

# *Wandless*

**By: Lyiint**

Draco slumped down on his seat in the empty compartment on the train to Hogwarts, closing his eyes and breathing a sigh of relief. Finally, he was heading back to school and out of his families home, away from his father. He had come to the conclusion over this summer that his father was utterly mad. He snorted derisively to himself at how long it had taken him to figure this bit of truth out, but then he could never see the faults in his father and had always tried to please the man. The man he now knew that he would never be able to please no matter what he did.

Draco had always known that his father was ruthless and single minded, his devotion to the Dark Lord and his cause was unwavering. All his father ever talked about now was the Dark Lord this and the Dark Lord that and how everything would be great once all the muggle lovers and mudbloods had been killed and/or enslaved and shouldn't Draco drop out of school and accept the dark mark.

That had frightened the young Slytherin. He had always idolized his father, but Draco had been unsure of whether or not to accept the mark. It was something he had been thinking about since his father had told him the Dark Lord was interested in him.

When he had been younger, he had wanted nothing else. He was a Malfoy and a Slytherin, the Sorting Hat had barely touched his head before putting him in the house that countless of his ancestors had been in. He was expected to be the shadow and clone of his father, the man that he had wanted to garner pride and love from. To that end, he had parroted the elder Malfoys bigoted views without truly understanding the full import of what he said and did to others.

But as he had gotten older and thought more on it, the shame of what he had done in the past began to tear him apart and he felt like he was losing his mind as his own conscious and sense of self warred with his father's teachings, pulling him in two different directions.

*„Does father expect me to follow in his footsteps; to become a killer for a cause that I don't know if I totally believe in anymore?“* Draco questioned himself. The answer was more than likely, yes, but he was certain he didn't want to become a murderer for any reason. As he contemplated his feelings, sitting in the overly warm compartment waiting for the train to take him away, he knew he still loved his father in some fashion and ached to do his bidding, even if the once proud man had lowered himself to the status of servant with the Dark Lord.

This was something that galled Draco to no end. *„Didn't he tell me to always stand proud, to not bow down before others? How can he say that and kiss the hems of the Dark Lords robes? He acts more like a house elf than a Malfoy,“* Draco thought disdainfully, furrowing his eyebrows. His thoughts saddened him as well. Everyone was afraid of his father and his father seemed the most powerful wizard he knew, but he came to realize that Lucius was just as terrified of the Dark Lord as Draco was of his father.

The blonde scoffed to himself, giving a sad, little laugh. It appeared the Malfoy's were a pathetic bunch, wanting power, but doomed to be lackeys to those who wielded it.

Other questions, more personal ones, came to bother him as well. *„How could I still care for him?“* The blonde sixteen year old asked himself. *„He was never kind; in fact he's been downright abusive, but still...“* Draco shuddered remembering the many times his father had beat him for whatever infraction he had done. Even something as simple as not sitting properly at the dinner table had been cause for fists to fly and blood to flow. There were times when he had wondered if someday his father wouldn't kill him. Times when his father had not stopped after a few slaps or punches, but had continued until Narcissa had intervened when Draco had been the better part of unconscious.

Draco had to admit though, his father had never hit his mother once in any time that he had seen and he was sure the elder Malfoy had never touched her when he wasn't there either. Apparently that honour had been bestowed solely upon Draco. *„Lucky me,“* he thought sarcastically. Draco hadn't even been allowed to make his own friends. Everything was planned out for him so he could be the shining jewel in his father's drive for fame and glory.

The blonde sighed again and turned his head to look out the window. Many students were still rushing to board the train and he saw some of his own housemates saying goodbye to their families, their trunks hovering behind them. He stood and locked the compartment door before again seating himself by the window. He let his forehead rest against the cool glass and looked out over the thinning throng of teenagers again.

Ah, there he was. Harry Potter. The dark haired teen was walking towards the train with the weasel and mudblood in tow, the three of them smiling and joking.

*„What the hell are they so happy about?“* Draco grouched to himself. As far as he was concerned there was nothing for anyone to be smiling about. He certainly never had anything to be happy about in his life. Voldemort was still on the loose, holed up where ever crazy Dark Lords holed up, people were going missing, wizards were getting the dark mark and he had had to put his father off again about joining the Death Eaters. He watched the golden trio until they walked past his window as if they didn't have a care in the world and he could no longer follow their movements.

There were quite a few things that Draco didn't want to think about, which the appearance of the three Gryffindors reminded him of; the years when he had been bitter and full of hate for all the wrong things, things that mainly had to do with one Harry Potter. All the wrong decisions he had made...decisions that he couldn't undo. This new introspection of himself led him to have sort of an epiphany over the summer. He didn't hate Harry Potter. He was jealous of him, the prat still drove him crazy and the throngs of Potter fanatics galled Draco to no end, but there was no hate there.

Draco realized that he was wasting precious energy with this childish animosity and had vowed to not give into his desires to put the boy down any longer. He had actually come to realize that he had a sort of grudging admiration for his long time rival, but not to the extent of the rest of the swooning public, thank goodness.

Draco had wished many times that he could be more like The-Boy-Who-Lived. That he could be courageous and fearless, beloved by all. He wished he could have friends that would stick by you no matter what, unlike his so called friends that his father had picked out for him. They only wanted to be around him because of his family's money, status and what they could gain from being in his good graces. If the going got tough for him he was sure they would disappear like flakes of snow under a hot sun.

He would never admit this to anyone, he barely admitted it to himself, but he wanted to be one of the good guys too. He was getting pretty sick and tired of his bad ass image

that he had been cultivating for years, one that his father had encouraged him to develop.

In fact, the blonde was getting pretty tired of always doing what his father wanted. Why couldn't he have his own life, chase after his own dreams and desires? Because his father didn't approve and since Draco had been pursuing after that approval all his life, he had

acquiesced to the older Malfoy - until now. He didn't know what had changed him over the summer and why he no longer cared if his father accepted him or not anymore, perhaps he was just growing up. Perhaps he had come to realize that no matter what, his father would never care about him so why bother even trying.

Draco had his own beliefs about the muggle born wizards and witches learning magic. He didn't want to kill them for it, but he didn't think it was such a great idea for them to be coming to Hogwarts either. He had learned, during his studies in his History of Muggles class, the great distrust they had for anything different. Muggles were notorious for killing off whatever they didn't understand and/or fear. Knowing there was magic in the world and that a select few knew how to use that magic would have every wizard and witch either imprisoned or experimented on, if they didn't burn them all at the stake as in the past.

Draco could also see the possibility of the muggles employing them as weapons for one nation to use against another. Even Dumbledore had to understand that muggles knowing of the wizarding world was not a good thing. Why else would they have concealing spells and protective wards on the entrances into their world if not to keep them out?

Also a concern was the marriages between muggles and wizards. Draco saw this as a dilution of the great lines of wizards. True, some muggle born and half-bloods were quite strong in magic, he could even name a few, but many were not. There was also the fact that many more squib were born, now as compared to in his ancestor's time and more every year.

Draco had thought on this many times, how magic was not just spontaneously created, but there was magic that was allowed to die. It seemed to the blonde that everyone seemed to have forgotten how old magic worked.

For every muggle born, there were ten "odd children" whose parents either didn't believe or never got their Hogwarts letter. They would never know exactly why strange things happened to them, why, when they got really angry, the window panes would

crack or the lights would flicker. Then there were those that had such low levels of magic that they simply passed under the notice of the Ministry all together.

The Slytherin had even gone so far as to research the genealogy of the older family lines of wizards and had come to the conclusion that there wasn't any such thing as a purebred muggle. The bloodlines had mixed so thoroughly that almost every person in Britain had to have some kind of magical signature.

Having magical power was now down to the luck of the draw. Some receiving enough power that they can go to a wizarding school, some born a squib, with so little magical energy that the child might as well be considered muggle.

He thought Hermione Granger was a perfect example. In her case, he imagined her ancestors as one squib line with a decent amount of power left in it. He would be interested to look back on her genealogy because he was sure he'd find that she had a great grandmother that had been sent to a special "finishing school" and disappeared from knowledge or perhaps a grandfather that had no history before his nineteenth birthday. Either way, he was sure that, if he was so inclined as to check, he'd find magic in her line if he looked for it.

Somehow, the genes within her parents had managed to create a functioning witch, but Draco also knew that her powers were weaker than half and full bloods. Take her flying skills for example. She was probably one of the worst witches on a broom he had ever seen and you rarely saw her in the air. She could study twice as hard as a pure blooded classmate and she'd be a better student than them, Granger had already proven that, but she'd never have as much power that other students show. She'd never be able to do all of the things her friends at school could. That, he knew from just watching her and others of her year, was a fact.

Eventually Draco could see the end of magic altogether. It may not happen for quite some time, but over the years magic would be bred out of people until everyone was nothing more than muggle squibs. He shuddered at the thought.

Because of these thoughts, when he had gone home for the summer he had done some more reading and investigating on his own, hoping to figure out what should be done. If there was another way to deal with this or if, in fact, Voldemort had the right idea after all.

He had finally decided after extensive research and keeping an open mind, that the Dark

Lord was no better than one of muggle histories infamous leaders. When he had read about Hitler, his views and especially what he had done to the Jewish people, it had hit home just how similar this man and the Dark Lord were and he had come to the conclusion that he didn't want to live in Voldemort's world if he did indeed manage to win in the fight between light and dark.

He had decided by the middle of the summer that he was not going to follow a person, who he saw as a completely unpredictable lunatic and sadist. The evil wizard turned on his supporters as easily as he attacked his foes the Slytherin knew, as he had heard the screams coming from their meeting room in his home when Voldemort was displeased with those in his circle.

Draco's eyes had finally been opened and he had come to realize that the Dark Lord didn't care who he killed and what was more astonishing to him was the fact that others worshipped him like he was some kind of god. It just made the blonde wizard sick.

The only problem was that he had not told his father his decision. Rather, he had used excuse after excuse to put off meeting his father's master. He had gotten a few beatings over the summer for it. His right arm was still in a cast and sling from being broken two weeks ago, his father not allowing it to be healed by magic, nor had he allowed any type of pain killers.

This had happened when the teen had tried to hint at his uneasiness in allying themselves with such a wizard. Lucius refused to even consider that the Dark Lord could be wrong and had twisted Draco's arm behind his back until it had snapped, saying that

Draco should think clearly on what would be good for the wizarding world and for his place in their family. The threat had been unmistakable, bow down or suffer.

His mother had again come to his rescue, as she did from time to time when things got a bit out of hand, telling his father that he was still too young, too inexperienced and shouldn't he stay at the school so that he could relay any information about a certain Harry Potter back to them. His father had been appeased and had allowed Draco to return, much to his relief.

Draco realized though that this was just a reprieve and he had to start thinking about how he was going to get out of joining the dark side in the coming conflict and still keep his life.

Draco's musings were cut short when he heard the handle on the door wiggle. He sat and waited for who ever it was to just pass on by. Loud knocking ensued with the addition of a voice he knew too well.

"Draco, are you in there?" Pansy questioned, banging harder on the door. This was his usual compartment and she couldn't figure out why he had locked the door. The girl slipped her wand out of the pocket of her school robes and, mumbling a spell, unlocked the door and stepped inside.

"If I had wanted company I would have answered," Draco drawled disdainfully, giving her one of his famous glares.

The girl ignored his anger. "Bit testy today, are we?" Pansy questioned sardonically as she placed her bag in the overhead compartment and sat down beside the blonde boy. "What happened to your arm?"

"Fell," Draco replied shortly, turning his head to stare out the window again.

Pansy looked at the boy she was betrothed to marry curiously. He looked thinner and paler than when she had saw him last. And what was up with that sling? Surely his family would have had given him proper treatment to heal what ever was wrong with it. "What's that white thing over it?" she asked tapping the cast inside the sling.

"Nothing. Just leave it alone," Draco ground out, shifting his body away from the girl. Gods, but she could be so annoying.

Pansy huffed in irritation, but then smiled when the door opened and Blaise walked in followed by the rest of their friends in Slytherin house. They all began to get comfortable and soon the small compartment was filled with laughter and chatting about all the things they had done and seen over the summer holidays. All but one was involved with the conversations. Draco tuned them all out and continued to stare out the window mindlessly as the train finally got underway.

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"What the hell is that on Malfoy's arm?" Ron questioned his two friends as they sat at their table as the new first years were sorted into the four houses of Hogwarts.

“It’s a cast,” Hermione answered. “Muggle doctors put them on when you’ve broken a bone, to hold it still so it can heal.” She too gave the Slytherin table a curious look.

Draco was sitting in his normal spot with Crabbe and Goyle on either side of him, but the blonde looked like he was barely awake.

“Think he’s sick?” Harry asked. This was the second time today he had seen Malfoy and he had been surprised at the sling. He had been even more surprised when the blonde had done nothing more than give him a curt nod before heading to the dungeons, a house elf following with his luggage. “Wonder why he didn’t have his arm fixed magically?”

“He’s probably just looking for sympathy or attention, same as always,” Ron huffed. The red-head gave a cheer with the rest of their table as one of the small first years was sorted into Gryffindor.

Harry and Hermione joined in and soon forgot about the blonde boy sitting across the room.

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Draco’s arm was killing him. Stupid Goyle had bumped into him as they were coming into the Great Hall and the dull throbbing that he had been accustomed to, had escalated into a sharp, burning pain that was just now beginning to ebb. To make matters worse, his arm was also itching and he couldn’t get anything under the cast to scratch it. He just desperately wished that this could be over soon. He found he didn’t have an appetite in the least and all he really wanted to do was crawl into his bed and sleep.

He was embarrassed as well. How did you tell your fellows that your father had broken your arm in a fit of temper and that he couldn’t use magic to heal it? If he had to answer one more question about it he was going to scream. His father, in his gracious need to educate and punish Draco, had spelled the cast so that any attempt to use magic to heal the bone or give him relief from the pain would instead cause the arm to break again.

Draco gazed around the room as the sorting continued, trying to take his mind off the throb and itch of his arm. His eyes drifted over all the different tables, seeing many



familiar faces and noticing some that were missing, no doubt having either joined with the Dark Lord or been removed by parents that were afraid their children wouldn't be safe.

He only noticed one empty seat in Hufflepuff and since he figured no one from that house would join with He-Who-Can't-Be-Named that left withdrawal by parents. The Slytherin table had the most missing spots followed closely by the Ravensclaws. Draco knew more would be gone by the time the end of the year rolled around.

Most of the teachers were the same except for the addition of an older man who was supposed to teach Defense Against the Dark Arts. Draco couldn't remember the man's name, as he hadn't been paying much attention to the same old speech Dumbledore gave every year.

His tour of the room finally ended on the Gryffindor table. He noticed not one seat was empty on the large table and in fact, many of the first years were getting sorted into the house, the older students making room for their new fellows.

*„Figures,“* Draco snorted to himself, *„everyone wants to be a hero.“* He let himself stare at a certain green eyed, dark haired boy. He watched as a cheer went up, yet again, as another eleven year old boy with a huge grin was accepted at the table.

Suddenly, green eyes were on him and his first impulse was to look away. *„Fuck it, what does he care if I'm staring, I sure as hell am not looking away first.“* That old competitiveness came to the fore and Draco steadily held Harry's gaze, only this time, he kept the sneer off his face that would normally have been there.

Harry felt a prickling at the back of his neck and lifted his eyes to find grey looking back at him. *„What the hell is his problem?“* the Gryffindor wondered with some irritation, noticing that Draco continued to stare at him with a completely blank expression on his face.

Harry scowled, but his blonde rival didn't react in any way. Finally, feeling awkward, the raven haired teen dropped his eyes and put his attention back on his two friends; they were engaged in a rather animated conversation about the new DADA teacher, Professor Archibald Cox. Nobody seemed to know much about the new professor, other than the fact that he was from Scotland. Harry hoped he at least knew more than Gilderoy.

Finally, the sorting was finished and the meal started. Famished, Harry dug in with gusto laughing and joking with his two best friends, not noticing that he was still being watched by a certain Slytherin.

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Draco fell back on his bed feeling totally drained. He had left the hall before the others, only managing to pick lightly at the food on his plate before feelings of depression had washed over him. Watching Harry interact with his friends, seeing everyone at the different tables giving the Boy-Who-Lived happy smiles and seeing said boy wave and smile back cheerily had made the blonde feel such despondency that he had to leave knowing that nobody would ever be glad to see him like that.

Now, lying here alone in his shared room with his bed drapes drawn, all he felt was loneliness. „*Well I can't change anything now, I burned those bridges long ago,*“ Draco told himself sadly. „*I've only got a few months to figure out how the hell to get away so it's time to stop this pity party.*“

Money would not be a problem, as he was planning on taking the monthly allowance he always received and squirreling it away. He was going to have to travel light, so there was no sense in buying more stuff that he would just have to lug around. Now he was trying to decide how he was going to get out of Hogwarts without making anyone suspicious when the time came and where he was going to go where his father wouldn't be able to find him. He tried to think of anyone that would be able to help him and he kept coming up totally blank.

A few names flitted though his head as he lay on the bed with his broken arm across his stomach, the other under his head. Severus was the first, but he wasn't sure if he could trust the Potions Master. Draco had seen the dark mark on his forearm when he had been to the Malfoy mansion for various meetings with his father and the other Death Eaters. He had heard rumours to the fact that Severus could be a spy for Dumbledore, but decided that to entrust his life into the hands of someone who may, or may not, be on the side of the light was not the smartest thing to do.

He had also wondered about putting himself under the protection of the old man himself, but he always had the suspicion that Dumbledore withheld information and was sneakier than he let on. There was also the fact that Harry was supposed to be under his protection, but the enigmatic wizard didn't seem to be doing such a good job with the boy everyone considered to be the wizarding worlds best bet to beat Voldemort.

He also feared that since the Headmaster seemed to favour Harry Potter; that his enemy, Draco Malfoy would be refused any help whatsoever and be cast aside.

Any of his house mates were out. Many of their parents were Death Eaters and he also knew that in a pinch, they would turn on him quicker than a cat on a mouse if it could garner them favour and keep them out of trouble. An image of Harry quickly popped into his head and he discarded that idea quickly. Considering the baleful glare he had received in the Great Hall at the opening feast he was sure that no help would be coming from that direction. *„Probably hex me on the spot for even daring to ask.“*

Draco frowned as a hollow ache filled his chest. He really was going to have to do this on his own. The thought scared him to death. To go against his father's wishes with no support was daunting, but the alternative was more frightening. He did not want to take the dark mark and become one of Voldemort's followers. He didn't want to have to kill any of his fellow students and he certainly didn't want his fellow students trying to kill him. Draco's sense of self-preservation was too high for that and he wasn't ashamed to admit it.

*„Okay, so I've got to go it on my own, no big deal. Now where the hell am I going to go where father won't find me?“* Draco's head swam with one idea after another and he soon decided that he was just too exhausted to try and figure it out right now.

*„I've got nine months until the end of school. I'll have lots of time to come up with a fool proof plan.“* He yawned and closed his eyes, drifting off into a fitful sleep, too tired to even take off his school robes.

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*„What the hell??“* Draco sat up in his bed, grabbing his wand and casting a lumos spell, trying to comprehend what he was seeing. Every sheet and blanket had dozens of knots tied throughout the fabric. His pillow had large diagonal gashes running across it, as if some ferocious animal had sunk their claws deep into the material; feathers coated the bed and floor.

Looking around in dismay and confusion he saw small cracks twisting around the wooden posts and headboard of the bed. He checked himself over and could see no injuries, although he curled his nose up at his own sweaty smell. He was a bit disappointed in himself for falling asleep with his robes on, something he had never done before, and now they were wrinkled and damp.

It was still dark as the Slytherin dorms, being in the dungeons, had no windows. Draco carefully opened his bed curtains and peeked out, his eyes adjusting quickly to the gentle light of the fluorescent moss that coated the dorm walls and he shut off the lighting spell from his wand. Everyone else was still in bed and asleep from what he could hear of the deep breathing and heavy snores. He could see nothing else amiss anywhere else in the room and wondered again what the hell had happened to his bed and why he hadn't woken up if someone had done this kind of prank. „*I wonder if someone slipped me a sleeping draught.*“

Draco cast a repair spell and everything went back to how it should be. He then crept out of bed and headed towards the shared bathroom deciding a shower and change of clothes were in order. Dawn would be coming soon and he knew he wasn't going to be getting any more sleep so he might as well get ready for the day.

By the time he came back out, feeling much more refreshed, but still curious as to how his bed had gotten into such a state, Goyle was stirring in his own bed that was across from Draco's.

“Hey,” grunted the bigger boy as he watched the blonde come out of the bathroom looking perfect as always. He sat up in his bed and slung his legs over the side, putting his rather large feet on the ground and began to scratch his messy hair.

“Good morning,” Draco responded neutrally. He knew he was going to have to keep up appearances in his house so that none of them would suspect that he was planning on running away. He watched as his house mate, wearing nothing more than a pair of gray boxers, stood and began to scratch his balls.

“That's disgusting,” Draco complained. “Find somewhere more private to do that and put a robe on for Merlin's sake.”

Goyle looked sufficiently chastised and grabbed his robe, flinging it over his shoulders. “Sorry,” he mumbled as he walked by Draco.

“Um...Goyle,” Draco called out, stopping the larger teen. “Do you know if anyone mucked around with my bed last night?”

“No. Why?” the boy questioned him curiously.

“No reason, never mind then.” Draco turned towards his trunk and began to gather up the books that he hadn’t unpacked yet.

Goyle shrugged his shoulders and headed into the bathroom reaching behind him and scratching his ass as he closed the door.

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Breakfast was fairly uneventful and Draco felt himself relax as he listened to his friends and housemates banter. He hadn’t realized how tense he had been until then.

It seemed like nothing was new on the Dark Lord front and Draco had to wonder if his father had been making things seem worse than they were. Everyone at the school seemed unconcerned as far as he could tell, no different than last year. Even the teachers could be seen smiling and joking. He could feel no extra tension in the room at all.

Just to be on the safe side, Draco decided to buckle down this year in classes. He wanted to learn anything which would aid him in his quest to get away and to hide himself. He was quite interested in learning some good concealing and defense spells. One could never be sure when such things would come in handy.

*„I wonder if I could check up on some morphing spells as well,“* he pondered to himself.

If he could change his appearance he would stand an even better chance of evading anyone who may come looking for him. He was also hoping to snatch a port key from somewhere. They were handed out only to order members at the moment so he would have to come up with a plan to get into Dumbledore’s office. He was sure there would be at least one there.

“Draco, are you listening to me?” Pansy asked, quite annoyed at the blonde for making her call him over and over.

“What? No, sorry. I was thinking about something else,” Draco responded putting his attention on the girl.

She gave him a disgruntled glare. “I asked if you were okay, you’ve hardly touched your breakfast.”

“I’m fine,” Draco replied picking up his spoon and digging into his cereal, “just got distracted for a bit.”

“Anything you want to talk about?” Pansy asked with concern. Draco seemed odd to her ever since he had gotten to school. He was never this quiet and she could see the beginnings of dark rings under his eyes.

“Not to you,” Draco answered her with an air of disdain.

„*Maybe he’s alright after all,*” the girl thought as she gave her crush a death glare. “You certainly don’t have to be such a snot about it,” she complained, leaving the Slytherin prince to his own devices and turning to talk to one of the girls across from her.

Breakfast over, all the students began to rise and head to their respective classes, Potions being the first class of the day. Draco took a bit longer at the table gathering his books, having the use of only one hand. As he headed towards the doors he could see there was an altercation happening between Blaise and the Weasel. He had just approached the group of Slytherins and Gryffindors that were surrounding the two arguing teens when Blaise pushed Ron right into Draco causing him to smash into the wall, his cast arm taking the brunt of the blow.

“Bloody hell,” Draco cried out as his books flew out of his hands. He squinted his eyes shut to hold back the tears that sprang to his eyes as intense pain pulsed through his arm. “Zabini, just fucking grow up!” he cursed loudly holding his throbbing arm.

Ron, Hermione and Harry looked at Draco in amazement. He was actually cursing out his fellow Slytherin rather than putting the blame on Ron. In fact, Harry had been getting ready to defend Ron to the blonde and stop him from attacking the red-head, which he thought for sure Malfoy would do. Instead, Draco’s angry storm grey eyes were squarely on the equally shocked Blaise, and if looks could have killed, the dark boy would have dropped dead on the spot.

“Oh for Merlin’s sake,” Pansy cried out. She took out her wand, and before Draco could stop her, cast a bone healing spell on his arm. Everyone heard the loud snap that echoed around them and the equally loud shriek from Draco.

Draco dropped to the floor on his knees, his vision swimming into grey, cradling his arm protectively to his midsection. He gasped through the pain. „*Fuck, this hurts worse than*

*when it was broken the first time.*” Realization hit him like a punch to the gut. His father had added another little curse just in case he ever got the urge to try magic to fix the bone. He just knew that each time it was tried the pain would only increase. That in mind, he desperately tried not to pass out so the others wouldn’t take him to Madam Pomfrey to heal it again.

“Oh shit, Draco! I’m so sorry,” Pansy cried out, tears beginning to flow down her face. The girl was twisting her hands together trying to figure out what she had done wrong. She was sure she had cast that spell correctly.

Blaise was trying to lift Draco from the floor, his own face white as a sheet. “Come on, I’ll take you to the infirmary...,” he started to say.

“No,” Draco gasped out, refusing the other boy’s aid and rising slowly on his own. “I’m fine, it’s nothing.”

“What do you mean it’s nothing,” Harry spoke up, surprising himself by the surge or worry he just felt for the blonde. “Malfoy you’re unbelievable. Don’t be stupid, go see Madam Pomfrey.”

“Fuck off, Potty,” Draco growled in reply. “Why don’t you and your groupies just get lost.” He hadn’t quite meant to be so harsh, but it was too late now.

“Fine, fuck you too, Malfoy,” Ron shot at him. “Come on Harry, Hermione. If he wants to be a masochist, why should we care?”

Pansy was still apologizing and Blaise was still trying to convince him to go to the hospital with Crabb and Goyle on either side of him as Harry, Hermione and Ron walked off. Harry took one look over his shoulder at the blonde that was looking as if he was going to kill someone at any moment.

“SHUT THE FUCK UP!” Draco yelled, causing everyone around him to back up a step. A loud rumble followed by a shuddering pop was heard as the stone wall in the hallway they were standing in cracked, the fissure opening up a quarter inch wide as small spider lines raced through the rocks a good couple of feet long.

The only thing heard in the following silence was Draco’s ragged breathing as he struggled to bring himself under control. Even the three Gryffindors had stopped and were staring back at him as if he had just grown an extra head.

Draco was stunned. He wasn't quite sure what had just happened; other than that he had been so angry and in such pain that he had just wanted to lash out at something. „*Did I do that?*“ He wondered. An image of his bed this morning passed through his mind and he speculated if he had done that as well. Everyone was staring at him and he felt his face heat with a flush of embarrassment. “Look, let's just go to class,” he stated quietly, bending over to pick up his scattered books.

Crabb and Goyle got to them first. “We'll carry them for you, Draco,” Crabb offered, his eyes betraying the fear he had felt when the blonde had lost it.

Again Harry surprised himself and the others by coming back to where the Slytherins were. “Are you sure you're alright?” he asked as he bent over and passed the book he had picked up to Goyle.

Draco was too tired and his arm was throbbing too much to argue anymore. All he wanted to do was just go to the dungeons and get the rest of this day over with. “I'm fine, we're all going to be late,” he answered. Everyone's jaws dropped at how calm he was being considering what had just happened.

Without saying another word, Draco began to walk off to class trying not to jar his arm, going past Ron and Hermione who were standing there gawping at him. The rest soon followed, the Slytherins running to catch up to their leader as Ron, Hermione and Harry brought up the rear.

“What the hell happened do you think?” Ron questioned in a whisper.

“It looks like Malfoy lost control of his magic,” Hermione answered, her voice low as well.

“At his age?” Ron asked with a bit of smugness. “Only little kids can't control their magic. Maybe he's not as great as he thinks he is.” Ron grinned, thinking of how he was going to be able to tease the blonde.

“I don't know...something doesn't seem right. Don't bother him about it, Ron,” Harry stated, knowing exactly what his best friend was thinking.

“What? You must be mad, this is *perfect*. I'm just getting even with all the shit he says to us all the time,” Ron argued.



“I know he deserves it, but just leave it alone for today, okay?”

Ron put on a grumpy face, crossing his arms across his chest, but in the end agreed to keep quiet about it. “Just for today though and if he says anything to any of us the deal is off.”

Harry smiled at his friend. “Okay, okay,” he placated.

“So glad you could all join us today,” Snape drawled as the two groups entered his class three minutes late. “Five points from Slytherin and ten from Gryffindor as I’m sure it was Mr. Potter’s group that has made everyone late,” he snarled as the teens took their seats.

Harry and Ron scowled at the Potions Master and Harry was about to complain when Hermione grabbed the arm of his robe and pulled him towards their seats. Harry took a look over towards his blonde rival, positive he was going to see that condescending and triumphant grin plastered all over his face, only to be surprised yet again by the boy when he only saw him sitting there, opening his books and ignoring the incident altogether.

Snape began to put them into groups and, of course, split up the Gryffindors by putting them with the other Slytherin students saying that perhaps they would get their potions right this time if he paired them with people who knew what they were doing. Harry found himself paired with Draco which seemed to be par for the course in this class.

*„Snape just does this to see me suffer,”* Harry thought to himself as he sighed, knowing there was no getting out of it.

Snape wrote the ingredients on the board, explaining that they would be working on a shrinking potion. If brewed correctly, the person imbibing the potion would shrink down to the size of an action figure for approximately five minutes before returning to normal. If done incorrectly it would only make the persons vocal cords shrink causing them to sound like they had inhaled helium for the rest of the day.

“When, and *if*, you get the correct response,” Snape added, looking pointedly at the Gryffindors in the room, “I’ll explain how you can increase the time of shrinkage by adjusting the amounts of ingredients in the potion. Now go get your items.” Snape sat back at his desk and began to write in a large book as the students rose to go to the back of the room to get the required magical articles.

“I’ll get them,” Harry said as he stood, noticing that Draco still seemed to be favouring his arm. He was stopped dead by the quiet „thanks“ he heard coming from the last person he would ever think to thank him for anything.

“What?” Draco questioned irritably when he saw the look of astonishment on his rivals face.

“Are you sure you’re Malfoy?” Harry asked, raising an eyebrow at the blonde. He almost fell over in a dead faint when said Malfoy grinned at him with absolutely no maliciousness at all.

“I’m sure,” he answered, smirking when Harry just shook his head and went to the back of the room for their things.

The class passed quietly, but both boys could feel the weight of many eyes on them as the others, including Snape, watched for the inevitable fight that never came. In fact the two worked well together and their potion turned out perfectly. Harry was astonished himself. Not once had Malfoy said anything nasty or snide and, in fact, seemed totally engrossed in making the potion work properly rather than on getting on his nerves.

“So who’s going to test it?” Harry asked, suspicious of this truce that seemed to have erupted between them from out of no where.

“Oh for Merlin’s sake,” Draco sighed and began to dole out a small portion of the lilac colored potion into a tube to drink. He put it to his lips and then hesitated. What if his arm reacted to the potion? The pain was just now settling down to a throbbing ache that he was just able to stand.

Harry took a good look at his potions partner for the first time since being assigned with him. He could see that the blonde was still white and a bit pasty looking. A fine film of sweat had accumulated on his brow and made his slightly damp hair stick to his forehead. „*He’s got to be in pain and he’s trying to hide it,*“ Harry realized, recognizing the signs as it was something he’d done often enough.

“Here, give it to me,” Harry stated as he grabbed the vial from Draco before he could complain, drinking it down in one gulp.

“Harry,” Hermione hissed fearfully behind him, worried that the reason Malfoy had not wanted to drink it was because he had done something to it.

Harry felt a bit odd as he began to get smaller and smaller. Soon he was no more than ten inches high and standing on the stool he had been, just moments ago, sitting on.

“Well done, Mr. Malfoy,” Snape stated, not complimenting Harry at all. The professor moved on to another group and watched the reaction they got from their potion.

*„Well, at least Snape didn't say anything bad to me,”* The Boy-Who-Lived thought wryly.

Draco crouched down beside the stool. “How do you feel?” he asked, fascinated by the small version of his rival.

“Okay,” Harry returned in a high squeaky voice. “It's kind of neat, actually.” Harry grinned at the blonde who gave him a crooked smile back.

Draco decided he was definitely going to have to practice making this potion again. This one might come in handy for him later on. On impulse the blonde held out his hand and was surprised when Harry hopped over onto it and sat down on his palm, grabbing onto his thumb to prevent himself from falling off as Draco straightened up from his stooped position.

Some of the other students crowded around getting a look at the tiny Harry and talking excitedly. Draco just tried to keep his injured arm and Harry out of bumping range.

“I'm sure Mr. Potter is most interesting in this more suited size for him, but lets all get back to our own potions,” Professor Snape drawled, smirking when he saw the small frown that adorned the dark haired boys miniscule face. “Mr. Malfoy, I would recommend putting Mr. Potter down, the five minutes are almost over.”

Draco deposited Harry gently onto the stool and watched, amazed as the boy began to grow back to his original size.

“That was really cool, you'll have to try it yourself,” Harry told Draco.

Draco put on an air of fake disappointment, “I was hoping your voice would stay squeaky,” he complained with a smirk.

Harry laughed, causing the others in the class to again stare at both boys. Ron, especially, was flabbergasted that his best friend and Malfoy seemed to be getting on so well.

Everyone sat back at their seats after the entire class had a chance to test their potions. Many had high, falsetto voices with only a few getting the desired results. Snape finished his lecture on how to make the potion last longer and then dismissed them all to their

next class after telling them he wanted a ten inch report on the potions potential usages and its pros and cons. "Due tomorrow," he stated firmly to the groans of the entire class.

"You know, you really should go see Madam Pomfrey...about your arm," Harry said softly as the class got ready to leave.

"It wouldn't do any good," Draco replied. Harry could almost feel the boy beginning to retreat into himself.

"Why?" Harry asked, genuinely curious. Without even thinking the two of them began to walk out of the classroom together, leaving their friends behind to stare at them.

"I don't want to talk about it," Draco responded defensively. Harry passed over the books he had been holding for Draco. He hadn't even realized he had picked them up for his former enemy. Somehow in the short time they had been in potions this day, something had changed and Harry no longer looked on Malfoy as someone completely evil.

*„He's still a total wank though,"* Harry smiled to himself.

"Harry, what are you doing?" Ron asked belligerently, staring daggers at the blonde who had the audacity to be chatting up his best friend. "Come on, we're going to be late for Charms." The red-head practically dragged Harry away.

Draco waited for his group and they followed the Gryffindors to their next class, Blaise giving his blonde leader a calculating look behind his back.

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Draco thought the rest of the day was going well until he found himself in the middle of

Transfiguration class with McGonagall. Today she wanted the group to learn a simple transforming spell that would turn each of them into mice and back again. Noticing Draco's arm, the head of Gryffindor house wanted to heal it so that Blaise could perform the spell on him and he wouldn't become a mouse with a broken leg.

"No," Draco stated, holding the arm away from her causing Professor McGonagall to glare down at him.

"Mr. Malfoy, you will have that arm healed and you will not use such a disrespectful tone," the older witch said firmly.

To the astonishment of the whole class, Draco pointed his wand at the teacher, his eyes snapping like lighting in a stormy sky. "It's my arm and if I don't want it healed, it won't be."

Internally the blonde was shaking in his shoes. He couldn't believe that he was threatening a professor, but there was no way in hell he was going to go through any more pain today. His arm had just started to feel better since the whole debacle this morning. „*My damn father, I hate him. I should just tell them what's going on.*” He cast that impulse aside and frustration, shame and self-loathing twisted inside him at his foolish desire to protect his father.

An expectant silence fell over the entire class as everyone watched to see what was going to happen next. Some students, even the ones from Slytherin, backed away from the two magical beings that still had their eyes locked onto each other in a silent battle of wills.

"Mr. Malfoy, drop your wand. *Now*," McGonagall ordered in a deadly quiet tone which foretold that something serious was about to happen if Draco didn't comply.

Draco swallowed and dropped his eyes from the intense gaze of his professor. His wand hand dropped to his side as well. "I don't want you to heal it," he said defiantly, but in a much quieter and more subdued tone. A growling rumbling began to thrum throughout the classroom and the pictures on the wall began to shake slightly.

McGonagall raised an eyebrow at the blonde boy standing in front of her with his head bowed, his bangs hiding his eyes. She could feel the magic leaking from him as well as the anger that was causing this slight loss of control. This was something that could be expected from a three or four year old as their emotions ran high and tended to rule

their magical outbursts. But from a sixteen year old who had, up until now, perfect control of his abilities, was almost unheard of.

“Mr. Malfoy, gain control of yourself,” McGonagall demanded firmly, taking a step closer to him.

Draco’s face flushed in embarrassment as he tried to stop the quaking in the room without success. He had been disciplined, rather harshly at times, in self-control since he was too young to remember. But now, those emotions that had been repressed for years, never having any kind of outlet, began to run riot within him, spilling from him in the form of his magic. He could hear others whispering and even a few giggles and the rumbling got louder. Various items on the shelves around the room began to fall to the floor, the more fragile items breaking.

Without stopping to think that Malfoy may turn his anger on him, Harry stepped between the blonde and his head of house. “Malfoy, stop it,” he said, taking ahold of Draco’s shoulders and trying to look him in the eye. “Draco,” he called out again, giving the boy a shake for good measure when he got no response other than the tables beginning to skitter across the floor.

Draco brought his eyes up to look into brilliant green and felt an odd sense of comfort. Immediately the shaking and rumbling stopped as the two boys continued to stare at each other.

Harry could see his rivals eyes shimmer with unshed tears, the normally sparkling silver tones a dull grey from anxiety and embarrassment, and all he wanted to do at that moment was comfort and help this boy that had always given him nothing but grief in the past. All that seemed to lessen in importance at the sight of the pain he could plainly see glittering in misery riddled grey eyes. It was a look that was often reflected back at Harry when he stared at himself in the mirror.

“You called me by my first name,” Draco responded, unrest giving way to surprise.

“I guess I did,” Harry stated, surprised at himself. Both boys blushed as McGonagall cleared her throat. Harry finally let his hands drop from Draco’s shoulders.

“Fifty points from Slytherin for this outburst and, Mr. Malfoy, you will immediately follow me to the Headmasters office,” McGonagall stated a bit angrily. “Class dismissed.”

As soon as the professor and Draco had left, the rest of the class burst out into excited chatter and speculation as to what was going on. The Slytherins left hurriedly to head to the Great Hall, talking amongst themselves and ignoring any comments from the other houses.

“Harry, what were you thinking?” Hermione asked, rushing over to him with Ron close behind her. “He could have hexed you. It’s plain to see he’s losing control.”

“Maybe he’s going mad,” Ron piped up. “Maybe they’ll send him away. Maybe they’ll take away his wand,” the red-head stated hopefully.

“Ron,” Harry admonished with a slight frown. “I don’t know, I just had this urge to help him,” Harry replied to Hermione’s question. “Something is going on with him, he’s different this year.”

“Come on mate, Malfoy different? He seems like the same old ferret to me,” Ron drawled out with exasperation. “Don’t tell me you’re going soft on him.”

“You’re too kind for your own good, Harry,” Hermione added. “He doesn’t deserve any help, you know he’s just going to become a Death Eater anyways and we’ll probably end up fighting him.”

“Maybe,” Harry acquiesced softly. “But he really hasn’t done anything to any of us since he’s been here.”

“It’s only been a couple of days, give him time,” Ron replied with a huff as the three friends began to walk towards the Great Hall for lunch.

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Draco waited nervously outside the Gargoyle to Dumbledore’s office, and was soon ushered in after Professor McGonagall left. He rode up on the winding staircase and stood nervously before the Headmaster waiting to be acknowledged.

“Mr. Malfoy, please come in and be seated,” Dumbledore said, pointing to a small elegant chair. “Lemon drop?” he asked congenially, offering an intricately etched glass bowl full of the candies in the boy’s direction.

Draco shook his head negatively and sat waiting to see what was going to happen to him. To threaten a professor was serious and he wondered if all his planning was going to be for naught. If Dumbledore expelled him, his father would be contacted immediately. The blonde swallowed and tried to hide his fear.

The older wizard sat quietly in his chair behind his desk looking at the one Malfoy he had ever met that he thought could have some kind of future with the side of the light. Just how he was to get this intelligent, but closed down teen to see that was another matter.

Albus continued his scrutiny of the blonde boy allowing his magical senses to drift over him. He was not surprised by the high level of occlumency he could sense, seeing as this young man had a natural talent to compartmentalize his emotions and shut them off from others. The problem was that the boy was so good at it that he had also suppressed the good sides of himself; his pity and his compassion that the Headmaster knew were inside the blonde as well. The old man wondered if this was in some part due to the influence of the father.

“Can you tell me what happened in Professors McGonagall’s class?” he asked the boy kindly. He wanted to hear this young man’s side of things before he decided what to do.

Draco fidgeted in the chair uncomfortably. “I don’t know,” he finally returned, trying his best to maintain his manner of aloofness.

Again Dumbledore just sat back and stared at him for a few moments, looking into his eyes. *„There is sadness in the depths of that irritated gaze. A sadness he is trying to lock deep within his heart, so that nobody will know. His attempts to not depend on others, to make no real connections with his fellows, these are signs of someone who is deeply hurting,”* Albus mused to himself.

“Let me see your arm,” he ordered, but not unkindly. “I won’t try to heal it,” he added seeing the nervousness that had begun to creep into Draco’s grey eyes.

Draco reluctantly held out the arm that was encased in the white cast when Dumbledore came around the desk to stand in front of him, trying not to flinch when the Head Master waved his wand over it.

Albus did a simple diagnostic spell on the arm and could see that it had been broken, which he had suspected. What did surprise him was the fact that it had been broken



twice, both times in the same spot. It looked to him as if the bone had begun to heal only to fracture a second time, quite recently. Another shock to the old man was the wards and hexes that were prominent on the arm. "Draco, who did this?" he asked with some consternation.

"I fell," Draco replied casting his eyes to the ground.

"And the spells preventing magical intervention? Who cast those?" Dumbledore pushed.

"I was experimenting with some different healing spells and did them wrong, it's my fault." Draco ground his teeth at the lie that slipped so easily between his lips.

"The bone will have to heal naturally," Dumbledore affirmed. He waved his wand, shutting off his spell and went back to sit at his desk, walking back slowly to give himself time to reflect on what Draco had said. He didn't believe a word of what the boy had just told him. He wasn't a Mediwizard by any means, but even he knew that a spiral fracture, such as what Draco had, was caused by someone twisting the arm so forcefully that it broke.

*„He's trying to protect someone. There is no way a healing spell gone wrong would cause this kind of interference."* Dumbledore turned and sat down. "I understand that you wouldn't want anyone to use magic to heal it, considering," the Head Master began, "But, you certainly cannot threaten a professor either."

"I understand, sir," Draco replied looking up into Dumbledore's face. "It won't happen again."

"Yes...well...you will have detention with Professor McGonagall for the next two weeks doing whatever she requires of you. I will inform your other teachers not to try and interfere with the natural healing of your arm, and I am ordering you to work with Professor Snape to control your magical outbursts. I see no reason to bother your father about this," he finished, not without noticing the extremely relieved look on Draco's face.

Draco stood and gave a courteous bow. "Yes sir, Thank you, sir. It's better than I deserve." He turned to leave, but Dumbledore stopped him.

“Mr. Malfoy. If you ever have need of someone to talk to, my door is always open to you. I can help you if you need it.”

“Thank you sir, but I don’t require any help.”

„*No one can help me anyways*,“ Draco finished in his mind. He walked out of the office leaving Albus to watch after him sadly.

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Harry hid behind the bleachers of the Quidditch field keeping an eye the blonde teen as he stood just inside the pitch. Draco was gazing skywards with a wistful look upon his face as his fellow team mates practiced above him in the clouds.

Harry had been surreptitiously watching his rival? - Former rival? He didn’t even know what to call him anymore; shadowing the blonde for the past two weeks since the incident in Transfiguration class. He had heard though the grapevine that Malfoy’s arm had some strange curse on it that wouldn’t allow it to be healed magically, although nobody seemed to know who had cursed him in such a way or why.

Ron had figured that the ferret, as he was still wont to call him, deserved that and more, but Harry couldn’t help but be more than a little bit curious about it and perhaps, somewhat sympathetic. Not to mention that Malfoy had not once hexed, cursed, been snide or nasty to anyone.

Even when Ron had teased him, calling him „wittle Dwaco“ and strongly suggesting that he needed a training wand because of his lack of control that day, the blonde teen had not responded. Instead he had calmly walked on by the laughing group that Ron was with, his head high, ignoring everyone. This was so completely out of character for the Slytherin, that Harry was utterly intrigued by the whole thing. Something was definitely going on and he intended to find out.

If truth be told, Harry found himself missing the war of words that they had been engaging in since first year. Now, Malfoy basically just ignored everyone, including some in his own house and could often been seen sitting near the end of the Slytherin table by himself, his nose in a book, rather than at his former spot in the center of the group trying to garner attention. He was beginning to remind Harry of Hermione in a strange sort of way.

Blaise seemed to have taken over the spot as head of the Slytherin gang and it was now him that tried to cross words with the Gryffindors, although his taunts didn't have near the sharp edge as Draco's.

As Harry continued to watch the blonde that was staring wistfully into the sky, a strange feeling took hold of him. Malfoy seemed so forlorn and alone, not unlike himself, that The-Boy-Who-Lived stepped forward and walked over to stand beside the Slytherin.

His friends would probably think him mad, he even thought so too at times. Why would he want to start a conversation with Malfoy? He was nothing but a spoiled tosser with a superiority complex, so why did he feel like he wanted to be close to him? And why did it bother him so much that Draco ignored him now? He should be jumping for joy that the Slytherin had decided to leave him alone, but instead he felt...a bit lost, like he wasn't sure what to do with himself now that he didn't have the emotional outlet that Draco had always provided.

Hermione had outright told him that she thought he was becoming overly obsessive about his need to find out about the blonde teen. Since then he had tried to be a bit sneakier so his two friends wouldn't question him about it anymore.

After reflecting on the years he and Malfoy had spent at each others throats he came to the realization that he never really hated the blonde. Harry had certainly hated the nasty things he said and did; how he had acted so pompous and self important, but he didn't hate the boy himself.

Draco glanced sideways at the dark-haired boy as he came up and stood beside him. He felt a bit nervous with Potter being around him. Ever since the green-eyed teen had taken ahold of him in McGonagall's class, he couldn't get the image of those beautiful, intense eyes out of his mind and the feeling of comfort he had gained by looking into them.

"Potter," Draco drawled as a means of acknowledgement, hiding his discomfort.

"Malfoy," Harry returned. An uncomfortable silence descended for a moment before Harry tried to alleviate it. "Your team looks pretty good," he stated looking upwards at the group above them.

Madam Hooch blew her whistle, apparently at a foul between Gregory Goyle and Miles

Bletchley and everyone else hovered, waiting for the Flying Instructor and referee to come between the two who had started to throw angry words at each other.

“They’d do better if they’d watch where they were flying,” Draco complained. He had seen when Goyle had almost knocked Miles off his broom because he hadn’t been paying attention as to where he had been going.

Harry cast a quick glance over to Draco and then averted his eyes so the other boy wouldn’t catch him staring. *„By the wand, I think he just spoke to me civilly.“*

“So...how long do you have to have that cast on?” Harry asked. He could see that the blonde was frustrated at not being able to join his team-mates.

“Four more weeks,” Draco replied as he watched the practice game get back under way.

“As long as someone doesn’t try to fix it again,” Harry stated, watching the game as well. Draco took a quick glimpse over at the Gryffindor, again wondering how much Potter knew about his arm. The blonde had heard the gossip as well when others didn’t think he was around and he was surprised by how close they were to the truth of it. He figured Headmaster Dumbledore had a big mouth. “Yeah, as long as no one tries to fix it,” he agreed with a slight grin.

“So it’s true then,” Harry returned, looking at Draco face on. “Somebody did curse you.”

“Something like that,” Draco responded sullenly.

“Who?” Harry asked. He hoped that Draco, being in this magnanimous mood, would tell him. He was disappointed.

“That’s really none of your business, Potter,” Draco intoned a bit angrily. He turned and started walking away, back towards Hogwarts.

“Wait, Malfoy. Look...” Harry started haltingly once he had run and caught up to the fleeing Slytherin. “Maybe I can help...you know...if I knew what happened we might be able to come up with a counter curse or something.”

“Why?” Draco questioned suspiciously, stopping suddenly. “Why would you want to help me?”

Harry's cheeks flushed. "Uh...well...I..." Merlin, why was he getting so flustered? It was Malfoy after all; he should have expected the boy to be contrary. It wasn't as if Harry wanted to impress the blonde or anything, but he was finding himself feeling a sense of disappointment that their peaceful talk was now ending.

Draco rolled his eyes and then began walking again. "I'm not fluent in incoherent Gryffindorian babbling," he snorted, leaving a perturbed Harry to watch his back as he strode towards the school.

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Hermione searched the rows of books in the library for the one she was looking for. Her face fell in disappointment when she saw it had already been removed. It was a more advanced text dealing with the young witch's favourite subject, Arithmancy. A soft sound behind her alerted her to another's presence and she turned around quickly only to be surprised as to whom it was.

"Do you need this?" Draco asked, holding out the very book she had been looking for.

"Uh, yes. Thank you," she returned, taking the book from the blonde's outstretched hand. She stood there staring for a moment feeling a bit like she had slipped into an alternate universe as Malfoy went down the aisle, looking for another book.

"What are you up to?" she questioned the blonde with a frown, getting her feet to work and following along behind him.

Draco stopped and turned his head, looking at her over his shoulder. "I have no idea what you're on about. I didn't think giving someone a book was cause to call out the Aurors," he stated sarcastically.

Hermione flushed angrily. "That's not what I meant. I mean you're whole change of attitude. I just don't buy it. A leopard doesn't change its spots."

"Think what you want, Granger," Draco bit out at her. The word „mudblood“ had been on the tip of his tongue and he was a bit proud of himself at his forbearance from using the

slur. "I don't really have time to engage in inane conversation with you." The blonde teen turned his head back to the front, his back stiffening in indignation and he

continued to read over the spines of the books, completely ignoring the muggle born witch.

Hermione was gripping the book that Draco had given her tightly to her chest. She huffed out her displeasure and turned and flounced off.

Draco sighed, his shoulders slumping dejectedly. He had been trying very hard to not play into his feelings of anger and frustration and retaliate when other's pushed his buttons. In part this was due to his new urge to better himself and not react the way he had in the past as well as his fear that he would again lose control of his magic.

He had been more than embarrassed at having to work with his godfather and head of house in trying to control his wayward abilities. Snape had had him go back over simple control exercises that were taught to almost every five year old wizard or witch. He was sure the Potions Master was getting a thrill out of the humiliation this was causing him and he was concerned that all of this was going to get back to his father.

Draco pulled out a book on spells, flipping through it quickly before realizing it was nothing he didn't already know. He was hoping to find stronger or better hexes, charms and spells that might be helpful to him for when he ran away. He went to put the book back on the shelf, but dropped it by mistake. Reaching down to pick it up, his foot stuck the edge of it and sent it skidding under the small opening between the floor and the wooden bookshelf.

„*Damn it,*“ Draco thought in irritation as he dropped down to his knees and reached his fingers under the shelf, trying not to bump his still healing arm on the floor. He brushed the edge of the book with his fingers and pulled it out. As he picked it up he realized that he had a different tome.

This one was old, leather bound and extremely dusty. He sat back on his haunches and blew the dust off the cover so he could read the small lettering on it, causing himself to sneeze. He looked curiously at the name - „An Introductory to Fundamental Spell Battles“. He stood, forgetting the other textbook that was still lying under the bookshelf, and headed over to one of the large, plush chairs to peruse his find. He had never heard of spell battles before. „*I wonder if this has anything to do with wizarding duels.*“

When he first began to look through it, all the pages were blank with the exception of the first page. This page had a long list of various languages written in their native script. At the top of the page was a picture of a hand pointing a wand at one of the language

choices on the list. Draco pulled his wand out of the pocket of his robes and tapped the word „English“.

He checked though the book again and found it full, everything written in neat, understandable lettering. As he scanned the pages his eyes began to get larger as realization hit him. This book dealt entirely with wandless magic. All the spells cast were done by the use of words and prose and a person's innate magical ability. The first section dealt with how to bring that magical ability out so as to competently use it. The rest of the book focused on how to initiate a spell battle, how to do the different spells, how to word them and what hand signals to use.

Draco was fascinated, but knew that he needed to get to somewhere more private to read it. How the book had ever come to be where it was, he had no idea, but he figured it probably wasn't supposed to be out on the main shelves. He was sure that if the librarian saw him with it, she would confiscate it and it would be put in the restricted section where he wouldn't have a hope of getting it again. It was only happy coincidence that he had it now.

The blonde tucked the book into his robes and rose from the chair. He walked out of the library; nobody paid him any attention at all.

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Sitting on his bed that evening with the curtains drawn, Draco read the first part of the book. The rest of the room where the others were sleeping was dark; the only illumination for him to read by was coming from the lumos spell from his wand.

There were many exercises to help a person harness their magic and make it come to them on command without the aid of a wand. The first few were simple breathing and what was called „yoga“ exercises to calm the emotions and center the person. The book saying this was essential, as wandless magic, like wand magic, would have different consequences and strengths depending on the intent or emotion present in the spell caster. There was also a caveat printed in large letters at the beginning of the first chapter. Under no circumstances were any of the spells in the book to be performed with a wand. The author stating that to do so could cause unforeseen and far reaching consequences that he was in no way responsible for.

Draco found himself very impressed with this author, who wasn't listed anywhere that he could find. The person didn't gloss over the more negative emotions and their uses in conjuring, like what usually happened in classes. Anger and hatred were listed as making certain spells more powerful, but the student was warned about loss of control so even those emotions had to be focused and contained. If the caster felt fear though, the spell would be weakened or may not work at all. There was a small chapter on self hypnotic spells to use to counter-act the fear response.

The book listed love as the best emotion to use when casting a protective spell, especially if casting it over another person. The love of another person towards himself could also strengthen his own abilities and make him able to withstand attacks from others that

might otherwise incapacitate him. This information was located in a section that dealt with combining with another person to do battles, one being the main caster the second providing magical support and acting as a sacrifice, whatever that meant. Seeing as he would be on his own and without a partner, he didn't see much sense in perusing this section so he moved on to another.

Draco flipped back towards the front again and found a chapter that focused on the ability to imagine the outcome of the spell in your mind's eye. If you could envision it happening the way you wanted it to, it more than likely would be cast successfully.

There were other hints to make the magic work as well. A wizard/witch could use the magical signatures that were located in every living thing around the caster. This force, the book stated, could be called upon to expand the casters own magic, allowing the spells to again increase in strength and effect.

Draco was not entirely surprised to read that even muggles and squibs had some inert magical abilities, given his own research during the summer, although they were unable to access it or awaken it. But a witch or wizard would be able to tap into that hidden power, if they were nearby, and make use of it for themselves with no ill effects to the non-magical person.

The best part though, was the fact that wandless magic was completely untraceable, which was something that Draco had been worried about. All wand magic left an echo of the person who cast it, so if he had had to use his wand while he was hiding, others may have been able to trace it and find him. Not to mention if he ever lost his wand or it broke. Now it looked like he wouldn't have that to worry about anymore.



As he quickly read through some of the spells he was a bit shocked to see that at least one was extremely similar to the Unforgivable Curse, Imperio of dark magic. Called the Enslavement Spell and found on page 153, it did basically the same thing, causing the recipient to obey the casters will.

The terms dark and light magic were never mentioned anywhere in the text and in fact, it seemed that the author was hypothesizing that the spells themselves were neither good nor bad, but it was the intent of the person using the spells that would cause the magic to be evil or pure.

As Draco read over the curse he was surprised really at how simple it was. All that you needed to know to activate this spell was the person's full name and to hold the image of that person in your mind. It could even be cast when the person you wanted in your control was a long distance away, although that was more difficult as it called for a high degree of concentration. He grinned wryly at the very simple way to counteract this spell. Flicking or tapping the one cursed firmly on the forehead between the eyes would snap them out of it.

„*Ingenious, really,*“ Draco thought, completely fascinated. He also noticed that for every spell listed there were counter spells that could be invoked to negate or defend against the original spell. One area listed out spells, counter spells and counter-counter spells in a hypothetical battle between two fighters. „*I wish I could try this with someone,*“ Draco thought wistfully as he read the mock battle, imagining how it would go.

The final chapter was reserved for designing your own worded spells and there were many blank pages on which to record them with small tips and hints to help the wizard written in small lettering along the top, bottom and sides of the pages.

Feeling energized from his reading and wanting to learn as quickly as possible, the blonde flipped back to one of the first focusing and summoning exercises at the beginning and began to try it.

He sat cross legged, taking his cast arm out of the sling and resting both hands palm up on his knees. He relaxed his muscles and allowed his mind to go totally blank taking deep, regular breaths. The book had stated that, rather than forcing yourself to not think, and thereby causing the distraction you were trying to prevent, you should just allow what thoughts you had to flit across your mind like butterflies; letting them pass out of your consciousness naturally until you felt your inner self go still.

At first Draco found this a bit difficult as he wanted to delve into the thoughts that crossed his mind. He opened his eyes for a moment, took a couple of deep breaths and then closed them again to try once more. This time he tried not to capture and explore his thoughts and eventually he went into a calm, dazed state. He soon felt his senses sharpening as he realized he could now feel his heart beating slowly, the blood washing through his veins warm and thick. He heard every sound in the dorm room, every breath of his sleeping roommates, every tick and creak of the old building around him. He swore he could even smell the sweetness of the chocolate frogs that Crabbe had stashed in his bedside table on the other side of the room.

Draco began to feel an odd sensation; it wasn't unpleasant so he waited to see what would come of this new feeling. It began as a slight tingling in the pit of his stomach and began to swirl outwards towards his hands. By the time it reached his fingertips, it was almost a palpable thing.

He slowly opened his eyes, continuing to maintain his semi-trance like state and was amazed at the rainbow sparks of light that were hovering over his upturned palms and the ends of his fingers. He realized with awe that this was the aura of his magic, he had called it and it had come to him.

He got so excited at his ability to do the focusing spell correctly that he soon lost his grip on the magic and it retreated back into his body, the lights fizzing and snapping out.

Undeterred, Draco grinned like a fool. He felt exhausted from the mental exertion, but also elated at his success.

This was exactly what he had been looking for and his confidence soared. „*I can do this. I can really escape on my own.*“ He vowed he would train hard with the book until he was able to master conjuring these worded spells. „*I wonder what old Potty would think if he could see me doing wandless magic,*“ he thought a bit smugly as he placed the book under his pillow and put out his wand. Maybe for once he'd be able to do something better than the great Harry Potter. With that pleasant thought in his mind, he snuggled under the covers on his bed and instantly fell asleep, his arm, for the first time since being broken not hurting at all.

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“So he gave you a book,” Harry stated, perplexed over why Hermione was making such a big deal out of it.

“It’s not that he gave me the book, which in itself is something,” the young witch mumbled. “It was the way he did it. He didn’t say anything nasty or snarky and he just handed it over without any problems. I didn’t even ask for it. I swear someone’s

put some kind of personality change charm on him.” “Well that’s good, isn’t it?”

Harry questioned.

“He’s up to something if you ask me,” the girl retaliated, still not wanting to trust the blonde.

“I think he’s trying to change,” Harry announced. “Maybe we should give him the benefit of the doubt.”

