape would teach him more advanced defensive spells, and also spells to attack, and give him more information, as he grew more confident and able.

In a huge contrast to the lessons he had received over the summer with his father Draco thoroughly enjoyed the lesson. Not only was it interesting, but he liked learning the spells and perfecting those he hadn't been so great at, and also he found that it was made so much better by the fact that this was a cause he believed in-and now he was truly doing something to help fight Voldemort.

As he walked back to the Slytherin Common room he felt alive and enthused, as he had not done in a very long time; he was finally doing something.

He went straight up to his dormitory and sat on his bed with the emerald curtains drawn. He thought for a very long time about what he had learned that night, what he still had to learn, and how he could become fully useful in the War, and help Potter, himself, and others besides...

He sat there for maybe two hours, motionless and silent, before he next moved. He got up, and left the common room, strode along the dark corridors noiselessly, until he came to the kitchens. He tickled the pear in the picture of the fruit bowl, pulled open the door which appeared and went into the kitchen. Immediately a sea of tiny House Elves surrounded him, squealing questions and asking for orders.

He asked if he could have a mug of hot chocolate and in seconds he was holding a huge mug full of frothy chocolate. He turned to leave but as he did so a House Elf standing slightly apart from the rest, wearing a strange array of brightly coloured clothes and looking very nervous caught his eye. Dobby always avoided Draco when he went into the kitchens; the memories of dozens of punishments were still painful. In the past Draco had been quick to scowl at the elf, or else to ignore it, but now he felt different....it had feelings...deserved to be treated with respect...not only that but it had greatly aided Potter in their second year...

He looked the elf up and down, then looked it in the eye, and nodded once before leaving briskly. His last sight of the kitchens before the door closed again was of Dobby dissolving into hysterical sobs or mingled terror and joy.

He returned to the Common Room feeling relaxed a quite tired. He wanted to go to bed, drink his hot chocolate, and sleep. But as soon as he walked in he knew he couldn't do that.

Again there was just one person left in the common room.

And again that one person was Dominic Foster.

Title: [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 25)

Author Name: [Purple Flame](#)

Owl the author: [here](#).

Rating: R

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

Genre: Drama, Slash

Era: The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: "So Much More to Give"~ Ginny meets the girl-again, and Professor McGonagall unwittingly give Ginny a helping hand. Foster is, once again, the last one in the Common Room along with Draco and this time he is determined to get the answers he wants.

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Author's Notes:

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## Chapter 25- So Much More to Give

Ginny sighed in exasperation as she searched through her bag for her hairbrush, which seemed determined to avoid her. She was tired and desperately wanted to get to bed and have an early night, but she had only just managed to finish her Transfiguration essay for the next day.

She found the brush at last and dragged it through her hair, wincing as it pulled on the tangles. She hoisted her bag on to her shoulder and glanced at her watch as the door of the library snapped closed behind her.

8.57

"Shit," she muttered. "Three minutes to get back inside the common room...no chance."

Breaking into a slight run she listened hard for the sounds of any teachers likely to tell her off for being out of Gryffindor Tower so late.

"Shit!" she exclaimed again, as her bag let her inkbottle slip through a tear in the corner and smash on the floor. She raised her wand to clear the mess up, but before she could even draw breath a silver light had shot at the pool of emerald ink and it disappeared.

"What-?"

A girl stepped out of a classroom to her right, nearly making Ginny drop her wand in shock:

*It was her.*

"You should sew that up, you know," said the girl with a small smile, "or more things will fall out."

"Um.... yeah...yes, of course. Thanks," Ginny stuttered, cringing at her childish shyness.

The girl laughed. "At least we're not swearing at each other this time, hey?"

Ginny flushed scarlet. "Yeah...yeah, I'm sorry about that."

"Don't worry. I'm used to it."

"What? Why?"

"People don't understand me. I'm in Slytherin," she explained. "People see me as being different because I'm not a Voldemort supporter" -Ginny flinched- "and my parents aren't Death Eaters. It's really the others who are different, I've done nothing wrong."

Ginny nodded. "Don't you have friends in other houses, though?"

"Oh, no. Of course not. The moment I say the word 'Slytherin' people can't wait to get away," she sounded mournful. "In fact, I'm surprised you're still here. Most people don't believe me when I say I don't have the Slytherin's 'unspoken qualities'."

"Of course I believe you. Things have happened to me and to people around me...I'm not narrow-minded."

The girl looked at her quizzically.

"Let's just say you're not the only one," Ginny said quietly.

The girl looked for a few moments as though she's like more details, but didn't ask. Eventually she said, "I'm Jodie Hunter, by the way. Sixth Year."

"Ginny Weasley," Ginny said smiling; she suddenly felt very confident, "Gryffindor Fifth Year."

Jodie nodded. "I know you. You're friends with Harry Potter, aren't you?"

"Yes," Ginny replied. "What're you doing out so late anyway? It's gone 9."

"I spend as little time in the Common Room as I can," she said grimly. "And I could ask the same of you?"

"Transfiguration Essay," Ginny said simply.

"Ah. Rather you than-"

"Weasley! Hunter! What are you doing out of you Common Rooms this late at night?" Professor McGonagall's voice snapped down the corridor.

Ginny took a quick step back. "Nothing, Professor! I was just going back; I've been in the library."

"That is no excuse, Miss Weasley. And you, Miss Hunter, I'd have thought that the amount of punishments *you* have had would mean you would know better. Clearly not. Both of you will serve detention, 7pm tomorrow. My office. Understand?"

~~~~~

"You again?" Draco said lightly.

"Yeah," Foster replied. "I can't sleep. No point in going to bed."

"Right," Draco said. "Well, I could sleep for a week, so, 'night."

"Oh, no! Stay up for a bit longer. I could really do with someone to talk to."

"I really-"

"Please?"

Draco hesitated. "Oh alright, then. But not for long."

"Thanks," Foster smiled.

Draco took a seat and Foster just looked at him expectantly. Draco wasn't sure why but it made him nervous.

"Are you OK?" Foster asked suddenly.

"Yes. Of course I am. Why wouldn't I be?" Draco asked defensively.

"No reason. Well...except that you're diff-"

"Oh fucking hell, don't start that again, Foster," Draco snapped, feeling annoyed. He made to stand up but Foster leant over quickly and put his hand on Draco's arm.

"Look, I'm sorry. Don't go."

Against his better judgement, and still with a frown on his face, Draco sank back down onto his chair.

"I've never really had friends you know, not really," Foster said. Draco didn't really know what to say to this sudden announcement, so he stayed silent as Foster went on. "I've always been a bit of an outcast. I was never the same as anyone else in this house I've never had their beliefs. It comes from being brought up by Muggles, I suppose. It made them see me as the enemy-as scum who deserved to die. The way most people in this house see Muggles and Muggle-borns." His eyes were shining as he reminisced.

"I thought you were Pure-blood?" Draco said, becoming interested in the tale, despite himself.

"Oh, I am. But my mum died after she gave birth to me. Got an infection and refused to let anyone treat her. They told me that my dad had always had a bit of a problem with drink, but after my mum died it got worse. He eventually drank himself to death. I was nine months old and I didn't have a family, my Grandparents were dead and it's sort of a family tradition to be an only child.... I had no one. I was an orphan. So I was sent to a Muggle Orphanage. It was hell. I hated it. But now I reckon that was only because I resented the fact that it had to be *me* whose parents had died.

"Anyway, when I came here I was hated by everyone. They saw me as a Mudblood. So I didn't have any friends. I concentrated on work instead- I got 11 top grade OWLs, you know. Then, on my 17th Birthday, the Orphanage sent me some letters my mum had written for me on her deathbed. She knew Dad's problem would get worse, so she made him write to me, too. She said I was to get them when I came of age. I got them and they changed my life. I found out who my parents were, who *I* really am- and I realised how wrong I've been all this time. I've had such warped views in the past, but now my mum and dad have shown me the right way."

Draco nodded. Foster said, "You're the only one I've ever been able to tell. I trust you."

"Why?"

"Because.... I know we feel the same. We think the same. We *are* the same."

"No," Draco shook his head. "We're not. We're very different, believe me. But-I can see why you think the way you do. Why *you* have changed."

Foster looked at him. "How? How can you see?" he asked.

"The question," Draco said, "is not *how*, but *why*."

"Go on," Foster prompted breathlessly.

Draco hesitated. But why shouldn't he? He wouldn't be revealing anything too major, and, after all, Foster had just told him some of his most intimate secrets...Draco gulped and said, "It's because I'm...in love."

~~~~~

"Ginny, calm down, I can't understand you."

"I saw her, Harry! I spoke to her!"

"Who?"

"*Jodie Hunter*!" Ginny said urgently. "It was so surreal...and she's gorgeous...and really nice and...oh my God, I don't believe it!"

Harry grinned. "So it *was* her then..." he muttered. "What did she say?"

"Nothing exciting. But we've got a detention together tomorrow."

"That's great!" Harry said.

"It is?" Ginny asked bewildered.

