

## Nine Circle Journey (The Story of the White Door)

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## Nine Circle Journey (The Story of the White Door)

by [GoldenEmpire](#)

### Summary

Harry and Draco are pulled out of their potions lessons to go to Hell (don't ask). Reluctantly they agree to go through the Nine Circles and face lust, jealousy and violence among other things. Secrets are uncovered and the two 'enemies' might just confess their obvious love for each other when they're literally forced to go through hell together.

(Smut alert)

## Notes

Please leave comments and kudos love you all and thankyou for reading <3

# Prologue

## Chapter Notes

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

## Prologue



*Dumbledore looked at the door in front of him and for the first time in many, many years, he felt hopelessness settle over him. The taste of failure was fresh in his mouth, and it had the same tang that the blood in his mouth had after he fought Grindelwald, after he killed his beloved little sister. He had known practising dark magic in his office wasn't one of his brightest ideas but he had to do it somewhere. He was getting old and rusty, and years of peace had made him forget some worse, more deceitful spells. The door looked harmless enough; made of simple white wood, carefully polished to perfection. The doorknob was round and a reflective gold, yet when Dumbledore let his hand hover over it he couldn't see its reflection. He knew what lurked behind it, could feel it down in his old bones.*

*He had gone into a frenzy of spells, shooting one after the next. He had created a portkey out of one of Lockhart's books that the man had left behind, and each time Dumbledore uttered a spell the flash of light would disappear into the book, only to be spat out somewhere in the Midlands. Dumbledore hoped nobody decided to go camping that night, because their trip could've been ruined by a few unforgivable curses. Dumbledore lost himself a bit, his mind wandering back to the day Ariana died as he methodically waved his wand and cast the spells, practising the movements that he had never truly forgotten.*

*It was too late when he finally realised. The book was pulsing like a heart and Dumbledore stilled his hand as he broke from his trance, and watched the portkey swallow another of his imperius curses. The book continued to pulse as if it was a heart, as if it was alive. Dumbledore stared at it. He had never seen a portkey do that but he assumed anything would be affected by such a large amount of dark magic. Cursing himself, Dumbledore took a step towards the book, and that's when it exploded.*

*Acrid black smoke filled the room and Dumbledore crumbled to his knees as the wave of sulphuric heat hit him. He felt rid of all his energy, his happiness. It felt like a hundred dementors had crowded into his office and were reaching for him with their crooked fingers. Dumbledore coughed violently and covered his mouth with the sleeve of his robe, trying to keep the smoke away from his lungs. He couldn't see anything but shadowy darkness. He felt the faith seep out of him, a soul-splitting rage replacing it. A searing heat touched his face, and then he felt an icy breath all over his body. He shivered and moaned as he fell forward, pressing his face against the floor and feeling his life force fighting to peel away from him. A thousand voices of agony wailed in his head.*

*With the sound of the door slamming, it all ended as abruptly as it had began. The smoke was sucked right out of the air, and it took all the negative emotions and pain with it. In the place where the portkey had been now stood a white, modern door which looked completely out of place in the old-fashioned office. Dumbledore remained on the floor, his stomach rebelling against him as he stared at the door with wide eyes.*

*Minerva and Severus came running into his office, their robes billowing behind them.*

*"Albus!" Minerva exclaimed when she saw him and Severus fell to his knees to help the headmaster up. Dumbledore stared at the door.*

*"What happened?" Severus asked quietly, "Professor...," he followed Dumbledore's gaze and saw the door, falling silent. Minerva sucked in a startled gasp and stumbled away from it. They must've felt the evil coming off of it too.*

*"Albus," she whispered, horrified, her wrinkled hand coming up to hover his mouth, "Is that...?"*

*"The door to hell," Dumbledore confirmed grimly.*

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Harry sat in front of Dumbledore's desk, trying to not seem too curious. It was hard though - the headmaster's office was full of wonders, from the marble pensieve in the corner oozing out silver mist to the fiery-red phoenix resting close-by. Dumbledore himself sat at his desk, casually popping sherbet lemon's into his mouth, almost like he had all the time in the world. Harry didn't want to prompt him, or interrupt the man's tranquillity, so he just sat in the chair patiently and tried not to ask questions about the magical objects in the office. The only peculiar thing (or in this case the only normal thing, which seemed out of place) was the white door on one of the walls. Compared to Hogwarts' other doors, heavy, made from dark woods, the white door seemed weirdly modern and...muggle-like.

Finally Harry couldn't stand it anymore, "Professor, where did that door come from?"

"Ah," Dumbledore popped another sherbet into his mouth, "I will explain everything in due time, we are just waiting for our other...participant."

"Participant?" Harry asked, confused, but Dumbledore just smiled, his eyes twinkling behind his half moon glasses as he went back to eating the sherbet. Harry was starting to feel antsy - he was meant to be in potions and he already had enough trouble with the subject without missing lessons. He started tapping his foot on the floor anxiously. He had no idea what Dumbledore wanted from him, or if he even wanted anything at all. But over the last six years at Hogwarts Harry had learned not to ask questions.

An almost angry knock sounded on the door and Harry had been so lost in his thoughts that he jumped.

"Come in," Dumbledore said brightly.

Into the office strode none other than Draco Malfoy himself. Harry's hands balled into fists before he could stop himself - over the seventeen years of his life he had never despised someone as much as the blonde prick in front of him. Malfoy was everything that Harry hated in people; arrogant, cruel, quick-tempered, selfish. And apart from that he also believed that he was the best thing in the world since sliced bread.

"Malfoy," Harry hissed. Malfoy's cold grey eyes narrowed, and then he smirked in that annoying

way of his that got Harry's blood boiling,

"Potter," the snob said coldly, and then sat down in the other free chair, way too close to Harry for comfort. Disgusted, the raven haired boy attempted to scoot away from him.

"Mr Malfoy, Mr Potter," Dumbledore's eyes sparkled with merriment as if he had just witnessed something adorable. Harry had a bad taste in his mouth from sitting so close to Malfoy and his perfectly slicked back blonde hair, "Thank you both for coming."

"Professor, why are we here?" Harry asked hurriedly, hopelessly hoping that he and Malfoy weren't going to be forced to work on some idiotic project together, because Harry could think of a hundred things he wanted to do more than that, including kissing a dementor.

"If you gave the Professor a second to explain then you'd know why we're here, wouldn't you Potter?" Malfoy asked, voice dripping with sarcasm. Harry's hands itched to punch him but before he could retaliate, Dumbledore rose. His smile was gone, as was the twinkle in his eye.

"Boys," he said gravely, and immediately Harry's frustration evaporated, "We have a serious problem."

Harry was about to ask if the problem was Malfoy's attitude, but stopped himself, sensing that there really was an issue. He watched as Dumbledore mournfully looked towards the white door,

"Unfortunately, under certain circumstances this door was created," Dumbledore swept his hand towards it, "it was once a portkey but under a heavy influence of dark magic from...not such an intelligent wizard, it had been changed into a portal of sorts. A portal to hell."

Harry gaped at the door. It looked so...innocent. Completely out of place, yes, but innocent.

"You're telling us," Malfoy voiced what Harry was thinking, something the Gryffindor wasn't ecstatic about, "that the entrance to hell is a white door in your office?"

"Always thought it would be a highway," Harry muttered to himself. Malfoy's eyes snapped to him sharply,

"What?" he hissed.

"Nothing," Harry flushed. Malfoy already thought of him as inferior because of his upbringing, he didn't need to know about Harry's stupid habit of dropping muggle hints into his conversations. Thankfully the blonde seemed more interested in the door,

"How did it get here?" he asked, rising, "*Why* is it here?"

"Mr Malfoy I cannot disclose that information," Dumbledore shrugged as if he had just told them that the door leads to a Sainsbury's somewhere in Yorkshire.

"Then why are we here?" Malfoy's irritation was beginning to show.

"Gentlemen, this issue of...the door," Dumbledore turned away from said door in distaste so he could sit behind his desk again as Malfoy inched closer to investigate. Harry hoped the door would open and swallow him whole, "Is that it can be easily resolved. I have called both of you here because in my opinion you are best suited for this problem."

"Wait." Harry's eyes widened, "Professor...you can't be saying that...y-you can't be implying that you want to send us to hell."

Dumbledore laced his fingers together in front of him, "I have to send someone and I can't think of anyone else to do it."

Harry could think of a dozen of people who could be more suited for it; Hermione AKA the smartest witch in the year, or Seamus since he liked explosive things, or even one of the teachers since they were damn *adults*, someone from the ministry, *anyone* but two inexperienced seventeen year olds. But of course Harry couldn't say that and dump the responsibility on someone else. Though it wasn't really his responsibility either. As far as he was concerned he wasn't the one who opened a doorway to hell.

"I would require both of you gentlemen to go down to hell and retrieve the original portkey form, which was one of the works of your old professors, Professors Lockhart. I have been informed that upon destroying it, the doorway will close and you will be teleported back to this room."

"Informed by who?" Malfoy flinched away from the door, "Has someone done this before? You're telling me that you can just come and go from hell as you please?"

"Only powerful wizards can," Dumbledore said calmly, "and I have never seen such a powerful pair as yourself and Mr Potter."

Mr Potter was too busy trying to comprehend that behind a white door not two feet from him was the entrance to hell itself to bother involving himself in the conversation, though Malfoy was fighting enough for both of them.

"I am not going to hell!" he said angrily, "and I'm definitely not going to hell with Potter!"

Dumbledore sighed, "I thought I could count on you Mr Malfoy and I must say that I am disappointed. Alas, I cannot force you to go if you don't wish to do so," he picked up another sherbet and studied it, "Nevertheless, thank you for coming," he turned to Harry, who felt like a deer caught in headlights, "I am positive that Mr Potter can make the trip alone, though undoubtedly it will be more challenging. Isn't that so, Mr Potter?"

Harry opened his mouth, trying to figure out how to politely decline Dumbledore's very 'tempting' proposition of a nice weekend spent in hell, "I-I..."

"There will be one hundred house points in it for both of you," Dumbledore said, glancing at Malfoy who had his arms crossed over his chest like the pissy child that he was, "If you chose to go that is. And of course, honour and pride in it alongside of knowing you did something good." Dumbledore looked sourly at the door, "Who knows what damage hell could do if the door was opened by say...an unsuspecting first year."

Harry imagined a terrified eleven year old letting out all the evil in the world, like Pandora's box, and immediately felt guilty which is obviously what Dumbledore wanted. Harry stood up. Somehow he wasn't as afraid as he thought he'd be; after all in his short life he faced basilisks, giant spiders, dementors, werewolves, and even the Dark Lord himself, so hell didn't seem quite so bad. Besides Harry always knew that the majority of his bravery rested on his stupidity and lack of self preservation. It was a miracle he was still alive.

"I'll do it," he said determinedly. Malfoy snorted, shaking his head, and then realised that Harry wasn't joking,

"Shit, you're serious," he muttered in disbelief.

"Language, Mr Malfoy," Dumbledore tutted, but the spark was back in his eye, "Mr Potter thank

you. You exceeded my expectations. I am proud to call you my student, truly. You are one of the best wizards I have ever enco-

"Oh alright!" Malfoy interrupted angrily, eyes burning with hate, "I'll do it too!"

"Brilliant!" Dumbledore clapped his hands as if it was exactly what he had expected, "I knew I could count on you boys! Now, I will open the door and you will have a second to jump in-

"What?" Harry interrupted, "You want us to go *now*?"

Dumbledore blinked as if the question surprised him, "Well yes."

"B-But...", Harry stuttered.

"We're not prepared!" Malfoy yelled, "we don't know any dark spells that could help us-

"No need for that," Dumbledore waved him off and rose, "All you need is your wands and your strong heads." He went over to the door and Harry exchanged a panicked look with Malfoy, something he never thought he'd do, "Just a warning; I don't know what you will find inside but make sure to stick together. If you are left alone you might just perish, like Dante would have without Virgil."

"Isn't that a poem?" Malfoy raised an unimpressed eyebrow. With a bright smile on his face, Dumbledore reached for the golden doorknob on the door,

"Ready?" he asked ignoring the Slytherin's question.

"No," Harry said, reaching for his wand. He knew he had no choice now as he and Malfoy nervously advanced towards the door. When they were close enough, Dumbledore twisted the knob and threw the door open. Behind it Harry saw, with a twist in his stomach, was nothing at all. Endless night sky stretched in front of him, just black broken up by tiny pinpricks that indicated some faraway stars, and clouds floating in the vastness. A cliff fell down to the shadowy earth below. Meanwhile in the office it was early afternoon, the room drowned in sunlight.

"Professor I-" Harry started, feeling nauseous, but he didn't get to finish as a sudden gust of violent wind ripped him from the safety of Dumbledore's office, and he was thrown right out into hell, accompanied by nothing but open air around him, and Malfoy's terrified scream.

## Chapter End Notes

Aloha, go check out my other works, especially my Original work that I just finished writing. (Has loads of sex and loads of plot, so yay?)

# Me and God, We Don't Get Along

## Chapter Notes

Featuring a playground, flashbacks, bad weather and a twelve year old

### The First Circle: LIMBO



Draco woke up with a mouthful of dirt. Maybe 'woke up' wasn't the right word. It was more like after tumbling through the white door Draco had almost teleported, so that one second he was screaming in thin air and the next he was lying down on solid ground. It didn't feel like Hell though. As Draco blinked dust from his eyes and unsteadily stood up, he frowned.

He was in a playground, with Potter groaning somewhere to his left as he struggled to sit up. That was weird - Draco never expected Hell to have a playground, but he supposed even Satan's kids needed a break sometimes. He tried to remember anything he knew about Hell. Last year he had secretly read *Inferno*, the muggle poem about the journey through hell, and he enjoyed it immensely even though he'd never admit that out loud. The *Inferno* never talked about a playground though, especially one as abandoned and lonely-looking as this one. The grey swings creaking sadly on the wind, the equally grey slide was rusted over. The playground was framed by a fence that reminded Draco weirdly of a trap. It gave him the creeps. The sky was steely, the clouds accumulating overhead had a dangerous green tint to them. In three directions a field stretched as far as eye could see, with ragged, dry grass reached as high as Draco's calf. The one side which didn't look like a plantation consisted of a pathway of neatly trimmed grass which brought on the question; who the fuck did gardening in hell? The pathway led to a grey looking sullen town that looked British - which was idiotic since Hell had no geographic location. At least Draco didn't *think* it did.

"Shit," Potter swore next to him and Draco's irritation immediately spiked. For a blissful second he had forgotten about Wonder-Boy. The Slytherin dusted himself off, pointedly ignoring Potter next to him as if that would make him go away. Of course it didn't, "I know this place," Potter sounded like he was talking to himself and when Draco glanced over at him he saw that the boy's eyes were faraway, and not as bright as usually, "This is Little Whinging."

"This is Limbo," Draco objected with a sour face. Potter blinked as if waking from a trance and sent Draco a weird look. There was dust on his glasses,



"Li-what?"

"Limbo," Draco rolled his eyes. He almost said *don't you read?* but then he remembered that he should have never read *Inferno*, since it was a muggle work, "Blaise told me about it sometime," the blonde tried to seem nonchalant as he tugged on pieces of information floating around his head, "If I'm correct - which I usually am - there are nine areas in hell, or 'circles' if you'd like. The first one is called Limbo, and that's where all the non-believers are supposed to go."

To Draco's surprise, Potter grinned, "You read *Inferno*!"

"N-No I didn't!" Draco spluttered, feeling blood rush to his cheeks.

"Then you're almost as smart as Hermione," Potter popped off his glasses and started wiping them on his robes.

"Almost?" Draco grumbled to himself, "I'm smarter than that muddl-"

He didn't finish his sentence as a sudden wind picked up. Previously the weather had been...neutral. Not too warm, not too cold, no moisture or breeze in the air. But now suddenly a gust of icy wind swirled dead brown leaves through the playground like dust-balls in old American films about the Great Depression. It tugged on Potter's dark hair and the boy pushed his glasses back onto his nose, looking unsettled. The swings creaked, and it sounded weirdly like a warning. Draco's hair stood on end. Suddenly he really, really didn't want to be in Little Whinging, or Limbo, or wherever the fuck they were.

"I think I know where we need to go," Potter said, mouth set in a tight line. Usually Draco would protest following the idiot anywhere because even though Potter seemed to survive every brush with death Draco doubted he'd be that lucky. But at that moment he felt so anxious to get out of the playground that he all but clung onto Potter's robe like a frightened child.