“Give who the benefit of the doubt?” Ron asked as he came over and sat with his friends at the long Gryffindor table in the Great Hall.

“Where were you?” Hermione asked before Harry could answer.

“Oh, just talking to Katie,” Ron said with a blush.

Hermione raised her eyebrows at her long time friend. It seemed like Ron was getting over the crush he had on her. The young girl had no problems picturing her red-headed friend going out with their teams Quidditch chaser and Hermione found herself becoming a little disappointed.

“So who are we talking about?” Ron questioned to change the subject, grabbing a huge plateful of food.

“Malfoy,” Harry stated. “Apparently he gave Hermione a book she was looking for yesterday so now the world is going to end,” Harry aimed a teasing smirk at the muggle born witch who stuck her tongue out at him.

Ron looked confused and then reiterated exactly what Hermione had stated earlier.

“He’s up to something. We should keep an eye on him. Where is he anyways? The rest of them are here.”

Sure enough the Slytherins were all accounted for at their own table, save one.

The golden trio finished their breakfast and soon all the occupants of the great hall began to drift off to classes.

Harry had been keeping watch on the door and still no Malfoy. „*I don't believe I'm worried about that prat,*“ he confessed to himself as he walked along with his two best friends to the dungeons and Professor Snapes class. Ever since their last conversation, The-Boy-Who-Lived had been hoping for an opportunity to talk to the blonde again.

Entering the class Harry took a quick look over to where the Slytherins always sat. Seeing the empty seat between Crabbe and Goyle, he frowned slightly as he took his own seat between Ron and Neville with Hermione behind them. Professor Snape began writing the ingredients on the chalkboard for the potion they would be working on when a slightly disheveled Draco opened the door.

Everyone eyed the blonde curiously, all could see that he had probably run to class to try and get here on time. His face was slightly flushed, his tie wasn't quite done up right and his hair was still a bit damp and mussed from the quick shower he had had. He walked over to his chair with what dignity he could muster, only his panting breath giving away that he had been in a definite rush.

Harry shocked himself by thinking how adorable the blonde looked when everything wasn't completely perfect about him and then blushed when Draco looked over at him as he sat down. Malfoy nodded and gave Potter a curious look before opening his book, writing quickly to catch up.

Snape finished his writing and then turned around, glaring at Draco. “Detention with me at the end of the day,” he informed the teen. Snickers could be heard throughout the class, especially from the Gryffindors, as the teachers pet finally got in trouble. Harry, however, was a bit put out that no points had been taken which certainly would have happened if someone from his house had been late.

“Does anyone else wish to join Mr. Malfoy,” Snape sneered at the giggling teens, which caused complete silence to descend over the room. “I thought not.” Professor Snape began his lecture and then told the class to split into groups of three to perform the practical part of the class.

“Where were you?” Pansy whispered at the blonde. She, Draco and Goyle had formed a team, much to Draco's distaste. He had the feeling that Goyle had a huge crush on Pansy, although she seemed not to know about it.

*„She could be just pretending not to notice,”* Draco thought, because as far as he could figure, Goyle was being pretty obvious about it as the large boy was always staring at her with puppy eyes. If he had had a tail, Draco was sure it would have waved back and forth wildly if she even looked his way. He wished them the best of luck in his mind. *„Might be a good thing if it keeps her away from me.”*

“I overslept,” the blonde told the girl, taking the ingredients from Goyle as he came back with them. He instructed the larger teen to just sit down and not interfere with the potion making, not trusting his rather slow lackey not to cause an explosion.

Pansy began chopping up the various items to put into the cauldron as Draco put it over the small flame to bring the water inside it to a boil. “You? Oversleep?” she asked incredulously, raising her eyebrows at the blonde.

“It does happen from time to time,” Draco replied, trying to shut out her nattering and concentrate on the task at hand. He hadn’t realized how much energy he had drained trying out that spell. Not that it was going to deter him, as he planned on working through the whole book and mastering all of it before he took off. He was going to play hooky from the next class to see if he could find a private out of the way place to practice where he wouldn’t be seen. He was only missing Charms with Professor Flitwick anyways.

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Harry hid in one of the alcoves off the main hall outside the classroom, using a disillusionment charm for good measure, waiting for Malfoy to appear. Snape had taken the blonde aside after he had dismissed the rest in order to give him a bit of a dressing down for being late. The Gryffindor was sure that Malfoy was up to something and he was hiding himself in order to find out just what.

Hermione and Ron had gone on ahead to their next class after making him promise to be careful and to tell them if he found out anything. Harry didn’t have to wait long; the blonde came out of the classroom and looking both ways, ran over to a set of stairs.

Draco decided the best place to practice would be Moaning Myrtle’s bathroom on the second floor. He knew that the bathroom, although operational, was rarely used because people didn’t want to put up with the antics of the resident ghost girl. He continued on his way, checking around frequently. He had the distinct impression he was being watched, but he could never see anyone when he looked.

Finally making it into the bathroom, he gave a sigh of relief and cast a locking spell on the door just to be safe. Draco pulled the book out of his robes and sat on the floor in the middle of the room, re-reading the instructions for the focusing and summoning exercises one more time and checking over one of the spells he wanted to try.

“What are you doing?” Myrtle moaned as she came floating over towards the seated boy. She didn’t often get visitors and wasn’t going to let the opportunity pass to talk to someone.

“Practicing,” Draco responded as he crossed his legs and placed his arms on his knees, being careful not to jar his injured arm.

“Practicing what?” the girl ghost queried with a tilt of her head.

“You’ll see. Now be quiet, I have to concentrate,” Draco responded with a smirk. He winked at the girl before closing his eyes which would have caused Myrtle cheeks to blush pink if she hadn’t been a ghost.

Harry held still against the wall, managing to squeeze through the door before Draco had closed and locked it. The disillusionment charm he was still under changing his color so he could blend into the background and not be noticed, similar to the way a Chameleon changes colors to hide itself. He had finally gotten into a position where he could see the blonde and he watched as Malfoy closed his eyes wondering what the teen was trying to do. As far as Harry could see he was just sitting there like a lump.

After a few moments, Harry’s eyes widened in astonishment, watching as a soft glow began to surround the seated boy. Different colors flexed and strummed in a pale aura around the blonde until finally all the colors accumulated at his hands, becoming brighter and more real looking.

Draco opened his eyes and keeping himself calm and focused he stood and approached the mirror over the sink. He was going to try one of the simple one word spells and see if he could crack its surface. He envisioned the glass breaking as he lifted his hand towards his reflection. “Shatter,” he spoke out forcefully, pushing his palm towards the glass.

As soon as the spell left his lips he knew something had gone wrong. He almost felt like he had that day that he had cracked the stone wall when his arm had been hurt. Everything went totally out of control.

Harry pressed himself back against the wall in shock as every mirror and window in the room exploded, shards of glass flying everywhere. Astonishingly, he had not one wound anywhere as he took an exploratory check of himself after it was all over. He did see, however, that Draco had not been so lucky.

The blonde had numerous slashes all over his body which were oozing and dripping blood. Harry released himself from the concealing spell with a flick of his wand and rushed worriedly to the blonde that had slumped to his knees, his hand gripping at his throat where a large shard of glass was embedded.

Draco was in a shocked daze and didn't even question it when Potter suddenly showed up at his side. "Bollocks," he groaned out, "need to use less force next time and definitely more control." He realized he probably shouldn't have focused all the energy and intent he could muster in order to get the mirror to crack. In the back of his mind he hadn't really thought he'd be able to do it. „*That could shatter someone's bones if you weren't careful,*" Draco thought hazily.

"Merlin, Malfoy, what did you do?" Harry questioned in a panicky voice. "Hold on I'll get you to Madam Pomfrey."

"No," Draco refused forcefully. "Can't you do something? You can fix me, right?"

"Is he going to die?" Myrtle asked almost hopefully. She had been alone for so long in this bathroom that the idea of company sounded good to her. "You could let him bleed to death," she added, coming closer to the blonde and brunette that were kneeling in a pool of Draco's blood.

Harry gingerly pulled the shard from Draco's neck, ignoring the pesky ghost and flinching as more blood gushed from the deep gash between the wounded teen's fingers. He wiped at a spot that had landed on his cheek with the back of his hand, only managing to smear it across his face.

The blonde began to slump further down onto the floor and Harry caught him in his arms. Pointing his wand that he still held in his right hand at Draco's neck, he uttered a healing spell, hoping he had remembered it properly. Slowly the wound began to close until it was no more than a slight cut, a very small amount of blood seeping from it for a few seconds before stopping completely.

Harry gave a ragged sigh of relief. A lump began to form in his throat as he looked down on the barely conscious Malfoy whose skin was almost as pale as Myrtle herself.

“Don’t tell,” Draco croaked out fearfully. “I’ll do anything you want if you don’t tell.” That being said he promptly passed out in The-Boy-Who-Lived arms.

Harry debated whether he should do as he had been asked or not. Not really sure why he was going against his better judgement, he lifted Draco in his arms and headed for the seventh floor and the Room of Requirement.

Classes should still be in so he didn’t worry about others seeing them and once he paced in front of the wall the requisite three times he entered the room and placed the blonde on the bed he had asked for. There was also a chair and small table by the bed with bandages and antiseptic potions.

Harry had made sure to ask the room for a blood producing potion as well, which was now sitting in the small box with the other first aid supplies. A modest fireplace was burning brightly in the wall across from the end of the bed, warming the room nicely.

Three large windows were along the wall to the right of the bed, but the soft, thick drapes were drawn to keep the light in the room dim. Another larger table was on the opposite side of the bed as the first aid kit and it had a large basin of warm water with a stack of washcloths and towels beside it.

Only thinking of helping Draco, Harry stripped him of his robes and clothing so he could see what other damage the boy had inflicted upon himself with his botched spell casting. It still hadn’t occurred to him to wonder how Draco had done the spell without a wand.

A leather covered book fell out of the robes and Harry picked it up without really looking at it and placed it on the end of the bed with the rest of the blonde’s shredded and bloodied clothes.

Harry sucked in his breath at seeing the dozens of cuts crisscrossing the pale body. None of them looked anywhere near as serious as the one he had healed in the bathroom

however, so he felt a sense of relief come over him about that. He calmly dipped the wash cloth in the warm water and cleaned off his blonde nemesis.



When all the blood had been washed off and the blonde had been dried, Harry applied the healing poultices and wrapped or bandaged all the wounds. When he was finished he quickly cleaned Draco's blood off his own hands and face and then tried to wake the Slytherin.

"Malfoy," Harry called out to him, shaking him gently and even slapping his cheeks moderately to get him to come around enough so he could get him to swallow the blood enhancing potion to no avail. He was concerned at how pale and cold Draco's skin was and he began to chew his lower lip nervously as he realized that Malfoy could still die if he didn't get this potion into him.

Afraid to use the Enervate spell in case the blonde woke with a start and reopened his wounds and not being able to think of any other way to do this, Harry put his arm behind Malfoy's head and shoulders and lifted him into a semi-sitting position, cradling him carefully so as not to open the wounds he had just bandaged or move the broken arm. He then popped off the top of the vial with the thumb on his other hand and poured the potion into his own mouth.

The thought that what he was about to do was a little weird crossed his mind, but he shrugged it off and leaned over. Placing his lips over Draco's, he worked the boy's mouth open with his fingers and forced the potion into him, making sure to push it onto the back of his tongue. He then rubbed Draco's throat to get him to swallow.

Harry didn't pull away as soon as his task was done. The potion itself was tasteless, but he definitely tasted something like spicy chocolate when his tongue had slipped into the blonde's mouth as he tried to get him to accept the liquid. He swept his tongue inside the warmth of Malfoy's mouth again, tasting that same sweetness before blushing in embarrassment. He felt some shame, as he was basically taking advantage of the unconscious boy and pulled his lips away. He lowered the blonde to the bed and went about cleaning up the supplies he had used.

Harry astonished himself in that he wasn't nearly as disgusted about kissing another boy as he thought he would be. In fact, he kinda wished he'd be able to do it again, maybe when Malfoy was awake and if he didn't Avada Kedavra him for even thinking about it.

That thought shocked him. If he had an interest in boys, which he wasn't sure he did; this could all just be a reaction caused by his adrenaline rush, he told himself. Then surely he could find other boys more pleasant and trustworthy than Malfoy to associate with in such a way.

Still, Harry had to admit that the thought of the two of them together wasn't totally repulsive, even though they were complete opposites in every way. Draco's pale, sleek and neat hair contrasting with Harry's own wild and willful dark locks; Draco's small, pale and thin body against his taller, stockier and darker one. The two boys were differing points on the opposite ends of the same line. Each others features negatively matched by the other in such perfect harmony as to be breathtakingly beautiful if one were only to look.

Even their house colors and philosophies, Slytherin's emerald green regarding ambition, cunning and resourcefulness in high esteem and Gryffindor's scarlet red valuing courage, chivalry and boldness seemed radically irreconcilable at first glance. But on a closer look they complemented each other perfectly. They provided a counterbalance from one to the other without the extremes of character both houses possessed.

But what was it about Malfoy that intrigued him so, other than his good looks? Well he was smart, his grades were only second to Hermione and his command of language was excellent. Too bad he wasted it on nasty, snarky comments. Although in retrospect, his sharp tongue was witty, even if he was being insulting.

He was loyal in his own way, even if it was to people or ideas that Harry didn't necessarily like.

The blonde had excellent self control, far better than he himself did, and he had a determination that surprised the Gryffindor. Harry may have beaten him in Quidditch every time, but it wasn't for lack of trying on the Slytherin's end. He worked hard in every single game, never holding back and giving it his all. If Harry hadn't been such a talented seeker and was a little less lucky, he suspected that Draco's hard work and determination would have beaten him to the snitch by now.

Harry was distracted from his thoughts when Draco shivered. The Gryffindor pulled the large, cozy comforter over him, tucking it under his chin and then sat back on the chair beside the bed, deciding to hold off deliberations of the conundrum that was Draco Malfoy until a later date.

He brushed Draco's bangs from his face, feeling relief when he saw that some of the color was slowly returning to the blonde's cheeks. It was only now that Harry had a chance to get a really good look at himself. He quickly cast a cleaning spell over his bloodied robes and then he noticed the book that was lying at the end of the bed.

Harry stood to get it before sitting back down. „*Might as well read something while I wait for him to wake up and explain what happened,*” the dark haired teen thought as he pushed his glasses, which had slipped, back up on his nose and opened the book to the first page. Reading would also distract him from examining too closely his, before now, unquestioned sexuality or looking at the peaceful, angelic face of the near naked person in the bed.

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Draco groaned and slowly opened his eyes in the darkened room, not understanding where he was and what had happened. He turned his head to see, of all people, Harry Potter sitting in a chair beside the bed he was on with an unreadable expression on his face. His eyes drifted down to the brown leather book in the bespectacled teens hand and memories of what had transpired flooded though his mind.

“Where am I?” he questioned painfully. His throat felt raw and he winced as he put his hand to his neck to feel bandages wrapped around it.

“We’re in the Room of Requirement,” Harry told him. “You almost killed yourself using a spell in this book.”

Again, Draco looked at the book and then back to The-Boy-Who-Lived, who now had a very distrustful and angry expression on his face.

“How did you get this book, Malfoy?” Harry ground out suspiciously. “Planning on using wandless magic when you become a Death Eater?”

“What would you know about what I plan to become?” Draco sneered. “You don’t know me, you know nothing about me.”

“I know all I need to as far as you’re concerned,” Harry shot back angrily, gripping the book tight enough to cause his knuckles to begin to turn white.

“All you know is what your friends tell you,” Draco hissed, his eyes snapping dangerously. “You’ve never once tried to get to know me on your own, to make your own decision one way or the other about me. You’re a fucking sheep, Potter.” Draco tried to sit up in the bed, only stopping his exertions for a moment when the room started to spin. When he finally made it he propped a few pillows behind his back and then leaned back, closing his eyes as another wave of vertigo swept over him.

Harry was still angry, but the way the blonde's skin suddenly paled took some of the heat out of his fury and the fact that Malfoy was correct in saying that he had never really tried to get to know him. This wasn't all his fault in Harry's opinion as the Slytherin was always acting like a total asshole, and who would want to get to know that?

"I should take you straight to Dumbledore and show him what you've been up to," Harry continued to argue, not willing to concede anything to his nemesis.

Draco snorted disdainfully, opening his eyes and glaring at the Gryffindor. "And what have I been up to, Potter, besides injuring myself? I haven't done anything to anyone.

Harry frowned at the blonde. "Well, I'm sure you shouldn't have a book like this. You probably stole it from the restricted section or something." Now he was just being childish, but he just couldn't help it. Malfoy always had this uncanny ability to get under his skin.

"Not that you'll believe me, but I found that book and I wanted to use it to help me when I leave Hogwarts." Panic was beginning to bloom in his breast. Harry held his life in his hands at the moment and if he took him to Dumbledore the old coot would certainly believe Potter's word over his and he'd probably be expelled. Of course then his father would find out and that would be that. He'd never get away.

"Leave Hogwarts?" Harry questioned; perplexion taking over the irritation and anger.

"I'm running away," Draco responded, holding back the tears that were prickling at the back of his eyes. "I don't want to be a Death Eater," he finished softly.

Harry stared at the boy on the bed uncertainly. He certainly sounded genuinely truthful. "If you don't want to be a Death Eater, then don't be one. You could always fight on our side," Harry offered.

"Are you totally dense, Potter?" Draco questioned scornfully. "My father will force me to become one if I stay here and I don't want to fight on either side."

"How can you say that?" Harry retaliated, his aggravation rising again. "You can't stay neutral in this, you're a wizard. Don't you care what happens in our world?"

“Of course I care,” Draco snapped. He glared at The-Boy-Who-Lived for a moment. “Is it that easy for you?” he finally asked.

“What?” Harry asked back irritably.

“To kill your schoolmates. Even if they are from other houses, you still know them, have had classes with them, ate in the Great Hall with them. Can you kill them so easily?” Draco took a shaking breath trying to calm himself as he felt his frustration and anger beginning to boil within him. “You’ll have to, you know. Some of them will be on the side of the Dark Lord. You’ll have to fight against them and destroy them before they destroy you. Personally, I don’t think I can be that callous and I’m a Malfoy,” Draco finished.

Harry’s face went white as a sheet at the blondes rant and the implications within it. He curled both hands into fists as he tried to control his anger at the boy in the bed and hide

his feelings of guilt. “How dare you,” he stated in a deathly quiet voice. “You think it’s easy for me!? You don’t know fuck all of what I’ve been through. I don’t want to kill anyone either, but I can’t allow Voldemort to take over our world, and I’m not the one that’s used dark magic before either,” he accused his nemesis as he threw the book at Malfoy, hitting him in the face. “And I’m not a coward that will turn tail and run away!” Both boys glared at each other angrily and then Draco did something that Harry would forever remember; he apologized.

“I’m sorry,” Draco stated softly, all his anger deflating out of him. The blonde was so tired, tired of all the fighting and hate, tired of bearing Potter’s censure and presuppositions. “You’re right, I don’t know what you’ve been through and I’m sorry for everything. All the stupid childish things I’ve said and done in the past to you and to your friends. It was stupid and so is this, I mean you did save my life and...and...I’m just...sorry.” Draco put his arm over his face so Potter wouldn’t see the tears of regret that were beginning to pool in his eyes.

Harry was stunned, he certainly wasn’t expecting this. He stared stupidly at Draco’s cast arm. A thought popped into his head. “You’re father broke your arm, didn’t he?” the dark haired boy asked.

Draco nodded his head, not wanted to speak in case he started sobbing in front of the wonderful Harry bloody Potter.

“Why?” The question hung in the air for a moment as Draco composed himself enough to answer.

“Because I wouldn’t meet with the Dark Lord over the summer,” he finally answered.

“Your father would really force you to take the dark mark?” Harry asked, astonished at how callous and uncaring Lucius Malfoy was.

“He’d probably hold me down so the Dark Lord could brand it on my arm before using the Cruciatus Curse on me for refusing in the first place,” Draco affirmed. “They’re both totally mad, you know. This battle, when it comes, is going to be bad.”

“We all know that, but you see why we have to defeat him. You could really help us out, Draco. I’m sure Dumbledore can protect you from your father if...”

Harry didn’t get a chance to finish as Draco interrupted him. “Like he protects you? Please,” Draco responded, rolling his eyes. “How many times have you been in mortal danger over the years here? You’re the Chosen One, The-Boy-Who-Lived and the most important person in the wizarding world, or so I’ve been told, and yet you still manage to almost get yourself killed at least once a year. I’d rather say he’s not doing such a good job keeping you out of harms way and I dare say he wouldn’t be as observant in keeping me protected. I’m not one of his favourites, you know.”

“It’s not all his fault and Dumbledore doesn’t pick favourites,” Harry stated lamely. Even to himself he didn’t sound very convincing.

“Look, just let me go. No one really needs me in this fight and no one is going to miss me either,” Draco said sadly. He was now sitting completely up in the bed looking down at the book that was lying open on the covers. “I just want to be able to defend myself in case my father or his cronies come looking for me, that’s all.”

“I’ll miss you,” Harry told Draco firmly, surprising himself by this declaration. He moved to sit on the bed and captured the blonde’s chin in his hand. He lifted Draco’s head so he would have to look straight into Harry’s green eyes and see the truth in them. “Stay. I’ll protect you.”

The two boys stared deeply into each other’s eyes, and without even knowing why he was doing it; Harry threw caution and all common sense to the wind. He suddenly

found himself tired of fighting this magnetic pull that had always been oscillating between them and he yanked Draco's face towards his and kissed him.

Draco's eyes opened wide in shock and his first impulse was to push the Gryffindor away and pound the living shit out of him, but unfortunately, or fortunately depending on your point of view, his muscles and brain didn't seem to want to make the proper connections to follow through on this plan. All his mind could understand at the moment was that he was being kissed by The Harry Potter and after he got over his momentarily stupefaction, he found that strangely enough, he was enjoying it. He closed his eyes and allowed himself to respond and follow the other's lips, sighing softly in acceptance of this gift from his loneliness.

Of course, the blonde had kissed before, this wasn't like it was his first time or anything, but he had always been the one to kiss. Never the one to be kissed and this was certainly his first time kissing another bloke. He had thought of boys occasionally in the past, even becoming slightly titillated when he had taken quick peeks at his fellow's naked bodies while in the showers, but he had passed it off as simple sexual curiosity and would never have acted on it.

This kiss was different from the other's he had engaged in, mostly with Pansy. He could almost believe that someone actually gave a damn about him and he wrapped his good arm around his dark haired partner's neck, not wanting this moment to end.

Harry continued to kiss the plump lips of his former long time enemy, entranced at how soft the other boy's lips were and pleased as Draco kissed him back. He was enjoying himself so much that he was totally shocked when he heard the blonde sob. Harry pulled back, guilt hitting him like a punch in the gut. "Merlin...I'm sorry...I didn't..." he stuttered, suddenly wondering what in the hell had come over him.

"It's okay," Draco sniffed, wiping at his face with his hand. "It was just a little...overwhelming. No ones ever kissed me like that," he finished in a whisper, his cheeks heating up in embarrassment at his confession.

"It was okay, then?" Harry asked, needing some reassurance that he hadn't done something terribly stupid.

Draco smiled which caused Harry's heart to almost stop in his chest at the beauty of it. He had never seen the blonde genuinely smile ever, especially at him, and at that moment he vowed he would make this boy smile like that all the time from now on.

“It was nice,” Draco responded, leaning forward towards the dark haired boy, silently asking for Harry to kiss him again.

Harry obliged, cupping Draco’s cheeks in his hands and bringing their lips together in a soft, gentle kiss. They parted slowly a few moments later, both of them feeling a bit flushed and short of breath.

“This doesn’t mean I’m staying, though,” Draco told Harry, although the tone in his voice said that he might be able to be convinced otherwise.

Harry gave Draco a crooked grin and tapped the book on the blonde’s lap. “Just don’t go trying anymore spells without me, okay?”

“You’re not going to tell? You’re going to let me keep the book?” Draco asked in amazement.

“I will, only if you let me learn this stuff along with you. It could come in handy to know,” Harry stated, thinking of the advantage he would have in the coming conflict if he could master wandless magic. He knew, of course, that Dumbledore might not approve, as some of the spells in the book were probably walking the line between dark and light. With that in mind he didn’t see a reason the Headmaster, or anyone else for that matter, should know about it.

“Deal,” Draco smirked, holding out his hand.

Harry took it and gave it a shake. “If you’re feeling up to it, we should get back to classes. We’ve already missed lunch and I’m sure we’re going to be missed ourselves, if we haven’t been already.”

“Yeah, I think I’m alright now,” Draco responded. Then he looked down at himself. “Uh...where are my clothes?” he asked, for the first time realizing that he was wearing nothing more than bandages and his underwear.

Harry turned bright red and grabbed the blonde’s clothes from the end of the bed. He cast a cleaning and repair spell on the garments and passed them over to an equally red Draco. “Uh...I’ll just meet you outside then,” the blushing Gryffindor stated, getting off the bed.



“Yeah, just give me a sec,” Draco replied. Both boys avoided looking directly at each other as a cloud of awkwardness descended between them.

Harry stood outside the Room of Requirement feeling a bit frazzled and confused from the emotional rollercoaster he had just been on until Draco appeared looking none the worse for wear. The blonde had removed the bandages from around his neck and there was only the smallest scar on his throat which he was sure wouldn't be noticed. The two boys walked together to get to their classes and finish their day, agreeing to meet later in

Myrtle's bathroom to work on the spells. Each of them decided that, maybe now, they could take a chance to truly get to know each other as well.

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Harry waited nervously with Myrtle in the now tidy bathroom. „*Those house elves do a bang up job,*” he thought as he looked around. „*You'd never know that this place was a disaster earlier.*”

Pacing back and forth with the girl ghost flying by his side, Harry was becoming agitated. „*Where is he?*” He knew that Draco had detention with Snape, but he thought for sure he'd be done with that by now. He wondered if the blonde was alright, surprising himself by how quickly he had come to have feelings for the teen.

Harry had been spacing out from time to time the rest of the day after getting to Care of Magical Creatures. He could barely concentrate because all he could think of was Draco and that kiss and he had put off Hermione and Ron's questioning stares, saying that he would tell them later.

Harry was confused beyond belief. He had never thought of guys in that way at all, but now he could think of nothing else.

„*Does this mean I'm gay?*” Harry thought as he distanced himself from his other classmates by retreating to the back of the group. He knew he liked girls. He had had a huge crush on Cho Chang and eventually even dated her for a time, enjoying the kissing and petting they had done.

He let his gaze roam over the other boys that were around him and could honestly say that he had no urge to kiss any of them. „*So, why him? Why Malfoy? How could the*

*hate I've always had for him become something different? Did I really ever truly hate him?"* These questions and more swirled through Harry's mind, but he still could come up with no decent answers for himself.

In truth, apart from that bit of dating with Cho, Harry had no real experience. He had been love deprived living with the Dursleys, which had just made him very awkward and shy around others. He was sure he wouldn't have even ended up being with Cho if she hadn't been the instigator, giving him the push start to get the ball rolling. The reason that they hadn't remained together was that Harry had not been emotionally ready to be the lead in their relationship. With Voldemort and death stalking his every move he had needed someone to be strong for him, to love him and to hold him, but Cho hadn't been able to be that person for him and so they had parted after an argument and drifted apart.

Harry's more practical side told him to just turn the blonde over to Dumbledore and forget about it. Malfoy was always trying to cause trouble of some kind or another for him and all this could just be another scheme of the boy's to get at him.

Harry ran his fingers through his hair, only making his dark locks messier, as he tried to sort out his confusing thoughts. In his guts he knew that Draco had been telling him the truth. He really didn't want to follow in his father's footsteps and he seemed terrified of the older Malfoy. Harry wondered if Lucius had ever hurt Draco before this.

*„Could that be why Malfoy is the way he is? It would make sense,"* he thought. Harry was under the impression that he and Draco shared a similar loneliness and uncaring past so maybe this was the reason for his fascination for the blonde. He subconsciously recognized a kindred spirit, someone that might truly understand him, the real him underneath the guise of the hero.

"Harry," Hermione hissed at him, jabbing him in the side to get him to pay attention. Hagrid had just asked him a question and he had absolutely no idea what had been said.

He had been so deep in thought that he hadn't even noticed his friend approach him until her sharp elbow had connected with his ribs.

"Sorry," Harry apologized sheepishly to his rather large friend and now teacher. "I wasn't paying attention."

“That’s all right, Harry,” Hagrid replied in his rough brogue, giving the teen a bit of a smile. “We all know you have things on your mind.”

“No, I’ll pay attention,” Harry responded, feeling guilty that he was taking advantage of Hagrid’s friendship and good nature. He put his mind back on the class deciding to forget about Malfoy until they met later.

Which was where he was now, waiting for Malfoy in an abandoned bathroom with a hovering ghost traipsing after him. He was about to leave, thinking that he had been wrong about the blonde after all when the door opened and said blonde walked in. Harry was mortified, Draco looked like shit and he hurried over to the boy that looked like he was going to collapse at any moment.

“Malfoy, are you alright?” Harry asked worriedly. The blonde teen was pale and a sheen of sweat shone on his brow, his bangs wet and sticking to his forehead.

“Just overdid it a bit,” he stated, waving Harry away. “Snape had me re-catalogue every ingredient in the potions lab and I think someone was trying to follow me so I ran through different corridors trying to lose them.” Draco put his back to the wall and slumped down to sit on the floor. “Just let me rest a bit and then we can start.”

“Draco...” Harry breathed. “No, we’re going right to Madame Pomfrey. You lost a lot of blood earlier and she can help you better than me. We can work on the spells when you’re feeling better,” Harry said decisively, taking ahold of Draco’s arm and helping him to stand.

Myrtle, who had been silently watching them, spoke up. “Are you sure you don’t want to just leave him here. He could die and keep me company. It’s not that bad being a ghost.”

“Myrtle,” Harry admonished. “I am not leaving him here.”

“Ohhh,” Myrtle moaned as she floated away. “You’re not very nice at all.”

Harry was surprised to hear Draco chuckling.

“My hero,” the blonde retorted with a smirk. Draco looked up to the slightly taller boy, a serious look coming over his face. “We need to talk about what happened earlier,” he stated bluntly.

Harry had known that they were going to have to address that kiss, but he had hoped that he could have put it off. "I know," he answered, "but right now we have to get you some help."

Draco felt so physically drained that he decided not to argue the point and he began to walk out of the room only to have his knees buckle underneath him. He began to fall and was sure he was going to make a fool of himself in front of the other boy by landing flat on his face. Instead he felt warm, strong arms embrace him and then he was lifted bodily into the air.

"Put me down, Potter!" Draco yelled in dismay, his face flushing in embarrassment.

Harry held his slender rival bridal style with a determined look in his eyes. "You're not going to be able to walk. For Merlin's sake, why didn't you go to the infirmary before this?" Harry asked irately.

"What if someone sees us," Draco tried to reason. "How are you going to explain why the wonderful Harry Potter is carrying the evil Draco Malfoy around like a damsel in distress."

"You think I'm wonderful?" Harry asked with a mischievous twinkle in his eye. He noticed that Draco wasn't really putting up that much of a struggle to get away so the bespectacled youth hoisted his burden into a more comfortable position. "I don't think you're evil and you are in distress," he added for good measure almost laughing at the indignant scowl that swept over Draco's face. "Reach into my robes," Harry told his passenger.

Draco gave The-Boy-Who-Lived a strange look. "I'm not really in any kind of shape for that sort of activity," he stated wryly, enjoying the look of embarrassment that crossed Harry's features. „*Take that, Potter,*" he smirked to himself in satisfaction.

"Prat," Harry complained, his cheeks tainted pink. "Just grab the cloak inside my robes."

Draco reached in and pulled out the shimmering cloak. "What's this?" he asked curiously, looking at the strange fabric.

"It's an invisibility cloak," Harry grinned. "Put it over us."

Draco looked suitable impressed. “No wonder you could get away with so much. Where did you get it from?” the blonde asked letting the material slip through his fingers slightly as he investigated the garment.

“It was my dad’s,” Harry replied softly. “I got it from Dumbledore in first year, at Christmas.”

Draco nodded, noticing the small catch in the brunette’s voice as he spoke of his father. He flipped the cloak over the top of Harry so it draped down over both of them. It was a little strange looking out from beneath it. The blonde could see everything, but it all looked a bit hazy. “Does this thing really work?” he questioned dubiously.

“Don’t worry, no one will be able to see us. Now, I’m taking you to Madame Pomfrey.” Harry said in a less depressed tone.

Draco pushed open the door as Harry’s hands were a bit full at the moment. The-Boy-Who-Lived soon gave a start of surprise as he felt the weakened blonde grip him a bit tighter and rest his head on Harry’s shoulder as he walked down the corridor.

Draco closed his eyes, he felt so tired and Harry’s arms were warm and comforting. “Did you mean what you said earlier?” the blonde asked blearily.

“What?” Harry answered, unsure of what Draco was talking about.

“About missing me. I thought you’d be the one person that would be glad if I wasn’t around anymore.” Draco hadn’t realized until Harry had told him that, how absolutely alone and isolated he had felt. It was an emotion that he had become so used to feeling over the years that it didn’t even register with him anymore.

Harry thought about that for a moment. He could honestly say that he no longer felt any hatred for the blonde, he really wasn’t sure if he ever had. Draco could be a right pain in the arse and Harry had been more than angry with him, but even he had to admit that he would miss him if he wasn’t around.

Malfoy was the one person that treated him as if his Boy-Who-Lived status didn’t mean a thing. No one but the blonde had ever pissed him off so much and no one but the blonde had ever dared to tease and challenge him, even if it had been humiliating at

times. Draco had always treated Harry as a normal person, not some freak hero to be worshipped and never a harsh word said to him. Deep down the dark haired teen had been grateful for that.

“Yeah, I’d miss you,” Harry finally responded.

They continued onto the infirmary in silence, walking past Zabini on the way. The dark boy was creeping around turning his head this way and that, like he was looking for someone. Both boys gave each other a questioning look as they watched the other Slytherin for a moment and then continued on their way.

Draco told Harry to stop just before they went through the door of the infirmary. “Put me down, I’ll walk in and let me do the talking. You just back me up.”

“What are you planning?” Harry asked, raising an eyebrow, unconsciously mimicking one of Draco’s facial expressions.

“You just tell Madam Pomfrey you found me in the bathroom bleeding and you tried to fix me. I’ll do the rest.”

Since technically, what Draco said wasn’t a lie, Harry decided to go along with it and he put the blonde on his feet, removing the invisibility cloak.

“And here,” Draco said, putting his hand in his robes and pulling out the book. “Take care of this.”

Harry took the proffered book and slipped it into his own robes with the cloak and then the two boys entered the ward, Harry hovering closely in case Draco fell over again.

“Oh my,” Madame Pomfrey exclaimed upon seeing the very weak Draco Malfoy wobble into view with none other than Harry Potter at his side. “What happened?” she questioned coming over and helping the blonde to a bed, going right into healer mode.

Harry explained how he had found Draco earlier that day and that he had tried to heal his wounds.

Madam Pomfrey had her wand out and was doing a diagnostic spell and could easily tell that the blonde had lost a lot of blood and he had very low blood sugar, the combination was what was causing his weakness. She also made note of the fact of the many magically healed cuts and the small amount of blood booster potion in the boy's system. "Why didn't you bring him here right away?" She scolded Harry as she went off to get some more blood booster. "Did you two have a fight?"

"No," Draco responded. "I told him not to bring me. I was ashamed," he continued softly.

"Ashamed?" the Medi witch questioned with a raised eyebrow, "Ashamed of what?" She reached out and gently inspected the slight scar at Draco's throat.

"I did this. I cut myself."

Harry had to hand it to the Slytherin, he was still basically telling the truth, but he wasn't sure if he liked what the boy was trying to suggest to the healer.

"Madam Pomfrey at first looked angry, but that soon changed to worry. "Here, drink this," she ordered, putting a vial of potion to his lips. "You'll stay here for the rest of the day and overnight until I'm sure you've gained your strength back." She then turned to Harry who had been standing off to the side. "He should be thankful you found him," she praised him.

"Will he be okay?" Harry asked, trying not to act too worried about someone Madam Pomfrey believed him to dislike.

Madame Pomfrey gave The-Boy-Who-Lived a strange look. "Yes, he should be fine. You did a good job of fixing him up. He's just a bit weak, but the potion I gave him will help and I'll make sure that he gets something to eat." She looked over to the blonde teen that had fallen asleep. "Do you know why he tried to hurt himself?" she asked, her voice not betraying her dismay that someone so young felt the need to end their own life. "No, not really," Harry responded suddenly feeling nervous under her scrutiny.

"Well, I'll get someone to talk to him and help him deal with what ever is bothering him when he wakes up," the Mediwitch stated. "For now you better get back to your rooms. It's getting close to curfew and I wouldn't want you getting into trouble over this."

Madame Pomfrey smiled at the boy who had spent a lot of his time here with her in the past. "At least it's not you this time," she joked as she ushered Harry to the door.

"Can I come see him tomorrow?" Harry asked before he left, kicking himself internally for his tone of eagerness.

Again Madame Pomfrey gave the boy she was so fond of a curious look. "Yes, if you wish and if it's alright with Mr. Malfoy."

Harry smiled at her and saying goodbye headed off to his dorms.

*„I thought these two hated each other?“* The mediwitch thought, perplexed at the change in attitude she sensed from both boys. Putting that aside for the moment, Poppy took a final check on her patient, using her wand to quickly change his clothes into hospital pajamas and slip him under the blankets before heading to Dumbledore's office.

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Draco awoke later in the evening to the faint mumblings of voices. He kept his eyes closed, not quite ready to deal with anyone yet. He picked out Dumbledore's voice, speaking with Madame Pomfrey...and was that Snape's voice there too? He knew what they were going to think, he had as much as confessed that he had tried to commit suicide. Something that was almost unheard of in the wizarding world, especially from someone his age. *„Well there's no getting out of it now. I can't let them know I was practicing wandless magic. Merlin,“* he sighed to himself, *„what a mess.“*

Why had he gone along with this? The old Headmaster could call his father at anytime, if he hadn't already, and then all his planning would be for nothing. Why had he even considered staying? Because Harry had kissed him? Because Draco had felt safe in the other boy's arms? ***„Stay, I'll protect you.“*** Isn't that what Harry had said?

The Slytherin wasn't even concerned that Harry was a boy. He had never really been that impressed with the females he was in contact with. Most probably the fault of his intended, Pansy. Just thinking of her fawning and groping at him made him shiver in revulsion. He supposed, looking back, that he had always had an interest in men, but since his father had chosen Pansy for him and he was expected to provide an heir to carry on the family name for the Pureblood community he hadn't worried about it.



There also was the fact that he wasn't sure how to start any kind of clandestine relationship with anyone without his father's knowledge and subsequent punishment, so he had accepted his fate as part and parcel of being a Malfoy and had fully intended to follow through with it at that time.

There had never been any kind of cuddly moments in the Malfoy household. Nor had he seen a tender exchange between his father and mother. He could never remember a time when either of his parents had held him, praised him, or comforted him. In fact, his father often reminded him what a disappointment Draco was to the name of Malfoy and to himself. Any lessons his father deemed necessary for Draco to learn were taught with a heavy hand and his mother seemed to be indifferent to him most of the time.

The blonde teen tried not to groan out loud at his stupidity. *„Am I that starved for affection that I'd do anything Potter says just to have the illusion that someone really cares?“* Draco had to admit, rather shamefully, that he was. Even all the nasty tricks he had played on Harry, Ron and Hermione in the past had been to try and gain popularity with his Slytherin peers. He desperately had just wanted someone to truly like him.

He had picked on Harry the most, he now realized, because of him refusing to be his friend in their first year. He understood now, that he had acted like a pompous ass and that was really the reason Harry had turned him down. But at the time, that rejection had only reinforced the idea in his eleven year old mind that he was unworthy of anyone really caring about him. It had hurt, it had hurt a lot, especially when he would watch from a distance and see that Potter seemed to like everyone else he met. The reality that The-Boy-Who-Lived didn't want to make an effort to get to know him and be friends with him caused him indescribable pain and he had wanted the person that made him feel that pain to hurt as well. It was from that, that the resentment, animosity and rivalry grew.

*„No wonder I'm so fucked up,“* he bemoaned internally. He listened to the whispering for another few moments before opening his eyes and looking to where the voices were coming from. Sure enough, Madame Pomfrey seemed to be angrily whispering something to Professor Snape who was standing stiff as a board with a scowl on his face. Dumbledore was there as well, standing beside Snape with a serious expression on his face.

Draco was a bit disappointed that Harry was no where to be seen. *„He doesn't really care. You know that,“* he berated himself. *„It's just his damn Gryffindor hero complex*

*kicking in. Harry Potter; out to save everyone, even us villains.*" Suddenly, Draco felt quite depressed.

"Mr. Malfoy, I see you're awake," Dumbledore stated with a kind expression.

Draco was sure he saw a hint of pity in those twinkling blue eyes and he crossed his arms over his chest defensively.

"How do you feel, Draco?" Snape asked coming over and sitting down on the small chair that was at his bedside.

"Fine," Draco responded, a bit petulantly as he moved into a sitting position. The blonde wondered if that was true concern in his godfather's voice.

"I'll leave you gentlemen to talk for a few moments," Madame Pomfrey stated as she placed a vial containing a clear liquid in Draco's hand. "Please drink this," she told the boy before bustling off.

Draco downed the potion in one gulp and then twirled the glass tube in his hands, finding it utterly fascinating to look at while he waited to see what the two older men were going to say to him.

A heavy silence descended between the three of them until Draco could handle it no longer. "For Merlin's sake," he huffed out, looking up to his professors faces. "You want to know if I really tried to off myself, don't you?" he questioned boldly.

"Mr. Malfoy!" Professor Snape exclaimed, irritated by the blondes lack of decorum.

"Now, Severus," Dumbledore interjected. "Let the boy speak. Yes, Draco, that is exactly what we want to know."

"Yes," the blonde Slytherin lied with perfect ease and believability. "Are you going to tell my father?" he asked, not quite hiding the flash of fear that crossed his eyes from the old Headmaster.

"Do you want us to call your father?" Dumbledore questioned back.

Draco glanced over to his Potions Professor, unsure how he should answer as he still had no idea on which side the man stood.

Dumbledore seemed to understand his hesitancy. "Professor Snape is a spy for our Order," he told the boy. "You can be quite frank in front of him and he will not betray anything that is said between us."

Draco's surprise must have shown clearly on his face after hearing this admission as Dumbledore broke out into a rather amused smile.

"Then no, I don't want my father to know."

"Why, Draco?" Snape asked, unintentionally letting his mask slip and showing some of the upset he felt that this young man, his godson, had felt the need to take his life.

Draco didn't totally trust these two men, but he had to tell them something, so he told them about not wanting to become a Death Eater and that he was afraid he would have no choice but to comply. "This was the only way I could think of to get out of it," he finished. „*Keep everything simple and basically truthful and you won't get tripped up later,*" the blonde told himself.

Dumbledore looked furious, Snape looked utterly horrified.

"Was your father the one that was going to take you to the Dark Lord?" Dumbledore questioned, knowing the answer without the boy having to say, but needing the confirmation.

Draco shut his mouth and scowled. He had just put himself in a very precarious position. His father would, in all likelihood, see this as a betrayal, but the blonde might still be able to wiggle out of it if he needed to and if he was clever. He knew he would have to endure punishment, but if he went any further, if he told everything he knew, there would be no turning back and his life would definitely be forfeit.

"I won't say anything against my father," he told both men firmly. "If you ask anything about him, I won't answer."

Now it was Snape's turn to look angry. „*I should have been around more to help him,*"

Snape thought guiltily. He had always had the impression that Lucius was too harsh with the boy. It seemed he had time to aid Dumbledore and the Order, but he couldn't be there for his own family, for this boy that had definitely needed somebody. „*I'll kill Lucius,*“ the potion master vowed. „*Before this war is over, he will lie dead at my feet for making the only person that means anything to me feel that death would have been preferable to living.*“

“Gentlemen,” Madam Pomfrey interrupted. “My patient still needs his rest. You can speak to him again another time. I should be able to discharge him tomorrow.” The mediwitch gave Draco another vial, this time a sleeping draught. After he finished she reclaimed the two vials in his hands before shooing the Headmaster and Potions Master out of the ward.

When the three of them were out of earshot of the blonde boy, Poppy continued. “I want him supervised at all times and I'll be giving him cheering potions for awhile. I'm also going to look into finding a counsellor for the boy to talk to.”

“Understood,” Dumbledore agreed. He turned to Snape. “Severus, I want you to extend yourself to the boy until someone suitable can be found. He does think quite highly of you and I have a feeling this attempt of his has more to do with his father than anything else. I believe he really needs someone reliable in his life right now.”

“You don't have to tell me that,” the Potions Master snapped out with more disrespect than he had intended. “I will not badger the boy about his father, though,” Severus told Dumbledore seriously. “You'll have to get your information about him from someone else. I will not allow Draco to feel that's the only reason I'm helping him.”

Dumbledore hid his disappointment; he had been thinking along those lines. “That's fine. I don't wish the boy to come to harm either,” he said instead.

“He and Mr. Potter seem to have ironed out their differences,” Poppy informed the two men, telling them that she had thought that the blonde and brunette had been fighting and she had therefore, assumed the injuries had come from that. “Mr. Malfoy stood up for the Potter boy when I suggested it, telling me immediately that it was he who had injured himself. Harry seemed quite concerned for him and asked to come back tomorrow to see Mr. Malfoy. I think we should encourage this friendship for the sake of the Malfoy boy.”

Snape scowled, not sure if this was such a good idea at all. Those two had been at each other's throats since first year and he was concerned that his godson would end up getting hurt, being in this vulnerable frame of mind. But even he had noticed how isolated Draco seemed to be this year, his fellow Slytherins staying away from the surly teen leaving the blonde alone most of the time. Another pang of guilt shot through Severus. „*It had been happening right in front of my eyes and still I didn't reach out to him.*“

Dumbledore smiled, outwardly agreeing that it was wonderful that the two boys could put their bad feelings behind them. In his heart, however, he was of the same mind as Snape, but for different reasons.

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“Okay, so spill it,” Ron stated eagerly, accosting Harry the minute he walked into the Gryffindor common room. Hermione took a hold of her dark haired friend's other arm and both teens bodily escorted The-Boy-Who-Lived over to a private corner of the room where all three sat on a large, comfortable sofa.

“Well...” Harry began haltingly. He really wasn't sure how much he should say. He wasn't sure if his two best friends would understand about his desire to at least be Malfoy's friend, if not more. He wasn't sure if he understood this urge either. He decided to just stick with the basic truths, as Draco had done, and let them infer what they would.

“Come on mate, what's up with Malfoy? Is he doing something evil?” Ron asked with an unfriendly scowl at the thought of his hated enemy doing something against them yet again.

“I found him nearly unconscious in the bathroom sitting in a puddle of blood,” Harry returned rather starkly, bending the truth only slightly. He was a bit irritated at Ron's attitude, even though he could understand it, since it was an attitude he had shared with his friend not that long ago.

“Wha...what?” Hermione stammered out. “But we saw him in class, he looked perfectly fine.”

“Well...I fixed him up because he wouldn't go to Madame Pomfrey, but then he got really weak and had to go to the infirmary in the end.” Harry answered her with a shrug.

“What happened to him? Was he trying to do dark magic with the blood? Did you have to fight him?” Ron asked, hoping in his heart that Harry had given the ferret what for.

Harry sighed. “No he wasn’t trying to do blood magic. He hurt himself,” was all he said.

Ron and Hermione looked at their friend incredulously. Surprisingly, it was Ron who seemed to catch the drift of what Harry was insinuating before Hermione. “He tried to off himself?” the red-head asked, now speaking in a hushed whisper.

Harry skipped over answering that question as he didn’t want to out and out lie to his friend. “He’s in the infirmary now, but I think Madame Pomfrey will let him go tomorrow.”

The three sat silently for awhile, not knowing what to say about that. “Maybe we should leave him alone for awhile,” Hermione finally spoke up, which earned her startled looks from both boys. “I mean if he’s having a problem, we shouldn’t take advantage of it,” the girl blushed.

“We haven’t done anything to him and this is Malfoy we’re talking about. What in the hell could be so bad with his life that he’d want to kick it? I don’t believe it,” Ron stated gruffly.

“That’s not the point, Ron,” Hermione reprimanded. “What if it’s true? You’ve been teasing him almost every time you see him, about him losing control of his magic. I think you should just give it a rest,” she finished, scowling at the red-head.

Ron crossed his arms and stared up at the ceiling, but gave a nod that said that, even though he wasn’t happy with it, he wouldn’t bother Malfoy anymore, at least for the time being.

Harry gave a huge yawn. “I think I’m heading off to bed,” he stated as a way to get out of answering anymore questions. “Goodnight guys.” The dark haired boy stood and stretched, leaving his two, now somber friends sitting on the sofa whispering with each other.

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Early in the morning Harry carefully snuck out from behind the portrait of the fat lady, being careful not to jar her awake. He quickly headed down from the seventh floor to

the first, going straight to the hospital wing. He was, of course, covered by his invisibility cloak so he wasn't worried about anyone seeing him and he was sure Madame Pomfrey would still be asleep, but just in case...

Opening the doors, he crept up to the bed Draco was lying in and just stood for a moment watching the sleeping boy. Harry was a bit shocked to find himself thinking that Draco was actually quite beautiful. A strange thing to think about another boy, but that didn't seem to change the fact that it was true. The early morning sunlight falling through the window seemed to suffuse around the blonde, making his skin glow almost bronze and highlighting his pale hair.

Draco sighed softly; his long, pale eyelashes fluttered before he rolled over onto his back and opened his eyes slowly. He laid there for a moment or two before sitting up and looking around, slightly concerned. He had a strange feeling that someone was watching him and then it dawned on him.

"Are you here, Potter?" he hissed out, peering around his bedside.

Harry popped off the cloak so his head came into view causing Draco to give a start of surprise. "Merlin, don't scare me like that," Draco blurted out. "And take that thing off, you look ridiculous as a disembodied head," he complained.

Harry chuckled, happy that Draco felt well enough to be so demanding. He removed his cloak and sat on the stiff backed chair beside the bed. "How are you feeling?" Harry asked conversationally.

"Fine, fine," Draco replied off-handedly. "Pomfrey said she'd let me leave today, but everyone thinks I tried to commit suicide so all the professors are going to be watching me like a hawk and I have to drink bloody cheering potions AND talk to someone about my feelings," Draco complained with a disgruntled expression, using his fingers to mimic quotation marks when he said the word „feelings“. "I don't know when I'll get a chance to work on those spells," the blonde finished dejectedly.

"You mean we, right?" Harry interjected with a grin.

Draco looked over to the dark haired boy, narrowing his eyes in contemplation. He supposed now was as good a time as any to ask his question. "Why did you kiss me?"

Harry's eyes widened in surprise, he wasn't expecting Draco to be so blunt and direct.

The timing of the question caught the Gryffindor boy off guard as well. "I...uh...ahh...um..." Harry stuttered.

Draco rolled his eyes. "It's not that hard of a question. You must have had some reason, or do you normally go around kissing boys out of the blue?"

"Because...because...I don't rightly know to tell you the truth," Harry finally managed to get out, scratching the back of his head in perplexed nervousness. "I just wanted to. Why did you kiss me back?" Harry asked turning the tables on the Slytherin.

Draco had actually thought of that and had an answer ready. "Because, I don't hate you anymore. I guess...I like you."

„Cool as a cucumber,“ Harry thought with awe, amazed at the blonde's forwardness and composure. "So I guess this means you like guys," the Gryffindor stated; rather obviously, Draco thought.

"Don't you?" Draco shot back with a smirk

"I didn't used to think so," Harry mumbled so Draco couldn't hear. "I guess I like you too," he added a bit louder, noticing the curious look he had received.

Draco looked out the window at the brightening day for a moment trying to collect his thoughts. It was definitely going to be harder to slip away unless he could convince the suicide squad, as he had dubbed Pomfrey, Snape and Dumbledore, into believing he was not going to try anything like that again.

„At least they won't tell father,“ the blonde sighed in relief. He had actually been hoping to leave earlier than the end of the school year, but it looked like now he might have to push his escape time back even further.

Another problem was in getting involved with Potter. As it was now, he was starting to think that maybe staying wouldn't be so bad, that maybe Harry could help him. The blonde knew that the two of them becoming...whatever, was going to cause more problems than they could probably deal with. It was certainly not the Slytherin thing to do, but Harry had seen the worst of Draco and still, here he was saying that he liked



him. Maybe it would be nice to have someone like him for himself. He certainly wouldn't have to worry about Potter being with him just to get something from him or his family, and he was sure the Gryffindor would be honest with his feelings.

"Do you really want to do this, Potter? I mean...you and me. You know we could never let anyone know, for the safety of us both. Your friends could turn on you and I'm sure Dumbledore is not going to want to risk me influencing you to turn into a dark wizard or something." Draco warned, trying to give Harry a way out.

"It's Harry," the dark haired boy grinned. "If we're going to be...friends, call me Harry." The-Boy-Who-Lived wasn't sure what to call their burgeoning relationship, but friends was a good place to start. "And I don't think you'd be able to turn me to the dark side, even if you wanted, which I don't think you do." He held his hand out to Draco.

The blonde boy looked at the offered hand knowing he could refuse to take it, the same as Harry had done to him those many years ago. Here was his way out and if he was smart, he wouldn't put his hand in the other boys.

*„Guess I'm not as smart as I thought,“* he berated himself as he tightly clasped Harry's hand.

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Draco became more and more irate as the morning dragged on. Madam Pomfrey, true to her word, had released him after breakfast and she had even escorted him to his first class. The problem now was that every teacher seemed to want to hover over him, asking him if he was alright in whispers that they didn't think the other students would overhear.

They were all trying to be so careful not to upset the young Malfoy that it was actually making Draco quite nervous and definitely driving him to distraction, even under the influence of a cheering potion. By the time lunch rolled around he was in a foul mood as he stomped off to the Great Hall with one of his teachers in tow.

By the time lunch was nearly over, it seemed every student in Hogwarts seemed to

know, or think they knew, what had happened, as the gossip from overhearing the

teachers circulated around the room. Even his own house mates weren't sure what to do about him. Most were just trying to avoid him to allay their feelings of awkwardness, but some seemed outright angry at him.

When a young Hufflepuff girl suddenly found herself in front of him as the students filed out to afternoon classes, she looked at him with such pity as she sidestepped away from him that Draco lost it.

"Suicide's not contagious, you know," he shot at her loudly, causing the other teens that were around him to stop and stare at the blonde. Before Draco could get a head of steam up and start hexing everyone, Professor Cox stepped forward.

"Off to classes, please," the Scot instructed the others. "Mr. Malfoy, I believe you have Defense against the Dark Arts with me. You may accompany me."

Draco clicked his mouth shut, his face blushing as he saw the other students flash him looks of condolence, pity or stares of outright disdain. He noticed Harry standing off with his two Gryffindor friends, looking like he wanted to say something and Draco gave his head a small shake of negation. The blonde dutifully followed his Professor with his head down and his visage scowling.

"He really did try to kill himself," Ron stated in amazement after the retreating forms of Professor Cox and Draco Malfoy. "He just admitted to it."

"Remember, Ron, we promised not to aggravate him," Hermione insisted.

Harry said nothing, but feelings of guilt at allowing Draco to go through this without setting everyone straight were gnawing at his insides. He hoped to be able to speak with the Slytherin after classes and Harry decided he'd try to get the blonde to at least confess that he had had some kind of accident and hadn't really tried to commit suicide, that all this was just a big misunderstanding.

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Harry waited outside Draco's last class of the day for the blonde teen. He had snuck out of his own class in order to meet the Slytherin. Soon the door to the classroom opened and students began pouring out. "Draco," Harry hissed from around the corner as the blonde walked by.

Harry waved his hand to get the boy to come over. Draco looked around and then slipped into the adjacent corridor with the dark haired boy. "We need to tell everyone something else," he stated. "Maybe you could say you had an accident and that the professors just took it wrong."

"Are you kidding?" Draco quipped crossly. "If I try to deny it now it will make it look more like I really did try to commit suicide. No one will believe me." Draco took a step closer and lowered his voice. "You still have the book, right?"

"Yeah, it's in my trunk in my room."

"We have to figure out a way to practice those spells away from prying eyes," the blonde mused out loud.

"Why don't we just forget about it for now?" Harry questioned. "Let all this stuff die down."

"I suppose we don't have much choice," Draco responded irritably, his grey eyes clouding.

"You're still planning on going, aren't you?" Harry questioned, surprised that the blonde leaving was really beginning to bother him.

"I don't know," Draco replied honestly. He looked up into the other boys amazing green eyes. "Looks like I can't leave right now anyways with all the teachers keeping watch. I'm just really concerned my father's going to find out about this," Draco admitted.

"Do you think he'd do anything?" Harry questioned, reaching out and taking Draco's hand to lend him some moral support.

Draco was surprised at the gesture, but he didn't remove his hand. "I don't know, he's so unpredictable, he may not even care at all." The blonde Slytherin felt a knot of emotion begin to form in his throat and he swallowed hard to get it to go away.

Harry felt a pang of sympathy for his now friend as he saw the pained expression flicker across his face. Harry squeezed the slim hand in an attempt at comfort, the two boys unconsciously moving closer together.

“Everything will settle down soon and when it does, we’ll practice the spells. If you decide to leave then you’ll be prepared and if you decide to stay, then we’ll both be ready to fight Voldemort.” Harry smiled confidently, his grin widening when Draco returned it with a small one of his own.

“You’re not going to give up on that, are you?” Draco questioned, feeling glad that someone wanted him around.

“Nope,” Harry continued to grin, stepping even closer to the blonde so that their foreheads were almost touching, gazing into those oh-so-stormy grey eyes.

“Mr. Malfoy, Mr. Potter,” Snape called out. He had been a bit late to meet with Draco after his last class and was more than surprised at the sight that greeted him when he had heard voices coming from this corridor. It almost looked like the two were about to engage in a kiss, much to Snape’s horror, but surely that couldn’t be right.

The two boys shot away from each other like an arrow flying from a tautly strung bow, both their faces flushing crimson at being caught by none other than the stoic Potions Professor.

Snape raised an eyebrow at the pair, resisting the urge to ridicule them for fear of depressing his godson. “We’re going to dinner,” he drawled, turning in a swirl of black robes, his manner stated that he expected the boys to follow.

The Potions Master decided on the way to the great hall that he needed to have a good stern talk with the Potter boy about this. He was not going to let anyone upset Draco, no matter if it was well intentioned or not.

Severus did not suspect Potter of machination against the blonde. More than likely it was that annoying Gryffindor desire to genuinely help another that was causing this transformation in the two boy’s previously non-existent relationship. Regardless, his godson was in a sensitive and exposed frame of mind at the moment and he wouldn’t have The-Boy-Who-Lived taking advantage of that.

Severus wondered if the old Headmaster had prodded Harry to become friends with Draco so they could get information about Lucius and the Death Eaters. He wouldn’t put it past the scheming old fart. The more he thought about it the more plausible the idea became until he had basically decided that Harry and Draco being friends was in no way going to proceed any further if he had any say in the matter.

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At the same time that dinner was almost finished in the Great Hall, Lucius Malfoy, after talking to the senior Crabbe, stormed from his private den, a murderous cloud of shamed anger whipping around him. Grabbing his cloak, and with an expression that would have melted though the toughest metal, he apparated out with a loud crack. Destination...Hogwarts.