Harry sighed in mock irritation and raised his eyebrows at her. Then-

"It *is*!" she exclaimed loudly.

~~~~~

In love.

Draco Malfoy. In love.

Foster felt as though he'd been knocked over by a train. He couldn't believe what he had just heard. Not only was a *Malfoy* admitting he was in love, but this was Draco...Draco wasn't *allowed* to be in love...was this the answer he had been working for for so many weeks? Had this been what he had expected? Was it what Kierre had expected?

No.

At Draco's words Foster felt everything that had kept him sane fall to the ground. His obsession, his passion, his life, was being wrenched away from him.

Unless...yes. It was what he'd wanted to do all along...not in this way though...but if it meant that he got what he wanted...what he *needed*.

"Who is it?" he asked, failing to disguise his agonising fury. The words came out harshly but Draco did not notice.

"I can't say," he said.

"Why not?" Foster demanded.

"It just can't. It's difficult. Probably dangerous."

"*Bullshit!*" Foster yelled.

"What?" Draco asked, bewildered. "Foster, I don't-"

"Don't give me that crap! 'Dangerous'? How the hell can it be dangerous?"

Draco was starting to feel angry himself now. Why was Foster behaving like this? It wasn't as though he had just admitted to a terrible crime...

"You've been giving me this shit for weeks, Malfoy, and I'm tired of it! You told me you hadn't changed- what crap! I knew you had, but I didn't expect it to be anything like *this!*"

Through his haze of confusion Draco was suddenly feeling very glad that Foster's emotion-whatever it was- was refusing to let him see that love might not be the only reason Draco had changed. He was also very glad he had not opened up further to the boy. "What the fuck? Why are you reacting like this? What the hell is wrong with you?"

"What's wrong with *me?*" Foster raged, hysterically. "There's nothing wrong with *me!*"

"I think there is. You're behaving like a spoilt child! Like you're...like you're.... *jealous!*" Draco finished.

That last word seemed to bring Foster to his senses.

"Jealous..." he muttered, more to himself than to Draco. "Why would I be jealous? I'm not jealous..." but that wasn't the truth and Foster knew it. He had lusted after Draco ever since the younger boy's first day at Hogwarts. Foster had been young and stupid then, but meeting Draco, learning what he stood for, and his own hatred of his Muggle carers made him yearn to be like Draco...he hadn't realised it at first, but as the years went on he couldn't fail to notice that Draco was in his thoughts constantly...that every night as Foster sat alone he found himself staring at Malfoy...

He hadn't been honest with Kierre; because Foster *had* changed...but not in the way he had led Draco to believe...this last year he had finally understood what his obsession with Draco meant. It seemed absurd- he couldn't *possibly*- but he did. And now here was his chance...his last and only chance...he would have what he so badly wanted whether Draco liked it or not...Malfoy couldn't get out of this one...

He would get the answers they had been searching for for weeks, but not for Kierre, he didn't matter any more. No. He wanted the answers for himself. He wanted to find the bitch Draco said he loved and kill her...hand her to Voldemort...anything as long as there was no one but Foster in Malfoy's life. Kierre need never know how or why Foster had got the answers, just that he'd got them. Kierre wasn't Foster's concern any more; he didn't care what he did to Malfoy.

Foster stood facing Draco, looking defensive, his chest heaving, thinking hard. Would it work? Could he possibly pull this off?

Yes.

"Foster?" Draco asked quietly.

Foster looked up into Draco's face with an oddly calm expression. He was so damn hot...and he would be all Foster's... "Are you going to tell me who it is?" Foster asked calmly.

"I've already told you-"

"Are you going to tell me, or not?" Foster yelled.

"No!" Draco said loudly. "No way!"

"Your choice then, Malfoy. You've brought this on yourself.... it's all your fault..."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Draco asked, a slight twist of concern in his stomach.

Foster began to walk towards him purposefully. Neither of them said a thing. He stopped less than a foot away from Draco.

"Last chance," he whispered maliciously.

"No," Draco said.

With a sudden movement Foster grabbed hold of Draco's arms and pushed him back onto the bare stone wall, slamming him against it. Draco was totally taken aback; he had absolutely no idea what was going on or why Foster was doing it. He tried to twist his wrists out of Foster's grip but he couldn't; Foster was holding on too tightly. He grasped onto Draco's hand and moved it up the wall firmly so it was slightly raised. Draco winced as he felt the skin on the back of his hand scraping off, but did not abandon his attempt to make Foster release him. Foster's body was far too close to him to allow Draco to get away, or to hit him, and his wand was in his dormitory downstairs. He was trapped. Foster's body was *far too close*.

"Back off," Draco said dangerously, through gritted teeth.

"No," muttered Foster, "because I want answers, and I'm going to get them. Understand?"

"And how the hell do you propose to do that? Going to put me under Imperius?"

"No. No, something *much* more effective..."

Draco tried not to feel afraid, but his confusion and anger were hindering his attempts to get free. *What was Foster going to do?* "Why me?" he asked.

"Why you? You've answered your own question, there. It's *because* it's *you* that I'm interested. It's not because you're Malfoy- it's because you're *Draco* Malfoy."

Draco frowned and yelled angrily, "You're fucking *mental*!"

"Not quite. Now, Draco, you're going to give me answers, OK? I want to know...who is it? Who's the bitch you 'love'? Tell me!"

"Make me," hissed Draco dangerously.

But that was exactly the cue Foster had been waiting for. He took a deep breath, and then began to drink in every inch of Draco's features, savouring the moment, as Draco Malfoy became *his* at last. He closed his eyes and then this came as a shock to Draco- so gently, as though Draco were a priceless artefact, he kissed Draco's lips, tasting them with his own.

In the second their lips were together Foster felt utterly content and unbelievably turned on. It was better than he could've imagined. Draco realised what exactly was happening with a sickening jolt and ripped his head away to the side, breaking the kiss, thoroughly repulsed.

"What-the-fuck-are-you-doing?" he screeched irately, feeling ill.

"What does it feel like?" Foster crowed. "Would you like me to do it again?"

"No, I wouldn't you *bastard!* Leave me alone!" growled Draco.

"Only when you tell me."

"*Never.*"

This time Foster didn't feign tenderness, nor did he kiss Draco in such a way that allowed him to escape. He smashed his lips against Malfoy's, kissing him passionately, forcing his tongue into Malfoy's mouth, forcing their bodies to move closer together, and forcing the kiss to become more and more frantic.

Somehow it was made so much better by the fact that Draco was not enjoying it, that he didn't want this...that there was nothing he could do about it.... Foster relished the fact that Draco was not enjoying it...and that in time he would *make* him enjoy it...Foster loved the fact that no matter how much Draco writhed it was impossible for him to escape his grip.

He stopped, at last, savouring the touch and taste of Draco's mouth. He was slightly breathless, and his swollen lips were tingling pleasantly; the last wonderful remnants of what he had done. For a moment he enjoyed the sight of an extremely pale Draco trying to remove himself from his own body...to make it so that it was someone else's lips that had been touched by Fosters.

"Are you ready to tell yet?" whispered Foster, tightening his grip on Draco's wrists still further.

"No, and I never will be!" Draco tried to keep his voice steady, which was made difficult by the fact that he was forcing vomit back down.

Foster grinned to himself. It didn't matter that Malfoy wouldn't tell this time. He would crack eventually, and all the while Foster would be getting what he had desired for so long.

And the best part of it was that Draco couldn't, or wouldn't, tell. Who would he go to? His friends? Not likely. A teacher? Foster could just imagine the conversation between Malfoy and Snape and had to stifle laughter. His parents? Draco wouldn't risk letting them know that another boy had got the better of him, that he had weaknesses. His *lover*? Draco didn't have the guts- he'd be far too scared.

And then, of course, Foster's most important weapon-Malfoy's pride. There was no way in hell he'd let anyone else know about this. Malfoy would deal with it himself, or die trying, before he went to anyone else, Foster knew that. He had total control of Draco...

The worst thing was that Foster was right. And both Foster and Draco knew it. Draco would never tell.

Draco lay shivering and curled up into a tight, protective ball in his bed. He felt as though he was going to throw up at any moment. Tears streamed silent rivers down his still pale face, but he didn't wipe them away. He didn't move at all.

Foster's last words were ringing, almost painfully, in Draco's ears like a funeral Knell-

"I'll come back Malfoy, don't you worry about that. You'll tell eventually. I'll get what I want- what I need. Because this does not end here. This is going to go on...and on...and there's nothing you can do, Malfoy, because this...it is just the beginning- it is going to get so much worse, I can promise you. I've got so much more to give you."

Title: [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 26)

Author Name: [Purple Flame](#)

Owl the author: [here](#).

Rating: R

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

Genre: Drama, Slash

Era: The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: Now that Draco knows what Foster wants he'd scared to even leave his Dormitory, but he knows that Foster won't stay away for too long...

When he comes face-to-face with Harry (who, by the way, is on Cloud Nine) will he be able to stand the heat? And will he tell his boyfriend the truth about Foster?

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Author's Notes:

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## Chapter 26-Doubting

Harry sat in an armchair next to Hermione and Ginny, smiling absent-mindedly. He didn't care that he was getting dirty looks from Ron, or that the quill he had thrown down because he couldn't concentrate on his work was now allowing ink to spread across his unfinished Potions essay. He didn't care right now, because he and Malfoy were OK again.

Yet again, Hermione was trying to make very forced conversation between the group. Though Harry, as ever, spoke perfectly normally, Ron was deliberately ignoring everything she said if it meant involving Harry in the discussion.

"How're the new tactics coming on? All ready to face Ravenclaw on Saturday?"

"They're fine," Harry said. "Ravenclaw have got a crap team this year, their Beaters and their Keeper both left last year, replaced them with worse ones than Crabbe and Goyle. We're pretty confident."

Ginny nodded in agreement, but when Hermione turned questioningly to Ron, he raised his eyebrows in disbelief and turned away. Harry shook his head in disgust-he was fed up of Ron's childish antics and pathetic approach to the whole thing. He couldn't really be arsed summoning up the energy to be angry through his happiness, so when he gathered up his books and inky quill and had said goodnight to everyone else, he bent down low towards Ron and hissed, so no one else could hear, "Get a grip, Ron, stop being so fucking childish."

"Get over yourself, Potter," Ron spat back, rather surprising Harry that he was actually talking to him.

"No, you get over yourself and think about what's important. Is my sexuality hurting anyone? No. Is the fact that I'm in love hurting anyone? No. Is the fact that if all our allies turn against each other making Voldemort stronger going to hurt anyone? Yes. You think about that, Ron, and then tell me if it's worth you being such a prick."

He turned and traipsed up the boys' staircase, feeling, despite everything, rather pleased with himself.

~~~~~

Draco hadn't left the common room for days. He was glad it was the weekend; it meant he didn't have to socialise.

Or see Potter.

He wasn't really sure why he didn't want to see Potter, only that he knew he couldn't face it. He wanted to, God knows he wanted to. He felt he was the one in the wrong, like he had betrayed Potter

in some way, or let him down. He hated Foster and Kierre for what they were doing, and desperately wanted revenge- especially on Foster- but he didn't dare.

Instead he did not move from his dormitory, lay in bed for most of the day, and did not say a single word to anyone, even Crabbe and Goyle. He tried so hard not to think about what Foster had done, and what he had said but it was impossible. No matter how hard he tried to force it to the back of his mind it was always there, always present, and every time he thought of it, remembered the touch of Foster's mouth, the rough way he had forced Draco, a fresh wave of nausea engulfed him. He had even tried to counter the memories of Foster with the precious memories of Potter, but it was no good. It was as if Foster had even taken Potter away from Draco, even the memories...

"Fuck!" he muttered out loud. He stood up and began to pace the room, trying to think of what he could do. It was impossible to think, though, with the weight of misery upon him. He knew that tomorrow, Monday, would be hell. He would have to leave his room, walk around the school, go to lessons, talk to people...and probably see Potter. And Foster. It was unavoidable.

That night Draco was in bed before anyone else. He pulled off his shirt and was unbuckling his belt when something happened which made his heart stop.

"Well, well, well," said a quiet, almost victorious voice, "you *do* put on a good strip-show."

Draco snatched up his shirt and held it close to his body before turning to face Foster.

"Fuck off," Draco whispered. He had meant to make it sound threatening, but it came out more a whimper, a plea.

Foster laughed heartlessly. "Be nice!" he cooed. "Oh, come on, you can put the shirt down. Let me see more of you...don't let me stop you...carry on where you left off, I was quite enjoying it...." His eyes strayed down to Draco's crotch.

"I fucking mean it, you Wanker, *get lost!*" Draco growled.

"You're so cute when you're angry," Foster said, a superior glint in his eye. He took a step further into the room and moved closer to Draco. "Come on. Don't tell me you don't want it. Don't tell me you didn't enjoy it. You and I both know you love it...now, are you going to tell me what I want to know?"

"Never," Draco whispered furiously. "No matter what you do I will *never* tell you."

Foster laughed. "Have it your way, for now. We shall see, Malfoy, we shall see..." he turned to leave, but stopped himself at the last moment. He turned slowly and advanced upon Draco. "Oh yes," he said softly, "before I forget..."

Before Draco could do anything Foster had snatched the shirt from Draco and wrapped one arm tightly around him. His other hand felt Draco's chest between them...he leant forward and kissed Draco's firmly closed lips.

"Goodnight..." he let go, and was gone.

Draco collapsed on his bed, not sure how much of this he would be able to take.

*

Draco ate Breakfast as late as possible in the Great Hall the next morning, trying as hard as possible to avoid certain people. It was easy enough to escape them in his first lesson, Arithmancy (since only

himself, Nott, and Hermione Granger took that subject at NEWT level), but he knew the rest of the day would be hard.

Somehow he managed to get through the whole morning without meeting anyone he didn't want to (though he did notice Hermione Granger's odd looks in Arithmancy), and even managed to get lunch alone.

But then came double Potions. A whole afternoon in the same room as Potter. He walked into the dungeon as though he were going to his execution. It certainly felt like that to Draco. He felt slightly sick, but he knew he had to go in. Potter was already in there. Usually they would have caught each others' eye, but not this time. Draco slunk past him without once raising his eyes from the floor, and sat down at a bench at the very back.

Snape swept in looking even more irritable than usual. "Instructions are on the board, and the extra ingredients you need are on my desk. Begin."

And with that the whole class started to follow the instructions written in tiny, barely legible handwriting. The lesson dragged on. Draco tried his hardest to concentrate on the brewing of his potion, but was finding it impossible. When he had first seen Potter he had wanted to run, fast, from the room. He felt sick and, for some reason, guilty.

About twenty minutes before the end of the lesson there was a smart knock on the dungeon door.

"Yes?" Snape snapped.

Professor McGonagall walked briskly to Snape's desk, bent down low and muttered to Snape in such a quiet voice that, try as they might, no one else could hear. Both Draco and Potter strained their ears but all they managed to glean from the conversation were the words "Dumbledore....now....Dark....tonight...you..." Broken words which meant nothing. But they both still knew what she was talking about. Snape was going to have to go to Voldemort tonight...Perhaps they would have felt sorry for him, had it not been for his next words. He stood up and addressed the students, as McGonagall left. "As you are now in sixth year I am allowed to leave you unattended for a short while. The Headmaster wishes to meet me immediately, so I will have to leave you. I won't be back before the end of this lesson. I want you all to finish your Potion and leave a clearly labeled flask of it on my desk, understand? After that you may leave. And for homework complete an essay on why we must add Augery Blood to this Potion. I think even the least intelligent among us can understand those instructions." He glared at Potter, pointedly for a moment, before he left, slamming the dungeon door behind him.

Immediately, the usually silent Potions class burst into speech, some complaining about the essay, others wondering what Dumbledore wanted from Snape. Slowly the noise died down as one-by-one the students finished their Potion, put it in a flask, and left the room. Finally only a few were left.

"Want me to wait Harry?" Granger asked.

"No, it's OK, you go. I'll be ages sorting out this Cauldron of crap..."

Granger laughed slightly, and smiled to herself as she left, knowing that now, as luck would have it, there were only two particular people in the room, but not knowing what had gone on....

Draco stirred his potion feverishly, willing Potter not to say anything. It was no good.

"Hi, Malfoy..." Potter said quietly. He hadn't noticed anything was wrong.

"Hey," Draco muttered vaguely. *Shit*, he thought, *shit, shit, shit! Please shut up, don't talk to me, leave me alone, I can't face you, not now...*

"Where've you been? I wanted to meet you at the weekend."

"Uh...not well," Draco lied. His potion was not finished, not by a long way, but he couldn't stand being in here alone with Potter any longer. He scooped some into his flask, cleared up his things, and snatched up his bag.

"Bye," he said, as he reached the door.

"Where are you going? Don't you want to talk?"

"Lots of homework," Draco choked. "Sorry." Finally he broke out of the door and ran along the corridor, wanting more than anything to be back alone in his dormitory. He stopped in a deserted corridor and leant against the cool wall, breathing deeply. He had felt so claustrophobic back there...

He yelled out angrily and kicked the wall as hard as he could. He cursed Foster for doing this to him, for taking away everything Draco held close, *how* had it happened? How had he let it happen?

He yelled again, and hit and kicked the wall as violently as he could, wishing it were Foster.

And speaking of Foster...

"We meet again, Malfoy..." said an icy voice. Malfoy spun angrily on the spot, pulled out his wand and yelled the first hex he could think of. Foster only just managed to conjure a shield around himself in time. "Be nice, Malfoy, or I might get angry..." he said in a would-be sweet voice.

"Whatever," Malfoy spat.

"Don't worry, Malfoy....I'll be seeing you later...unless there's something you want to tell me..."

Draco didn't reply, just tried to dodge around Foster. But Foster put out a hand and stopped him. "I don't think so." He shoved Draco into the wall roughly and leant in close. Draco could feel his ragged breathing on his face. Once more Foster's lips met with Draco's, no matter how much he struggled. Foster's hand was low...far too low...