The Gryffindor really did seem to know where he was going. He strode confidently but depressingly through the path of cut grass, as if he was walking to a funeral. That didn't help Draco's nerves as he followed quickly, sticking to Potter's side because he refused to go *behind*. However he kept glancing over his shoulder and as they advanced on the town, the playground grew smaller and smaller at their backs. Nobody had appeared, the area was still deserted, but that did nothing to calm Draco. The wind followed them, rustling the dead grass as if to remind the boys of its presence.

"Stop looking behind you," Potter sighed, "It's distracting."

"I'll do what I damn well please Potter," Draco grumbled, and reached for his wand. Feeling the wood in his hand made him feel a thousand times better. Potter shook his head but Draco felt a little pleased when he followed the Slytherin's example and pulled out his own wand.

"Tell me more about Limbo," Potter asked as they entered the town finally. Draco didn't know what Little Whinging looked like in real life, but in the hell alternate reality it was nightmarish at best. The neat rows of identical houses lined abandoned streets; there were no cars, no stray cats, no signs of life. Whatever sun was hiding behind the heavy clouds had begun to set and it grew colder and darker. As the two boys ventured among the houses, Draco tried not to look at them. Their walls were smooth, their roofs slanted. There were no windows or doors on any of them - like they were refusing the boys the chance to pass into the safety of walls. All of them seemed to stare at them as they passed with their cold, blind brick faces. There was nothing in *Inferno* about entrance-less houses so Draco felt lost.

"Limbo is where Dante meets Virgil, his guide," Draco said gloomily, kicking at a stone on the ground to avoid looking at the houses.

"So you *have* read it!" Potter persisted. Draco felt his eye twitch in annoyance and he glared at the Gryffindor. His annoyance grew when he realised he had to crane his neck up to do so. When did Potter get so damn tall?

"Can you just shut up about it and listen?" Draco snapped, "Limbo is seen as the...hallway to hell. The place where people who haven't sinned remain because they chose humanity over Christ. The whole point of Limbo is that the people stuck here can't see past what there is - they have no faith or hope that there is anything more than this."

"What people?" Potter glanced around uneasily, "There's nobody here."

"Oh excuse me I thought you were the blind one, not me," Draco said sardonically, "I don't know where everyone is. In *Inferno* the people in Limbo were men like Homer, Aristotle and Orpheus. The Queen of the Amazons and Electra were here too - people from *myths*, Potter."

"I thought Hell was a myth too until a doorway appeared in our headteacher's office," Potter pointed out. Draco sighed. He was growing tired of the grey houses constantly passing by. He wanted to get out of Limbo, though he suspected whatever was after was worse, "How do we even know if anything's real? How do we know the people from myths don't really exist?"

"Even if they're real, genius, I don't think we'll meet them," Draco said, "This Limbo was created to adjust to each specific person who comes here. At least I think so. Clearly, this has something to do with you," the blonde looked with disgust at the houses and felt Potter tense next to him.

"I don't believe in God, but I don't think this has any connection to my faith," he said quietly. Draco shrugged,

"Maybe it has something to do with you muggle upbringing. Don't ask me stupid questions, the only thing I'm going by is some ancient poem written by a guy who was probably high on glue," Draco snapped, ending whatever...comradeship there had been building between him and Potter.

"I didn't ask a question," Potter sulked. Then he straightened up and his step faltered, "Whatever is going on, I think it'll make sense soon."

Draco didn't want to follow Potter's gaze, but he found himself unable to stop himself. He saw a house at the end of the street, with a sign stuck outside reading *4 Private Drive*. The house past the low wall was just like the other ones on that street, except instead of being door-less and windowless it had seven windows on the second floor, and seven doors on the bottom floor. Draco's stomach twisted. He felt like he was in some messed up dream, everything felt surreal and yet hopelessly tangible at once. The blonde could feel the cold wind on his skin, feel his wand pressing into his palm. It was real.

Outside the house three people were stretched out on beach chairs, as if a storm wasn't gathering and they were casually sunbathing in their driveway. Two of the people were shirtless males, a man and a boy. The boy was maybe Draco's and Potter's age, his skin sunburned as if there really was a sun. The man next to him must've been his father and he reminded Draco of a walrus with his massive stomach and weird moustache. The third person was a stick thin blonde woman with sunken cheeks, dressed in an old fashioned swimming costume. All three of them were motionless, sunglasses perched on their noses, faces craned up to the invisible sun.

"Excuse me-" Draco started, stepping forward, glad that they finally met someone. However Potter

grabbed him by the arm and his touch came as a shock. He pulled Draco back roughly,

"Don't," he looked nauseous and angry at once, though Draco didn't understand why. He looked at the house as if it was mould growing on his wall, "Those people are my muggle family."

Draco knew little about Potter's upbringing. Of course everyone knew about his first few months, when he had lived with the famous Lily and James Potter in Godrick's Hollow. That's where Voldemort murdered Potter's parents. The next thing Draco knew was that Hagrid had collected Potter from some muggle aunt and uncle, and that he came to Hogwarts. When he was eleven Draco became a little bit...obsessed with Potter. He hated to admit it. When he met him in the robe shop Draco had imagined them becoming friends. He didn't have any *proper* friends back then, only other pureblood family's children who he didn't really like. And Potter was so different - rough around the edges with his glasses put together with sellotape, and hair sticking up in all directions. Draco didn't know what Potter's life was like before their first encounter, but the memory of the Gryffindor rejecting Draco's friendship on that train still stung every time the boy remembered it.

"I don't care who they are," he snapped now, feeling old wounds reopen, "They're clearly here for a reason. Maybe they're like Virgil - our guides."

"They're not," Potter said determinedly. He was really getting on Draco's nerves - he offered no explanation to his statements, like he just expected Draco to trust him. After all the shit they've been through it was as likely as the big JC himself coming down from the heavens and telling them they're have to lead his people out of Egypt. The Slytherin stepped towards Private Drive four, determined to get this over with and move on as quickly as possible to get away from Potter, but the Gryffindor just pulled him back again. Draco swatted his arm away, frustrated,

"What the hell is your problem?!" he yelled, "I know this is probably your ideal fucking vacation, but I actually *want* to get out of here, so would you just stop trying to shit all over our mission?"

Potter's mouth tightened, but at Draco's yells the Muggle's stirred.

"Harry," the woman rose. She looked almost transparent, her sunglasses so dark that Draco couldn't see her eyes, "Who is your...friend?" the woman smiled the way someone smiled when they really disliked you but were acting like they didn't. Potter's hands balled into fists, but Draco saw a conflict in his eyes,

"His name is Draco, Aunt Petunia. He's not my friend," the boy said. Draco had no idea why he was talking to people who clearly weren't real. The woman who was apparently his aunt nodded curtly, and her pig-looking son snorted,

"Yeah mum, Harry doesn't have any friends," he laughed. His mother chuckled and Draco blinked, confused. When he looked over at Potter the boy was staring at the ground, his wand limp in his hand. The walrus man stepped forward,

"Why don't you give me that stick, boy?" he seethed, a warning underlying his words. There was sudden tension in the air. Draco was becoming more and more uncomfortable, though he didn't know why, "before you do any more of your...magic tricks."

Potter looked worried and confused, as if he didn't know where he was, "I need it for later, Uncle."

"Harry," the man growled, "give me that wand of yours or we won't let you out of the cupboard for the next week. *And* you won't get any food."

Draco stared in disgust at the family as pieces started to click together. Back then in the shop when they were eleven Potter's glasses hadn't been broken because he was some superhero, fighting the dark from a young age. The truth was much more mundane, and heartbreaking. The pig-boy snorted again and Draco felt the urge to punch him, "Yeah! And me and Piers and the others will beat you up, like last time!"

Draco had heard rumours, though he never really believed them. Whispers sometimes went around that Harry Potter had grown up in some cupboard under the stairs, and that he had been abused all his life by his muggle family. Draco never believed that. In his head he had always just thought that Potter grew up in some rich relative's house. That he was happy and content, the wonder boy who had everything. And now he was being proved wrong and it...well, it made something tighten in his stomach. He turned around to tell Potter that they had to get into the house, and stumbled back.

Where Potter had been second ago, towering over Draco, was a little boy. He was maybe a little bit younger then when Draco had first met him at Madame Malkin's, barely reaching Draco's shoulder. His face was rounder, his bright green eyes more innocent. There was a bruise on his flushed cheek, and cellotape on his glasses, the way Draco remembered. In place of his robes Potter wore an oversized, patched up jumper and a pair of sweatpants. He still had his wand in hand.

"P-Potter....," Draco's voice faltered.

"Give it to me boy!" Potter's uncle boomed, his face turning purple with sudden rage. The wind picked up again and to Draco's surprise, and horror, Potter actually stepped towards the man, his wand hand stretched out. It was Draco's turn to grab the boy and pull him back, heart hammering. Another powerful gust of wind almost ripped the child from Draco's arms, but the Slytherin held on, even as he fell to his knees.

"I need to give him my wand," Potter whispered, and he sounded terrified, looking at Draco pleadingly. Something twisted in Draco's heart. Potter looked so...tiny, and afraid. Draco suddenly wanted to protect him fiercely,

"No, no, you can't do that," he said, almost feverishly, "You have to hold onto the wand, okay?"

Tears gathered in Potter's green eyes and he shook his head, "N-No. They'll lock me up again-"

"No they won't," Draco murmured, feeling like crying himself. He shocked everyone (including himself) as he suddenly wrapped his arms around Potter. But technically it wasn't the Potter he knew. He wasn't the strong boy who defeated Voldemort multiple times. He was a lonely, abused, unloved child. Draco held him tightly, desperately wanting to go back in time and reassure little Harry that his life wouldn't always be so hopeless, "I won't let them do that. We need to get into the house and then we can leave, okay?"

"No," Potter's voice was muffled by Draco's shoulder, "I can never leave. It's always going to be this way, it won't ever end."

Draco realised what was happening. Limbo might've not punished the people residing in it, but it was still a part of Hell. The worst part about it was that you couldn't look past what was there, couldn't see the future. This was it, forever. Even thinking about it made Draco's heart plummet but he kept his head straight - he knew that there was more. Eight more circles, and then home, Hogwarts, the real world. They just needed to make it through.

"You can't lose faith, Harry," Draco pulled away but held onto the boy's shoulders, "We need to get back to Hogwarts, yeah? We need to finish that potions essay for Snape."

Some recognition flickered in Potter's eyes, "I need Hermione to help me with that."

"Yes," Draco smiled, "We'll do that. We'll finish that stupid essay. But we need to go into the house first, okay?"

"Okay," Harry mumbled. Draco stood up and pulled out his own wand again. He didn't remember putting it away. Potter's uncle was right up against the gate but he clearly couldn't leave the yard. His wife and son stood behind him like eerie shadows. Draco raised his wand.

"Let us pass," he said determinedly. Potter's small, clammy hand slipped into his.

"Do I look like a man who can be intimidated?!" the man roared, spit flying everywhere. He sounded like a recording, like he was replaying something he had said in the real world. Draco's eyes narrowed and he tightened his hold on Potter's hand. No matter how much he despised the Gryffindor, these people hurt a *child*, and Draco wouldn't take that.

"We're going through," he told the muggles, and then turned to Potter, "Harry, raise your wand. They can't stop us as long as you believe that we can get into the house."

"But which door is our one?" the boy asked, looking at the seven doors with a confused stare.

"It doesn't matter," Draco said soothingly, though of course it mattered. He himself was feeling more and more panicked. If they even managed to get past the muggles they'd have to pick a door, and Draco had no idea which one led where. They could end up in the arctic for all he knew. Or back in Dumbledore's office. Or anywhere really. They could be obliterated to nothing. *No, you can't believe that.* Limbo was messing with his mind, making everything seem pointless and confusing.

All the door were identical - black with the number four on it. In a world of magic it was hard to believe that there was an omniscient power up in the sky, but at that moment Draco wished there was. He wished he was given a sign that would help him make the right decision. *If there is anybody out there, anybody, anybody...* He looked at the steely sky, and imagined that someone was looking back down at him, someone who'd help him, just this once.

A fourth figure appeared in the driveway suddenly, and Draco flinched. The man stood by the second door to the left. Draco had never seen him before but he was old, and dressed in muddy dungarees, with a pageboy cap on top of his wispy white hair. He was more transparent than the other muggles, as if he didn't quite belong in Limbo. He wasn't looking at Draco or Potter, his eyes fixated on the second door.

"We take the second door," Draco told Potter. He knew that was the right choice - and the second he made a decision he felt better, and so did Potter as he straightened up and raised his hand, wand trembling.

"We're going through," he echoed Draco's earlier words. The two took a step forward,

"Do I look like a man who can be intimidated?!" Potter's uncle roared again, and just sounded like a recording. *He can't hurt us.* Holding his breath Draco walked forward, and through the gate. Potter's hand was shaking in his, but the boy bravely followed behind. As they passed his uncle the man didn't even look at them, repeating *do I look like a man who can be intimidated?!* to the empty road in front of him. The wind picked up once more and with his heart pounding Draco and Potter passed the other two family members, who didn't move. They made it to the door and the old man's eyes landed on them. He looked tired.

"Thank you, Frank," little Potter said, smiling as if he knew the man. Frank smiled back almost as an afterthought, and then he pushed the door open for the two boys. Instead of a room behind it, there was a field stretching out in front of them, and a hill top. Draco's heart stuttered and he turned to look at the road behind him, and at the muggles. They were back in their beach chairs as if nothing happened, and with a firm tug of Potter's hand, the Slytherin stumbled through the door. They had no choice - they had to move on.

# The Good, The Bad and The Dirty

## Chapter Notes

Featuring hormones, fantasies, the Midlands and everyone's favourite Hogwarts' Ghost

### The Second Circle: LUST



Harry was still holding onto Malfoy's hand.

He didn't even mean to take it in the first place but something in Limbo made him snap. When he saw the Dursley's in front of their old house again all of his memories from Private Drive came flooding back. But they were more intense and clearer than Harry remembered them, and they overpowered him. You'd think that after everything that happened to him some past abuse wouldn't matter. And yet it did. All of Harry's shame, embarrassment, loneliness, came crashing over him like a wave and he had no way of stopping it. He seemed to once again be standing in the kitchen while Aunt Petunia prepared his 'school uniform,' which consisted of Dudley's old clothes dyed grey. He remembered the punches of his cousin, and how his uncle and aunt never did anything about the bruises on his face. He remembered seventeen forgotten birthdays, and how unloved he felt back then, when he lived in that cupboard.

He hadn't realised he had *actually* become his old self until everything, including Malfoy, loomed over him. The hopelessness he felt was unreal - he couldn't remember Hogwarts, or Ron and Hermione, the Burrow or anything good that happened to him through the years. Surprisingly it was Malfoy who reminded him that there was hope, that he had a new home now. Without him, Harry would have probably remained in Limbo until he lost his mind.

Despite gladly leaving the First Circle, Harry knew this would be worse. He had no idea where they were, but it looked like somewhere in the West Midlands. They stood on top of a windy hill, the door they had fallen through melted into the air. The sky looked almost identical to the one in Limbo, but there was a red tint to the clouds. Apart from hills sprouting from the ground like mushrooms, and the long panes of grass in-between, there was nothing else. Harry felt thankful though - the feeling of hopelessness had left him, and now, despite the wind tugging at his robes, he felt weirdly warm.

Malfoy snatched his hand back almost violently, reminding Harry that he was still holding it. Theatrically, and more for show than from actual disgust, Harry wiped that hand on his robe.

"Where are we?"

"Do I look like the oracle to you?" Malfoy snapped, "Why am I supposed to have all the answers?"

"You read the poem didn't you?" Harry felt like he was dealing with a stubborn child. Whatever gratefulness he had been feeling towards Malfoy for helping him to get through Limbo was replaced by mild irritation and tiredness. Being faced with all of his bad memories left Harry drained, and the idea that there were still eight circles to go made him want to curl up in a ball and fall asleep right there on the hilltop. But a loud crackle of thunder overhead stopped him from doing so. The sun was still setting like it had been in Limbo, but this time Harry could actually see it - oversized and glowing orange as it sunk, partly concealed by wispy clouds. It warmed the tips of the hills, but not the ground below which was shadowed in darkness. Somewhere above a thunderstorm was brewing. When Harry craned his neck he saw a flash come from above, and lightning struck one of the hills close by, sending up white sparks.