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Draco was mutely finishing his dinner, and occasionally casting secret glances over to a certain Gryffindor, when fate decided to throw a complete hissy fit at him. The doors to the Great Hall opened with a loud groan and Lucius Malfoy stalked into the room like a man on a mission. He stared at his son with an open glower of such contempt, that the younger Malfoy's heart doubled in speed from fright.

Severus stopped arguing with Dumbledore and stood, looking down from the teachers table at the menacing blonde man. The Headmaster pushed his chair back and stood calmly as the whole room went deathly quiet.

"What can I do for you, Lucius?" Albus Dumbledore asked politely.

"I will be taking my son," Lucius responded primly, now glaring at the Headmaster. "Something that should have been brought to my attention by you," he stated icily, "I had to hear from other sources. It seems my son is not getting the proper care or supervision in this school and I intend to rectify that." This time his eyes locked on his sons and Draco was pinned like a butterfly on display.

"Let's go to my office to discuss this and..." Dumbledore didn't get a chance to finish as Lucius interrupted him angrily with a wave of his hand.

"No discussion. Draco, come with me now."

This was not meant as a request and Draco knew it. The blonde teen started to panic and his eyes darted around the room looking for a way to get past his father and make a run for it.

"Get up now," Lucius growled out again. "Do not disobey me."

Draco stood, fear causing his knees to shake, but then he felt a hand on his shoulder preventing him from going to his father.

Severus Snape, after descending from the staff table behind Draco, looked down at the confused teen and then boldly met the ice grey eyes of the father with his smoldering black ones. "Mr. Malfoy isn't going anywhere," he stated in the voice he used to inflict terror in his students hearts.

"Stay out of this, Severus. This is between me and *my* son." Lucius emphasized the word „my“ and gave the potions master a calculating look. "Even if you have always wanted this boy to be your son, he is not, and nothing you can do will change that." The older Malfoy then returned his icy gaze directly to Dumbledore. "None of you have any legal basis to stop me from taking my son home. So step aside," he brought his eyes back to Snape challengingly.

Severus had gripped Draco's shoulder almost painfully when Lucius had told all and sundry of his private wish and Draco looked up to the tall, pale man in surprise, a questioning, searching gaze in his eyes. Snape continued to lock wills with the elder Malfoy and then removed his wand from the pocket of his long robe, pointing it straight at the blonde Death Eater.

A collective gasp could be heard from all in the Great Hall and crying from some of the first years. Many students took the opportunity to try and exit the room in all haste, especially the ones surrounding the trio as Lucius Malfoy raised his wand towards their Potions Master.

"Gentlemen, stop this at once," McGonagall cried out, rising from her seat. "Albus, do something."

"Severus, lower your wand." Dumbledore ordered. "There is nothing I can do. He's right. We have no cause to stop him from removing Draco. The boy is a minor, living at home. We cannot interfere with his parental rights."

"As I thought," Lucius responded smugly, still keeping his wand trained on the tall Potions teacher. "Come here, Draco," he commanded the frightened teen.

"You can't just let him take him," Harry yelled out in distress. He had been sure the Headmaster wouldn't allow Lucius to take Draco away, but now he could see he had been far too naïve in his trust in the old man. The-Boy-Who-Lived leapt across the

tables until he was standing beside his Potions Professor, his wand also trained on the elder Malfoy. Everyone looked at Harry in disbelief. What did the boy think he was doing?

Draco's eyes widened in fear for his dark-haired friend's life and he finally found his voice. "Stop it. I'll be leaving with my father," he said with much more conviction than he felt. He sneered haughtily at his two would be rescuers. "He's right; I do not receive the care I should. That's being lavished on another student," he stated nastily and stared

pointedly straight on at Harry. "I would be better off with my father than here amidst the Potter fan club."

Snape removed his hand from the boy's shoulder, letting his wand hand lower to his side, feeling frustrated that he could do nothing. He had already placed himself in danger with this action. Lucius had Voldemort's ear and could definitely cause problems for him if he went any further.

Harry was stunned, why was Draco saying such things? He took a closer look at the boy that was now facing him and if it hadn't been for the fear he could see shining in the depths of his eyes he almost would have believed everything Draco had just said.

The blonde seemed to realize that Harry didn't believe him and he gave his head a quick shake, silently telling him to back off, that he would handle this himself.

Harry grudgingly complied for now, but he was definitely going to come up with something to rescue his new friend.

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The minute they apparated back to Malfoy Manor, Lucius rendered his son unconscious and carried his limp body down to the dungeons with a fierce look of determination on his face. He went down a few twisting corridors and entered a room only he knew about and bound his son to the wall with the shackles hanging there, after stripping him of his robes, shirt and shoes, leaving him only in his trousers. He paced back and forth waiting for Draco to awaken and take his punishment.

*„How dare that ungrateful brat do such a thing? No wizard has committed suicide in over three hundred and fifty years. I refuse to accept that my son, a Malfoy, would*

*ever consider such a thing. What will my lord think of me to have such a boy as a son? He will learn to not shame me again,*" Lucius muttered to himself. The more he thought of it and the more he remembered the condescending tone in Goyle Sr.'s voice as he told him what his so called son had done, as if Draco's attempt had been somehow his fault, the angrier Lucius became. Unwilling to wait for the younger Malfoy to come to, Lucius began his lesson. *„He'll wish he had succeeded in his endeavor by the time I'm done with him."*

Draco was shocked awake by horrendous pain. He screamed and thrashed wildly in a desperate attempt to escape the torture his agonized muscles were undergoing. He hazily realized that he was bound, ankles and wrists, to a stone wall. The damp coldness seeped into his scored back from where his body had scraped the rough stones again and again during his struggles. The flesh was being rubbed raw from his wrists and ankles as he pulled and twisted against the restraints and blood droplets spattered the floor below. He was faintly aware that he wasn't alone and he tried to focus through the blinding pain in order to catch a glimpse of his tormentor as his body arched in agony yet again. Just as he was about to slip into the welcoming arms of unconsciousness; the pain abruptly ceased.

Draco could hear himself whimpering, his voice harsh from screaming; his breath coming in ragged gasps as he hung limply from the wall. He opened eyes he hadn't known he had closed to see his father, Lucius Malfoy, standing before him with a grim expression on his face. His father's wand was pointed straight at the blonde boys sweating chest and clutched so tightly in the older man's hand that Draco was sure it would soon snap in two.

Lucius lowered his wand hand and came forward, stroking his son's cheek in a parody of caring. "Let this be a lesson to you, Draco," Lucius seethed furiously, his voice dripping sugary sweetness with an undercurrent of serrated knives. "A Malfoy never takes the easy way out. You will not disgrace me again."

Draco nodded furiously, unable to use his voice, willing to agree to anything if only this torment would end. Hot tears welled up in his pain-glazed eyes as he watched his father step back and lift his wand, hatred and malice gleaming from the striking steel-grey orbs so like his own. The stab of pain in Draco's heart was much more terrible and debilitating than the pain in his body and he sobbed pathetically before he was consumed again by unbearable anguish, realizing now that hell was the place he called home.



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Draco slowly came back to reality, his body twitching in shivering spasms that he was unable to control. He found himself lying on a bed, his head in his room as recognition of his surroundings hit him. It was night; he could see the darkness from the windows as he laid there in only his school pants, feeling barren and drained as he watched the first snow flurries of the year flutter past the closed panes.

Inside he felt nothing, as if his soul had been completely emptied from him. He vaguely wondered if this was what it felt like to receive the Dementor's kiss.

How long had his father had him under the Cruciatus curse? He had no idea. He only knew that everywhere ached, especially the hollow area deep inside his heart. He knew that a punishment would be forthcoming, but this - he never would have believed his father would hate him so much as to use an Unforgivable on him.

The blonde boy looked at his left arm and saw the new white cast on it, running from just below his elbow to just above his bruised and reddened wrist. He figured that his arm must have been broken yet again, more than likely from his violent struggles. As he looked at the cast, the thought that he had been put through all that pain and still his father wouldn't heal his damn arm, began to bother him more than the fact that his father had tortured him nearly into insanity and tears began to gather in the corners of his deadened eyes.

The blonde realized then and there that he didn't want to be the one that the battles always chose. „*Have I always been this confused inside?*“ he asked himself.

Thinking back on his past and all the things he had done, how utterly arrogant and rotten he had behaved, made Draco feel ashamed. His shame only increased when he realized how far he had been willing to go to get his father to acknowledge him, to make the man that hated him so fully, love him.

This was why he never knew what was worth fighting for, but he was beginning to understand why he felt like screaming most of the time.

„*Why do I instigate and say what I don't mean? How did I get this way? I know it's not alright.*“ Draco pondered his situation and the way that his future was unraveling, taking him along without his control. „*I'm breaking the habit,*“ he vowed. „*I'm breaking the habit, tonight!*“

Draco forced himself to rise, his body not wanting to co-operate with the signals his brain was trying to send it and he was soon in a sweat from the effort. He knew he had to get up, to compel himself to move. He had to get away before his father returned and decided he needed further punishment. He finally staggered over to the door and whined in frustration when he found it locked. He almost gave up then and there, but an image of Harry's face came to him and he struggled, gasping in large painful breaths, to make it over to the windows.

He was on the third floor, the ground a long way below, but he remembered there were quite a few bushes that would help soften his fall. With escape the only thing on his mind he opened the window and compelled his complaining and aching muscles to work so he could sit on the sill with his legs dangling outside. He pushed off with trembling hands, turning in the air so he could land on his right side and thereby protect his thrice broken left arm.

Shirtless and barefoot, Draco staggered into the cold October night, making noises in the back of his throat like an abused dog. His faltering and barely functioning form was slowly swallowed up in the darkness of the swirling snow and the shadows of the witching hour.

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The eccentric old lady sat inside her wagon, her little travelling home, her grandson outside driving the horses to their next destination. The aged woman was short, slightly chubby with long grey hair, her eyes clouded with thick cataracts, the sight gone from them for years now and her face lined with wrinkles. Rather than making her look like an ugly crone, they added character to her kindly face and others often trusted her immediately upon meeting her. She went by the name of Granny to everyone as no one knew her real name any longer. Sometimes Granny couldn't remember herself, it had been so long since anyone had called her by her given name.

She wore the long, colourful skirts of the gypsy, of which she was, one of the few remaining ones in this modern world if the truth be told. In their caravan was the rest of her family, her son, Sean of sixty years, his wife, Elizabeth and their two adult sons, William and George.

William, the eldest at forty three had one child; twenty two year old Cassandra who looked much like her Granny did when the old woman was the same age. The younger woman inherited the dark, cascading wavy hair and the brilliant blue eyes of her

grandmother. Cassandra's mother had left when the girl had been around the age of seven, not willing or able to continue the hard life of the travelling gypsy.

George was lighthearted and cheerful, carefree to the point of frivolity, which annoyed Granny. The man had just turned forty and had yet to grow up. He was so unlike his serious and contemplative older brother who could always be counted on.

The woman of indeterminate age snuggled the blankets around the already tightly swaddled unconscious blonde teenaged boy that William had found lying on the ground while he had been out hunting, although the local constabulary would have actually termed it poaching.

William had almost missed the lad as he had been hidden under a dusting of snow that covered his half naked body that was now lying in her small bed. Granny brushed the blonde hair back from the angelic face, feeling again the strange aura within the boy.

„*He has the gift,*“ Granny thought to herself. She too had what she called the gift, not like what she felt emanating off this young boy, but she could often tell what others were feeling and she had an eighty-five percent success rate when divining from the tarot. Sometimes she would have prophetic dreams.

Her tarot deck was a special item, made especially for her by Elizabeth. It had Braille markings on it so she would be able to read, something she genuinely enjoyed doing. She could also see auras, not in the physical sense, but in her minds eye and could sometimes influence them in others to heal their bodies or spirits. This young one, though, had quite the aura and she could feel it tingling against her old fingers as she continued to stroke the child's head.

Her gift had been a double edged sword to her, a blessing and a curse. Many sought out her services, wanting to know their futures. Others were fearful of her and would shun her or try to run her and her family off, often times quite violently. She had been glad that none of her immediate family had been burdened with the gift. She had not passed it down to any of them. In a way she felt relief they would not have to endure the prejudices she had had to, but it also made her sad that there wasn't another she could teach her skills to or understand how she felt at times.

She knew this boy was a run-away. From the looks of him he was more than likely running away from an abusive parent. „*Feels like the father,*“ the old woman spoke to

herself, letting her aura mix with this young one's, catching glimpses of stone cold, grey eyes set in a stern face. She wondered if like her, his gift had been cause for the abuse, the family not wanting to accept the unknown in their son.

"Poor child," she muttered softly. "You've had a hard life, Granny knows. Granny can feel your sadness and pain, but we'll make it all better," she soothed. The old woman smiled gently. It had been so long since anyone had really needed her that she had often felt quite useless and a burden for her family. Then out of the blue this wounded angel appeared; this boy on the cusp of manhood that needed her and her talents. "God has sent you to me to heal, my broken sparrow," she told Draco as she caressed his cheek. "Granny will take good care of you and give you your wings again."

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Lucius Malfoy angry face glared out of the fireplace in Dumbledore's office. His visage was full of rage and his hair was unaccustomly mussed. "Where is he?" Lucius demanded hotly when Dumbledore just stood there gazing at him in his infuriating way.

"Who?" Dumbledore asked, genuinely confused. He clasped his hands gently behind his back, trying to deal as patiently as he could with the blonde man.

"You know very well who you crafty old bastard! My son. You have him here, don't you?" Lucius was in a fury. He had dropped the unconscious Draco off in his room after their „lesson“ and then had been called by Voldemort. He had locked the doors to the boy's room upon leaving, not worrying about him escaping. The elder Malfoy was sure that his son would be out of it for quite a long time. Upon returning a few hours later he had been shocked and then furious to find the boys room empty, the window wide open. Any footprints that may have been made had been obliterated by the still falling snow.

Dumbledore stared into Lucius' eyes, the innocent twinkle gone from his eyes. "He is not here, nor do I know where he is."

Fawkes, being sensitive to his master's emotions, ruffled his feathers and gave the blonde man in the fireplace a piercing stare, snapping his beak into the air. Professor McGonagall and Harry walked in just as Lucius was finishing his conversation.

Lucius Malfoy ignored the two new people that had just entered. "I will have the

Department of Magical Law Enforcement do a thorough investigation into this and if you're holding him here, I will be sure to see you sent to Azkaban for kidnapping," Lucius threatened darkly.

"You can have them look all you want," Dumbledore stated. "Draco is not on Hogwarts premises."

Harry and Minerva gazed between the two men uncertainly. With a last withering glare, Lucius' face disappeared from the flames and they returned to their normal orange glow.

"Draco's missing?" Harry asked, concerned for his friend.

"So it would seem," Dumbledore agreed.

"Then we should find him. We've got to help him," Harry proclaimed urgently.

"We cannot interfere. I'm sorry Harry, Draco would have to come to us and ask for asylum before we could do anything for him."

Harry was astounded at his Headmaster and he could see his Head of House also agreed with the old man. "If it was me you'd do everything in your power to help," he accused the two older people.

"Draco has family," Minerva tried to explain gently, "and powerful alliances as well. We cannot interfere with them unless we have positive proof that there has been any wrong doing."

"You know it was his father that broke his arm," Harry stated angrily. "I'm sure that man beats Draco regularly, that's abuse isn't it? Can't we get him for that?"

"We need proof, not just gossip or innuendo and unless Draco comes forward himself and makes a complaint, there is very little we can do," Dumbledore told Harry gently. "I have put further wards on the castle. Lucius Malfoy can not enter if the young Mr. Malfoy wishes to seek our protection, but he is the one that must approach us. I'm sorry, but there is nothing more I can do," he finished firmly, letting Harry know that the subject was closed from further discussion.

Harry shut his mouth, tired of arguing with someone he knew wasn't going to help. As soon as he was done here he was going to head to the dungeons. There might just be another professor he could tell this to, another that might have a more vested interest to aid the young blonde.

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"Hey, hey, look who's opened their eyes," George grinned at the blonde teen as Draco blinked, not understanding where he was. It felt like the whole room was rocking back and forth making him feel quite disconcerted. Memory quickly rushed in and visions of himself struggling through the cold snow with absolutely no idea where he was going or what he was going to do ran through his mind. The last thing he remembered was how incredibly cold and tired he had been and that he had sat down on the ground to just rest for a little while and try to collect his thoughts.

He must have looked confused as the dark haired muggle gave a cheerful laugh and then explained his predicament.

"I'm George," he introduced himself cheerfully. "My brother William found you near frozen to death so he brought you here, to our caravan. We're gypsies," George finished proudly. "Right now you're in Granny's wagon and we're working our way to London."

Mention of the old woman brought her tottering over towards the bed. "Hello boy," she smiled gently. "George, get the lad something to eat and drink, make it hot. Tell William and the other's to stop so we can tend to our guest."

George bounded off towards the small wooden door in the side of the wagon and opened it, yelling up to his brother. "Granny says stop, your stray is awake."

Draco was a bit surprised when the gentle rocking lurched to a halt. He was still lying, wrapped tightly in many blankets, his eyes wide in apprehension even though he was a bit indignant about being called a stray.

"Rest easy, child," Granny said as she patted his head. "You're safe here with us." The old woman waited for Draco to respond. "What's your name, child?" she asked kindly.

Draco made to answer her, but his throat was so raw from all the screaming he had done and lying in the cold snow had not helped, that he could barely even croak.

“Can’t speak, eh?” Granny questioned. “Let me see if I can feel your name.” The old woman took his hand and concentrated. “Starts with an „M“...Ma...Mal...Oh dear, I’m not as good at this as I used to be,” she joked. “I think I’ll just call you Malachi, it means my angel and that’s just what you are,” she grinned at the shocked Draco.

*„She must be a witch,”* Draco thought. *„She almost got it right just by touching me.”* The old woman was still holding his hand and Draco reached out with his magic to feel hers.

“Ha ha ha ha,” Granny laughed. “That tickles.” She stared just left of Draco’s head. “We both have the gift,” she stated with a smile, “although yours is very strong, much stronger than mine at least. When you feel better I can help you understand it.”

Draco was twice surprised. It seemed this old witch had no idea she was one and the blonde Slytherin noticed that the woman was blind. *„She’s muggle born,”* he realized. *„But still, how could she not know she’s a witch? And how did she do that without a wand with such limited powers?”*

Draco decided that playing mute might be the best thing for now until he found out further information so he could decide what to do. He had left his home with only his pants and it was just now hitting him how absolutely vulnerable he was. He had no idea where he was, no money, no way to get any, no wand and no book. At the moment he was utterly defenseless should his father come looking for him. The smart thing to do would be to stay where he was and get his strength back. His father, or anyone else for that matter, would never think to look for him amongst a group of muggle gypsies.

George came back in with a whole group of people that surrounded the bed and began chatting to him all at once. There was a tall dark haired man that looked very much like George. This had to be the famous William who had rescued him in the forest. He was flanked by a grey haired, mustached older man. This was Sean, Williams and George’s father. Just behind him a thin sixtyish woman with her hair up in a bun. Even at her age Elizabeth still had a pretty face and lovely sea-green eyes, the same as her eldest, William. Coming around to the other side of the bed was a young, pretty woman with bright blue eyes and lustrous black hair. Draco couldn’t tell what color the old woman’s eyes were for sure, but he thought he saw a hint of that same blue under the whiteness of the cataracts.

“Step back, all of you,” Granny ordered. “You’re making the boy nervous.”

The group settled back, sitting on the various chairs or stools in the cozy wagon.

“He’s very beautiful,” Cassandra said. “He’s going to stick out quite a bit with our group. I assume we’re keeping him.”

Draco bristled, he wasn’t some damn stray puppy and he attempted to untangle himself from the blankets, his mouth moving to tell them as much, but no sound coming out. He was still weak from his ordeal and was further irritated to find he was beginning to feel light headed and shaky from trying to sit up.

“The poor dear’s a mute,” Elizabeth breathed out, her voice soft and gentle.

“His name is Malachi,” Granny informed the group and Draco made a huffing noise of indignation. He noticed that no one seemed surprised at the old woman’s declaration and it was probably better if these muggles didn’t know who he really was. Draco’s pride not letting him believe that even muggles wouldn’t know the name of Malfoy.

William popped outside to check on the food he had let sit over the fire he had started before going in to see the boy he had found in the snow. He prepared a plate for himself and Malachi and poured the hot water from the kettle into two cups for tea for them.

“The rest of you lot can help yourselves,” he stated with a smirk at his younger brother. “The stews all ready.”

The rest of the family went out, Elizabeth returning with a plate and tea made up for Granny.

“Eat, boy,” William demanded with a smile as he helped Draco sit up.

The young wizard stared at the plate on his lap as if it was going to bite him while his saviour passed the blonde a fork.

“It will put some meat on your bones, which I may say you’re sorely lacking,” William stated.

“Don’t pester the boy,” Elizabeth admonished her son which only made the man laugh. The woman handed Draco two white pills, which he looked at distrustfully. “It’s only Tylenol; it will make you feel better, dear. Your arm must hurt quite a bit.”



Draco downed the two tasteless pills, deciding to take a chance that they would help as his whole body just ached. He was surprised when, about twenty minutes later, his arm did feel better and the small aches and pains he had throughout his body disappeared. Another bonus was that his arm didn't break yet again with the use of the non-magical pain killers. He had to admit, the muggles were ingenious in a small sort of way.

Draco spent the rest of the evening until bedtime in the warmth of the wagon, surrounded by happy and cheerful muggles. He wasn't sure if he should be glad of that or not, feeling like he had stumbled into a muggle version of the Weasleys, but soon, even he realized that they were a very nice group and that he should be grateful that they took him in at all. He felt a pang of jealousy and loneliness as he witnessed the closeness of the entire clan and was just starting to feel sorry for himself when George came over and sat beside him on the bed, clamping an arm around his shoulders and ruffling his hair with his other hand. Elizabeth and Cassandra cleared away the dishes, smiling at the antics of the happy-go-lucky man.

"Welcome, Malachi, little cousin," he stated cheerfully. "Welcome to the family."

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The day after Draco's escape The Daily Prophet screamed the headline:

### ***MALFOY BOY SUSPECTED KIDNAPPED***

#### ***Distraught Parents Beg For Son***

*Then it went on to state how the worried Malfoy family were willing to pay any amount to have their precious son returned unharmed, pleading for the kidnappers to contact them with their demands. Lucius also asked the community to come forward with any tips as to the whereabouts of his boy. A huge reward was offered. Beside the article was last years school picture of Draco and below that a picture of Lucius looking very worried holding a weeping Narcissa Malfoy.*

"Do you believe this crap?" Harry growled, throwing the paper down on the table.

“Yeah,” Ron agreed. “Who’d want to kidnap the ferret?”

Harry sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. Last night he had pretty well barged into Professor Snape’s room demanding that he accompany Harry on a search for the blonde Slytherin. The Gryffindor had only stopped his frustrated ranting when he noticed Snape looked like he was going to burst a blood vessel.

“Don’t be so impudent, Mr. Potter,” Snape had warned him, stabbing his long finger into Harry’s chest. “And just where do you suggest we look for Mr. Malfoy?” he had sneered, looming over the smaller teen.

That had taken the wind out of Harry’s sails. He had no idea even where to start. He just wanted to do something to try to push back the fear that Lucius had killed his new friend.

Snape had softened his voice when it looked like Harry was going to start to cry; horrified that he might have to comfort The-Boy-Who-Lived. “I’ll keep my ears and eyes open, Mr. Potter. I do have some connections and I might be able to find something out. If I do, I’ll tell you,” he finished, looking more than relieved that Potter had gained control of his emotions at the utterance of this promise.

Snape had actually been very surprised and then touched at the way he could see that Harry truly cared for Draco. Perhaps he had been wrong in wanting the two of them apart. It certainly would be good for Draco to follow Potter rather than the Dark Lord or his father. Perhaps, just perhaps, he could put aside his distaste for James’ son. Just as Draco was not Lucius, Potter was not James either. Severus decided he’d have to at least give it further serious consideration as he shooed the boy out the door so he could check in with those contacts he had mentioned.

Harry came out of his remembrances to look at his two friends that were re-reading the article describing how Draco had disappeared from his family home in Wiltshire, where he had been recuperating from an illness, without a trace.

“I need to tell you guys something,” Harry caught the attention of his two friends and then began to inform them of what had really been going on. How Draco had wanted to run away from his abusive father and that he had not, in fact, tried to kill himself. He even told them how much the blonde had changed and that he and the Slytherin had started the beginnings of a friendship. He downplayed the depth of his feelings for the grey eyed teen and kept the fact that he had kissed the boy to himself though.

“Do you still have the book?” Hermione asked when Harry had finished his tale, a bit disappointed that her friend of many years hadn’t explained all this before.

“Friends? With Malfoy?” Ron asked, still stuck on that bit of information and impeding Harry from telling their witch friend that he did indeed still have the book.

“Ron,” Hermione reprimanded. “Stop interrupting.”

Harry took the two up to the dorm room and showed them the book that had been tucked into his trunk. “Why do you want it?” he asked.

“Maybe there’s a spell of some kind that could help us find Malfoy. I assume you told us all this so we could help you,” she said with a smile. Hermione was also curious as to the spells within it, even if at the same time a chill of excited anxiousness ran through her at what her bespectacled friend had briefly told her of them. The girl could never resist the promise of new information from a book, however, and cast aside her trepidations.

Harry was relieved that Hermione wanted to help and both of them looked at Ron who was sitting cross-legged on Harry’s bed.

The red-head threw up his hands. “I’m in,” he stated a bit grumpily. “But I’m not doing this for Malfoy. I just want to be able to bug him about having to rescue his ass.”

“Okay, then,” Hermione grinned, hopping up on the bed beside Ron and giving him a hug. “Let’s see what we can do. Pass me that book.”

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Draco finished his work and wiped the sweat from his brow. He was sure no one would ever recognize this new Draco Malfoy. Face tanned from being outside much of the time, he also sported a more muscular physique because he actually did manual labour of all things. And he even enjoyed it.

His appearance had been altered as well. Cassandra had feared that police would be looking for the minor aged boy, who definitely let them know, without words, that he did not want to be found. The girl had dyed his blonde locks a deep mahogany brown so he would blend in better with their group.

Draco had not been happy about covering his largest vanity and would still look ruefully at his reflection, self-consciously pushing his longer, darker hair behind his ears. With the addition of muggle thrift store clothing he looked nothing like his old self and he was sure that even if he had ran into his father, the man would have walked right on by him, ignoring the street urchin that he resembled.

Since being rescued by the gypsies in mid October, he had been accepted wholeheartedly into their family as one of their own. In fact, when they had met others like them, muggles who travelled from here to there, he had always been introduced as their mute cousin. At first he had been annoyed to have to pretend to be, not only related to these poor people, but also that he was a muggle. Slowly, however, he came to accept and then love them all. He often wished he really was their cousin and knew that if he never wanted to go back he could be happy living his life with these people.

Granny loved him dearly and, true to her word, had done her best with her meagre talents to help him with his gift.

After initially scoffing to himself at the old woman's ability to teach him anything, Draco had been surprised at how her teachings had actually helped him. He was now able to call up his magic at a seconds notice without having to do all the focusing exercises he had done in the past from the book and he was able to influence small objects with the force of his magic, moving pencils and lifting small stones by his will alone.

She taught him to control the magical outbursts that happened periodically when his emotions got the better of him. Granny had made him realize that it was this leaking of his talents that had given him the ability to use wandless magic in the first place, something that he knew was extremely difficult to do even for older, more experienced wizards. He had also been secretly practicing any spells that he remembered from the leather bound volume and was pleased at what he was able to do, even though they were still fairly simple spells.

The old lady also taught him divination, much better than Trelawney ever could think to, and he learned to read the tarot quite accurately.

"Remember the past is a fixed thing," the old lady had told him one day. "The future is always evolving so I never tell someone they are going to die, even if that is what I see in the cards. It is only one possibility out of tens of thousands. Our gift can help them to walk a different path and prevent the danger to them. We are not bound by fate, we can change the outcome." Draco had felt quite optimistic for his own future after that.

The best ability she had helped him with, as far as Draco was concerned, was the ability to heal, or the gift of „laying on of hands“ as Granny called it.

Draco had no idea it was something he could even do. He had found out quite by accident when he and Granny had been walking through one of the towns they frequently stopped at to get work or supplies.

Granny had pulled him off the path of the small park they had been walking through to kneel before a small bird. It had been definitely mauled by a cat, and although still alive, it wasn't going to be so for long. Granny had picked up the small animal and called for Draco to come and put his hands on the bird with hers.

“Concentrate Malachi, empty your mind and become one with this small creature. When you can feel where the animal is injured think of healing it. See in your mind the wounds come back together and the bones knit.”

Draco had complied, feeling somewhat foolish, but not willing to be rude to this old woman that he had begun to look up to, and dare he say, care for. In a matter of minutes, the bird fluttered and struggled in their combined grasp. Opening his hands, he was astounded to see the small creature fly away.

Granny had laughed joyfully when she felt the confusion and awe emanating from the boy with the use of her empathic talents. It was those same talents that had awakened her to the plight of the bird. “You have the gift of healing,” she informed him happily. “You're just full of surprises, Malachi. You truly are an angel.”

Draco had hugged the blind woman, feeling happy and a bit tearful over the whole incident.

Draco learned something from everyone. Sean acted as the father figure for the blonde and a disappointed look from him caused such guilt to flow through the teen that he did everything in his power to not have to endure it again.

Sean was tough, but fair, expecting Draco to hold up his end of chores and responsibilities as a member of the family. The older man gave praise and encouragement for botched attempts, of which there were many, and never once laid a hand on him when Draco was openly defiant. He never had to, those sad eyes bored deep into Draco's conscience and he was immediately shamed.

Elizabeth taught him the value of caring for others. Something he had always been told and believed was a weakness. The quiet woman always thought of others, buying things they all needed, like a good pair of boots for him before he had even had a chance to complain about it. She was always making or doing things for the others, knitting mittens, cooking, keeping the whole household in complete order so they never felt they lacked for anything.

Draco often wondered if she had some kind of empathic abilities like her mother-in-law and just didn't realize it. She always seemed to know what others were feeling and what to do if they felt upset or sad. She had helped Draco through some lonely nights when he had first been with them. He had missed the magical world, feeling quite out of his element with the muggles, but too afraid to return. And he also missed one person in particular. She was always there to sit with him to offer encouragement or just pass him a Kleenex when he needed it.

William and George treated Draco like a little brother and would often tease him in a friendly manner, making him angry in one moment and then happy in the next. The three would hang out together quite a bit, the two older men doing the talking as Draco had yet to say a word. He would have, but he was afraid to. Feeling like if he spoke, they would know he was not mute and that he had been fooling them. He was apprehensive that they would kick him out because of it. But more than that, he was worried that they would be disappointed in him.

William was the one that often found them their various odd jobs and Draco had been a house painter, a bus boy, a janitor, a stable hand and various other sundry employments to earn his share of the household finances when his cast had finally been removed at a free clinic. In this way he had learned quite a lot about the lives and inventions of muggles. This, at first, caused confusion in his mind from what he had been taught as a Pureblood wizard and what he was now learning as a muggle boy. He eventually decided to accept his own experiences as fact and discard his father's views totally, letting go of the final vestiges of his skewed and prejudicial thinking.

Since he usually worked with William or George, he had gotten quite a few odd looks when he first started working in the muggle world and they had covered for his ineptitude when he had problems with certain things. The two men had thought that Malachi's family must have not educated him and, in fact, George had asked him, on more than one occasion, just what planet he was from to not know how to use a phone or operate a pay toilet. Draco was now quite comfortable passing as a muggle and using the various devices they used. He even found himself feeling quite impressed with the muggles ingenuity and their technology.

Draco's favourite job had been working at the riding stable with the horses, and he now often helped William with their own half-Percherons. His father had kept horses at their manor, of course, but his horse had always been ready and waiting for him to ride. He never had to do anything with the animal and he found he thoroughly enjoyed brushing the large, gentle creatures and feeling their body heat in the cold winter mornings seeping into his chilled hands as he worked the brush across their hair. The glad feeling he got from the soft nickers of the animals as he came with their feed or the wonderful feeling of contentment from a job well done became to be worth more to Draco than he would have ever imagined.

Draco had seen himself in the rich, arrogant and haughty muggles that came to ride and take their lessons. Now he knew what it felt like to be on the other side of the coin. He certainly found that he had a new appreciation of the Weasley family. If he ever went back he would be sure to apologize to Ron for all the crappy comments he had made about his family and their lack of wealth.

George had introduced Draco to the muggle world of magic. The first time George had approached him with a mischievous smirk, asking him if he'd like to learn magic, the blonde teen had almost fainted. It turned out that what the cheerful man had been talking about was slight of hand, misdirection and illusion. Even though it wasn't real magic, Draco was fascinated at some of the tricks George performed, which left the former Slytherin pondering for days until George would break down and show him the simple method to it, laughing at how he had fooled his little cousin. Draco was a quick learner and the two of them worked as buskers from time to time when other jobs couldn't be easily found.

He found a new hobby with the aid of William. Draco had watched curiously one day as the quiet man had cut again and again at a piece of wood. Soon that small piece of wood turned into a little dog and Draco grinned happily when the man passed it to him with a smile, asking if he'd like to learn how to whittle as well.

Draco had quite a few cut fingers that Elizabeth would patiently mend, scolding her eldest son for allowing poor Malachi to be injured. Eventually he got the hang of it, although when he showed his first attempts at this type of folk art to the family, they usually guessed wrong as to what exactly they were looking at, much to the now brunette's chagrin.

Draco was slowly getting better with the knife and wood and was now working on a Christmas present for Granny. He was whittling out the entire family, piece by piece.

William would help him out from time to time and had been impressed with his adopted cousin's attention to detail. Draco wanted to make sure the blind woman would be able to tell who each person was by touch as she wouldn't be able to see them.

"You need to whittle yourself as well," William had told him, watching as Draco worked on one of the figures. "You're family too."

Draco had been quite touched and was now working on himself after finishing the Cassandra doll.

Cassandra had a bit of the criminal in her Draco soon came to find out and he imagined she would have made a fine Slytherin. Noticing how nimble Draco was with his fingers, she soon introduced him to the rush of the five finger discount and the art of pickpocketing. She always warned him to only go after those that looked like they had money to spare, equating what they were doing with the story of Robin Hood.

Draco didn't really like stealing. He was sure every one of his ancestors would be rolling in their graves to see a Malfoy stoop to theft, and the young woman seemed to understand his hesitancy. "It's only during the dry times," she explained. "We've got to eat too and when there's no work...well you do what you have to in order to provide for those you care about." After that it didn't seem to be that much of a big deal, especially since the boy had felt those dry days when his stomach had grumbled in complaint at not having something put in it for two or three days in a row.

Draco found he had acquired an appreciation for muggle food. Hotdogs were a favourite as well as Sloppy Joes that William was famous for making. The candies he snatched from time to time were good, even if they didn't hop about or change flavours at will and he became absolutely addicted to Coca-Cola. Granny had to put her foot down as to how much the boy was allowed to have. That had been after he had become so energetically hyper that even George couldn't keep up with him after he had consumed six bottles in a row.

It was now three days before Christmas and they had finally reached London. The ninety mile trip taking longer than it would have because of the time they would take to stop and work at the various towns and cities along the way; sometimes staying for almost a week until they had enough money to move on again.

Draco was looking forward to spending his first Christmas with his new family, understanding now what real family was. He still felt a pang of sadness at missing out on the great party that his mother would put on and all the excitement of the holiday



with his friends. He certainly wouldn't miss his father, but he and his mother had always spent some special time together when he went home. It was as if she was trying to make up for all the other times she had ignored him.

Draco wondered what Harry was doing and he hoped everyone was alright. He had finally come to realize what Harry, Dumbledore and the others had been talking about when they had said there should be a place for the muggle born wizards and witches in Hogwarts.

Looking at Granny, who had lived her long life not even knowing she was a witch and still she tried on her own to use that magic, made Draco feel quite foolish for his previous convictions. He had no idea how she had been passed over and hadn't received a letter from Hogwarts when she had been younger. It was probably something he would never know, but he wished in his heart she could have gone and learned to use her powers even better than now.

*„She probably wouldn't have had such a hard life if she had been there. There would have been people to support her when her family disowned her.“* He had felt connected with Granny when she had explained that her family had tossed her out into the streets at the tender age of ten, afraid she had been possessed by the devil. His own father, he had found out none too gently, could care less for him as well.

Granny never complained about it though, she had worked hard, met and fell in love with an exceptional man, God rest his soul. She had a wonderful son and daughter-in-law, grandchildren and a great-grand daughter. And, she said, she had Malachi, her treasured angel. Draco had been so moved by the old woman's kindness, faith and love for him that he had fallen to his knees in front of her and cried with his head in her lap.

That had been the true turning point for Draco and he made a decision to return to the wizarding world and fight on the side of light against the Dark Lord and his father, so that all who needed to could learn peacefully at Hogwarts. He was pondering exactly how to do that without alerting his father before he could get to the safety of the school and Dumbledore, when he received unexpected aid the very next day.

William, George, Cassandra and Draco went into the city to do last minute Christmas shopping. Each had tucked aside a small amount of money for the occasion from their various jobs. They split up on a street lined with stores, making arrangements to meet back outside the pet store in two hours.

Draco had just wandered by an electronics store, peeking in at the displays in the window when he noticed two identical heads of red hair. Fred and George Weasley were in the store, looking over the various gadgets. The twins were hoping to find something for their father, who absolutely adored any muggle device.

Draco was a bit stunned at first and stood gawking though the window before coming to his senses and opening the door. He wasn't sure if these two would help him, but he had to take a chance. Maybe, just maybe these two pranksters would be able to sneak him into Hogwarts to see the old Headmaster.

The twins found a battery operated toy robot that made lots of noise and had plenty of lights. They knew their father would have an immensely good time playing with it before deciding that he needed to take it apart to see how it worked. Of course, after that it would probably never work again without magical intervention, but then it would make their father happy. The pair walked right by the dark haired boy that was approaching them, not even giving him a second glance until he spoke up.

Draco hadn't spoken in so long that it felt odd to hear his own voice. "Fred and George Weasley," he called out to them. He had to clear his throat to make his voice audible.

Both older teens turned at the same time, looking curiously at this boy. Fred was the first to realize who they were looking at. "Draco Malfoy?" he questioned incredulously.

"No way," George added, bending down to stare at Draco, making the younger boy a bit nervous. George straightened back up a look of utter disbelief on his face. "Well fuck me! Where the hell have you been?" he asked. "Everyone thought you were kidnapped or dead."

"I'm very much alive and I'll explain everything, but I need your help," Draco stated, getting right to it. "Will you meet me somewhere later?"

The Weasley twins looked at each other and shrugged their shoulders at the same time. "Sure, why not," they replied in unison. Being two years ahead of the Slytherin and now being out of school running their joke shop, they really hadn't much cause to interact with him so weren't as predisposed to refusing his request, unlike their younger brother would have been. They were getting bored anyways and finding the missing Draco Malfoy was sure to lend some excitement into the day. Fred wondered, to himself mind you, if they would be able to collect that very substantial reward.

“I have some things to do right now,” Draco explained. “There’s a pub down that street,” he said pointing to the left. “I’ll meet you there at 7:00pm. Is that alright?”

“Sure,” agreed Fred. “But, hey, you’re a minor. They won’t let you in there.”

Draco smirked. He and George had helped the owner by thwarting a would-be robber from driving off with his beer truck. The pair had been out job hunting when the Slytherin had noticed a scruffy looking man skulking around.

Draco had pulled on George’s coat sleeve to get him to notice how the man was creeping towards the truck as the real driver went into the bar to have his order papers signed before unloading. George had looked at Draco as if giving a signal and the two of them had tackled the man before he could get into the truck to drive off with it. The owner had been so overjoyed at not losing his months order of liquor that not only had he given George a job, Draco not able to get one because of his age, but he had given both of them a standing invitation, no cover charge for life. The balding bar owner had then winked saying that he would allow the young Malachi one beer each time he stopped in, but no more.

“He’ll let me in, no worries,” Draco responded, making both red-heads raise their eyebrows in question. This was getting more interesting all the time.

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Draco was waiting patiently, sipping on his allotted one beer when the two red-heads came in, only a couple of minutes late. They ordered a round for themselves and then Draco explained everything that had happened to him starting with what went on over the summer. He didn’t explain that he had not tried to commit suicide, just glossing over that part of the story and not mentioning the wandless spell book at all. „*The fewer who know about that, the better,*” Draco decided.

Draco had wanted to ask after Harry, he had thought of him over the months he’d been in the muggle world, but imagined that the dark haired Gryffindor probably had time to rethink the friend’s thing, figuring the blonde and all his baggage just wasn’t worth it. Just as well, he supposed as he wasn’t sure how to explain why he’d be asking after The Boy-Who-Lived in the first place. Still, he hoped he’d get a chance to see Harry again.

“So now you can see why I want to go back and help if I can,” he told them as he finished his tale. The twins had been stunned into silence at some of the things Lucius had done to his own son. Breaking his arm and not letting magic heal it was bad enough, but to put him under Cruciatus was something else. What had further surprised them was that Draco, who they had always assumed to hate muggles, really seemed to care for the gypsy family that had taken him in.

“They’re more of a family to me than my own,” he had stated simply. “So will you help me?” he asked, changing the subject. “I can’t allow my father to know that I’m back, and it could be dangerous...”

He was interrupted by two sets of identical grins. “We’ll do it,” they chorused out together, looking forward to the cloak and dagger aspect of the adventure.

“We’ll have to tell our father though,” Fred explained. “Snape had Dumbledore get the Ministry involved in trying to find you, so our dad’s been participating in the search, he’ll need to be notified.”

“That’s fine,” Draco returned, suddenly feeling a hollow emptiness engulf him with the knowledge that he was going to have to leave people that he felt, for once, truly cared for him. “You two will have to explain things to the Vannes’s. They think I’m mute, remember. And you’ll have to call me Malachi in front of them.”

“Malachi?” George questioned.

“It’s the name Granny gave me and I don’t want her to hear my real one.” Draco was so proud that the old woman thought of him as her angel that he didn’t want her to hear his own name with its darker connotations. He never wanted to disappoint his mentor and teacher, his Granny.

“I have just the plan to sneak you in,” George added with a mischievous smirk. “I promise you, no one will know who you are.” Draco supposed he should have been more troubled by that comment and the wide grin the two were sharing, but he just couldn’t muster up enough emotion to care.

The two older teens finished their second order of beers and then the three left the pub, Draco leading them to his adopted family with a heavy heart so they could get this over with.

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Harry sat looking out the window of his room he always stayed in at the burrow. It was Christmas Eve day and still no sign or indication of the blonde Slytherin had been found.

Harry, Ron and Hermione had gone through the book on wandless magic from front to back and could find nothing to help them locate the missing blonde. Harry had looked hard at the Enslavement spell, wondering if he could use it to make Draco come back, but Ron and Hermione talked him out of it. They had been afraid as it so closely resembled the Unforgivable Curse, Imperio. At least he knew that Draco had probably not been killed by his father or the Dark Lord. Having a spy in the enemy camp was very useful.

Harry and Severus had worked together to try and find the missing Slytherin and they had formed, if not a friendship, then a better understanding and tolerance of each other. It was during the course of their search that Harry had found out Snape had been marked as a Death Eater. To allay his fears and anger, Severus had taken him to Dumbledore who had explained the situation as far as the Potions Master was concerned. The-Boy-Who-Lived had been initially suspicious, but after working with the man and seeing how much he truly cared for his godson, Harry had come to trust him, at least a little bit.

Even Severus had been mystified as to where Draco had disappeared to. Lucius' desire to find him and his ignorance of his son's whereabouts were genuine. The blonde man had many of the Death Eaters searching for the blonde and had increased the monetary amount of the reward without luck. Both Harry and Severus were thankful that the elder Malfoy seemed to be in the dark as much as they were.

So where was he? Harry had wracked his brain to try and remember if Draco had ever told him of where he wanted to run away to, all to no avail. He didn't even think that the blonde had thought that part of his plan out at that time and he sat, looking out over the expanse of snow, feeling frustrated and dejected. He really hoped that Draco was okay and not all alone hiding somewhere over the holidays.

"Harry, mate, come on," Ron yelled from the bottom of the stairs. "Mum wants to do some last minute shopping, if we go, maybe we can pick up some chocolate frogs from Honeydukes."

“I thought your mum already had everything she needed,” Harry called down, getting up from the window seat and heading to the stairs, deciding to put thoughts of the blonde out of his head so as not to cause problems for the Weasleys. They already worried and fussed over him enough as it was, and he didn’t want to ruin their Christmas with his moroseness.

“She did, but Fred and George have invited someone to come and stay with us so she says she needs to buy a bit more food.” Ron told his dark haired friend as he turned to find his jacket he had thrown somewhere. His mother had picked it up, but he was damned if he knew where she put it. “Mum,” he yelled poking his head back out of the closet he had been rooting through. “Where’s my coat?”

“So who’s coming?” Harry asked, passing Ron his dark brown wool jacket that had been hanging right in front of his nose.

“Don’t know. It’s some big secret or something,” Ron returned, a bit annoyed that his brother’s wouldn’t let him in on who their mysterious visitor was. He shrugged the jacket on and began to look for his boots. “Dad does though, but he won’t tell either. He just says it’s someone who needs our help. I don’t even think mum knows.”

“Must be something to do with the Ministry of Magic,” Harry postulated, knowing that Arthur worked there and that the twins would help him from time to time. The bespectacled boy slipped on his boots and coat as well.

“I guess,” Ron shrugged. “Well, we’ll find out soon enough I suppose. Fred and George are bringing them here by the end of the month.”

The two boys met Molly Weasley in front of the large fireplace in the living room and the three of them flooded to Hogsmeade.

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“Are you sure, Malachi?” Cassandra asked, glaring distrustfully at the twins that had just been speaking. The gypsy girl was standing just behind Draco with her hands on his shoulders, gripping him tightly as if the two red heads were going to snatch him away.

George and William were standing on either side of Draco. All three were looking quite formidable in their protective stance of their „cousin“ causing Fred and George to become quite nervous.

“These two aren’t forcing you, are they?” It was George who had asked this question.

Draco shook his head negatively. He knew he had to go, as much as he didn’t want to, but his wavering attitude was plain for his family to see in his body language and their anxiety grew.

“We aren’t going to harm Malf...Malachi,” Fred spoke up, raising his arms slightly, displaying his palms. His brother George had taken a step back preparing to defend himself as he felt the tension between themselves and these muggles thicken in the air.

“There have been a lot of people looking for him. I promise we’ll keep him safe,” Fred added calmly.

“It’s alright,” Granny said soothingly to her family as she approached the group that had been standing just in front of William’s and Cassandra’s wagon. “She ambled over and pushed her George aside with her cane to stand beside Draco. She gripped the young boys hand in her own. “You have something important to do, don’t you my angel?”

Draco nodded his head, even though she wouldn’t be able to see. The former Slytherin knew that Granny would be able to tell anyways.

The old woman smiled, placing her other hand on Draco’s cheek. “I know. It’s okay.” She turned to face her family that were still hovering by Draco. “These boys will not harm our Malachi. He has to leave us for awhile, but we’ll see him again. I’ve had a dream vision of this,” she finished firmly.

Fred and George were a bit astounded by the old woman. Draco had explained that she was a self taught witch, even though she thought of herself as no more than a simple muggle fortune teller. They were quite impressed with her small display of foresight.

“Malachi wants to stay until after Christmas, which is fine with us. We’ll come back on the twenty-eighth if that’s alright with you, to take him home.” Fred spoke up, addressing the old woman as she seemed to be the one in charge.

“He is home,” Cassandra ground out.

Draco turned and placed his hands on the young woman’s arms, trying by facial gestures to alleviate her irritation.

Cassandra sighed as she looked into his grey eyes. "You're always able to wrap me around your finger when you look like that." She then looked back to the pair of older teens. "Fine, but if we hear of anything happening to him, you'll have us to deal with."

Fred and George nodded and swallowed. They were certain they didn't want this muggle woman to be on their bad side anymore than she already was.

"Go on you lot," Granny shooed them away. "Let Malachi say goodbye to his friends for now." She patted the young Draco on his shoulder and then left with her family to go further into their camping area.

"Are you sure you want to leave?" George asked when the group had left. "You seem to have a good thing here, they really care about you."

"That's why I'm leaving," Draco responded. "Granny should have been able to come to Hogwarts. Anyone like her should. If things are going to change we all have to fight, right?"

"Right," Fred and George agreed in unison. "You've changed a lot, Draco," Fred stated just before he left. "We're glad to see you on our side."

Draco grinned. "I'm glad to be on the right side for a change."

The red-heads started to leave. "Leave it to us. We'll see you on the twenty-eighth."

Draco waved at the retreating pair, feeling sad and happy at the same time at his impending homecoming.

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"Wake up, Malachi," George stated cheerily, shaking the sleeping boy. "Its Christmas morning, are you going to sleep all day?"

Draco grunted and rubbed his eyes as he sat up in his bed. Ever since being found he had stayed with Granny in her wagon. William had bought a single bed from the Salvation Army and it was pushed up against the back wall with a curtain hanging in front of it to give the boy privacy.



“Come on,” George whined like a child, pulling at Draco’s arm. “Granny won’t let us open our presents unless you’re there too.”

Draco nodded with a grin and threw the blankets off, grabbing the thin blue robe off the floor and wrapping it around himself. He followed George out behind the curtain to find the rest of the family sitting in the living area around a small tree which they had all covered in decorations the night before.

Elizabeth handed him a cup of hot cocoa and Draco sat on the floor beside the chair that Granny was in. The morning was spent joyously opening the few presents they had either made or bought for each other.

Draco had received a large hunting knife from Sean. Elizabeth had made him a beautiful green cable knit sweater that fitted his body perfectly. William had bought him his own whittling kit which had many types of blades that could be inserted into the single handle, making one knife into many to get different cuts in the wood. He had received two decks of cards from George, one a normal deck that came with a book on card tricks, the other a nice set of tarot cards. Cassandra had given him a whole slew of mind-bending puzzles, stating they were to keep his mind sharp and his fingers nimble. Draco was engrossed in trying to figure out the Rubik’s cube as the others opened their presents.

The best gift he had received was from Granny and at first he felt bad in taking it. She had given him a set of rosary beads that had been handed down from her grandmother, to her mother, and then to her before her father had cast her out. Draco had tried to refuse at first, thinking that surely they should go to William, George or Cassandra. The old lady had been insistent, stating that she would give them to none other than her angel. The others had agreed and Draco now had the long beads looped around his neck so the solid silver crucifix rested in the center of his chest.

Everyone had been excited when Granny opened her gift from Malachi. She had tears of happiness running down her face as she held and fingered each figure that Draco had whittled, holding the one of him close to her heart. The whole family had ended up sniffing and laughing at their own emotions in the end.

Draco had wished he had had his money from his account in Gringotts so he could have bought better gifts for everyone, but they all seemed genuinely pleased with what he had gotten them.

For Sean he had bought a set of bells for the harness of his horses that he had been wanting. Elizabeth received a beautiful green and blue hair pin in the shape of a butterfly which she had put immediately into her bun. William and George had each been given a book from Draco. Williams was on the history of the Royal Family with which the older man had a secret obsession with, and George's was an expose of all the great illusions and escapes of Harry Houdini, detailing how each one was done. For Cassandra he had bought a gorgeous shawl that could be worn over the shoulders or around the waist. It was colored the blue of a summer sky and had silver threading though it and the fine tassels that dangled from it, making it shimmer and shine.

Cassandra loved it and tied it around her waist, doing a bit of an old gypsy dance, making it sway and glitter enticingly as she moved about. Everyone clapped when she was done and, after waiting for Draco to dress, they all went over to Sean's and Elizabeth's larger wagon to eat their Christmas dinner of turkey with all the fixings.

Warm from good food and being with family, the whole group relaxed around the portable propane heater, content and satisfied with the world. For Draco, it was the best Christmas that he had ever had in his entire sixteen years.

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Granny and Draco returned to their own trailer later that evening. The family had played music, sang and danced. Draco had even joined in on the muggle gypsy dance, something he never would have done in the past. He had tried his best to mimic Cassandra's cat like, sultry movements, stumbling at first to the laughter of everyone, but in the end he managed well and had been thoroughly enjoying himself.

"Before you go to bed I need to speak with you," Granny said before Draco could head behind his curtain. He came and sat at her feet as she dropped down into her favourite chair.

"I've known for awhile now that you would be leaving," she started. "I've had dream visions and I've done a tarot reading as well." The old woman lowered her blank eyes towards the teen with a serious expression. "I see you and another boy during a great battle with a very evil man. There is a danger of one or both of you being in mortal peril so you must be careful. In my vision it was as if someone was speaking to me. They said that „either must die at the hands of the other. Neither can live while the other survives.“

It seems to me that this unknown presence is trying to warn me that either you or your friend could die at the hands of this evil man and that neither you nor this other boy can live if that evil one survives.”

Draco sucked in a breath. He had heard something like this before. Hadn't this been part of the prophesy about Harry? He was shocked that he seemed to be involved with it as well. He wondered if Granny could be wrong in her interpretation of it. „*Of course Dumbledore could be just as wrong with his opinion as well,*” Draco thought, seeing as the source was Trelawney. Between the two, he decided to trust Granny's evaluation.

“You must defeat this man,” Granny stated, grabbing and gripping onto Draco's hands that had been on her lap. “I do not understand all of what I saw, but I do know that the world will change irrevocably if he succeeds in whatever he wants to do. Remember what I told you earlier, you can change the future. It's like a book that hasn't had anything written on its pages yet. I put an old gypsy protection charm on the rosary beads I gave you, but, please Malachi, please be careful.”

Draco squeezed the old woman's hands. “I will,” he whispered to her. Granny smiled, seemingly unconcerned with his miraculous ability to speak. Draco was under the impression that she probably knew all along that he could, but had allowed him to remain mute until he was ready.

“Good boy,” she praised, letting go of Draco's hands and patting him on the head. “Now go to bed, your Granny is tired.”

Draco stood and kissed her cheek before heading to the back of the wagon and his bed. He changed into a pair of flannel pajamas and cuddled under the quilt that had been made by Granny's own hands, playing with the crucifix around his neck. He couldn't be sure if any kind of spell the old woman did would really protect him or not, but it made him feel better knowing that she had tried. It was quite awhile before he was able to sleep.

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The morning of the twenty-eighth dawned bright and cold. Draco was outside blanketing the horses after feeding them, and their breath steamed into the air, foggy and thick. “I'll miss you guys,” he said softly as he patted the horses necks.

Ebony whuffled her nose against Draco's coat where he usually kept the sugar cubes he gave the mare. The blonde chuckled before sadness seeped into him as he gave her the sugar, not knowing when or if he'd ever be able to give it to her again.

Everyone at camp was quiet and melancholy as they went about their chores knowing that Draco would soon be leaving them. The blonde tried hard not to break down into tears in front of everyone and attempted to keep a cheery attitude.

After breakfast he went into his and Granny's wagon and began to pack the few things he had. William had given him an old, battered suitcase that had been sitting under his bed and Draco, with Elizabeth's help, was folding his clothing and placing it in the musty smelling case.

"Don't you forget to come back when you're done with whatever you need to do," Elizabeth stated softly. "We're going to miss you terribly." The woman turned her head so Draco wouldn't see the tears that were building in her eyes.

Draco pretended not to notice and turned away from her to put his puzzles that Cassandra had given him for Christmas into the case beside his whittling kit, allowing Elizabeth time to wipe her eyes with a small hanky she had in her dress pocket. Draco bit the inside of his cheek to stop the tears that were threatening to flow from his own eyes.

Draco took one last look around the wagon to make sure he hadn't forgotten anything and then made his way outside after pulling on the deer skin coat that Elizabeth had made from the hide of the deer that William had shot, pulling the fur collar up around his neck.

Fred and George were outside with the rest of the family waiting as Draco descended the two steps to stand before them. The men all hugged him and patted him on the back while the women hugged and kissed him goodbye. George handed him a case of 24 cans of Coca-Cola with a warning to not drink them all at once. Draco almost lost it completely when Granny swept him into her arms.

"Goodbye, my angel," she whispered into his ear. "I can see your wings, you're ready to fly." She gave him a kiss and wiped the wetness of her tears from her old face and smiled. "Now, no more crying," she admonished the group. "I told you that we'll see him again."

William passed Draco a piece of paper. "This is a map of all the places we stop at and when we're most likely to be there so when you come back you'll be able to find us."

Draco nodded and gave the man that had been like a brother to him a huge hug, placing the map in his coat pocket. The twins again promised to take good care of Malachi and then Draco was following after them despondently after giving his family a last wave farewell.

Fred and George pretended they didn't hear the sniffing as they walked towards London proper with Draco trailing along behind them, his head down, bangs covering his eyes. They were heading to Charing Cross Road and the muggle entrance for the Leaky Cauldron, but before getting there, they pulled Draco over towards a gas station bathroom.

"What are we doing here?" Draco asked, a bit worried at the mischievous grin that was on both boys faces.

"You need to change into your disguise," Fred stated.

"Yes, I think this will work wonderfully," George added, passing Draco a paper bag with some clothing inside it.

Draco opened the bag and looked in for a moment before lifting his head, a frown on his face. "This is a dress," he stated.

"Yes, exactly," George said with a huge grin. "No one will ever know it's you."

"No," Draco grouched. "I refuse to dress as a girl."

"It's a perfect disguise," Fred argued. "And besides, we're putting ourselves in jeopardy to sneak you back into the wizarding world."

"Yeah, and we're giving you a safe place to stay until you get to Hogwarts," George added.

Draco looked back into the bag again. He did suppose he owed these guys big time for doing this for him when he was sure that no one else probably would have. „*It's only for*

*a little while, no one will know,*” Draco thought to himself, swallowing his pride. “Okay, okay,” he sighed.

“There’s some makeup in the bottom of the bag too,” Fred informed Draco. George turned around so the Slytherin youth wouldn’t see him holding back his chuckling. “Do you want me to help you apply it?” Fred asked, doing a much better job at hiding his mirth than his brother was.

Draco scowled at George’s back. The red-head had both hands over his mouth and the younger teen could plainly hear him giggling.

“Merlin no,” Draco responded, putting his attention back on Fred. “You’ll have me looking like some harlot. I’ve seen my mother do it enough, I’m sure I can manage.”

“At least your hair is still dark so that will be a help,” Fred stated as he began to giggle as well, his twins now outright guffawing becoming infectious.

Draco stomped off into the bathroom, holding his head high as Fred joined his brother in his merriment. *„I swear when I get my wand back I’m going to spell them both with the Jelly Legs jinx,*” Draco vowed crossly as he pulled out the green dress. He held it up and gave it a good once over.

It actually wasn’t bad, it had long sleeves and it was his favourite color even if it was a bit paler than he liked. The front had a crew neck with silver lace covering the bodice. *„At least it will hide the fact that I have no breasts,*” Draco thought wryly.

He pulled off his sweater that Elizabeth had knitted for him and removed his pants. The twins had even provided him with pantyhose, which he carefully pulled on so as not to put a run in them. He slipped the dress over his head and was thankful that it draped down to just below his knees. He wouldn’t have put it past the twins to give him a minidress just to amuse themselves further.

He reached behind himself and pulled up the zipper, straightening and smoothing the dress down. He looked over the makeup that had been provided and chose a light sea foam green eye shadow and then applied a pale pink highlight. He used some black eyeliner and black mascara to finish the look. He was actually quite pleased; the colors complimented the grey of his eyes and the dress, the mascara and eyeliner making his smoky iris’s pop and his already long lashes even longer.