Finally it stopped, and with a sickening grin Foster strode away down the corridor, leaving Draco white and shaking.

~~~~~

Across the other side of the castle, Harry lay in bed, listening to the light spring rain tapping on the windows. He was confused. *Why* had Malfoy behaved like that? Surely he hadn't changed his mind? Not now. He had wanted to talk but obviously Malfoy had had other ideas...

Or maybe he was being harsh. Maybe he really did have homework he had needed to do...maybe he, Harry, was being unfair.

What could he do? He wanted to see Malfoy, to talk to him properly, like couples should do....but it was so difficult to do it anyway, and Malfoy didn't seem keen to help matters...

Harry tossed and turned for hours before he finally got to sleep, but he still had a nagging doubt, a shadow at the back of his mind.

~~~~~

Draco locked the door that night, even though he knew it would be no good. He didn't even try to sleep, but had his wand hidden in his bed next to him, ready for when Foster came. It wasn't "if" Foster came in, he knew, it was "when".

He lay shivering for what felt like hours. Heard the noises of the other boys in the Dormitory coming to bed. *Surely*, he thought, he wished, *Foster wouldn't want me now...not with everyone else around. Surely he won't do it now...he'll stay away for tonight....*

He lay awake, listening, his eyes sore with tiredness yet not daring to close them...there was no noise at all, save for the deep breathing of the other four boys...

It wasn't going to happen. It wasn't tonight.... He felt an enormous surge of hope well up inside him....*Not tonight...*

But he knew. He knew it was a false hope. The second he heard the door creak open the hope drained away from his body. He clutched his wand even tighter in his hand; he was ready to strike, yet so nervous that he felt he knew he would be too late...

Through the darkness he sensed the curtains around the bed open, felt the bed sink a little lower as Foster lowered his body onto it. Draco held onto a sob as he tried not to think of Potter- Potter was something clean, something pure, something he couldn't, no, *wouldn't* let Foster ruin for him.

"Hi Malfoy, you stayed awake for me then?" Foster teased, sickeningly.

Draco tried to reply but found he couldn't. Instead he raised his wand but before he could mutter a hex Foster had grabbed his hand and torn his wand away. Draco heard it clatter onto the floor.

He was defenceless.

Foster laughed quietly; the sound made Draco feel sick with hatred.

All of a sudden he could smell Foster's breath, sense his agitated heartbeat and feel his excitement. And then Foster's lips were on his. Foster's tongue next to Draco's. Foster's hand next to Draco's skin, trying to strip him.

And Draco couldn't stop him.

Foster's breathing was ragged as he desperately tried to make Draco succumb. To his wishes. The blond couldn't do anything to stop him, he couldn't clench his jaw tight enough, nor keep his body rigid enough. Soon, Foster knew, Draco would give in and let him do what he wanted to him.

Foster had wanted this for so long, without knowing it for so many years...the wait was making it even more wonderful that it had been in the countless fantasies he'd had over the years.

He slowed an little and whispered, "You can't take it can you? You know you're going to give in, Malfoy so just let me do it...it'll be over faster that way. Who knows, you might even enjoy it. It'll give you some experience to share with that *bitch* of a girlfriend you've got!"

Malfoy couldn't help it, he cried out in pain and hatred as Foster spoke the last words. He knew he wouldn't be able to stop him. He felt too weak. It would happen anyway, even if Foster had to beat him into submission to get what he wanted, it would happen...

Foster's tongue was making its way down Draco's body over his, now naked, body. As Draco whimpered helplessly he felt Foster press himself against his leg.

"You know you're going to like it Draco. Try it, why don't you?" Foster said maliciously, reappearing.

"No," Draco whispered.

"Do it," Foster grunted. He pushed Draco's head downwards and moaned in ecstasy, as it began.

Title: [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 27)

Author Name: [Purple Flame](#)

Owl the author: [here](#).

Rating: R

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

Genre: Drama, Slash

Era: The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: "Three's a Crowd"~ Draco is falling deeper into Foster's web, as he tries desperately to avoid Harry. It's inevitable, though, that Harry will want to speak to him. And when he does neither is really very pleased.

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Author's Notes:

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## Chapter 27- Three's a Crowd

Finally Malfoy had agreed to meet him. Harry didn't know what was up with him, but he'd obviously been trying to avoid Harry for over a week. Successfully. Harry desperately missed his boyfriend, and, though he was more than a bit irritated he decided not to mention it- Malfoy had obviously come round or he wouldn't have agreed to meet him.

He tapped the door of Classroom 11 with his wand and stepped inside.

"Malfoy?" he called, tentatively.

"Hi," a small voice replied from between the thick branches of the trees, closely followed by a gorgeous boy. Harry smiled.

"How are you?" he asked. "You look- are you OK? You look a bit pale."

"I've been ill," Malfoy lied smoothly, ignoring the guilty feeling squirming in his stomach.

"Oh. Is that why you've not-"

"Yeah," Malfoy interrupted. "Yeah, that's right. How are you anyway?" He turned the conversation around, but Harry seemed not to have noticed how keen Malfoy was to change it.

"I'm good. Hermione is starting with all that *spew* crap again, but I think she's just trying to make me and Ron talk again....huh....fat chance."

"How about...the other thing. How're you feeling about everything? Are you sure you're OK?"

"No. I'm not sure. But I can't do anything about it now. And I know it'd be easier if Ron was talking to me but.... hey, I've got you. I don't need him now."