"Merlin," he swore softly. He had no idea where they were but suddenly he felt exposed up on the hill and desperately wanted to get down, "Let's go," he told Malfoy and without offering any explanation he hurriedly jogged down the hill, afraid of being hit by a lightning bolt. His heart was hammering, he had an impending feeling of doom hanging over him. It was fear but something else too, something he couldn't quite put a finger on. Additionally it was still getting warmer, and Harry was finding it hard to breathe as he descended sideways. The hill was dry but the Gryffindor still found himself stumbling, Malfoy following behind him and having little more luck. As Harry slipped and tripped his way down the hill, it became harder to breathe. He felt blood rush to his face, and sweat make his shirt stick to his back which was weird since the air was still cold and the wind was still attacking him fiercely. It seemed like the heat was coming from inside him.

Malfoy didn't speak to him and Harry was glad for at least that. They were halfway down the hill, which seemed higher now that they were finally descending it, when Harry couldn't take it anymore. He stopped to slip off his robes and loosen his tie, popping open his top button and giving Malfoy the chance to catch up with him. The blonde regarded him coolly for a second and then silently followed in his footsteps, leaving his robe and tie in a pile next to Harry's.

"Do you think we should just leave it here?" Harry asked, worrying on his bottom lip. Malfoy shrugged and rolled up the sleeves of his shirt,

"I'm not carrying it, but if you feel like doing that then be my guest," his perfectly slicked back hair started to curl slightly because of the dampness in the air, and tumbled onto his forehead. Honestly Malfoy looked more of a mess than Harry had ever seen him - his cheeks were flushed, probably from the same heat Harry was feeling. The rolled up sleeves gave him a more boy-ish and untidy look that suited him surprisingly well. The weird heat that had so far been spread throughout Harry's entire body suddenly accumulated in his stomach, and then slid lower. Harry's eyes widened when he felt the unmistakable arousal possess his body, and he quickly whirled away from Malfoy in an effort to conceal his erection.

"We're in Lust aren't we?" he whispered, horrified. He had just gotten *hard* over *Malfoy!*

"I hoped we wouldn't be," Malfoy sounded pained but Harry didn't dare to look at him. His palms were sweating, and Malfoy's voice really wasn't helping, "In that section there was something about slopes, and violent winds, which I-I suppose is what's happening. T-This is where a-all the adulterers and stuff went, I-like...um, C-Cleopatra a-and Helen of Troy a-and..." he trailed off and there was a weird, slightly endearing shaky quality to his usually emotionless, cold voice. Harry couldn't stop himself from turning around. The sun was low enough so that the part of the hill they were on was dark, and yet Harry could still see Malfoy weirdly clearly. His pupils were blown so wide his eyes were almost black, and his hands were balled into fists. Harry could see a dent in his trousers and he futilely tried to look away from it, but found himself unable to.



"I feel weird," Malfoy whispered hoarsely, looking unsteady on his feet, and his voice sent a shiver down Harry's spine. He suddenly had the irresistible urge to push Malfoy down onto the grass and kiss his way down his pale body until the Slytherin was screaming his name and *fuck*. Harry tried to control himself. *Get a hold of yourself! We're in hell, we need to resist this...*but Malfoy just looked so damn *good*. He seemed to be enticing Harry with his dark eyes as his chest rose and fell rapidly. He seemed changed, like he wasn't that annoying, snobbish Slytherin that he had been in Dumbledore's office just...hours? minutes? ago. He was someone else now, *something* else, and Harry just wanted him. He wanted him so, so badly, his body ached to touch the blonde, to get his hands on him. Harry's mind echoed *mine, mine, mine* longingly, and the boy caved after a pathetic fight to try and resist.

In all honesty it wasn't *all* him. Malfoy met him halfway when Harry lurched forward, and the second their lips met the heat that had been building up in Harry's stomach erupted in a rage of fire and the boy lost all control over himself. His mind went blurry as his body moved on its own, roughly pushing Malfoy down into the cold grass. The wind howled in Harry's ears as his mouth slid against Malfoy's, his erection pressing against the boy's sharp hip. Their desperate breaths mixed together as they kissed, tongues fighting for dominance, hands ripping at each other's clothes. Harry felt intoxicated, he didn't know which way was up or down. Malfoy was dangerously hot against him, his mouth wet and warm and delicious. The blonde tasted like expensive tea and chocolate, his hands almost violently tangled in Harry's hair.

The raven haired boy felt like he was going insane, but in the best way. He ripped at Malfoy's shirt until the top buttons popped right off, revealing the Slytherin's pale, creamy skin. Harry blacked out for a second and the next thing he knew was that he was kissing down the blonde's neck as his world spun, hungrily, greedily, biting at Malfoy's collarbone and eliciting a delicious hiss out of his swollen lips.

"Bastard," the boy growled.

"Don't be rude now, Malfoy," Lavender Brown said. Startled, Harry sat up, blinking blearily. He felt light-headed, horny and confused. Out of nowhere several girls had appeared and were sitting on the grass casually, smirking and licking their lips, dressed in nothing but lacy lingerie. Harry tried to focus on something other than sex but it was hard, especially with Lavender Brown so close, her curly hair falling down to her impressive breasts. Hormones buzzed in the air.

"Hello Harry," Lavender purred.

"Looks like *someone's* excited," Cho Chang giggled on Harry's other side. The boy whipped around so fast he almost got whiplash. Faintly he was aware of Malfoy's legs sliding from his waist, but he couldn't concentrate on that when Cho Chang was so close to him practically naked, smelling wonderfully. Her lips were bright red when she licked them.

"You're not real," Harry muttered weakly, though he was less and less sure of that.

"Don't we *feel* real?" Ginny Weasley was in front of him now, where Malfoy had been seconds ago. One of her lacy straps had slid down her freckled shoulder and she reached out and squeezed Harry through his trousers, making him jolt. Gods it *felt* real, "Come on Harry, let's have some fun."

"Yes," Lavender giggled, "Let's!"

Cho gripped Ginny by the back of her head and drew her in for a passionate, messy kiss, and Harry's mouth fell open. He was painfully hard, and felt like he had just drunk a whole bottle of Firewhiskey. He watched, mesmerised, as Cho's lipstick smeared all over Ginny's lips. The boy

didn't have the strength to protest when Lavender's fingers slid into his hair and she pulled him in for an equally hungry kiss. He felt like his nerves were on fire as Lavender slid into his lap. Cho and Ginny ended their kiss and came over to press themselves against Harry. Ginny bit at his ear lobe and Cho kissed down his neck, and Harry wondered why this was called Hell when it was so heavenly.

*Because you can never stop*, the rational part of Harry's brain finally broke through the haze of lust and with tremendous effort the boy pushed Lavender off of his lap, his heart hammering. He didn't know how long they had been kissing for. The girls looked hurt as he scrambled away from them, feeling bile rise in his throat. *They're illusions. That's all they are.*

"Don't you want to have some fun?" Cho pouted. Harry remembered where he was; on a windy hill with a storm brewing overhead, in the Second Circle of Hell. He scrambled to his feet,

"Get away from me," he told the illusions shakily and then he turned to where Malfoy was, desperate to remind him about the aim of their journey. But Malfoy was preoccupied. He was lying in the grass a few feet away from where the girls were, with none other than Blaise Zabini on top of him. The newcomer's eyes were black as he gazed down at the blonde beneath him, who looked as dazed as Harry felt. The Gryffindor watched, horrified and frozen, as Zabini's hand slid down to Malfoy's trousers, only to have the boy hesitantly push the hand away.

"Come on," Zabini whispered, voice like honey, pressing kisses to Malfoy's jaw, "Let me have you. Come on, Draco."

Malfoy tried to speak but Zabini just covered his mouth with his own, kissing him heatedly as his hand attempted to slide into Malfoy's pants once more. Again the blonde pushed it away and Zabini pulled back to coo softly,

"Let me do it, Draco, come on, baby."

Harry could see Malfoy's resolve weakening with every second and it made him sick, because as aroused as Malfoy looked, he also looked terrified. With some effort Harry stumbled towards the pair,

"G-Get off him," he stuttered. Malfoy blinked, and glanced up at Harry as if just remembering that he was there too. The Gryffindor's stomach twisted and he felt his cock twitch in his trousers at how desperate and aroused Malfoy looked. Harry wanted to knock Zabini off of him and take his place, fuck Malfoy right there and then on the grass. *Get your mind out of the gutter*, Harry scolded himself, "Malfoy we need to go."

"Don't listen to him," Zabini didn't even look up at Harry as he gently bit at Malfoy's neck, eliciting the sweetest moan Harry had ever heard from the blonde, "Let me make love to you."

"Malfoy don't be an idiot!" Harry hissed, and Malfoy blinked up at him with some effort, "You know what this is! The Second Circle of Hell, you don't *really* want this...illusion to fuck you, do you?"

A spark of recognition flickered in Malfoy's eyes, "S-Stop," he told Zabini, though he didn't sound convinced of his own words.

"Come on baby, just this once," Zabini's hand went down again. Malfoy's resolve hardened and he violently shoved Zabini away,

"I said *stop* asshole," he spat. Harry blinked, and Zabini was gone, melted into thin air. Unable to

not feel disappointed, the boy turned to where Cho, Ginny and Lavender had been minutes ago. The only thing left was his tie lying in the grass. He didn't remember which of them had to take it off as he picked it up mournfully. Malfoy just laid on the ground, trying to catch his breath. There were no marks on him left from Zabini, just his mussed hair and the swollen lips - which was Harry's fault. The Gryffindor couldn't help but feel proud of his work as Malfoy finally picked himself up shakily.

"Well, that was weird," Harry pointed out, trying to lighten the atmosphere even though there was still heat coiled in his stomach. Every time he looked at Malfoy a spike of want went through him. He didn't think he'd ever want to go back to Limbo but suddenly facing creepy-illusions of the Dursley's seemed like a much better idea than standing on this hill with Malfoy, and fighting the urge to fuck him.

"I think I'm going to be sick," Malfoy whispered, covering his mouth with his hand.

"We need to get our robes," Harry retaliated, ignoring the hurt he felt at Malfoy's words. The Slytherin nodded and turned back the way they came, giving Harry a perfect view of his perky ass, hugged by his school-trousers. Harry squeezed his eyes shut and stifled a groan. He hated this new feeling of wanting to jump Malfoy every other second, but what was worse was that the feeling wasn't *exactly* new. In his weaker moments Harry's thoughts did stray to Malfoy. Occasionally. It wasn't like it *meant* anything. Hermione explained to him that she read somewhere that a lot of people think weird or dark thoughts when they're about to orgasm, and it just so happened that whenever Harry had his hand around his cock, seconds away from climax, his 'weird' and 'dark' thought would be Malfoy in his bed.

But that didn't mean Harry was okay with. He absolutely wasn't. Of course he accepted that he was bisexual, experimented with a few guys, even went as far as having full blown sex with one of them when he was drunk, but the idea that he could feel...attracted, to Malfoy was off-putting. Even now, looking at the git's wonderful ass, Harry couldn't help but pull a face as he followed him back up the hill. Yeah, the Slytherin was a one hundred percent asshole but Harry would have to be actually blind to not see how stunning Malfoy was. His sharp cheekbones, delightful silver eyes and flawless porcelain skin all added up to making him look like an angel, even though he was literally Satan incarnate to the point where Harry actually debated leaving him in Hell. And the way he willingly opened his mouth when Harry kissed him, how soft his lips were...

Harry's thoughts came to an abrupt stop when the two came to the point where they had originally begun - on top of the hill. The sun was hung halfway to setting, almost like it couldn't finish the job, and the very tip of the hill remained lit and golden. Every few minutes a lightning bolt would strike one of the hills nearby accompanied by a rumble of thunder.

"We shouldn't be here, it's not safe," Malfoy said. He had picked up his robe when they had climbed back up and he hurriedly wrapped it around himself now. There was nothing he could do about the buttons Harry ripped from the top of his shirt.

"There's no door, nowhere to go," Harry was starting to get frustrated. The heat in his gut wasn't subsiding, and he was getting antsy. He wanted to desperately get out of Lust before he did something very, very stupid, but unlike Limbo where there had been too many doors, there were none here. Harry turned in a circle, desperate for a way out, but all he saw was more rolling green hills and a sun that wouldn't set. There was an itch under his skin that he couldn't scratch and his trousers were really getting tight. Malfoy didn't look all that much better as he collapsed on the top of the hill and rested his head in his hands,

"*Inferno* didn't say anything about this," he mumbled, voice muffled, "Dante just faints and

teleports on."

"Maybe one of us has to pass out then," Harry offered halfheartedly. Malfoy's head snapped up and he glared at Harry, but it felt more heated and intense than ever. He was already sitting down, one push from Harry and he'd be on his back and...

"I said I'd be sick, not black out," the blonde growled, like Harry had offended him somehow.

"Maybe we ruined it," the Gryffindor whispered, dread settling in his stomach alongside the heat, "Maybe because we kissed, it means we're stuck here until we break, and then we fuck like rabbits until the end of time-"

"Read my lips, Potter," Malfoy growled, "I. Am. Not. Fucking. You."

Harry snorted, but he was surprised at how much the Slytherin's statement hurt, "My bad, would you rather fuck Blaise Zabini? Oh wait, you already did."

Okay, Harry knew that the comment was cruel and below the belt, but everything was just so hot and frustrating and irritating and he just wanted to rip his clothes off and rut against Malfoy like a dog in heat, but instead he watched as the Slytherin flushed bright red, getting to his feet in a second,

"I didn't *fuck* Blaise, and before you ask he didn't fuck me either," he spat, words full of poison, "Unlike you I'm not some fuckboy who goes around getting hard over everything with a fucking pulse."

Harry blinked, "So you're a virgin."

For a second all the malice and anger left Malfoy, and he just stood there with his eyes wide and his mouth open. Then even the tips of his ears burned red, "S-Shut up, Potter."

Lightning hit the hill just mere feet from Harry and both of the boys jumped as the air was filled with the stink of burned grass and smoke. Harry's heart started pounding as static travelled through his body. He swallowed, and when the fumes from the blast cleared, he was stunned to see none other than Hogwarts' favourite bathroom ghost hovering over the grass,

"M-Myrtle?" Harry spluttered. The transparent ghost smiled her 'charming' smile and batted her eyelashes,

"Who else would it be?" Moaning Myrtle asked, and then she pouted, "Oh it gets sooo boring up in the castle sometimes. The prefect bathrooms are no fun since Cedric died, and since you finished your illegal potion brewing escapades nobody had visited me in *my* bathroom either."

"Illegal potions?" Malfoy asked suspiciously but Harry ignored him pointedly,

"Wait you're actually real?" he asked, confused, "Not an illusion like the others?"

Myrtle shrugged her see-through shoulders, "Eh. A lot of ghosts can pass into the first few circles of Hell. I come here sometimes because I get bored," she looked around and pulled a face, "What have you done to the place? Last time at least there was some variation in landscape," she shuddered.

"Myrtle do you know how to get to the third circle?" Harry asked, feeling some of his hope return. Myrtle smirked and tapped her nose,

"I might do," she mused, sauntering over closer to Harry, who tried not to flinch, "Thing is - you haven't been very nice to me lately, Mr Potter. You haven't visited."

"Ah, sorry about that," Harry tried not to shudder as the ghost sidled up to him. Malfoy was trying, and failing, to hide his smile behind his hand. Apparently the situation was hilarious. Harry wanted to strangle and fuck him at the same time, "When I get out of here I'll come see you. Just tell us how to get to the third Circle," Harry focused his eyes on Myrtle in hopes that his erection would go down. No such luck.

"Hmmm, no deal," Myrtle floated away and Harry's heart plummeted. He sent Malfoy a despairing look but the boy was staring at his feet, "Actually!" Myrtle must've noticed the glance because she suddenly turned around, grinning, "I have an idea! If you two kiss then I'll tell you how to get to the Third Circle."

A lightning bolt exploded on the hill behind Malfoy, exaggerating the horror on his face, "I am *not* kissing him."

"I have no joys in life," Myrtle wailed, doing a little spin in the air, "This is all I want! To see you two kiss, that would make me oh-so happy, so many things to tell everyone!" her eyes flashed behind her glasses, "Just a kiss. Please, that's all I want! And then you can carry on your way. Or you can stay here," she crossed her arms over her chest and pouted once more, "Your choice."