He rooted through the bag and found a couple of different colored lipsticks and discarded the darker colors for a neutral blush pink. The foundation and cheek blush were too dark for his pale skin coloration so he chose just to finish off with a light dusting of face powder.

He stood back and looked at himself in the dingy mirror of the cramped bathroom and was a bit surprised at his transformation. He really did look like a girl. „*A cute one too,*“ Draco thought with a smirk as he twirled around to see himself from all angles. He tucked his dark hair behind his ears and put his coat and boots back on. The coat was shorter than the dress and the boots took away from the whole effect, but there was nothing he could really do about it so it would have to do.

Draco exited the bathroom and grinned when he saw the twins eyes widen. “Uh...you look good,” Fred complimented, surprised at how beautiful Draco was. He really could pass as a girl, and quite easily. There really was no way that anyone would think this very pretty dark haired girl was Draco Malfoy.

George continued to stare with his mouth hanging open until Draco went over and used his finger under the red-heads chin to push his lower jaw closed.

“Shall we go, lads,” Draco smirked passing over the bag with his old clothing and his suitcase for the twins to carry. He laughed to himself when they both lugged his stuff with no complaints as the trio headed for The Leaky Cauldron. His amusement turned sour, though, when a small sports car whizzed by honking loudly.

“Hey there hot-stuff!!” the muggle passenger yelled out the window as the car sped by. Draco frowned indignantly as the two red-heads roared with laughter.

“Oh, honestly,” Draco retorted, his face flushing pink, causing Fred and George to laugh even louder. The blonde spun on his heel, stomping off down the street with the two amused and gleeful twins running to catch up.

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Harry, Ginny and Ron were in the main room of the Weasley’s seven story home, sitting at the dining table playing exploding snap when Fred and George walked in with their mysterious guest. The three friends all stared curiously at the newcomer as she stood just behind the twins looking around speculatively at her surroundings.

Harry had the distinct impression that he knew this person, a chord of familiarity sang through him as he took in the dark haired girl. He wracked his brains trying to figure out where he might have seen her before and kept coming up blank.

Ron just stared, dumbfounded. He had never seen such a pretty girl in his life. „*My brothers have all the luck,*“ he thought. „*By Merlin’s beard she’s hot.*“

Ginny stood from her seat, pushing her chair back and approached the silent girl. “Hi, my name’s Ginny. These two are Harry and Ron. Ron’s our brother,” she stated motioning to herself and her twin siblings.

Draco smiled and nodded to her, not trusting himself to speak. He couldn’t believe of all people, Harry Potter was here seeing him dressed like this. He would have preferred to just crawl into a hole in the ground and be covered over. He was so embarrassed that his face flushed pink.

Ginny giggled, taking the girl’s hand and pulling her over to the table where Ron and Harry stood up from their seats. “You’re a little shy, aren’t you?” the red headed girl joked kindly seeing the blush that ran across the dark haired girl’s cheeks, misinterpreting it.

Fred and George, as much as they were enjoying the show, had to find their father, who was probably in his study, and let him know that they had all arrived safely. “Why don’t you guys take care of our guest until we get back,” Fred drawled.

“Yes, Ron, be polite and take Malachi’s coat for her,” George ordered, trying hard not to laugh at the besotted expression on his younger brother’s face.

“Malachi, that’s a nice name,” Ron squeaked out self-consciously as he held out his hands for Draco’s coat.

Draco smiled in spite of everything. He could see Ron’s face beginning to turn red as the disguised Slytherin removed his coat and passed it over to him. He made sure to flutter his eyelashes cutely and give the redhead a shy, sweet smile, becoming even more amused as he saw Ron swallow hard and then flash a goofy grin.

“Here, have a seat,” Ron offered, pulling out the chair that was beside the one he had been sitting in previously, nonchalantly placing the palm of his hand on the middle of Draco’s back.



“Don’t I know you from somewhere?” Harry asked as he came closer, looking over the brunette before he could sit down.

Draco wasn’t sure if they were supposed to know it was him or not so he didn’t know what to do. Should he speak and let them know or just stay silent? He wished he had asked Fred or George. He was just about to say the hell with it and tell them when Harry sucked in a huge breath.

The-Boy-Who-Lived finally realized where he had seen those grey eyes before. There was only one person that had eyes the color of storm clouds and then he began to notice the shape of this „girls“ features, the contour of the cheekbones, the aquiline nose, the small smirk on her lips...”Draco?!” Harry squeaked out his question in complete and utter confusion.

Draco gave Harry a lop-sided grin and blushed again. “Hi, Harry,” he answered, lifting his hand and wagging his fingers at the boy.

“Malfoy?!” Ron and Ginny shouted together in astonishment. Ron immediately moved his hand and stepped back as if he’d been stung.

The peals of laughter coming from the spying twins that were peeking around the corner of the door jamb confirmed it. The missing Draco Malfoy was standing in the burrow dressed as a girl.

Ron turned to give chase to his older brothers who could be heard pounding up the stairs towards their fathers study, their uproarious laughter echoing behind them. “YOU BASTARDS!” he hollered up after them. “You two knew all along!” It was useless, the two had already disappeared. Ron turned back towards his found enemy, his eyes blazing and his face bright red from the bottom of his chin to the tips of his ears. “What the hell are you doing here?” he asked, mortified that he had thought that Malfoy, of all people, was hot.

“Your brothers kindly invited me,” Draco replied coolly with a smirk.

“Now, Ron, just calm down a bit,” Ginny said, getting her wits about her. „*How can he look so cute like that?*“ She pondered, raking her eyes unbelievably up and down the disguised boy, feeling the tiniest stab of jealousy.

“Calm down?! Calm down?!” Ron sputtered. He glowered disdainfully at Draco. “I always knew you were a ponce,” he ridiculed.

“Well at least I’m not the one that was flirting with me,” Draco responded, batting his eyelashes coquettishly again.

Harry jumped in front of Ron whose face had begun to glow an even darker and more dangerous shade of red that enveloped and hid his freckles. The dark haired teen held back his red headed friend’s fist that was about to smash into Draco’s face by grabbing his arm.

“Oh, my,” Molly Weasley stated as she looked over the commotion in the room with her husband Arthur and the twins following behind her.

Ron jerked himself away from Harry and his angry countenance shifted from Draco to his two brothers.

“Let’s all settle down shall we,” Arthur interjected noticing the tension in the room.

“I assume you all know that this is Draco Malfoy.” “Why is he dressed like that?”

Ginny asked.

“It’s a disguise,” Fred stated.

“A very good one,” George added innocently, not looking at Ron who was glaring daggers at him. “It was my idea,” he finished proudly.

“Why don’t we all sit down and let Mr. Malfoy explain everything to us,” Arthur stated pulling out a chair for himself. “If that’s alright with you,” he added, speaking to Draco.

“Fine with me, but it’s just Draco if you don’t mind,” the teen grumped as he sat down and gracefully crossed his legs, pulling the skirt of the dress over his knees.

“I’ll go make us some tea,” Molly offered. She started to head out into the kitchen, but not before giving Draco a second look. “It really is a good disguise,” she affirmed before leaving.

Draco moaned internally. He hoped he wasn't going to have to continue wearing a dress until he got to school even though he was happily thrilled that he had gotten under Ron Weasley's skin and the red-head couldn't do a thing about it.

"Where were you?" Harry asked wishing the Weasley's would have let Draco change first. „*That is just creepy how good looking a girl he makes,*“ the dark haired Gryffindor thought. „*And what did he do to his hair?*“ Harry wondered sorrowfully, finding himself disappointed at not seeing that blonde hair that he had secretly enjoyed looking at.

"I'll just start from the time my father showed up at school and I left with him," Draco stated, taking a sip of the hot tea Molly placed in front of him. He waited for her to seat herself comfortably and then went about explaining a shortened and censored version of how his father had punished him. He was surprised at how hard it was to actually speak of it. He was sure he was over that betrayal, but apparently he wasn't. He could feel his heart clench hollowly and he had to take a couple of deep breaths to settle his nerves as he continued.

His grieved demeanor gave way to a more upbeat mood as he talked about the muggle gypsies that had found and cared for him.

The others listened, enthralled as he told them about Granny and how she had taught herself to use her innate magical abilities. They laughed when he told them of his small adventures with George and William and they all felt how much Draco cared for all of these people that had adopted him into their family.

Harry, Ron and Ginny were surprised at the changes wrought in the boy speaking. Harry could tell that he had been truly happy with these people, he could see it in the animated way he spoke of them, the way his eyes shone, and the genuine smile that was on his face.

Even Ron seemed to have noticed and wasn't glaring angrily any longer at the Slytherin. The red-head seemed more confounded and uncertain as to what to do with this new Malfoy which didn't fit into his expectations any longer.

Ginny, who had hated Draco as much as any of the others because of his treatment to her long time crush and her brother, now looked at him as if he was a real person and not just Malfoy, future Death Eater and all around evil guy.

“I understand now that what my father and the Dark Lord are doing is wrong,” Draco stated as he finished his narrative. “I want to help, I don’t want them to win and I don’t want to run away anymore.” He said this last bit looking directly into Harry’s green eyes. Harry grinned proudly at Draco while Ginny and her mother were sniffing and wiping at the happy tears that were sneaking down their cheeks.

“We’ll make sure you get to Hogwarts safely,” Arthur promised. “Welcome aboard, Draco,” he smiled as he stood and offered his hand for the youth to shake.

Draco stood politely and grasped the proffered hand, giving it a firm shake. He suddenly felt very tired and just wanted them to show him a room with a bed he could lie on.

Molly seemed to immediately pick up on his exhaustion. “We’ll put Draco on the same floor as Harry,” she ordered. “He can take the room beside yours. Would you take him up, Harry?” she asked.

“Sure,” Harry answered, complying immediately. He wanted to get a chance to talk to Draco alone for a moment.

“Ronald, carry Draco’s bags up for him,” she told her youngest son. “And show him where the loo is.”

Ron didn’t look real happy about it, but he grunted his obedience and picked up the small suitcase and the paper bag that Draco had left just outside the door of the dining room when he had first come in with George and Fred. The three boys mounted the stairs, Harry in the lead with Ron right behind Draco.

“Show me the bathroom first,” Draco said over his shoulder to Ron. “I’d really like to change out of this outfit.” Mr. Weasley hadn’t told him he had to continue with the disguise so he was more than happy to be rid of it as soon as possible. He was feeling more than self conscious about his appearance, especially when he kept noticing the odd looks he was getting from, not only Harry, but Ron as well.

Ron flushed red and looked away with a scowl. “It’s down the hall, third door on the left,” he stated, trying his best not to look at Draco anymore. „*This is Draco Malfoy I’m looking at,*” repeated though his mind like a mantra, helping to stop his imagination from thinking strange thoughts.

“I can take him to his room when he’s done,” Harry offered. “I’ll meet you downstairs in a bit.”

Ron was more than happy to go, not even feeling guilty at leaving his friend alone with Draco. He still didn’t know if he cared anymore for the Slytherin than he had before, but he was willing to hold a truce. Just for the moment mind you, until he could see for himself if Malfoy was going to stick to his word and help their cause.

Draco took the bag from Ron that contained his clothing from earlier while Harry took the suitcase. “Your family is really nice,” Draco spoke out before Ron could leave. “I’ve been wrong about a lot of things. In how I thought and in what I’ve said in the past. I shouldn’t have said anything bad about your family and I’m sorry for that.”

“No, you shouldn’t have,” Ron agreed hiding his shock at the apology, not quite ready to forgive yet. The red-head walked back towards the stairs and then disappeared down them.

“He’ll come around. Ron’s really a nice guy,” Harry told Draco.

“Well, he didn’t curse me, so that’s a start,” Draco agreed with a slight grin.

Harry stood outside the bathroom waiting for Draco, feeling optimistic that things would work out regardless of what Voldemort had planned.

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Harry gawked as the blonde exited the bathroom carrying his disguise over his arm, his face washed free of the woman’s makeup, making him look more like the old Draco with the exception of the dark hair. The Slytherin was wearing a green cable knit sweater that enfolded snugly around his more muscular chest and a pair of old faded blue jeans with a rip in the knee that hugged his hips just right, his feet were bare.

“What?” Draco asked, noticing the flushed face and staring eyes of The-Boy-Who-Lived. “Is my zipper down or something?”

“N-no, it’s n-nothing,” Harry stammered, appreciating the view. *„How did he get muscles?? Merlin, he’s...he’s...gorgeous.”*

“I just never would have figured you to wear muggle clothing, is all,” Harry added to hide his more lecherous teenaged thoughts.

Draco shrugged his shoulders. “There wasn’t a robe store handy, so...” He flashed Harry a grin. “Weren’t you going to show me to my room?”

“Uh...yeah,” Harry answered, turning and leading the Slytherin towards the end of the hall.

After entering Draco took his suitcase from Harry and placed it on the seat of the small chair under the window, draping the disguise over the back of it. His cans of pop were in a cooler in the kitchen and he thought he might have to take a nip down and grab one later on.

Draco felt a bit strange being back and also saddened that he couldn’t share this with the Vanners. He knew George would have loved to find out there was real magic in the world and probably would have gotten on famously with Arthur.

They were a lot alike actually, Arthur with his fascination for anything muggle and George with that same fascination for anything magical. *„I can just picture the two of them comparing notes,”* Draco thought wistfully. Of course Granny would have been beloved by everyone and he was sure she could be happy here. *„Maybe she can come. Maybe they all can if we can defeat the Dark Lord.”*

“Are you alright?” Harry asked noticing how quite and pensive Draco had gotten. He was just standing there staring out the small window looking off into nowhere.

“Uh, yeah...Sorry,” Draco apologized. “I just miss them,” he stated sadly. He opened the suitcase and rummaged around until he found and pulled out a pair of white socks.

“You were really happy with them, weren’t you?” Harry asked. The-Boy-Who-Lived was sitting cross-legged on the small single bed that was against the wall watching as Draco came over and sat beside him, bending over and pulling on the socks.

“Yes, I was. To tell you the truth, it was the happiest time of my life.” Finished, Draco straightened and put his elbows on his knees, his head in his hands. “How could I have been so stupid for so long?” he asked no one in particular.

Harry kept quiet, knowing he really wasn't supposed to say anything, and really, what was there to say. Draco had been an asshole in the past. To lie and tell him he wasn't would have been insulting and disingenuous.

"Everything I was ever taught was all lies and I believed every word of it. I wish..." Draco drifted off, feelings of dejection and shame running deep within him.

Harry put his arm around Draco's shoulders. "You know the truth now, right? And you're going to stay and help us."

Draco smiled at the other boy. "Yeah, I really want to help." There was a moment of silence between the two as Harry grinned back at Draco. "Hey, Harry. Do you still have the book?"

"Yeah, it's in my trunk in my room, why?" Harry questioned as he removed his arm, letting his fingers trail across Draco's shoulders.

"I think we should still work on the spells, especially the ones using a partner," Draco stated remembering the vision Granny had told him about, with he and Harry fighting together.

Harry looked at him quizzically and Draco explained his reasoning and told him Granny's take on the prophesy. "What do you think?" Draco asked after he finished speaking. He leaned back on the bed, propping himself up with his elbows, letting his thigh touch Harry's knee.

"I don't know...we'll need to talk to Dumbledore about it, but it does make sense. I could never figure out what „either must die at the hands of the other“ and „neither can live while the other survives“ meant. Dumbledore seems to think it means that either I or Voldemort must kill the other and also that we might have become fused because of Voldemort's rebirth from my blood; that we are no longer separate entities and we cannot live as ourselves."

"That would explain the „neither can live while the other survives“ part, but how do you feel about that?" Draco asked, sitting back up to look quizzically into Harry's face. "Do you think you are fused with him?"

“I don’t feel as if I am. Merlin, I hope not,” Harry sighed out dejectedly, worried about how he his scar hurt when Voldemort had strong emotions and how the evil man could give him visions. “I don’t want to be any part of him.”

Now it was Draco’s turn to put his arm around Harry and the Slytherin gave him a quick, but firm hug. “Well that just means we’ll have to defeat him then, no matter what.”

Harry laughed softly, agreeing, then became serious again. “We might have to fight against your father, can you do that?”

Draco thought that one over for only a second before replying. “Definitely,” he stated firmly. He wondered if all his stuff, especially his wand was still back at school. He’d have to make sure to check when he got back.

Harry could see that Draco was earnest in his declaration and nodded. The bespectacled boy then grinned. “What the hell did you do to your hair?” he questioned to get their minds off what was coming and what they might have to do. He ruffled his fingers through the dark locks that now adorned the Slytherins head.

Draco blushed, his scalp tingling from the sensation of Harry’s fingers tickling though his hair. He smoothed down his tresses awkwardly. “Cassandra colored it so I wouldn’t stick out so much. It worked. When I first saw Fred and George they would have walked right by me if I hadn’t called out to them and it still took them a few minutes to figure out who I was.”

“I think I like it better blonde,” Harry intoned a bit teasingly. In fact the Gryffindor had always loved Draco’s hair, even when they had hated each other. He would never admit this to the blonde, but he always found it quite pretty really. Especially when the sunlight would shine off of it, making it appear as if his head was cloaked in a soft halo of gold as they chased after the snitch over the Quidditch pitch, trying to out-manuever each other in the air. Harry had always been able to find him because of those silver blonde locks, no matter where he was.

The-Boy-Who-Lived began to feel emboldened from all the touching and hugging they had been doing. In fact, Harry realized that they had been awkwardly flirting with each other, neither trying to be too obvious about it.



Draco felt like he was beginning to get lost in those vivid green eyes that were staring into him, through him. “Wh-what are you doing?” he whispered out as Harry leaned closer. The Slytherin teen was afraid that they’d be caught; his door was still wide open.

Harry stopped with his lips just millimeters from Draco’s. “I’m kissing you,” he whispered back and then pressed his lips gently to the unresisting ones of the other teen.

The-Boy-Who-Lived brought his left hand up to cup Draco’s cheek, caressing it delicately while his right had slid through those dyed locks. Harry gripped the back of his head and pulled the Slytherin’s lips more firmly onto his.

Draco let out a noise from the back of his throat that sounded like a half moan, half yelp, clutching the front of Harry’s robes when his former rival’s tongue invaded his open mouth. „*When did I open my mouth?*” Draco questioned himself with some amazement, and then decided that analyzing the kiss was not as good as just enjoying the feel of that warm tongue against his own.

Harry tasted that sweet, spicy chocolaty flavor again and sighed softly into the other boy’s mouth. He couldn’t believe how good this felt, how right, and he would have liked to have continued longer, but Draco pulled gently away from him.

“The doors wide open,” Draco whispered afraid someone, Ron really, would come upon them looking for Harry. “Someone might see us and this could cause problems for you.”

“You know,” Harry murmured, hugging his arms around Draco’s waist and looking deep into his grey eyes that had gone a shade darker than they were before, “it feels like anything could happen and it would be okay.”

Draco flushed half from embarrassment and half from an unfamiliar sense of joy that fluttered in his chest. “Don’t be so sappy,” he admonished, not able to stop the smile that was picking at the corners of his lips.

Harry laughed at him knowing that Draco was secretly pleased by what he had just heard. “Okay, your highness,” The-Boy-Who-Lived intoned jokingly. Harry let go of Draco and stood to give him a deep bow.

Draco smirked and then threw a pillow at him. The blonde turned brunette flopped back on the bed. “Merlin, I’m so tired. Do you think anyone would mind if I just slept for a bit?”

“Naw, I’ll come back up and get you when it’s time to eat,” Harry responding tossing the pillow back towards Draco. The Slytherin caught it and put it under his head.

“Thanks, Harry,” Draco said and then hesitated for a moment. “I didn’t know if you’d still want to be...friends or not.”

“I’d like to be maybe more than that,” Harry answered truthfully, if not a bit bashfully. “It seemed like we were starting something before all this happened, I’d like to see what.”

“You seem a little bold,” Draco stated a bit surprised. Normally the Gryffindor was awkwardly shy and would have been totally embarrassed to say such a thing. „*He’s changed too,*” Draco thought.

“I really missed you when you were gone. I was afraid I’d never see you again,” Harry confessed. “Now that you’re back...I don’t want to lose what might be a good thing for us both.”

Internally, the Gryffindor thought that since everyone seemed determined for him to act the hero, then that’s what he wanted to be for the blonde. That and more. Not because the Slytherin wanted it or expected it, but because Draco was the one person that needed a hero more than anyone he’d ever met in his whole life.

Harry walked over towards the door and then stopped, looking back. “I’m sorry about what your father did to you.”

Draco nodded, “me too,” he returned sadly.

Harry spent the next couple of hours hanging out with Ron, who still wasn’t overly joyful about the Slytherin boy being in his home.

“Dad says he’ll be going to Hogwarts soon. I think they’re going to floo over tomorrow,” Ron stated happily.

“You should give him a chance, Ron. He’s really not that bad,” Harry admonished. He hadn’t told his friend yet, but he planned on going with Draco when he left.

“I don’t trust him, Harry. How do you know this isn’t all some kind of trick?” Ron asked, frustration bleeding through his tone of voice.

“I don’t, but I believe him. I think his father’s been the cause for the way Draco behaved to us in the past. I think Lucius beat him, maybe even used Crucio on him more than what he’s told us.”

“Did he say that?” Ron questioned, still not totally convinced.

“No, he doesn’t talk much about what happened between him and his father. I wouldn’t put it past the bastard though. I mean everyone, including Lucius, thought he had tried to commit suicide and instead of helping him, he puts him under the Cruciatus curse!? Does that make sense to you?” Harry fumed. “If he hadn’t gotten away, I don’t know what would have happened to him.”

Ron sighed, knowing he might as well give it up for now. When Harry decided to protect someone, he was like a dog with a bone and he’d never let it go. “Alright, I’ll give him the benefit of the doubt, but only because you’re my best friend and I trust you.” The red-

head smirked and gave his brunette friend a friendly punch on the shoulder. “Although you’re judgement leaves something to be desired,” he joked.

Harry laughed and then the two of them went off to find something to do until Molly called them all for lunch.

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Harry stood looking down at the sleeping Slytherin. Molly had sent him up to wake the teen so they could all eat and discuss what was going to happen now. For a few moments he just watched as Draco slept on his side, both of his hands curled under his chin. „*He looks like a little kid,*” Harry mused to himself as he smiled gently down on his hopefully soon to be boyfriend.

Harry was so relieved to have the boy back. He couldn’t believe he could miss another person as much as he had missed Draco. He didn’t think he loved the other boy, but he

sure knew he liked him an awful lot and that feeling hadn't disappeared since he had gone missing.

As surprised as Harry was to find he had these sorts of feelings for another guy, he had decided that he wasn't going to let the opportunity pass for him to be happy. He always had to keep up the good fight and be dependable; save the world, be the hero. None of that made him truly happy and, in fact, scared him shitless.

He had learned a painful lesson with the death of his godfather Sirius, one that he still wasn't emotionally ready to accept and was terrified of watching any other people he cared about dying. He knew he couldn't save everyone, no matter how hard he tried. He was just sixteen for Merlin's sake. He didn't want to have to worry about evil wizards taking over the world and trying to kill him and all his friends. He didn't want to deal with being The-Boy-Who-Lived, supposedly the only one that could defeat Voldemort. He didn't want to be everyone's idol, never knowing if they really liked him as himself or as the seemingly invincible Harry Potter. He couldn't be lazy, selfish, afraid, cranky or angry with anyone, anyone except Draco.

Harry knew that with Draco he could really be who he was; he didn't have to put on a cheerful face if he didn't feel cheerful just to keep other's from worrying. He wouldn't have to pretend everything was alright. Draco wouldn't coddle him or worship him or keep things from him for his own good. Harry decided he was going to grab whatever this thing was between him and the blonde and hold on for dear life.

"Draco," Harry called out softly, not wanting to scare the Slytherin awake. The-Boy-Who-Lived crouched down beside the bed so he could look the other teen in the face. He put his hand on Draco's shoulder and gave him a gentle shake. "Hey, wake up."

"Uhh," Draco moaned as he blinked his eyes a couple of times, trying to comprehend where he was. He grinned sleepily as he finally came to enough to see beautiful dark green eyes smiling at him. "Hey, what time is it?" Draco asked groggily. He flipped over onto his back and let loose a huge yawn as he stretched.

Harry swallowed, his face heating up a bit as the sweater Draco was wearing hitched up, showing off his toned and flat stomach. "It's lunch time." The-Boy-Who-Lived answered, unable to take his eyes off the other boy's midriff. "Mrs. Weasley made something for us to eat and Mr. Weasley wants to talk to you about going to Hogwarts." Draco sat up in the bed, completely oblivious to Harry's appreciation of him as he pulled his sweater down. "Okay, lets go, I'm starved."

The two boys went downstairs and sat down at the table. Molly had put on quite a meal and at first there was no talking as everyone tucked in.

“I’ve contacted Dumbledore and explained to him what’s been going on,” Arthur spoke up. “He said it’s probably best to get you to Hogwarts as soon as possible, so we’ll be going by floo tomorrow morning.”

“We?” Draco questioned, finishing off the sandwich he’d been munching on.

“I’ll take you myself just in case. I’m sure no one knows you’re here other than those of us in this room and Dumbledore of course,” Arthur explained.

“What about Professor Snape?” Draco asked. He had wanted to see his godfather. He wanted to thank him for trying to stand up against his father for him when Lucius had taken him.

“Are you worried about him knowing you’re here?” Molly asked, misunderstanding Draco’s intent. She had never really cared for the Potions Master herself, even though her husband had told her he was a spy working for Dumbledore and therefore on their side. She had always found him to be too shifty for her liking. If he would betray one side what was to stop him from doing the same thing to their side?

“No, I’d like to see him,” Draco answered her. “I think he should know that I’m back.”

“Let’s discuss all that with Dumbledore when we see him tomorrow,” Arthur said evasively.

“I’d like to go too,” Harry piped up from his seat beside Draco.

“I’m sure Draco will be fine with Dumbledore,” Arthur stated, feeling somewhat surprised by Harry’s request. It seemed he wasn’t the only one, the rest of his family were giving The-Boy-Who-Lived curious glances as well.

“I need to speak to the Headmaster myself, and I might as well keep Draco company. There won’t be many at the school because of the break.”

“Are you sure Harry?” Ron questioned, giving Malfoy a glare. The red-head wasn’t happy about Harry leaving with the other boy. “I thought you were going to stay with us for the holidays.”

Draco said nothing, but he watched the exchange between the two friends. He really wanted Harry to come with him, but he certainly wasn’t going to ask in front of everyone.

“I really do have to talk to Dumbledore. I’ve had some dreams about Voldemort and I need to see what he has to say about them.” What Harry had just told everyone was true. Over the period of the few days before Draco had been found he had been having unsettling dreams where the Dark Lord was attacking Hogsmeade with hundreds and hundreds of death eaters. It didn’t feel like a vision to him, but it also didn’t feel like an ordinary nightmare either. He really did want Dumbledore’s opinion about them.

“Why didn’t you tell us?!” Ron cried out. The others nodded their agreement.

“I didn’t want to spoil the holiday,” Harry answered sheepishly. “I just figured I’d talk to Dumbledore when I got back, but since Draco’s going anyways I can tag along and talk to him before school starts. That’s okay, right?” Harry asked, knowing that the Weasley’s wouldn’t deny him.

“Of course it is, dear,” Molly interjected before her husband could respond.

Arthur nodded his consent to the disapproval of Ron and Ginny. “Be ready right after breakfast then,” the head of the Weasley family stated. “We’ll leave nice and early.”

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Draco was glad to finally be heading upstairs for the privacy of his room. He had spent the remainder of the day with Harry, Ginny and Ron and was mentally exhausted. The two Weasley siblings had been giving him glaring looks since „the incident“, which he ignored for the most part. It was when Ron decided that he needed to continually make some kind of snide remark or another that finally wore on Draco’s nerves. He couldn’t even escape to the relative relaxing company of Fred and George as they had left to go back to their small apartment over their shop after lunch.

It had all started innocently enough. Everyone seemed to be getting along well until Draco had sat beside Harry...in the seat that Ginny had just vacated when she went to get something for everyone to snack on.

The Slytherin had just wanted to show Harry a card trick he had learned from George when he had been with the Vanners, so had come over to sit beside the boy. The card trick was the main reason, but it wasn't the only basis for the move. He was also a tiny bit jealous of the attention that Ginny had been receiving from The-Boy-Who-Lived.

When the girl had returned, Draco had made no indication of vacating the coveted spot on the sofa, and Harry hadn't seemed to care as he didn't ask him to give Ginny her seat back, so he had just stayed put. That was when Ron started frowning, seeing as this slight had upset his sister. This was when the comments had begun.

At first Draco had parried insults back and forth with the red head, but this seemed to upset Harry so he had kept quiet, not wanting to make the brunette pick sides. Ron, however, didn't seem to have a clue and kept badgering and needling at him, seemingly getting worse when the Slytherin refused to rise to the bait any longer.

What had agitated Draco the most was when Ron had started going on and on about his father. How uncaring and manipulative the man was, and how some people, he wouldn't name any names, were just like him and wouldn't be changing anytime soon.

Harry had finally told Ron to give it a break, becoming irritated that his friend wasn't taking the many hints he had been giving to get him to either shut up or change the subject.

Draco had finally had enough when Ron had leaned over to his sister, when he knew Harry wouldn't hear, and whispered to her that Draco was such a bad person that his own father didn't even care for him. Even though the remark had been whispered between the two red headed siblings, Draco knew Ron had made sure that he would still hear it.

The comment had hurt, more than he thought it would have. He knew his father probably didn't love him, not like how he easily saw how Molly and Arthur loved their children. But to hear it put so bluntly made him feel that forgotten emptiness that he had always been able to hide behind his confidently arrogant, egotistical and cocky attitude.

Draco pretended that he hadn't overheard the commentary, and instead feigned fatigue, excusing himself from the large couch he had been sitting on and the game of cards that they had been playing.

"What's wrong?" Harry asked seeing the look of dismay on Draco's face as he stood to leave.

"I'm just tired. I'm going to bed," Draco replied shortly and stalked out of the room trying hard to swallow the large lump that had formed in his throat. He'd be damned if he was going to cry in front of the „Weasels“.

Draco closed his door and flopped onto the bed. He lay on his stomach, his arms embracing the pillow that his head was resting on, sniffing softly as tears stung his eyes. He had become so used to being accepted without question out in the muggle world that Ron and Ginny's distaste for him was hitting him hard and he had a sudden bout of home sickness for the small gypsy wagon and his muggle family.

Draco supposed he did deserve their hatred. He had never been pleasant to Ron and had ridiculed his family enough. Maybe this was just payback for that. It still didn't make him feel any better because, in truth, he really was sorry for what he had said and done in the past. He also hadn't meant to monopolize Harry, but the looks of adoration on Ginny's face had just irked Draco to the point that he just couldn't stand watching her around the dark haired boy any longer.

"Draco, can I come in?" Harry questioned from outside the door. He had his hand on the handle waiting for permission. The dark haired wizard was also fuming. He didn't know what had happened to make Draco seem so upset, but he was sure Ron had something to do with it. When Harry had asked his friend what had happened, Ron and Ginny both feigned innocence and ignorance.

"How would I know what's wrong with the ferret," Ron had grouched, crossing his arms defensively across his chest. Ginny had just shrugged her shoulders, but she wouldn't look Harry in the eye.

Harry sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose in front of his glasses. Not wanting to start an argument with his best friend and the youngest Weasley, he had walked off to find Draco, telling the two siblings he'd be back in a minute.



Draco rolled over and sat up, wiping at his eyes. "Sure, if you want," he answered once he thought he had gotten rid of the evidence of his self-pity.

Harry came in and closed the door behind him, walking over and sitting on the edge of the bed. He looked closely at Draco's face, seeing the reddened eyes. "What happened?" he asked.

"Nothing, it's not important," Draco responded.

"Did Ron say something to you?" Harry questioned.

"It's probably nothing that wasn't the truth," Draco replied with a sigh. "I don't think Weasley and I are going to be getting along with each other anytime soon."

Harry chewed on his bottom lip. He wanted to stand up for Draco, but he didn't want to alienate himself from someone who had been one of his best friends for the last six years either.

"Don't worry about it," Draco told him, wanting to sooth the anxiety in the bespectacled boy's green eyes. "I know, he's a good guy at heart, isn't that what you said? I'm sure we'll work it all out in time."

"So are you, Draco," Harry affirmed. "I'm sure everyone will see that, just like I do."

Draco grinned, suddenly feeling much better. "Still, I'll be glad to get to Hogwarts tomorrow, to be somewhere familiar. I'd like to practice with the book while We're there and I want to see if my stuff is still there."

"Your father took all your things from your dorm not long after you disappeared," Harry replied.

"Damn it," Draco cursed. "Now I even have my wand. Shit." He was glad that at least he had given Harry the book for safe keeping.

"Didn't you take your wand with you when you ran off?" Harry asked.

"I wasn't really thinking too clearly then," Draco responded sullenly, remembering at that time all that had been consuming his thoughts was the very real need to just get

away. He was certain that had he remained, he probably would have been dead by now, or worse, a Death Eater.

“Just buy another one,” Harry informed him, trying to be helpful.

Draco knew he probably wouldn’t be able to access his accounts at Gringotts, but maybe his father missed the stash of money he had hidden behind a loose brick in the wall beside his bed at Hogwarts. “I might be able to,” he said. “That is if I can get to Oleander’s.” The Slytherin wasn’t going to hold his breath on that small hope. He doubted very much he’d be able to show himself anywhere outside the safety of the school. It certainly wouldn’t be long before everyone, including his father, knew he was back and on the side of the light.

Draco stood and wandered over to the dresser looking in the mirror. “At least I don’t have to wear women’s clothing anymore,” he laughed self-depreciatingly. “I wish I could get rid of this dark hair though,” he sighed, running his hands through his darkened locks and sticking out his tongue at himself in the mirror.

“I was just getting used to you having dark hair like mine,” Harry laughed. He stood also and pulled his wand out of his pocket and approached the Slytherin boy. “Just stand still, I think I know a spell that might be able to get rid of the color for you.”

“Wait,” Draco exclaimed. “What kind of spell? Are you sure you know what you’re doing? I don’t want to become bald,” he stated nervously, taking a step back from the grinning Boy-Who-Lived and covering his head with his hands.

Hermione used it once, to get rid of footprints we made in the snow. I really think it will work to get rid of that color. Trust me,” Harry cajoled.

Draco swallowed nervously, not liking one bit the expression on Harry’s face. He looked far too happy about casting a spell on him and it was making the Slytherin quite jittery. He took a deep breath and stopped and stood his ground, although he did close his eyes as Harry cast the Obliteration charm. He didn’t feel any different so he opened his eyes and turned to look in the mirror. He was pleasantly surprised to see his hair was still all on his head and it was now the light blonde color it had been in the past.

“Hey, I’m me again,” the now blonde said with a grin, still slightly miffed at the other boy for scaring him. He stood a little straighter and flipped his shoulder length hair behind his ear, a small smirk of self appreciation on his lips.

Harry just rolled his eyes at the boy's vanity. "Think you can tear your eyes off yourself now?" the bespectacled boy taunted, having a hard time himself to stop from staring at the blonde's beauty.

"Umm," Draco drawled lazily. "Maybe I'll just let you do all the staring for me," he returned giving Harry a smoky look. He was soon snickering at the blush that flashed across his counterparts face. Draco, feeling more like his old self, decided to tease The-Boy-Who-Lived a bit, just to get even for the scare over his hair. Still giving Harry that come hither look, he reached down and took hold of the bottom edge of his sweater and pulled it off over his head baring his torso to hungry emerald eyes.

"Draco, what in the hell are you doing?" Harry asked, becoming flustered as he took in that pale body, all long-legged and slender muscled, standing only in his jeans.

"Getting ready for bed," Draco returned innocently. "I did say I was tired. Is there a problem?"

Harry felt as if he had just been hit by the Hogwarts Express at full steam, his teenaged hormones shooting sparks through his body as he stared unabashedly at the other boy. The jeans Draco was wearing were ones he had gotten from the goodwill store and they were slightly too big which caused them to hang just an inch lower than was decent, exposing the milky white jut of his hipbones.

Draco laughed merrily at the simple minded expression on the other boy's extremely red face and then his own expression turned wicked. He slowly moved his hands to the button on his pants, a satisfied, smug grin adorning his face as he watched Harry's reactions.

Harry began to feel far too hot all over as his gaze raked up and down Draco's body of its own violation stopping at the fingers playing with the metal button.

"Uh...I...I...better go," Harry finally stammered out, completely agitated, glad he was wearing his cousin's loose, baggy sweatpants so the blonde couldn't see the very real effect this little strip tease was having on him.

"I...I better go to bed as well, we do have an early m-morning," The Boy-Who-Lived stuttered, gaining control of his libido and tearing his eyes off the half dressed boy in front of him. It certainly wouldn't do to be caught grabbing and molesting his former

enemy by any of the occupants of the house. He scrabbled with his hand for the handle of the door that he had backed up to before he changed his mind about that decision.

Draco almost undid his resolve when he stuck out his bottom lip in a very sexy pout. "Oh well, I guess it can't be helped." The blonde then grinned, tilting his head cutely. "See you tomorrow, Harry," he purred out as he began to slowly pull down the zipper of his jeans.

Harry hurriedly pulled the door open and then closed it just as quickly, leaning his back against the wood. He wasn't sure if he was trying to prevent Draco from coming out and following him or preventing himself from reopening it and going back in. He was sure he heard the sound of throaty laughter muffled behind the door.

*„I am so going to get him for this,“* Harry grumbled to himself as he took a deep breath to calm his pounding heart and then adjusted other more intimate body parts that were throbbing away in time to his heavy heartbeats before he went back downstairs to say goodnight to Ron and Ginny.

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Arthur left to go back home after speaking momentarily to Dumbledore. He opened the door allowing the two boys to enter after him, giving them a cheery goodbye.

Draco and Harry sat silently in the twin chairs before the old Headmaster, waiting for him to say something after Draco's story.

"Well, it seems you've had an interesting disappearance," Dumbledore stated with a slight grin. He knew the boy had it in him to become a white wizard and not one with the dark, although it had been a close call. Even the old man, who was very good at reading others and their intentions, had been mystified at times as to what the Malfoy heir would eventually become. It seemed the father's brutal punishments had driven the boy away from him rather than cow him.

"Yes," Draco agreed. "So now I cast my lot in with you. I'll tell you all I know, which is not as much as you'd think being the son of one of the top Death Eaters. I wasn't in the inner circle by any means, but I heard and saw things, things I probably wasn't supposed to."

"Indeed," Professor Snape's voice drawled out from behind the two seated teens.

The two boys turned in their seats, surprised the Potions Professor had been able to sneak up behind them so casually, especially since he was hobbling in on a cane.

“I’m afraid Professor Snape has had a close call,” Dumbledore explained to the curious looks he was receiving from the two boys. “He’s lucky to have escaped with his life.” “It seems my loyalty to the Dark Lord was in question,” Snape finished cryptically. “Are you okay?” Draco questioned, a bit worriedly.

Snape nodded his head a small grin turning up the corners of his lips. “Yes, I have allayed his concerns,” the Potions Master stated. “And you, Draco? You seem well.”

“Yeah, for now I guess,” Draco replied.

“And on that note,” Dumbledore began, “we need to find Mr. Malfoy a place to stay. His return and the subsequent knowledge of his defection will certainly come to light, so staying in the Slytherin dorms would not be conducive to his safety.”

“He could stay in Gryffindor tower,” Harry offered.

Draco snorted. “I don’t think so, all that red clashes terribly with my skin tone.”

“That’s not feasible either,” Snape interjected. “I doubt if any in the tower would welcome Draco to their bosom. He would be in jeopardy there as well.”

Harry pulled a sour face, but seeing the reaction that the blonde had received at the Weasleys, especially from Ron, made him agree.

“Draco will be staying with me,” Snape informed them. “I can keep a close eye on him and his safety will be guaranteed.”

“But yours won’t,” Draco interjected. “I’m sure the Dark Lord, not to mention my father, will be totally thrilled that you have a traitor in your rooms.”

Snape gave the blonde boy a curious look. „*Since when has Draco cared about the safety of others over himself?*” he pondered.

“The boy is correct,” Dumbledore stated. “That’s why I’m giving you your own room here in the castle close to my own. But before that, and I really hate to do this, its just procedure you understand,” the Headmaster confided, reaching into his desk and pulling out a vial of Veritaserum. “I’ll need you to allow us to question you after you drink this.”

“You don’t trust him?” Harry questioned irritably. After all that Draco had been through, they thought he was lying.

“It’s not a matter of trust, Mr. Potter,” Snape interjected before Dumbledore could smooth over Harry’s ruffled feathers. “This way we will be certain that any information Draco tells us is accurate.”

“I’ll do it,” Draco stated before Harry could get carried away. “Just don’t worry about it, Potter.”

Harry was worried about it. What if Draco let slip about the book; the book he still had in his possession. He wanted to work with the spells as much as the blonde and he certainly didn’t want Dumbledore and Snape to find out about it and possibly take it away from them. The brunette grumbled under his breath, but sat back down.

“Wonderful,” Dumbledore smiled, pushing a glass bowl full of lemon drops towards the group on the other side of his desk. “We’ll have our little chat and then see you to your new quarters.”

Draco nodded, his forehead furrowed in a slight frown. He tried not to allow it to show, but he was a bit miffed at the thought that Dumbledore didn’t trust him. He sighed to himself; he might as well get this all over with so he could hopefully have some snogging time with Harry. He was quite pleased to find out he’d have his own private room.

Dumbledore politely asked Harry to step outside while he and Professor Snape questioned Draco. Harry, of course, complained. He hated that he wouldn’t get to hear what they were going to ask. He supposed he should be used to this, of course. The old man never seemed to want to let him in on all the facts.

Draco was distinctly more nervous without Harry at his side and he swallowed as the Headmaster passed the vial to the Potions Professor. Snape dripped two drops on Draco’s waiting tongue and then sat down beside the blonde teen. They questioned

Draco for nearly an hour and as the blonde had stated earlier, he really didn't know much about the Dark Lord's plans. He did, however, give them a good list of people he knew to be Death Eaters and some interesting information that even Snape wasn't even aware of.

Draco told them the Carrow's were actually the siblings Alecko and Amicus, which Snape and Dumbledore found surprising.

Dumbledore was stunned when Draco told them that Antonin Dolohov was the one who murdered Molly Weasley's brothers, Gideon and Fabian.

Both Snape and Dumbledore knew that Bellatrix and Barty Crouch Jr. were the ones that tortured Frank and Alice Longbottom into insanity, but what they didn't know was that Rodolphus and Rabastan Lestranger aided them. And still Draco had more to say.

"Travers, who killed the McKinnon's, has survived the first war," the teen told the two older men. "Augustus Rookwood has a twin brother named Algemon Rookwood who is a Death Eater."

Albus wasn't worried about Augustus; he was working on their side. Voldemort was under the impression that the man was working as a spy for him in the Department of Mysteries, but in fact, Augustus was working for the Order of the Phoenix. What concerned Dumbledore though was the fact that this twin brother could very well have taken the place of Augustus and some of the orders plans could have been getting back to Voldemort after all.

"Anything else, Draco," Dumbledore questioned, his mind reeling at the information and implications of what he was learning.

Here is where Draco gave the two professors a bit of a shock. "That guy who works in the Ministry of Magic, you know, he's the executioner for dangerous creatures."

"Yes," Dumbledore prodded, feeling a bit of concern well up within him. "Walden MacNair is his name."

"He's a Death Eater too."

"It seems like the Ministry of Magic is overrun with spies," Severus intoned seriously. He had often wondered why the Death Eaters seemed to know more than they should.

Dumbledore stood from behind his desk. "Thank you, Draco. That will be all for now. I'll have a house elf take you to your room. I need to speak with Professor Snape about what you have told us."

"I'll come shortly to help you settle in," Professor Snape told the youth.

Draco stood, glad that he was done. He now had an excruciating headache and he was terrified as to what would happen once his father found out what he had done. He was pleasantly surprised when he saw Harry waiting outside the office.

"How did everything go?" Harry questioned with concern. He noticed how pale Draco's face was.

"Okay, I guess," Draco responded dully.

"You don't look well," Harry said as he came over towards Draco. Just then a small house elf popped between the two.

"Master Malfoy is to follow Tully," the small being stated shyly.

The two teens followed the little creature down the corridor and then turned right down another long hallway. At the end of the hall the silent group stopped in front of a large portrait of metal clad knight, holding an impressive feathered helmet in his arm at his hip.

The little elf bowed before the intimidating portrait. "Chivalry," he stated in a quiet tone.

"Like that password would be hard to figure out," Draco drawled. The black haired Knight gave him a scowl.

"Master mustn't make fun of the Knight," Tully proclaimed. "He won't open if you don't show him the proper respect."

Harry hid his smile behind his hand as Draco bowed very correctly before the picture. The Knight must have been appeased as the large portrait swung sideways, opening the way in to the room.



Draco was pleasantly surprised. The room was larger than he thought it was going to be and in fact looked more like a small apartment than a room. It had a kitchenette off to the left and a small common room with a fireplace straight ahead. Long windows lined one wall looking out over the central courtyard of the school. After the elf left, the two boys wandered around.

They found a bath off the short hallway to the right of the living room which led to the one bedroom. The bathroom was small, but a nice six foot long iron tub sat in the middle of the room. The toilet and sink were just to the side of the tub behind a half wall made of etched glass.

The two boys closed the door to the bath and opened the one at the end of the hall. The bedroom looked cozy, with a bed similar to the one that Draco normally slept on, a large four poster with green curtains encircling it. The floor was covered in a plush off white carpet and an armoire with plenty of room for his clothing sat in the corner opposite of the door. A large window with heavy drapes was just behind the bed.

“This is bloody perfect,” Draco grinned. Finally something was going right for him and even his head had stopped aching.

Harry sat down on the plush sofa while Draco went into the kitchenette to check the cold box to see if anything was in it. There were some snacks and his case of pop. He grabbed two of the cokes and went and sat with Harry, passing one of the cold cans to the dark haired boy.

“Pop?” Harry questioned with raised eyebrows as he pulled the tab on the can. This had been something of a treat for him when he stayed with his aunt and uncle. Of course Dudley drank it all the time, but Harry had managed to sneak a can or two when his family wasn’t paying attention.

“I just love this stuff,” Draco replied, taking a nice long drink and sighing in contentment. “Best muggle invention ever.” He took a couple of more sips of his drink before lapsing into a thoughtful silence.

“Is something wrong?” Harry asked, seeing the saddened expression on the blondes face.

“I’m just...I don’t know. Worried I guess. I really have nowhere that I belong anymore,”

Draco replied despondently. He downed the rest of his drink and then leaned his head back on the sofa and closed his eyes. They soon popped open when he felt a tendril of his hair being brushed off his forehead by the other boy.

“I feel that way too sometimes,” Harry confessed. “My aunt and uncle never wanted me and even though I love being here in the magical world, there’s really nowhere That’s just mine and mine alone, you know?” Of course Harry did own 12 Grimmauld Place, but he had allowed the Order to continue to use it after the death of his godfather and he really didn’t consider it his.

Harry continued to play with the blonde hair looking into soft grey eyes. Draco’s breath hitched in his chest and he swallowed hard, heart suddenly hammering. “I guess maybe we could belong to each other,” he whispered, enjoying the grazing touches.

Harry leaned in and covered Draco’s mouth with his own and something intangible passed between them in that moment. The contact shocked the two of them at how unbelievably good it felt to be wanted and needed by another person. It hurt, it was exquisite; it made them both feel powerful and powerless at the same time.

There had always been a desperate ache buried deep down inside each boy; this yearning to be loved and held, to be touched intimately and with affection. For Harry, this craving was the unrequited longing of an orphan, never having known the love of his parents. Draco’s desire was fueled by the unreturned hungering of a lonely heart caused by his mother’s apathy and his father’s cruelty.

Harry pushed Draco back onto the sofa, one hand entangled in the soft blonde hair at the nape of the Slytherin’s neck, the other gripping and holding the smaller teen’s chin, falling to lie on top of him.

Draco’s arms went around The-Boy-Who-Lived’s waist, clutching frantically at the back of the red and gold robe as if he thought the Gryffindor was going to disappear. As Harry’s weight settled on top of him, pinning him to the cushions, Draco groaned into the dark haired boy’s mouth, his body trembling with sudden arousal, his mind not knowing what to do about it.

Harry was working on instinct and pulled the other boy’s head back by tugging on his hair so he could tease his lips over Draco’s jaw and neck, making him gasp. The taste of the blonde’s skin absorbed so much of his attention that he was suddenly surprised to find his fingers working at the opening of Draco’s pants, making the Slytherin’s abdominals twitch in interesting ways.

Harry suddenly jerked away from the enticing body beneath him when he heard a loud knock on the portrait door, blushing in sudden horror as he realized that he had been about to undress Draco, forgetting that Professor Snape was going to be checking in on the blonde.

Draco jumped up quickly from the sofa, frantically adjusting his clothing and trying to make the heat in his face go away before going over to open the door. He cast a glance back at the Gryffindor to make sure he looked presentable before he let the Potions Master in.

“Ah, you’re both here,” Snape drawled, not noticing the flustered expressions on the faces before him. “The elves have prepared lunch and will be bringing it here shortly. Headmaster Dumbledore has requested that I work with Mr. Potter on his Occlumency so I will meet you both in the potions lab after you’re done eating,” he told the two boys, looking less than pleased.

“What about Draco?” Harry questioned sulkily, unhappy to hear that he was going to have to have classes during the holiday break.

“He is quite adept in the art, so he may be able to give you pointers,” Snape returned disdainfully.

Draco snickered a bit at the look on Harry’s face, but stopped when he received an angry glare from the dark haired teen. “Anything to help,” he added innocently.

“Great,” Harry stated, allowing his displeasure to show.

Professor Snape ignored the teen’s bad manners and with a dignified swirl of his black robes, he turned towards the door. “The Headmaster will see you after our lesson so you may speak to him about your dreams that you mentioned earlier. Draco you will stay with me until Mr. Potter is done,” he stated as he looked back at the two boys.

“I don’t need a babysitter,” Draco complained. Now it was his turn to scowl at a sniggering Harry.

“Be that as it may, you will have someone with you at all times...Dumbledore’s orders.” Snape exited Draco’s rooms just as one of Hogwarts house elves popped in with a tray full of food.

“I wonder if that means I get to stay the night,” Harry pondered with a shy grin on his face.

Draco’s pout fell away. “Well you heard him; someone has to stay with me at all times.”

Harry swallowed at the look he was receiving from the blonde. “Let’s eat so we can get this day over with.”

“You’re not very subtle, are you?” Draco joked with a chuckle at the red stain that crept across the Gryffindor’s face.

“Shut-up, Draco.”

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“I wish to speak to you for a moment,” Snape stated after Harry had left to go see Dumbledore.

“What about?” Draco questioned a bit suspiciously. He was not happy to be delayed, he wanted to head over to his old room and get his money from behind the stone wall.

“This friendship you seem to have developed with Mr. Potter.”

Draco scowled at his professor and godfather. “I don’t see how that’s any of your business, to be honest.”

“Don’t be snide,” Severus admonished. “And don’t be stupid, either. Potter is a danger to himself and everyone around him. I would advise you to distance yourself from him.”

“I thought he was the wizarding world’s best bet to beat The Dark Lord?” Draco questioned.

“That’s just my point. Voldemort has plans for him,” Snape confided, his words making Draco’s spine tingle with fear. “He and The Dark Lord will do battle, make no mistake about that,” the Potions Master continued, knowing full well that the evil wizard would kill anyone who interfered with him and his vendetta against the dark haired teen.

“Anyone around him will be caught in the cross-fire and any emotional ties you may have with him are dangerous to yourself.”

“What if I don’t want to distance myself from him?”

“Where is this coming from, Draco?” Severus asked a bit incredulously. “You used to hate him. What’s changed that you would put yourself in danger for him?”

Draco blushed faintly. “Maybe I’m finding out we’re more alike than I thought,” he answered.

Severus snorted. “Don’t be misled, boy. Do you think Potter really cares what happens to you? If it comes between you and one of his friends, he’ll drop you in an instant.”

Draco frowned. His godfather had just hit on Draco’s major insecurity. Having been around Ron and Harry while he was at the Weasley’s home, he had seen how Harry had avoided confronting the red-head directly when he and Ron had had their spat. How The-Boy-Who-Lived had not wanted to say anything against the other Gryffindor.

Severus put his hand on Draco’s shoulder. “I know you feel like you are alone now and maybe that’s why you’ve developed an attachment to Potter. I just want you to be careful with who you give your trust to. Just think about it. I am here for you, Draco,” the Potions Master added. “I will protect you.”

“I...I’ll think about it,” Draco responded quietly. He understood that his godfather was just looking out for him and maybe he was right. Harry probably didn’t care for him the way he did for Ron or Hermione. That did only make sense after all. The three of them had been friends since Harry had started school here while he had been their enemy for that same amount of time.

*„Is this all just one-sided?“ Draco questioned himself as he headed to the Slytherin dorms. „Is it just me that wants us to be together? Would he drop me if his friends found out about us?“*

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Harry stomped out of Dumbledore’s office and headed for Draco’s rooms. *„What gives him the right to tell me who I can and cannot be friends with?“* the dark haired teen fumed. He was angry because the Headmaster had cautioned him about being friends with Draco.

Harry didn't understand it at all. „*I thought Dumbledore was on Draco's side now. What was all the bullshit about not getting too attached to anyone? Does he mean Ron and Hermione too? Trying to tell me it's for my own good. What the hell does he know about what's good for me?*“

“Chivalry,” Harry grumbled to the Knight when he reached the portrait.

Draco was sitting on the sofa in the living room drinking a coke in front the fire that had been lit earlier. He was pleased that he had been able to locate all the money he had previously stashed away, feeling relief that his father hadn't found it. “How'd it go?” he questioned the irate Gryffindor.

“Fine,” Harry stated curtly, dropping down on the comfortable couch beside the blonde. He glared into the fire, looking less than fine in Draco's opinion.

“What's wrong?” Draco questioned. “Didn't he know what you're dreams meant?”

“I don't even think he took them seriously, since I was sure they weren't a vision from Voldemort.” Harry complained, returning to his brooding silence.

“Is that what's got your knickers in a knot?” Draco questioned, hoping to lighten the mood a bit.

“He said I shouldn't get too close to you,” Harry responded in frustration.

“Funny...Snape said something along the same lines to me about you,” Draco told the bespectacled boy as he took another drink.

“He did?”

“Yep. Said if it came between me and one of your friends, you'd drop me quicker than a screaming mandrake.”

“That's not true, I wouldn't do that,” Harry argued, getting more upset.

“I'd understand you know,” Draco said softly, staring into the flickering flames. “I mean, they've been your friends for a long time, longer than you or I.”

“You and I are different. We’re not just friends. I want to be with you.” Harry informed him adamantly.

Draco felt his heart lighten a bit and turned his head to look at the other boy. “When we were younger I wanted your attention so badly and you never seemed to care. You gave everyone else a chance except me,” the blonde responded. “Why do you think I hated you so much?” Draco smiled softly. “I’m glad you’ve changed your mind since then, I’d like to be with you too.”

“So it’s official then,” Harry stated firmly.

“What’s official?” Draco questioned, not understanding what Harry was saying.

“I’m officially making you my boyfriend.”

“What? No flowers or love poems?” Draco joked, outwardly trying to remain cool and composed, but inwardly leaping for joy.

Harry gave Draco a questioning look. “Do you want flowers and love poems?” He really hadn’t considered that Draco might be into all that romantic stuff.

The blonde grinned. “Well, I wouldn’t say no to it, but being the boyfriend of the famous Harry Potter will have to do, for now.”

Harry blushed self-depreciably and smiled back for a moment before his happiness began to slide away. “It could be dangerous for you. I have to fight Voldemort and he might target you because of me.”

“I imagine Voldemort’s got it in for me already. You might be in danger because of me,” Draco retaliated, surprising himself by his ability to say that hateful name without shuddering. “And you could lose your friends over this as well.”

“I don’t think That’s likely to happen,” Harry responded. He felt that he and his other two companions had been through too much for the fact that he was gay and had taken Draco as his boyfriend to destroy their long friendship. “...Although...they are going to be pretty shocked when I tell them.”

“Well, just in case, I think I’ll make myself scarce when you do tell them,” Draco smirked. He finished his drink and stood to take the empty can out into the kitchen. “Can you stay in here with me?” he asked from behind the counter.

“No, Dumbledore had all my stuff taken over to Gryffindor tower,” Harry grumbled. “But at least We’re on the same floor. Why don’t you come over with me and I’ll show you around?” Harry offered. “I’ll give you your book back too; it’s still in my trunk.” “All right,” Draco agreed, secretly curious about the Gryffindor common room.

The two boys headed over to the tower and, after Harry said the proper password, entered into a large airy room decorated in red and gold. There were many windows, a nice large fireplace (although it didn’t have as ornate a mantelpiece as the Slytherin’s fireplace, Draco noticed), quite a few tables and lots of sumptuous, armchairs. Two stairways lead up, one to the boy’s dormitories, one to the girls.

“So what do you think?” Harry asked, his voice reflecting the pride he felt for his house’s rooms.

“It’s certainly open and less dark than my dormitory, but all this red and gold. Doesn’t it give you a headache?” Draco teased as they headed up to the boy’s sleeping quarters. “Green and silver are much more restful colors.”

“Give it a rest, Malfoy. You like it, you just don’t want to admit it,” Harry retorted from his position by his trunk. He jumped on his bed and passed the book to Draco who sat down beside him.

Draco began to flip through it until he found the section on working with a partner.

“Umm,” Harry started to say. He scratched the back of his head nervously, not sure how to proceed.

“What?” Draco asked suspiciously. Harry never looked this nervous unless he had done something stupid.

“I sort of let Ron and Hermione see the book,” the dark haired boy admitted.

“You...sort of...what?! What if they tell someone?” Draco complained.



“They won’t. They’re not like that.” Harry responded, coming to the aid of his friend’s integrity.

“Well, I hope you’re right,” Draco replied in a miffed tone.

“I only did it because I thought they might be able to help me use the book to find you. We were hoping that there’d be a spell in there that could help.”

Draco was placated by the thought of Harry wanting to find him so badly. “Well, no harm done I guess,” he grudgingly agreed. The blonde put his attention back onto the book and began to read the section he had opened it to.

“Did you read this?” Draco questioned after a few moments.

“What?” Harry asked, leaning over to see what had captured the Slytherin’s attention.

“It says here we have to do a bonding ceremony in order for our magic to work together.

“I really didn’t read the book that much,” Harry admitted. “Hermione did most of the reading.”

“I bet,” Draco drawled, rolling his eyes. “Looks simple enough,” the blonde mumbled to himself, turning back to the book and reading over the instructions. “Want to try it?” he asked after a few moments of reading.

“It says we have to share blood,” Harry read over Draco’s shoulder, nervous of the prospect.

“We don’t have to drink it, Potter,” Draco scoffed. “Do you have a knife or a dagger or something?”

“I have an all opening knife,” Harry admitted reluctantly. This had been a gift from his godfather Sirius.

“That’ll do, go get it.”

Harry went back over to his trunk and dug around until he found the knife. He pulled the blade from the handle and passed it over to Draco. “So what do we do?”

“It says here that we just have to share blood and magic. If I cut our hands and we put them together, that should work. We just need to call our magic out. Like this,” Draco explained, summoning his magic to his hands easily so a colourful aura encased his palm and fingers.

Harry reached out and gingerly touched the swirling colors. He jerked his fingers back as he felt the sensation of a static shock. “How do I do that?” he asked, a bit awed. “Didn’t you try any of this when I was gone?” Draco asked incredulously.