Malfoy smiled encouragingly as he hugged Harry, but the Gryffindor didn't see the pained expression on Malfoy's face as he buried his head into the warm shoulder, and tried not to think of what was making his life *hell*.

~~~~~

He'd had no choice but to agree to see Potter. He still wasn't sure he could face it, but it wasn't fair on Potter to ignore him like that. Draco would just have to try and sort out the problem with Foster by himself before he involved anyone else in the mess.

Every night Foster had visited Draco. And every night had run the same as the first. And every night when Foster finally left, kissing Draco a sickly goodnight, Draco had had to run to the bathroom. But

Draco was determined not to let Foster get what he wanted from him. If it meant he would have to endure this for weeks on end he was totally refusing to let go of the secret he held so closely- for doing that would feel like giving Potter himself up.

And anyway, Draco thought miserably, maybe there won't be any information to give up soon....not if I keep ignoring Potter, anyway.

It hurt so much to see Potter, though, when Draco couldn't be what Potter wanted him to be at the moment...

Potter let go of him and stood back to look at Draco properly.

"Are you sure you're alright?" he asked, face full of concern.

No, leave me alone, leave me alone! Draco pleaded internally. "Yeah. Yeah, of course I am. Why wouldn't I be?"

"It's just...oh never mind."

He forced a painful smile onto his face. "How's er....Quidditch practice going? Weasley fallen on his broom again yet?" he joked.

"No quite....I'm tempted to knock him off it, though..."

Draco forced a laugh.

"You know," said Potter, "your laugh is so sexy...."

"Yeah?"

"Mmm....it makes me want to taste it..."

"Taste what?" Draco asked curiously.

"Your laugh."

"My laugh?"

"That's right."

"How?"

"Like this..." Potter leaned forward and placed his lips on Draco's, savouring the taste. Draco was taken aback. It was bittersweet: he so desperately wanted to kiss Potter, and yet he hated it because it felt so wrong right now...as though he were deceiving Potter. He responded as best he could, trying to seem natural, all the time hating himself.

"Malfoy what's wrong?" Potter suddenly stopped kissing to ask him. "Something's wrong, I know it is."

"Nothing's wrong," he tried to keep his voice even.

"Yes there is! You can't lie to me! I know damn well that something isn't right!"

"Everything's fine!" Draco fought to keep his voice even, but knew it was no good. "Why are you asking me all this? Why now?"

"I don't know...I can feel it...the way you're acting...the way you're speaking...your kiss..."

"What?"

"Something's not right."

"What do you mean?"

"It's not you kissing me....not like it was before. And..." Potter knew it would sound stupid, but said it anyway, the last week of being ignored was bubbling in his mind, "I don't know...it...it *tastes* different."

Draco didn't move or say a word. He knew why it was different. He even knew why it tasted different. Foster had left his mark on him, he wasn't just affecting Draco's mind any more. And last night, even more than any other, Foster's kisses had bitten into Draco's lips...the rough way he used Draco over and over...after, it had bled for what felt like hours, he could still taste it in his mouth.

"Don't be stupid."

"I'm not fucking well being stupid! I know there's something up, so stop denying it! Why have you been avoiding me? Why don't you want to see me? Have...have you gone off me?"

"No! Don't be daft, I-"

"JUST TELL ME!"

"THERE'S NOTHING WRONG!"

"I know there is," Potter said quietly. "Don't lie to me, Malfoy because I know damn well that there is...we're not enemies any more, remember?"

"I know that! I just...I can't...of leave it alone, will you?"

"No!"

"STOP IT, POTTER! Just stop it! Stop having a go! Why is everyone determined to make me miserable? Just leave me alone!" Draco yelled. He turned on his heel and stormed from the room, not quite sure what he was feeling or *why* he was refusing to tell Potter what was going on.

It looked like Foster had been right- Draco was too proud to tell anyone what was happening.

Foster, though Draco was trying to prevent it with all his strength, was winning.

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The common room was warm and noisy, as the fire crackled merrily and the first years went into hysterics as Neville was caught out, yet again, by a Canary Cream offered by Dean. The last of spring was lingering on, with constant rain and dark cloud in the sky.

It was hard to believe that not so long ago Harry had been happier than he could have believed possible, yet now Hermione and Ginny found him sitting in a miserable stupor as far from everyone else as he could manage. He did not say a word as they sat down next to him, but simply turned his head away to the wall. He didn't want to face their questions, their stares, to have Ginny say "I told you so." He didn't want any of it.

"Why aren't you with the others."

He said nothing.

"Harry?"

"Because Ron's there, alright?" he lied.

"We're not stupid, Harry. You've taken this for months; he wouldn't suddenly start getting to you now, after all that. Tell us."

"Leave me alone. Stop trying to tell me you know everything about it because you don't. Maybe I don't want to tell you, did you think of that Hermione?"

"I'm trying to help you, and be a friend, Harry, but if you'd rather I-"

"Don't you dare leave, Hermione, he's in the wrong, not you. Harry, tell us what's up. You can't keep it from us forever. It's best to get it over with now so budge up because the arm of this chair is digging into my arse," Ginny said matter-of-factly. Harry was totally thrown by this so couldn't think of anything to do but to move. When he didn't say anything, Ginny poked him and said, "So?"

"Erm...it's....*him*," he said, resignedly.

"Voldemort?" Hermione asked at once.

Ginny winced.

"No," Harry said sadly, almost wishing it *was* about Voldemort. "Not him. The other one."

"Oh," Hermione said softly, her confused expression clearing. "What's happened?"

Harry looked at her and blinked sadly. "We've had an argument."

"What about?"

"Erm...well...about..." *What was the reason?* "Erm...he was ignoring me...avoiding me..."

*That's not a reason to break up with someone, he told himself sternly, you've blown this out of proportion, but it's too late now and it's your own fault!*

"It's too late..." he muttered, not actually aware of the two girls staring sympathetically at him. "It's my fault...*shit* I'm such an arse!"

"Don't, Harry, that'll only make it worse. It can't be entirely your fault. You don't break up with someone for no reason."

"But it is. It *is* my fault. And...I don't think there really is a reason...not a proper one...I thought there was though...Why did I have to do it? WHY!?"

"Something must have made you do it."  
Harry just grunted incoherently.

"He's probably feeling exactly the same," Hermione said soothingly.

"Doubt it," Harry said.  
"How do you know?" she said fairly.

"Just do. Because it's NOT his fault...it's mine"

"Harry," Ginny said quietly, "I think you're forgetting that he's changed...he *will* be feeling the same way, and you damn well know it. He's not the same M- er...the same as he was before. You've had a go at me about this often enough, not it's my turn: *He's changed*"  
Harry looked up. "You really think so?"

"Of course I do. And so do you. What I want to know is what you're going to do about it."

Harry stared at the table in front of him to ponder this. It was he, Harry, who had caused this, he was the one who had blown it up, and he was the one who had made stupid paranoid theories up in his head....Harry had broken this, so only Harry could fix it. If Malfoy would let him, that is.

"What can I do? I was so horrible to him."

"Well explain why you did it to him. Tell him that you're sorry. You *are* sorry aren't you?" Hermione shot at him.

"Of course I am!" said Harry, highly offended. "But I don't see why he's got any reason to forgive me!"

Ginny and Hermione both tutted in an impatient sort of way.

"What?"

"Boys have got no subtlety or sensitivity. You'd think that they'd realise in a situation like this, but no, they're as crap as ever." Ginny said through gritted teeth, Hermione nodding her grim approval next to her.

"What!" He repeated, completely nonplussed, and desperate to unravel the mysterious girl talk.

"It's very simple, Harry," Ginny said.

"*What* is?"  
Hermione made a noise of desperate frustration. "The reason he'd want to forgive you, idiot!"

"Oh. Right." He was silent for a bit while he thought. "Er...what is it?"

"LOVE," the girls said together, almost hysterically incredulous.

"It's perfectly simple," sighed Ginny. "He loves you. He understands you. He knows the way you are and what you're facing... if he's as good as you make out then *of course* he will forgive you, because he *loves* you."

"Shhhh!" he hissed. "Keep it down or everyone will guess I'm...you know."

"It's nothing to be ashamed of."

"I know but....still." He fell silent.

Ginny watched him for a minute, and then said in a heavily exasperated voice, "Well go on then!"

"What *now*?" He demanded.

"Go and *find him*. You know what to do so *go*! *Now*!" Hermione almost yelled.

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"Ahh, just the man. I wanted a little word if you don't mind, Malfoy?" Foster said silkily, eyeing the group of Hufflepuff third years dangerously as they passed. Draco said nothing but ignored Foster and walked past him as though he were a suit of armour. "Malfoy," Foster called again, a little louder, "Malfoy it's quite urgent, could I have a word? It won't take long...then you can get straight to....*bed*."

With everything he was having to deal with, and his recent meeting with Potter, Draco felt something inside him snap. He turned to face Foster from down the corridor, hatred pumping through his body.

"*Fuck off, Foster! What are you trying to achieve from this?*" he yelled, balling his hands to try and contain his anger. The Hufflepuffs heard the yells, and looked back with frightened expressions on their faces, then, as though they did not want to be caught spying on older Slytherins, they turned and scurried off nervously.

Draco and Foster stood staring at each other silently, Draco slightly pink with anger and hatred, and Foster with a sickening look of longing on his face, like a cat bearing down on a mouse.

Foster laughed softly and began to walk towards Draco. Draco wanted to run, but he was still three floors above the common room, and anyway, he was not a coward.

"Take one more step, Foster-" he warned quietly his hand finding his wand, his mouth ready to form the curse.

"You wouldn't." Foster stopped dead, his voice was full of confidence.

"Watch me."

"I'd love to. But sadly I can't. I can't let you do that. You see, then I wouldn't be getting my way. And I like to get my own way Malfoy, surely you realise that by now?"

"I've realised," Draco's voice was trembling slightly with anger and repressed fear. "But I'm not going to give you your own way."

They stared at each other for a few seconds longer, then, slowly, Foster raised his foot and took a step forwards.

"*Slavaka*-" Draco yelled.

But Foster had already spat, "*Expelliarmus*!"

The red light from Foster's wand erupted first, it caused Draco's electric-blue beam to go off course and crash into the wall with a sickening *crunch*. The place it had hit immediately crumbled, and an intricate network of cracks spread directly from the point it had hit.

Draco slumped against the wall in pain where he had been thrown backwards, his wand ten feet away, silence echoing round the corridor threateningly.

"*Impedimenta!*" Foster said, and Draco found himself unable to move.

"*Not a wise move, Malfoy!*" he said furiously.

"You bastard!" choked Draco, "You utter-"

"Shut up! Now, do you mind if we have that little chat now? Good."

He dragged Draco to his feet and into an empty room to the right. Draco tried desperately to struggle but the jinx made it impossible.

"Well done," Foster whispered. He was panting slightly from the effort of dragging Draco. The jinx was beginning to wear off but Foster had pinned Draco so tightly to the wall that Draco could hardly struggle any more than before.

Foster moved his head closer to Draco's, so Draco could see Foster and nothing else, and feel his breath on his face.

"I'll never tell you, you know," Draco said. "You're wasting your time."

"That may well be, but I can't stop now can I? I've gone this far...and besides it wasn't just the answer I wanted out of this. I've wanted this for five and a half years, so I don't think I'll stop now. I'm enjoying it *far* too much..."

He moved his face even closer...

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Harry stepped through a moth-eaten tapestry thinking hard. Malfoy was not in the library, or the toilets, and Harry very much doubted he would be in the common room. Where else could he be? He walked quickly, pondering the possible hiding places Malfoy could have found, rehearsing what he would say under his breath.

*"Malfoy, I didn't mean to say those things...no, too formal, Malfoy I'm so sorry...no I don't want to sound like I'm begging...but I might have to beg...I'm really sorry Malfoy I just get paranoid about these-oh for God's sake how hard can one apology be!?"*

He climbed the stairs to the second floor and walked along the corridors, peering into the classrooms hoping to find Malfoy in each one, but without luck. He tripped over something on the floor. Stumbling upwards he cursed and turned to see what had been in his way. It took him a few seconds to find it, because he had managed to kick it away as he tripped and it was now lying at the top of the stairs from which he had just come. He walked to it, and bent to pick it up. It was a wand, of similar length to his own. He examined it. He was sure it looked familiar. It was probably Neville's...he was becoming more and more distant these days, and had disappeared from school the week before. He had returned the same night, looking utterly depressed and would not answer when people asked where he had been. But as he had watched the pained expressions on Neville's face, Harry had developed a suspicion that Neville had started paying visits to St. Mungo's.



He continued his way down the corridor, looking into every room, feeling growing panic as he found each one dark and deserted. A very faint flickering light was coming from one of the rooms ahead, it looked as though a single, dimmed torch had been lit. He heard voices coming from the same classroom. It sounded like there were two people having an intimate discussion in there, it sounded like Roger Davies and one of his many girlfriends...he was renowned for meeting them in secret after their curfew time...he didn't want to disturb them...he would just ignore the room and go on to the next one...

He walked past it, determined to resist...but curiosity overcame him and he glanced in. It wasn't Roger Davies at all. He could only see one person clearly, and it took him a few seconds to realise it was Dominic Foster, an extremely good-looking Slytherin seventh year. Harry smiled and repressed a laugh, Foster was renowned for being anti-social, but it seemed he had found a girl willing to put up with his icy front. But who was she? Foster leant forwards and kissed whoever it was. He moved his head slightly to one side as he did so, deepening the kiss.

It hit him like a train; he staggered backwards and retched. He had recognised the streaked blond hair, perfect pale skin, and delicate features of Draco Malfoy.

**Title:** [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Not Just an Empty Emotion 28)

**Author Name:** [Purple Flame](#)

**Owl the author:** [here](#).

**Rating:** R

**Spoilers:** PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

**Genre:** Drama, Slash

**Era:** The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

**Main Character(s):** D, G, H, Hr

**Ship(s):** D/H, Hr/R

**Summary:** "As His World Collapses"~ So Harry's seen Draco and Foster together- and, understandably, his mind automatically jumps to the one conclusion he's been fearing all along. Draco tries to talk him round, but are his attempts in vain?

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**Author's Notes:**

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Chapter 28-As His World Collapses

He took a further horrified step away from the scene, feeling nauseous. He gasped, trying to force air down into his lungs but found it was impossible. At last he managed it.

"*Bastard!*" he screamed, every particle of his being focussed on his hatred of Foster and Malfoy. "*Bastard!*"

He turned on his heel and ran; he wouldn't have been able to watch the scene any more even if he hadn't thought he was about to throw up. Up stairways, along corridors, through paintings and secret paths...he ran as fast as he could, wanting, *needing*, to be as far away from them as possible.

At last he saw the Fat Lady's painting, forced the password through his lips and struggled into the common room. He tore across it and up the staircase into the boy's dormitory. Someone behind him might have shouted his name, but he didn't much care. At last he reached the sink next to the window and threw up in it again and again.

Shaking, he splashed his face with water and rinsed his mouth. He put his head against the icy window, seeing the glass become frosted as the heat from his skin radiated onto it, through half-closed eyes.