It wasn't really a choice at all. Harry and Malfoy exchanged a helpless look - technically they already kissed so it wasn't that much of a deal, but the idea of touching Malfoy again re-kindled the fire inside Harry, and he was afraid that he wouldn't be able to stop himself if they as much as brushed against each other. Malfoy looked like he wanted to roll off the hill, his hands clenching and clenching. Harry wanted to hold his hands to stop him doing that, he wanted to pull him close, kiss him until he couldn't breathe.

It didn't happen like that though. As fast as he could, Malfoy crossed the space between him and Harry, and before the Gryffindor could react, he pecked him on the lips. That was it - a quick, hard, cold brush of mouths and then Malfoy was pulling away, leaving Harry with a rapidly pounding heart. Myrtle whined,

"You're no fun!" she complained, and shook her head, "Well I'm going to go back now. I don't like the third circle and you two clearly don't want me here."

"Tell us how to get to the Third Circle!" Malfoy protested heatedly, "You promised."

Myrtle shrugged, "It's easy," she said and then a lightning bolt crashed right into her from the heavens and in a shot of brightness and electricity, she was gone.

"You're kidding me," Harry groaned as realisation dawned on him. Malfoy looked vaguely sick,

"Is it even possible to die in Hell?" he asked.

"Isn't the whole point eternal torment?" Harry pointed out, "If we died we'd probably just get reincarnated like a stupid game of Super Mario Bros." He shook his head when Malfoy gave him a confused look, clearly not understanding the reference, "I guess this is the only way. If we die then too bad," Harry looked up at the sky, brewing with almost palpable anger. The sun resumed its setting, and Harry knew he made the right choice. He held his hand out to Malfoy, "Don't be difficult."

"Fine," Malfoy snapped, and stepped towards Harry. He threaded his fingers through the

Gryffindor's and Harry was startled at how weirdly familiar it felt to have Malfoy hold his hand, "Fine," the boy repeated again, and then Harry's ears were filled with a sudden deafening roar. His hair stood up as a shock of electricity passed through him and into Malfoy. Then they were swallowed up by blinding white as lightning crashed over them.

# Starving Till I Tasted You

## Chapter Notes

Featuring sludge, a friendly werewolf, a fairytale and aquaphobia.

### The Third Circle: GLUTTONY



There was no pain, or even that much heat or shock when Draco and Potter left Lust, which was surprising since Draco expected the lightning strike to leave him as nothing more than a charred chicken bone. In a second the world felt like it was literally flipped upside down; from the windy heat of Lust that left Draco hard and hot he was suddenly tossed into a freezing cold field. It was confusing to wrap his head around; he and Potter didn't fall from the sky, and yet their hands were ripped apart as the weather changed suddenly, and they both landed shakily in ankle-deep watery snow.

Draco's head was spinning with confusion. He groaned in disgust as his feet sank into some kind of watery, icy sludge covering the field. It wasn't really snow - despite the freezing temperature and fresh snowflakes falling from the stark white sky, the ground was covered in old, mushy snow that suckled on Draco's expensive shoes like some hungry monster baby. The colour didn't resemble snow either; it was brown and yellow in places, and grey in others. Draco felt his mood dampen as the cold seeped through his cloak and ripped open shirt (he had Potter to blame for that). Of course, he wasn't aroused anymore, but instead he was shivering from the cold, wet and disgusted. He pulled his foot out of the sludge and it gave a repulsive slurping sound as it let his foot go. It even smelled foul, the was snow was *not* meant to smell.

"Is that the Shrieking Shack?" Potter asked, looking over Draco's shoulder. He, being the peasant that he was, clearly didn't care that they were standing in snow shit. For a second Draco forgot about that though - because he was kind of taken by how the snow petals looked in Potter's dark hair. *Idiot, idiot*, he yelled at himself mentally, looking away and feeling himself flush. He regretfully remembered what happened in Lust, how he had not only snogged Potter, but also almost believed that Blaise was real.

Draco had a crush on him since fifth year. It wasn't anything deep or meaningful, more appreciation than anything really. Blaise was the complete opposite of Potter; he was sly, and sarcastic, he would do anything for his house even if it involved cheating, he didn't care about what others thought of him. He actually liked Draco properly. He didn't pretend to just because Draco was a Malfoy. Also, he was stunning. But despite all that Draco would never want to do anything with him - he wanted his first time to be special, as cheesy as that sounded. Obviously he'd never

admit that to anyone; it was bad enough that Potter knew he was a virgin, he didn't need to know how secretly romantic Draco was either.

Honestly the encounter with mirage Blaise in Lust was more terrifying than anything else. Draco had been hit with irresistible, body burning lust and he had *wanted* to have sex, so badly he thought he'd pass out. Kissing Potter had been...intense, and kind of nice too, and just all kinds of arousing. But then Blaise had appeared out of nowhere, and despite how hard and yearning Draco was, some part of his brain was telling him that he needed to get away from mirage Blaise's probing, insistent hands. He didn't dream of his first time being on some windy ass hill in the Second Circle of Hell. He supposed he owed that one to Potter, for breaking him out of whatever daze he had been in. But that didn't mean that Draco had to look at him, they had *made out* for Merlin's sake, and that was awkward enough without adding Draco's embarrassment to that.

Reluctantly Draco followed Potter's gaze and saw that indeed, the Shrieking Shack had somehow made its way into the Third Circle of hell. It stood, innocent enough, past a wire fence and looked pretty much identical to the way it did in the real world. It was two storey, abandoned and ruined, its holey roof blanketed in snow, its windows broken. Where normally Hogsmade laid behind it, was just more slushy snow, endlessly stretching to the horizon.

"We need to get out of this crap," Potter finally seemed to realise where they were as he wiggled his foot in the sludge.

"I guess we have no choice," Draco admitted gloomily. He didn't know if it was just his imagination but he thought that the sludge had climbed higher, so that it now reached his mid-calf, though it hadn't started snowing more. Sickened, and a bit freaked out, Draco pulled his leg free and took a slow, heavy step forward. His foot sunk back down in the icy sludge with the gross noise, and Draco tried to ignore it as he took another step. The sounds coming from behind him indicated that Potter was doing the same.

They didn't speak as they trudged towards the Shack, shoving through the snow. It felt like walking through jelly, and Draco was getting more and more cold with every step. Not only that but his stomach started twisting in hunger, reminding him that he hadn't eaten in Merlin knows how long. It was hard to judge time in Hell. The silence between him and Potter seemed ridiculously awkward and heavy, and Draco wracked his brain for something to say that would ease the tension. Despite being wet from the sludge, and cold, and starving, the Slytherin stupidly wanted to fix his hair, to make sure that he didn't look as much of a mess as he felt. The sweat and humidity in Lust had made his hair wavy, something he hated, and now it was just getting more damp from all the slush. *Your appearance really isn't the most important thing right now!* Draco scolded himself.

"So," he started, as they continued their sluggish progress, the silence finally getting to him, "If this all isn't some massive joke, then I think we're in Gluttony."

"What's that?" Potter asked, pushing on through the sludge. *Now* Draco was sure that the levels of the snow were rising as he felt the fabric of his trousers get wet at the knees. He tried to ignore his apprehension and the tightness in his chest. The Shrieking Shack wasn't that far ahead anyway - he and Potter would only have to get past the fence, climb a small hill and they'd be safe from whatever the fuck was falling from the sky, because it might've looked like snow, but it certainly wasn't.

A growl in Draco's stomach reminded him where he was, "Gluttony. Essentially all it is, is eating too much."

Potter stopped in his tracks, gazing at Draco, "You are *not* telling me that being hungry is the



Third Circle of Hell."

"I already told you I didn't write *Inferno*," the Slytherin growled, honestly growing tired of the questions, "I didn't design Hell either. I'm just telling you what I know."

Potter didn't say anything and Draco fell silent with a heavy heart as they finally reached the fence. It felt like they had been moving through the snow for ages, but it only must've been a few minutes. As Draco touched the cold chain link, he realised that the sludge was dangerously close to his waist. He swallowed nervously but didn't tell Potter about it - there was no reason to worry him, they'd make it to the Shack and be alright. Draco looked up and down the chain fence, which rounded the shack, but saw no holes or gaps on it. It looked like they'd have to climb over, which Draco wasn't too happy about.

"What now?" Potter asked. Draco opened his mouth to give him some brilliant retort, but then he was sudden hit by a wave of *painful* hunger. He doubled over, his stomach clenching, and gasped. His stomach felt horribly hollow, and his vision was blurry. His fingers tightened into his shirt, digging at the skin of his stomach as if to push the pain back. Draco felt nauseous. He had led a privileged life, he couldn't deny that, and never in his life had he felt so *hungry*.

"Malfoy?" Potter started to reach out to him but stopped halfway as if thinking better of it, his eyes worried behind his glasses, "Shit, are you okay?"

"F-Fine....," the pain passed to a dull throbbing and Draco straightened up shakily, "You didn't feel that?"

"I feel hungry but....," Potter bit his lip, "It's not too bad. I can take it."

"Because your muggle family used to starve you out," Draco said without thinking. Immediately he regretted his words as Potter turned away, shifting uncomfortably.

"Please don't mention that," he said quietly.

"R-Right," Draco mumbled, turning away. He hated that he felt bad over *Potter* out of all people, "We need to get past this fence."

As if Hell heard them, on cue there was a loud, creaking sound heard and a portion of the fence bent backwards, creating a hole just big enough to let the boys through. Draco exchanged a grim, depressed look with Harry. The hole itself wasn't the problem - the level of sludge was. The hole was closer to the ground than either of them would have liked, and the melted devil snow came up halfway so the boys would have to crouch down to crawl through.

"I'd rather climb over," Draco grumbled, but of course he couldn't do that. He was sure that Hell had some sadistic plan for them, and if he tried to go over the top he'd slip and break his neck, probably so he could be reincarnated as a cockroach. Potter just sighed. He seemed way too down with whatever was going on, and it made Draco feel...incompetent. Of course, he was still better than Potter at most things (except Quidditch) but seeing the boy casually pull off his cloak and push it through the hole, no hesitation, just stupid bravery, made Draco realise why he was such a Gryffindor at heart.

"I'll go through first," the raven haired boy told Draco as if the Slytherin needed to know that. He watched cheerlessly as Potter crouched down in the sludge, causing it to splash all the way up to his chest. The Slytherin wrinkled his nose as Potter grabbed the fence with his hand and ducked through the hole. He straightened up his side and the sludge was reaching his lower ribs, and Draco's heart plummeted. In the second it took the Gryffindor to go through one side onto the

other, the sludge had risen so it almost completely cover the whole. *I'll have to go under.*

Potter realised it too because he gave Draco a worried look, "You need to come over *now*," he said, sounding slightly panicked which wasn't helping the situation. Draco swallowed down the hysteria rising in his throat as he slotted his fingers through the gaps in the fence. He took a calming breath and looked down at the sludge. He could feel the malice radiating off it and it made him want to throw up. He wanted to go back; back to Lust and Limbo and Dumbledore's office, but there was no way back, only forward. And if he stopped for too long the sludge would swallow him up and he'd suffocate to death.

"Malfoy," Potter sounded impatient. Draco didn't realize he was shaking,

"I c-can't," he whispered, tears making his vision blurry. An invisible hand squeezed his heart.

"Come on, it's not that hard Malfoy," Potter was frustrated, "Seriously hurry up or we'll never make it to the Shack."

Another shot of agonising hunger almost made Draco's knees buckle and he let out a pained sound. The dizziness made his world spin, and the cold was making him shiver as if he had a fever. Everything was building up; the cold, the hunger, the suffocating sludge crawling up his body. He needed to get over but the more he looked at the sludge the more he just wanted to turn around and run back to Lust.

"*Malfoy*," Potter growled. Draco just wanted him to understand.

"S-Shut up Potter," he whimpered.

He'd never admit he was scared to anyone, especially Potter. He was the great, proud Draco Malfoy and he'd never show any sign of weakness. Except he was now. His eyes prickled with tears, his body trembled violently. A memory flashed in Draco's mind. It happened in second year, when Draco's pride made the Slytherin team lose one of the Quidditch matches. His team - the people who were meant to be his comrades and family - dragged him to the changing rooms and dunked him in a sink full of freezing water. Draco hazily remembered how much his lungs ached, and how terrified he was. He couldn't breathe then, the other boys' strong hands keeping his frail twelve year old self down. He had been so traumatised then, and they had just laughed the whole thing off.

Potter wasn't laughing though. He crouched down on his side of the fence and pushed his hand through the hole,

"Come on, I'll pull you through," he said, and his voice sounded impossibly gentle. His eyes were soft, and he wasn't angry. Draco hesitated, heart hammering in his chest. He never understood some people's kindness, "Don't be scared, I won't let you drown or whatever, okay? I promise."

"I'm not scared," Draco said weakly. He had never had anybody speak like that to him, in such a...caring, way. It left a weird taste in his mouth and an even weirder feeling in his chest. It was peculiar to think that Potter actually tolerated him enough to go through the trouble of being so gentle. He could have easily teased Draco about his fear until the boy's pride forced him to duck under but instead the Gryffindor had taken the softer approach, something Draco didn't think he could ever get used to.

He pushed his hand beneath the freezing sludge and his numb fingers found Potter's. The Gryffindor opened his mouth, most likely to start a count down, but Draco couldn't take that. He pushed the memory of the Quidditch aftermath out of his brain, and took a deep breath. He didn't

allow himself any second thoughts, just tightened his fingers around Potter's and pushed under.

It was freezing. Draco's ears were filled with a deafening sound that sounded like thousands of people screaming in agony. His automatic instinct was to snap his eyes open, and when he did the sludge stung his eyes and all he saw was black, even though the sludge had been grey. His mind yelled at him to breathe as his lungs began to ache desperately, faster than if he had been under normal water. His skin burned, his arms felt heavy and clumsy and he found his fingers slipping from Potter's as the icy sludge closed around him. He couldn't think about getting through the fence, forgot all about the fence, as his only thought was *breathe, breathe, breathe*, it was so impossibly cold that every nerve in Draco's body felt seared and-

Potter's hand wrapped around his wrist, shockingly warm and strong and alive, and with one swift movement Draco was hauled to his feet. He broke through the slush and the biting winter air filled his lungs. He didn't care about how much it hurt to breathe as he panted desperately. The few seconds under had felt like ages, and Draco wanted to collapse and cry. Everything hurt, he was wet and shivering, his hands paler than usual. Draco greedily swallowed at the air, as he slumped against Potter. He didn't know what else to do, he was so confused and scared, and Potter was steady and warm.

Potter hugged him, something that Draco never expected. He normally would push the boy away in disgust but not this time. This time he revelled in the feeling of the Gryffindor's powerful arms wrapped around him, making Draco forget he was in Hell for a second. Potter smelled like peppermint, something that seemed weirdly human in Hell, and he didn't pay attention to the sludge covering Draco from head to toe as he held him in his arms fiercely.

"It's okay, Draco," Potter whispered softly, and it sent a jolt through Draco, so powerful that he jerked away.

"D-Don't call me that, we're not f-friends," he said shakily, and then attempted a weird glare, trying to ignore his thumping heart. A look of hurt passed across Potter's face, but then he turned away.

"We need to get to the Shack," he said, voice cool and emotionless.

They started up the hill. Despite it being higher ground, the sludge didn't go down. If anything it started to grow higher and higher, like a flood, slithering up Draco's already numb, cold body. His breathing was laboured, lungs aching as if some of the toxic sludge had made its way into his lungs. Every time he exhaled shakily his breath turned to a white cloud in front of his face. He rubbed his hands up his arms but it did little to warm him up.

Draco's heart jumped when he realised how close he was to the Shack - he had made it up the hill faster than he expected. He just wanted to get out of Gluttony - the hunger he was feeling was making him unsteady on his feet, and the watery sludge didn't help. Draco was just downright miserable in the Third Circle, all of the horrible feelings like the insane temperature, poisonous sludge and sickening hunger were making him want to give up. He yearned for the windy hills of Lust. At least it had been warm and dry there, and he hadn't been so *starving*.

The Shack loomed overhead, giving him hope. It was abandoned and messily patched up but to Draco it offered dryness and a way out of the sludge. Maybe there was food there. The boy quickened his pace as much as he could with the slush already reaching his chest, when he realised that Potter wasn't in front of him. Fighting through his desperate hunger, Draco turned around and saw that the boy was left a few feet down the hill, looking lost as he stopped walking.