“Not really, like I said we really just read it over. When we couldn’t find anything to help us, I just tossed the book in my trunk.”

“Honestly,” Draco sighed, rolling his eyes again. “Gryffindors.” He let his magic fall back into his body and turned the book to the beginning. After about a half hour of working together, Harry was able to call his magic out and keep it visible. Both of the boys noticed that while Draco’s aura was paler and more contained, Harry’s swirled with brighter colors and the flashes of magic arced out like sun spots from time to time before falling back into the sparkling emanation.

“Okay, I’m going to cut you first,” Draco told Harry as he picked up the knife. “Don’t forget how to say the spell. Are you ready?”

Harry nodded, swallowing his nervousness. “I’m ready.”

Draco slashed the knife quickly against the palm of Harry’s hand, feeling the strong tingle of static charge as his skin touched the heavy magical aura of the brunette. He called forth his own aura and repeated the gesture on his own palm, hissing from the painful sting as blood welled up from the cut. The two boys clasped their wounded palms together and a strange vibrating sensation crawled up their arms, putting their teeth on edge.

“We are wandless. We will not be defeated. Our words and hands are mighty. I am invincible with you by my side,” Harry and Draco said in unison, looking into each other’s eyes as they knelt on the bed.

They were suddenly inundated by powerful muscle spasms, but both refused to release their grip on the other, riding the tide of sporadic pain until it ebbed. Then the visions started.

Harry could see a young Draco, not much older than five, being beaten into unconsciousness by his father. Draco saw a six year old Harry on his hands and knees cleaning the kitchen floor while a large man stood over him, yelling; back to Draco, being whipped this time because Hermione Granger had gotten higher marks than him in Arithmancy. It was Harry now, just before he found out about Hogwarts, his cousin Dudley punching him while his aunt and uncle, who were in the room, did nothing; Draco at age twelve, again being beaten, this time with his father's cane after Harry had tricked Lucius into releasing Dobby from servitude, the elder Malfoy taking out his anger on his son.

Back and forth it went, Draco shackled to a wall under Cruciatus, the same curse being used on Harry as he hung bound from a tombstone. Draco being thrown in a small dark box, the lid being locked on him; Harry in a small dark closet, the door clicking shut.

Harry saw the gentleness and kindness that had been forced to hide deep inside Draco's heart, the blonde afraid to let it show, afraid of the weakness his father told him he had. Draco saw the spot of darkness inside Harry from his contact with the Dark Lord, felt the fear that The-Boy-Who-Lived felt because he was unsure if he could overcome it.

Vision after vision appeared randomly to both teens, their souls talking and resonating with each others until they knew everything about the other's life, all the pain, misery and loneliness each had endured. Then it was over.

Harry opened his eyes to see Draco looking back at him with a wide shocked gaze, one he knew he was mirroring. Both were astounded by the many similarities in their lives.

Harry couldn't believe what a vile person Lucius was and was further amazed that Draco had grown up in that environment. Having Lucius Malfoy as a role model, a hero...it was unthinkable. The Gryffindor now knew, all the nasty things that the blonde had said and done were beaten into him by his father and his anger was only a self-protective device. Hurt them before they could hurt you.

Draco was thinking very much along the same lines. Anger and sadness burned through him at the apathy and hatred that had been shown to Harry by his muggle family. They were supposed to protect him, love him, but they had instead treated him little better than a house elf, and worse, had tried to break his wonderful spirit.

Their magical aura's had now combined and were encircling them, entwining until neither knew where one began and the other ended. The brunette's nerves were

thrumming in a most pleasant way, all the pain gone as the spell worked towards completion.

Suddenly, Draco grabbed Harry's free wrist with his unwounded hand, pushing him against the wall behind him and trapping him forcefully in place.

The air huffed out of Harry's lungs as his back met the unrelenting brick and he fell from his knees onto his backside on the bed. He was about to demand that Draco release him until he saw the hungry look in those sultry grey eyes. The-Boy-Who-Lived licked his lips, staring at the blonde as if he were made of candy, even though he felt like he was the one about to be eaten.

Draco locked his lips forcefully onto Harry's mouth, kissing hot and hard; stealing kisses like he was trying to steal the snitch.

Harry responded by freeing his hands and reaching out to grab fistfuls of blonde locks, shoving his tongue into the Slytherin's mouth. Before Draco could register what hit him, Harry had wrapped an arm around Draco's waist and twisted them, so that he and the blonde fell back and off the bed onto the floor.

Draco jumped up, pulling Harry up by his tie, intent on dragging him back towards the bed, but the brunette attacked again. This time the Gryffindor slammed the Slytherin teen's body against the opposite wall, the dark haired wizard's knuckles scaping on the stone as it was trapped between the wall and the other boy's waist.

Harry caught the blonde's bottom lip between his teeth and Draco moaned and fisted the bespectacled boy's robes as all control left him. The Gryffindor, too, was losing control, the final bit of the spell working over them, urging them to complete the bond in a way as old as time.

Draco tugged on Harry's belt, pulling the raven haired boy's body forward and flush against his own, lifting his leg and pressing his thigh against the Gryffindor's waist.

Warning bells began to ring in the back of Harry's mind as he reached down and grabbed that thigh, holding it in place.

"Draco," Harry growled out in warning. Everything was just happening all too fast and the thought that they should stop this before things really got out of hand flashed through his mind. The only response he got from the overly hormonal and excited

blonde was for Draco to throw his arms around Harry's neck and try to pull himself up. The way the Slytherin's body wiggled against his proved to be too inciting, and Harry buried his nose into Draco's neck and moaned.

Draco nuzzled the side of Harry's neck, nipping gently with his teeth and thrust his hips against the Gryffindor.

Harry groaned as their bodies met and he bucked his hips in response, sliding his hand up the back of Draco's thigh and grabbing a handful of Slytherin ass.

Emboldened by Harry's actions, Draco hopped up, wrapping his legs around Harry's waist and began to kiss him with wild abandon.

Harry moved unsteadily over to the bed, trying not to drop the blonde boy he was carrying, returning those hot kisses feverently before allowing the two of them to topple over onto the mused blankets. Their lips were still locked together, hands grabbing, pulling and ripping at clothing.

"Hey, Harry...." Ron stopped speaking, looking on in open-mouthed shock as he witnessed what was happening on the bed in front of him. "What the fuck?!" he finally managed to choke out.

Harry and Draco were brought back to their senses as if they had been thrown into the icy water of the lake in winter and they scrambled away from each other as fast as they could.

"R-Ron," Harry stuttered. "What are you doing here?"

Draco scooted back on the bed trying to simultaneously zip his pants back up and pull his shirt down.

Ron took in the disheveled appearance of both boys, the red flushed faces, Harry's skewed glasses, the blood smears, and then he noticed the drops of blood falling from his friend's hand as he pulled his Gryffindor robe closed over his torn shirt. The book on wandless magic was lying conspicuously on the bed.

"What did he do?" Ron questioned accusingly.

“No-nothing,” Harry started to say. “Ron, look. You don’t understand,” he tried, seeing his friends face take on that distinctive angry red hue.

“I do understand, he’s put you under some kind of spell. I knew he couldn’t be trusted!” Ron yelled. He began to approach the bed, his movements jerky and angry, staring furiously at the blonde as he pulled his wand out of his robe pocket.

Draco hastily tried to crawl off the bed so he could get out of the way of the hex he knew that was going to be coming his way, but his legs tangled in the blankets causing him to fall onto the floor. He landed on his back, his hands outstretched towards the red-head trying to defend himself.

“Diffindo!” Ron yelled as he waved his wand, before Harry could stop him. A thin, deep gash appeared on Draco’s face and blood poured down his cheek.

“Constriction,” Draco called back, clenching his fist, his eyes flashing angrily.

Ron suddenly could barely move and found it increasingly difficult to breath as invisible bonds began to squeeze him tighter and tighter like a reticulated python.

“Draco! Stop! Let him go!” Harry cried out as he heard his red-haired friend try and gasp in breath.

Draco relented slightly, trying to control the anger within himself so he wouldn’t kill the freckled Gryffindor. “Tell him to stop trying to kill me then,” he fumed.

“Ron, you have to calm down, okay?” Harry pleaded to his friend who was trying to squirm free of the grip Draco’s spell had him under, glad that he was at least able to take air into his lungs again.

“What’s he done to you, Harry? Can’t you see he’s meddled with your mind or something?” Ron complained after taking in a few mouthfuls of blessed oxygen.

“No, he hasn’t. We’re...well, We’re sort of going out,” Harry blushed.

“You...you’re going out?!” Ron couldn’t believe his ears and he stopped struggling, staring at his best friend in the world as if he had gone completely mad. “Why would you

want to go out with...that?" he asked disgustedly, jerking his head towards Draco. "And you like girls, Harry," he told the dark haired Gryffindor pointedly as if he was explaining a basic truth to a small child, unwilling to believe that the fellow who had shared his room and seen him in the shower could possibly like guys that way.

"I do, but I also like guys too," Harry tried to explain. "At least I like this guy anyway," he amended.

Draco fully released Ron from the spell, but eyed him distrustfully as the red head continued to gape at Harry.

"What about the blood? I can see he's hurt you, look at your hand," Ron argued.

"Look at his hand too, Ron. We were trying to work on one of the spells in the book and it called for a bit of blood magic."

"Merlin, listen to yourself, Harry," Ron whined. "You're doing blood magic now and why in the hell would that make you have a...a...snogging session with Malfoy?"

Harry's face flushed. This was not the way he had wanted to break the news to his best friend. "I'm not sure," Harry mumbled, still feeling like he had to have the blonde's body against his. Looking at Draco's dilated pupils, it seemed the Slytherin was feeling the same way.

Ron seemed to come to a decision in his mind. "I'm going to have to tell Dumbledore. There is no way that this is normal. Hermione and I tried to tell you before not to muck around with that book and now look at you."

"Don't do that, Ron," Harry stated, beginning to get angry. Why did everyone think they had to treat him like a child, as if he couldn't make his own decisions or didn't know what he was doing? He was getting damned tired of it.

"I'm sorry, mate, but this is for your own good," Ron returned firmly.

"Bind." Draco mumbled the wandless spell as Ron turned to leave.

The red-head found himself falling forwards, unable to move, and he let out a loud squawk as his body hit the floor.

“Draco,” Harry admonished.

“Well, what do you suggest, Potter?” Draco returned huffily, wiping at the blood dripping down from his still bleeding cheek with the back of his hand. “We can’t let him run off to Dumbledore, especially after what the old man said during his little chat with you.

„*Dammit*,“ Harry cursed to himself. “Ron just cool down, I’m still the same guy here,” he said as he kneeled by his inert friend. “You know we could use these spells to defeat Voldemort. That’s why I’m trying to learn them. I told you all about this before, when we were looking through the book.”

Ron was past listening at the moment. He was pissed that Harry wasn’t helping him get free of the stupid ferret’s hex and he just couldn’t come to grips with the fact that his friend, his Harry, liked the blonde Slytherin who had always caused them grief. “If you don’t make him let me go, I swear I’ll never speak to you again, Harry,” Ron threatened in a low voice.

“Come on Ron, don’t be that way. Let’s just talk it over, okay?”

“It’s either me or him. Make your choice,” Ron glared up from his prone position on the floor, staring straight into Harry’s green eyes so the brunette would know that he was dead serious about this.

Harry’s eyes widened in surprise, Ron had never spoken to him in such a tone before. “Let him go, Draco,” Harry commanded quietly after momentarily taking in the determination on his friend’s face.

“I don’t think...” Draco started to say.

“Let him go, now,” Harry ordered in a harsher than intended voice, interrupting the blonde.

Draco narrowed his eyes and tightened his lips in anger, but did as his new boyfriend demanded. He crossed his arms over his chest defensively and waited to see what was going to happen next. „*Let him take care of it if he wants to. I’m not going to help him again*,“ Draco thought to himself sulkily.

Ron rose stiffly from the floor, ignoring Harry’s outstretched hand.



“Let’s just sit down and talk for a bit,” Harry said softly.

Ron was still mad, but since he was feeling a bit smug that Harry had taken his side over Malfoy’s, acquiesced. “Okay, but I still might go to Dumbledore,” he stated.

Harry turned to face Draco and felt his stomach drop at the expression of anger and hurt on his blonde boyfriend’s face. “I’ll talk to you later, okay?” he asked quietly, gently hinting that Draco should leave.

Draco stuck his nose in the air, grabbed the book and brushed past both Gryffindors, heading to his rooms. He didn’t look back. When he entered his quiet apartment he went directly to the bathroom. Looking at himself in the mirror, he cleaned and healed the cuts on his cheek and hand dejectedly. „*Guess Snape was right after all.*”

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“Ron just let me explain, okay?” Harry asked as he sat on his bed, his best friend sitting beside him with his arms crossed and a frown on his face.

“Explain? How could you not tell me you were gay?” Ron asked, his eyes betraying the hurt he felt.

“I really didn’t know, and it’s not like I didn’t have other things on my mind,” Harry returned, scratching the back of his head nervously. “I don’t think I’m gay. I still like girls and Draco’s the only guy I really think about in that way, so I don’t know. Maybe I’m bi. Does it really make a difference to you?”

“No, I guess not,” Ron capitulated sulkily after a moment’s thought. “It’s just surprising That’s all. But That’s not the real problem here,” Ron replied. “You’re putting way too much faith in Malfoy. I still think he’s done something to you with that damn book. How could you suddenly like him so much after all the shit he’s put us through? I just don’t understand it.”

“He’s not like we thought he was and he’s had a hard time of it,” Harry responded softly.

“His father beat him all the time, over everything. When I beat him in Quidditch, when Hermione got higher marks and probably just for the hell of it.”

“And you believed him when he told you this?” Ron asked, still unconvinced.

“He didn’t tell me, I saw it, kind of like visions. We did a bonding spell from the book.” Harry blushed remembering exactly how he had wanted to bond with the blonde. “It’s like I could see his entire life. His father was always at him since the time he was just a little kid, always drilling it into his head that anyone who wasn’t a pure blood was worthless. And all the beatings he endured, it’s no wonder he felt like he had to do better than us, that we were his enemies.”

Ron had uncrossed his arms and Harry could see his friend was at least considering the possibility that there might be more to Draco than he thought. “Okay, I’ll give you that he had a hard life, but so did you and you’re not an asshole,” Ron quipped.

“Well I had Dumbledore, Hagrid, you and Hermione. I had a lot of good people that were willing to be there for me. Draco didn’t have that. All he had was his family and their twisted views shoved down his throat. Merlin, do you know how jealous he is of you? He sees the great family you have, all the love you receive, That’s all he’s really wanted. That’s why he always gave you such a hard time about your family. He was so angry that his family didn’t care about him like the way yours did for you.” Harry stared down at the crumpled bed sheet he was sitting on, hoping he could make his friend understand. “He’s really making an effort to change. He wants to do the right thing. I want to help him choose the right path and just give him the chance that all you guys gave me.”

Ron sighed. Perhaps he had been a bit stubborn and unrelenting in his animosity towards the blonde. “Merlin,” the red head murmured, running his hand through his hair. “So, you really like him?” he finally asked, a bit plaintively.

Harry was glad to see that Ron had calmed down. “Yeah, I really like him. He’s really kind underneath all those blustering layers he’s built around himself. He makes me happy. I really want you guys to get to know each other. Will you try, Ron, for me?” Harry pleaded, giving his friend a large, puppy eyed look.

“Hermione is going to have kittens when she hears about this,” Ron muttered. He looked over to his dark haired friend. “I’ll try. I really will,” Ron agreed. “But no snogging in front of me and definitely no more of whatever it was you were doing before, I’m not ready for that.” he ordered.

“Promise,” Harry replied with a huge smile, crossing his heart with his index finger. “But can we keep this just between us for now? You know, kinda keep it a guy thing.”

Ron grabbed him in a big bear hug and then let him go, both boys grinning at each other. "Okay, I'll let you tell Hermione, but if he ever hurts you Harry..." the red headed wizard warned.

"I know, I know, you'll kill him," Harry finished for him, still smiling.

"Too right," Ron affirmed.

"So what are you doing here?" Harry asked, suddenly curious as to why the red head showed up here before the end of holidays.

"Well, when dad got back he said that Dumbledore thought it might be a good idea if I came over to keep you company, seeing as there wasn't anyone else here in the dorms with you," Ron responded.

"I see," Harry replied tightly. *„So it is just Draco he doesn't want me to be friends with.“*

"I...I'm sorry. I can go back if you don't want me to stay," Ron said, suddenly confused by the anger he saw snapping in Harry's eyes.

Harry gave an exasperated sigh and let his ire simmer under a joviality he didn't feel. "No, That's okay, I want you to stay."

"You're sure?" Ron asked. The red-head made a face that left no doubt that he was slightly grossed out. "Maybe you wanted to spend some time with...Draco."

Harry laughed loudly, his outrage at his Headmaster disappearing. "What's with that face? Yes, I'm sure. This might be a good time for you and Draco to get to know each other a bit, when it's quiet around here."

Ron's face fell again which only made Harry laugh harder. "Okay, okay," Ron grumbled. "It's not *that* funny."

"I'm sorry," Harry apologized as he removed his glasses so he could wipe the tears of laughter that were beginning to run down his cheeks. He snorted a couple of more times before bringing himself under control. "Speaking of, I better go have a talk with my little

Slytherin. He looked a bit put out when he left,” Harry stated as he replaced his glasses, getting up from his bed and heading out of the dorm room. “I’ll be back in a bit.”

“And don’t be calling each other pet names in front of me either,” Ron complained with a wave. „*Merlin, Little Slytherin! What’s Harry thinking? That’s a stupid pet name,*” the red head mumbled to himself as he went about unpacking.

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Harry opened the portrait door to Draco’s rooms to find a sulking blonde sitting on the sofa drinking his favourite muggle beverage. “Those things will rot your teeth,” Harry stated as he sat on the couch with the Slytherin.

“They make me feel better,” Draco returned sullenly, taking another long drag on the can.

“I’m sorry, Draco. I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings,” Harry apologized. “But I really needed to get Ron to calm down and not run off to Dumbledore. Plus I wanted him to understand what you mean to me.”

“What do I mean to you?” Draco questioned huffily. The blonde stood from the sofa and walked over to the kitchen, grabbing another coke out of the cold box after tossing the empty can he had just finished into the bin. He didn’t offer one to Harry. The Slytherin teen sat back down and stared at the red can in his hands, his fingers fidgeting with the pull tab.

“Draco,” Harry sighed. “I really like you. I wouldn’t have asked you to be my boyfriend if I didn’t.”

Draco continued to stare at his can of pop as if it was the most interesting thing in the room. “You didn’t ask me, not really. You told me I was your boyfriend, just like you told me to let go of Weasley.”

Harry took ahold of Draco’s chin, forcing the blonde boy to look at him. “Will you be my boyfriend, Draco?” he asked quietly. The Gryffindor frowned slightly in confusion when the blonde averted his eyes and didn’t answer.

“I don’t know if being boyfriends is such a good idea,” Draco replied after a moment, still avoiding the gaze of green eyes.

Harry blinked, feeling a bit stunned. This seemed to be such a turn around from just a short time ago. "You don't want to be my boyfriend?" Harry asked, his tone relaying his hurt.

Draco felt a pang of anguish run through him. "No, it's not that," he replied, finally looking up into Harry's saddened face. "It's just...this is going to cause so many problems."

"For who?" Harry questioned with some annoyance. "You?"

"Yes...no." Draco took a breath and tried again, this time without the attitude. "For both of us. I don't want you to have to choose."

Harry also wrestled his aggrieved emotions back. "I don't understand what you mean," he returned.

"Didn't you hear what Weasley said? He told you to choose between him and me. As much as I like irritating the Weasel, I don't want you to have to pick between us...because...because..." Draco trailed off softly.

"Because you think I'll choose him," Harry finished for him, understanding now what the blonde was so upset about.

"Yes, but not just that. What are you going to do if other people stop trusting you because of me? They might think you're going to join with the Dark Lord, that I've tricked you or put a spell on you."

"Then I'll tell them They're wrong, just like I told Ron," Harry responded firmly. "Look, I can't predict the future. I don't know what's going to happen or how other people will react, but if they don't accept you then They're not my friends. I'll still work to fight against Voldemort and those that really know me will support me, and you."

Draco gave Harry a dubious look.

"I can't promise that we'll always be together, but I do know that you make me happy and I want to be with you. I like you a lot, Draco," Harry said shyly as he removed the unopened can of pop from the Slytherin's hands and placing it on the table in front of them, taking those hands in his own. "You like me too, right?"

Draco smiled softly. "Yes, I like you too," he answered.

"Then Let's give this thing a go," Harry stated. "What do you say?"

Draco leaned forward and brushed his lips against the brunette's, smiling a bit broader now. "Okay, seeing as you're so infatuated with me. It just wouldn't be fair to deprive you of my affections."

Harry snorted in amusement. "Now there's the Draco I know," he joked before leaning in for another kiss, this one a bit longer and more intense.

The spell, which had been interrupted earlier, began to activate again and the two boys felt the air tingle with static around them. Their bodies began to throb with need for the other, but Draco pulled back. "We should continue this when We're sure that Weasley's not going to come looking for you," he panted out.

Harry was equally flustered, but knew Draco had a point. He had left Ron in the dorm room by himself and sooner or later the red-head would get bored of waiting and come looking for him. They really didn't need a repeat of what had happened earlier. The Gryffindor groaned and nodded his agreement and the two of them went back to sitting side by side, not touching each other as the air around them went back to normal.

"I'm going to head back to the tower," Harry told Draco. "But I want all three of us to get together for supper. I've already told Ron that I want the two of you to get along. He's willing, how about you?" Harry challenged gently.

Draco made a face that was extremely similar to the one that Ron had made earlier and Harry couldn't help but laugh at their comparable expressions.

"I suppose I'll have to call him by his first name as well," Draco pouted.

"That would be a good start," Harry agreed, continuing to chuckle. "You guys are actually a lot alike."

"Please," Draco drawled, rolling his eyes. "There's no need to be insulting."

Harry snickered a bit longer and then headed out the door, leaving a more confident Draco behind.

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At first, supper was a stilted, awkward affair with Ron sitting across from Harry and Draco beside the dark-haired teen. All in all there were eight students now at the old school. Richard Summerby and his girlfriend Meagan Jones from Hufflepuff, the two Ravenclaw chasers Bradley and Chambers, who had decided to ditch visiting elderly relatives with their families, and the only other Slytherin other than Draco, Adrian Pucey. Rounding out the octet was, of course, the two Gryffindor best friends.

The other students stared at the unlikely trio that were currently sitting at the Gryffindor table, gossiping quietly between each other, well except for Adrian who just gave the odd threesome a bored look and then went back to reading the book he had with him.

Meanwhile, Harry's two favourite male companions wouldn't even look at each other, both keeping their eyes on their plates and their mouths busy with ingesting food.

Harry was unsure how to get things rolling when Draco suddenly asked Ron about how he thought the Quidditch matches were going this year. The dark haired Gryffindor could have kissed his boyfriend for the effort and then done the same to his red-headed friend as Ron answered politely. It wasn't long after that, that all three boys were having an enjoyable discussion on the different strategies that should be used on the various teams they would be competing against, including each others.

After supper the boys decided to go flying for a bit to burn off some energy, bundling up warmly against the chill of the December evening. Bradley and Chambers ran over to them with their brooms as well when they saw the other boys heading for the door, unperturbed by the presence of a Slytherin with the two Gryffindors. Besides, the two Ravenclaw friends wanted to find out what was going on so they would be the first to have all the interesting gossip to relay to their fellow housemates when they returned after holidays.

The five boys went over to the Quidditch pitch and took off on their brooms, doing spins, dives, barrel rolls and other tricks trying to show-off and out-do their fellows. Draco slowly extricated himself from the flying competitions without anyone noticing and just flew in lazy loops and circles around the others, watching Harry.

Draco found that he was still jealous as hell of the raven haired boy's abilities, but he was captivated by them as well. He found it almost erotic the way Harry flew, fast and hard and with a finesse that was sensual and breath-taking. The-Boy-Who-Lived

showed absolutely no fear of being in the air; it was almost like he belonged there, like a creature born to it. The blonde could almost believe that Harry could fly without a broom if he so wished.

This was why Draco gave a start of surprise when he noticed Harry falter in mid-air. He quickly brought himself to fly beside the dark haired Gryffindor, becoming worried when he noticed the grimace of pain that flashed over his boyfriend's face.

"Are you okay?" Draco asked as he sidled up on Harry's right side.

"Yeah, just a bit of a headache. I'm okay," Harry grinned at the blonde.

"Harry, mate," Ron called as he appeared on the left side of his friend. "What's wrong?"

"Just a headache," Harry reiterated. "Nothing for you guys to get worked up about."

"It's your scar, isn't it," Ron correctly guessed, knowing what that look of „I'm-in-pain but-I'm-hiding-it“ meant.

The three boys flew a sweeping arc and came down for a landing.

"Hey!" Bradley called from above them. "Are we done already?"

"Yeah," Ron answered back, looking up into the air to see the two Ravenclaws hovering above them. "Harry's not feeling well. We're going to head back."

The other two boys landed as well, deciding that they might as well go too. They followed along behind the threesome, whispering quietly so the others wouldn't hear.

"I thought that Malfoy hated Weasley and Potter?" Bradley questioned his friend.

"Doesn't look like it, in fact They're all getting along like gang-busters I'd say," Chambers answered back.

"You don't think Malfoy's joined with Harry against You-Know-Who?"

"It's a possibility," Chambers agreed. "Or..."



“Or what?” Bradley questioned.

“Maybe Potter and Weasley have joined with Malfoy. All three of them are Purebloods.”

“I didn’t think Potter was a Pureblood.”

Chambers sighed at the naiveté his friend. “He’s The-Boy-Who-Lived, it doesn’t matter if he’s muggle, Half-blood or purple, he’s still a Pureblood if you get what I’m saying.”

As the two Ravenclaws were postulating behind them, the three boys ahead were engaged in a bit of an argument.

“Why won’t you tell us if you’re scar is acting up?” Draco asked huffily.

“Because he doesn’t want to worry us,” Ron replied, with a „been there-done that“ tone to his voice.

“Damn it, Harry,” Draco growled. “We shared that bonding spell. You know I know what it means when you’re scar hurts. It means Voldemort is up to something and That’s something we should know about.”

“Guys,” Harry complained. “It’s not that I don’t want to tell you, but there’s nothing to tell. I don’t know what he’s up to. I can’t see anything because he knows how to keep me out of his mind unless he wants me to see it.”

“You need to practice harder with Snape on your Legilimency and Occlumency then,” Draco ordered. “You’re always giving him a hard time, he’s just trying to help and you should really take advantage of that connection you have with the Dark Lord and use it to our advantage.”

Ron snickered at the expression of distaste on Harry’s face, but secretly he agreed with Draco. He knew Harry could do it if he applied himself. The red-head was usually impressed by the bespectacled wizard as he always managed to master spells if he really had to; something Ron wasn’t very good at himself.

“Spoken like a true Slytherin,” Harry shot out at his boyfriend as he began to walk faster to get back to the school and away from the conversation. He was becoming very

agitated that Draco was sticking up for Snape, the same man that never cut him a break, ever.

“And what’s wrong with that? I’m proud to be a Slytherin, and it’s better to think things through rather than jumping in with no plan at all,” Draco scoffed as he lengthened his strides to match Harry’s. “If That’s what it means to be a Gryffindork, then you can have it.”

“Like you could be a Gryffindor,” Harry quipped tightly, emphasizing the correct way to say his houses name. He couldn’t understand how Draco could still hold loyalties to his former house after all that they had talked about, especially since Draco had decided to join the side of the light, and his anger began to boil over at the insult to his own house.

Ron began to feel a bit nervous. He knew his long time friend had quite a temper when he got riled up and that Malfoy never backed down from a fight. The red-head kept quiet, putting his hand in his pocket and on his wand just in case things turned nasty as he walked beside Harry. He could feel the air suddenly grow chilly, and not just from the winter cold, as Malfoy seemed to get severely pissed at the comment Harry had just made.

“Oh? And why’s that, Potter?” Draco demanded, pulling on Harry’s arm and spinning him around so they were facing each other.

“Because you’re a self-absorbed, devious, cowardly, pretentious git without a shred of decency!” Harry seethed, standing nose to nose with the blonde. He immediately felt a stab of guilt at the pained and wounded expression that crossed Draco’s face before the blonde had a chance to slam his self-protective mask of callousness on.

“To hell with you, Harry Potter,” Draco seethed as he shoved Harry in the chest, his voice like a hissing dragon ready to spew fire. He jumped on his broom and flew off, deciding he never wanted to see the other boys face again.

“Bloody hell,” Harry sighed in exasperation, rubbing at his scar as he watched Draco disappear into the night sky.

“Wow, I’ve never seen Malfoy look quite so upset,” Ron stated in disbelief. He was also shocked that the blonde it’s hadn’t hexed his friend into next week, as were the Ravenclaw boys that had stopped to watch the show. They were going to have lots to talk about in their house that was for sure.

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Draco flew around to the West Tower and entered Hogwarts through the Owlery blinking hard to stop the tears that were threatening to fall. He picked his way through the straw, small bones and various debris on the floor as the many owls watched him from above, some finishing off their evenings hunt, others preening.

He made his way down to the seventh floor and his apartments with the hurtful words Harry had thrown at him ringing in his ears. Reaching the portrait of the Knight he mumbled the password and then held his hand on the edge of the open portrait, stopping for a moment.

“Sir Knight, I’m changing the password,” Draco stated, taking a step back so he could look at the large, intimidating man in the frame. “The new password is: Harry Potter is an asshole.”

The Knight looked very affronted, but he nodded his consent to the upset Slytherin who nodded back and then stepped through to his rooms.

Draco pulled his coat and scarf off and threw them on the couch, tugging his feet out of his boots and leaving them with the snow dripping and melting on the floor of the living room. He held his emotions in check until he slumped down on his bed, then the tears that he had done so well to keep back flowed freely from him as his chest hitched in anguished sobs. He allowed himself to cry for a few minutes before he again tried to rein in his sorrow.

*„How could I have been so stupid to think that Potter and I could be friends, let alone boyfriends? I can’t believe he really thinks that about me now.”* Draco wiped at his eyes and stood to walk over to the armoire to pull a hankie out of one of the drawers in the bottom of it. He blew his nose, making a loud honking noise and then began to pull off his clothing so he could take a bath and go to bed.

This was not how he had pictured the coming year to be. He had hoped to make plans with the Gryffindor so that they could be together to ring in the New Year, one that would hopefully be more promising for the future of the wizarding world as well as themselves.

The blonde grabbed a towel and padded naked to the bathroom, readying the water for his bath. He couldn’t seem to stop sniffing and tears continued to leak out of the

corners of his eyes. „*Damn that Potter!*“ Draco sniffed to himself, using the now very wet hankie to wipe his eyes yet again before tossing it in the hamper for the house elves.

He had just settled himself into the soothing hot water when he heard a loud banging on the portrait door. Draco frowned and lay back in the tub, ignoring the pounding and the muffled voice of Harry asking him to open the door.

The minute Harry had entered Hogwarts he had headed to Draco's rooms. He had not been surprised to find that the Knight would not let him in, realizing that the blonde must have changed the password. In fact, when he had said the usual maxim, the Knight had put his helmet on and turned his head away from him. Harry took that as a sign that

Draco must be extremely angry with him, not that he could really blame him. „*Why the hell did I call him those names. Damn it, I'm always mucking things up.*“

“Open the door, Draco, please,” Harry asked as he pounded on the frame of the picture. “Let me apologize at least,” he begged.

Draco remained in the tub with his arms crossed stubbornly on his chest. Growing irritated at Harry's continued banging, he slid down into the water so his ears were covered, blocking out the sounds completely. He remained under the water, his face floating above with his eyes closed for a few more minutes. When he popped his head up all was silent. He listened for a moment or two and then sat up, bending his legs so his knees were protruding out of the water. He hugged his arms around them as he lowered his forehead to press against the bony angles of his kneecaps and wept wretchedly.

Harry sat outside on the floor in front of the portrait. He could actually feel Draco's pain and sorrow though the almost complete connection they had from the spell they had done earlier. He leaned his head back until his occipital bone thunked against the wall, repeating the gesture in frustration as he felt the muffled emotions of heartbreak and betrayal make their way into his heart. Realizing that he wasn't going to be able to talk to Draco tonight, as the blonde was far too upset, he stood and made his way to the tower and his dorm. For now he'd let his boyfriend settle down and tomorrow he would apologize for his temper.

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Draco awoke groggily after a restless night. He rolled over and checked the time, realizing with annoyance that he had missed breakfast. Stumbling out of bed in just his

pajama pants, he headed to the bathroom to splash some cold water on his face and wake himself up.

Looking in the mirror, the blonde grimaced at himself. "You look like something the cat has drug in and then drug back out again," his reflection berated him. Draco stuck out his tongue at his mirror image and grabbed a brush. He smoothed down his blonde hair that was sticking up in every direction from all the tossing and turning he had done in bed throughout the night because he'd barely been able to get any sleep after the fight with Harry.

Draco splashed some more water on his swollen and red eyes. He had never cried so much in his entire life, at least not since he had been a small boy, and he was now feeling emotionally drained and snappish from lack of sleep. He wished wholeheartedly that he had his wand so he could cast a Glamour spell to hide the puffiness under his eyes.

Draco couldn't understand why Harry's words had upset him so much. The-Boy-Who-Lived had certainly said worse to him in the past without him breaking down, but then again he it's hadn't wanted to be with the dark haired teen then. He it's hadn't wanted to change.

He padded out into the kitchen, going to the cold box and taking out a pitcher of pumpkin juice. He still had a few cokes left, but decided to hold off on having one until later in the day. He downed the juice he had poured and was just about to call for a house elf to bring him something to eat when he heard a soft knock on his door. Draco immediately knew who it was and was almost not going to open it as hurt irritation beginning to course through him once more.

"Draco, it's me," Harry called from the other side of the door. "I brought you something to eat." He was holding a tray of scones, various jams and a pot of tea that he had brought up from the Great Hall when Draco it's hadn't made an appearance as well as a large bouquet of wild flowers he had picked before breakfast and a love poem he had written the night before. Surprisingly, the „bringing breakfast to the pissed off boyfriend“, had been Ron's idea.

The whole day yesterday had been surreal for the red-head. He couldn't believe how well

Malfoy had behaved and it boggled his mind to realize that the Slytherin was being this agreeable just to make Harry happy. Ron had felt like his whole world had tilted off its

axis; that was until the two had started fighting. The first thought that had popped into his head had been that things were finally getting back to normal. He had had the distinct urge to tell Harry „I told you so,“ but had wisely kept quiet when he noticed the devastated look on his friends face when the blonde had flown off.

Last night had been worse, Harry kept pacing around in their room late into the night trying to think of ways to make up with his angry boyfriend when he had returned after unsuccessfully trying to talk to Draco, keeping Ron awake. The bespectacled teen had acted more upset than the time he and Cho had argued. He had finally calmed down after sitting for an hour composing his poem, allowing them to at least get a few hours of sleep before getting up for breakfast.

Down in the Great Hall, Harry had been checking the time every two minutes and watching the door, only shoving his food around on his plate, his clutch of wild flowers on the table, the poem folded and tucked into his pocket, not interested in eating. Ron could not get him out of his funk no matter how hard he tried. He hated seeing his best friend so depressed, so he had finally broken down and suggested that Harry take the blonde some breakfast as a peace offering, as well as his gifts.

“You think it would be okay?” Harry asked, feeling more than a little insecure.

“Yes, I’m sure he’s had time to cool off. You know Malfoy has always been a drama queen, and he loves getting presents,” Ron joked. “Go on and talk to him.”

“Thanks mate,” Harry said with a grateful smile. He knew Ron was having trouble with he and Draco being together, but still his friend was trying his best to not make it awkward between them and The-Boy-Who-Lived loved the red-head even more than he could say for trying to help.

Harry gathered up the food and then headed off to Draco’s room, intent on staying until they had a chance to talk, no matter if he had to do it on the other side of the portrait door.

After Harry had left, Bradley and Chambers had plopped themselves down at the table, one on each side of Ron.

“So, what’s up?” Bradley questioned, extremely curious as to where Harry was running off to with flowers and a tray full of breakfast, especially since it looked to him like enough for two.

Ron dropped his head to the table, banging his forehead a couple of times for good measure. "Bollocks," he mumbled, wondering why in the hell he it's hadn't just left well enough alone.

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Draco opened the door to a sorrowful and remorseful Harry Potter, holding a tray of food and flowers in front of him, a pleading look in those large, round, green eyes. As the blonde stood there wondering if he should just slam the door in the brunettes face, he suddenly realized that he could feel those apologetic emotions coming from the other boy. He it's hadn't noticed it yesterday as he had been too caught up in his own distress.

"Can I come in?" Harry asked tentatively, trying hard not to stare at the half naked blonde, the silver cross of the rosary looking far too erotic against the pale, muscular chest.

Draco opened the door a bit further and then turned to head into the living room, not saying anything. Harry took that as a yes and followed the irritated blonde inside, closing the door behind him with his foot. He placed the tray on the coffee table in front of the sofa and sat down on the opposite end that Draco had seated himself at.

"These are for you," Harry offered shyly, passing the flowers over to the frowning blonde.

Draco looked at the offered bouquet for a moment and then took them, gently sniffing the fragrant blossoms, saying nothing.

"Hungry?" Harry questioned nervously, trying again to get Draco to say something to him.

"I guess," Draco responded sulkily. The blonde placed the flowers on his lap and reached out and took a scone, buttering the bread and lathering on strawberry jam before nibbling on it.

Harry poured them each a cup of tea and then grabbed a scone for himself, putting marmalade on his. "Oh, I wrote this for you too." The Gryffindor reached into his pocket and pulled out the folded parchment, giving it to Draco.

Draco carefully opened the parchment after finishing his scone and his eyes softened slightly from frozen granite grey to dark summer lake as he read the short, but sweetly sentimental poem.

I'm sorry I hurt you, it won't happen again.

I want to get to know you as more than a friend.

Time will tell, if we are meant to be,

But before we can do that, will you forgive me please?

"I'm sorry, Draco. I didn't mean what I said yesterday," Harry apologized, hoping that the very small tilt of Draco's lips as he finished reading meant he was thinking about forgiving him.

"Then why did you say it?" Draco asked, still feeling cranky and irritable. The smile that had been picking at his lips disappeared.

"I was angry. Not at you, but at the whole situation," Harry sighed. "I know I should try harder to find out what Voldemort is doing, but I just can't stand the thought of being in his mind or of his being in mine. And I know you like him, but Snape and I have never gotten on well...I guess you just hit on a sensitive topic for me."

Draco could understand that. He wasn't sure if he could handle what he knew Harry had been through in the past when he had to deal with the Dark Lord and he certainly knew that Harry was not on Snape's Christmas list to say the least. His thoughts were interrupted by his boyfriend's soft apology.

"I'm really sorry I took it out on you."

"I know you are," Draco replied in a gentle voice. "I can feel it, here," he finished, placing his hand over his heart.

"You can feel my emotions too?" Harry questioned.

"I can feel them now. Yesterday I think I was too upset," Draco stated.



“Merlin, I know. I could feel it. It felt like my whole being was being crushed,” Harry explained, running his hand nervously through his overly messy hair. He reached for another scone, sliding a little closer to the blonde on the sofa.

Draco smirked, letting Harry know he had noticed that not so subtle action. “And you thought you’d bring me flowers, poems and breakfast to soften me up,” the blonde stated, grabbing another scone as well after placing the flowers and parchment on the table, leaning forward and then settling back a little closer towards the raven haired teen.

“Well, you know that old saying. The way to a man’s heart...”

“Is through his stomach,” Draco finished for him, surprising Harry at his knowledge of muggle colloquialisms.

Harry grinned tentatively. “So We’re okay?” he asked hopefully.

Draco finishing off his scone and took a sip of the hot tea making Harry nervous with his hesitation. “I really care a lot about you, more than I thought I would ever care about another person, and when you said those things to me, I felt like all I have been trying to do, to make myself into a better person, just wasn’t good enough. I...I just need to know how you really feel about me,” the blonde teen said seriously. “I won’t get mad or whiny if you don’t say what I want to hear. I’m asking so we can be clear with each other,” he finished.

“You’ve really been thinking about this, haven’t you?” Harry asked.

Draco nodded, waiting for Harry to answer him.

“To tell you the truth, I’m scared shitless,” Harry told the Slytherin as he sat close enough to the blonde to tuck a strand of pale hair behind the boy’s ear, feeling more confident when Draco didn’t move away from his touch. “The way you seem to trust me, how you’ve been trying to redeem yourself, how you seem to need me, and then I see the strong person that you really are under all that spoilt brat exterior you’ve built around yourself, you’re so different from what I’ve thought about you for all these years...it’s confusing and sexy as hell. I don’t know what to do about it. I want to be with you so much that it scares me to death and I don’t know if I can live up to what you want, what you need. All I know is that I really like you and I want this.”

Draco was stunned by what Harry had just told him and incredibly touched. He bent close to the Gryffindor so that he could feel Harry's breath on his lips.

Their noses bumped and Harry gave a quiet laugh, glad that Draco had forgiven him. He reached his hand out and wrapped it around Draco's side, stroking his other hand though pale, soft locks just waiting for the other boy to follow though at his leisure.

By tiny fractions of inches, Draco followed the trail of Harry's breath and the air around the two of them crackled with that familiar electricity. Lips touched, lightly, tentatively, were removed and then touched again and stayed as hurt and wounded emotions were soothed.

Draco opened his mouth and deepened the kiss, accepting Harry's tongue into him. As he kissed him fiercely, the blonde knew that this was exactly what the Gryffindor needed. He needed to be wanted, to be shown that he was desired and the Slytherin decided not to disappoint.

Harry suddenly slid his hand up Draco's back, between his shoulder blades, and pushed his weight onto the lighter boy, knocking him back hard onto the sofa.

With a throaty groan Draco melted into a puddle of lustful need, forgetting himself in the realness of Harry's body all along the length of him.

Harry, too, was making erotic sounds, crushing the Slytherin and bruising his lips, loving the combined taste of Draco and strawberry jam. It was better than anything Harry had experienced so far. Maybe tomorrow they might be in mortal danger, but right now they were safe and alone in this warm bubble of two bodies with nothing to distract or interrupt them.

Draco knew nothing but this kiss, the heat and strength of Harry's arms around him and the unbearable pleasure of his boyfriend's mouth and tongue as he gave this moment his whole attention. Their legs twined together, and the Slytherin was unprepared for the lightning jitters caused by Harry's thigh gliding across his rising manhood. He could feel the brunette's arousal, by the obvious and rather frighteningly large erection that was just a couple of layers of clothing away from his bare abdomen.

Draco suddenly couldn't get enough air and he had to break the kiss to gasp out his need, trying to get his hands between them so he could pull aside the Gryffindor robe and fumble at the buttons of Harry's trousers. His oppressive desire made him work only on instinct, his mind not knowing what he was going to do if and when he got those pants off. He only knew they were in the way and that just wouldn't do.

Harry gasped and tightened his arms around the blonde, making his ribs creak. He ground his hips down onto the body beneath him, whispering and murmuring Draco's name into his ear.

Draco couldn't bear it as the raven haired teen moaned his name, especially with Harry's thigh rubbing strongly against him again and again, causing him to whimper and arch against the other boy. Whirling sparks of pleasure shot through him as he released his seed all too soon between their heated bodies and into his pajama bottoms.

As he subsided into warm dizziness, Draco realized what he had done and was absolutely mortified and red-faced with embarrassment. Harry drew back to look down at him, sensing his discomfiture.

"Oh Merlin," Draco whispered, trying to cover his face with his hands.

Harry grinned, chuckling low in his throat. "It's all right," he stated kindly, pulling Draco's hands away from his very red face to smile down at him. "Gives me quite an ego boost to know you're so hot for me that you lost it just because I said your name."

Draco grimaced and turned an even brighter shade of red. "I'm sorry," he muttered out, his voice hesitant as he was unfamiliar with making apologies.

"What are you apologizing for?" Harry questioned as he eased more of his weight off the Slytherin.

"Well...you didn't...I mean..." Draco stammered.

Harry leaned down and gave Draco a quick peck on the lips. "That's okay. To tell you the truth, I'm not really sure what I'm doing here. I'm not really experienced," the brunette confessed with a blush. "This damn spell is making us both crazy and I want to make sure I don't hurt you...you know...if we..." Harry's sentence drifted off.

“This isn’t something I’ve done before either, so We’re working on a level playing field as far as that goes,” Draco responded, trying to make Harry feel less embarrassed.

Harry felt kind of relieved that the two of them seemed to be able to keep their wits about them even with the incomplete bonding spell whirling around them. He also wanted to make sure that this was something the blonde truly wanted, and not because the spell was forcing him into it. He gave Draco a huge grin again. “Consider this part of my apology for making you feel so bad yesterday.”

“That’s quite the apology.” Suddenly, it caught up to Draco’s mind as to what Harry had said just a moment ago. “Are you implying that I’m bottoming?” he asked with a raised eyebrow. “I’m not sure, mind you, but I’m of the opinion that Malfoys don’t bottom.”

Harry just rolled his eyes, knowing that when they did decide to do it, the blonde would probably be more than willing to be on the bottom. At least if he went by the reactions he had received from the Slytherin thus far. He wisely decided not to make an issue of it.

“Although, this does make me wonder...” Draco pondered to the dark haired teen, getting his attention.

“What?” Harry questioned rolling off the blonde so they could sit back up.

Draco stood to head to the bathroom so he could clean the stickiness off of his abdomen and thighs, preferring the wet, warm soap and water over the dry, itchy feeling of a cleansing spell. He also gathered up his flowers to put them in a vase as he passed through the kitchen. “Am I still a virgin?” he questioned, somewhat seeing the humour in the situation.

“Humm. Good question. Is it coming in company or actual shagging that trips the virgin meter?” Harry joked back.

Draco laughed and after putting his flowers in a summoned vase, walked down the hall and closed the bathroom door behind him, leaving a very happy, if somewhat sexually frustrated, Harry sitting on the sofa.

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Harry spent the rest of the morning with Draco in the dueling classroom, the two of them working through some of the spells in the book. They both found out that while Harry's magic was the stronger of the two, Draco had more control and an easier time invoking the spells. The biggest problem was that neither wanted the other to be the „sacrifice“.

According to the book, the person that became the sacrifice would act as a booster, allowing the one that was the main caster to use their partner's magic to strengthen the use of the spells. The problem with this was that the sacrifice would also tend to take any damage that would have been felt by the caster from their enemy, allowing the person that was the „fighter“ to be able to continue to battle without becoming debilitated.

“I should be the sacrifice,” Harry argued. “You can do these spells and I can boost your power so the damage to Voldemort would be stronger.”

“We've tried that,” Draco returned, remembering their botched practice attempts. “I can't control your power, it's too much. If I was the sacrifice I could help you with control. I know you can learn this. You've done more difficult spells and hexes in the past. Some of them on the first try.”

“Yes, but I was using a wand. I'm having too much trouble with this wandless stuff,” Harry shot back, feeling frustrated. He did not want Draco to get hurt and hurt he would be if they had to go up against Voldemort.

Draco sighed dramatically. “You wanker, I am the wand. That's what the sacrifice is for.”

Both boys stood staring at each other, deadlocked and convinced they were the one that was right. Suddenly Draco started laughing.

“What? What's so funny?” Harry questioned irritably.

“We just can't seem to stop fighting,” Draco stated between giggles. “I guess we wouldn't be us if we weren't crossing words in some manner.”

The tension eased from Harry as he started chuckling as well. “I guess old habits die hard. But seriously, Draco...”

“I am serious,” Draco interrupted, bringing his merriment under control. “Everyone knows you’re the one who has the best chance to defeat Voldemort. It has to be you to fight him. Prophecy, remember.”

“Fuck the prophecy,” Harry cursed with a frown. “If the bastard hadn’t tried to kill me when I was a baby, then the prophecy wouldn’t even be relevant. It’s just so stupid, almost as absurd as being famous just because you didn’t die.”

Draco approached the irked Gryffindor and wrapped his arms around him in a hug. “You can do this. Just let me do what I can to help you. It’ll be alright and who knows, maybe old moldy butt will stay in hiding for a long time.”

“Moldy butt?” Harry questioned, almost choking on his laughter.

“Voldemort, moldy butt, sounds similar enough to me,” Draco returned with a smirk.

Harry sighed and put his arms around his blonde boyfriend’s waist, giving him a soft kiss. “Okay, we’ll do it your way, but if things start to go bottoms up, we pull back. Okay?”

“Okay,” Draco agreed, invading Harry’s space for another kiss.

The two boys left the classroom and made their way to the Great Hall for lunch. They sat with Ron and the two Ravenclaw boys, chatting away about nothing and everything for awhile until Draco suddenly remembered that he had to finish getting caught up with some of the assignments he had missed while he was in the muggle world.

Harry and Ron decided that they should finish the essay for their Transfiguration class that they had been putting off from doing over the holiday break.

Draco stood and waved goodbye as he trekked off to his rooms. Deciding that Harry being around would be too much of a distraction, he encouraged his boyfriend to go to the library with Ron and work with him.

Harry acquiesced, and the two friends ran up to their dorm to grab their books and parchments before heading to the library.

“Can you see if that text is in the stacks?” Ron asked his friend, shifting through the many books they had brought with them and not finding the one they needed.

Harry walked lazily through the long row of shelving, letting his finger drift across the spines in the manner of a young boy clacking a stick across a picket fence. He was feeling immensely happy at having made up with Draco and was day dreaming more than looking for the book on metamorphosis.

„*Mel...mem...men...*,” Harry chanted in his mind, reading the first three letters in the titles of the books he was passing, suddenly the name of a book jumped out at him, “Men Who Love Men – A Guide to Pleasing Your Partner.”

„*Where the hell did this come from?*” Harry wondered, forgetting completely about the book he was supposed to be looking for, “Metamorphosis, Understanding the Big Change.” He stopped and drew the soft covered book from its place and took a quick glance around to see if Ron or any of the others were around. Seeing no one that was going to ask him what he was looking at, he opened the book to a random page and his eyes practically bulged from their sockets as his face burned red.

Harry had inadvertently opened the book to where the animated pictures were graphically displaying exactly how to please your partner. The-Boy-Who-Lived slammed the book closed before carefully re-opening it again a moment later, his curiosity overcoming his shocked embarrassment.

He watched the various pictures for a moment, licking his suddenly dry lips as he felt a slow warmth begin to spread across his belly and groin. Deciding he didn't want to explain to his red-headed friend why he had a hard on from looking for a text book, he stopped gawking at the pictures and turned to the table of contents, perusing the explanations of the chapters and shaking the images he had just been watching from his mind.

An excited grin spread across the Gryffindors face, this book was definitely going to come in handy. He tucked it into his robes as there was no way he was going to Irma Pince to check it out. „*Someone's had to put this here for a joke,*” Harry thought, figuring he'd discreetly put it back after he had had a chance to look it over.

The raven haired boy went back to the table Ron was working at, sitting down with a sly smile on his face, visions of he and Draco rolling around in his hormonal teenaged mind.

“Hey,” Ron stated, snapping his fingers in front of his friends face to get his attention. “Where’s the textbook?”

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Harry, Ron and Draco had supper together in the Great Hall, making plans for the next day which would be New Years Eve. They decided to have a small party in the Gryffindor tower and invited the others to come. Everyone accepted, except for Adrian who politely declined to Harry, but upon turning to face Draco, gave him such a nasty glare as he was leaving that the blonde felt a shiver of heavy foreboding vibrate through him.

“Are you okay?” Harry asked, seeing the slightly disturbed expression on his boyfriend’s face.

“Uh...yeah...everything’s fine,” Draco replied, trying to shrug off the ominous feeling. “You’d better hurry, Snape’s waiting for you,” the blonde told the raven haired teen, hoping to put his mind on something else.

“Shit!” Harry exclaimed. “Sorry guys, I gotta go,” he said to Ron and Draco as he ran off to meet with the Potions Master. They were still working on his Occlumency and Legilimency which Harry was beginning to make some small progress with, thanks in part to the truce they had established over Draco’s disappearance. Still, it wasn’t enough of an improvement in Snape’s book, so The-Boy-Who-Lived didn’t want to further irritate the older wizard by being late.

Ron and Draco sat at the table looking at each other awkwardly. This was the first time they’d been alone together and neither one knew what to say to the other.

Finally, Draco stood. “I better get back to my rooms. I’ve still got a lot of work to do to catch up with everyone.”

“Yeah, me too...I mean I don’t need to catch up, but I still have to finish the last bit of that essay,” Ron babbled.

Draco resisted the urge to roll his eyes and just gave the red-head a nod instead. “Well...see you,” he offered as a way of saying goodbye.



“Okay,” Ron answered, watching as the Slytherin walked away. „*Hermione is never going to believe this,*” the freckled boy thought as he too left the Great Hall and made his way to the tower, not sure if he believed it himself.

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“That’s enough for this evening,” Snape growled, resisting the very real urge to throttle The-Boy-Who-Lived. He had thought that maybe the young Gryffindor was starting to make some headway, but this evening’s session had been horrid. The Potter boy had been daydreaming most of the lesson and Snape, unfortunately, had managed to catch glimpses of exactly what he had been daydreaming about before the bespectacled boy could cover his thoughts.

“Next time, Mr. Potter, please keep your debauched imaginings to yourself,” the Potions Professor drawled with an unhappy scowl, causing Harry to blush crimson. “Now off to your dorm with you and do not even think to see Mr. Malfoy tonight,” Snape warned, giving Harry a stern look. “I myself shall be going to see him shortly.” Severus intended to basically interrogate the blonde over why exactly The-Boy-Who-Lived-To-Be-Horny seemed to think that the visions he had running through his mind could become reality.

“Yes Professor,” Harry grumbled back, still blushing hotly.

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Up in the Gryffindor tower, Ron and Harry played a couple of games of exploding snap before deciding to call it a night.

Harry got ready for bed and then curled up with his book, his curtains drawn, reading well into the night and absorbing everything he could about how to go about making sex pleasurable for his partner. His professors would probably wish that he would put this much concentration and effort into his scholastic studies if they could see the absorbed look on his face now as he re-read and re-checked the book ardently.

„*This is just in case things happen,*” Harry told himself logically, so he wouldn’t feel like he was totally sex crazed. „*It’s not like I’m going to throw him to the floor and shag him the next time I see him or anything. Although this looks interesting,*” he thought as he read through the section on foreplay, flipping to the appropriate illustration to see how it was done. „*Doesn’t seem too difficult, I wonder how it tastes?*”

Eventually, Harry's eyes began to get heavy and he tucked the book under his mattress and then turned off his wand, settling in and going to sleep.

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The next morning the two boys didn't really get a chance to see much of each other. Draco ensconced himself in his rooms, determined to finish all the work he needed to get done before school started again. Harry was disappointed, but knew they'd see each other at the party tonight. He left his boyfriend alone while he and Ron, with permission from Headmaster Dumbledore, went into Hogsmeade for the afternoon to buy some more parchments and quills from Scrivenshaft's Quill Shop. A stop in at Honeydukes to pick up some snacks for their party was on the list of things to do as well.

Ron and Harry had asked Bradley and Chambers if they would like to join them, but the two Ravenclaw's shook their heads, saying they had some important things to arrange for the party this evening.

"What are you two planning?" Ron asked suspiciously.

"Don't worry your pretty little red head about it," Bradley replied with a smirk.

"I think we have everything we need," Harry told the two. "Richard and Meagan are going to take care of the music and Ron and I are getting the food so you guys don't have to go to any trouble."

Bradley and Chambers laughed. "No trouble at all, Harry. Go on, get going and we'll see you later," Chambers stated, still chuckling under his breath.

"Yeah," Bradley agreed. "We'll make sure the most important item is there." The two boys went down the hallway, laughing up a storm.

"What the hell?" Ron questioned as he scratched his head.

"I guess we'll find out tonight," Harry stated, watching the Ravenclaw's retreating backs with confusion. "Come on then, Let's get going."

Harry and Ron made it back just in time for supper and upon entering the Great Hall they found the two Ravenclaw's sitting with the Hufflepuff couple at their table, chatting

animatedly to each other while Draco sat alone at the Gryffindor table. Adrian was also alone, sitting directly across from Draco at the Slytherin's table, neither boy looking at the other. Harry's good mood suddenly darkened.

"What's going on?" Harry asked as he sat down beside his boyfriend.

"Nothing, just eating," Draco replied matter of factly.

"Did anyone say anything to you?" Harry inquired. He couldn't understand why Draco had not at least sat with Adrian at his old table.

"Nobody said anything to me," Draco replied, taking a bite out of his potatoes. "Pass the pepper, would you?"

This was the absolute truth. The Slytherin decided not to sit with Adrian as he was still tossing angry looks at him and the two Ravenclaw boy's, although they had smiled nicely enough at him when they entered, had passed him and gone over to sit with Richard and Meagan.

Draco supposed he was going to have to get used to being ostracized. From the reaction he had received from Adrian, he was sure that his own house was going to be upset with him, to say the least, because of his switch of loyalties and the other houses didn't seem to want to trust him either because he was a Slytherin. The knowledge of it still didn't make it hurt any less.

"Are you sure?" Harry pestered as he passed over the shaker.

Draco sprinkled some pepper on his potatoes and took another bite, content with the food at least. "Yes, everything's fine. What did you guys get at Hogsmeade?"

Harry and Ron told him all they had picked up for the party and soon Harry's good mood had returned as his blonde boyfriend perked up while they regaled him with tales of all that was going on in the small village. Again Harry was very pleased that Ron and Draco seemed to be getting along, or at least they were trying hard to get along for his benefit. By the end of the meal, Harry had a huge grin plastered over his face.

"I'm going to get cleaned up for the party," Draco stated as he rose from his seat, also feeling better than he had earlier. "I'll see you guys in a couple of hours."

*„This will give me time to ditch Snape too,”* Draco thought to himself. The Potions Master had made a show of appearing around his door if he even thought that Harry might be accompanying him. *„Potter better improve his Occlumency if he’s going to be having those kind of thoughts around Snape,”* the blonde teen grumbled to himself, still

feeling embarrassed over the lecture he had had to endure with Snape. In the end he was sure that he had convinced the Potions Professor that Potter must have been having him on, either that or he was completely mad. He was brought out of his embarrassing thoughts by Ron.

“It takes you that long to get ready?” Ron teased.

“Don’t hate me because I’m beautiful,” Draco retorted back as he sashayed out the door. “Cheeky bastard,” Ron grumped, which caused Harry to snort with laughter.

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“There, done,” Bradley grinned as he finished putting the ice-cubes into the very large bowl of Rum and Coke that he and his friend had procured. Chambers decorated the edge of the bowl with lemon slices and the two stood back waiting for Harry and Ron to inspect their contribution to the party.

“What’s in it?” Ron asked dubiously.

“It’s a muggle concoction, its called Rummyco Punch. A friend of ours told us about it and he managed to get the ingredients for us. It’s actually very easy to make,” Bradley explained, stating the name of the drink incorrectly.

“Taste it,” Chambers offered excitedly.

“Have you guys tried it?” Ron asked, looking at the offered cup of dark liquid as if it was going to bite him.

“Well...not yet, but our friend said it was exactly what we should have for a New Years Eve party,” Chambers stated, forcing the cup into Ron’s hand. He poured one for himself as Harry and Bradley did the same.

“All together lads,” Bradley cried. “Bottoms up!”