The door opened with a bang and in strode Hermione, Ginny and, surprisingly, Ron. Hermione put her arm around him and led him across to his bed, where a glass of icy water was pressed into his shaking hand by Ginny. Ron pretended to be shuffling around in his trunk for something, attempting to seem as though he were ignoring Harry.

Harry wiped his face, trying to remove any evidence of his grief, but the tears were all too obvious.

"What's happened?" Hermione asked finally in a sensitive voice.

Harry just shook his head.

"Was what happened really that bad?"

He shook his head again, and said almost inaudibly, "*I hate him. I hate him.*"

"What?" Ginny asked, bewildered. "I thought you said *you* were the one who was upset with him? So why do *you* hate *him*?"

He couldn't say it. Saying it would mean it were real- meaning that what he had seen had really happened.

"Ron can you go away please?" Hermione said.

"Er...no! Hermione you can't tell me to get out of my own dormitory-"

"I'm not telling you, I'm asking and appealing to your better nature."

Ron looked as though he was about to spit a retort at Hermione but thought the better of it. He stomped towards the door and muttered, "Just because precious Potter and his bitch are having a catfight-"

Harry leapt off the bed and grabbed Ron's robes. "Don't you-"

"Harry NO!" Ginny yelled. "Doing that will only make it worse *stop it!*"

"He'd deserve it! I've put up with so much shit from him! He'd deserve it and you know it!" Harry snarled.

"I know he would-" Ginny and Ron exchanged dirty looks "- but you can't do this!"

Harry glared at Ron for a moment longer before letting him go and turning away. Ron shook his head and left the room.

"Harry, listen, please tell us. We're your friends. Don't be miserable alone- we want to help."

"You can't."

"We can try."

"Oh. Right," Harry gulped. "You can stop Malfoy falling in love with someone else can you? You can stop him kissing someone else, can you? You can stop all that?"

Both Hermione and Ginny looked thunderstruck.

Hermione was the first to react. She jumped up looking utterly repulsed and furious. "*Malfoy*," she said in a disgusted tone. "Your boyfriend is *Malfoy*?"

"Shit!" Harry moaned, screwing his face up, cursing himself.

"Oh, God Harry...I'm so sorry. How do you know?"

"I saw them. I've been so stupid to think that he really...that he..." he couldn't finish. Ginny hugged him consolingly.

Hermione was still on her feet. "Ginny, you knew about this didn't you? Why didn't you try to stop it? It's not just about Harry it's every one of Voldemort's enemies who matters here! I mean, Draco Malfoy, for God's sake! What were you thinking? Why the hell, Harry, are you with him? How!?"

"Well I'm not any more am I, and that's the point!"

"Which is even worse!"

"How, Hermione? *How* can it be any worse?"

"What do you think Malfoy's going to do? Now you're not together any more -if it was even a proper relationship in the first place- he's sure to run to daddy and tell him-"

"He's not like that! He's not the Malfoy you think he is!"

"Well he's obviously not the Malfoy YOU think he is either!"

Harry opened his mouth to reply. There *was no* reply. Had he been stupid all along? Had he really believed Malfoy when he should have been suspicious?

"Can I just interrupt a moment?" Ginny said. "Yes Hermione, I knew. And my reaction was just like yours a first. I didn't believe a word of it. But it's true. Malfoy *has* changed. I still don't like him and there's no way he'll ever be good enough for Harry, but he has changed. He's not on You-know-Who's side any more. He's with us. Sounds doubtful, I know, but it's true. I want to kill him for doing this to Harry though. I mean it...next time I see him my wand will be on his *so fast*-"

"Don't bother," Harry said miserably. "Let him be happy. Foster can have him, I don't want the bastard any more."

Even Hermione's expression softened at this.

"Do you mean Dominic Foster?" Ginny asked. "Well, he might be gorgeous but he's got nothing else to attract anyone..."

"Tell Malfoy that."

Ginny hugged him, and, as much as he tried to hold back the tears, he sobbed into her shoulder uncontrollably.

"Oh, fuck this I'm going to find the bastard," Hermione said, and strode from the room.

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"*Bastards!*"

They both heard the yell and Foster let Draco go, looking around angrily, panic on his face. They were just in time to see a student's robes flying behind them as he ran along the corridor.

"Shit!" Foster yelled, clearly confused. "What was it? Did you see who it was?"

"No," Draco said truthfully. Foster looked disbelieving. "How do you expect me to have seen anything when you were...were..."

"When we were kissing?" Foster added dangerously.

"No. When you were kissing," Draco said defiantly. He didn't care if Foster got angry, or forced him to do anything else because Draco wasn't going to take this any more. He didn't care. And besides- he had recognised the voice.

"See you tomorrow Malfoy," Foster said distractedly, and ran out of the room in the general direction the person had run.

Draco stood against the wall for support, shaking. The voice was ringing in his head....*bastards...bastards...* there was no doubt in his mind. How many times had he listened to and loved that voice?

Potter had seen it.

Draco wailed- how could he have let this happen? There was no way Potter would believe him, even if he did tell the truth. It was over. Foster had succeeded in ruining Draco and Potter's relationship.

He scrubbed his eyes and told himself not to cry, then walked determinedly, but nervously, from the room and towards the Gryffindor common room, shaking.

\*

He stood before the Fat Lady's portrait, not sure of what to do next.

"Er," he said. "Will...will you let me in?"

"Certainly not!" the Fat Lady said irritably. "Not without a password which I don't think you have, do you?"

"No but...I...I need to speak to someone. It's important."

"I don't care if you're Albus Dumbledore come to save Harry Potter, if you haven't got a password you're not coming in!"

Draco considered insulting her, but decided against it. He would just have to wait here until somebody came out. But what if it was someone he didn't want to meet? The only two people he could possibly talk to were Potter or Ginny Weasley. He sank down against the stone wall next to the portrait, the Fat Lady looking at him curiously, with an expression similar to sympathy on her face.

He didn't have to wait very long. A minute later the portrait hole swung open and a furious-looking figure strode out.

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Hermione strode across the common room, ignoring the curious stares that followed her, determined to find Malfoy and punish him. She pushed the Fat Lady's portrait rather harder than was necessary and stomped outside into the corridor.

She stopped dead. Malfoy had got to his feet and within a split second was looking at her with a frightened but determined expression on his face. She didn't wait for him to speak.

"You *bastard*," she said, her voice shaking with fury. "You utter *bastard*."

"What?" Malfoy said bemusedly. "Oh no. He's told you."

"Yes, Malfoy. I know. And I know what you've done to him too!" She reached up a hand and slapped him around the face with as much force as she could. He staggered backwards and smacked into the wall, but did not turn to face her again.

"You deserved that and *much* more, and you know it."

"Yes, yes I know I do but not for the reasons you think!"

"You mean you're ashamed of something *other* than for kissing someone else when you're meant to be with Harry?" she said furiously. "Oh, well, *that* fits! I shouldn't have expected anything less from *you*!"

"Shh! Keep your voice down, *please*! It's not what you think!"

"Oh, what, so Harry was seeing things in that classroom, was he?!"

"NO! I'm not saying that! I...I.... just let me talk to him. Please?"

"Tell me, Malfoy.... just give me one good reason why I should?"

"I can give you three," he choked. "One: I'm on your side now, and you know damn well that there's more to this than it first seems. Two: You care about Potter and you and me both know that, if by letting me talk to him, we can sort this crap out then it's worth it. Three: I love him."

Malfoy was even more careful not to meet her eyes as he said this, his face turning pink. Hermione still looked furious, but what Malfoy said had obviously softened her. It was true: as much as she disliked Malfoy, she had to admit that over the last few terms he had not been the evil git that he once was. And it was true that it had certainly made Harry happier, being with Malfoy. Above all though, Hermione couldn't help being touched by the sincerity in Malfoy's voice.

"Fine," she said heavily. "But how the hell do you propose getting in there? Do you want me to bring him out here?"

"No," Malfoy said. "No, I need to be the one who goes up to see him...he'll never come anyway. I thought I might just...blend into the crowd..."

"*Blend into the crowd*?" Hermione repeated incredulously. "Don't be so *stupid*!"

Malfoy looked at her at last. "Well then how am I going to do it? *Please*, Granger, I need to speak to him *now*. If there's any way..."

She looked at him, the desperate, miserable expression on his face, the tired eyes, the face which looked, upon closer inspection, as though he had faced hell...and suddenly, though still livid, she pitied him.

"Right," she said. "Fine. But if you do *anything* wrong...anything at all....I'm still not saying I'm happy about this. This is for Harry's sake and if you do one thing-"

"I know! I won't, I promise. Please just.... tell me?"

She took a deep breath. "Stand up. Now, what I'm going to do will only last a few seconds, so when I do it, you have to get as quickly as you can to the staircase. It's the one on the-"

"I know where it is. What're you going to do?"

"You'll see."

"Granger...thanks."

"Don't mention it," she said bitterly. "Ready?"

He nodded, his face frightened but set.

She pointed her wand at his face and said, "*Peruio Stalsas!*" then turned to the Fat Lady and said, "*Wizard Wheezes!*"

The portrait swung open and she gave Malfoy a dig in the back. She saw him walk as fast as he could without attracting attention to the boys' staircase. No one recognised him, because her spell had turned his hair mousy brown, made it shorter, and given him a large nose and bad skin. She breathed a sigh of relief and gave him a minute before she repeated the password and followed him up.

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Harry had sat back down on his bed and was being comforted by Ginny, who had decided to let Hermione go on her own, both of them badmouthing Malfoy.

"Don't worry," she said. "Hermione will sort him out. You know what she's like when she's angry. He'll get at least some of what he deserves."

Harry just grunted, not feeling inclined to do much else.

They sat for a few minutes in complete silence, listening to the light rainfall outside the tower, the miserable weather reflecting Harry's mood.

The door swung open silently, and she looked up simultaneously. When she saw who it was Ginny jumped up angrily, with a protective hand on Harry's shoulder. Malfoy (back to normal) was standing in the doorway, looking anywhere but at Harry.

"Get out," Harry said quietly, willing his voice to remain even.

"Potter, I-"

"I don't want to hear it! Just go on back to Foster where you'd rather be instead! Why bother coming after me when you've got him to keep you company?"

"Because I don't *want* Foster! I want *you*! I love *you*!"

"So what was all that about then? Is Foster just a bit of fun? Do you love me but find me boring? Will Foster let you do more, eh?" Harry bellowed. "I've told you I don't want to know, I don't care what your crap excuse is just get *out*!"

"No!" Malfoy found himself yelling. He had put up with so much shit over the last few weeks, with Foster, with trying to make sure Harry was OK, with trying to just handle his life...and he was not about to let Foster win. He would make sure Harry knew the truth even if he had to force him. "There is a *reason* and believe me, Potter I don't want to admit it! I'm only telling you because I love you, I've only put up with it because I love you, and you are going to listen whether you like it or not because I'm not giving up this easily!"

"Put up with what?" Harry asked. "What do you have to put up with? And whatever your 'reason' I don't care- fact is you were looking pretty happy with someone else, and I don't think there can really be any excuse for that, can there?"

"Well there is," Malfoy said fiercely. "And you're going to listen. *Please*, Potter. You can't want to give up this easily?"

"Easily? Explain what's 'easy' about this? And you didn't seem to have trouble giving up."

"That's because I didn't give up. Weasley can you...er...please...leave. I need to talk to Harry alone."

"Of course I can't leave. You think I'm about to leave Harry with you? No chance."

"Anything you can say to me you can say to her."

"Look! I need you to do this, please! You can wait outside the door! I just need to be allowed to explain, and it's just not very....not very....nice."

Harry waited a moment before replying. "Of course it's not nice. Fine. Ginny, can you wait outside the door?"

She looked at him for a moment as though doubting his sanity but then said, "Yeah. Of course. I'm right there if you need me."

"Thanks," he said, not quite sure what he was letting himself in for.

She left the room, giving Malfoy her dirtiest look as she did so, and slammed the door behind her, raising her eyebrows doubtfully at Hermione who had just climbed the stairs.

"Talk," said Harry. "But make it quick."

"Well, I...I'm sorry first of all."

"I don't want apologies! They won't work; you can't bring me round that way! What you've done is not excusable!"

"I know but...I'm not apologising for what you saw. I'm apologising for not telling you before."

"Telling me what?" Harry asked at once. "About the affair?"

"No," Malfoy said, feeling sick. "About what they were doing to me."

"*What?*" Harry said dangerously.

"Just let me speak," Malfoy pleaded, then, at the end, you can chose whether to believe me or not. Please?"

"Fine," Harry said. "But make it quick."

Malfoy took a deep breath and told Harry everything, from when Kierre had first cornered him, to when he had Foster had got involved. He told him about the odd meetings with Foster, and the night Foster had finally opened up about his own life...about how he had kissed him....how he had threatened him...how he had continued to meet him and force him to do things...

When he had finished, Malfoy looked slightly paler than before and said in a weak voice, "And that...that's what happened. You can chose whether to believe it or not, but I promise you now it's true."

"You've made a lot of promises, Malfoy. Why didn't you tell me all this before? When it started?"

"That's why I'm sorry. I should have told you I know. But I couldn't. I was ashamed, I thought I could sort it out for myself. It was my won stupid fault, I should have been more careful. I shouldn't have got into that situation in the first place. I wanted to sort it out for myself. I thought I could. I wanted to prove I was still strong, that even though I've changed.... I could still be in control. And...I thought you had enough to be getting on with."



"Bollocks. Since when have you cared about what I've had to deal with?"

"Since I fell in love with you."

Harry didn't have a reply. Instead he said. "But when it got really serious? Why didn't you say something then? Surely you know I'd have stuck by you?"

"Yes, but that wouldn't have been fair on you. And I didn't want you to think I was weak. You shouldn't have to deal with this as well as everything else."

"Malfoy, you were my *boyfriend*, it's my job to care about you and help you!"

"I know. I was stupid. And that's why I'm really, really sorry."

Harry didn't want to ask the next question, he didn't want to hear the answer, but he knew it had to be done. "How far did you go? If this is true, what did he make you do?"

Malfoy looked disturbed at this; he didn't want to think about it, and didn't want Harry to know. "Are you sure you want to know?"

"No. But I need to know. So tell me."

"He...he made me... it was no further than we've done. But it would have got worse, he told me."

Harry felt sick. He took a large gulp of water to stop it.

"Please, Potter. *Please*, you have to believe me! The only way I've got through this is because you were with me."

"Even though I was the problem?"

"Yes. Because I love you. I only wanted to protect you. And if we....if Foster splits us up he'll have won and we'll both be miserable."

"But if...I'm not saying I do, but....if I do believe you...then what are we going to do about Foster? How can we stop him?"

"We can't. He knows someone saw us because you shouted, but he can't make it public because he wants everyone to think he's straight...not even Kierre knows what he's been doing. He doesn't know who you were though, or that you're the person I'm seeing. He still thinks it's a girl."

"So he thinks you're straight?"

"Yes. And I couldn't tell him, Potter, I-"

"It's OK. I know you couldn't. But...there has to be a way. As far as he's concerned he's still got as much power over you as before so he won't stop. How can we stop it?"

"I don't know, and right now I don't care, we can come to that later. Just...please, Potter, believe me. I need you to believe me. I'm telling the truth, I swear...please."  
Harry looked at the desperate figure before him, saw the pain in his eyes, the torture that he had tried for so long to hide, etched upon his face...