"Potter!" Draco yelled anxiously, but the boy didn't react. Draco felt panic build up inside him as the sludge crawled up Potter's chest, so it almost reached his shoulders, "POTTER!" he screamed,

voice hoarse and snatched by the wind. Draco knew he had to leave the Gryffindor - they'd never make it before the sludge closed over their heads. Besides, he was terrified of drowning. Bravery was Gryffindor's domain, and Hufflepuff got the loyalty. Slytherin's were meant to be cunning, and yet they hated to owe something to someone. And Draco owed Potter for pulling him through the hole.

At least that's what he told himself as he struggled back downhill, the sludge splashing at his face. *It's payback.* Draco was sure he'd get frostbite, if that was even possible in Hell. What happened to all the fire and boiling cauldrons? Draco yearned for them.

"Potter!" he shouted as he splashed towards the boy. He grabbed him by the shoulder, which miraculously was still above the sludge, and then groaned as another intense shot of hunger went through him, his empty stomach twisting. He shook violently, though he didn't know whether it was from the hunger or the cold. But at least his touch seemed to snap Potter out of whatever trance he was in.

"Malfoy?" he seemed confused.

"W-We have to g-go," Draco's teeth clattered, and he was sure his lips were blue. The sludge closed over his shoulders, though Potter's were still above. The Gryffindor's wits came back and with a sharp nod of his head he started back up the hill. Their progress was slowed down by the sludge, which sucked at their clothes and skin. Draco battled the cold water, and his hunger as he clawed up the hill. The slush was up to his neck.

"Come o-on," Potter was in front of him again. He grabbed Draco by the wrist and hauled him up. With hysteria rising in his chest Draco felt the sludge press its freezing fingers to his chin. He gasped and craned his neck up to the snowy white sky, but Potter tugged on his wrist again. Just when Draco felt the first horrifying watery drops on his lips, there was a creak and Draco realised that they were at the Shack. With one push of Potter's hand, the door gave way and the two wet, shivering boys spilled onto the dusty floor, gasping for breath. Surprisingly the sludge remained in a curtain at the door. Draco felt sick looking at it and Potter must've felt the same as he struggled to slam the door shut.

When Draco got his breath back he struggled up into a sitting position and looked around tiredly. The room was empty save for a smashed mirror and a banged up cupboard in one corner, the floor had a thick layer of smoky dust on it and it broke into the air when Potter collapsed next to Draco. It was still below freezing in the Shack, though at least somewhat dryer. The hunger didn't pass though. With a groan the Slytherin curled up on himself as the agony rode over his body, wondering what would happen next.

"What are you hungry for?" a man asked, his voice dreamy and quiet. Draco's head snapped up and Potter shuffled back against the door, eyes wide behind his dirty glasses. There were three men in front of them, all constantly shifting, looking not quite real. Draco had no idea where they came from but they were clearly mirages, like the other apparitions, but there was something more unsettling about them. *Their earthly counterparts are dead.* The three of them had similar features that indicated that they were brothers, but Draco was more focused on other things. The first brother had a bloody, smeared red line on his neck. The brother next to him had a red rope burn in that same place. The third one's face kept flashing from human to sullen skull, and it made Draco nauseous.

"Who are you?" he asked, struggling to his feet. The hunger was making him shaky and weak, and he just wanted to eat something, *anything.*

"We are the Peverells," the first brother said, his voice raspy, causing blood to bubble from his

wound. Draco turned away and fought the sick rising in his stomach. Potter looked confused, of course he did, but Draco knew the story of the Peverells, and how they thought they had cheated death. The first brother must've been Antioch. Draco had always thought the Deathly Hallows were just a bedtime story, but he supposed that everything was possible in Hell.

"You are hungry," the second brother's, Cadmus', voice was faint from where the rope had snatched his life away.

"We went through life hungry," the third brother, Ignotus, despite looking like a young man for the most part had an ancient, frog-like croaky voice. Draco thought he was the bravest and most righteous of the brothers in the story, but seeing him standing in front of him, his skin rotting, he realised that he was just as bad as the other two, only smarter.

"Hungry for power," Antioch whispered, blood staining his cloak crimson.

"Hungry for love," Cadmus brushed his fingers around the rope burns.

"Hungry for life," Ignotus rasped, and then laughed, sending a chill down Draco's spine. Potter moved ever so slightly towards him, and Draco was glad for that, for his presence. He was finally realising that he wouldn't be able to make it through Hell alone. The three dead wizards were sinister, and they filled the Shack with a feeling of malice and rage. Draco's insides twisted and he swayed on his feet. If he didn't eat soon he'd pass out, and then no doubt the three brothers would do horrible things to him, like suck his soul out through his nose or something, "You are hungry and we can feed you."

Two golden apples appeared on the floor in front of them, slipping out of the dust like everything in that fucking shack. That's all gluttony was - dust and slime. Draco felt his mouth watering despite his thoughts, but at the same time his mind screamed at him to get away from the apples.

"No thanks," Potter said, and he looked as creeped out as Draco felt.

"We can feel your starvation," Antioch whispered, his form flickering in the dust filled room, "the hunger," he turned to Potter, "You are hungry for peace, for all of the world's problems to go away."

"And you are hungry for acceptance," Cadmus' eyes were just dark holes in his eyes and they were looking right at Draco. The Slytherin fought a flinch, "If you don't let us feed you then you will die, and there will be nothing more for you here. You will become nothing."

"Truly it's much better to eat," Ignotus mused, "Eve ate from the tree, and that started humanity. You eating will bring you everything you want. Power, love, life."

"Piss off," Potter grumbled sourly. Draco swallowed hard. He wished he could be as sure and steady as the wonder boy, but his mind began to stray. He was starving to the point where he wanted to collapse and cry. His mother had loved him, when he was her perfect little angel boy. His father disapproved of him until he began to incorporate Draco into the Dark Lord's doings. During the summer Draco was meant to get his Dark Mark, something that would make his father love him, and his mother hate him. His friends in school were only with him because he was a powerful wizard, not because they actually enjoyed his company. He was only on the Quidditch team because he bought his way in. Seeing everybody; Finnigan and Thomas, Potter and his two stupid friends, all of them loyal and loving each other, filled Draco with want. He just wanted that - he just wanted someone to care about him, he wanted acceptance. That's all. He'd give anything up for it - his status and money and name, just to feel real love from someone. He stared at the apples, gleaming innocently.

"Malfoy," Potter said, "You can't *actually* be considering it."

"I'm not," Draco lied.

"Think about it," Antioch hissed, "about all the power you will have. You may destroy your enemies, you may have everyone bend to your will. All you have to do is eat."

"All that love," Cadmus continued softly, "you can have all you ever wanted - just for someone to love you. To be with you not because of what you are, but because of *who* you are."

"You can have a real life," Ignotus aimed this at Potter and Draco was barely listening, transfixed with the apples, "Without the Dark Lord, without all the threats of death. You could be a normal wizard."

"I have a better idea - you could get out of here," a figure had appeared on the stairs, snapping both Draco and Potter out of their hypnotised sessions. Neither realised that they had both been inching towards the apples. They snapped back, disgusted, and saw none other than Remus Lupin. He was leaning against the broken stairs, looking bored in his tattered cloak and messy hair. Despite knowing he was just an illusion, his presence filled Draco with surprising warmth.

"P-Professor," Potter stuttered. The three apparitions hissed and slipped backwards, until they were just mere shadows, watching intently but with no more power. Lupin walked down the stairs and bent down to pick up the apples tiredly.

"Do you boys want these?" he asked quietly, holding the apples to Draco and Potter. The Slytherin's stomach rumbled but he flinched away from the apple, finally seeing it for what it was - a trap. If he ate, he'd become nothing more than a mirage like the Brothers. Potter must've thought the same,

"No," he said, voice steady, "We don't."

The golden apples turned to gleaming sand in Lupin's hands and crumbled to the floor with a soft *hissss*. Draco exhaled a sigh of relief though his hunger didn't pass,

"What now?" Potter asked feverishly, "How do we get out of here?"

"Mr Malfoy should know that," Lupin's eyes gleamed with amusement. Draco bit his lip and wracked his brain for anything more he knew about *Inferno*. A stupid idea formed in his head.

"*I fainted, as if I had met my death,*" he whispered to himself. Potter blinked at him, confused, and Draco's stomach twisted, "We need to pass out," he explained hurriedly. He was starving but he knew it would be hours before he'd be hungry enough to faint, and they didn't have hours. He could see the same dilemma in Potter's eyes and the boy looked pleadingly at Lupin. Draco swallowed hard and the Professor glanced at him knowingly. Draco nodded. It was the only way - they didn't have much time.

Lupin came towards them, pressed his freakishly solid mirage hands against the back of their necks, and slammed their heads against the wall.

# Make That Money, Watch it Burn

## Chapter Notes

Featuring a paradox, the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black, privileged white boys and the return of the White Door.

### The Fourth Circle: GREED



Harry's head was throbbing but he supposed that was what happened when you decided to travel through the Circles of Hell via head smashing. It was not ideal at best. The Gryffindor groaned as he struggled to his feet, his brain feeling too big for his head. There were cold tiles underneath his hands as he squeezed his eyes shut, willing the pain behind his eyelids to subside. When he opened his eyes he saw that his glasses were cracked.

"Potter," Malfoy's hand dug into his shoulder, shaking him. Harry looked up, and his heart jumped in his chest. Somehow, Merlin knows how, they had returned to Hogwarts, and for a beautiful second Harry thought it was real.

"What the...," he trailed off, staring at the familiar corridor in front of him with wide eyes. Everything was the same; the high, arched ceilings, the floor to ceiling Gothic windows, the torches burning on the stone walls. Harry smiled, realising that they were *home*. But of course they weren't.

"Where is everyone?" Malfoy was on his feet. He was still wet from Gluttony, and left a damp trail across the floor as he went up to the paintings decorating the walls. The scenery was still there; lush green fields, banquet halls and beautiful gardens. But the occupants of the paintings were gone, vanished, and that was the first indication the boys got that Hogwarts wasn't really Hogwarts.

Harry scrambled to his feet, feeling on edge all of a sudden and went up to the windows. It was pitch black outside and at first Harry thought that was just because it was night. He yearned to see the merry lights of Hagrid's hut just down the hill. He wanted to see the Forbidden Forest and the Whomping Willow. Instead all he saw was black. It wasn't *just* dark past those windows, it was empty too, a void right in front of Harry. His stomach plummeted to the stone floor. When he reached out to touch the window with a trembling hand it pulsed heat beneath his palm, like a heart, and the glass began to crack. Hastily Harry pulled his hand away, somehow knowing that he shouldn't let whatever darkness was outside into the mirage-Hogwarts.

"I'm going to check the rest of the castle," he told Malfoy determinedly. The blonde was still studying the abandoned paintings but Harry couldn't stand still. He felt anxiety build up to him again and he wondered if it would ever end, this nightmare. Each door passed seemed worse than the last. First he was forced to face the horrible memories with the Dursley's, then he was so filled with lust that he almost had sex with his worst enemy, after that he had to waddle through sludge, dealt with some men from a fairytale, and now he was here. Harry was exhausted, but there was a maniac kind of energy inside him as he jogged down the corridor, a need to finish this mission. The fire in the torches flickered and gave him hope that not all was dead in this empty shell of his home. Harry rounded a corner and sucked in a breath.

Despite the fact that he had just come around the corner, he was right back at the end of the corridor he had started on. Malfoy was giving him a weird look, hand on one of the frames of the painting,

"What?" he asked, water dripping from his hair. Harry nervously glanced down the corridor he had just come, and saw that it was exactly the same as the one he was in now, with Malfoy standing there like a mirror image. It was a crossroad. With a desperation Harry sprinted down the new corridor, right past a protesting Malfoy, and rounded the corner once more, heart pounding. Again, he saw the same hallway stretched in front of him. He took in a panicky breath. They were trapped in a never ending corridor.

"Potter," Malfoy grabbed him by the arm and forced him to turn. Despite being shorter and skinnier, he seemed in control of the situation and Harry wanted stupidly to trust him. He was too tired to try and figure this paradox out.

"There's no way out," he whispered brokenly. After a moment of hesitation, Malfoy's hand slid from his arm,

"Don't be stupid there has to be. This is only the Fourth Circle."

"But the corridor just goes on and on," Harry said wearily, slumping against the closest wall. Malfoy bit his lip and looked around, unsure. They stood at the intersection of two identical corridors. Harry rubbed his hand down his face, feeling the headache continue to throb behind his closed eyelids, "So what's this Circle?" he asked softly. Malfoy started talking and Harry relaxed against the wall, the blonde's voice soothing him.

"There's meant to be people here. All of the one's who hoarded money and possessions and stuff. And they're meant to be fighting?" it sounded like a question, "Which is weird, since they're not here. It's almost like they're hiding somewhere, but that somewhere has no door to it. Maybe it's invisible or something like that."

Harry's eyes snapped open, and he stared right down the corridor. Opposite him, past the empty paintings and windows, was a blank wall. It wasn't really a wall. Despite everything, Harry grinned.

"You're brilliant," He told Malfoy, and he really didn't mean to say that but he just did. Malfoy stared at him for half a second and then he flushed bright red, looking away as if what Harry said embarrassed him,

"O-Of course I am," he said, though he sounded adorably shaky. Harry was still grinning, the sense of despair slowly leaving his chest. He walked down the corridor, feeling like everything was suddenly lighter, and hesitantly the Slytherin followed. Their footsteps echoed down the empty corridor and every time they passed a torch it winked out, leaving a murky darkness behind them. That was unnerving since the torches hadn't done that before. Harry knew he wouldn't be able to



turn back since he made his decision, and he just hoped it was the right one. He felt the hairs stand up at the back of his neck and seized by a sudden panic he grabbed Malfoy by the wrist, his anxiousness getting the best of him, and broke into a run.

When they came to the wall the corridor didn't branch out anymore and only one, lone torch was left shifting uncertainly in its holder. Apart from the wall everything else was pitch black.

"What now?" Malfoy asked impatiently. Harry bit his lip, faced with a sudden dilemma. He didn't want to show Malfoy what he was about to do, didn't want him to know about what Hogwarts was capable of. It was stupid but despite everything they've been through Harry still didn't trust the Slytherin. Malfoy could be easily corrupted. He was also selfish and cunning and disloyal. Harry glanced at him wearily. The boy was looking at the wall tiredly, hugging himself. His ripped shirt was still damp, his wavy hair falling into his eyes. He didn't look selfish or cunning or disloyal right then, in the light of that one torch. He looked soft and beautiful and Harry wanted to protect him from whatever darkness was lurking just a few steps behind them.

He put his hand against the wall. The stones were warm, and vibrated beneath his palm. Fighting his disgust, Harry began his walk. Malfoy, thankfully, kept silent as the raven haired boy trailed up and down the corridor three times, hands tracing the stones on the wall. In his mind he desperately thought *the real Hogwarts, home, safety, the real Hogwarts, home, safety...* after he had followed the wall three times, a door began to form beneath his hand. Harry stepped back and stared at it grimly. It didn't even come as a surprised that it was identical to the white one in Dumbledore's office. Still Harry couldn't help but think *This is it, we can go home now*. Malfoy sucked in a breath,

"I-I...," he came up to the door, eyes wide as he understood what Harry just showed him, "I thought the Room of Requirements was just a story."

"I think we established that stories are true," Harry said, unable to not smile at the awe in Malfoy's eyes. The Gryffindor couldn't help but hope that when they got through the door back to Dumbledore's office he'd be able to see more of Malfoy's expressions. He didn't want to see him sneer or glare, or get red with fury. He wanted to see him smile, laugh, he wanted to see him like this - with his defences down, looking like he just saw the most wonderful thing in the world. Obviously Harry felt disappointment - he and the blonde weren't able to complete their journey from Hell but after all they were just two seventeen year olds who never thought this would happen.

Malfoy reached out and grabbed the doorknob without further ado, and then he pulled the door open.

The last torch gutted out violently, shrouding everything in darkness and in his blind panic Harry pushed Malfoy forward through the threshold, desperate to get out of the corridor. The door slammed shut behind them and then there was just dark. With a twist of the heart Harry realised that he was now among the shadows that were outside the windows - whatever he wasn't meant to let in he was now right inside of. He couldn't see anything but he felt as if he was surrounded by heavy, heavy smoke which was brushing his arms softly.