All four teens downed their drinks in a couple of large gulps and then began to sputter and cough. “Merlin,” Ron choked as he felt the hot burn of the alcoholic drink make its way down his throat.

Harry finished sputtering and then felt a soothing warmth fill his belly. “That’s pretty good, actually, although you wouldn’t want too many.” The-Boy-Who-Lived said as he went to the bowl to pour himself another.

“What’s pretty good?” Draco asked as he approached the foursome.

Harry was basically stupefied as he looked over his blonde boyfriend that had just entered their common room. His hair was perfectly coiffed and his skin glowed in the low light of the fireplace. Draco was wearing those jeans that slid off of his hips in a sinfully erotic way with a black turtleneck that showed off his upper body beautifully. The silver crucifix of the rosary lay nestled against the darkness of the shirt, causing the eye to travel to his well developed chest.

Draco grinned seductively as he watched his boyfriend’s eyes rake him up and down. “See something you like, Potter?”

“Uh..wha...” Harry stuttered, coming back to the here and now and flushing bright red at the quizzical looks he was receiving from the Ravenclaw boys. Ron just shook his head, but even he had to admit that the blonde looked hot. Well...if you were into that sort of thing.

“Here,” Bradley stated, passing a cup of their “punch” over to Draco. The blonde took a tentative sip and then smiled happily. “This is coke,” he grinned. “But there’s something else in it.”

“Never heard of coke,” Bradley replied, but the other stuff is rummy. Its muggle liquor,” he explained knowingly. “Good isn’t it?”

“Yeah, this is great,” Draco praised as he downed his glass and then went to the bowl for another. He really liked the smoky, heavy flavor that had been added to his favourite muggle drink and thought he’d have to find out where the Ravenclaw’s had gotten this „rummy“.

“If this stuff is like our Fire Whiskey, you better take it easy,” Harry cautioned, sipping his own drink slowly to make it last.

Draco just rolled his eyes. "Yes, mother," he replied, but then drank his cup down in three large swallows when Harry wasn't looking. The blonde went back for another when his boyfriend went to help Richard with the music. He was joined by Bradley who was taking his second. Ron and Chambers decided that one of those drinks was enough and stuck to pumpkin juice for the rest of the evening.

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"10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, HAPPY NEW YEAR!" everyone yelled out at once as the magically summoned twinkling confetti rained down on them all. Well, everyone except Richard and Meagan who were sitting on the couch closest to the wall making out with each other.

Draco plopped down onto Harry's lap and threw his arms around the raven haired boy. "Haaaary," he slurred with a sloppy grin on his face. "Give us a kiss."

"Oh no, Harry, you promised!" Ron cried out, jumping up and pulling the drunken Slytherin off his friend who was sitting on one of the large, comfortable chairs.

"Something I'm missing here?" Chambers questioned, raising an eyebrow at the disgruntled blonde who had landed on his butt at Harry's feet.

Bradley staggered toward them and leaned over, giving Harry and Draco a boozy stare. "Yeah, What's going on here," the boy slurred, weaving back and forth precariously over the grumbling and sparkle covered Slytherin.

"Nothing, it's nothing," Ron blurted out. "He's just drunk, That's all."

"I wanna kiss," Draco whined from his position on the floor.

"I'll kiss ya," Bradley proclaimed as he dropped to his knees and began to crawl towards Draco who was blinking owlishly at the Ravenclaw.

"Uh...maybe we should get these two back to their rooms," Harry stated as he stood to help Draco from the floor stepping between Bradley and his boyfriend. "Come on Chambers, grab ahold of him," Harry ordered, indicating the other Ravenclaw boy that was now hugging Harry's knees, threatening to knock him over.

“Come on, mate,” Chambers sighed at his drunken friend, grabbing him under the arms and dragging him, swaying, to his feet. “Party’s over.”

“Is it?” Bradley questioned sadly, he soon had a big smile on his face again. “It was fun, wasn’t it?”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah,” Chambers agreed as he pulled his best friend out the portrait door. “See you guys later,” he called back over his shoulder to the others.

Draco waved back happily as he clutched onto Harry with his other arm, almost making the two of them fall over with his wild lurching.

“Are you going to be okay to get him back on your own?” Ron asked.

“Yeah, don’t worry about it. Why don’t you see if you can get Summerby and Jones to stop their lip lock long enough to tell them the party’s over. We’ll clean up tomorrow.”

Ron grimaced, but nodded his head. “Night, Malfoy,” the red-head stated.

Draco surprised the two Gryffindor friends by letting go of Harry and attaching himself to Ron, gripping him in a large, friendly bear hug. “You’re a good guy, Wheeshley,” the blonde gushed, sniffing as tears began to fill his eyes. “You’re susch a good friend to Arry.”

“Uh...thanks...Harry, could you help here?” Ron said in a plaintive voice as he awkwardly patted Draco on the back.

Harry couldn’t help but chuckle at the almost frightened expression on his red headed friend’s face, but in the end he pried Draco’s arms from around Ron’s neck and got his tipsy boyfriend headed out the door and down the hallway.

Making it to the Knight, Harry was reminded again that he needed to get Draco to change the code for the door. “Why don’t you change the password back, love,” Harry cajoled charmingly, not wanting to call himself an asshole.

Draco blushed at the sentimental nickname Harry had just called him and then gave him a beaming smile. “Sir Knight,” Draco said, raising his finger in the air imperiously.

“I change the password to...to...”

“Chivalry,” Harry prodded.

“Oh, yeah. Chilvery...shiverly...chivalry,” he finally announced proudly, pleased at his ability to say it correctly.

The Knight nodded, quite thankful that the dreaded password from before was back to something more befitting him, and opened the door allowing the two boys to enter.

As soon as they were inside, Harry found himself with an armful of inebriated Slytherin. Draco kissed Harry forcefully, running both hands through the dark, messy hair and sighing contentedly. Soon their tongues were entwined and Harry found himself losing his senses as electric sparks passed between him and his blonde boyfriend.

“Merlin, Draco,” Harry whispered, pulling back to catch his breath and gain some control over himself. He did not want to take advantage of the Slytherins condition, even though the blonde seemed to be having no such qualms.

“Lesh go in the bedroom, Arry,” Draco moaned out in such a way that Harry’s body responded instantly, his manhood giving a very definite and interested twitch.

“You’re drunk,” Harry stated. “This isn’t something we should be doing now.”

“I’m not that drunk,” Draco replied a bit huffily. “I juss want my kissh.”

Harry grinned a bit at the sulkiness that his boyfriend was displaying, deciding not to inform him that he had just gotten his kiss. “If you just want a kiss, then Let’s just sit down on the sofa.”

Draco was smiling again. “Okay,” he agreed, pulling the Gryffindor towards it by his wrist. As soon as Harry had seated himself he had, for the second time tonight, a lapful of Draco as the blonde straddled his thighs and sat on him, overtaking Harry’s lips with his own.

Falling under the spell of the bond, Harry found that the slight warmth that was emanating from their mingled mouths had begun to spread throughout his body and



intensify as Draco held his head in his hands, changing from light, soft, lips-barely-there kisses to tongue deep, mind reeling snogs. Harry's arms embraced Draco tightly, his fingers slipping under the cotton of the shirt the blonde was wearing and splaying open on bare skin.

The way that Harry had his arms wrapped around his back caused Draco to moan. He felt as if he was being invaded from the inside out by the power that was Harry Potter. Their tongues collided as they pressed their lips together over and over again, each of them passionately trying to take the other's breath.

Draco kept his eyes closed from the combined dizziness caused by his overindulgence with the „punch“ and the effects this kiss was creating in him, making him feel as if Harry's warmth and lips were his whole world.

Harry was thinking that the bedroom was starting to look like a very good idea after all and couldn't think why he had thought differently only a short time ago. With a groan he stood from the couch, lifting the smaller boy in his arms and carrying him down the hall, their mouths hardly losing contact with each other on the way. They both tumbled to the bed, Harry straddling the blonde this time as he pulled the turtleneck off of him, flinging it to the floor.

Draco moaned and tossed his head from side to side as his raven haired boyfriend traced the curves of his chest and abdomen curiously with his fingers, lightly ghosting over his warm flesh.

Harry realized that touching the Slytherin could become a very addictive thing as he listened to the breathy sounds escaping Draco's throat while he caressed the blonde teenager. The Gryffindor was entranced with the way the low candle light was bouncing chips of light off the sparkling confetti that was in the blonde's hair and on his cheeks, making Draco look like some kind of enchanted creature.

The sensation of Quidditch calloused fingers exploring his quivering muscles made Draco's body heat rise like a blast of dragon breath as Harry continued to pet and grope his upper torso. Other parts of him awakened, crying out for those nimble fingers and the blonde fidgeted and squirmed, hoping desperately that Harry would take the hint.

Draco's booze fuddled brain quickly began to clear as he felt his dark haired boyfriend tugging on his pants, opening the button and unzipping his fly, pulling out his trapped and swollen member. The Slytherin's hips bucked forward and a loud moan flew from

his throat as Harry pumped his length with firm, long motions that started at the top of his manhood and slid to the root of his shaft, repeating over and over. Stroke after stroke caused such exquisite sensations that Draco was soon close to the point of completion, but before he could fall helplessly over the edge, everything suddenly stopped.

Draco cracked open his eyes and watched wide eyed as Harry left the bed to stand beside it and remove his Gryffindor robes and all clothing underneath it before divesting the Slytherin of his jeans and undergarments, leaving the blonde naked and shivering from sudden nervousness.

“Harry,” Draco breathed out shakily. “Have you done anything like this before?” He was beginning to wonder as his famous boyfriend seemed to really know what he was doing, whereas Draco hadn’t a clue and his nervousness increased. He suddenly wasn’t sure he wanted to continue this.

“No, but I found a book in the library and I’ve been doing a lot of reading,” Harry answered with a grin. In his mind he was going over his internal checklist of things to do to help his partner relax. He could see the hint of fear in those round grey eyes that were blinking up at him.

“I don’t know,” Draco waffled, bringing his arms up to cross and cover his chest and squeezing his thighs together in a defensive gesture.

Harry sat down beside his tense boyfriend and took his hands in his own, kissing the blonde’s fingers gently. “We don’t have to do anything you don’t want to. I won’t force you,” Harry soothed as he continued to kiss each finger. “But there is something in the book I read that I’d like to try. I think you’ll really like it.”

“Well...okay,” Draco replied hesitantly, curiosity mixing with apprehension. “You don’t mind not going all the way?” he questioned softly.

Harry smiled. “No, I don’t mind. Like I said earlier, it’s not something we should do until you’re sober and ready.”

Draco returned Harry’s smile, feeling relieved. He really didn’t want his first time to be when he was still feeling the effects of the alcohol he had previously imbibed, but he was wondering as to what book Harry had been talking about and as to what he planned to do.

Harry gazed down at his very sexy boyfriend, taking in everything about him as Draco laid there sparkle clad and passive in a very tantalizing position, his arms relaxed at his sides with his slim fingers gently curled towards his palm. His pupils so dilated they looked like pools of obsidian. The expression on his liquor induced flushed face was a mix of curiosity and bewilderment and Harry found him absolutely breath-taking. This was the one time in which the Gryffindor was sure that the blonde was unaware of what kind of effect he was having.

Harry leaned over and kissed the Slytherin's forehead, allowing his lips to travel down to Draco's temple and then to his eyelids, before capturing those soft lips with his own and sucking in the plump lower lip. The-Boy-Who-Lived shifted himself on the bed so he was lying beside the blonde, never breaking contact as he moved.

There was something about the Slytherin that put every nerve ending in Harry on edge in a wonderfully complete way. Whether it was due to the bonding spell that was still swirling around them or the boy himself, he wasn't sure. What he did know was that his mind, his body and his soul all wanted Draco Malfoy, especially when he felt the shock of hot, smooth, naked skin against his own.

Harry broke the kiss and continued downward, brushing his lips and teeth over Draco's neck and then moving down to his shoulders. He hesitated for a moment when he reached his chest to lick a pert nipple and then move to gently bite and kiss its partner while the blonde panted and moaned causing Harry to grin in satisfaction against the heated skin at his lips.

Draco was drowning in the delicious heat and the sensuous feeling of Harry's touches as the Gryffindor pressed and slid against him while he worked the Slytherin into a sexual frenzy.

Harry let his lips trace upwards again until he was nipping and licking at Draco's earlobe, murmuring Parseltongue into the blonde's ear words he couldn't understand, but which caused him to cry out louder all the same. The Gryffindor continued to make his boyfriend crazy by very carefully ghosting his hands along the Slytherin's chest, finding nipples that were still erect from the tongue lathing they had experienced just moments ago and twisting them between thumb and forefinger as he continued his verbal assault.

Pressing closer to the blonde, Harry bucked his hips, grinding his engorged manhood against Draco's left hip. The blonde took the hint and reached down to touch and stroke

his boyfriend's heated flesh. The-Boy-Who-Lived shifted again, exchanging his hand for his mouth at a nipple. He mistakenly nipped down fairly hard on the swollen bud because of the sensations Draco's experimental touches were causing him.

"Ahh, ouch!" Draco cried out, trying to twist away from those wicked teeth. The blonde was soon whimpering and moaning instead as Harry gently licked the wounded nipple soothingly, removing his lower anatomy from the blonde's reach so he couldn't be coaxed into releasing before he had taken Draco there first.

Harry slid his tongue down the Slytherin's body, teasing the skin with teeth, tongue and lips until he reached his navel. Here he dipped his tongue into the indentation of the blonde's belly-button causing Draco to squirm in a most delightful manner. The-Boy-Who-Lived was happy that his boyfriend seemed to enjoy being teased, Draco letting him know this by his ragged breathing and the way his fingers were gripping tightly to his dark hair. Harry filed that piece of information away for future use as well as cataloguing all the various spots that seemed to get more whimpering reactions from him before finally grasping Draco's weeping length in his hand.

Draco stopped moving, almost stopped breathing as he felt a tentative lick of hot tongue graze across the head of his cock.

The blonde's firm shaft tempted the Gryffindor into seeing what kind of responses he could get out of the smaller teen and he allowed his tongue to further explore the Slytherin's hardness. Although Harry had read up on this quite a bit, he found that trying to put that theory into practice was harder than he thought so he took time to test the Slytherin to his licking and nibbling, finding out what made him sigh and twitch and what drove him to moan and thrash madly before fully plunging into the situation.

Draco groaned and his body shuddered as Harry finally sucked in the head of his cock. The Slytherin couldn't believe that Harry was actually putting his cock into his mouth and he grasped the bedspread with one hand while still gripping the Gryffindor's hair in the other. His knuckles were soon turning white when his boyfriend decided to take more of him in and suck harder. Draco bucked his hips upwards in response to the increased stimulation, forcing quite a bit more of himself into Harry's mouth.

Harry jerked his head back, gagging, as he had been unprepared for Draco's thrusting hips. Taking his hands, which had been playfully teasing the juncture between thigh and groin, he firmly gripped the bucking hips instead to hold them still on the bed.

Draco got the hint and tried his best to calm his body. As soon as he had, he felt that wonderful wet mouth engulf him again as the Gryffindor bobbed up and down on him. The oral ministrations grew hungrier as suction came into play.

Harry noticed how the harder he sucked, the louder Draco groaned so with escalating confidence he increased the speed and suction, pulling more noises that were bordering on screams from the blonde. The Gryffindor removed one of his hands from the just slightly shivering hips and encircled the lower part of his lover's shaft. This being the raven haired boys first time giving a blow job, he could only bring the first few inches into his mouth, even though Draco was not overly large. He had not enjoyed experiencing his gag reflex and didn't intend on repeating the sensation. He covered what inches that were not in his mouth with his hand and stroked furiously as his tongue darted over the head and slit of the Slytherin's manhood.

Draco let loose a gasping howl, completely lost in the sensation of pleasure that he didn't even think was possible. He wasn't even sure if he could handle what was promising to be the most powerful orgasm he had ever experienced and he linked one of his legs around the Gryffindors neck and moaned in response as the tightening in his abdomen multiplied.

Harry began to move faster and suck harder, allowing his hand to grip tighter and pump more ferociously, trying to encourage Draco to release.

Draco replied by throwing his head back and screaming, his body arching off the bed, practically pulling the hair from Harry's head as long ribbons of semen spurted into the Gryffindor's mouth as he came in hot eruptions

Harry sat up and swallowed; a small amount of liquid dripping from the corner of his mouth and onto his lips. He grinned at the flushed and astounded face of his partner as his tongue darted out to capture the escaping cum which almost caused Draco to pass out. It was certainly the most erotic thing he had ever seen.

Harry crawled up and lay down beside his boyfriend, listening as his panting breath become slower and more normal, his own erection screaming for some relief.

"Merlin's beard, that was...there's no words for what that was," Draco groaned, causing Harry to grin even more. "Does it taste awful?" Draco questioned after a few moments of comfortable silence.

“Not really,” Harry answered. “Why don’t you find out for yourself,” he offered hopefully as he rolled over onto his back so Draco could see his stiff and throbbing member.

Draco was feeling fairly drowsy from the combination of orgasm and booze, but there was no way he was going to leave Harry hanging out to dry, besides, he couldn’t let Harry get the upper hand. He definitely was going to try and outdo the Gryffindor and show him exactly what a Slytherin tongue could do.

Harry could only groan as Draco scooted down to rest between his legs and took his poor neglected member in his mouth. The blonde was certainly inexperienced, but he more than made up for it in enthusiasm and sheer determination as he tried to copy what Harry had done to him, swirling his tongue all around the head of the Gryffindor’s arousal as he fisted the hardened shaft.

Harry could now understand why Draco had had a hard time to keep his hips from thrusting into that warm, wet mouth. It was all he could do to keep his own hips steady so as not to choke his boyfriend when in reality all he wanted to do was grab the Slytherin’s head and fuck his mouth to his hearts content. The Gryffindor yelped out in pleasure as Draco groaned around his shaft, the vibrations causing heat to boil in his groin.

Draco misinterpreted the sound and stopped, removing his mouth. “Did I do something wrong?” he asked, unsure of what he had done.

“Merlin, don’t stop,” Harry pleaded breathlessly. “Make that noise again too, it felt bloody fantastic.”

Draco smirked and went back to work, humming as he sucked as much of Harry into his mouth as he could. This time the Golden Boy couldn’t stop his hips from jerking forward, but it didn’t seem to bother the blonde. Draco just pulled back a bit and then continued to torture the Gryffindor with his tongue, hardly breaking rhythm.

Harry could feel the head of his manhood prodding at the back of his boyfriend’s palate everytime Draco descended onto him and everything just seemed to go white as he felt his orgasm rip out of him and into Draco’s throat.

Draco was caught by surprise and he felt the compulsion to choke. He forcibly resisted the urge to pull off and cough, swallowing instead, finding the taste not as bad as he was sure it was going to be. The consistency was a bit thick, but all in all he really enjoyed making Harry feel so good, almost as much as when he himself had experienced it. He popped the dark haired teens softening member from his mouth, giving the head a solid kiss before crawling up the bed to snuggle into Harry's side contentedly, pulling the covers over their naked bodies.

"You've really got to show me your book," Draco mumbled sleepily.

"Tomorrow," Harry promised, kissing Draco on the top of his head as he wrapped his arm around his boyfriend's shoulder, feeling totally drained and warmly blissful. "Go to sleep," he ordered contentedly with a yawn. He didn't have to bother, Draco had already drifted off.

This was to be the last bit of peace the two were going to get for awhile, because it only took two days for the trouble to start, the trouble that was going to cause Harry and Draco's worst year ever.

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Harry crept quietly into the dorm room so as not to wake Ron. He had not intended to stay so late at Draco's and couldn't believe he had fallen into such a deep sleep, he had only meant to close his eyes for a moment. Now it was just past four in the morning, the night still and dark. He removed his clothing, changing into a pair of sleeping pants and then just about jumped out of his skin in surprise when Ron spoke to him.

"You did it, didn't you?" Ron asked in a half accusatory, half curious tone. Damn it, why did Harry have to beat him in everything?

Harry turned to the bed beside his, seeing his friend's head poked out between the curtains. "Merlin, don't scare me like that!" the brunette exclaimed as he slipped between the sheets of his bed. He sat up with the covers over his legs, turning so he could fluff up his pillow before lying down on his back, clasping his hands behind his head.

"So?" Ron asked again. He pulled his curtains back fully and rested on his side, his face in his hand, looking at his best friend.

“So, what?” Harry responded, glad it was too dark for Ron to see the blush that crept across his face.

“Did you and Malfoy....you know.”

“No, or course not. Why would you want to know anyways? Didn’t you say you weren’t ready for stuff like that?” Harry questioned.

“Well, just because I don’t want to see it doesn’t mean you can’t talk to me about it. We are mates.” Ron answered reasonably. “I’d tell you if I lost my virginity.”

Harry sputtered indignantly. “I didn’t lose my virginity, I told you we didn’t go all the way.”

“Oh? What *did* you do then?” Ron asked with a lift of his eyebrow. Now he was just having fun teasing Harry.

“Mates or no,” Harry replied, trying his best to look serious as he tossed a pillow at his chuckling friend. “I’m not going to talk about this with you.”

“Okay, okay,” Ron laughed, throwing the pillow back. “Guess old Drackey-poo wouldn’t put out, eh?” he teased, not able to resist goading his friend one more time.

“That does it!” Harry cried with a snort of laughter and the pillows began hurling back and forth between the two.

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Draco sat at the Gryffindor table nibbling very slowly on a piece of dry toast. The only thought going through his mind this morning was that he was never ever, *ever* going to drink muggle alcohol again. He reached out and took a sip from the cup of weak tea just as Harry and Ron entered the Great Hall. The blonde could feel his boyfriend’s good mood bubbling over him like champagne and he gave the Gryffindor a wavering grin.

Harry sat down beside the Slytherin and Ron sat across from Harry, which was now their normal seating arrangement. “Not feeling well?” Harry asked the blonde as he felt the complete wretchedness wafting down their strengthened connection from his hung over boyfriend.



Draco could only nod as he turned six shades of green as he watched Ron noisily dig into his huge breakfast of scrambled eggs, sausages and kippers.

Ron lifted his head and gave Draco a grin around his mouthful of food, which only caused the Slytherin to almost lose what little he had taken in this morning. "Harry told you not to drink so much," the red-head informed Draco happily, after swallowing noisily.

"Shut up, Weasel," Draco responded half-heartedly, lowering his head and placing his cheek against the coolness of the table.

Ron just chuckled and went back to eating.

"You should go back to your room and have a lie down," Harry stated, feeling a touch of sympathy for his boyfriend, although he was finding it somewhat funny as well.

"I don't want to," Draco responded sulkily. "This is the last day of vacation before everyone comes back to Hogwarts for classes. I wanted to spend the day with you."

Harry reached over and gave Draco's back a bit of a rub, trying to offer comfort and consolation. "I know, but you're not going to be able to do anything in the condition your in. Look at you. You can't even lift your head from the table. Come on, I'll take you back. Maybe we can ask Snape for a hangover potion or something."

"I'm sure Snape would be more than thrilled with us if he found out we were drinking on school grounds. He'd just blame you anyways," Draco complained feebly. "Eat first and then we can go back to my room."

"Hey, what am I supposed to do while you guys are off doing...whatever," Ron grumbled.

"I really don't care," Draco huffed as he sat back up. He soon wished he had just stayed down on the table as a swirl of dizziness and nausea swept over him.

"Guys, come on," Harry rebuked the two, before they could get into insulting each other. "We'll all go to Draco's." The dark haired teen added after a moments thought.

"Fine, fine," Draco groaned petulantly as he rubbed his aching temples. "Just don't be so loud and...happy."

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Draco lazily dozed in and out of sleep as he lay on the couch while Harry and Ron played chess. Harry sat on the floor in front of the sofa, his back leaning against it, sitting just enough to the side so that Draco could watch the game if he choose over the Gryffindor's shoulder. Ron sat on the opposite side of the coffee table as Harry, his legs crossed Indian style as he stared at the board trying to figure out his next move.

Draco opened his eyes and watched as the two friends played, noticing that Ron had one more chess piece captured than Harry. He had to hand it to Weasley; he really was good at Wizard's chess, although probably not as good as Draco, of course. The Slytherin was feeling much better now that he had a chance to sleep the worse of the headache off and he reached out to the nape of Harry's neck and started twirling a strand of ebony hair around his finger, his hand hidden behind the Gryffindor's head so Ron couldn't see what was going on.

Harry's attention was immediately distracted from his game with Ron as he felt Draco playing with his hair. Tiny shivers coursed over his scalp and down his spine causing goosebumps to rise in their wake as the blonde moved his hand and traced lazy patterns on the back of Harry's neck before moving back up to stroke through his hair again, the Slytherin's fingernails gently scratching at the back of his head.

Ron stared at the board after making his move, waiting for Harry to take his turn and then looked up curiously when it seemed to be taking too long. The first thing he saw was the way that Draco was staring at Harry's neck as if he were a vampire that had gone too many days without a feed. Casting his eyes to his friend he saw that Harry's face had a slack, dreamy expression and he wasn't even looking at the board. "Hey!" the red-head called out indignantly. "What are you doing, Malfoy?"

"Nothing," Draco answered sweetly with just a touch too much innocence.

"Are you flirting with him?" Ron asked, narrowing his eyes. He knew he was right when Harry's face turned crimson.

"What if I am?" Draco responded and then leaned forward to run his tongue up the side of Harry's neck as he stared straight at the shocked red-head.

Both Gryffindors let out a yelp of surprise at the same time and Draco burst out laughing at the expressions on the two boys faces. Harry's face was burning from embarrassment and possible arousal, while Ron was just gaping like a fish out of water before he scowled at the blonde.

"Bloody hell," Ron yelled. "Don't do stuff like that in front of me."

Quicker than anyone would have thought, considering how the blonde had been suffering not that long ago, Draco jumped up off the sofa to sit right in front of Ron, leaning in towards him until their noses were almost touching. "What's the matter? Feeling left out?" Draco smirked, his tone a deep, rumbling purr, allowing his breath to caress against the stunned red-head's lips.

Ron scooted back as fast as he could. "Bl-bl-bloody hell!" he stuttered out, at a loss for anything else to say before his face went an angry shade of red.

Harry went to jump between the two, certain that Draco had gone too far and was about to lose his head when the blonde calmly stood up, laughing like a mad-man.

"It was a joke, calm down," Draco responded with another amused smirk as his laughter died down, wiping a few tears of merriment from the corner of his eyes. "You're just too easy, Weasley." The blonde snickered as he headed out into the kitchen.

"Harry," Ron warned. "You better control him or so help me..."

"I'll talk to him, I promise," Harry tried to placate as he moved to sit on the sofa.

Draco returned with three cokes, one for each of them. He had almost left them there, they were his last three, but Malfoy's were always good hosts so he decided to share them. "Come on Ronald," Draco teased, passing him the can. "I thought you Weasleys like a good joke."

"That wasn't funny," Ron returned icily and then a look of surprise came over his face as he realized that Draco had called him by his given name for the first time ever since he had known the grey eyed boy. He normally hated to hear his full name, but coming from the blonde it seemed appropriate somehow. He wasn't sure if he was ready to be quite that intimate as to allow the Slytherin to call him Ron, so Ronald suited him fine.

Draco went and sat by Harry, passing a can to him before opening his own and taking a large swallow.

“Want to keep playing?” Harry asked Ron. He too had been surprised that Draco had called his friend by his first name, but then he smiled. Even though Draco’s teasing had been a bit over the top, he was at least trying his best to fit in with the two Gryffindors and that made Harry feel a little less put out at the joke.

Harry and Ron had just begun to resume their game with Draco watching when the door to the blonde’s rooms opened without so much as a knock and the tall, serious Potions Professor walked in.

Severus was a bit surprised to see the red-headed Weasley boy there with the other two. „*Is Draco going to befriend every Gryffindor in the school?*“ He thought to himself, suddenly having a nasty vision of Draco in red and gold robes before he shook it from his mind with a shudder.

“Mr. Malfoy, Headmaster Dumbledore would like to speak to you,” Severus stated formally, glaring at the other two boys as a hint that they should leave. “Now,” he added icily when the other two continued to just remain there staring at him.

“I don’t mind if they stay here,” Draco replied, a bit put out that his godfather had barged in and was now being rude to his guests.

“We may be some time.”

“Maybe they could come too, then,” Draco said hopefully “Absolutely

not,” Professor Snape responded haughtily.

“Come on, Harry,” Ron said nervously as he tried to pull his friend towards the door by the sleeve of his robe.

Harry’s face darkened in anger and he was going to argue with the professor, but Draco stopped him.

“It’s alright, I’ll find you later,” the blonde soothed.

Harry and Ron went back to their dormitory saying hello to some of the students they passed that were coming back to the school after the holidays. Classes didn't start for another two days, but there were some that wanted a quiet place to finish up any assignments at the last minute before the rest of their peers showed up tomorrow.

The two boys had just entered their common room and sat down when Hermione bounced up to them. "Hi," she greeted the two excitedly. "It's good to see you guys again. How was your holiday?"

"Fine," Harry answered, still in a sour mood because of being kicked out of his boyfriend's rooms.

Hermione gave The-Boy-Who-Lived a curious glance before turning to the red-head, asking with her eyes what was wrong.

Ron just gave her a bright smile and then hugged her. "You aren't going to believe what's been going on," he stated as he released her.

"Oh?" the girl replied, her curiosity very piqued.

"Draco's back," Harry answered. He figured now was as good a time as he was going to get to explain things to her. "We should sit down so I can fill you in."

The three friends went over to their favourite corner of the common room, away from the main traffic area and sat down on the comfortable chairs.

"Where was he all this time?" Hermione questioned. "Who found him?"

"In the muggle world," Harry informed her.

"Fred and George found him around Christmas time and brought him over to the burrow," Ron told her.

Hermione fired off question after question and the two boys filled her in to what had been going on and how Draco was now on their side and under Dumbledore's protection from his father.

"There's more," Ron stated after they had caught the young witch up with all the news.

“But Harry is the one That’s going to have to tell you.” Ron hoped that his not very subtle hint would get his friend to tell the girl so she wouldn’t hear about it later from somewhere else and be upset at the two of them for not letting her know themselves.

Harry blushed and stuttered a bit, unsure of how to tell her.

“For Merlin’s sake, Harry, just spit it out,” Hermione scolded, wondering what it was that had the raven haired boy so flustered and Ron grinning smugly like the cat that had just eaten the proverbial canary. She was still trying to come to grips with the fact that Draco Malfoy was now on their side.

“We’re going out,” Harry said in a rush, causing Hermione to blink stupidly for a moment or two.

“You’re...going...out?” The teen witch repeated each word slowly. “What in the world do you mean?”

“Malfoy is Harry’s boyfriend,” Ron answered, glad that finally, this was all out in the open. Even though he had promised Harry to keep it quiet, he hated not having Hermione know. She was part of their golden trio and he didn’t want to leave her out of the loop, especially since he knew it would hurt her feelings terribly. He was sure he would have spilled the beans anyways, if Harry had taken too long to tell.

“Malfoy...is...” Hermione didn’t even know what to say anymore, she had never been at such a loss for words in her life as she was right now. “Are you serious?” she whispered, leaning forward towards the bespectacled teen.

Harry’s face was so red he was sure he was going to spontaneously combust at any moment. “Yes, but you can’t tell anyone,” he whispered back. “I don’t want the other Slytherin’s to know, they might give him a hard time over it.”

“Well I’d say,” Hermione responded, sitting back and looking at the two boys silently for a few moments. “Are you sure this is wise, Harry?” she finally asked, concern for her friend showing plainly in her tone of voice.

“Yes, he’s okay. You’re not upset are you?” Harry questioned nervously.

“No...just....really surprised. I mean, you went out with Cho and...well, I just didn’t think you’d be one to fancy boys...and Malfoy of all people...I’m just...surprised,” the young witch repeated.

“He’s not so bad, once you get used to him,” Ron added, glad that Hermione seemed to be taking this so well.

“You like him too now?” Hermione questioned the red-head unbelievably.

“Well...I wouldn’t say I like him, but he’s not a bad sort when he’s not acting like a total prat.”

The three friends suddenly burst out laughing, Harry in relief that Hermione wasn’t angry with him about the whole thing. He then began to tell the curious girl how the two of them had become friends and then more, when he was interrupted.

“Harry,” Seamus, who had just come back to school, called out. “Malfoy is at the door, says he won’t leave until he speaks to you. When the hell did he get back here? Wasn’t he kidnapped or something? And what does he want with you?”

Harry ignored Finnigan’s questions and went to the portrait to let his boyfriend in, feeling a sense of uneasiness course through him. That unease only intensified when he saw the look on Draco’s face.

“What’s wrong?” he asked as he led the blonde over to where Ron and Hermione were sitting.

Draco plopped down in one of the chairs with an expression of fear mixed with sorrow. “Dumbledore told me the Ministry has arrested my father,” he practically whispered. “For child abuse, there’s going to be a trial at the Wizengamot and I have to testify.”

There was stunned silence for a moment and then Harry stood, his hands clenched into fists in anger. “What the hell are they thinking? They’re putting your life in danger. They can’t do that without your consent, can they?”

“I’m a minor, they don’t need my consent. Snape told me that Dumbledore tried to intercede until he had a chance to speak to me, but the Ministry went ahead anyways.

Professor Dumbledore has put himself forward as my legal guardian so I have some protection. The Order found out because Dumbledore went to them and explained what had gone on between my father and me, trying to get protection for me from Voldemort and the Death Eaters in case they found out that I was the one that gave out information on them. I guess the Ministry Aurors that are involved with the Order have been after my father for years because they suspected that he was involved with the Dark Lord, but they could never find any proof. They decided They're more than happy to put him away for this instead and figured him being out of the picture would keep me safe as well, but they don't know my father."

Harry sat down on the arm of Draco's chair and pulled him into a hug, Ron decided he would let the show of affection and comfort slide by without making a fuss about it this time.

Draco tried to squirm away, seeing as they were right in the middle of the Gryffindor common room where anyone coming back from holiday could see them and Harry released him, but stayed seated on the arm of his chair. The blonde then noticed that Hermione was there as well and gave her a slight nod at the wide eyed girl. "I take it she knows about us," he stated to his boyfriend.

"They just told me," the witch replied with a bit of a stunned expression on her face at witnessing Harry hugging Malfoy, it was just too surreal. She was still trying to digest all the information and she was unsure of how to act around the Slytherin. "I don't understand why Dumbledore would be your guardian. Why wouldn't Snape offer, isn't he your godfather?" Hermione asked.

Draco sighed, he wasn't sure how much he should explain to the other two Gryffindors, but Harry took the decision out of his hands.

"Snape's a spy for the Order. If he came forward against Draco's father, it would put him in jeopardy."

"You're kidding?" Ron questioned with surprise. He had always been sure that Snape had to be a Death Eater or one in the making the way he acted.

Harry nodded and then turned his attention back to his boyfriend. "Are you going to be okay with this?" he asked the quiet Slytherin.



“I don’t know,” Draco responded truthfully. The blonde had imagined that he and Harry might have had to fight Lucius whenever Voldemort crawled back out from under his rock, but to have to face him and describe what his father had done to him with the man sitting right there. It was a very frightening prospect, even if his godfather had assured him that he and Dumbledore would stand with him and that he would be safe.

“When is the trial?” Harry asked gently.

“In a few weeks, I guess,” Draco responded dully. “I have to go in and make a deposition sometime in the middle of the week.” The blonde was staying very calm on the outside, but inside he was terrified. He felt that he was being pushed into this confrontation with his father, a confrontation he wasn’t ready for and in a way he it’s hadn’t planned for. He had the feeling that he had just fallen overboard without a life vest into water too deep for him to stand.

“Draco?” Harry questioned with some concern when the blonde teen stood from his chair, his face paler than normal.

“I...I just need some time alone. I’m going back to my room,” Draco answered, before he started to walk towards the portrait hole.

“I’ll go with you,” Harry called after him, also rising to follow his boyfriend.

“I’ll be okay, just stay here with your friends. I really need to be alone right now,” Draco stated before he opened the door and left Harry standing there wondering what to do.

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Harry stayed with Ron and Hermione until supper time, trying to give his boyfriend some time to himself. When Draco hadn’t shown up in the Great Hall he began to get worried, and grabbing some food for them both, headed to the blonde’s rooms telling his two friends he’d meet with them later.

Draco lay on his back on the sofa, one arm bent, covering his eyes. He had no idea how much time had passed. His thoughts were in turmoil and he felt as if he were floating up and down, spinning and colliding within his mind. He was frightened by the prospect of betraying his father in front of everyone and angry with himself for even thinking of it as a betrayal. He hated his father for what he had done to him, for the pain he had put him

through year after year, for all the lies he had told him. But he loved him as well and he couldn't come to grips with his warring emotions.

Not knowing how to think, Draco sat up and screamed aloud into his silent apartment, his hands fisting his hair. He just felt cold and that there was no light for his path. One part of him wanted everyone to know what his life had been like; another part wanted to hide it deep inside, hide it even from himself, and just pretend everything was fine as he had always done.

Harry burst through the door when he heard his boyfriend scream, his heart pounding in his chest. He rushed over to the blonde and set the tray of food on the coffee table, sitting beside the Slytherin who was now hiding his face in his hands, his shoulders shaking with quiet sobs.

"I don't think I can do this," Draco said in a low, shaky voice before Harry could even ask if he was alright. "I know he's a bastard and he deserves to go to prison, but he's still my father. I don't want to be the one to put him there."

Harry had no idea what to say so he said nothing and just put his arms around his hurting boyfriend, rubbing his back in soothing circles, trying to offer any comfort.

Draco grasped Harry tightly, both hands clutching the front of his robes as he put his forehead to the Gryffindors chest. "I want to stop this, but I don't know how. Right now it feels just like I'm falling in the ocean and the waves are taking me down. I'm treading for my life, but it seems no matter what I do, I won't be able to keep up this breathing. I just don't know what to do, nothing I can think of feels like the right thing to do."

Draco cried out his misery, wetting the front of Harry's robes right through to his shirt and the dark-haired boy let him. Harry hated how upset this was making his boyfriend, he hated the Ministry for making Draco do this, he hated Lucius for screwing up Draco's life, but most of all, he hated himself for not being able to fix it and make things better for the blonde.

Tears began to leak from Harry's eyes at this feeling of uselessness that was enveloping him and he hugged Draco closer, kissing his head and temples. "I'm sorry, Draco. I'm so sorry," Harry murmured soothingly over and over again between kisses.

Draco's sobbing quieted to small hic-cups and then he raised his head so his lips could connect with Harry's, still clinging to his robes, needing the other boy like a life preserver, more than he had needed anyone in his life.

Their kiss, at first, was full of desperation. Draco's desperation to forget his father's cruelty and Harry's desperation to console the blonde, but it soon changed, becoming more gentle and loving as both boys emotions calmed and they began to enjoy the feel and comfort of each others lips.

The two pulled apart slowly to take in air and Draco gazed longingly into Harry's eyes. The blonde teen realized that he wanted the Gryffindor, that he wanted to share everything with this dark haired boy, to show him that he loved him.

Draco blinked a bit in surprise at his own feelings. They had just snuck up on him at this very moment. He knew he had liked Harry, but love? He continued to stare into green eyes for a bit longer, pondering this sudden swelling emotion and found it was true. At least, he thought it was. He'd never been in love before so he had no real experience with it to compare.

"Are you alright, now?" Harry asked curiously, noticing the changing expressions flying across the Slytherin's face. The way Draco was looking at him made his heart rate increase considerably, and he wasn't really sure why.

"Yeah, I...I think so. I'm okay," Draco answered softly. He gave Harry a small smile. "I think...I...I want you," he whispered, chickening out at the last minute from saying what he really wanted to.

Harry's eyes widened in astonishment, "You want me?" he questioned, hugging his arms around the other boy a bit tighter.

Draco blushed and looked away. "Yeah, I do." There were a few moments of silence before Draco looked up again. "Stay with me tonight. I want to sleep with you."

"Oh, Draco...I don't know. I mean you've had kind of a shock with your father and all..."

"I know and I'll have to face up to that, but later. Right now I want to be with you," Draco confessed, cutting Harry off from his objections. "Don't you want to?" Draco asked worriedly after Harry just continued to stare at him.

“Gods yes, I want to,” Harry affirmed. He gazed at Draco quite seriously for a moment longer. “Are you sure?”

Draco smiled at his worried boyfriend, easing Harry’s doubts. “Yes.”

That one word of confirmation set Harry to kissing the blonde, all thoughts of supper forgotten as they sat on the sofa hands caressing under clothing and tongues intertwining. Suddenly Draco stood, confusing Harry for a moment until he reached his hand down to the seated Gryffindor.

“Let’s go somewhere more comfortable,” Draco said huskily.

Harry took his boyfriend’s hand and allowed himself to be led down the hallway to the bedroom. Once inside Draco closed the door and the two of them made their way over to the bed, crawling onto it and kneeling in front of each other.

Draco began to pick at his shirt buttons, keeping his eyes locked on Harry. His hands were shaking so much with anticipation and nervousness that he was having a hard time to get the shirt undone. Harry chuckled and pushed his hands away, methodically and slowly unfastening each button until he was able to gently push the shirt from the blonde’s shoulders.

Draco swallowed hard as the Gryffindor’s hands caressed warm and scratchy over his shoulders as he slid the fabric off. Harry brought his lips to the bared left shoulder and began to kiss and nibble his way towards the blonde’s neck, one of his hands tweaking at a nipple, the other going further south, rubbing against the hardness that was straining behind denim.

Draco huffed out small gasps as he pulled at Harry’s robes. “Harry,” the blonde cried out, lost in the pleasure and passion of the brunette’s touch and the feelings from his newly discovered emotions for the Gryffindor that were combined with the spell which was swirling around them. “Please, fuck me.”

The dark haired teen answered this coarse and arousing request by drowning the blonde with kiss after kiss as the two boys stripped each other between lip locks.

Harry rolled them both down to the bed, wrapping the blankets around their naked bodies. Now that there was nothing between them, the feel of skin on skin was amazing

and they slowed their frantic movements to enjoy the feeling of long, slow kisses and the warm, dry friction of hands taking the time to explore each other thoroughly.

After what seemed like ages of this sweet torture, when Draco was gasping hoarse breaths and could hardly see for the spinning in his head, Harry moved to lean over the bed, reaching towards his robe that was on the floor. He dug into his pocket for a moment or two and then came back with his wand.

“What do you need that for?” Draco asked breathlessly.

Harry was equally out of breath, but he grinned sexily at the blonde that was lying on his back looking up at him and called forth a spell that he had learned from his book. “Traditum Lubricus,” Harry intoned, pointing the wand at his hand and causing a clear oil to begin to coat his fingers. The-Boy-Who-Lived was soon chuckling again at the look on Draco’s face. “You look like you’re changing your mind,” he smiled.

“No,” Draco replied, though his voice was a bit higher in pitch than usual. “I want this.” Nevertheless, he wasn’t quite ready for the sensation of oiled fingers teasing at his entrance and his eyes went as big as saucers when Harry pushed one in.

“Does it hurt?” Harry questioned with concern, keeping his eyes locked onto Draco’s.

“N-n-no,” Draco stammered. “It...it feels kind of weird, but not bad,” he finished.

Harry concentrated hard, trying to put into action everything he had learned from his little book, his tongue beginning to stick out of the side of his mouth as he moved his finger in and out of his boyfriend’s tightness. He gently inserted a second finger and pushed in a bit further, searching for a certain spot that the book promised would bring his partner incredible pleasure.

Draco was beginning to relax and he was rather enjoying the sensations the Gryffindor was causing, especially when Harry touched something inside him that sent a scalding wave through him. He cried out loudly, as much in shock as in pleasure, not expecting it to feel this good.

“You okay?” Harry asked, his voice rough and husky. He was so turned on just watching the reactions he was getting from the blonde as he carefully stretched him, that he wasn’t sure what was going to happen when he was finally inside the warm muscles that were engulfing his fingers.

“Ahh, yessss,” Draco hissed out, squirming as he tried to make Harry touch that spot again.

Harry moved to lay half on and half off of the blonde, nipping and sucking at his earlobe, his right arm around Draco’s waist as he continued to stroke in and out with his left hand, adding a third digit to the mix. “How’s this?” he questioned, his voice rumbling deep and dark against the Slytherin’s ear.

That wave of pleasure crashed over Draco again, forcing a wild groan out of him. There was no way he could answer; words seemed to have disappeared from his mind as Harry

caused those undulations of bliss to cover him again and again. When the fingers were withdrawn, he whimpered a protest, distantly shocked at how wanton he sounded, unheard of for a Malfoy. Draco reached up and removed the Gryffindors skewed glasses, letting them plop to the floor.

Harry moved again, this time to lift both of Draco’s knees and spread his legs. He positioned himself at the Slytherins entrance and waited for a moment, overcome with what he was about to do. The Gryffindor kept in mind the warnings from the book and resisted the very real urge to just plunge in quick and hard. “Relax as much as you can,” Harry counselled. “This might hurt a little.”

By this point in time, Draco couldn’t give half a galleon for „hurt a little“. Every atom in his body was hungry for Harry to enter him and when the Gryffindor pushed at him, too tentative, too careful, he pushed back, grabbing his lover’s hips and pulling him closer. He felt Harry’s pleased surprise and he raised his arms from his boyfriend’s hips to wrap them around his neck.

Suddenly, a shudder of hot thickness filled him, causing him to feel a hundred times better than before. He felt stretched, but the small painful twinge couldn’t compete with the feeling of completeness he was feeling as Harry overwhelmed him and their connection opened to a new level, all at once. Draco could no longer tell which feelings were Harry’s and which were his own, a blazing flood of fire and ice twirling in marvelous confusion.

Holding him tightly, Harry began a tide-slow rhythm, his entire body shaking from the effort of being so gentle. Draco’s incoherent cries begging him to stop holding back only caused his belly to tighten and his manhood to throb almost painfully within the slick walls.

*„Please...go harder, faster. I need you deeper, I can't take this...too gentle,”* Draco screamed out in his mind.

Harry gave a start of surprise as he continued to stroke in and out excruciatingly slowly, trying to make this wonderful feeling that was wrapped around his shaft and coiling in his belly last. He had heard every word of Draco's plea in his mind, just the same as if the blonde had said it out loud, but he refused to give in and possibly hurt his boyfriend.

Instead, he looked down at the boy beneath him with half open eyes, their lips just touching, almost kissing and Harry feasted on Draco's desperation.

Draco finally managed to sob out his name. “Harry,” he cried. “Please...”

Harry breathed shudderingly onto Draco's mouth as he allowed himself to go a little faster, push a little harder. “My Draco,” he groaned out, the only English words he said before slipping into Parseltongue and uttering stings of endearments against the blonde's lips. The-Boy-Who-Lived was beyond reasoning as the blonde's muscles contracted around him and he let his hips buck forward with slightly more force, striking deeper inside his boyfriend's body.

When Harry lapsed into Parseltongue and he felt the Gryffindor's manhood drive into him, Draco could no longer bear it. The pleasure that rolled through him was as exquisite as Crucio was excruciating and this time his orgasm was more deeply intense than when they had engaged in oral sex. It blasted through him like Expelliarmus, destroying him utterly.

Just as the white fire began to recede, Harry let go of the final bit of restraint he had been holding onto and thumped hard into Draco a few times with a groaning cry, which brought the blonde, impossibly, to a second peak as Harry came inside of him.

The world slowly came back into focus, reassembling as they moved apart a little with their foreheads touching. Harry pulled up the blankets, which had been pushed and kicked down to the foot of the bed, to cover their damp and cooling skin.

“Yuck, sticky,” Draco complained as his hand found his warm semen that was spread across his stomach.

Harry gave a breathless laugh and then sighed contentedly. “Was that how you thought it would be?” the Gryffindor asked after a few moments of sleepy silence.

“Better, it was better than I thought it would be,” Draco responded as he squirmed closer. He pushed his fingers into the messy mass of Harry’s hair, scratching lightly over his lover’s scalp. This brought a happy noise from Harry so he went on doing it. “I had no idea anything could feel so good.”

“Mmm, glad,” Harry sighed out as his eyes drifted shut, hugging the blonde a little closer, agreeing totally.

There didn’t seem to be much else to say and despite the stickiness, Draco was beginning to nod off, all the emotional pain and physical pleasure of the day catching up with him. He just barely managed to keep his hand going through Harry’s hair, since he could feel through their link how much the Gryffindor was enjoying the soothing sensation.

Just before he lost the desire to continue, he gathered his courage to say the one thing he now knew to be true. “I love you,” he whispered out.

Harry’s answer was a faint snore. He hadn’t heard.

„*Bloody Gryffindor,*“ Draco thought fondly. „*He’ll be lucky if I ever say that again,*“ he complained softly, knowing that as soon as the right moment appeared again he would tell his dark haired lover exactly how he felt. Content with the world, he gently slipped into the warm embrace of sleep as well.

*AN: The spell Harry used, “Traditum Lubricus”, are two real Latin words. They roughly translate out to mean “transmit oil”. This is, of course, a spell I made up and is not found in the canon spells from the world of Harry Potter.*

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Harry and Draco awoke early in the morning, earlier than they had wanted, to the sound of loud knocking on the door.

“That’s gotta be Ron,” Harry grumbled as he began to disentangle himself from the very warm body of his boyfriend. His left arm was completely numb all the way down to his fingers, as Draco had been sleeping on it all night, so he ended up dropping his glasses when he went to pick them up from the floor. He shook his hand, clenching and unclenching his fingers to try and get the circulation moving again and relieve the sensation of pins and needles that was pricking along his skin.



“Get rid of him,” Draco mumbled as he curled up under the blankets, not even bothering to open his eyes.

Harry cast Draco a disgruntled look at being ordered around, but put his trousers on and recovered his glasses, placing them on his face and blinking to wake himself up a bit more. „*Merlin, but a shower would be good right now,*” the Gryffindor thought longingly as he trundled off to the door and the insistent knocking attempting to smooth down his unruly hair. He was not looking forward to Ron’s disapproval. “I’m coming, I’m coming, hold your Thestrals.”

It wasn’t the red headed boy at the door when he opened it and Harry snapped fully awake as he stared at Rita Skeeter and her photographer Bozo.

“I thought this was where Draco Malfoy was staying,” the Daily Prophet’s reporter queried as her eyes scanned the shirtless Harry and the room behind him. The-Boy-Who-Lived was momentarily blinded from the flash of Bozo’s camera.

Draco took that moment to grumpily yell from the bedroom before Harry could come up with a plausible lie. “Harry, tell him to get lost and come back to bed.”

Rita grinned like a werewolf that had just found wounded prey. “Well, my, my. What’s going on here now? Have I intruded onto a secret love nest?” The nosy woman had her quill out hovering over her notebook. “Care to make a comment?”

Harry finally gathered his wits about him and began to close the door when Draco walked into view with only the blanket from the bed wrapped around him, his hair mussed and with a look on his face that left no doubt in Rita’s mind that he had been thoroughly shagged, and by the Boy Wonder, no less. One of the blonde’s arms went up in front of his eyes defensively as the camera flashed again, the other hand grasping at the material of the blanket to try and keep it closed tightly about his naked body.

Harry pushed the woman and photographer back frantically and slammed the portrait door, turning to put his back against it as soon as it was closed, his eyes wide.

“That wasn’t Ron,” Draco said, the color completely drained from his face.

“Nope, not Ron,” Harry reiterated, hanging his head in defeat. Why did shit like this always happen to him?

They listened silently for a few more moments as Rita continued to fire off questions from the other side of the door, trying to cajole the two into either making a comment about Draco's father's arrest or what The-Boy-Who-Lived was doing with his arch nemesis, The-Boy-Who-Was-(allegedly)-Abused with barely a stitch of clothing on. Finally, the woman left with her photographer in tow, not wanting to get caught after going to all the trouble to sneak into Hogwarts in the first place. They left two nervous teens trying to figure out what in the hell they were going to do for damage control.

Rita, meanwhile, had decided she was going to have the scoop of the century, whether the boys talked to her or not. She and Bozo transformed into the Animagus forms and quickly scuttled away.

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The next morning Harry woke with a start in his own bed, cold sweat dripping down his body. It was very early, the sky still dusky grey, just lightening slightly from the darkness of night. He had had a horrible dream.

In it he saw Draco lying dead from multiple wounds, his eyes closed and his face slack and pale. Harry had been trying desperately to get him to wake up, not believing that his lover would never open those grey eyes upon him again. He had been crying and holding the bloodied blonde to him while in the background evil laughter could be heard mixed with the screams and cries of the fallen and dying. That's when he had bolted upright in bed, gasping for breath, his eyes wide, his body quivering.

"You okay, mate?" Ron questioned groggily from his bed.

"Yeah," Harry panted, "just a bad dream. I'm fine, go back to sleep."

"Anything you want to talk about?"

"No, thanks Ron, it's just a stupid dream, nothing to worry about," Harry answered, surprised that his voice sounded so normal.

"Okay then," Ron mumbled as he flopped back onto his bed. In a few seconds he was snoring softly.

Harry lay back on his own bed, willing the fear that was clenched tightly around his heart to loosen as he took slow, deep breaths. His scar didn't hurt so he knew he hadn't

had any kind of vision from Voldemort, but these dreams he had been having were so vivid. It was almost like he was truly there and it was enough to make him crazy.

*„I'm just freaked out about the possibility of Draco fighting the Dark Lord with me, That's all. It's just my fears getting the best of me,”* the dark haired teen thought, trying to make himself feel better. *„Draco's smarter than that, and We're going to be working with powerful wandless spells. And Voldemort might not even come anywhere near us for years. I haven't had any visions or heard anything about Death Eater activity in ages. I'm just acting stupid.”* Harry began to feel better and he drifted off back into slumber. Thankfully, no more nightmares plagued him. Unfortunately, it wasn't long before he was disturbed again.

“Harry! Harry!” Ron shouted, shaking his friend's shoulder. “We're going to be late for breakfast. I have to have something to eat before we go to classes,” the red head complained, moving away from a groggy Harry as he pulled his robes on.

“Okay, okay, I'm up,” Harry grumbled. He was having a very good sleep for a change and was loath to leave the warmth of his bed. He sat up noticing that they were the only two in the dorm. “Where's everybody else?” he questioned, adjusting his glasses.

“Down in the Great Hall, where we should be. Come on, mate. Get dressed,” Ron ordered as he threw Harry's robes across his bed.

Harry bounded out of bed and made his way to the bathroom, carrying his clothing with him. “You go ahead, I'll be right there.” Now that he was awake he was looking forward to the first day of classes and also to seeing his boyfriend and maybe sneaking a bit of private time with him as well.

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Draco went to the Great Hall, leaving before the rest of his house, for breakfast. He was so early that the owls hadn't even delivered the mail yet. Since all the rest of the students were now back for classes after the holidays, he decided to sit at his own table rather

than Harry's. Merlin knew that there was going to be gossip enough once that Skeeter woman plastered his private life all over the papers and he didn't want to add fuel to the fire.

Harry and he had decided to try and ignore and deny, seeing as there wasn't much else they could do about it, hoping that everyone would remember that The Daily Prophet was a complete rag and not to be taken seriously. They were more than counting on that fact, actually.

Hermione had suggested that they go back to their old rivalry as well, or at least pretend to, so as to throw others further from the truth. Draco wasn't sure he wanted to insult Harry, even if it was pretend and had decided instead to just ignore The-Boy-Who-Lived, at least in front of anyone else other than Ron and Hermione.

He was almost finished when others began to trickle into the Great Hall. One of the first people he saw was Pansy and she stopped dead, looking at him as if he were a ghost.

"Draco," the girl squealed as she ran over to him. "Where have you been? What happened? How did you..."

"It's a long story," Draco interrupted. "Sit down and I'll tell you about it." The blonde knew that some explanation was in order and he wanted to be the one to tell his school mates in the hopes of heading off the disaster that was going to explode when people read the papers.

More and more students came into the hall and Draco was pleased that many of his old mates seemed to not be angry with him any longer over his supposed suicide attempt. In fact they seemed concerned for him and were eager to hear what had happened to him during his disappearance.

"Is it true?" Theodore Nott asked as he sat down beside Draco making Vincent Crabbe give him a nasty look, which the boy just ignored. "Did your father really beat you?"

"Where did you hear that from?" Draco asked, surprised that the news had circulated so quickly. His father had just recently been arrested and as far as he knew everything had been kept hush-hush.

"My dad told me," the other boy responded. All of Slytherin were huddled around waiting to hear the blonde's answer.

Draco sighed. This was going to come out in any event so there was no sense denying it. "Yes, it's true. I was never kidnapped, I ran away because of what my father did to me."

Draco continued to explain some of what had happened, keeping everything to a minimum, not really enjoying exposing his private life to others. He left out any mention

of Harry Potter, wandless magic, his defection, or anything else he thought might get him in serious trouble with his peers. He did tell his group about being found by the muggles, but he played down their importance to him and the length of his stay with them. Finished with his tale he hoped against hope that when The Daily Prophet hit the tables, they'd take his word over it's.

And speaking of, here came the owls, dropping off letters and the dreaded newspaper.

Draco took a quick glance over to the Gryffindor table as his house mates sat in their seats and saw that Ron had just come in and was sitting in his normal place while there was no sign of Harry at all. „*Is he going to spend the whole day in bed so he doesn't have to deal with this? Great, leave me to the wolves,*“ the blonde thought sulkily with a frown.

Draco put on his best poker face as he waited for the inevitable, which didn't take that long to happen.

“What is this?” Pansy squeaked when she looked at the paper that had landed face-up in front of her. Under the headline:

**“SECRET GAY LOVE AFFAIR REVEALED – Previously missing Malfoy heir abuse victim finds comfort in the arms of The-Boy-Who-Lived”**

was the lovely photo of a bare-chested, deer-caught-in-the-headlights looking Harry, standing in front of the open door with a blanket clad Draco in the background, his arm raising over and over again to cover his face. The pertaining article took up the rest of the front page and most of the second.

Draco glanced at the picture the girl was holding out to him with a bored expression on his face. “Really, Pansy,” he scoffed. “That rag will just write anything and it's plain to see that picture is doctored.” Draco tapped his own image. “That guy doesn't even look like me. I mean look at his hair, it's a mess. I'd never be caught in such disarray. And me with Potter, please,” he mocked. “I have some taste.”

Draco smirked as he noticed the expressions of his fellows change from shock to belief.

“This is all Potter’s doing,” Pansy grumbled. “He’s so jealous of you he’s trying to drag your name through the dirt. He must have hired some actor to pose as you. Well he won’t get away with it.” Pansy was working herself into a snit, gripping the paper and wrinkling it in her grasp.

“He’s lying,” Adrian Pucey said quietly from his position just behind Draco.

Everyone turned to the older boy who had been standing quietly looking over the blonde’s shoulder until now. Draco tried his best to keep his face from showing his shock.

“What?” Pansy asked, confused.

“I said Malfoy here is lying. He’s been here for a few days and he hasn’t left Potter’s side the whole time.” Adrian gave Draco a nasty look, daring him to refute what he had just said. “I’ve been watching them, seems to me they’ve been pretty friendly.”

Just then Harry entered the Great Hall to the cheers, cat calls and wolf whistles of the other students who had been reading the Prophet, leaving the few who didn’t know anything staring in confusion. Draco had the distinct impression that things were about to go tits up in a hurry and he tried to catch Harry’s eye unsuccessfully.

“Way to go, Harry!” Bradley yelled from the Ravenclaw’s table, thrusting his fist into the air in a parody of victory. “I knew you guys were more than friends. When did you nail him?” the boy continued to shout loudly as everyone in the Great Hall looked on. “Must have been after the party, guess you gave him that kiss he was asking for.” The whole of Ravenclaw burst out laughing. They had been privy to more than was in the papers as the two boys that had stayed back over the holidays had been gossiping non-stop since their friends had returned.