"I know you are," he said at last. "I know."

He stood up, walked to Malfoy and hugged him.

"I'm sorry..." they said together.

"Malfoy, you can tell me anything you know. I love you, so there isn't anything you can't talk to me about."

Malfoy nodded. "I know. As long as you tell me?"

"Yes," Harry whispered. He kissed Malfoy briefly, then looked into his eyes and said. "And we're going to sort out that bastard, OK?"

Malfoy smiled weakly, relieved, and squeezed Harry's hand.

**Title:** [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Not Just an Empty Emotion 29)

**Author Name:** [Purple Flame](#)

**Owl the author:** [here](#).

**Rating:** R

**Spoilers:** PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

**Genre:** Drama, Slash

**Era:** The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

**Main Character(s):** D, G, H, Hr

**Ship(s):** D/H, Hr/R

**Summary:** "Obliviate"~ At last that truth is out in the open and Harry knows what Foster has been doing to Draco. They both feel it's time to sort out Foster and Kierre...with a little help from a few friends, of course...

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**Author's Notes:**

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Chapter 29- Obliviate

"Ginny!" Neville called hopefully as they emerged from the staircase.

"Neville I can't really-"

"I just want to ask if this sounds OK..." he brandished a long letter written in green ink before her.

"Neville, you know I'm always glad to help you, but I'm really busy right now, and besides I'm sure Luna will appreciate it no matter *what* you write." Ginny hid the slight exasperation in her voice well.

"Oh," he said, looking crestfallen. "Are you sure? I don't want to seem too-"

"Neville! She loves you for who you are, not what you write, OK?"

Neville smiled uncertainly at her as they left through the portrait hole. They heard him calling a second too late, "Hey! You can't go out now, it's half past ten!"

All four of them strolled down the corridor purposefully. Harry looked pale, Hermione irate (though whether it was with Harry and Malfoy or Foster, no one was quite sure), Ginny looked as though she were thinking hard, and Malfoy was repairing his hair after pulling off the invisibility cloak.

"Where do you think he'll be, Malfoy?" Ginny asked as they reached the entrance Hall.

"He'll be in his dormitory now...waiting for...for everyone else to go to bed."

"What time does he normally come into the dormitory?"

"Gone Midnight."

"OK. Right. I have a plan."

The other three whipped their heads around in surprise.

"Go on then," said Harry when she remained silent.

"I'm just thinking...there's a bit of it I don't know how we'll manage...but anyway...if we sneak in there when everyone else has gone to bed, and wait in the Common Room, will he come looking for you, Malfoy?"

"Of course he will. He won't stop at anything."

"OK, good."

"Good?" Malfoy repeated disbelievingly.

Ginny ignored him and continued. "That means he'll find us there. We can make it so he can't escape. We force him to admit what he's done...and then we selectively wipe his mind."

They stared at her for a minute, lost for words. Then Harry said, "OK, I have three problems. Firstly, why only selectively wipe his mind? Why not take everything? Secondly, *how* do you propose we wipe it? And thirdly- what about Kierre?"

"We do it selectively so it's not suspicious. He needs to remember what he's been doing, just not the bit where he pestered Malfoy and did those things to him. Otherwise people will notice he's not.... not right."

"OK, but how do we selectively wipe it? Ask McGonagall to do it? I don't think so..."

"No, Harry, don't be stupid. I'll do it."

"YOU? But how...you can't..."

"I can. Bill taught me how last summer. He said it'd be important. He wanted to teach Ron, too, but Ron was too bothered about you..."

"So you can do it, can you? Properly, I mean?"

"Yeah. I've not tried it out for real but...Bill said all the practice attempts looked really strong..."

"Bloody Hell," Malfoy said, almost enviously. "So...what do we do about Kierre? I'm not letting him carry on trying to beat me to a pulp..."

"You won't have to," Hermione cut in, surprising them. "Ginny, can you wipe a mind totally?"

"Yes, but, Bill said to do it selectively would be more important."

"OK, that's fine. I can't do it selectively yet, but I can do a strong mind wipe." There was an odd expression on her face as she spoke.

"But won't people notice?"

"No. He behaves like he's been made to forget everything anyway, this won't make much difference. I'll only do it enough so he forgets what's been going on in the last few months."

Harry and Malfoy looked at each other, unsure. "Are you sure this'll work, Weasley?" Malfoy asked.

"Of course I am. Trust me. I want it to stop almost as much as you do..."

They had come, at last, to the Slytheirn Common room. It was late, gone eleven.

"OK," Malfoy said, "I'll go in first, and when everyone's gone to bed I'll come back out and get you."

"Fine," Hermione said.

Malfoy whispered a password and disappeared.

Harry leant against the wall with his eyes closed.

"Why do you believe him, Harry?"

He opened his eyes irritably. "I don't know. I just do. Because he's been through so much...I could just tell...it was there in his eyes, he was telling the truth."

"And I suppose we'll find out one way or another, anyway, if we get Foster to admit it..."

"Oh, don't worry. I know how I'm going to do that."

Ginny raised an eyebrow at him but didn't say anything. Instead, it was Hermione who spoke, in a surprisingly angry voice.

"Harry, what the *hell* are you doing with *Draco Malfoy*?"

"What? I thought that was obvious!"

"Harry, his father is a *Death Eater*, he is a *Voldemort supporter*, can't you see he's just using you?"

"He's not using me!" Harry said, equally angrily.

"How do you know?"

"Because I trust him! Because I love him! And because he's proved it to me."

"How?" she demanded.

"I don't want to discuss it, Hermione. *This* is why I didn't tell you, I knew you'd do this."

"Can you blame me?"

"A few months ago I'd have had the same reaction, but not any more. He *is* on our side, I swear. I thought you would have understood that there's no way I could have trusted him if I wasn't one hundred per cent sure of him!"

"*How* can you be so sure, though? *How*? It doesn't make sense! How did all this start? You don't go from being enemies one day to being in love the next!"

"And we didn't! We didn't want this, we tried to stop it but we couldn't help it! Hermione, trust me! Please! Trust *him*."

"I can't. I don't believe him."

"It's the truth." Harry jumped, as he heard Ginny speak quietly. He hadn't expected her to contribute to his attempts to persuade Hermione- he was still under the impression that she was not entirely sure about the whole thing.

"What?" Hermione said dangerously.

"Malfoy's different. Harry's right about him. He's with us now."

"How do you know?"

"I trust Harry. And when you think of the way Malfoy's been recently...it all fits."

"I don't believe this! Why didn't you try to stop it! Whether he's on our side or not, he's still a Malfoy!"

"I know! But it's Harry's decision! I can't dictate who Harry sees, and neither can you. I didn't trust Malfoy at first but...but now I do. As much as I don't want to.... I believe him."

"This is ridiculous!" Hermione said. "Ludicrous!"

"Hermione!" Harry said through gritted teeth. "Do you really think I'm that stupid? Just trust him, OK? You'll find out what he's really like if you just give him a chance. You're behaving like Ron."

Hermione stopped, looking horrified. The last comment seemed to have brought her to her senses. She still looked upset, but not as angry any more. "I- oh, alright, but I'm not saying I'm happy with it."

"I'm not asking you to be," Harry said.

"Fine. But that's not the issue here. *Foster* is..." And suddenly her face had, once more, become set in a terrifyingly livid way.

No sooner had they fallen quiet than the door in the stone opened, and Malfoy appeared. "It's empty," he said simply.

They stepped inside silently. Hermione and Ginny looked around apprehensively-neither of them having ever been inside the Slytherin common room before. They took seats with Harry and Malfoy, however, on one of the hard green sofas, and waited.

They glanced occasionally at the large and ugly Grandfather clock in the corner which was clunking noisily. Midnight...five past...ten past...

At last, just as the clock chimed a quarter-past, a figure appeared in the Staircase to the right. It strode forwards into the room, and then, as it noticed those waiting for him, stopped dead.

"What the-"

"Shut up," spat Malfoy. Ginny, Hermione and Harry surrounded Foster, so he could not escape.

Malfoy walked towards him with a look of deepest loathing on his face. "Did you really think you could get away with it? Did you think you'd win that easily? Well I've got news for you- you haven't won. You never will."

"What are you talking about?" Foster asked defiantly, a sick grin on his face, and his eyes clearly telling Malfoy that he would deny everything as far as he could.

"We're not playing games, Foster. You see, we thought it was about time that you left the playground and entered the real world."

"What?" Foster crowed. "What do you want, Malfoy?"

"You know damn well. *Tell them.*"
There was a moment's silence, then, "Tell them what?"

Foster was smiling but, to the older boy's discomfort, not as much as Malfoy was.

"You've blackmailed me, Foster, and though I may have changed I still carry some of the old qualities. I've endured your blackmail, now lets see if you'll endure mine..."

"What do you mean?" Foster asked, a note of fear in his voice for the first time. He wasn't noticing as the three Gryffindors closed in on him slowly.

"I mean.... tell them what you've done...and why.... or the rest of the school might be finding out a little bit about Dominic Foster's preferences...your quiet reputation couldn't be doing with the whole school finding out that you're *gay*, now, could it?"

Foster glared at him. "You bastard," he said, with a pathetic attempt at keeping his voice cool. All right, I'll tell them...but what good will it do?"

"It'll do the world of good, Foster, believe me..."

"Fine. I wanted answers. So I tried to force you to tell me. But you wouldn't. So I

"...kissed you..."

"Tell them," Malfoy said, his voice rising.

"Made you...do things...did things to you...."

"Well done," Malfoy said lightly. "That didn't hurt, did it?"

"You sick bastard!" Foster shot at him.

Malfoy looked at him for a moment and then laughed, Foster squirmed in anger.

"Good boy, Foster. Now, can you keep quiet about all this? If you stop this, then I won't be forced to tell everyone about you. Do you agree?"

"No! It won't be half as bad for me as it would for you! You can't beat me that way."

"Shame. Because now, you see, you've forced us to do something we *really* didn't want to have to do." He walked over to a now terrified Foster. Harry darted forwards and held Foster's arms tightly, so he couldn't move.

"What the f-"

"Shut it!" Malfoy roared. He stepped forwards, reached inside Foster's robes, and withdrew his wand. "Still feeling brave?" he asked.

He threw the wand to Ginny, who caught it deftly. Harry forced Foster around to face her.

"Weasley!" Foster said angrily.

"Yep," said Ginny without an ounce of concern. That's right. Nice touch, Malfoy," she added. She raised Foster's wand and shouted, "*Salen Obliviate!*"

At once Foster's head was thrown back, and Harry had to doge out of its way while he kept hold of Foster. Ginny's eyes were fixed on Foster's, as his head became a blur of sliver thoughts trailing around him. Every now and then one would dissolve in a flash of green light.

Thirty seconds later, Foster hung limply in Harry's arms, and Ginny lowered the wand. "Done," she said easily.

Harry dropped Foster onto the floor. "Shame," he said, "half his memory taken away by his own wand..."

Ginny smiled wickedly, and dropped the wand next to Foster. "He'll come round soon..." she said.

"Shame," Hermione muttered. "What are we going to do about Kierre? Is there any way we can get it over with tonight?"

"Not really," Malfoy said. "Not unless you want to go up to his dormitory...that might get awkward, though, we'd probably wake the other bastards."

"Not necessarily," Harry said, his eyes bright. "Which floor is his dormitory on?"

"The third one down."

"Right, come on everyone."

Looking rather dubious, the rest of them followed Harry through the door and down the stairs until they reached the right dormitory.

"Ready? Let's get this over with quickly." They entered the dormitory silently, though they doubted their footsteps would have been heard over the grunts and snores of the sleeping boys anyway. The curtains of the second bed on the right were slightly open. Kierre's head was visible through the gap, his mouth wide open and snoring loudly.

"*Protega Silencia!*" Harry whispered. A light blue shield surrounded Kierre's bed. "That will stop anyone hearing what's going on in there. Ready, Hermione?"
Hermione stepped forwards, wand raised, but Malfoy put out an arm to stop her. She looked at him quizzically.

"Just give me a minute," he whispered, "I need to do something." He stepped forwards to Kierre's bed and reached out a hand to his shoulder. He shook hard. It took a few seconds for Kierre to come round, and when he did it was with an angry yell, which the blue shield made soundless. He mouthed angrily at Malfoy, and then spotted the others behind him. He made to sit up, but became entangled in the sheets. Malfoy pinned him down. "You thought you'd get away with it. Well I've got news for you, *you lose*, Kierre. Bye bye." He nodded at Hermione and she stepped forward.

"*Obliviate!*" she cried. For a split second Kierre's expression was one of mingled fear and fury as he realised what she was doing to him, but it swiftly changed to confusion. He seemed to have forgotten that they were there, as he rolled over and closed his eyes once more. Hermione smiled triumphantly. Harry withdrew the sound shield with an odd sucking noise, the blue light faded, leaving the room as dark as before, and led the way out, back up the stairs to the deserted common room.

"Well done, Hermione," Ginny said.

"Yeah, er...thanks, guys," Malfoy said awkwardly.

"No problem," Hermione said. Her tone was not unfriendly, but hinted at formality- clearly she was still not happy about his involvement with Harry. "Come on, let's go. I don't like this place much..."

"Neither do I," Malfoy said quietly.

They left the common room, and immediately the stone wall grinded back to its original appearance. Ginny shivered, though whether that was because of the cold in the dungeon corridor, or because she didn't like the Slytheirn common room, Harry couldn't tell.

They did not speak as they proceeded back up to the Entrance Hall where they were dazzled by the bright light of the many torches that hung on the walls. Hermione looked round at Harry. "Coming?" she asked pointedly.

"No. You go on up to bed," he said. "I'm going to stay with Malfoy for a bit. I need to talk to him."

Hermione nodded, Ginny gave him a swift hug, and they left.

*

Harry turned to Malfoy. "Not here," he said. They walked from the Entrance Hall and away from the main school, up stairs, along corridors...along to a place neither of them had visited in a long while. The classroom where he and Malfoy had first kissed so many months ago.

Harry locked the door and turned around to look at Malfoy. "God, I'm so proud of you," he said, and pulled Malfoy into a hug, holding him close.

"You shouldn't be. I should've told you a long time ago."

"It doesn't matter. It's done now. Finished."

Malfoy nodded and smiled. "So...so where are we?" he asked awkwardly.

Harry grinned at him. "We're further than we've ever been."

Malfoy smiled again. Harry saw the pain and terror had gone from his eyes. Once again he looked like the old Malfoy, pure, perfect and sexy as hell...but with a passionate look of mischief. The misty torchlight highlighted his pale, flawless skin, and made his eyes shine with a fervent brightness. How could he have ever thought of Malfoy in any other way?

Malfoy, for his part, was noticing Harry, too. The messy dark hair, which looked sexily ruffled... the defined features that made him so striking to look at...the twinkling dark green eyes...shining with adventure and unspoken possibilities...the deep red lips which seemed to come alive in the torchlight...

"God, I love you," Malfoy said. Harry moved towards him. He took one hand in his own, and placed the other on his face, savouring the soft feel of Malfoy's warm skin beneath his fingers. They moved closer together and their lips met, slowly, tenderly, they kissed in the torchlight.

When they broke apart they did not let go. They stared into each other's eyes and became lost, falling deeper.... deeper...

"And I love you, Malfoy," Harry whispered.

They were still so close that when Malfoy spoke, their lips brushed together, and both closed their eyes in ecstasy.

"I think it's about time...that we started to use our first names...*Harry*." And he leant forwards, and met his lips with Harry's, feeling more in love than ever before.

Title: [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 30)

Author Name: [Purple Flame](#)

Owl the author: [here](#).

Rating: R

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

Genre: Drama, Slash