"This isn't Hogwarts, is it?" Malfoy's voice was barely above a terrified whisper. In the dark Harry found his clammy hand and clumsily intertwined their fingers. He didn't know why he did it but holding onto the Slytherin in the darkness definitely helped to calm him down. The two stood as close as they could, shoulder to shoulder holding hands and holding their breaths. There was something lurking in the darkness, but Harry didn't know what it was. Clumsily he heard Malfoy draw his wand,

"*Lumos*," the boy murmured softly. Instead of the light coming from his wand, the whole room flared to life. The two boys stumbled back against the door they just came from in shock. Harry's hand itched to get back out into the corridor but he had a horrible suspicion that there was no corridor left. Whatever darkness had swallowed it up would eventually seep through the door. Harry heard an invisible clock ticking as he took in the room, realising that they didn't have much time left in Hell.

It looked like they were in one of the vaults in Gringotts bank, except much larger. It was filled from floor to ceiling with heaps of treasure. Harry gaped at the glimmering piles; pounds and dollars and yen, every currency in the world. Knuts and sickles and galleons seemed to wink at Harry from their heaps where they were mixed with rubies, pearls, emeralds and diamonds. Chests spilled from the mounds, full to the bursting with more goods. Harry felt light headed as he looked at all of it, going on for miles and miles in the vault. He forgot all about his troubles as he stepped forward, the glow from the goods almost blinding. The air felt deliciously warm.

"Never seen so much money Potter?" Malfoy sneered. Harry turned to glare at him and noticed that the boy was changed; his pupils were blown the way they had been in Lust but this time it wasn't with arousal. His face was twisted in a mocking smile that got Harry's blood boiling.

"Fuck off you privileged cunt," Harry snapped and turned back to the treasure, once again taken by its beauty. His hands were itching to touch all that wonderful gold so he reached out. His fingers were inches away from all the riches when Malfoy's bony hand wrapped around his forearm and yanked him back. Harry stumbled backwards into the boy and they were both sent sprawling onto the only part of floor that wasn't covered in valuables, "Why did you do that?" Harry growled, desperately trying to untangle himself from Malfoy.

"Don't touch it," Malfoy snarled, shoving Harry off of him violently, "It's not for you!"

"Oh would you like it instead?" Harry rolled his eyes, getting to his feet. He partly wanted to stay and piss Malfoy off, show him who was the boss, but at the same time the money seemed to be calling to him, like a siren's song. Harry licked his lips which suddenly felt weirdly dry. The wall of gold stood high in front of him, reaching the ceiling. *So much money*, Harry thought in wonder, *I could buy so much with that. All the new Quidditch brooms for me and Ron. I could fix up the Burrow for the Weasleys. So much money.* His hand started to reach for the gold again before Harry even realised what he was doing.

Malfoy shoved in front of him, blocking his way, and Harry felt his irritation spike.

"*Move*," he hissed, attempting to push past the blonde. Despite Harry's height and weight advantage, the Slytherin didn't budge.

"Don't you remember what this is?" his eyes were returning to their normal silver shade, "This is Greed, Potter."

"Yeah, okay, cool, I don't care," Harry tried to manoeuvre himself around the boy. The jewels were singing to him, and he wanted to be near them, all of them. He wanted to shove as much as he could in his pockets - with just a fraction of this he could rebuilt his parent's house in Godrick's Hollow, he could renovate Grimmauld Place.

Malfoy's freezing hands on his face startled him. The boy was dangerously close, looking at him desperately as if wanting Harry to understand something that he couldn't, "You can't take any of it."

Harry roughly pulled Malfoy's hands off of his face, "It's not for me," he said, still holding onto his

wrists. The boy looked scared and Harry felt himself softening, "Hey. Think about what we could do with all the money. We could get all the new Quidditch brooms, we could buy a nice house...um, I mean *houses*," he said quickly. Malfoy looked at his feet, his eyelashes casting shadows on his cheeks.

"Money doesn't make you happy," he whispered, "it only makes you miserable. You think you have everything you want but then you just buy more and more, only because you can, because you can't stop. You hoard things, you surround yourself with pretty furniture and expensive teacups and it doesn't make you any *happier*," Malfoy pulled his wrists out of Harry's grip. The Gryffindor frowned,

"I wouldn't use the money for that," he said, "I'd buy stuff I actually need. I'd help Ron out-"

"And what after?" Malfoy turned away, hugging himself, "after you're living comfortably you'll realise you still have so much money left so you'll upgrade. Up and up until there will be no higher you can go and then you will come to terms with the fact that you can never be happy again because you've become a materialist."

Harry wanted to listen to him, because somewhere deep down he knew that Malfoy was right. He wanted to nod and be strong and find a way out of this twisted Room of Requirement. But he couldn't. The pull was too strong - Harry remembered all those years wearing Dudley's old clothing, not getting anything for his Christmas and birthdays. He thought of all the nice stuff he could *finally* buy; new robes and shoes and brooms and books and parchments, tickets to Quidditch matches and concerts. That wasn't *greedy*, he didn't want the money just for the sake of it! He just wanted to be stable, to not have to worry about funds after the money his parents left him run out.

This time Malfoy was unable to stop him as Harry dashed to the closest pile of treasure. *I won't take too much!* He told himself that as his hands sunk into the metal and gold. It pulsed just like the windows had and maybe that brought Harry back to reality. That, or the sudden flash that made his eyes blur.

"Get away from *my* treasure!" a voice screeched and Harry reeled back just as a spell hit the pile of gold he was standing by, making it fall apart. The Gryffindor blindly stumbled backwards, away from the golden avalanche. Malfoy grabbed him by the wrist and pulled him to the side to prevent him from getting buried alive. A figure dashed among the remaining piles of gold which now creepily reminded Harry of termite mounds. An eerie, crazy laughter rang through the air and Malfoy's hands tightened on Harry's wrist.

"That's Aunt Bella," he murmured in disbelief.

Bellatrix Lestrange jumped from behind a pile of gold, cackling maniacally. Seeing her wild, tangled hair and crazy eyes made a cold sweat break out on Harry's back. *She should be in Azkaban.* The boy shakily reached for his wand.

"It's *mine!*" the woman screeched, voice echoing through the vault. She threw her head back and laughed again, exposing her rotting yellow teeth. Harry shuddered but Malfoy just stepped forward cautiously, as if cornering a scared animal, "Stay back!" Bellatrix bellowed, and swirled her wand so a blast of green broke on the wall just next to Malfoy. The Slytherin flinched,

"I don't want your treasure," he called, but Bellatrix ignored him as she danced through the gold coins under her feet, spinning around like some ghostly parody of a bride, except dressed all in black. *Mine, mine, mine,* she sang happily, voice ringing back at the two boys eerily. Uncomfortably Harry was reminded of his own thoughts in Lust, when he had looked at Malfoy and thought the same thing. Now glancing at him standing among the gold looking lost Harry

found it hard to concentrate on him. The boy was focused on the mirage of his aunt so Harry carefully inched his way sideways, to where he saw a blood red ruby pendant spilling from a wooden chest. *I could give it to Hermione*, Harry mused as he felt the hypnotic pull of the jewel, *Or I could sell it and buy something nice with it. Or I could put it in a pure-gold crown and wear it like a King*. Harry had no idea where all these thoughts were coming from but as each one slipped into his swollen, hurting brain the boy found it hard to think about anything else. His stomach was tight, his heart pounding. When his hands finally wrapped around the pendant it flared bright red, and pulsed beneath his hands.

"Put that back!" Bellatrix screeched. At the same time another figure dashed from seemingly nowhere, spilling gold coins down the mountain of gold.

"*Accio!*" a voice bellowed and the jewel was ripped from Harry's hands. The boy whimpered and tried to catch it but it flew through the air, right into the hands of Lucius Malfoy. Harry gaped as the man grinned maniacally, the pendant gleaming in his hands. *I need to get it back*, Harry thought feverishly and scrambled forward and up the crumbling mountain of gold. Lucius' cold grey eyes, so unlike his sons, focused on the Gryffindor.

"Stupid boy," the man seethed, drawing his wand again and cradling the ruby to his chest, "This belongs to me, fool! *Crucio!*"

Draco knocked Harry sideways and the curse flew past them only to shatter another mountain of gold. Harry's back hit the hard, uncomfortable coins beneath him and the boy groaned as they dug into his back, Draco's weight pushing him further down. Bellatrix screamed and whirled on her brother in law, wand draw. The room began to flash as they fought over the ruby.

"You need to stop!" the Slytherin was looking half crazy himself as he hovered about Harry, and yet somehow still more sane than everyone else in the room. He was gripping the raven haired boy by his shirt and shaking him, though the Gryffindor barely felt it as his hands dipped into the gold below him. It was hot and alive, "We need to get *out!*" Draco's face was blurry, "*Potter!*"

"Get off my gold!" Bellatrix bellowed, and Harry saw her struggling through all the gold towards them, eyes shooting lightning and wand raised. With tremendous effort Harry shoved Draco off of him. Both the boys went spilling down the golden mountain, whatever curse the Witch threw at them missing them by a hair. Harry was breathing hard, and his hands were blistered from where he had dove into the gold. He couldn't feel any pain - just irritation. Bellatrix and Lucius clearly thought the gold belonged to them but it *didn't!* It belonged to whoever wanted it, and Harry wanted it the most!

The Gryffindor snatched his wand from his pocket and rose shakily. He thought of terrible curses he knew; *sectusempra*, *cruciatus*, *imperius*. The syllables of those started forming on his tongue, but then Draco was in front of him, relentless. He shoved Harry against the wall. The Gryffindor felt the anger building up inside of him as Draco clung onto him,

"Let *go!*" the dark haired boy spat, shaking Draco off. He didn't understand why the Slytherin couldn't see that what Harry wanted to do was nothing wrong. He simply wanted to protect the treasure from Bellatrix and Lucius and whoever else could use it for evil purposes. Harry wouldn't use the gold to support the Dark Lord, he'd just buy nice things with it! He'd finally be able to have the thing the Dursley's never gave him as a child.

"*Harry!*"

The boy turned around, ready to tell Draco to piss off once and for all but the blonde's appearance threw him off. Whatever cool, cold mask Draco might've still had through the past few Circles was

finally dissolving now. Harry could see his anger, the challenge in his eyes, but most of all he saw fear and desperation and hopelessness. Draco was afraid, more than he had been of the water in Gluttony. He was afraid because back then at least Harry had been with him, and now...the Gryffindor looked at all the gold and jewels and his stomach churned. A part of him still felt its intense pull, he *wanted* to take the treasure. But at the same time he was beginning to realise that he only felt that way because the Circle was *making* him feel it. Harry didn't want the money, but Greed wanted him to have it. Disgusted, Harry kicked at the gold coins at his feet.

"It's all mine!" Bellatrix screeched again, scrambling through the heaps of treasure towards the boys like a freaky spider. Lucius furiously rolled his sleeves up and was about to charge at them too, but suddenly Narcissa Malfoy slipped from behind a gold pillar.

"M-Mother?" Draco's voice faltered. The woman looked upset and hurt as she gripped at her husband's hand,

"Lucius!" she called as he shook her off roughly, "Bella! Stop this! Money doesn't make you happy, riches don't make you happy!"

"I'll make you chains of gold, Narcissa!" Lucius spat and then started towards Harry and Draco. The Gryffindor grabbed Draco by the hand and tried to pull him away but the boy didn't budge. He was staring at his mother, glassy-eyed and unfocused.

"It's not real," Harry told him insistently,

"Oh! But it is!" Bellatrix cackled, "*Crucio*," the spell hit the wall next to Harry and Draco and the boys fell onto the pile of gold. Somehow over the time the two spent inside the vault all the riches had grown considerably warmer and now they burned Harry's bare hands. With a hiss he shoved back to his feet, tugging Draco back up with him. The boy felt uncoordinated and limp, like a doll. Harry went to draw his wand as Bellatrix and Lucius closed in, looking like starved animals circling their prey.

"*Stop it!*" Narcissa wailed, "Draco get away from them!"

The Slytherin finally snapped out of his shock and gave Harry a wild, desperate look. The Gryffindor understood and tried to climb the gold mountain in front of him but whenever he tried to grip the gold his hands would flare with a burning pain. The panic was building up inside of him; there was no way out, Bellatrix and Lucius were circling in with their wands raised, grins almost splitting their faces. For the first time Harry saw that there really was nowhere to go. The only door left was the one leading back into the dissolved corridor and-

"Get to the door," he told Draco as the answer dawned on him. Harry didn't know if it would work but they had no choice - it was that or be blasted to pieces by Bellatrix and Lucius.

"W-We need to get my mother," Draco reached for the boiling gold to try and get to the faraway figure of Narcissa, but Harry pulled him back,

"She's not real!" he told him hectically, and hauled the resisting boy after him as he made for the door. By then Harry's hands were burning from where he had touched the gold, and his head was spinning. It was hard to concentrate on anything, the air was unbearably thick and stuffy, and it was difficult to breathe. Harry somehow managed to rip his wand from his pocket and he pointed it at Bellatrix and Lucius, who were advancing rapidly like vultures.

"*Expelliarmus!*" Harry yelled, though he had much worse spells in his mind. The two wizards were thrown to the side, falling into heaps of steaming gold which didn't seem to affect them. Harry and

Draco barrelled past as the two frantically scrambled for their wands, lost in the treasure. The gold was still pulling Harry towards it, but Draco's hand in his was somehow grounding him.

Narcissa was standing by the white doors, her eyes full of tears, "Here, boys!" she waved at them and the two came to a halt next to the door, panting and slipping on the gold beneath their feet.

"Get away from my treasure!" they heard Bellatrix scream. Draco opened his mouth, his eyes fixated on his mother. His shoulders were trembling, his eyes full of pain and fear.

"No, you need to leave," the woman seemed to be able to read his mind and stopped him before he said anything. She looked pleadingly between the two, "Stay together, don't split up or you'll never make it," then her expression softened, "You're almost there, boys, almost there."

Harry's heart twisted as he suddenly thought of his dead mother. He never missed her as much as he did in that moment.

Narcissa opened the white door with a sharp tug and a gust of fresh, salty air slipped into the vault. Harry gulped greedily, his clothes sticking to his sweaty skin. Behind the door was just murky, impenetrable darkness. Draco's fingers tightened on his,

"H-Harry-," he started. But Bellatrix and Lucius were advancing again, and the gold was begging Harry to stay, and there was no other way forward, so they stepped right into the darkness and then they were falling.

# I Want My Anger to Be Me

## Chapter Notes

Featuring more water, hella spells, a nice little cave and fountains.

### The Fifth Circle: WRATH



Draco had become too comfortable, in a weird sense. Since seeing the Peverell's the boy had felt weirdly detached. Despite the dangers he knew Hell held, he felt immune, like he was just some onlooker following a story he wasn't involved in. The Fourth Circle unnerved him, especially seeing the mirage of his parents among the freak-gold, and yet Draco still felt like he wasn't a part of it, even as he feverishly tried to bring Harry (he didn't remember when Potter had become Harry) back from whatever dark part of his mind he had gone to in Greed.

Draco didn't even feel afraid as he and Harry spiralled into the murky darkness from the Fourth Circle. He felt the air whistling past him, tugging at his clothes, and saw only darkness, and he didn't feel a part of it. Until suddenly he fell through the clouds which had been his darkness and in an instant he was free falling from a steely sky. He heard Harry shout something just below him but Draco didn't hear as his stomach revolted in his body. Directly below him was a mirror of black waves, breaking upon a sheer cliff. Apart from the clouds that the two boys had just fallen through and the grey sky there was nothing else around, but Draco didn't care as he saw his life flash before his eyes. It wasn't a pleasant experience.

Draco continued tumbling through the air, unbroken, the ocean coming closer and closer at an alarming pace. The Slytherin barely had the mind to suck in a mouthful of salty air before he hit the sea like a rock. He had thought that Hell couldn't hurt him, that no matter what it was all just an illusion. He was violently reminded that it wasn't. The water closed over him, icy and merciless and dark. In an instant Draco's body was encased in a watery prison as the waves tossed him around roughly. His ears popped, his mouth was full of cold, salty water that suffocated him. He saw bubbles dance in front of his eyes and desperately tried to kick his way up to the surface, except he didn't know which way was up or down. A sharp pain on his temple indicated that he had hit a rock. Everything was dark, and yet somehow Draco saw watery light break through the waves somewhere to his right. Blindingly he clawed through the water, his lungs ready to explode, his eyes blurry and aching. Everything hurt.