A loud smack reverberated through the Great Hall as Pansy struck Draco across the face hard enough to make him topple from his seat onto the floor.

Draco looked up into the angry eyes of his fellow Slytherins and swallowed hard. He choked back a cry of pain as Adrian kicked him in the ribs. Another kick soon followed from Blaise Zabini, this one catching him in the shoulder. Pansy, not being satisfied with a simple slap, slammed her foot down onto his fingers.

Draco began to panic as he saw the rest of his house begin to close around him, their eyes taking on the haze of mob mentality as each of them wanted to get their licks in too at the boy they saw as a traitor. A few seemed uncertain as to what to do, such as Gregory Goyle and Vincent Crabbe among others. The two boys stood to the side looking as if they wanted to aid their blonde friend, but afraid to do so as most of their house descended on Draco.

Harry leapt over the tables when he saw what was happening to his boyfriend, grabbing Slytherin's and pulling them away before they could beat the blonde to a pulp, Ron right behind him. As soon as Draco's fellows saw the two Gryffindors protecting their former prince they turned and began to attack the brunette and red-head as well, wands drawn and curses flying.

Harry's table, seeing that two of their own were unfairly outnumbered joined the fray, and the Great Hall soon erupted into a pub room brawl as people from other tables jumped in as well. Many were throwing punches and hexes indiscriminately, not even knowing what they were fighting about.

"STOP RIGHT NOW!!" Professor Snape bellowed over the din of fighting as the teachers made their way into the hall. Most of the teaching staff had their wands out, ready to intervene magically to come between the fighting students, except for Snape. His angry

voice was enough to stop everyone in their tracks as the students, and some of the other professors, turned wide eyes on the black haired teacher. They had never heard Snape raise his voice like that before, and he wasn't even using a spell to increase its volume.

"Return to your seats," Snape ordered, glaring over the teens that were standing stock still and utterly quiet. He reached into his robes for his wand and took a step towards the students when they didn't move and it didn't take long for everyone to quickly scramble back across the food strewn floor to their respective tables, picking up overturned benches to sit.

"That means you as well, Mr. Potter," Snape drawled out nastily when Harry continued to stand beside the still fallen Draco. Ron grabbed his friend's arm and literally hauled him back to the Gryffindor table.

"Impressive," Professor Cox whispered to Minerva McGonagall. "He should have been a Quidditch referee." The Gryffindor witch gave the DADA professor a scathing look, but she was grudgingly impressed by Snape's authority as well.

Severus went over to the Slytherin table and pulled Draco from the floor by the collar of his robe, plunking him down unceremoniously into his seat and then cast a withering look full of warning to his charges before following the other Professors to their own table at the head of the room.

Headmaster Dumbledore remained standing, looking out over the ravaged room and the young witches and wizards as the rest of his staff found their seats. The old man quietly waved his wand and the mess was cleared.

“Never in all my years here at Hogwarts have I seen a display of such contempt as you have shown me here today,” the old man chastised the students with a sad look, causing many of the teens to blush and bow their heads in shame.

“I do not know what brought this on, nor do I care. To unmercifully attack each other when you should all be working and learning together for the benefit of our wizarding community...you are to be our bright future, but all I can say is that I am ashamed of you all. Dumbledore let his gaze sweep the entire Great Hall and not one person could look him in the eye.

Minerva took a quick glance at a half torn Daily Prophet that was lying in front of her, picking it up and stowing it in her robes pocket. This was something that was definitely going to have to be discussed in private with the Headmaster as she now knew what had started this whole mess. She put her attention back on Dumbledore as he continued to reprimand the whole of Hogwarts.

“All points that have been thus far accumulated this year shall be taken from all houses,” the old man declared which caused groans and cries of protest to be heard. Everything returned to silence when Snape slammed his hand down on the table forcefully.

“Thank you Professor Snape,” Dumbledore intoned before turning his attention back to the students. “Now, finish your breakfast and head to your classes. I only wish I was able to give each and every one of you detention. Instead I shall inform your teachers that any extra homework they deem necessary to keep you all out of trouble shall be allowed without impunity.”

No one dared make a sound as the Potions Professor glared around the room, daring anyone to complain and Dumbledore took his seat and began to eat his breakfast.



Professor McGonagall leaned over and whispered in the old man's ear and he listened with a grim look on his face.

“Mr. Potter, Mr. Malfoy. You will come to my office at the end of the day,” Dumbledore called out to the two boys as the whole hall began to clear of students rushing off to classes.

Harry looked across the hall at Draco and Draco looked back at Harry with identical expressions of dismay before turning to nod to the Headmaster.

*„This whole day is bollocks,”* Draco groaned to himself. *„At least it can't get any worse.”*

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*„I never should have said things couldn't get any worse,”* Draco complained to himself. It wasn't even lunch yet and here he was sitting on a bed in the hospital wing, waiting for Madame Pomfrey to come back with her creams and salves to heal the small cuts and bruising on his face and body.

The blonde Slytherin had gone to classes with everyone else after the debacle in the Great Hall and everything had seemed quiet until the end of class. On his way to his next class he had been waylaid by Pucey, Zabini, and surprisingly, Malcolm Baddock who was in a younger year and normally didn't get involved with in-house politics. They had dragged him into a quieter corridor where they proceeded to beat him almost unconscious. They hadn't even used their wands on him, and had left him bleeding, lying in the hall until a first year Hufflepuff had found him and helped him to the infirmary.

Draco lay back on the bed as a wave of dizziness overcame him, feeling utterly defeated. Not only had he had to endure the embarrassment of being helped by a little eleven year old kid, a Hufflepuff no less, but he also had to face up to the fact that he was no longer welcome in his own school house. He had thought he would have been prepared for the jeers and insults, able to hold his own against it and still come out looking not too bad, but what the others had done had been personal.

They considered him a traitor of the worst kind. To lie with a Gryffindor was tantamount to him spitting in the eye of Salazar Slytherin himself, at least That's they way they saw it. And if that Gryffindor was a boy and Harry Potter to boot, well then that was three strikes against him, wasn't it.

Pucey, Zabini and Baddock had called him a turncoat, a traitor and other various names not to be heard in mixed company as they beat him. Their final words had been that they no longer knew the name Draco Malfoy and as far as they were concerned he was no better than a scab beetle under their feet. They tore the Slytherin crest from his robe, effectively banishing him from Slytherin house before turning their backs on him and walking away.

Of course, this was only a banishment from his peers and not official from the school, but the effect was the same as if it was, maybe worse. From this day forth no Slytherin student in the school would ever speak or look at him again. As far as they were concerned he was a non-existent entity. Draco sighed and took a couple of deep breaths to try and control the well of sadness that wanted to erupt from him in the form of tears. He had always been proud to be in Slytherin and now he didn't even have that. The thought that all this just wasn't worth it flitted through his mind until he thought of Harry.

Draco wiped the small amount of moisture that had gathered in his eyes. As long as Harry was by his side he guessed he could deal with it.

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Harry sat between Hermione and Ron at lunch, trying his best to ignore the questions and smart assed remarks that had followed him the whole morning. The other houses seemed to think of it all as a big joke, except for Slytherin house. He must have been purposely shoulder bumped a half-dozen times in the halls already, all from the Slytherins. Even that greasy git Snape seemed to be in on it, making his life more miserable than normal in Potions, until Harry had to hold himself back from seriously hexing the man.

He glanced over to the Slytherin's table as he tried to eat with his two friends running interference and frowned in perplexion when he didn't see a familiar blonde head. In fact, now that he thought of it, he hadn't seen Draco since first class.

"...and he was just bleeding everywhere," Harry heard a young Hufflepuff say as he walked past the Gryffindor table behind him with two of his friends.

"I can't believe you actually helped him," another boy said with an affection of awe in his voice.

“You better be careful, the other Slytherin’s could come after you for it,” the third boy cautioned.

That was all Harry heard as the boys passed from his hearing range. The-Boy-Who-Lived jumped up from the table and made to follow the three young boys.

“Harry?” Ron called after him.

“It’s okay, I’ll see you later...I...um...I forgot something,” Harry yelled back, running quickly so he wouldn’t lose the three first years.

Harry caught up to them just as they were turning to head to their dormitory. After talking to the boy who had aided Draco earlier, Harry took off to the infirmary, ignoring a Ravenclaw that laughed and asked him if he was hurrying to catch a quickie with his boyfriend.

“Harry,” Madame Pomfrey said with a frown. “You haven’t been hurt have you?”

“No, I’m okay. I want to see Draco. How is he?” Harry asked worriedly.

“A bit beat up, but he’ll be fine. I think it’s been more of an emotional blow to him than anything else. He’s sleeping right now,” the healer answered. Although she wasn’t overly pleased with the turn the boy’s friendship had taken, she did have some sympathy for them.

“Can I see him?” Harry asked almost pathetically.

Poppy gave a soft sigh. She never could resist Harry when he looked at her like that. “Alright, but don’t you dare wake him up, Harry Potter,” she admonished. “He needs the rest.”

Harry was about to go over to the bed the healer had pointed out to him when she stopped him. “When Mr. Malfoy is feeling a bit better, I want the two of you back in here for a discussion on safe sex,” she informed the now madly blushing Harry.

“O-o-okay,” Harry stuttered, feeling very flustered. He hoped that his agreement would forestall any lecture she wanted to give him right now on the subject; sure he’d be able to weasel out of it later.

Harry sat down in the chair that was beside Draco's bed, watching as the blonde boy slept. The-Boy-Who-Lived felt a sense of déjà-vu and a shiver went down his spine as he looked at the Slytherin lying on top of the covers. He looked like he had in his dream, when he had been dead.

There was something about the way his wrist and hand rested across his flat stomach, the angle of his head on the pillow, the sight of throat, collarbone and shoulder that was visible where his shirt was pulled askew and the healing bruise on the side of his cheek. He looked entirely too fragile and Harry was overcome with the urge to shake him and make sure he was, in fact, still alive.

Harry forced himself to think more pleasant thoughts; such as the surprising strength of Draco's slender arms when they had embraced him tightly as Harry shagged him into oblivion.

It had not been what the Gryffindor had expected, that request that Draco had made for them to sleep together. Nor had he expected the unflinching eagerness with which the blonde had taken it, the abandon with which he had enjoyed it. Not that Harry was complaining, mind you. Draco's reactions had made him feel like some kind of god and the raven haired boy had found that feeling to be more than pleasing.

Draco blinked open his eyes and smiled at the boy sitting in the chair beside him. He winced slightly at the tightness in his cheek when smiling had stretched the bruised skin, causing him some discomfort.

"Draco, are you alright? Who did this?" Harry asked, his anger coming to the fore.

"Don't worry about it," Draco answered as he sat up, swinging his legs over the edge of the bed so he was facing Harry.

"What do you mean, don't worry about it. It had to be those damn Slytherin's, they've been giving me a hard time all morning," Harry complained.

"You know I'm one of those „damn Slytherin's“, as you put it," Draco drawled, secretly pleased that Harry was worried for him. "I guess we shouldn't have expected anything else, seeing that the papers have us plastered all over the front page. If anything, it's that Skeeter woman's fault. Nobody has hurt you have they?" Draco questioned fearfully.

“No, just stupid stuff. Knocking into me in the halls, slapping my books out of my hands, you know, juvenile shit like that. Oh, I guess Pansy did hit me with the Trip Jinx before I went to lunch. We’ll just have to deal with it, I guess.”

Draco was relieved. He figured the other Slytherins were probably too scared to incur Dumbledore’s wrath if they harmed the old man’s golden boy. “Merlin, I’m hungry,” the blonde stated as his stomach grumbled.

Madame Pomfrey made an appearance just as the words left his mouth. She was carrying a tray full of lunch, enough for both boys. The witch waved her wand over Draco and then she nodded. “Eat up and then you can return to classes. Most of the bruising should disappear within a day or two,” she told the young wizard kindly.

Draco dug into the delicious food the healer had brought them while Harry picked here and there. Having already eaten he found himself getting full quickly. When he was finished, Draco repaired his robe and charmed off the green decorations that showed he belonged in Slytherin house until his robe was completely black. Harry gave him a curious look, but the blonde pretended not to notice. Both boys left to head to their afternoon classes, the ex-Slytherin’s green and silver tie left lying on the bed.

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“Ah, boys, please do sit down,” Dumbledore said as he charmed two chairs to come before his desk. The old Headmaster looked both teens over seriously after they had sat. The old wizard noticed the blonde’s blackened uniform, but decided to say nothing about it. He did feel some sympathy as to what had happened to the teen, but figured he’d only make things worse by interfering in peer related politics. This was something that unfortunately, Draco was going to have to deal with on his own.

“Now then, what is going on? And believe me - I’ll be able to tell if you’re lying,” the old wizard stated firmly.

“Depends on what you mean,” Draco answered, trying to keep the edge of trepidation out of his voice.

“I think you know what I mean. Is this true?” Dumbledore asked as he pushed the front page of the Daily Prophet towards the two young men.

“Yes,” Harry stated boldly. He was really beginning to get pissed by the whole affair.

He'd been the butt of jokes all day, Draco had gotten beaten up and now his mentor was giving him a most disappointed look. The dark haired wizard was reaching the end of his patience over the whole thing.

"I see," Dumbledore returned. "You know I cannot allow this to continue. The paper has made it seem as if I have supplied you the means to carry on an illicit affair and that I therefore condone this type of behaviour, which I do not. I never meant for you to have private rooms so you could engage yourself in physical gratification," the old man rebuked the blonde.

"Hey," Harry intoned angrily, he didn't like the idea that his boyfriend seemed to be getting the brunt of the older wizard's displeasure. "I have a great deal of admiration for you Professor Dumbledore, but, with all due respect, you can't tell us that we can't be together. He makes me feel happier than I have in a long time and I'm not going to give that up. If Draco was a girl we wouldn't be having this conversation and I don't think it's fair of you to single us out because We're both guys," Harry finished indignantly.

Draco sat in shock at Harry's declaration, also feeling a good deal of awe because the Gryffindor had stood up for him in front of Albus Dumbledore himself, even though he had been slightly miffed to be voiced as the „female“ role in their relationship. The blonde glanced back across the table to try and gauge the older man's reaction. He was more than a bit surprised to see the old man's eyes sparkle with something akin to amusement.

"It would be the same if you were male and female. I cannot condone sexual intimacy in this school, irregardless of gender. So, to that end, you are forbidden to be in Mr. Malfoy's rooms after curfew," the Headmaster told Harry. "I expect you to be in Gryffindor house at the proper time. If you are caught there at such time there will be consequences. This applies to you as well, Mr. Malfoy. You will be in your rooms when you are supposed to be."

The old man stared hard at both boys before a small grin tugged at the corner of his lips.

"I am not a fool, nor have I forgotten what its like to be young, so I know that if you are bound and determined on being intimate I cannot stop you. However, I would encourage you both to be more discreet in your activities. I think we've had enough of airing our private lives in the Daily Prophet. Don't you?"

Harry and Draco felt properly chastised and stood to leave after promising to abide by the rules. "Oh, I almost forget," the old man interjected, stopping them momentarily.

“Please go see Madame Pomfrey. I believe she would like to have a word with you both.”

Draco's and Harry's face flushed bright red as they knew very well what the healer witch wanted to talk to them about. They nodded, mumbling their agreement and then trudged off to the infirmary for another lecture.

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Lucius read the article in the Daily Prophet as he waited for word from his advocate. He gripped the edge of the paper tensely as he read the part that described how Miss Skeeter had come upon the two young men, who she said must have just recently engaged in forbidden sex, in the rooms provided to them by Headmaster Dumbledore.

*Both boys refused to comment to this reporter on their state of undress, but it seems that Harry Potter, whom has previously been featured in our paper for his warnings about He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, has seduced the young wealthy wizard, stealing him away from his intended Pansy Parkinson, who has been Draco Malfoy's chosen fiancée since the time they were tots. This is certainly a blow to the Pureblood wizarding community and a slap in the face to the Parkinson's.*

*The young Mr. Malfoy has also been rumoured to be the victim of child abuse at the hands of his father, Lucius Malfoy. The senior Malfoy is currently being detained by the Ministry of Magic until such time as a trial can be arranged. This reporter wonders if the alleged abuse has partly been the cause for Draco Malfoy's relationship with Mr. Potter as the Boy-Who-Lived has always had a persistent hero complex...*

Lucius threw the paper onto the floor, unable to continue to read any further, his visage promising retribution of the worst kind. He looked up when a short, balding, bespectacled man entered the small room that had been provided to him for his interview with the advocate. The gentleman gave the impression of a serial killer hidden under the guise of docile servitude.

“Good Afternoon, Mr. Malfoy. I am Mr. Twillig from Twillig and Croat Wizarding Advocates,” the man introduced as he held out his hand in greeting.

Lucius stood and shook the man's hand, gripping the offered appendage a bit more firmly than he meant in his anger. “What news do you have for me,” Malfoy asked, motioning to the seat opposite his at the table for the small man to sit at.

Mr. Twillig rubbed his slightly crushed fingers as he sat. "I have been able to have you released on your own recognizance with certain stipulations."

"And what would those be," Lucius demanded.

"You are not to come within five hundred yards of your son and your wand has been charmed so that you will not be able to do harmful hexes or curses as long as you are within sight distance of him," Twillig recited, reading off a parchment he had removed from his briefcase. "You must also sign an oath that states that you swear to appear at the required time in front of the Wizengamot in order to deal with these charges." The balding man pulled out another parchment and a quill, passing both over to Lucius to read and sign.

Lucius hid his intense anger and scanned the parchment and then signed at the bottom. If things proceeded as he thought they were going to, he wouldn't have to worry about appearing anywhere. "You work quite quickly," the blonde wizard stated as he passed back the signed parchment. He had only been interred slightly longer than twenty four hours and now he would be able to leave, and with his wand.

"When the Dark Lord makes a request of us, we tend to make sure we do not displease him," Twillig returned quietly, passing Lucius his charmed wand and then closing his case. "You are free as of now, if you have any future need of our services, please do not hesitate to call on us. We are most happy to serve any that are „friends“ of the Masters." The small man stood, opening the door for Lucius to proceed him.

The two men left the Ministry silently and then parted outside, Twillig to his office, Lucius to the Dark Lord.

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Harry stomped through the door to Draco's rooms, surprising the blonde that was sitting at his kitchenette counter eating his toast.

"You could knock you know," Draco scolded after swallowing what was in his mouth.

"What are you doing in here?" Harry asked testily. His scar had been causing him pain on and off, so it and the situation that had occurred with Draco had left him feeling snappish and irritable.



On the one hand he had been incensed that the Slytherins had thrown Draco out of his school house as he knew how important being a Slytherin was to the blonde. Secretly though, he was glad that Draco was no longer a part of a group that would be so cruel to one of their own. He did not want the grey eyed teen to feel as if he had to hide in shame. Draco was much prouder than that and he intended to make the entire school see that his boyfriend was a force to be reckoned with and that he wasn't afraid of anybody.

Draco looked at his second piece of toast that was sitting on the plate in front of him and then back to Harry. "I'm dancing," he replied with a straight face.

Harry's anger cooled as a look of confusion crossed his features.

Draco rolled his eyes, silently asking the gods why he had to have an idiot for a boyfriend. "Honestly, Potter, I'm having breakfast, what does it look like I'm doing?" "Why are you eating in here and not in the Great Hall?" Harry demanded, his irritation building again.

"After what happened yesterday, I thought I'd just try and stay away from everyone for awhile," Draco answered, picking up his toast and taking a large bite. He didn't want to confess that that was only part of the reason. He was still mortified by the very in-depth and intensely descriptive lecture they had received from Madam Pomfrey and was positive that he would die from embarrassment if he saw the woman again.

"So you're going to let them win," Harry stated. "You're just going to let them scare you into hiding in here."

"I'm not hiding, and who said I was scared?" Draco responded, beginning to get annoyed by the Gryffindors manner.

"If you're not scared, then come on," Harry said, putting his hands on his hips.

Draco scowled for a moment before standing and grabbing his books. "I'm not scared," he mumbled as he followed Harry out the door.

They were just about to go through the doors to the Great Hall when Draco stopped. "Maybe I'll just head to class, get an early start..." He didn't get to finish his excuse as

Harry grabbed his hand and dragged him into the large room, pulling him over to the Gryffindor table. The dark haired teen glared at everyone, daring them to say anything as the two boys sat down.

Draco thought his face was going to burn off from all the scrutiny he was receiving that was making his cheeks flame red. „*What the hell is wrong with Potter? Dragging me in here by the hand in front of everyone, what the hell happened to being discreet?*“ he grumbled to himself.

The whole room seemed to fill with silence as everyone stared at the two infamous lovers seated together. Angry whispers could be heard from across the room from the Slytherins table. Harry frowned even more, his ire plainly showing in the tenseness of his shoulders and the way he was grinding his teeth together.

Suddenly, the bespectacled boy stood. “Draco Malfoy is my boyfriend,” the teen stated loudly. “And I really don’t care if any of you have a problem with that or not. Our relationship isn’t anybody else’s business but our own and if you can’t handle that, then go stick a broom up your arse. But I’m telling you all right now, if anyone hurts Draco again, I’ll hex them so hard they’ll wish they’d never heard of me.” Harry stared pointedly across the room at the Slytherins, some of whom blanched a little.

“Mr. Potter!” Professor McGonagall reprimanded. “We do not use such language and we certainly do not threaten our fellow students.”

“That goes for me too,” Ron spoke up, standing beside his friend. He glanced over at the shocked blonde and gave him a friendly smile. “You’re welcome here, Draco,” he stated.

“Mr. Weasley,” McGonagall intoned irately, but before she could lecture the two of them another voice cut her off, and then another.

“We’re happy for you Harry...and Draco,” Hermione smiled.

“Yeah, leave them alone,” Dean added. “If they want to be boyfriends, then That’s their business.”

Harry plopped down beside the red faced, former Slytherin as the rest of the Gryffindor table, excepting Ginny Weasley, Cormac McLaggen and Colin Creevey, gave their approval and congratulations. Professor McGonagall gave a sigh of exasperation and

then ordered her table to sit and finish breakfast. Soon the other students returned to their own meals and conversations and the hall seemed to get back to normal.

“Are you satisfied?” Draco whispered to Harry. “I’m completely mortified, how will I ever show my face again” he mumbled dramatically. He was actually very pleased at his boyfriend’s tirade and he wished someone, preferably someone from his former house, would say something to him so he could watch Harry hex them into next week. It would certainly make him feel better about being ousted from Slytherin.

Harry just grinned at the blonde and shook his head, ignoring his histrionics.

“Ron, are you still reading that garbage?” Hermione complained as she noticed the Daily Prophet in the red-heads hands.

Ron said nothing as he looked over the paper, shoveling food into his mouth at the same time. There, of course, was another article about Harry and Draco speculating on whether the famous Harry Potter was still on the side of light or if he had gotten involved with the dark side, seeing as there had been rumours that Draco Malfoy might have been involved with less than savory characters in the past. Ron frowned and turned the page and then his eyes widened.

“Uh...Hermione,” the red head whispered.

“Umm?” the young witch answered distractedly as she was looking though one of the many books beside her on the table.

“Has Malfoy seen the paper?”

“I don’t think so, why? More garbage about him and Harry I suppose,” Hermione sniffed disdainfully, glancing up from her charms textbook.

“Look,” Ron said as he passed over the paper and pointed to the article near the bottom of the page stating that Lucius Malfoy had been released this morning until such time as his trial was to commence.

“Oh dear,” Hermione worried. “We should warn him.”

“What are you two whispering about over there,” Harry asked in a joking manner. He always thought that Ron and Hermione would make a good couple and he liked the fact that they seemed to be figuring that out as well.

“N-nothing,” Ron stuttered quickly, which only made Harry more curious, especially when he saw his friend hide the paper behind his back.

“Merlin, what’s that rag saying now?” Harry questioned a bit irately. “You’d think they never heard of two guys being together before.”

Hermione shushed him when she noticed Draco taking an interest in their conversation. “Look,” she hissed, pulling the paper from Ron’s hands and sliding it over to Harry after Draco went back to eating his breakfast.

The-Boy-Who-Lived adjusted his glasses and read the small article and then his expression turned angry. “What the fuck?!” he questioned.

“What’s wrong?” Draco asked, worried, as Harry seemed angrier than he had ever seen the Gryffindor before.

Before Harry could come up with an answer the teachers stood from their tables, indicating that the students should leave for classes. “I’ll tell you later,” Harry answered, shoving the paper in his pocket as he stood. The bespectacled boy was debating with himself over whether Draco should be told about this or not. The paper could be totally wrong. That Skeeter woman wrote anything, whether it was based in fact or not. He decided to speak to Dumbledore first, just in case. He didn’t want to upset his boyfriend if it turned out to be nothing.

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“Thank you, my Lord, for seeing to my freedom.” Lucius kneeled, kissing the knuckles of the bony hand that were stretched out to him.

“We have much to do, Lucius,” Voldemort stated. “It wouldn’t do to have you incarcerated at this most important time.”

Lucius remained kneeling, his head bowed in supplication. “I must apologize for the disgrace Draco has wrought. I vow to you now, he is no longer my son.”

“Stand, Lucius and walk with me,” the snake lord commanded.

Lucius stood and walked to the left of his lord, following the evil wizard as they strolled though the old castle that was Voldemort’s current residence.

“So what I have heard is true, Draco sleeps with the Potter boy. A pity really, I had high hopes for that child,” Voldemort sighed. “He must be dealt with,” he continued. “We can not allow his defection and disobedience to go unpunished, or others may think us soft.”

“Yes, my lord,” Lucius replied.

“We move forward tonight with our other plans,” Voldemort told the silver haired man beside him. “As for the other matter, since he is no longer your son and you have no further attachment to the boy, you will kill him. You can kill him slowly or quickly, it makes no difference to me, but I want him dead and his body displayed as a warning. Do you have a problem with this?”

“None whatsoever, my lord.”

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Draco only felt slightly self conscious as he sat in the Gryffindor common room with Harry and the others as they all worked on their class assignments for the next day. The blonde had been going to head to his rooms after supper, but Harry had dragged him to the tower. He had to admit, he was pleased with the way the others seemed to accept him, especially after his boyfriend’s embarrassing tirade this morning at breakfast.

Currently he was sitting in a very comfortable sofa with the dark haired Gryffindor beside him, Hermione was curled up on a chair, taking notes from a large book on herbology. Ron had gone up to the boy’s dorm to retrieve another quill from his room, as he had chewed through the one he had been using earlier.

Harry had yet to talk to Dumbledore about Lucius’s release so had done his best to keep Draco away from any paper. He was actually glad that the Slytherin’s weren’t speaking to the blonde as he was sure one of them would have told him. He looked over at his boyfriend and gave a soft smile. He hated the idea of him cooped up in his rooms all

alone, even if Harry did regularly visit him so they could practice their wandless magic. He figured it would do Draco good to be around others as the blonde, he realized, was a fairly social person, even though he'd deny it vehemently.

Harry was also very grateful to his house mates for accepting Draco and their relationship so readily. He never would have thought that they would have stuck up for the two of them like they had. The whole incident from this morning left him feeling warm inside as he remembered how his fellows had stood by him.

"Hey, we got a letter from my dad," Ron called out as he came down the stairs, waving the white envelope his owl had brought him through his dorm window. It had Ron's name on it as well as Harry's and Hermione's. The red-head plopped down in the empty space on the sofa beside Draco and opened the letter.

"Well, what does it say?" Hermione questioned.

Draco's face drained of color as he leaned over curiously and read the letter Ron had in his hands. "They released him?" he questioned waveringly.

„*Oh, shit,*“ Harry thought.

"That's not all," Ron added; his face also as white as a sheet. "It seems that there's been a Death Eater attack in Wales. According to my dad, it was at a muggleborn's house. They're all dead."

Hermione put her hand over her mouth as Harry grabbed the letter, scanning it over. The letter ended with Mr. Weasley saying he would continue to keep them posted on what was going on with Lucius and of any further reports of Death Eaters, but that he wanted them to stay within the safety of the school and to make sure not to let Draco go anywhere alone.

Everyone was silent for a moment, taking in what they had just heard.

Draco was finding himself more worried about his father's release than the muggleborn family that had died and he felt immense guilt roll up within him. „*Merlin, what's wrong with me? I should feel something for that poor family, but here I am more worried*

*about myself than anything else.*“ Disgust at himself soon replaced guilt as he realized that not that long ago he would have been glad that those people had died. Did this

mean that he still felt that way? „*I'm a true Slytherin after all,*“ he thought, and this time he didn't feel any pride in that knowledge. The blonde clamped his hand over mouth to contain the mounting pressure of emotions, and a hiccupping sound that he realized was a sob escaped.

“Draco,” Harry said worriedly. “Are you alright?”

Draco clenched his teeth in a futile attempt to silence himself and jumped up from the sofa to blunder towards the portrait door, pushing a small second year down in his haste to leave.

Harry caught up to him just as he was turning down the corridor to his rooms and grabbed him from behind, wrapping his arms around him.

Though that embrace, Draco could feel a flood of emotion pouring down their connection. The care and concern that Harry felt for him felt so good it was agonizing. How could the Gryffindor stand touching him? How could Harry feel such things for him? A person that had such poison running through their soul.

“Draco, please calm down,” Harry said, doing his best to sooth the upset and struggling blonde.

Why, Harry? Why...why me? Of all the people in the world...You couldn't have found someone worse, don't you know what I am?

“I don't know what you mean.” Harry returned, feeling very concerned at how worked up Draco was. He understood that the blonde would be distressed to find out about his father and about the deaths of those people, but there seemed to be something more going on here that the dark haired wizard couldn't understand.

“All the things I've thought and done,” Draco sobbed. “I'm such a horrible person. It doesn't matter what I do, I'll never be able to make up for it.”

Harry's voice was low and soothing as he tried to calm his boyfriend. “Maybe you could have done things differently and maybe you couldn't...do you need me to forgive you? Would that help?”

“There are things no one can forgive me for,” Draco sniffed, thinking back on when he had caused the death of Buckbeak. He hadn't meant for the animal to be executed and

the guilt from that still clung to him. He had no way of knowing that the Hippogriff was alive and well to this day.

“Stop it. I’m the only one who really knows you, and I say you’re not a bad person,” Harry affirmed strongly. “Mostly I think you were just trying to get by the best you could given the situation you were in. You’re not evil, Draco and That’s the truth.”

When that only made Draco cry harder, Harry spun him around in his arms and grabbed the blonde’s chin and made him look at him. “I think you’re wonderful. You’re strong and smart and funny and brave, and so gorgeous it breaks my heart to look at you. There’s no one else remotely like you. Do you know why I was so worried when I didn’t know where you had gone? Not just because I missed you, not just because I was terrified that your father had killed you, but also because I knew that there were others who would miss out on finding out who you really are.”

“I can’t believe that,” Draco uttered out miserably. He was finding it easier to speak now, through the tears were still flowing down his cheeks.

“I’ll believe it for you then,” Harry returned, hugging Draco to him tighter and stroking the silky blonde locks.

“What if you change your mind?” Draco questioned quietly into Harry’s chest.

“I like where we are here. I won’t”

“You should!” Draco exclaimed, struggling again to get out of Harry’s comforting embrace. “I can’t be trusted, I don’t know why you keep trusting me. My father will probably come after me and he’ll capture you for the Dark Lord. I couldn’t stand it if I got you killed.” Draco dragged his wrist across his eyes, examining the wet streak on his skin so he wouldn’t have to look into Harry’s green eyes. “I’ve been such a rotten person.

Don’t tell me I haven’t...I’m the son of a Death Eater. I wanted to be one for fucks sake and I believed everything about how much better a pureblood wizard was over everyone else. I could have been the one to murder those muggles and I would have enjoyed it too. I need to make up for that so don’t you dare forgive me.”

Harry kept a tight hold on the slight body and rested his cheek on Draco’s head as the blonde ceased his struggles. “Okay, what ever you want,” he agreed. “Shush now.” The Gryffindor tried to keep his own dismay in check at what his boyfriend was saying. He



didn't seem to understand that Harry knew he would never have been able to murder anyone. Even before, when Draco had been the pompous prince of Slytherin, he knew the blonde just didn't have it in him to kill.

In the five years of animosity between them, Draco had never resorted to physical violence, relying on his sharp tongue and vitriolic wit instead. Harry just had no idea how to make the Slytherin believe that he just wasn't capable of the kind of brutality that was needed to become a Death Eater.

Draco sighed, he was sure Harry didn't fully understand what he meant, but it made him feel better to know that he was trying. "I'm afraid I'll spoil you. You're the pure hero and I'm this polluted thing," Draco whispered out after a few moments of silence. "I'm afraid I'll dirty the one clean thing I ever knew."

Harry smiled sadly and lifted Draco's hand to his lips, kissing his knuckles. "I'm no innocent either. I've made mistakes, some that cost people their lives," he told the blonde, his heart clenching with that familiar ache as he thought of his godfather, Sirius. "But look back on the time we've known each other. Look at all the changes you've gone through since our first year here.

Draco snorted out a small laugh. He supposed Harry was right. His cynicism had been ever slowly eroding since the time he'd first seen a gawky, scruffy haired Harry Potter in Madam Malkin's Robe shop in Diagon Alley. "I used to think you cared about things too much, that you were weak. Now, I find I'm caring about things, too."

"Well That's a good thing," Harry returned, stepping back to look at his boyfriend as he held both of the blonde's hands.

"I've never said anything nice to you, have I?" Draco asked sorrowfully. The blonde looked directly into Harry's eyes that he loved so much, into the face of the person that was most precious to him in this whole world. "I love you. I'm helplessly, crazy in love with you," he told the Gryffindor sincerely and bashfully. "When you aren't lying close to me, I miss you quite terribly. I may have fallen in love with you suddenly, but now there's no place else I could be, but here in your arms. I want to belong to you like a possession. I want to make you happy."

Harry was astonished by the feelings that ran through him at Draco's words. He had never had anyone tell him they loved him, especially as they looked at him the way his

blonde boyfriend was looking at him now, with such honesty and open faced conviction. He had no point of reference for anything that made him feel so high and bright, that brought him this much joy.

Draco no longer felt helpless or confused and saying it the next time was easier. "I love you, Harry Potter. I love the way to do things, how you learn so fast. I love your curiosity, the way you see the world, the way you talk, the way you laugh. I admire you so much for your crazy Gryffindor bravery and I love the way you try to do right without thinking whether it'll hurt you. I love the way you curl your hands up by your mouth when you sleep, and the way you scratch your nose when you're thinking...everything you do locks itself into my heart and stays there. I could go on about you for days."

Harry was studying their clasped hands, his face scarlet. "You can go on like that as long as you want," he sighed happily. "I love you too, Draco. More than I can even say. I just don't have words for what I'm feeling."

Draco gave Harry his sexiest smirk. "Well perhaps you could show me then," he intoned huskily, leaning up to nip at an ear lobe hidden under dark hair.

Harry felt a shiver run down his spine and he grinned back. The two boys walked to Draco's rooms hand in hand and as soon as they entered Harry bent and placed a deliberate single kiss on the blonde's lips, their cheeks brushing.

Draco leaned after Harry wanting more when the Gryffindor pulled back. The blonde squealed in an undignified manner when Harry picked him up and threw him bodily over his shoulder, carrying him to the bedroom at the end of the hall. Once the Gryffindor had dropped the Slytherin on the bed, he crawled on top of him, laughing and pushing back the bangs from his eyes.

Draco took Harry's glasses and set them aside on his bedside table. The simple touch of his boyfriend's hand brushing back his hair made his heart clench at the tenderness of it, making him feel far too good because of such a guileless caress.

Harry had barely begun to embrace him before Draco was suddenly all over him, flipping them so Harry was on the bottom and then the blonde was kissing him ravenously. They couldn't get close enough to each other, even as their legs tangled together and their tongues entwined.

Draco bore down, pressing his body firmly along Harry's, pushing the Gryffindor's legs apart so he could slide his hips to line up with his boyfriend's as he bit at the dark haired teen's lips

For eons they clung together, locked in the bewitchment of breath and spit and aching hardness, gradually realizing that they had connected at a totally new level. They were mingling now, not just in magic, but in mind and heart and they could no longer be certain which of them originated which sensation. Groans and sighs could be told apart only by the differing tones of their voices.

The static charge that always clung to them when they touched was now a visible thing making their hair attract so that white blonde and black ebony strands twisted and twirled around each other. The blurring of identity abated a little when Draco broke the kiss, pulling their hair apart as he moved away so that it stuck out in all directions.

The ostracized Slytherin followed the line of Harry's jaw to his ear with his lips and every touch was still amplified between them. With hands and lips they began to explore each other as if it was their first time all over again, removing clothing as they went. Harry tasted along a smooth shoulder as he strummed his fingers over the pulse point of a narrow wrist. Draco stroked his thumb over the scar on Harry's forehead as he nibbled on the sensitive skin just behind the Gryffindor's ear.

Harry rolled Draco under him and slid his hand down the bare flesh of his boyfriend's sides until he reached the waistband of his pants. Both of them were impatient with the slow explorations, but Harry drew it out anyway, taking his time with the buttons, dragging his palms down Draco's thighs as he stripped him completely, taking boxers along with the trousers, savoring.

Harry returned to Draco's shoulder and kissed his way over to his throat where he sucked firmly to bring the blood to the surface, marking the blonde as his alone. Finished, he kissed his way down. He went as slowly as he could. He didn't want to rush this, but Draco's hands knotted in his hair, desperately demanding.

Harry grinned and took in the blonde's manhood, gulping as much of Draco down as he could, catching an echo of how good it felt through their bonded line. His ears eagerly listened to the blonde's broken whimpers, making muffled sounds of his own as he bobbed and sucked on the pillar of flesh in his mouth. When Draco arched convulsively and let out a moan much deeper than his normal voice, Harry nearly went off as well as the blissful rapture of Draco's orgasm coursed over his nerves and down his throat.

Draco lay there panting for a bit feeling Harry's need. As soon as he got his breath back he was hungry to reply in kind. The blonde was still awkward in his oral ministrations, but his unsure touch was lethally sweet to the Gryffindor and Harry lay there gladly while his boyfriend worked out what ought to be kissed, bitten, licked...and what tickled.

Harry pulled Draco's mouth away from him at the last possible moment. "Get on your hands and knees for me," he purred out seductively and Draco couldn't move fast enough to get into position. Harry called forth his wand with a shaky voiced Accio Charm and then cast his special oiling spell over his manhood before sliding in a bit more quickly than he had intended into the waiting body before him. Every sensation that he felt and the blonde felt jumped into sharp relief in his mind. He felt the pleasure that coursed through his groin combining and twisting with the pain from his hasty breeching of his boyfriend, the intensity of the two opposing sensations was almost frightening.

Harry couldn't hold back, and he leaned over and kissed Draco's back, apologizing as he began to rock back and forth before the blonde teen was fully ready, holding the Slytherins hips steady as he thrust.

Harry soon felt as if he was flying and falling at the same time and he had a moment of terror that he would somehow break Draco if he let himself lose control, that he might release all his magic along with his tensioned desire and kill them both. He heard himself sobbing out incoherent words along with impassioned moans as he tried to fight the storm of Draco's reactions as the blonde bucked and groaned beneath him, freely allowing his emotions and bodily desires to flow through to Harry.

It amazed Draco the way their minds connected during sex. He could feel Harry deep inside of him and he knew the brunette could feel his essence surrounding him. It was as if the two of them were one being that was making love to itself, but still able to differentiate the two parts that made up that whole.

Draco sensed that someone else was touching him - Harry's body knew he was thrusting into another's, but the sensations were intensified and doubled as they shared each others pleasure. The Gryffindor ran his hands down the sides of his blonde lover, again gaining purchase on the pale swell of his hips as he pounded recklessly into the smaller body and they both moaned at the pulse it sent through The Slytherin's body.

In the end, Harry could do nothing more than surrender to their bonds twining of their emotions, a loop that fed on itself over and over until they were both mindlessly surging towards destruction or creation, neither knowing which, neither caring, and for an infinite moment, the two young wizard's universe consisted entirely of one blazing sun of ecstasy as their orgasms rushed wild from their bodies.

Regaining their senses from that euphoric high was like regaining consciousness after being knocked out cold. They lay breathlessly linked together for a time, tasting each other's mouths as they exchanged gentle kisses and let their hands caress aimlessly along sated and sweaty skin.

A fierce, proprietary joy was welling up inside Harry's chest, filling him so full he was sure he would burst. At that moment he was sure he could have cast a Patronus that would have covered the whole earth. "You're my lover," he whispered contentedly, amazed at the emotion created by that simple truth.

"Yes," Draco replied with a dreamy smile. "I like that, „mine“, be sure to say that a lot. Get all jealous and possessive, and hex anyone who comes near me."

A laugh bubbled forth from Harry as he pushed his fingers through Draco's hair. "I wish we could stay here forever, just the two of us in this room, in this bed with no worries about Death Eaters, Voldemort or...your father," Harry sighed.

"Me too love, me too," Draco responded quietly, snuggling closer to the lightning scared Gryffindor. "We have tonight, as long as Filch doesn't come banging on my door for you."

"Albus Dumbledore himself couldn't pry me out of this bed," Harry asserted, loving it when Draco slept next to him. He cast a cleaning charm on them and then grabbed the blankets, pulling them up over the two of them before snuggling down again. The two exchanged a few innocent kisses and vows of love before falling asleep in each other's arms.

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Harry and Draco had just opened the door to leave and found Ron standing on the other side, his hand raised in the act of knocking.

"McGonagall is having a fit," Ron stated. "She's heading this way looking for you, Harry."

I tried to cover for why you weren't in the dorm, but I'm not sure how convincing I was."

"She'll have to catch me first," Harry joked as he grabbed Draco's hand and began running. "Come on Ron, keep up," he called jovially over his shoulder.

The three boys managed to evade the head of Gryffindor house and made it to the breakfast table in good spirits. They had just sat down when Draco suddenly noticed how quiet everyone was. The blonde glanced around the table curiously observing the saddened and shocked faces around him.

"What's going on?" he questioned Hermione who was sitting across from him.

"There's been another attack on a muggleborn's family," the young witch breathed, catching the attention of the other two boys who had still been joking around, oblivious to what was going on. "It's in the paper."

These weren't the only attacks, the following day Ron received another letter from his father telling them of two more attacks, still confined to muggers. In the fourth attack, the actual wizard hadn't even been in the house, his family paying the ultimate price instead. All of this caused the muggleborn student's to become nervous and many floo calls went out to families from worried teens.

Arthur Weasley's letters had a bit more information in them than the Daily Prophet, though the Ministry still hadn't much to go on. The attacks were well organized and fast, leaving very little time for the Order to react and no clues. The Aurors were trying their hardest, but they couldn't figure out where or when the Death Eaters were going to strike next.

Another letter arrived Friday evening with news of two more attacks and a young wizard from Ravenclaw had to be restrained in the infirmary after he had broken down with the news that his entire family was now dead, including his five year old sister.

Over the weekend there were three more attacks, this time the Death Eaters had not only gone after the muggleborn, but also a Half-Blood family and, surprisingly, a Full-Blood family. The Daily Prophet's headline on Monday morning caused the entire Great Hall to be deathly silent as Dumbledore told everyone the shocking news.

“The Minister of Magic had officially declared the Wizarding world at war,” Albus stated, his eyes were flat and worried, the familiar humours twinkle gone. The Headmaster said

a few more words, promising that everyone within the school would be safe and that he would give the student’s families sanctuary within the old castle walls. He had then given the students the day off from classes to recoup from the shock.

Harry groaned in frustration. “What are we doing? We should be helping rather than sitting here.”

The three Gryffindors and the single Slytherin were sitting in the nearly silent Gryffindor common room. A few others were there, but conversations were hushed and short lived. Suddenly, Dean Thomas stood from where he had been sitting with Colin Creevey and Ginny Weasley, approaching the foursome.

“This all started after your father was released,” Dean accused, giving Draco a distrustful look. “Maybe you know something about it.” The black boy had been all for forgiving the blonde, wanting to believe in Harry’s judgement that the Slytherin really was trying to change. Unfortunately, fear and the insistent whispers of Colin and Ginny had made the normally friendly and cheerful boy suspicious and paranoid.

“What are you saying, Dean?” Harry questioned with a frown.

“My parents are muggles and I don’t want anything happening to them. I think Malfoy here knows more than he’s letting on. Maybe this good guy act is just that, an act. He was put in Slytherin for a reason,” Dean intoned angrily, parroting Ginny’s argument.

“He shouldn’t be here,” Ginny spoke up. “He could be a spy for his father. Everyone knows his dad’s involved with You-Know-Who, no matter how hard he tries to cover it up. I bet Draco’s a Death Eater too.”

A few of the other students that had been passing through stopped and gave nervous and mistrustful looks at the seated blonde, whispering to each other.

“That’s a lie!” Harry yelled, furious that everyone seemed to be turning on his boyfriend.

“Let’s see his arms then,” Colin demanded, coming to stand just behind Dean and Ginny. A few of the other students that had stopped to listen were nodding their heads as well, muttering sounds of agreement.

Draco scowled. „*So much for being accepted,*” he thought with annoyance and a twinge of hurt. The blonde stood and started to remove his cloak.

Harry grabbed Draco’s hands and stopped him. “He doesn’t have to show his arms to anyone. I know he’s not a Death Eater.”

“How can you be sure?” Jimmy Peakes, a short, first year boy, questioned nervously. “Maybe he’s hiding his mark.”

“Oh for Merlin’s sake,” Draco huffed, pulling away from Harry and removing his robes. He unbuttoned the cuffs of the long sleeved shirt he was wearing and pushed both sleeves up to his elbows, exposing both forearms that were free of any marks.

“Go ahead, cast *Aparecium*, *Finite Incantatem*, *Specialis Revelio*, or any other spell you want to use to see if I’m hiding a mark,” Draco drawled out disdainfully, holding his arms out to his accusers. “What’s the matter?” he asked mockingly when the other’s just stood there staring. “I’m waiting.” The blonde stood there, anger oozing off of him in almost palpable waves before he jerked his sleeves back down. Grabbing his cloak he stormed off towards the exit.

“I can’t believe you guys just did that,” Harry said as he glowered at his now shamed housemates, before running out the door himself after the blonde, leaving Hermione and Ron to lecture Dean and the three younger Gryffindors.

“Draco, wait,” Harry called out, catching up to his boyfriend just outside the Knight’s portrait. “They’re all idiots,” The-Boy-Who-Lived fumed.

Draco said the password and the two boys entered his private rooms. “They’re all scared,” Draco responded quietly.

“Yes, but they don’t have to take their fears out on you,” Harry replied, sitting down on the sofa with his boyfriend.



“Who better than me and Thomas was right, these attacks did start right after my father was released. Something is happening, something big and we’ve got to get ready for it,” Draco stated.

Harry leaned his head back and rubbed at the scar on his forehead. “I know. My scar’s been bothering me more than usual. We need to practice with those spells more, some of the stronger ones.”

Draco got onto his knees and pulled Harry around so that he was sitting cross-legged on the sofa, his back towards him. He began to massage the Gryffindor’s tense shoulders. “We should ask Ron and Hermione to practice with us. I need to work on the shield spells as well and I can’t do that if I’ve nothing to shield against.”

According to the book, the only spells the sacrifice would be able to perform would be shield or defense spells, while Harry, who had finally, after much sniping and cajoling on Draco’s part, grudgingly agreed to act the part of the fighter, would be the one to use the attack spells.

“It’s really happening, isn’t it?” Harry asked quietly. “We’re really at war.”

“Yeah,” Draco admitted a bit fearfully.

“We’ve got to stop them, Draco,” Harry affirmed.

“We’ve got to find them first,” the blonde boy returned. “Maybe Granger can help us with that too. She said she was going to try and track where the attacks were happening to see if she could find some kind of pattern.”

“I’ll ask her, I’m sure she’ll want to help,” Harry responded, sighing as the tension he

had been feeling was beginning to ebb under the gentle ministrations of his boyfriend’s kneading hands.

The two teens slipped into silence, each lost in their own thoughts and fears for the upcoming confrontation.

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All was silent for the next week, leaving some to hope that this was the end of it, that the Death Eaters were done and would now crawl back to wherever they had come from and everything could get back to normal. There were those, however, who suspected that this was only the beginning and many were still nervous and on edge.

The school continued with classes and the teachers tried to resume their lessons, but their attitudes were subdued and they were less prone to put up with any hijinks. Professor Snape's class, especially, was an absolute horror for the students and even the Slytherin's were not spared his bitter ire and sharp tongue. All Quidditch games had been cancelled.

Harry and Draco used any free time they had to train hard with the wandless spell book, cajoling Ron and Hermione into practicing with them in either the dueling classroom or the Room of Requirement.

"You have to try and hit us with something stronger than a Bat-Bogey Hex," Draco complained as he easily reflected the spell that Hermione had cast.

"I don't want to hurt you guys," the young girl said nervously. She was not totally thrilled to be trying to harm the two wizards, especially Harry.

"As if you could, Granger," Draco drawled out, smirking in his most Slytherin way.

Hermione scowled and then raised her wand, pointing it at the blonde. "Expelliarmus," she yelled out and a flash of pale blue light raced towards Draco.

"Evade," Draco called out and he felt his body move quickly across the room, faster than the eye could follow, suddenly seeming to disappear and then to reappear to the left and just in front of Ron, who was standing beside the frizzy haired girl.

"Immobulus," Ron called out, surprised at Draco's abrupt presence.

"We got him," Hermione smiled as she walked around the frozen blonde with a grin of satisfaction on her face.

Harry waved his hand and Draco was able to move again. "Not bad, Weasley," the blonde complimented.

“What the hell was that?” Ron questioned. He looked at Draco with a slight bit of awe. “Did you Apparate?”

“No, I just moved really fast,” he grinned. Draco wobbled slightly on his feet, feeling a bit dizzy. “That spell took a little out of me,” he said as he sat down on the floor, wiping at his forehead which had become hot and sweaty.

“We should call it quits for now,” Harry stated as he came over to check on his boyfriend. “You’re pushing yourself too hard.”

“I’m fine and we need to keep practicing. Your scars been acting up almost every day now, Merlin knows when the Dark Lord will show up. We can’t afford to rest,” Draco admonished. The blonde was a bit disheartened that he couldn’t control where he ended up when he used the Evade spell. He actually had meant to appear behind the two Gryffindor’s so he could hex them before they had a chance to turn and respond.

“He’s right, Harry,” Hermione added. “We have to be ready to deal with this when the time comes.”

“Come on, then,” Ron quipped. “Let’s get back at it. This time we’ll go after you, Harry.”

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Hermione put another two marks on the map she had created to track Death Eater attacks with a shaky hand, before bursting into tears.

“Hermione, what’s wrong?” Ron questioned worriedly, getting up from where he had been sitting and studying in the Gryffindor common room.

The young witch continued to sob as she passed over the Daily Prophet for Ron to read.

The red-head’s eyes got large as he read which places had been attacked this time. One attack had happened in the Cotswolds; a half-blood wizard had died holding back the Death Eaters so his family could escape by floo to the protection of the Ministry. The second attack had happened in Suffolk, where Hermione’s parents lived. Two muggles were missing, their house burned to the ground.

Ron sat down beside the crying girl, putting his arm awkwardly around her shoulders. “It doesn’t mean that They’re your parents,” he tried to soothe. “Why don’t we go to

Professor McGonagall or Headmaster Dumbledore? I'm sure they'll let you make a floo call so you can talk to your mum and dad and make sure They're alright."

"Okay," Hermione sniffed, wiping at her face. She tucked her map into one of her books and placed it back on the table she had been working at. She and Ron had just reached the portrait door when Professor McGonagall opened it from the other side.

"Miss Granger. I need to speak with you," the older witch stated putting her hand gently on the young girl's shoulder.

"Why?" Hermione questioned nervously, her voice hitching in apprehension. Ron sidled a bit closer to the girl, trying to give her some support. The red-head had a sinking sensation in his stomach as he looked at the expression of pity that crossed his head of house's face.

"Please, Hermione," Minerva said quietly. "Just come with me to Professor Dumbledore's office so we can speak to you." The older witch looked at the young man standing by the frizzy haired girl's side. "I'm sorry, Mr. Weasley, but this is a private matter. If you could wait here for Hermione's return?"

"Yeah, sure," Ron mumbled out. As soon as the sobbing girl had left with Professor McGonagall, Ron left, running as fast as he could to Draco's rooms where the blonde and Harry were.

Draco was enjoying a very hot snogging session with his boyfriend when thunderous banging was heard at his door. "Harry, Malfoy, open up. I have to talk to you guys," Ron called from the other side of the door, thumping his fist a few more times on the portrait door for emphasis.

"How does he know when We're making out? He's always interrupting us," Draco grumbled as Harry removed his fingers from where they had been stroking and pinching on the blonde's nipples, rising from his prone position over the Slytherin.

Both boys fixed their skewed clothing and then Draco told the Knight to let the other boy in.

"Professor McGonagall just came and took Hermione to see Dumbledore," Ron stated, coming in and passing Harry the newspaper he had brought with him, oblivious to the

frustrated scowl Draco shot at him. "See there, it says that two muggles in Suffolk are missing. That's where Hermione's parents live."

Harry read over the story. "It doesn't give any names. Maybe it's not her parents."

"Then why would McGonagall and Dumbledore want to talk to her? I have a bad feeling about this, mate," Ron said worriedly.

Draco took the paper from Harry and the three boys sat down in the living room. The blonde went into his bedroom and brought back a roll of parchment and a quill. He sat back down and made a few marks on it.

"What are you doing?" Ron asked curiously.

"Keeping track," Draco mumbled softly. "You know these are the only people to have ever survived an attack," he continued, meaning the family from the Cotswolds. "The other people could be alive as well. They said they didn't find any bodies."

"They could have taken them," Ron stated sadly.

"No, no I don't think they'd bother. They haven't taken any prisoners before this, so why would they do it now? They left the bodies for anyone to find, they want us to see what they've done," Draco responded.

"What are you keeping track of?" Harry questioned as Draco rolled up the parchment.

The blonde sighed, unsure if he should tell the two Gryffindors what he had been doing since the Ministry had declared war. "I'm making a list of everyone that's been killed," Draco finally answered quietly.

Harry and Ron stared at the blonde unsure of what to say.

Draco re-opened his parchment that he had neatly rolled up and passed it over to his boyfriend.

Harry looked over the neat rows of statistics. There were four main headings across the top of the paper, „Muggles“, „Muggleborn“, „Half-blood“ and „Pureblood“ with numbers

below each heading. The highest number of deaths was in the „Muggle“ category with the lowest being under the „Pureblood“ heading. Still, to see Purebloods listed at all only reinforced the dark haired wizard’s belief that Voldemort really didn’t care who was killed.

Scanning down the parchment, Harry saw that there were sub-headings, the ages of those that had been killed. The Gryffindor was horrified to, not only see how many children had been killed, but when he saw the number one below the heading of „Unborn“ he thought he might be physically sick.

“They killed someone that was pregnant?” Harry asked in disgust. Draco nodded and Ron’s face went white.

The last and newest category, „Escaped“, had the number three under it. Beside that, in brackets and with a question mark beside it, was the number two.

“My God,” Harry breathed, adding up the total in his head. “That’s two hundred and two people.”

Draco quickly rolled up the parchment again when Harry passed it back to him and shoved it into his robes pocket before the other boys could notice his shaking hands. “All of them, all the bodies were left in plain sight, so That’s why I think that Hermione’s parents may have gotten away somehow. They may just be in hiding somewhere.”

Harry suddenly jumped up from his seat, his face a mask of twisted anger. “We can’t sit around here anymore. Not after this. We have to do something.”

“I agree,” Ron stated firmly. The two boys looked askance at the still seated Draco.

“We need a plan,” Draco intoned carefully. “We can’t just go off half-cocked. We need to find out where They’re going to strike next so we can stop them.”

“Hermione was working on a map, trying to find a pattern to the attacks,” Ron told the other two boys.

“And?” Draco asked.

Ron sighed in frustration. “Nothing. It’s been driving her nuts. She said she couldn’t see any kind of pattern.”

“Where’s her map now?” Draco asked. “Maybe it just needs fresh eyes. I could take a look at it.”

“It’s back in the Gryffindor dorm, which is where we should be,” Ron told Harry. “We should really be there when she gets back.”

The three boys headed back to the Gryffindor common room to wait for Hermione. They didn’t have to wait long as the young witch entered with Professor McGonagall. She gave a watery smile to the three worried faces before her, trying hard to hold back her tears.

“Now remember what we told you, I’m sure They’re okay and that the Ministry will find them,” the elder witch consoled, patting the frizzy haired girl on the shoulder. “Try not to worry.”

“Thank you, Professor McGonagall,” Hermione said.

“Are you okay, Mione?” Ron asked.

The young girl burst into tears, unable to hold them back any longer. “It was my parents that were attacked. As far as the Order can figure, they’ve managed to get away somehow, but nobody can find them,” Hermione choked out between sobs. Ron and Harry put their arms around her, allowing the student witch to cry until she could get herself back under control.

“They’ll find them,” Draco stated firmly. “If you’re anything to go by, you’re parents must be smart people, so I’m sure They’re fine. You’ll see.” The blonde was trying to hold himself together as well. He wanted to cry, to scream or to hit something. His father was involved in all this, in all the killings and attacks and guilt was washing through him like a tsunami. Maybe if he hadn’t tried to get away, maybe if he had just done what his father had wanted. He could have worked against Voldemort within the ranks of the Death Eaters. If he had...maybe this wouldn’t be happening now.

Hermione sniffed and wiped her face, looking at Draco with a bit of astonishment. If someone had told her that the blonde Slytherin, who had always referred to her as „dirty

Mudblood“, would be consoling her over the disappearance of her muggle parents, she would have laughed in their faces.

“You’re right,” she affirmed, squaring her shoulders and raising her chin. “My parents are smart and they’ll be alright.” Hermione left the arms of her two best friends and came towards the blonde, giving him a quick kiss on the cheek. “Thanks, Draco,” she whispered before stepping back.

Draco blushed self-consciously. “Ron said you were trying to find a pattern to the attacks?” he questioned trying to take the focus of himself. He wanted to do something, something to stop all this, to try somehow to atone for what his father was more than likely doing.

“Yeah, but I can’t figure it out. The attacks are all so random,” Hermione sighed in frustration, pulling the map out of the book that she had left on the table.

Draco took the paper from her and pinned it up on the wall and the four teens stood and stared at it for a moment. Hermione had placed a mark in each town with a number beside it, showing the order of attacks. She had also listed the time of day each incursion had happened. “See? Nothing,” the girl grumbled.

Draco paced back and forth in front of the map looking it over again and again, trying to find some kind of correlation between the dates or times. He even checked over his own notes on which people and wizards had been killed trying to find anything that would give them any kind of clue as to what Voldemort would do next. He couldn’t see any kind of pattern either, but refused to give up. The other’s were now seated and talking quietly while he continued to stare until his eyes went blurry, causing all the dots on the paper to blend together and then he gasped.

“What?” Harry asked jumping up from the chair he had been sitting on.

“Give me a quill,” Draco demanded.

Ron grabbed the quill that was on the table in front of him and passed it over the excited blonde. Draco went over and began to connect the dots that made up the figure he had seen. When he had finished the other three looked at the symbol that was drawn on the map.

“A pentagram,” Hermione whispered.



“An upside down pentagram,” Draco replied. “No doubt the Dark Lord finds it ironically poetic to use a symbol the muggles would find terrifying, and look what’s in the center.”

“Hogsmeade,” Harry stated; his eyes going wide as Draco drew a circle around the town.