Era: The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: Hogsmeade's First~ The next Hogsmeade visit of the year is just around the corner, and Harry and Draco decide to go together. But how will they manage it without anyone knowing? And there's someone there who Harry **really** doesn't want to be seen by...Surely the invisibility cloak won't....slip?

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Author's Notes:

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### Chapter 30- Hogsmeade's First

"You coming to Hogsmeade, Harry?" Ginny asked casually.

"When?"

"It's next weekend."

Harry sensed Hermione staring at then in a disapproving way. He turned to face her. "What now?"

"Well, I'd have thought that *that* would be obvious!"

"Well it isn't so you'd better explain, hadn't you?"

"Harry! Voldemort is *out there*, he's not just looking for people to get on his side, he's looking for people to *kill* and that means *you* above all! Do you have any idea how hard it was to arrange this Hogsmeade trip? They've put much more extra security around the village for us, and for you. I don't think you should be playing right into Voldemort's hands like this!"

"Hermione," Harry said, frowning, "you've just told me they've put extra security there so I can go."

"Oh come on, Harry," she snapped back. "Do you really think a few extra wizards and a few more spells will stop Voldemort?"

"Hermione, I can't just stop living, you know!"

She sighed in a well-don't-blame-me-if-it-all-goes-wrong kind of way and returned to her knitting.

Harry raised his eyes at Ginny. He knew Hermione was only thinking of him, but it didn't stop him feeling pissed off at her interference.

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He was trying to make his frequent glances across at the Gryffindor table subtle, but he knew he wasn't being very successful. It wouldn't matter anyway, the rest of the Slytherins were too involved in discussing the events of that morning- due to the strength of Ginny's spell, Foster, it transpired, seemed to have forgotten where his bedroom was and had gone to sleep in the middle of the boy's staircase, and a third year had nearly broken his neck tripping over him at 5am. She caught his eye across the Great Hall and knew by the roguish grin she flashed at him that it was not entirely accidental.

Occasionally he caught Harry looking over at him and their eyes would lock for a second, only for them to look away innocently at once. Draco grinned to himself and stood up, he was fed up of being surrounded by Slytherins, only able to see Harry in the distance. He left the hall calmly, though when he passed the Gryffindor's table his heart was beating madly and he deliberately avoided looking at Harry.

He climbed the stairs towards the Gryffindor common room, along the route he knew Harry usually took. At the entrance to the Fat Lady's corridor, he saw a space between a statue of a wrinkled old Warlock and a large black stone vase, which was just big enough for him to squeeze into. He ducked between them not a moment too soon: the second he had pulled his robes behind him he heard footsteps and saw from behind the statue Dean Thomas and Seamus Finnegan walking towards their common room. He held his breath as they went past- he'd sent too many hexes in the way of Thomas and Finnegan, and they'd returned them, too, especially since Finnegan's sister had been killed. He didn't feel like facing a showdown right now.

He watched many more people pass his hiding place, oblivious to the fact that he was there. He was looking out for Harry, his heart beating nervously in case he missed him, or there were too many people around. A voice he recognised was approaching. He looked up quickly and saw Granger talking to Ginny and Ron Weasley as they returned to the tower. Surely Harry must be on his way? More footsteps...more people...second years...fourth years...first years...but no Harry.

He slid down the wall into a sitting position, massaging his leg where he could feel the beginnings of cramp threatening.

"What the hell are you doing down there?"

He jumped, making his shoulder collide with the stone warlock's sword. "Fuck!" he yelled, trying to stand. He looked up and saw Harry fighting back laughter as he looked down at him.

"It's not funny," Draco moaned as he stepped into the now deserted corridor, "I think I've broken something."

"Don't be stupid!" Harry said, laughing. "Anyway, if you *have*, then I'll kiss it better for you..."

Draco smiled. "Really?" he said softly. "Well, I think I might be getting a few more injuries before long..."

"Good." Harry leant forwards and gave Draco a soft kiss. "So what *were* you doing down there?"

"Looking for you."

"Behind a statue?"

"No. I wanted to find you to ask if...if...well, it's stupid anyway, you'd probably rather go with Granger or Weasley or someone..."

"Well you'll never find out unless you tell me what you're on about."

"OK. Well, do you want to come with me into Hogsmeade, next weekend?"

"I'd love to," Harry said. "But-"

"It's OK. I knew you'd rather go with Granger, I just thought I'd-"

"No! No, Draco, it's not that...it's just, we can't be seen together can we?"

"Oh," said Draco, his face falling. "No...I don't suppose we can be. Unless...how many people can easily fit under your invisibility cloak?"

"Two. Easily," Harry replied, his smile growing.

"Right. That's sorted then," Draco said. "I'll be at the Shrieking Shack at 12 o'clock then. See you there."

"You will do."

Draco pulled Harry into another kiss. "I can't wait."

Harry nodded. "Er...what made you think I'd rather go with Hermione, anyway? I don't think you trust me, Draco Malfoy."

"Don't you?"

"No, I don't."

"Well then, we'll have to do something about that, won't we?"

"Something like what, exactly?"

"Something like-"

The Fat Lady opened and a first year appeared. Harry and Draco stopped, dead, staring at the portrait. The first year looked back into the common room, and they heard someone shouting at her.

"What?" she called.

More muffled shouting.

"Oh. Alright then." And she stepped back into the hole, and disappeared. Harry and Draco looked at each other, eyes wide, and faces pale. They burst out laughing.

"That was so close!" Draco said.

"I know," Harry said. He leant forwards and whispered into Draco's ear. "*And it turns me on...*"

Draco laughed again. "I'm glad. Because, you see, I like it when you get turned on." He kissed Harry once more and walked away down the corridor, around the corner, and out of sight.

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So far spring had brought nothing but drizzly rain and miserable days, and today was the first to show any improvement. Weak sunlight had shone upon the castle and the grounds, and had finally given way to a cool and pleasant evening. It was wam in the common room and, despite the fine weather, everyone seemed rather irritable and snappy. Ron was talking to Hermione in low tones as Harry attempted to do his Potions homework.

*Healing and Medical draughts must be stirred three times anti-clockwise to activate the effects of the Salamander Scales. If not-*

"-least I don't come swanning back into my dormitory at half past one in the morning." The phrase drifted across the room to Harry. He could tell at once that Ron had not troubled to keep his voice low when he said it. He threw his quill down, and stood up.

"Well you shouldn't have waited up for me then, should you?" he spat at Ron. He turned and stormed out of the dormitory. He was already on the second floor before he paused to think where the hell he was going. He looked across at the grounds through a long dusty window. He could see Hagrid's hut in the distance, the light in the windows from the torches bouncing off the darkening grass outside. He hadn't seen Hagrid much all year.

Before he knew it he was off again, treading the once familiar path to Hagrid's. He knocked on the door and it was opened instantly.

"Arry!" Hagrid boomed, beaming at him.

"Hi Hagrid. Are you open to visitors?"

"As ever. Not seen yeh fer ages, Harry!"

"I know," Harry said, feeling a pang of guilt. "I've been a bit...busy."

"Aaah, right, 'busy' is it..." Hagrid said, his eyes twinkling knowingly. "Well, I can't say I blame yer, ter be honest. So much's goin' on an' that. How are yeh?"

"I'm fine."

"You sure? Yeh can't be properly fine, not with the situation you're in. But yer strong Harry. Yeh can deal with it. You show 'em."  
Harry smiled at him.

"Not been dwellin' on it to much, though, eh?" Hagrid asked. "Been concentratin' on...other things...school an' that."

"Yeah," Harry said. "I didn't think NEWTs would be this tough but...they are. And Snape's not helping. Seems to have taken it as a personal insult that I didn't give up Potions when I had the chance so he seems to want to make my lessons with him as bad as possible."

Hagrid chuckled. "I know he's not yer favourite teacher...not mine, come ter that, but he's on our side Harry. We've all gotta pull together."

"Suppose," Harry said distantly.

"Is there anythin' else I should know?"

"What?" Harry said sharply. "No. No, why should there be?"

"Just guessin'..." Hagrid said vaguely.

"What are you guessing, exactly?"

"Well, I might be wrong but...have you got a er...*romantic* interest at all?"

"What gives you that idea?"

"Just the way yeh've been, that's all. An' from some things Hermione an' Ginny have let slip." He was trying to hide a grin now.

"Oh no," Harry said, turning red.

"Don't worry, yeh secret's safe with me. An' I won't go nosin' neither! Unless er...yeh wanna tell me *who* yeh seein'?"

"Absolutely not," Harry said, grinning.

"Ahh, it was worth a try, anyway," Hagrid said, feigning disappointment.

"How's things with Ron? Lupin told me yeh'd had a disagreement."

"No, *Ron's* had a disagreement. He's being a pathetic prat."

"Ah, right. So er...no improvement, then?"

"No."

"Right. Why's he bein' like that then?"

"Because he's a small minded idiot."

"Oh. Nothin' to do with anyone you're seein' then, eh?"

"Something like that."

"I see," Hagrid said wisely, and left it at that.

Harry spent the rest of a thoroughly enjoying evening playing (giant) exploding snap with Hagrid, and discussing the sheer pointlessness of NEWTs. Apart from anything, it was nice to talk about something as normal and trivial as school for once.

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The Saturday of the Hogsmeade visit dawned bright and crisp, and Harry rose especially early and made sure he was looking as good as possible for Draco. He attempted to comb his hair flat, but no matter how hard he tried it would not work.

"Fuck it," he muttered, and messed it up even more (not realising how like his father that simple movement was). He didn't appreciate that the messy look made him look all the more sexy to Draco...and a lot of other people besides.

He was nervous as he lined up in the Entrance Hall next to Hermione, Ginny, and a resentful Ron, but not as nervous as he used to feel when meeting Draco. He was more excited, than anything.

He spent the morning walking around the various shops of the village, becoming increasingly more jittery as the morning progressed. Every time he opened his bag to get out his money-bag.

Finally, it was time.

"Good Luck!" Ginny whispered, hugging him tightly. Ron had dragged Hermione away as soon as they reached the village, but he passed them on the way up to the Shrieking Shack and she gave him a nod and an encouraging smile.

He caught sight of Draco leaning casually against the fence, ignoring the gawping third years. Draco saw him, smiled and bit his lip seductively.

Harry grinned and shook his head ironically. He continued walking up the hill until he could no longer see the rest of the village. He put down his bag, leaned against the stone wall and attempted to straighten his robes.

"You needn't bother you know," Draco said, as he emerged at the top of the hill, making Harry jump. "You can't make yourself look bad anyway..."

Harry blushed. "Complimenting me will get you nowhere, you know."

"I know. But I thought it was worth a try."

They threw the invisibility cloak over themselves; it covered them easily. They were able to walk back into the village and have whispered conversations about whatever they pleased. It was the first time they had ever had a proper, relaxed conversation about ordinary topics.

"Why don't we go and have a Butterbeer in the Three Broomsticks?" Draco said much later as it began to rain quite heavily.

"Great idea but...er...*how*?" Harry asked.

"Easy. Just follow me."

Slightly dubiously Harry followed Draco under the cloak as he ducked through the door of the pub after a large group of seventh years. He went into the toilets and took off the cloak.

"OK, Harry," he said, "You just have to follow me. I'll get the drinks in then I'll get a table. You join me, OK? If I just walk out of the toilet now no one will ever know I wasn't outside."

"Er, yeah, but what about how stupid you'll look sitting at a table alone?"

"I've done it plenty of times before."

"And ordering two drinks?"

"Done that before, too," he said with a mischievous grin. Harry rolled his eyes, made sure he was covered with the cloak, and then followed Draco into the pub.

You had to hand it to him, he thought as he watched Draco flirting with Madam Rosmerta while he ordered two pints of Butterbeer. They sat at a table, Draco slipped Harry his drink under the cloak, and then said, "And that, Harry, is how to win a girl over. Now the only problem I am facing, is how to win a guy over."

Harry laughed.

Crash! A table had been knocked over in the middle of the room and drinks were sent flying. Two tall men dressed in black stood up, as though angry.

"Someone's not happy..." Draco muttered. "It was probably only over a stolen cauldron or something." Harry laughed. The two men seemed to have lowered their wands and stopped fighting. They were having a muttered conversation.

But then suddenly-

"*Avada Kedavra!*" They screeched it simultaneously. The jets of green light shot over their opposite's shoulder, one flying straight past Draco's face and hitting a man behind him, who fell to the floor, dead, in an instant. At the same time the other jet hit a fourth year Ravenclaw girl, who had time to scream before her life was taken.

Harry realised at once that this was not two men arguing- they had planned this. They had made targets and met them. These were Death Eaters.

All Hell broke loose as stunned students leapt up and ran to the door, screaming. But their way was barred by more Death Eaters rising from tables, and what looked like a whole army of them outside in the street. There were no teachers around to help inside the pub, though Harry saw McGonagall and Snape running to the scene down the rain-soaked cobbled street outside. Spells from Death Eaters were firing all over the place, mixed with those from the bar staff, the residents of Hogsmeade and the students who filled the pub. Harry could only see a few members of the DA present.

He stood up and pulled the cloak off him, wand raised.

"Sit down!" Draco cried, trying to pull him down again.

"NO Draco! I've got to help!"

"No, you've got to sit down. You're in more danger than anyone! Listen to me! They can sort this without you!"

"No, Draco!"

"Yes! Please, Harry. Just cover yourself up with the cloak and we can get into the street. We're less enclosed there and we'll be more likely to escape. You can fight them from there-*please*"

"No, Draco I"

"Fucking Hell, Harry!! This is serious!" Draco yelled, though no one heard him above the noise of the fighting and panic. He grabbed the cloak, forced it over Harry and himself, and squeezed his way through the struggling crowds. It took them a while but they finally reached the door- just as a yellow beam hit Draco's chest. He screamed and doubled up.

"Draco! Are you ok!"

"Yeah..." Draco panted. "I'm OK...just sore...keep going!" Finally they were out in the street, where the scene was no better. Hogsmeaders, teachers, students and Death Eaters were all fighting for their lives in the pouring rain. Harry and Draco headed down a side street where they took off the cloak. "We have to stay. Fight," Harry said desperately.

Draco nodded, looking ill. "I know. But stay here, don't move. We can aim from here, alright?"

"Yes."

They fired spells at any Death Eater that passed, though it didn't seem to do much good. For every Death Eater that was brought down another two seemed to apparate. Students were trying to run back into school but were being brought back by Death Eaters, though they didn't seem to be able to pass through the gates of Hogwarts, or penetrate them with their curses. At last the Aurors, the extra protection, arrived and began to fight, along with some from the Order too.

The only thing they had to be thankful for was that Voldemort himself had not appeared.

Wrong.

No sooner had Harry thought this than the hideous form of Voldemort appeared only ten feet away, flanked by five Death Eaters. Draco threw the cloak over himself and Harry at once, where they waited.

Voldemort glared around. "Ahhh...chaos," he whispered. "My best friend!" He threw his head back and laughed. As Harry had seen him do once before he took a great sniff of air as though trying to catch the scent of something on the air. "And...Harry Potter is here. A public fall. *Perfect*. Find him. Bring him to me." He ordered. Then he stepped out into the crowd and fired green jets of light in all directions.

Harry was shaking under the cloak.

"Oh shit," he muttered, "oh shit, oh shit, oh shit!"

"We're not staying," Draco said firmly. "We're going back up to the castle, we'll be OK, we've got the cloak. There's nothing you can do! Come on!"