When Draco finally broke through the water he took in a greedy gulp of air, but a wave knocked him back down under so instead he got a mouthful of seawater. The boy re-emerged, spluttering,

and realised how close he had gotten to the cliff. The aggressive waves smashed against the rocks, spraying everything with water. Draco desperately kicked to stay above, hysterically wondering whether he should try and get closer to the cliff or try and get away from it. But that would mean swimming further out into the ruthless sea, and Merlin knows where that would take Draco.

Against his better judgement, the boy allowed the waves to push him closer and closer to the cliffs. They rose directly upwards, grey and sharp, without any way to climb up them. Their peaks disappeared into the clouds and Draco couldn't help but hope that somewhere above the clouds was the white door that had first gotten him and Harry into this hellhole.

*Harry.*

Panic seized Draco's chest as he whirled blindly in the viscous waves. He tried to spot a dark head among the water but it was impossible - every few seconds Draco would be dragged back under and he was starting to get tired, his legs burning. His eyes were full of water. By sheer luck he glimpsed the cliff furthest to his right. By a slither of a rocky beach was an entrance to a cave, like a gaping open black mouth. On the beach laid a body.

Draco's heart twisted and with renewed vigour he started to swim towards the beach, trying to swallow more air than water. His feet felt like lead, and the dark waves were impenetrable, so Draco could only hope that nothing was lurking in the vast emptiness below. He hazily remembered Limbo and Lust. It seemed like millennia since he had been there, but he would have given anything at that moment to return there. It seemed that the further they ventured into Hell, the worse it got, which wasn't surprising. Draco had thought Gluttony had been bad, until he landed in Greed. That had somehow been worse because Draco was unable to distinguish what was real.

By some miracle he made it to the little beach. He was drenched and shivering, his throat was dry despite all the water he swallowed. Spluttering, Draco crawled towards Harry's body on the rocks. The Gryffindor's legs still submerged in the temperamental sea. Draco was cold again, and the temperature change from Circle to Circle was making his body rebel. He felt like he had a fever; he felt freezing but his body was burning up.

"H-Harry," his teeth clattered as he violently shook the Gryffindor's shoulder. The boy looked freakishly pale, his lips an alarming shade of blue. His dark hair was plastered to his forehead and Draco pushed it back, revealing his scar, "Wake up," for a horrible moment Draco thought Harry was dead. His fingers scrambled at his neck to find his pulse, "F-Fuck wake up you b-bastard," he couldn't feel anything beneath Harry's wet skin. A hysterical sob spilled from Draco's mouth, "Y-You c-can't leave me h-here alone!" he yelled, shaking Harry again. He thought about crawling through Hell alone, or staying on this glum beach. His stomach twisted. He couldn't do it - not without Harry. If it wasn't for the Gryffindor he would have perished back in Lust, probably convinced to have sex with Blaise forever. Draco's trembling hands clung to Harry's body and he felt like some stupid parody of the Little Mermaid.

The sudden violent cough that shook the dark haired boy's body made Draco reel back. The Gryffindor rolled over onto his stomach and threw up salt water onto the rocks. Draco didn't even have the strength to be disgusted as he almost passed out from the relief. He had to physically fight the urge to hurl himself at the boy. Instead he just slumped against the rocks,

"Thank Merlin," he whispered, and then cleared his throat trying to not seem as affected as he was. *He'd probably laugh at me for getting so scared,* "You freaked me out there for a moment, Potter."

Harry wiped his mouth and gave Draco a watery smile, "Don't worry, you're not rid of me just yet."

Draco smiled too and for a moment it was peaceful, just the waves breaking out on the shore, the



sea humming gently. Draco was cold, his face constantly sprayed with sea-spray, and yet he was not *alone*, and that was the most important. Harry's eyes were green and bright behind his cracked glasses, his gaze intense. The Slytherin didn't realise that his heart was pounding until Harry looked away and cleared his throat, unsteadily getting to his feet. Draco scrambled after him. He felt like a different person - the Draco who had come from potions to Dumbledore's office was gone, and he took his slick back hair and snobbish grin with him. Now Draco was a mess, all his defences down, and all he cared about was making it back home with Harry.

"We need to go into the cave, don't we?" the raven haired boy grimaced at the cave mouth. Every fibre in Draco's body was telling him to stay away from there, but he knew they had no choice. He didn't reply, just nodded grimly, and took a step forward. Harry's hand on his wrist stopped him, "Wait," he said, face tight, "just...a moment more. Before we go in."

Draco exhaled, "Alright."

They turned back to the sea and despite the fact that his hand slipped from Draco's wrist, Harry still hovered close to him. Dangerously close. The blonde tried not to stare at the Gryffindor, focusing instead of the angry black sea in front of him. It emitted malice, as did the cave, and it felt like this tiny slither of beach was their only sanctuary from Hell. But Draco wasn't stupid - sooner or later the tide would rise, and sooner or later their time would run out.

"What happened here?" Harry's warm hand brushed against Draco's temple where the blood had crusted over. Draco flinched,

"I hit myself when I was underwater," he said, pulling back. Harry stared at him for a long, uncomfortably silent moment, "This is Wrath."

"Wrath?" Harry asked, "like anger, right? I don't feel angry, do you?"

Draco shrugged and hugged himself, shivering, "No. But I have a bad feeling that if we go into the water or into the cave we will."

"At least that's not a new feeling," Harry sounded almost fond and Draco risked a glance at him. His drying hair was peppered with salt and his hair was ruffled by the breeze, "We spent too much time being angry with each other over the years."

"Yeah," Draco murmured, looking at his feet. The waves washed over his ruined shoes.

"Why were you even angry with me in the first place?" Harry asked curiously. Draco's stomach tightened and he looked up,

"Let's have this conversation some other time, alright? For example when we're not stuck in Hell."

Harry cracked a grin, "Yeah. Okay."

They turned to the cave and started picking their way through the slippery rocks. As the cave loomed closer Draco felt the air cool even more around him, but it was a different kind of cold than the sea. This cold had eyes that stared and fingers that threaded through Draco's hair and trailed down their cheek. The boy paused at the border where the beach met the cave. The cliffs loomed above him, sheer and crushing. Draco swallowed, his face craned upwards.

"Draco," Harry was standing just in the cave, his face shadowed but eyes still kind and sincere, "Come on. We're almost there."

Draco strengthened himself, gathered up all the courage he had and stepped through the cave

mouth. He felt as if someone dumped a bucket of ice water over his head and his knees almost buckled. He inhaled and when he let that breath out it clouded in front of his face. Whatever watery light from the beach made it into the cave disappeared a few feet in front of him. The ebony walls climbed up and curved overhead, made of un-chiselled, rough rock which dripped with water.

The two boys walked into the gloom, afraid, but still. The light dimmed and dimmed until it disappeared entirely and Draco realised they were in a tunnel of sorts. He pulled out his wand and murmured *lumos*, trying to keep his voice steady. The pale light only revealed more rocky walls and floors. The tunnel seemed to go on forever, and only Harry's and Draco's breath and the steady *drip, drip, drip* of the water broke the miserable silence. Draco was beginning to tire - his feet ached, he was sure he had some kind of lung infection from the coldness, and he wanted to sleep *badly*. There was no way of saying how long he and Harry had been in Hell.

The boys continued walking sluggishly, slipping on the uneven stones ever so often. Instead of anger Draco just felt more and more tired. The hand with his wand began to slump when the tunnel finally ended, opening up to a colossal cave. Draco welcomed the change of scenery gladly. There was a dull green light coming from the island in the middle, which had nothing but a wide fountain on its shore. Surrounding it from all sides was a pitch black lake.

"What now?" Draco asked, pushing his wand back into the pocket of his tattered, ripped, soaking wet robe.

"Draco," Harry's voice was faint, "look down."

Draco did and his stomach twisted. Somehow he and Harry had wandered out into the lake without noticing and now they were standing *on* the water, the surface unbroken. In the hazy green light Draco could see people beneath the water - pale, dead-looking things with pleading, almost inhuman eyes. Their skins were wrinkled like after a too long bath and they pounded on the surface, unable to break through. Their mouths were open in silent screams. Draco remembered the information he knew about the Fifth Circle. In Wrath there were meant to be the angry fighting each other on top of a lake, and the passively-angry beneath the water.

"Harry-" Draco intended to share this with the Gryffindor, but when he turned to look at him the water beneath the Gryffindor's feet turned to treacherous liquid and he went under with a splash, "Harry!" Draco screamed in panic, rushing forward and falling to his knees on the ones again solid water. Harry pressed up against the surface, eyes wide and afraid. He was trapped in the lake, like the other things. Because he was passively angry. Because he never did anything about that anger. And Draco did, and that's why remained above water. The realisation made the blonde's fear grow as he pushed the rational part of his brain to the side in order to beat against the surface of the lake, willing it to crack like some kind of mirror. Harry was trying to tell him something, bubbles escaping from his mouth, hair floating around his face, but Draco couldn't hear him, "Merlin, Harry...," fear erupted inside Draco more intensely than before, as he pressed his hands against the water. Harry mirrored his movement and pressed his hands against the water too, but Draco couldn't feel his warmth. He blinked back the tears.

"Malfoy!" someone roared and Draco jumped to his feet, heartbeat accelerating. A massive, dark skinned man was running across the water, wand raised and purple robes billowing behind him like wings. With a stomach twist the Slytherin realised it was none other than Kingsley Shacklebolt from the Ministry of Magic. The people beneath the waves beat at the water underneath his feet but the man paid them no mind as he charged towards Draco, murder in his eyes. The boys instincts told him to *run*, to get out of there, but he couldn't leave Harry, "*Avada Kedavra!*" Kingsley bellowed, something Draco wasn't expecting. His stomach flipped in the same way it did if he missed a step on the staircase. A flash of green light exploded in the cave and

Draco dropped to his knees, the curse passing over his head. He was breathing hysterically, his fear making him want to throw up.

The boy didn't want to fight Kingsley, but he had no choice. The man was furious and still charging at him, and Harry was trapped beneath the water and unable to help him. Draco scrambled to his feet and ripped his wand from his pocket.

"*Expelliarmus!*" he yelled before Kingsley could utter another spell. The mirage man was pushed back, the wand flying from his hand and over the fountain, clattering to the water on the other side. Kingsley roared in rage and threw himself after his wand. Draco was panting but he got no peace as another figure hurled at him from the darkness of the opposite side of the cave. This time he recognized the man as Arthur Weasley, his red hair and freckles unmistakable. The fury in his eyes was nauseating and Draco instinctively raised his wand,

"*Avada Kedavra!*" Arthur Weasley yelled. With up-most concentration Draco parried the curse with his wand, the light dissolving as it touched the wand. The power from the curse forced Draco to stumble back. The boy felt the first trickle of his anger then - he had no idea why all of these people were attacking him, or why Harry was trapped, or why the world decided to shit on his fucking parade. Draco gritted his teeth, thinking about how damn unfair the world was, and was about to strike Weasley with something nasty like the jelly-leg curse, when somebody sprinted from his side of the cave.

"*Sectusempra!*" Ugly, snarling Fenrir Greyback jumped forwards, his lips drawn back to reveal his filed down teeth. Draco knew the man, and hated him. He was cold and cruel, and he spent way too much time in the Malfoy Manor for Draco's liking, whispering to his father, poisoning him. His curse hit Arthur Weasley square in the chest, forcing him down, blood gushing violently from his chest. As it touched the water surface it filtered underneath and the pale, soaked souls beneath the water hurled themselves ravenously at it, sucking it out of the water. Harry looked at the blood hungrily, but then his eyes snapped up to Draco stubbornly, as if he was fighting himself. The Slytherin swallowed.

"Fight Malfoy!" Fenrir snapped, eyes red and bloodthirsty, "Stop being such a coward you piece of shit, *fight!*"

Draco glared furiously, feeling his anger grow. How dare Greyback speak to him like that?! He was nobody, a useless wizard, a dirty werewolf-

The blonde looked away guiltily, remembering Professor Lupin in the Shack in Gluttony. He had helped him, him and Harry, them both. Without him they probably would've fallen prey to the Circle and the golden apples, and wouldn't have made it through...but Draco had no time to think about that because another wizard was exploding from the opposite side of the cave and Shacklebolt was returning with his wand. The newcomer was a woman, her hair an offending bubblegum pink. Draco didn't know who she was but next to him Greyback hissed,

"*Nymphadora Tonks.*"

Draco didn't know the girl but she was charging at him with her wand raised as if he had killed her whole family, Shacklebolt close on her heels, so he didn't really care about her identity. Fenrir threw himself forward with a roar and pounced on the girl. There was a flash of light and Draco blinked as the woman threw Greyback's limp body off of her, not stopping in her charge. The werewolf laid a few feet from Weasley, who was spasming on the ground like a fish. Draco felt new anger as Shacklebolt and Tonks charged at him unanimously. He didn't want to hurt them, and he didn't understand why they're were trying to hurt him either.

"*Avis Oppugno!*" Draco yelled, swirling his wand. He prayed that the two charms put together worked and when a flock of doves exploded forward and furiously circled Tonks and Shackbolt, pecking at their exposing faces, he couldn't help but grin. He fought the urge to shout *Ha! That's what you get!*

"Almost good work, Mr Malfoy, almost," Dolores Umbridge appeared next to him, smiling her greasy frog-smile. Draco flinched away from her and her atrocious pink attire,

"What the hell are you doing here?" he demanded, feeling his anger bubbling up again. He was tired of all these random people showing up and criticising him or trying to fight him. It was too confusing, too tiring. Umbridge whipped out her wand,

"Trying to help you, Mr Malfoy," she tutted, "Afterall that spell was a foolish idea! You should've used a different spell - like this one. *Avada Kedavra,*" she said, sickly sweet, and Shackbolt collapsed to the ground heavily, dead. Tonks roared in rage and sprinted forward. Umbridge met her halfway and the room started flashing with light. Draco's heart was pounding, he didn't know whether to attack Tonks, Umbridge or both. He was furious, he just wanted it all to be *over*. He remembered all the bad things that happened to him in life - he remembered how his father would get angry with him for no reason, if he simply wasn't the best. He remembered Harry and his 'fantastic' friends who'd always win everything and were always the best and Draco would be in the back, the sulking villain. He remembered his Quidditch team, bullying him after every match, and Potter taunting him, and the Death Eaters invading his home, and his father forcing him to promise to take the dark mark when he turned eighteen. The fury grew in Draco, all those years had been too much for him. He wasn't like Harry, trapped beneath the water, he couldn't *fight* his anger. He let it consume him until there was nothing left.

Igor Karkaroff stormed from Draco's side of the cave, eyes dark, lips pulled back in a sneer. He jumped to Umbridge and Tonks, but the bubble-gum haired girl had backup as well in the form of Professor McGonagall. She flew at them, her robes swirling, and the cave was filled with screams and shouts and spells. More and more people exploded out of the walls in he cave, charging at each other, waving wands. People fell like chess pieces, Draco's head was spinning. He wanted to destroy them, all of them, every single one. He didn't know where to aim, his rage was too much-

The fountain glowed brighter. Everyone was ignoring it, too busy attacking each other but Draco stared at it's soft green light and felt the anger gradually seep out of him. The drowned people were pressing at the surface of water, wailing soundlessly. Harry was looking at him pleadingly and Draco knew how to get out of the Fifth Circle, but it seemed impossible. He'd have to somehow get Harry out of the water and then make it all the way through the fighting wizards and get into the fountain. Draco's shoulders slumped - they were running out of time, and out of luck, and Draco didn't know what to do.

The strength left him and the Slytherin couldn't help himself as he slumped down to the floor, sitting helplessly on the water. Harry pounded on the surface but Draco couldn't look at him. This was the end. He was stuck here, among all those death curses and corpses, and he couldn't even have Harry by his side. He was alone after all. Tears stung his eyes.

"What are you doing?!" Umbridge screeched, flying at him, "Fight you coward! Fight!"

But Draco didn't want to. He looked at the woman helplessly and a death curse hit her from behind. She stiffened up, eyes wide, and then crashed forward. Draco flinched from her body in revulsion. Someone flew across the cave and landed in a heap next to him. It was Professor McGonagall and she pulled herself up shakily, her wand rolling away and hitting Draco's foot. He didn't touch it. Everything was happening so fast that he had trouble keeping up.

"Why Mr Malfoy?" McGonagall looked old and exhausted as she looked at her wand, "You're one of them, a Death Eater, are you not? Why not kill me? End it all for good."