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The four students waited with bated breath as to what the old Headmaster would say to what they had found out.

“Very well done, all of you,” Dumbledore complimented, looking over the map and the figure drawn on it. “I’ll call a meeting of the Order to apprise them of this development.”

“We’ll come too,” Harry announced. “We need to know what we should do next.”

Dumbledore smiled indulgently at the dark haired Gryffindor. “For now you will do nothing. You will all remain within the safety of the school.”

“What? No,” Harry complained. “We have to stop Voldemort. I have to stop him.”

Dumbledore rose from his seat behind the desk and approached the seat Harry was sitting in. He placed his hand on the teens shoulder. “We don’t know if Hogsmeade is his true objective,” he began.

“But...” Harry started to interrupt.

“Harry, my boy,” Dumbledore stated with a bit more firmness. “This could all be a trick, and even if it isn’t, we don’t know *when* he plans on attacking the town. I need to speak to the Order members about this so we can decide what to do. I promise I will keep you all informed if anything of importance comes up.” He patted Harry’s shoulder a couple of times and then moved around the desk, returning to his seat, letting the teens know that their part in this was over for the time being.

Harry stood from his chair indignant, ready to argue with the Headmaster.

“Thank you, sir,” Draco stated formally, standing at the same time as Ron and

Hermione. "We'll await your orders." The blonde and the other two Gryffindors began to move towards the door, Hermione grabbing Harry's hand and dragging him along with them before he could complain.

"What the hell are you guys doing? We're not going to do anything?" Harry asked incredulously.

"Of course we are," Draco replied disdainfully. "But We're going to do it on our own."

Ron and Hermione nodded their agreement. "He just wants to keep you safe, you know," Hermione added, trying to sooth her friend's anger and resentment against the old man as the group walked towards Draco's rooms to figure out what they could do without anyone else around to hear their plans.

Draco was of the opinion it was more than just keeping Harry safe. „*Safe to either kill or be killed by the Dark Lord,*“ the blonde thought disdainfully. Sometimes the Slytherin wondered if Dumbledore didn't just think of Harry as some kind of weapon, one he was trying to with-hold until the Gryffindor teen could do the most damage. It bothered him that perhaps the old man didn't have his boyfriend's best interest at heart, but rather was willing to sacrifice him for some greater good.

Draco scowled at the thought as he led the others to his rooms.

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"I think I might have figured out when he's going to attack," Hermione stated after a few moments of silence. The four teens had been in Draco's rooms for almost an hour contemplating when the Dark Lord would invade the town. There was no doubt in their mind that it was indeed Hogsmeade that the evil wizard would be after, the conquest of the wizarding village would put him in good range of the school itself, especially after hearing from Harry about his dreams of the town being over-run by Death Eaters. It was all just too coincidental for them to ignore.

Hermione, of course, had been going through her many books that she had run off to bring, meeting the boys at Draco's to try and find any kind of date or event that may have some significance for the Dark Lord. "Here, see. March 21st. It's the Ostara, or what the muggles call the spring equinox," the young witch explained, opening her book on the table and pointing out the relevant information.

The three boys crowded around her to look “What’s that got to do with anything?” Ron asked confused. Ostara was a celebration of spring and rebirth, not something he would think the Dark Lord would fancy.

“Just listen,” Hermione stated as she leaned over to read from the book. “It’s passing from one time into another, but it’s an in-between time as well. It’s a powerful time of transition. Everything is in balance – equal day and equal night.” The girl raised her head and looked at the three boys. “That means that any magical spells the Dark Lord wants to do will be quite strong. And look here,” she continued, turning the page for the others to see an illustration. “See, it shows an egg being laid by a regenerating snake. That’s a powerful symbol of the emergence of life out of death. Isn’t that what You-Know-Who wants? Eternal life?”

“So you mean all the killings he’s been doing is to try and gain the life forces of his victims so he can do some dark spell to make himself immortal?” Harry questioned.

“Yes, That’s exactly what I think and I think he needs to kill quite a few people in order to accomplish, what is probably a very complicated spell,” the frizzy haired girl replied.

“Are you sure, Hermione?” Harry asked, but as he had listened he had that sinking feeling in his guts that told him that the girl had hit the nail on the head.

“She’s right,” Draco replied, remembering when he had overheard his father going on about the equinox to his mother and how it was an important time for their lord. He unfortunately hadn’t heard much, because his father had seen him and had stopped talking about it. At the time he couldn’t figure out the significance of it all, but now he began to put what he had overheard and what he had learned in Astronomy together with what Hermione had just explained to them and it was not looking good.

“Why?” Ron questioned.

“There’s going to be a total lunar eclipse on that day,” Draco responded. When Ron continued to look confused Draco rolled his eyes. “Don’t you listen to Professor Sinistra in Astronomy?” the blonde questioned sourly. He sighed when the red head just scowled at him. “The Professor was going on and on about it, how it’s quite a thing to have a lunar eclipse on the equinox, especially since a lunar eclipse is seen as the absence of light, when the shadows are seen and darker impulses can be freed.”

“Th...That’s awful,” Ron cried. “He’s going to kill the whole town so he can live forever?”  
“We’ve got to stop him,” Harry spoke up after a lengthy, pregnant silence. “It looks like we have a month to come up with something.”

“Maybe we should tell Dumbledore,” Hermione offered.

Harry frowned, still miffed at the Headmaster for dismissing them so quickly before.

“I may have to take back what I said earlier, We’re not going to be able to do it alone,” Draco responded, reaching out and touching Harry’s arm to gain his attention. “We’ll need the Aurors to be involved as I’m sure the Dark Lord will have every Death Eater out there when the time comes.” The blonde boy sat back on the chair he was standing by, steeping his fingers together under his chin in thought, unconsciously imitating his head of house. He glanced over towards his boyfriend who was now sitting on the sofa beside Hermione.

“What?” Harry asked, noticing Draco’s calculating stare.

“Unless...If you could use your link to find out where he is now, then we could stop him before he attacks the town.” Draco waited to see what Harry would say to this. He knew the Gryffindor hated to connect with the Dark Lord, but was hoping that his boyfriend would see the necessity to at least try.

“That won’t work,” Harry sighed. “I won’t be able to keep him out of my mind and then he’ll know what We’re planning.”

“Damn it,” Draco cursed. Ron and Hermione sat back down, their shoulders slumping, but relieved as well. Hermione especially, since she knew that Dumbledore had never wanted Harry to use his connection to the Dark Lord. That to do so, may in some way harm Harry.

“We’ll have to tell Dumbledore,” Hermione stated firmly. “He’ll be able to evacuate the town so nobody gets hurt.”

The three wizards glumly nodded their agreement. They all sat and talked a bit more before deciding to see the Headmaster in the morning as it was starting to get late. Ron and Hermione stood to leave, looking quizzically at Harry.

“I think I’ll stay here a bit longer. Can you guys cover for me with McGonagall?” Harry asked.

“Sure mate,” Ron agreed. “Just don’t be too late.”

Harry gave a non-committal grunt as he walked his two friends to the door. After they had left he turned and looked at his blonde boyfriend where he was sitting deep in thought.

“Knut for your thoughts,” Harry said as he walked back and dropped down on the arm of the chair beside Draco.

“Just trying to think of a way to really find out what the Dark Lord is up to.” Draco mumbled. “You know, maybe I could work with Severus...become a spy, too.”

“Absolutely not!” Harry stated rather firmly. “All of Slytherin house knows We’re together, you’ll never be able to convince them you’ve changed sides yet again.”

“Don’t underestimate me,” Draco returned with a sniff of disdain. “I’m the master of deception.”

“I’m not going to let you put yourself in danger,” Harry growled. “Promise me you won’t do something stupid, Draco.”

“Okay, okay,” Draco responded, reaching out and putting his hand on Harry’s thigh, rubbing soothingly. “I’m sure we’ll figure something else out,” he finished to placate his upset boyfriend.

Harry nodded and placed his hand over Draco’s leaning down and giving the blonde a light kiss. “Thank you,” he sighed in relief.

“I’m knackered,” Draco yawned. “Do you want to stay the night?” he asked hopefully, deciding to just let the subject drop for the moment.

Harry grinned, determined to forget about everything for now. “I thought you’d never ask.”

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Harry held Draco on the bed kissing him over and over. Both boys were on top of the covers, still clothed. Soon the kisses grew deeper and their breath intermingled longer, transforming their gentle embrace into one resonating with passion.

Draco clung to Harry's body as the Gryffindor's tongue moved along with his, his heartbeat racing faster and faster as his boyfriend stroked his hair and a sigh fell from his lips. A few more kisses later and Harry gently pulled away. "I want you to make love to me," the Gryffindor teen stated throatily.

Draco looked up to his boyfriend feeling uneasy. Merlin, what if he didn't do it right and hurt Harry? "Are you sure?"

"Yes, you git," Harry laughed softly. "I wouldn't ask you if I didn't. I want to know what it feels like to have you inside me."

"Harry," Draco whispered, suddenly finding himself calmed by the feelings of trust Harry held for him that strummed down their bond. He grinned wickedly and flipped them and then sat up, straddling Harry's hips. After all, who was he to refuse such a heartfelt request? He began to unbutton his shirt, watching Harry the whole time with dark grey eyes smoldering with lust. He had to admit, he was more than excited to try topping. It was something he had thought of off and on, but had been a little self conscious to ask for.

Harry stared back, licking his lips and started to undress himself as well until Draco pulled his hands away and gently held them down on the crumpled blankets of the bed.

"Don't do that," Draco intoned huskily, leaning over the brunette allowing his hair to tickle Harry's cheeks as he whispered in the Gryffindor's ear. "Don't undress yourself, That's my job."

"Uh...Okay," Harry responded with a gasp, feeling an icy thrill shiver down his back as his manhood swell at the sensuous instruction from the blonde.

Draco smirked, releasing Harry's hands and refastened the three buttons on the Gryffindor's shirt so he could undress his lover himself.

Harry felt overcome with a warm, loving sensation and he sat up and embraced Draco, the sudden movement causing the blonde's opened shirt to fall off his shoulders

exposing supple skin to the Gryffindor's hands. The-Boy-Who-Lived felt quite content at the feel of the pleasant body heat that enveloped him as he held onto the Slytherin.

Draco engulfed Harry in a long, dizzying kiss after he moved to let his shirt fall off his arms and onto the bed, wrapping the Gryffindor into a tight hug. The warmth of his naked skin effused into the dark haired boy leaving both their heart quickly beating in tandem.

"I love you, Harry," Draco said, his voice grown hoarse with passion and he pushed the Gryffindor down on the bed and slowly began to remove his clothes.

Harry's whole self dissolved and merged with Draco's as the blonde touched his bare skin softly, lovingly, tenderly, as if he was afraid to break him. Harry thrashed on top of the sheets like a fish, his body temperature rising and moaned loudly.

Draco was mumbling and sighing under his breath as he kissed down his boyfriend's body, telling Harry how beautiful he was, his fingertips and lips touching him everywhere.

Harry's eyes began to tear up in happiness and he tried to blink the wetness back, feeling a bit foolish. „*No one has ever called me beautiful,*“ he thought.

„*Well you are,*“ Draco responded in his mind. Harry had forgotten that their bond was now strong enough that they could hear each other's thoughts when they were intimate. „*You're so beautiful*“ Draco murmured over and over in his mind as well as aloud, making Harry feel humbled at the force of the blonde's feelings.

Harry panted wildly, his skin tingling as he lost himself to this pleasure that Draco was causing to course through him as the blonde continued to caress and kiss torturously slow over every inch of his body, even going so far as to suck lustily on his toes. The Gryffindor was sure he was going to go totally mad and then Draco purposely stopped.

Painfully aroused, Harry raised his eyebrows and stared at Draco with agitation, his lips parted slightly, his breath short and sharp. His body was tinged with dampness and sweaty bangs stuck to his forehead, his face flushed. "Please, Draco. Don't stop," the Gryffindor pleaded faintly, a twinge of embarrassment ran through him because of his wanton begging, but it soon disappeared under the heated, lustful gaze of grey eyes.

Draco laughed softly, almost evilly as far as Harry was concerned, before removing the last remnants of his clothing and reaching for his wand on the bedside table. "What was that spell again?" he questioned, quirking a brow playfully.

"Traditum Lubricus," Harry puffed out.

"Ahh, yes, That's the one." Draco muttered the spell and then Harry's breath caught in his throat as he felt a slickened finger breach the tight ring of muscles of his anus. In the next instant the air whooshed out of his lungs and he groaned loudly as his blonde boyfriend pushed in deeper, crooking his finger just so, finding his prostrate almost immediately. „*Damn, but he's a quick learner,*" Harry thought as he tossed his head wildly from side to side.

„*I had an excellent teacher,*" Draco responded internally and Harry could just feel the smugness drift over him. The blonde continued to stroke and stretch, adding more fingers gingerly and enjoying the feeling of having so much control over another as the sensations from Harry's body crashed over his own.

"You're a fucking tease, Malfoy," Harry moaned, feeling that this whole stretching thing was taking far too long. "I'm ready now," he finished with a growl.

Draco smirked broadly and placed himself between Harry's open thighs, repeating the oiling charm on his rock hard member before carefully pushing inside.

Harry made no complaints, feeling absolutely no pain whatsoever as he took in all of Draco. Harry's flesh throbbed warmly where they were intimately connected and he tried to concentrate on this amazing feeling, deciding that from now on they were definitely going to be taking turns. This was just too good to ever give up. He clung to the blonde's shoulders as Draco rocked their bodies together passionately, calling out his lovers name, not even realizing that Draco was also gasping his name in his ear along with him.

Draco's movements gained speed and power, his body straining for the release that was tightening within him. "Oh god's Harry!" the blonde cried, the ecstatic sensations from being engulfed in such hot tightness ricocheting back and forth with the brunettes passionate perceptions took him over completely and in the next moment he exploded with a deep groan.



Harry couldn't stop his own climax as he felt Draco's race over every nerve of his being and with a short cry he came between their sweat slickened bodies, hugging the blonde tight to him.

Draco slumped heavily on top of Harry, astonished with the surprising speed of drowsiness that spread all the way to the end of his fingertips. "Wow," he groaned brokenly. "I can see why you like topping."

Harry loosened his death grip from Draco's shoulders, but kept his arms wrapped loosely around him. "I can see why you like bottoming," he replied with a deep chuckle.

Draco moved to slip out of his lover's body and rested beside him after a few moments. He sat up groggily and grabbed his wand, magicing away the wetness on themselves and the bed. The blonde plopped back down beside him and let out a long, contented sigh.

The-Boy-Who-Lived was surprised at the joy and happiness that ran through his heart as he heard the delicate affection that echoed in that soft sound. He closed his eyes, his body tingling still from where Draco had kissed him everywhere, intently aware of the extraordinary feeling of having been tasted all over.

"Merlin, you were so amazing," Harry said groggily. "I love you so much, Draco."

Draco smiled happily and shifted so he could get himself and Harry under the sheets, nestling in them up to his shoulders. He took Harry's hand and softly kissed his knuckles before snuggling his body tighter to his boyfriends. They kept their fingers entwined as they drifted off to slumber.

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Draco awoke rather abruptly in the depth of the night to the sound of an ear piercing scream that had his heart pounding in his throat. Harry was flailing about restlessly in his sleep, mumbling and slurring words that Draco couldn't understand. The blonde had just leaned over to give Harry a shake when the Gryffindor screeched out again and bolted straight up in bed, almost throwing Draco from the mattress.

"Fuck, Harry!" Draco exclaimed fearfully as The-Boy-Who-Lived stared back at him looking absolutely petrified and disoriented.

Harry drew in a choked breath and Draco reached over and gathered him in his arms, gently wiping the sheen of sweat from his damp forehead.

“Sorry, sorry,” Harry apologized as he began to slowly calm in Draco’s embrace, becoming more aware of his surroundings and the pounding headache that made him feel slightly nauseous.

“It’s okay,” Draco murmured soothingly, rubbing his boyfriend’s back. The blonde’s heart was still tripping like a jackhammer because of the expression of terror that had been on Harry’s face. “Are you alright now?”

“I saw...oh God...I saw...,” Harry told Draco, his voice muffled against the blonde’s chest.

“It’s okay. You’re safe here. Tell me what you saw,” Draco voiced gently as he hugged the raven haired boy tighter to him, not stopping his soothing caresses.

Harry shuddered in Draco’s arms at the remembered sensation of Voldemort inhabiting his body during the vision and swallowed thickly. The Gryffindor had felt barely there, a helpless passenger in his own body as the first brush of the evil wizard’s mind stung him with its raw, dark energy.

“I...he was standing in some kind of magical circle inscribed with dark seals and symbols,” Harry breathed out and then stopped.

“Go on,” Draco prodded. When Harry still didn’t continue Draco kissed the top of his head and lifted his chin so the shaking teen had to look at him. “We need to know what you saw. I know it’s hard, but try Harry. It might help.”

The-Boy-Who-Lived took in a large breath and nodded, gathering his wits and courage around him. “He was in this circle drawn on the floor and there were Death Eaters there.

They had these cages in their hands and they’d step through an archway that Voldemort had cut in the energy of the circle with a black handled knife.

“An athame,” Draco clarified, remembering back to when his father had taught him about the use of circle magic in accordance with the Dark Arts.

“Oh?” Harry questioned, having not heard of such a knife before. He took in a shaky breath and began again. “Once they had entered, they would open the cage. I think...I think what came out of the cages were the souls of people he had killed. They couldn’t get out of the circle, they were trapped and Voldemort was chanting and absorbing them...they were screaming. I could hear them, Draco. It was awful. And I...he...he was laughing.”

Harry had begun to hyper-ventilate and Draco continued to hold him, rocking him back and forth. The blonde’s face had gone very pale as he had listened to his boyfriend speak.

Throughout the whole vision, as Harry had felt himself overcome by the Dark Lord, he had never once stopped fighting against him. Trying to make him stop or make him step out of or break the magical circle, trying anything to affect the man in some way or another as Voldemort affected him. It had all been futile and had only left him feeling so tired that he now felt like a tissue-thin shred of himself.

“Take some deep breaths, Harry,” Draco ordered anxiously, slowly relaxing as the Gryffindor did as he was told and his breathing became more normal.

“Don’t go,” Harry whimpered, still feeling very fragile as Draco went to release him.

“I won’t,” Draco promised. “I just want to get more comfortable, okay?”

Harry nodded and moved away from Draco as he lay back on the bed. The blonde opened his arms, inviting the dark haired teen to come to him.

Draco wondered what Voldemort was trying to accomplish by absorbing the souls of his victims.

“I suppose we should talk to Dumbledore again,” Harry stated, his voice now steady and the pain in his scar slowly abating as he relaxed into Draco’s arms.

“Umm,” Draco agreed still thinking over what Harry had just told him. “Let’s just get some more sleep for now,” the Slytherin said as he closed his eyes.

Harry nodded against Draco’s chest and even though he was sure he wouldn’t be able to fall asleep again, he found himself being soothed by his boyfriend’s arms holding him, his gentle breathing and the steady thumping of his heart under his ear. Ten minutes

later, Harry was sleeping soundly while Draco was completely alert, trying to come to grips with the feeling of restless anxiety which had taken up residence in the pit of his stomach.

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It was getting closer to the time of the equinox and Harry still had no luck meeting with the old Headmaster.

“I’m sorry Mr. Potter,” McGonagall apologized. “Professor Dumbledore is away for the day. I’m not sure when he’ll be back.”

Harry thanked his head of house and returned to the library where Hermione, Ron and Draco were reading about circle magic and the use of souls, trying to figure out what the Dark Lord had planned. „*He must have already left to talk to the Order,*” Harry thought with frustration.

He explained the situation when he returned and sat down at the large table the other three teens were at in the furthest corner of the library. They had chosen this area as there were a lot more people around then there normally would have been. This should have been a Hogsmeade weekend, but Dumbledore had cancelled the outing because of the Death Eater activity and his conversation with Harry and his friends the night before.

“I can’t believe it,” the raven haired teen complained. “When you need him, he’s not around or he’s too busy to see me.”

It wasn’t that Dumbledore didn’t want to see the boy, but the old man had been very busy trying to organize a response plan to the upcoming attack at Hogsmeade.

The Headmaster was at this very moment setting up resistance fighters in the wizarding town and overseeing evacuation procedures to keep the populace safe. There was portkeys to make that would take Aurors and fighters to various safe houses in the event they needed medical attention or a place to retreat and regroup during battle, healing supplies had to be organized at each site where an Order member and a healer would be, and Dumbledore himself was charming various talismans for each person so that they could signal where an attack was happening to gain help from their fellows to the heaviest battle areas.

The group of teens had no way of knowing that the Headmaster already knew the date that Voldemort was most likely to attack. He may have been old, but he could figure things out as well as, if not better than, the four teenagers that were making their own plans.

“I don’t know what he’s thinking, honestly,” Draco agreed. It almost seemed to the blonde as if the elder wizard was avoiding them for some reason. “Well, we don’t need him,” the Slytherin added, sniffing disdainfully as he moved his chair closer to his boyfriends.

Harry dropped his arm around Draco’s shoulders and sighed, earning a slight glare from Ron and a little smile from Hermione. “I guess we should be going, it’s almost curfew,” the Gryffindor breathed, giving Draco’s shoulders a squeeze.

“Don’t worry, Harry. We’ll get everything figured out. It’ll all work out, you’ll see,” Hermione stated. The four teens rose from their chairs and put the books away before leaving. Hermione and Ron went up to the Gryffindor tower while Harry walked Draco back to his rooms, promising his friends he’d be right back.

Draco leaned up and gave his boyfriend a kiss just outside the Knight portrait. The gentle peck on the lips began to grow hungrier, but then Harry reluctantly pulled away. “If you keep that up, I’ll never be able to leave.” “Would that be so bad,” Draco drawled sexily.

“Your insatiable, you know that?” Harry grinned.

“You’ve created a monster,” Draco replied with a smirk before he turned and said the password, causing the portrait swing open.

“Meet us in the library after classes,” Harry told him before dropping one more quick kiss on the blonde’s lips before he entered his rooms. Hermione thought she was getting closer to an answer as to what Voldemort would want with his victim’s souls and wanted to discuss it with the boys.

“Okay,” Draco replied with yawn. All this late night research was making him sleepy.

Harry shook his head and smiled after the door closed. Draping his invisibility cloak over his shoulders and flipping it over his head, he turned to walk back down the corridor towards his dorm.

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The next evening the three Gryffindors were sitting at their usual table at the back of the library waiting for Draco to arrive. When he did, and settled himself in the chair across from Harry, Hermione cleared her throat.

“Okay, we know he’s collecting the souls of his victims, probably so he can live forever, but what I can’t figure out is how he’s doing it.” “What do you mean, Mione?” Ron questioned.

“Well, in order to absorb those souls, you would need an empty vessel to hold them. If the Dark Lord was empty, that would mean he wouldn’t have a soul, and if he doesn’t have a soul he be a walking, mindless husk, no better than someone who’s had the Dementor’s Kiss. So how is he absorbing the others?”

“He’s not totally empty, he must have removed some or most of his own soul, but still has a piece of it left inside of him in order to remain mentally aware. That would make him enough of a vessel to hold the others,” Draco stated after pondering over the problem for a moment or two.

“But why would he do that?” Harry asked. “Why would he give up his own soul to take those of muggles and wizards that are less powerful than he is?”

“That’s what I don’t know,” Hermione answered. “It really doesn’t make any sense and I haven’t been able to find any specific spell that would ask for the wizard to give up their own soul in order to attain immortality.”

“There could be something in books on the Dark Arts, which you wouldn’t be able to get here in Hogwarts,” Draco postulated, wishing he could sneak into his father’s library at home. He might be able to find something there.

“Wait,” Ron piped up. “If he has removed part of his soul, where is it?”

“Yes, I don’t imagine he’d just let it disappear or give it to someone else.” Draco agreed. “I don’t know that either,” Hermione huffed out in frustration. “None of this makes any sense, but he must have a reason.”

“And I bet it has something to do with Harry,” Ron groused. He turned and looked apologetically at his friend. “Sorry mate.”

Harry shrugged, he was used to Voldemort being after him.

“What he’s doing must be making him stronger, or he wouldn’t do it.” The blonde looked across the table to his boyfriend. “Strong enough to defeat Harry.”

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Blaise read the note again from his mother before using his wand to light it on fire, destroying the encrypted message, just in case.

Sitting in the large chair in the common room, the dark skinned boy called over Adrian and Pansy. “I think now’s the time that a certain blonde blood traitor got what’s coming to him.”

“Oh?” Pansy questioned with an evil grin.

Blaise grinned wickedly at his two companions. “We’re going to capture Malfoy. His father wants to have a word or two with his slut of a son.”

“And how do you know that?” Adrian asked, quirking his head curiously at the other boy.

The dark skinned boy puffed out his chest proudly. “My mother sent me a letter; said Lucius himself wanted me to personally carry out this mission. Apparently we may even be able to allow the Dark Lord to capture Potter. That stupid idiot will more than likely go off in half cocked Gryffindor fashion to try and rescue his lover,” Zabini choked out in disgust.

“His father will set him straight,” Pansy added gleefully, proud of her little pun. She knew that Lucius Malfoy was a stern disciplinarian and she couldn’t think of anyone

better to show Draco the error of his ways. A bonus would be in tricking Potter into the hands of the Dark Lord. Then all three of them would be held in high esteem for doing what others had tried and failed at. They would be the elite of the Death Eaters and, maybe, she could get her blonde fiancé to beg to take her back, after he was properly motivated, of course.

“So how are we supposed to accomplish this capture? No one here is supposed to even let on he exists. He’ll be suspicious if we try to speak to him,” Adrian told the others.

“What about Crabbe or Goyle?” Pansy questioned. “They didn’t do anything to him, he may trust them.”

“He may, but I don’t,” Blaise interjected. “The two of them will just fuck it up anyway. Salazar knows why Malfoy ever kept those dumb arses around.”

“I think I could get Theodore to bait him for us,” Adrian offered with a thoughtful look, a plan beginning to form in the older boy’s mind. “He didn’t try anything either in the Great Hall and, even though he doesn’t speak to him, he hasn’t mocked him or tried to hex him either. Draco might let his guard down with him, at least enough for Nott to get him in a position where we could grab him without being seen.” “You really think that Nott will go along with it?” Pansy asked.

“I’m sure he’ll understand what will serve in his best interests,” Adrian replied with a smirk. “He is a Slytherin.” He told the others the idea he had and Blaise and Pansy smiled smugly.

“Let’s just keep this between us, just in case,” Blaise intoned. “We don’t need anybody to mess this up, or take credit from us when we come before the Dark Lord.”

The other two Slytherin students nodded their agreement and then went back to doing what they’d been doing before their little meeting, deciding to leave it to Adrian to approach Theodore. None of them noticed one of their larger house mates that had been scrunched down in one of the chairs behind them, listening unseen.

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Theodore waited just outside Draco’s classroom, just off the main hallway. He had left his last class early, complaining of headache and nausea so he could be excused to fulfill



his part of the plan. He wasn't sure exactly why Adrian wanted him to lure Draco to the statue of Gregory the Smarmy on the fifth floor, but the older Slytherin said it would help to teach the blonde a lesson.

Theodore was a bit wary, but Adrian soothed his conscious, stating it was only a joke and that it might help to bring Draco back into the fold. Nott hoped so.

He really missed Draco, even though the blonde could be petulant and moody, he had done a lot for their house and ran it fairly. Much fairer than Blaise, who didn't really help the younger kids in Slytherin and kept his favourites well protected while letting everyone else fend for themselves against those in the other houses. At least the Malfoy heir had kept everyone a cohesive unit, them against everyone else.

Theodore stood a little straighter when he heard the soft click of shoes on the stone floor. That had to be Draco and he was alone. "Psst, Draco," Nott called out as the blonde went to walk past, heading upstairs to his rooms.

Draco came to a complete stop, watching Nott suspiciously as the other boy came out from around the corner to stop in front of him. "What do you want, Nott? Where're the rest of the masses?"

"I wanted to talk to you," Theodore replied, noticing the way Draco's hands tightened before putting them inside his robe pockets. Theo took his hands out of his pockets showing the blonde that he wasn't armed.

"I would have thought you wouldn't want to be seen with a traitor," Draco said, his demeanor calm and watchful.

"I don't think you're a traitor," Nott uttered softly, and he actually meant it. He wasn't happy with the blonde being with Harry Potter, and he hoped that this „lesson“ of Adrian's would convince his former Slytherin leader to drop the Gryffindor, but he really didn't think of Draco as a traitor just because he happened to be gay, even if he was gay with Potter.

"So talk," Draco shot out, taking his hands out of his pockets and crossing them defensively over his chest.

Theodore took a step towards the blonde. "We should go somewhere more private to discuss you coming back to Slytherin."

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„*What the fuck!!*“ Harry thought wildly as a meaty palm was slapped across his mouth, cutting off his cry while another large arm wrapped around his waist, pulling him backwards into an empty classroom. When he was released he twisted around to face Crabbe. Goyle stepped out from behind the door that he had just closed, standing between it and Harry. Both had their wands pointed at him.

“I’m only going to tell you this once,” Crabbe stated menacingly before Harry could even utter a word of complaint or indignation at the treatment he had just received. “Draco’s in trouble and you better do something.”

Harry blinked, completely taken by surprise at what he was hearing. Why would the Slytherin’s be warning him to help Draco? Didn’t they all hate him now?

The two larger boys lowered their wands. “He’s going to be on the fifth floor, by the statue of Gregory the Smarmy. You know...where that hidden passageway is where anyone could just grab him and take him out of Hogwarts,” Crabbe continued while Goyle kept a wary eye on the dark haired Gryffindor. “I’d hurry up if I were you. And you didn’t hear nothing from us.” The two large Slytherins then departed the classroom, glancing around the empty corridor nervously before quickly walking away, leaving Harry in stunned indecision before he too raced out of the classroom.

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“Why do I have to go to the fifth floor?” Draco questioned suspiciously as he stood before Nott, not moving.

Theodore sighed. He knew that this was going to be harder than his other housemates had let on. Draco was smart enough to know when something was up. He decided to stick to the story Adrian had told him to say, but he hadn’t much hope that the blonde would actually go with him.

“There’re those of us in Slytherin house that want you back in charge. Zabini is a right tosser and he’s no good at leading us. Besides, some of us don’t think you deserved to be ousted just because you got a thing going with another bloke.” Theodore blushed and cleared his throat lightly. “We’re trying to stage a coup and we need you.”

Pucey had been sure that this story would appeal to Draco’s sense of vanity and his ego.

“So what’s on the fifth floor then?” Draco questioned with a swelling sense of vindication, his mind beginning to turn to what he could do in retribution for how he had been treated by his fellows.

“We’ve found a secret room to hold meetings in and we’ve been trying to plan how we can get you back in at Slytherin,” Theodore told him.

“Who’s we?” Draco asked as he began to walk towards the stairs.

“Well, me of course,” Theodore stated as he followed along with the blonde. “Crabbe, Goyle, Davis, Greengrass and a lot of the younger kids,” the weedy looking boy said as he counted out on his fingers those that Adrian had told him to mention. “Zabini’s been quite tough on them.”

Draco stood on the stairway as it shifted to the left, thinking. If he was lucky, maybe that would be about half of Slytherin house. He’d have to meet everyone and see how many exactly were on his side before he decided if he wanted to take over Slytherin again. “Is everyone there now? In this secret room of yours?” the blonde questioned.

“Oh, yes. They sent me to see if I could convince you to come and meet them.” Theodore was beginning to feel a bit lousy for lying to the blonde. He had always liked Draco and he was starting to have a very bad feeling about this whole deal, especially since he wasn’t sure what was fully going on. He was weighing his options on whether he should just tell the Malfoy heir to forget everything he had just said when his Slytherin mate spoke.

“Okay, I’ll meet them, but it doesn’t mean I’ll go along with what you’ve got planned. I’m not sure if I want to go back to Slytherin after what happened, unless you can all accept Harry as well.”

Nott frowned, but quickly hid his anger. Harry Potter involved in Slytherin house? No way! Theodore put his trepidation behind him and smiled at his former blonde leader. Yes, Draco definitely needed a lesson taught to him.

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Harry turned the corner and skidded to a halt, his mouth opened in surprise at what he saw. Draco was in the middle of the hallway, laughing maniacally, throwing hexes and

curses at a group of Slytherins who were madly trying to find cover or fend off the spells that had hit home.

Pansy was screaming and running in circles, waving her hands wildly in the air trying to dissipate a thick black fog that was surrounding her. Harry heard the cloud buzzing angrily and then suddenly realized that the girl was being attacked by a swarm of biting midges.

Theodore Nott was petrified on the floor, his body rigid while his frightened eyes followed the movements of the evilly cackling blonde as he cast wandless spells from his right hand and used Nott's wand in his left.

Draco aimed his right hand at Adrian Pucey and mumbled a spell. Adrian quickly ducked behind the statue of Gregory the Smarmy to avoid a wave of frigid air so cold that the side of the statue where the spell hit immediately turned frost white. The older Slytherin lifted his wand, but before he could cast a curse, Harry cast Expelliarmus and Pucey's wand flew out of his hand and into the tunnel behind him.

The others, noticing that Harry Potter had joined the fray, quickly ran off down the corridor, leaving Adrian to make his way out by use of the secret passage, Nott lying still petrified, and Parkinson crying, slumped against the wall with her hands over her head while the midges continued to buzz and bite.

"Hi Harry," Draco greeted his boyfriend happily. He just knew when Nott approached him that something was up, but had followed anyways, intent on getting to the bottom of the ruse by pretending to go along with the stupid story that had come out of his former housemate's mouth. There was no one that was going to out Slytherin the Slytherin Prince and he hadn't had so much fun in a long time. Being on the side of light was all well and good, but some good old fashioned hexing put the blonde in a good mood. He had missed this.

"Guess you didn't need my help at all," Harry said as he put his wand back in his pocket.

"What did you think? I was some helpless firstie or one of your quivering groupies? I can take care of myself," Draco scoffed. He waved Theodore's wand and the swarm of midges disappeared. He crouched down beside the bitten and quickly swelling face of Pansy Parkinson.

“So Pans, what’s all this then?” Draco questioned in a seemingly friendly manner, except his eyes were as cold and hard as granite.

“I’m not telling you a thing,” the dark haired witch spit out at the blonde.

“Really,” Draco drawled, twirling the wand in his left hand. “I guess I could always summon the midges back again, I know how much you like bugs,” the blonde smirked. “I’ll just let you figure out how to make them go away.”

“No,” Pansy said quickly, her eyes going round. She didn’t even have any idea of where her wand went. It had fallen from her hand while she had been busy waving her arms around. She glanced over to Potter who had just happened to pick up said missing wand that had been on the floor by his feet.

Draco shot a quick look over his shoulder towards Harry and then turned back to Pansy, his smirk increased in a most unpleasant way. “You better tell me now, or else the bugs come back and we just saunter off with your wand.”

Pansy gave her former crush a defiant look for all of five seconds. “Zabini set this up. Your father wanted to speak to you,” the girl raised her head and stared up into Draco’s eyes, giving him a venomous look. “We were just supposed to grab you and take you out of Hogwarts.”

Draco knew this couldn’t be good. His father certainly didn’t want to have just a simple chat with him. The blonde boy stood and released Nott from his petrification, waving the two of them off. He was upset with them, but both Pansy and Theo had been friends of his for a long time and he didn’t want to really hurt them. “Get lost, and tell Zabini that if he’s smart, he won’t bother me again. I’ll make sure your wand gets back to you later.” The Slytherin shot out a stinging hex on the retreating girl’s backside for good measure and she hurried off with a yelp, scratching at the many bug bites.

Nott stood with his head bowed. “I’m sorry, I really didn’t know what they were going to do,” he confessed.

“Then, perhaps, you shouldn’t have gone along with it,” Draco returned irritably, shoving Nott’s wand into his hands. He was hurt by what the other boy had done, but hid it well.

Nott just nodded his head and then walked away, he really hadn't wanted Draco to come to any harm, but he didn't want to alienate himself from Slytherin house either.

"You know, you can be quite scary," Harry stated when the other boy had left. It was kind of nice being with someone who didn't need rescuing every time he turned around. He had forgotten just how independent the blonde teen really was.

Draco's expression turned smug. "I'm sure they won't try anything like that again." The blonde brows creased as he became thoughtful. "My father is a different matter, when he wants something he works very hard until he gets it." His smug grin soon returned. "Well one good thing came out of it. At least we have a way to get out of Hogwarts if Dumbledore won't allow us to join the fighting at Hogsmeade."

Harry could have hit himself. He had completely forgotten about the many secret passages out of the castle. "We'll still have to be careful," he told the blonde as they began to walk back to Draco's rooms. "Filch knows about this one."

Draco's smile turned slightly evil. "No worries, I'm in a right proper mood to take care of Filch."

"You really are scary," Harry returned with a matching grin.

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"Harry! Harry!" Ron whispered harshly so as not to wake the others in the room as he shook his sweating and moaning friend awake.

Harry jolted upright with a scream on his lips which he just barely held in, his scar throbbing hotly in the very depths of his skull. Panting and gripping tightly onto Ron's arms, he slowly composed himself until he was able to speak to the red-head. "It's started," he finally gasped out. "We have to get the others together."

Ron didn't argue or ask questions. Watching his fellow Gryffindor rub at his scared forehead, he immediately understood how Harry knew what was going on.

Quick as a flash, Ron and Harry dressed, grabbing the Marauders Map and Harry's Invisibility Cloak, while the other boys in the dorm slept on. Neville rolled over on his bed, mumbling something in his sleep, but didn't wake. Once their dorm mate had quieted, the two Gryffindors crept out of their room, heading for the girls staircase.

“The alarm is going to wake everyone,” Ron hissed.

“It’s okay, We’re not going up,” Harry answered pulling out a flat piece of plastic from his robe, which he unfolded and then proceeded to punch a few of the buttons on it while

Ron looked on curiously. “Muggle cell phone,” Harry told his friend. “Hermione’s parents sent them to her when the war was declared, just in case we needed to get in contact with each other or them. I hope it will work.”

Harry crossed his fingers, remembering when Hermione had used hers to frantically try and call her parents when they went missing with no luck. Time after time all she had received from her phone was the message that the number she was trying to reach was out of range, and That’s if she got any kind of signal at all. Thank goodness her parents had been found, and not long ago. They had managed to evade the Death Eaters when they had broken into their home, using their fire escape plan. They had thrown the chain ladder from their bedroom window and ran and hid in a large culvert in their neighbourhood. The Aurors, who had been canvassing and patrolling the area during the days after the attack, eventually found them wet, dirty and hungry, but unharmed. They were now staying at Order headquarters and were none the worse for wear from their ordeal.

Hermione had gone with the hope that since she and Harry were in closer proximity the phones would work. The worry was still there, though, that because of the heavy magical auras inside Hogwarts, the signal may become scrambled and may not operate, regardless of their proximity.

Harry held the device to his ear, keeping his fingers crossed, and heard a low ringing, sounding as if it was coming from a far way off. A moment later, amidst much static, Hermione’s sleepy voice wafted into his ear.

She was down the stairs in seconds, meeting the two boys in the common room. Harry and Ron wondered if she had been sleeping fully clothed in order to have arrived so quickly. The three of them snuck out quietly from behind the portrait door, checked the map for Filch’s whereabouts and then slunk down the corridor towards Draco’s rooms, huddling together under the invisibility cloak.

By the time the four teens slipped through the secret passage behind Gregory the Smarmy and made it into Hogsmeade, the battle was going full force. At first the four youths couldn’t distinguish between friend or foe because of the darkness and the flashing lights from the many spells and hexes that were flying all around them.

Harry saw a jet of red light coming directly towards him and he threw himself to the ground as the spell flashed over his head, so close that it ruffled his hair. He could see Draco, Ron and Hermione ducking and weaving trying to avoid the flying curses that went whipping by them at furious speed, crashing through the walls of buildings behind them.

Harry scrambled up from the ground and then dashed to the side as Draco blocked a spell that was aimed at his Gryffindor boyfriend.

“Turn to stone, congeal and solidify!” Harry yelled, waving his hand wildly, trying to aim his wandless spell towards the Death Eater that had cast the curse. It flashed past the hooded man’s ear, just barely missing.

“Now, where did you learn that?” a very familiar voice jeered through the flashes of light. “Too bad you don’t seem to have any control,” the voice continued. Harry knew immediately who it was once he saw the shocked and distressed look on his boyfriend’s face.

Lucius Malfoy turned his attention towards his son. “Draco, how very disappointing,” he said sadly, shaking his head. “You have disgraced the great name of Malfoy. You are nothing more than a pitiful excuse for a wizard, lower than a diseased muggle. If I had known what would become of you, I’d have drowned you at birth. It will please me greatly to end your insignificant life now.”

“At least I’m not the one That’s a house elf to a complete nutter,” Draco shot back defiantly, but Harry could see the pain in his eyes at the words his father had spoken to him. “You’re the one who’s disgraced the name of Malfoy.”

Lucius raised his wand, not the one that had been charmed by the Ministry, but the extra one that had no legal constraints upon it at the same time as Draco raised his hand and both yelled their spells simultaneously. Harry’s heart was in his throat as time seemed to slow down and green raced to blue and collided in a pulsing swell of sickening swirls and sputtering flares. Lucius’ disdain may have been strong, but Draco’s hurt was stronger and slowly, very slowly his spell began to creep closer and closer towards the man he had once called father.

Suddenly, Harry gasped as the elder Malfoy’s face contorted in rage and he began to push his curse towards his son. Draco took a step back, his shield spell faltering in the face of such hatred.



Harry snapped out of his frozen stance and ran to stand beside his boyfriend to give him aid, but found himself crashing to the ground instead, completely immobilized by the spell from a Death Eater that he hadn't even seen.

"Don't worry, boy," Lucius smirked. "As soon as I'm done with this deviant," he spat, glaring at Draco as his curse pushed closer and closer to the struggling teen, "I'll get to you. And your death won't be so kind."

Draco felt his blood begin to boil. The person he loved was on the ground helpless, the Death Eaters and his father were going to take Harry to Voldemort where he would be tortured to death in front of everyone. There was no way he could allow that to happen. Harry had to live, which meant his father had to die. Filled with new resolve and a burning determination stronger than any he had ever felt before, he caused his shield to turn into reflective glass stronger than diamonds and Lucius' curse was reflected back, hitting him squarely on the chest. Lucius' face showed nothing but simple shock and then the light went out of his eyes and he fell to the ground.

Draco didn't even have time to allow his mind to process what he had just done. He turned towards the other Death Eaters that were trying to encircle them and grab Harry and he let all the love he had for the messy haired boy shine through. A bright light of pure white flashed out from the whole of the blond's body racing out in all directions, throwing back those men that would do his lover harm and breaking the spell on Harry at the same time.

Harry felt nothing but warmth, safety and utter love encase him. The sensation was so heady that tears began fall from his eyes at the enormity of emotion coming from the blond boy. The light was like the Patronus Charm, but so much more solid, so much more real and alive. It was as if every happy memory in the entire world was wrapped around him and the Gryffindor laughed as he wept, completely overwhelmed by the surge of powerful joy that filled him like a religious experience. Later, those others on the side of the light would tell tales of that mysterious flare. That even seeing it had filled them with hope and renewed strength, allowing them to continue to fight even when they thought all was lost.

That magnificent light faded away leaving the Death Eaters to either flee or lay unconscious on the ground. Draco ran over to Harry who was still on his knees, sobbing as he smiled.

"Harry," Draco called out, shaking the other boy back into reality. "We have to continue on, we have to find Voldemort."

Harry blinked his eyes looking at his blond lover in awe, Draco returned his gaze with a quiet, shy smile. Dumbledore always said that love was the power that the Dark Lord knew not, the Gryffindor just never imagined it would be the love Draco held for him that would save him and give him strength.

The Gryffindor took Draco's hand and let the Slytherin pull him to his feet and then down the street. As they ran Harry caught sight of Hermione, who was valiantly casting spells and hexes as fast as she could as Death Eaters advanced on her.

Harry hesitated when he heard his witch friend shriek out in pain as one of the Death Eaters spells cut through her defenses and he pulled his hand from Draco's. He began to make his way over to the girl only to be stopped by the blond teen's hand grabbing him by the shoulder.

"You can help everyone best by defeating Voldemort. Don't let yourself get side tracked or it's all over!" Draco shouted over the din of the fighting. "She'll be okay, see, there's Ron!"

Harry's gaze followed where Draco was pointing and sure enough, there was the red head casting the Impedimenta hex upon Hermione's attacker. This gave the witch the time to cast her own spell, hitting the man square in the chest with a jet of purple light.

The Death Eater keeled over and Ron and Hermione gave Harry a thumbs up and a victorious grin before running off in the opposite direction that Draco was trying to pull Harry.

"We'll be fine! Go Harry!" Ron called over his shoulder as Draco dragged the protesting Gryffindor away.

Curses were streaming at the two boys from every direction as they used their wandless magic to ward or attack. Harry felt something slap across his face, but the sudden pain soon ebbed. Looking over to Draco he could see a wide slash across his face, blood running freely from the wound that was in the exact spot Harry had been struck.

"Draco!" Harry called out worriedly.

"I'm fine," Draco returned sharply, wiping the blood from his cheek. "Concentrate, Potter. Use that fucking link. Where is he?" In actuality, Draco was beginning to reach the limit of his strength. The spell he had used earlier to force the Death Eaters away

from Harry had left him shaky and feeling weak. The blonde hid his discomfort from Harry as best he could.

Harry stood for a moment and closed his eyes as Draco kept up a defense to give him time to pinpoint the Dark Lord's location. The Gryffindor took a shaky breath and only allowed himself to concentrate on the link between himself and the evil wizard, ignoring the pain in his skull. "There!" he exclaimed as he lifted his head and pointed across the battlefield.

Both boys took off again, Harry in the lead with Draco following, struggling to keep himself upright and mobile when finally, they saw him. Voldemort was casting the Avada Kedavra on one of the Aurors that were trying to surround him.

Voldemort smirked as he caught sight of his long time nemesis and blasted the others away with a flick of his wand. He approached Harry with a confident stride. "Harry, how nice of you to join our little party and I see you've brought your little whore with you," the evil wizard gloated as he glanced towards Draco.

Harry's eyes darkened as he glared at Voldemort, his hands tightening into fists. The former Tom Riddle smirked and raised his wand high. "Sectumsempra!" he called out and a burst of scarlet erupted from Draco's chest before he could shield against it, the blondes reflexes slowed because of the drain on his system.

Voldemort was caught totally by surprise because the Potter boy, who he had been aiming at, was completely unharmed. Harry took the opportunity to cast his own spell while the Dark Lord was distracted and confused. "Ignite, attack with blazing fire, temperature of one thousand degrees!"

Voldemort flailed backwards, screaming as he used the Flame Freezing Charm to cause the fire he was caught in to become harmless. He wasn't quite quick enough, though, as his robes were practically burnt free of his now red welted body. "You'll pay for that," he hissed, raising his wand again and bearing down on Harry.

Harry, meantime, was frantically trying to get to Draco who had collapsed onto his knees on the ground, holding his bleeding chest. One of the many Death Eaters that had been quietly watching from the sidelines leapt out behind the oblivious Harry, aiming his wand to deliver a curse.

“That without shape shall protect this body,” Draco choked out, just before the curse could hit the Gryffindor. The magic deflected, striking Voldemort causing him to stagger back.

“Forget me!” Draco tried to yell, his voice hoarse and strained. “Get Voldemort, kill him!” Harry’s eyes watered as he saw Draco cough up a clot of blood.

Voldemort regained his senses, and after firing the killing curse at his follower who had dared to come between him and the scared teen, he rounded on Harry.

Harry was ready and he stood firm and determined, anger boiling within him at the Dark Lord’s display of disregard for the life of one of his own followers. “Winds of absolute zero, become as a thief and steal his heat!” the Gryffindor teen cried and the temperature around him and Voldemort dropped quickly until Harry could see his breath fog into the air.

“Flames envelope with your warmth, give light and protection,” Draco cast at Harry, desperately trying to hang onto consciousness as he fell over on his side on the ground. „*I have to help Harry, I have to protect him,*” the blonde thought as he pushed all the magic he had left through their connection to the boy he loved.

Voldemort’s teeth were chattering, but his ruby colored eyes blazed pure hate as he looked at the boy who had disrupted his plans time after time. He forced his frozen body to respond and lifted his wand which was glowing sickly green.

Harry felt a surge of power slam into him and knew it was from Draco as he could feel the unrestrained love behind the magic. He calmly stood within the bubble of warmth Draco had cast for him, staring at the evil wizard who had once been a young man, much like himself, and knew that he had to help him as well. He had to put to rest the soul of Tom Riddle that now resided within the one known as Voldemort.

“Your four limbs tear asunder to the four winds with blades of ice,” Harry stated firmly before Voldemort had a chance to cast his killing curse.

Voldemort screamed as sharp daggers of ice began to slash through his body. Before he could be completely torn apart, he frantically mouthed a spell, waving his wand. In a puff of black, swirling smoke and blood red light, he disappeared.

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As soon as Voldemort disappeared, Harry ran to Draco's side using his wand to check his vitals which were frighteningly weak. The Gryffindor muttered the string of spells that he had used to close the blonde's wounds that day in the bathroom and then looked worriedly at the ashen face of his lover. He lifted his head and screamed for help, looking around the street, desperately hoping that somebody would hear him. But the Aurors were busy chasing down and collecting what was left of the Death Eaters who were trying to flee after the disappearance of their lord, and didn't seem to see the two boys on the ground.

Harry turned his gaze back to his boyfriend and was terrified by the amount of blood he saw coating the front of Draco's chest, so much red, too much, and he placed his hand over the blonde's heart, feeling it thud slower and slower. With fear near crippling him, the Boy-Who-Lived gathered the Slytherin teen into his arms and concentrated hard on their weakening connection, trying to charge it with his own energy as Draco had done for him.

"Look at me, Draco," Harry demanded.

Draco turned his head and opened his eyes slowly, trying to focus onto Harry's intensely worried features.

"Don't give up, Draco," Harry stated frantically. "Keep holding on, you're not alone." Harry smiled encouragingly when the blonde blinked up at him. "I'll be by your side always," the Gryffindor promised taking hold of his boyfriend's hand.

"Feels cold," Draco rasped out. "But I won't give in."

Harry felt hot tears drip down his face. His chest was heavy and tight as he vehemently denied the irrefutable knowledge that he could sense Draco's imminent death approaching. "We'll make it through, okay? Just stay strong, I'm here for you."

Draco nodded his head slowly, his eyes blinking again as he struggled to keep them open. "With you by my side I will fight and defend," the blonde whispered, staring straight up into his lover's tear coated face. His voice began to get fainter and Harry had to lean over to hear what he said next.

"Nothing's going to change destiny, what ever is meant to be, will work out perfectly. I love you." Draco's blinking stopped and his eyes remained open as they began to glaze

over, his pupils dilating to become as wide as his irises. The Gryffindor felt the grip on his hand loosen.

Harry stared down into his lovers pale face feeling as if a door had just slammed closed and that his life had just come to a screeching end. “Draco?” he called out softly, unsure. “Draco?!” The Gryffindor felt that terror come back full force and he shook the lifeless body of his lover as the wandless energy and wild magic from him spiked and swirled, becoming denser as it enveloped the two teens.

“You are not allowed to die here!” Harry called frantically. Using all his knowledge of wandless magic he poured his life energy down the barely there line that connected them still. The dark haired teen held on and refused to allow that delicate, faint strand to snap and leave his body an empty, soulless shell with its breaking. Harry’s heart beat wildly as the magic surged through his body into Draco’s as the Gryffindor tried to restart that silent heart.

“Breathe!” Harry screamed. “Don’t you fucking dare to die!”

Unbeknownst to either boy, beneath Draco’s bloodied clothing, Granny’s Crucifix began to glow, softly at first and then growing in strength. The weak charm the old woman had put on it was meshing with the energy that Harry was forcing into the blonde.

Seconds later, when Harry thought his own heart would stop and be as still as his lovers from the overwhelming tide of grief that rose up within him, Draco’s body twitched as one last bolt of Harry’s energy combined with the gypsy protection spell jolted through him, and he spasmed in the Gryffindor’s arms.

Draco sucked in a gasping breath and slowly his vacant expression began to focus.

Harry tried unsuccessfully to choke back a sob as he saw the boy he loved blink once more and he felt the heart that had been so still but a moment ago beating under his hand. It was weak, fluttery like a small birds wings, but it was beating and That’s all that Harry cared about at the moment.

Draco raised a trembling hand and caressed his fingers along the side of Harry’s cheek, smearing blood in their wake. “It’s okay,” the blonde whispered. “I’m here with you.”

Harry gripped the Slytherin tight to him, burying his face into Draco’s neck, uncaring of the sticky, dark wetness that coated them both and wept with relief as a couple of the

Order members, finally noticing who was kneeling in the middle of the street, hurriedly approached the pair.

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Draco slowly opened his eyes and stared up at the white ceiling of the school infirmary, blinking in confusion for a moment or two. He had no idea how he had gotten here. The last thing he remembered was being held and cradled in Harry's arms like a babe on a street in Hogsmeade. He thought he might have died, but he wasn't totally sure, perhaps it had all been a dream. He moved his head to the side and saw his Gryffindor boyfriend sitting on the chair that had been pushed up close to his bed.

Harry was resting with his upper body bent over the bed, sleeping with his forehead leaning on his crossed arms.

Draco was relieved to see that Harry seemed fine. There were no wounds that he could see and he lifted his hand and ran it gently through the Gryffindor's messy, dark locks.

"Draco?" Harry mumbled, raising his head slightly to look at his softly smiling boyfriend. "Draco!" Harry repeated with more enthusiasm as he came fully awake in a flash, leaping up and gathering the blonde into his arms as he pounced on the bed where his head had been resting.

"Harry, you're squeezing the breath out of me," Draco complained with a short-winded laugh.

Harry loosened his grip, but didn't let go, kissing the breath from Draco instead as a few happy tears slid down his cheeks. "I'm so glad you're alright," the Gryffindor boy stated joyously into the Slytherin's neck as he hugged him again. "It's been eighteen days, I was so scared you wouldn't wake up," he finished.

"Eighteen days?" Draco questioned in a shocked tone pulling back from Harry slightly so he could look directly into his face.

"Yes, and Mr. Potter has been here every one of them," Poppy Pomfrey informed the blonde as she opened the curtains surrounding his bed. "Maybe now, Mr. Potter can go to his own room to sleep," the nurse scolded with a smile. "Welcome back, Mr. Malfoy."

Harry released his boyfriend with a blush and moved back to the chair to give the Hogwarts healer room to bustle around the blonde.

Poppy checked him over with her wand, her smile getting larger by the minute as she read the results from her diagnostic spells. "Seems all is well, you're a very lucky young man and the hero of the hour, as well," she said as she fluffed and adjusted the pillows behind Draco so he could sit up more comfortably.

Draco's brow furrowed in confusion. "Hero?"

"You protected Harry very well, my boy. If it hadn't been for you, he never would have survived," Dumbledore stated as he walked in behind Poppy.

"Headmaster," Harry greeted with a smile.

Draco just stared, slightly confused. He had no recollection of doing anything to help Harry. Vague images of many people running and the sound of yelling and screaming flitted across his consciousness, but not much else. "I don't understand," the blonde said.

"This is just a temporary bit of memory loss," Poppy soothed, stroking his hair. "Everything will come back to you soon. Meantime, the Headmaster and Harry here can fill you in." The medical witch fussed around the bed for a moment or two more and then left the trio alone.

"What do you remember?" Dumbledore asked kindly.

Draco's brow furrowed in thought. "I remember we were fighting...we were trying to find someone."

Harry took Draco's hand. "Yes, Voldemort. We were trying to find Voldemort."

"Did we? Is he...?" Draco questioned uncertainly.

"Unfortunately, you did not defeat him," Dumbledore said softly. "And from the information I have, you would not have been able to. But I believe Harry did manage to cause enough damage to him so that it will be some time before he attacks again. Meaning that we will have some time to track down and find his horcruxes."



Again Draco looked confused. “Horcruxes?”

“Yes, very dark magic,” Dumbledore explained. “He has managed to split his soul into seven pieces and has hidden each one in some kind of object. I believe he was using the souls of the others to bolster the energy and strength of his body, while keeping the rest of his soul secreted away as a failsafe from being destroyed.”

“We’re going to have to find them, aren’t we?” Harry asked none too happily. Dumbledore had previously and briefly told the raven haired teen of them when Draco had been unconscious.

Dumbledore patted Harry’s shoulder sympathetically. “I’m afraid so, my boy, and we’ll have to find a way to destroy them as well.” The old wizard took in the dejected expressions on the two boys faces. “But for the moment, Let’s not worry about that. As I’ve said, you’ve bought us some time and I believe there are a few people wishing to see Mr. Malfoy. We’ll speak on the rest at another time.”

Draco smiled a bit, unsure as to who would want to see him other than Harry.

Dumbledore went to the door and opened it, allowing Ron and Hermione to enter with Draco’s muggle family. The old wizard smiled at the gypsies as they entered and then quietly closed the door as he left.

“Malachi!” George shouted. “Oh, I guess I should call you Draco,” he finished with a large grin.

Harry beamed at the surprised, excited and happy expression on his boyfriend’s face as the Vanners crowded around the blonde, exchanging hugs and cheerful greetings. Ron and Hermione came to stand just behind Harry’s chair, the young muggle born witch sniffing and wiping happy tears at the sight of the heart warming reunion before her. Even Ron cleared his throat a bit, causing Harry to give him a smile and a pat on his arm.

When the others had all pretty well squeezed the stuffing out of the Slytherin boy, Granny approached his bedside. Immediately Draco was on his feet, grabbing the elderly woman partly in a hug and partly to keep himself upright. Tears were brightening his grey eyes as he looked around at everyone.

“How? When...?” Draco was completely flummoxed as to how his family had gotten to the magical world.

William chuckled in his deep baritone. “Your friends here,” he said indicating Ron and Hermione, “found the map I gave you and came to us. Miss Hermione explained everything to us and brought us here to see you.”

“It was quite a shock too,” George grumbled. “Why didn’t you tell me you were a wizard? You must have thought me a right idiot showing you magic.”

Draco didn’t know what to say. He was so happy to see his family and he couldn’t believe that Weasley and Granger had gone to all the trouble to find and bring these people to him. The blonde turned to Harry’s two friends, his friends as well he realized. “Thank you, both. This means so much to me...I...I...” Draco couldn’t continue, a large and rather embarrassing lump was blocking off his words.

“Oh dear,” Elizabeth fussed. “We’ve shocked him into speechlessness again.”

“Be great if it would last,” Ron joked, trying to lighten the mood before everyone decided to burst into tears. Harry gave him an exasperated look, but realized that his red headed friend hadn’t meant it in a harsh way and everyone, including Draco, laughed at the ribbing.

Cassandra ruffled Draco’s blonde hair. “Nice to see you again, blondie,” the young woman grinned, giving him a wink. Elizabeth began shooing the others away so she, with Granny’s help could get the weakened teen back into the bed.

“I knew we’d see each other again, Malachi,” Granny stated firmly as she tucked the bedding around Draco. “I know you’re real name is Draco,” the elderly blind woman continued. “But you’ll always be my angel, Malachi, to me.”

“I wouldn’t have it any other way,” Draco responded in a voice choked with emotion.

Later, there would be time for him to remember and come to terms with the events on the battlefield, the death of his father, his role in that and what they would have to do in the future in order to finally defeat the Dark Lord once and for all. But for today, Draco would happily bask in life; in the simple pleasures of being with people who truly loved him and in his ability to return that love to them; his family, his friends and his lover.

**THE END**