Harry only resisted feebly as Draco dragged him towards the huge gates of Hogwarts which seemed to far away.

"Dumbledore!" Harry said looking up and pointing. The towering and furious form of Albus Dumbledore had just burst through the school gates and was charging with remarkable speed towards the main lane of Hogsmeade.

"See, it'll be OK now. Come on."

But the cloak had slipped and Harry's face and the right side of his body were revealed. A Death Eater had seen.

"It's Potter! Potter!" he yelled. Every Death Eater within earshot turned and looked. They had started running and firing spells before Draco had even managed to cover Harry with the cloak again.

"Shit!" Draco cried. "I'm going to get you out of here, Harry."

"How?"

But the question was answered when Malfoy muttered something under his breath, the world around them dissolved and then reformed almost instantly. Only it was different. Through the dark Harry recognised the eastern wall of the castle, where they had travelled with Snape to the first Death Eater's raid.

"Malfoy, what-?"

"I had to move you Harry, I'm sorry. I couldn't get you into the castle itself because I didn't want to risk using the Corden- it's too dark with all those Death Eaters and Voldemort around. This is as far

away from Hogsmeade, and as close to Hogwarts I can get, without actually being inside the Castle grounds."

Harry frowned for a moment; he didn't understand. But then it came to him-

Draco had apparated.

Title: [Not Just an Empty Emotion](#) (Chapter 31)

Author Name: [Purple Flame](#)

Owl the author: [here](#).

Rating: R

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, FB. Written between Order of Phoenix and Half-Blood Prince.

Genre: Drama, Slash

Era: The Harry Potter at Hogwarts Years

Main Character(s): D, G, H, Hr

Ship(s): D/H, Hr/R

Summary: "Beginning to Fall"~ After Draco managed to Apparate both himself and Harry to safety, Harry wants answers. And how much damage has Voldemort done to Hogwarts and Hogsmeade? And Harry has an idea he should have had a long time ago...

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Author's Notes:

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### Chapter 31- Beginning to Fall

"Draco..." Harry said thickly as he lay exhausted on the ground. Despite the pain and the acid sickness he was feeling, deep-rooted confusion was forcing its way through the clouds in his brain. "What did you...how....when...?"

"I taught myself.... last year..."

"But *how*?"

"I don't know. I'm not really sure. I think it was just something I really wanted to do. I looked it up in the library, read dozens of books on it. I couldn't practice in Hogwarts, obviously, so I sneaked out during the night into Hogsmeade. And I perfected it at home over the summer. I think I just needed to prove I was good at something."

"But you are, you're good at a lot of things," Harry said, puzzled.

Draco shrugged. "I've never really seen it that way. Maybe I'm not *bad* at them, but I'm not good at them."

Harry smiled to himself, hardly daring to believe that Draco Malfoy was avoiding his eyes as he admitted insecurity. "I can give you one thing you're good at," he said.

"Go on," Draco said, sceptically, not believing Harry could find anything.

But Harry struggled upright, pulled Draco to him, and kissed him. "That," he said simply.

Draco laughed. "Thanks. Good to know."

More screams and shouts tore through the air from the direction of Hogsmeade, breaking them apart. They were distant noises, but close enough to be disturbing.

"What are we going to do?" Harry tried to keep his voice steady.

"Well we're not going back," Draco said at once. "You have to stay away."

Harry frowned. He was strong enough and old enough to fight, and no one, not even Draco, could tell him what to do. He wasn't some irresponsible kid who didn't know how to take care of himself. Draco seemed to read his expression. "No, Harry! I wouldn't bloody care if you were Longbottom or if you were Merlin, it doesn't matter how powerful you are it's too great a risk!"

Harry looked away, ashamed. Draco was right, of course. It was stupid to even consider fighting. He'd had too many close shaves already, but that didn't stop the temptation and frustration he felt.

And the knowledge that he couldn't- that he *mustn't*- do anything didn't stop the horrible feeling that drenched his stomach every time another terrified scream or flash of light came their way. He could only hope the Order were holding *some* control over the situation...

They sat silently with their arms around each other, wrapped in the invisibility cloak for what seemed like hours, waiting as the struggle continued...

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Finally, as the sky turned from deep blue to black, the noises died down.

"Do you think it's over?"

"Dunno. I haven't heard anything for ages."

"Think we can risk going back to the castle?"

Harry looked at Draco in shock. "Already?"

"Well what else were you thinking of doing? We can't exactly stay out here all night, can we? It's bloody freezing, pouring with rain, and probably dangerous, too!"

"I suppose so."

Draco stood up and heaved Harry with him. "Come on then. Are you sure you're OK?" he asked.

"Yeah. Just... a bit shocked I suppose..."

They began to walk around the walls of the castle, towards the gates standing as close as possible beneath the invisibility cloak. Harry felt strangely exposed, even though he knew no one could see them, and he glanced around constantly for any unusual signs of movement or danger. And suddenly they were there. They had rounded a corner and the gates of Hogwarts had loomed up in front of them. Harry stumbled towards them desperately, dragging Draco along with him. It was only when they stepped through the Castle Gates, and heard them clang shut behind them that he felt more able to relax. Draco whispered in his ear, and they walked slowly up the drive and onto the grassy slope, which was slippery because of the rain, causing them to trip and stagger.

"Shh!" Draco said suddenly, grabbing Harry's arm to stop him.

"What? I'm not saying-"

"Someone's there" Draco whispered. Harry squinted through the darkness and saw a dark shadow drawing rapidly closer. It had an odd shape...long and thin, but it moved elegantly.

"It's Dumbledore!" Draco whispered suddenly.

"I need to speak to him, stay here," Harry replied. Before Draco could stop him he had extracted himself from the Invisibility Cloak and strode up to Dumbledore.

"Professor Dumbledore?" His voice was shaking.

If Dumbledore was shocked to see Harry before him, he hid it well. "Ahh, Harry!" he said, his voice only revealing the slightest sign of relief that Harry was alive and well.

"What's happening, Professor?"

"It's over. This time Voldemort had to admit defeat- He and his Death Eaters have left Hogsmeade and Aurors and members of the Order are still in the Village."

"Is everyone OK?"

"Ah...well... Voldemort is determined, Harry. Several of the Villagers were terribly injured, as were some Aurors...and you saw them take the life of poor young Miss Wood in The Three Broomsticks. Mercifully no more students or teachers suffered. Mr and Mrs Wood are indirectly involved in the Order. They are, obviously, devastated about their Daughter's fate, but- though I allowed them the option-they do not wish me to close the school. I think Cornelius Fudge has other ideas, but he has no more control over this school than Dolores Umbridge ever did." Even in the thin moonlight Harry could see Dumbledore's eyes glittering.

"Tonight's events were tragic, Harry, but given the circumstances they were the best we could have hoped for. Hogwarts is being given extra protection and there will be no more Hogsmeade visits for the foreseeable future.

"It is late, Harry, I am now satisfied that our remaining students are safe and back inside Hogwarts. I think you should go to bed and get some rest."

Harry nodded. "Thank you. Goodnight, Professor." Dumbledore turned and walked back towards the castle. Harry covered himself in the cloak again; glad to feel Draco's warmth next to him. The rain, which had stopped briefly, had now begun falling furiously once more. They did not speak as they walked into the castle.

They stopped when they reached the Entrance Hall, where they were to separate. "How does Dumbledore know everyone's safe? He couldn't have known about me." Draco sounded slightly hurt.

"Dumbledore knows a lot of things. I don't think Invisibility Cloaks fool him, most of the time."

"Do you think he saw me?"

"Probably not. He wasn't looking for you, was he? And he wouldn't have known I had the Cloak. No...I think it's probably something to do with Swan..."

Draco smiled. "Should've guessed."

They fell silent for a few minutes longer. Not willing to face departure.

"I don't want to leave you, Draco," Harry admitted.

"But you have to."

"I know. But I need you with me. Tonight, at least."

"I want to be with you, too. You know I do, but there's nothing we can do."

"There is!" Harry said suddenly, thinking of something he knew should have been obvious to him all along. Draco frowned at him.

"Come with me," Harry said, grabbing Draco's hand to lead him in the dark. Draco followed silently as Harry pulled him up staircase after staircase...along dark corridors...

"Where are we-"

"Shh...here."

"What? Harry, I don't under-"

Suddenly Harry was pushing the handle to a door which had appeared in the wall from nowhere, but looked as though it should have been there all along.

"The Room of Requirement..." Harry said simply.

Harry turned the handle and they walked in cautiously. They found a fairly large, cosy room. There was a roaring fire, great windows which currently had rain streaming down them...deep scarlet walls and, most amazing of all, a large four poster bed in the centre of the room. It looked as though the room was waiting just for them.

"Wow..." Draco breathed.

"Perfect, isn't it..." Harry said.

"Yeah...how?"

"Never mind."

"I always wondered what the inside of this place looked like...I never managed to sneak in on your meetings last year..."

"It changes," Harry replied, "depending on what you need to use it for."

"Oh yeah? And what are we needing to use it for tonight?"

"Shut up," Harry said, but he was half grinning. He had decided that now would not be a good time to tell Draco that the DA meetings had been happening throughout this year too-though far less frequently than before. He pulled the cloak off them and threw it to the floor. Draco was soaking wet, and all the more sexy for it. Draco's look of awe told Harry that he must have been thinking the same thing.

"What?" Draco said.

"Just looking...you."

"Why?" Draco asked, smiling slightly.

"Because you're gorgeous."

"Really?"

"Yes. Really."

Harry walked over to the window and pressed his hands against it, looking out over the steely lake

below, raindrops hitting it like arrows in the night. Draco followed and looked out too. He put his hands on Harry's waist and looked at him. His soaked clothes were clinging to every part of his body...his arms...his chest...his stomach...and places lower down too. Draco swallowed hard. Harry's wet hair was falling across his face and into the deep green eyes that were watching Draco carefully.

"What?" It was Harry's turn to ask this time.

"Nothing, I...you're..." He leant forwards and their lips met briefly. "Harry..." His lips brushed Harry's as he spoke, and a wave of pleasure broke over his body at the touch. He couldn't finish the sentence. He swallowed again.

"Shhh...." Harry whispered, placing a gentle hand on Draco's cheek and kissing him again. Deeper, more passionately. Their heartbeats grew faster as the kiss became more urgent. Harry slid his hand beneath Draco's tee shirt and caressed his chest before pulling it over his head and discarding it.

Soon all of their clothes were in a pile on the floor as they stood holding each other. Draco led Harry to the bed and lay upon it, pulling Harry down next to him. Harry looked at Draco taking in every detail of his appearance. He'd seen this before but this time...this time it was different. Even more perfect. His body was still wet from the rain, and it glistened in the candlelight as Draco panted slightly. The almost pure white skin... the strong but delicate body.

He had once thought that Draco had an ugly, pointed face, but now only saw perfect cheekbones, blood red lips, and smouldering eyes. His wet hair swept across his face, the contrasting shades of blond the ideal frame for it. He looked so damn sexy...Harry closed his eyes in contentment.

"Harry?" Draco muttered, looking into the eyes as they opened. They seemed to be ablaze with longing.

"What?"

The tender, crimson lips formed the word perfectly...

"I want to stay here, like this, looking at you all night."

"Why?"

This time the candlelight reflected off his flawless skin, adding a touch so sexy Draco did not believe it was possible. The messy black hair, which Harry had hated for so many years, only made Harry's face all the more tempting to Draco.

"Because...because...I need it. I need you. Because I love you."

Harry bit his lip, unintentionally seductively. "I love you, too." He bent down and kissed Draco delicately, savouring the moment. Draco moaned slightly and began to gently trace Harry's lower lip with his teeth.

It was slow...they had all night, after all.

Harry broke the kiss but stayed as close to Draco as possible, his hand still caressing his cheek.

"Draco, I..."

He didn't need to ask the question; Draco already knew what it was. Draco placed a finger on Harry's lips to stop him. "Are you sure about this? Is it what you want?" he whispered. Harry quivered at the sound of his voice, so deep and alluring.



"Yes. I've wanted it for so long. And I'm ready now."

Draco swallowed. "Come here...."

They began to kiss again, and then very softly, as though to do it any harder might break him, Harry kissed Draco's face, his neck, his shoulders, his chest. Stopping occasionally to take pleasure in the taste of Draco's warm, wet skin. Draco arched his back slightly as Harry moved lower down. They could feel that they were both excited. Harry covered Draco's entire body in soft kisses, savouring the touch of his body.

He moved back to Draco's level again, and smiled at him. One of Draco's hands was intertwined in Harry's hair as they looked at each other again, the other one stroked Harry's chest longingly.

"Are you OK?" Draco whispered.

"Yes. Fine." He kissed Draco once and then moved himself on top of him. He wasn't fine- he was nervous. "Will it be OK?" he asked.

"Yes. It'll be perfect. I promise." The slight shiver in Draco's tone told Harry that he was nervous too, though not willing to show it.

He breathed deeply. Draco's elegant scent seemed to fill his whole body, calming him, but at the same time making the longing which surged through his body even greater. The skin was perfect, soft and wet...Harry felt Draco shiver slightly as he moved his fingers over him...

He could taste his lover on his lips still, and savoured it, knowing he would soon encounter it again...he longed for the moment, but wanted to take pleasure in this one for as long as possible. He could hear Draco's uneven, expectant breaths...the occasional gasp as Harry's hands slipped over a delicate part...finally he could bare it no longer.

"Good."

Harry couldn't help but notice that Draco had closed his eyes. He kissed Draco slowly, took a breath, and then did it. He slid himself inside Draco. His face only twitched slightly in discomfort, but then, as they began to move together, his eyes flew open and a look of thrill reached across his face. They looked into each other's eyes as they felt the waves of pleasure throughout their bodies. This was more than Harry could ever have imagined, it was the most amazing, most intense, most beautiful feeling he had ever had.

Seeing the expression on Draco's face made it even better. He groaned in bliss as they moved in perfect rhythm. Draco was biting his lip so as not to make a noise.

"It's OK..." Harry whispered, but he found it difficult to speak. "No one can hear..."

Draco moaned loudly in satisfaction releasing his satisfaction.

They couldn't know how long it lasted, only that they savoured every moment. The first time Harry had kissed Draco he had been astonished at how close everything seemed. That was magnified a hundred times now...Draco seemed to fill every part of him...every fibre of his being. Draco was all he saw, and all he wanted to see. Every time their skin brushed together it was a new shock of ecstasy.

They kissed again, more urgently, moaning as they felt their bodies move. Soon they could not tell where one body ended and the other began; it was as though they were one being and neither wanted to leave that. Their motion and this moment was all either of them knew, and ever wanted to know. Nothing else mattered but this...

They began to move faster...and faster...sighing with enjoyment...lost in this act. And finally, together, they ended it, crying out.

They remained still, and utterly silent. After a minute Draco kissed Harry's lips, he was still shaking slightly, though not with nerves anymore. "Thank you," he whispered simply.

There was no reply, only the soft contented breathing of Harry against his body.

They pulled the blankets over their form, and rested in each others' arms, stroking each other softly, whispering into each others' ears, and cherishing the warmth of their bodies. In peace. It wasn't long before each of them fell asleep, breathing softly, safe in his lover's arms.

The promise had held true: it was perfect.