"No," Draco said quietly. He wanted it all to stop and yet he had the horrible feeling it would never end. McGonagall seemed to accept his answer as she got to her feet, picked up her wand, and charged back into the battle as if she hadn't just asked Draco to kill her. The boy watched the lights flashing through the cave helplessly, and the glow of the fountain beyond the wizards. *You can go by yourself*, something in his mind told him, *get back home*.

He couldn't do it. Not without Harry.

"You're neutral," a man came out of his side of the cave again, and the newcomer came to sit down next to Draco, avoiding Umbridge's body deliberately. Draco blinked at the stranger, trying to recall him; he had dark, curly hair and a sad smile on his face. His eyes looked tired, and like he was ready to pass on. He was looking vaguely familiar,

"Who are you?" Draco's eyes narrowed. The man smiled wider and looked at Draco with his eyes twinkling. The sound of the battle seemed to dim in the background,

"I'm Regulus Black - your uncle," the stranger said, though he looked too young to be Draco's uncle, "Don't try and remember me though; I was long dead before you were even born."

"Why are you here?" everything was too much for Draco, nothing surprised him anymore especially not ghosts coming to visit him.

"To help you, if only a bit," only now Draco was noticing that the man was weirdly see-through, like Moaning Myrtle had been, "it took a lot for me to get this far into Hell. Usually ghosts can only go as far as the Second Circle, Third if you're really crazy. But I was always an angry person, so here I am," he didn't look angry now, eyes all soft and affectionate, "You're conflicted."

"There's no way out," Draco looked away, voice hard and determined.

"You've said that before. You and Harry Potter both. And always there was a way," Regulus reminded him. Draco sighed and rubbed a hand down his face,

"I can't leave him," he admitted quietly, "but there's no way of getting him out."

"There is a way," Regulus mused, "You know that - you must only become like him - to allow the water to let you pass."

"Do you mean passive?" Draco frowned, "I don't know how to do that."

"Oh it's easy," Regulus smiled, "you need to remember everything that ever made you angry. Get furious, *so* furious. And then do nothing about it."

"What?" Draco made a sour face. He was exasperated with all the riddles and vague advice. Regulus stood up and put his hands in his pockets,

"Tick tock, time's running out Draco," he smirked a smirk that was pure Slytherin and then casually walked back the way Draco and Harry came what seemed like years ago. Draco watched him weakly and then looked back down at the water, where Harry was. Except he wasn't there anymore. The wet, white things were staring at Draco from the depths, some of them accumulating near the battle, hungry for blood, but Harry wasn't among them.

Draco ignored his agitation and tried to summon all the things he remembered before that had

made him angry, but now thinking about all of that, his father's face twisted in fury and the Quidditch boys sneering at him, didn't get the same rise out of him. Draco's anger had burned bright, but it had also burned out. The boy wracked his brain for something, *anything*, that would make him angry, truly, truly furious. Memories flew behind his closed eyelids like a movie best fast-forwarded but none of them got any emotion out of him except the powerlessness that made his mouth taste bitter.

A sharp image appeared in his mind. The inside of the Hogwart's Express, the red, worn seats and the dark world speeding past the windows. An eleven year old boy sitting down. Dark hair, bright eyes, a scar on his forehead. Draco's heart pounding with anticipation, a smile on his face. A pale hand being left hanging. Rejection, betrayal, shame. Once upon a time that memory made Draco sad and embarrassed. But after years of trying to push it down, trying to act like Harry's rejection of his friendship hadn't hurt the sadness turned into anger. And Draco could feel that anger in his stomach now. It's hot tendrils climbed from his gut and up to his chest, curling around his heart and making his way up his throat. Draco's brain urged him to open his mouth, to whip out his wand and shout a deadly spell, no matter who he aimed it at. His first instinct made him reach into his pocket but then he stopped himself, heart pounding.

*Control it, control it*, the Slytherin told himself. He slowly pulled his hand from his pocket and forced his breathing to steady. Then he laid down on his back, but the flashes of light were distracting him where they collided with the stone walls, reminding Draco of the flickering lights in the corridors on the Hogwarts express after he stormed away from Harry's carriage. He rolled over, so he was on his stomach, and pressed his forehead against the surface of cold water, *control it, control it*.

Harry was back in front of him, suddenly, and Draco gasped. The boy was looking at him pleadingly, hair floating around his face, making him look like a more handsome version of the merman in the lake back at Hogwarts. He was scarily pale when he reached out to touch the surface of water, as if to caress Draco's cheek. He was the same boy from that train carriage all those years ago, but he was different now. Draco exhaled and his anger seeped through the water like the blood of the dead. The front of his shirt dampened and the boy reeled back, panicking. The water was melting beneath him, trying to pull him down into the watery prison. Harry's hand broke through the surface, his face shocked as if he hadn't foreseen that happening. Draco didn't think twice as he jumped to his feet and grasped the other boy's hand. His feet were sinking into the water slowly, like melting snow, and he hauled Harry out roughly. The boy stumbled on the rapidly melting surface.

"*Run!*" Draco yelled, forcing the confused Gryffindor to his feet. Clumsily they sprinted across the surface together, stumbling and kicking up water that was trying to drag them back under. Draco tugged out his wand as the Wizards battling turned to face them, their faces full of hatred, "*Expelliarmus!*" Draco roared, shoving past them blindly, "*Expelliarmus!*"

Harry's own wand was out, and the two of them shouted spells as they ran faster, away from the mirage-Wizards and the curses and the water. The fountain was closer than Draco thought, it's light inviting and warm like the fire in the Slytherin common room. There was more water in it, glimmering like the pensieve in Dumbledore's office, but it was see-through and not black like all the other water in Wrath.

"Draco-" Harry started. His hand was wet in Draco's grip but the Slytherin was *not* about to let go. He didn't allow himself to stop or hesitate as he jumped head first into the fountain, pulling Harry along with him.

# It's Called Black Magic

## Chapter Notes

Featuring a Graveyard, Harry the Little Match Girl, an angel and a throwback to Fourth Year.

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

### The Sixth Circle: HERESY



A nightmare, that's what Harry was going through in the Fifth Circle. The lake that had swallowed him up was like some dormant monster but instead of finding himself in water, Harry was trapped in a liquidy darkness, unable to move. Around him were creatures that were maybe once human but now were no more than sentient *things*, pale and gruesome and hungry. They ignored Harry when he joined them, only focusing on the people appearing on the lake surface. Harry was useless and unable to help Draco, instead watching in mute horror as members of the Order of Phoenix and Death eaters fought against one another right overhead. He could feel the water sapping at his strength, until he felt drained, like his soul was weakening.

Draco had saved him once more. Harry owed the boy his life. The Slytherin could've abandoned him and tried his luck in the remaining Circles alone, and yet he had chosen to save Harry. Maybe it was for selfish reasons, maybe Draco was just afraid of being alone, but Harry didn't care. He was thankful nonetheless, until he realised where the Sixth Circle had taken them.

"We need to go back," Harry whispered, taking in the landscape around him, feeling his blood chilling. One second they had been diving head first into the fountain and now they were *here*. Fresh, raw memories flooded Harry's mind and he felt like he would throw up. The Sixth Circle of Hell was a graveyard in Little Hangleton. It was so familiar it was sickening. The grass beneath Harry's feet was probably the only alive thing in the place, and the only slap of dull colour. The sky was an ashy navy, sooty gravestones erupted from the dead ground like some long-forgotten bones of a prehistoric creatures. The angel statue loomed above Harry, its stone face shadowed by its stone cloak. Harry remembered too well when those marble arms had imprisoned him as he watched Voldemort come to life again. The cauldron stood where it had last time, as if nobody had bothered to move it.

"We can't go back, are you crazy?!" Draco looked unnerved, but not nearly unnerved enough. Harry felt eyes on him from all sides and he turned in a circle, breath coming out loud and laboured and panicked. The gravestones were silent and eerie, the moon slowly climbing into the sky and bathing the world in a cold light. It was still, it was silent, but Harry could almost hear Cedric

Diggory's voice in his head, right before he was killed, *wands out, d'you reckon?* Here everything changed forever, this is where Harry's life was shrouded by darkness and the threat of the Dark Lord. Draco's voice broke through Harry's panic, "This is the Sixth Circle - Heresy. Here Heretics are trapped in burning tombs but-"

Harry grabbed him by the shoulders, fingers digging him. Draco looked up at him with big, startled eyes. Seeing him, in this Graveyard, calmed Harry slightly. Draco hadn't been here that day, he had been up on the Quidditch Pitch with the others, probably hoping that the maze swallowed Harry up and spat him up somewhere in the sheep fields in Iceland. It had just been Harry and Cedric and touching Draco Harry realised that this was different, that Voldemort had already been re-born and there was no way to change that. He tried to tell Draco something, anything, but instead he just gripped his shoulders harder, desperate for him to understand. Realisation dawned in the blonde's eyes.

"Is this...is this where the D-Dark Lord...," he trailed off, unable to finish the sentence. Harry just stared at him. Draco's hands came to press against Harry's own hands on his shoulders, "It won't be like that," the blonde said urgently, as if he could read Harry's mind, "Everything will be fine, we made it this far. We just need to find a way out."

"You're right," Harry agreed. Of course he wanted to leave, his body was *screaming* at him to leave, but he knew hysteria wouldn't help. They had to be calm about this or otherwise they'd lose themselves in Hell. Their frantic search for a portal began - the boys circled the graveyard, never straying too far from each other, and checked every grave, every crevice, every curve and turn for a doorway, but there was nothing. To make matters worse the graveyard seemed to have no end, no fence or wall. It just went on and on for Merlin knows how far.

Harry's skin was still crawling when he and Draco met back up beneath the angel. They were exhausted and dejected.

"I can't remember anything more about Heresy," Draco admitted miserably. It was cold and grey and drab and Harry had never craved for a warm bed and some peace as much as he did then. Hell was taking everything out of him and it was no surprise since it was Hell after all.

"There has to be a way out," Harry said, though his voice sounded hollow. It was the same thing over and over, and it was becoming impossible to think ahead. Harry couldn't focus on what would happen when they made it back to Hogwarts - *if* they made it back - he could only think about now and then, and about the Sixth Circle of Hell. He and Draco leaned against the angel statue, the weariness washing over them like the waves on the beach in Wrath. Harry was on the verge of curling up in the grass and going to sleep, consequences be damned. Draco was obviously thinking more clearly about the situation,

"Maybe this is something to do with your memory. Before none of the Circles had been so specific, usually they were a jumble of different things that happened to both of us. Like Gluttony with the Shack and the Sludge and the Peverell's and Professor Lupin," he said quietly, shoulder brushing against Harry's, "What happened back then? With Cedric, after the Triwizard Tournament."

It was a memory that scarred Harry forever, worse than the actual scar on his forehead. The boy clenched his hands into fists. He hadn't truly told anybody the story, except for Barty Crouch Jr, who he had then thought was Professor Moody, and Dumbledore right after all of it happened. He didn't even tell Hermione and Ron about it. He just couldn't bring himself to. But now, being forced into that haunted place again Harry felt like Draco deserved to know - because he was there with him.

"W-We...," Harry cleared his throat to stop it from shaking and stared at the mist slowly curling



between the gravestones, "We decided to take the portkey together y'know. Our stupid Hufflepuff and Gryffindor sense of pride. Merlin. W-We...me and Cedric, we ended up here. And we were really confused, Christ I was just fourteen and we didn't think...we didn't think that the Dark Lord would come back," somehow talking about Voldemort in Hell didn't seem as terrifying. After all what did the Dark Lord have against the Nine Circles of Hell? "There was this little hut, it's not here though. Wormtail...Peter Pettigrew...you know the story of how he wasn't really dead, right? W-Well anyway he came out and he was carrying Voldemort's body. He looked like a child skinned alive, all pink and ugly. His voice still haunts me though. Cedric asked...he asked *wands out, d'you reckon?* And then Voldemort told Wormtail to kill him. So he did. It happened so fast, neither of us could react....," Harry pushed himself off of the statue of the angel with a shudder, remembering the next part. He pulled Draco back too but didn't look at him, "He spelled the angel to hold me and I couldn't move a-and Cedric was just lying there...Wormtail set a fire beneath the cauldron and he chopped off his hand-

"Harry," Draco's voice was quiet, trembling, afraid. Harry forced himself to look at him, and he realised he barely recognised him as the pompous git from Hogwarts, and that things would never be the same between them anymore. They were linked now, and Harry was glad about that for some reason. He was glad he wasn't alone. Draco reached into his pocket and pulled out a box of matches.

"What?" Harry frowned, "Where did you get that from?"

"They appeared in my pocket when we got here," Draco bit his lip and opened the box with shaking hands. Inside were two dozen used up matches, their ends black and burned out. One was still usable. Draco looked over at the cauldron, "I think you need to light it."

A sharp pain went through Harry, "No."

"Harry *please*," Draco was shaking, "I don't have time to give you a pep talk, *we* don't have time. We already went through so much this is just another one of Hell's tricks," he pushed the cold, hard box into Harry's hand, "Just...please."

Harry had no choice, and that was the worst. He took the matches and hissed. He had forgotten about the burns he had acquired in Greed after touching the gold, and now he noticed that his hands were red and raw. Nonetheless he took the matches from Draco and made his way to the cauldron cursing everything and everyone. He cursed the Dursley's for abusing the innocent child he had been, Blaise Zabini for making him feel all kinds of weird things about Draco, he cursed the Malfoy's for burying all of Draco's good traits underneath years of prejudice and cruelty and pride. He cursed Dumbledore for making him and Draco go on this suicidal mission, and he cursed Wormtail and Umbridge and Voldemort for making his life miserable. And he cursed himself for being an idiot.

He stood over the cauldron and lit the match. The flame was golden and alive and Harry bitterly thought that it shouldn't have been in such a dead place, as he threw it beneath the cauldron. There was no wood or anything for the fire to catch and yet it still blazed to life. Harry glared at it passionately as he stepped away. He stood well clear of the cauldron and of the stone angel, Draco close behind him so Harry could feel his warmth.

Wormtail appeared from behind the gravestones as if summoned by the flames. He walked like an old man, misshapen. His eyes were gone from his head, only two gaping black holes remaining in his face. It sent a shiver of disgust through Harry as his father's once best friend crept through the Graveyard. In his arms he carried Voldemort - just the way Harry remembered him. He must've reached out and taken Draco's hand though he didn't realise it until the blonde hissed in pain from

how hard Harry was gripping his fingers. The Gryffindor hopelessly waited for the snake-like words to leave Voldemort's mouth *kill the spare*.

They didn't. Wormtail walked to the cauldron like some distorted puppet and when he got there he simply dumped Voldemort unceremoniously into the now-bubbling potion. He didn't bother to cut off his hand, instead throwing his whole body into the cauldron. A disgustingly human scream filled the graveyard as Peter Pettigrew burned alive, and the gravestones around Harry and Draco spontaneously erupted into flames. Harry sucked in a breath and Draco scrambled for his wand.

A figure rose from the cauldron, tall and proud and wholly inhuman. His face was pale, his hair perfectly tousled. He had a devious smirk on his face. Harry tensed,

"Tom Riddle," he spat the name like it was poison. The last time he had seen the apparition it was during his Second Year, when he fought him in the Chamber of Secrets. He was just a mirage then as he was now and yet the sight of him still made Harry feel sick. The memory smirked,

"Harry Potter," he bowed mockingly and stepped out of the cauldron casually sauntering over to the boys, "It's been a while, eh? I have missed you dearly, friend."

"Shut up," Harry roughly pushed Draco back, "Get away from us."

Tom Riddle took a few more steps from the cauldron and then stopped, cocking his head to the side and studying Harry and Draco, a few feet between him and the duo. He was dressed in his school robes, his green and silver trim identical to the one Draco left somewhere in the windy hills of Lust, "Draco Malfoy?" Tom Riddle seemed genuinely pleased, "Potter's your new best friend now is he? I wonder if he knows about your plans to join *me*, and take the Dark Mark."

Harry's blood run cold and he turned to Draco.

"Speaking of the Dark Mark," Riddle said, effectively distracting the Gryffindor from this new information. The sky erupted with a sudden cool, green light. The dark mark appeared in the sky, a skull devouring a snake, the same one that had hung over the campsite after the Quidditch finals. The same one that Draco wanted to mar his body with. The angry blonde shoved past Harry incandescently and stepped forward,

"I don't know who you are," he snarled, hands in fists, "but my best guess is you're some fucked up heretic with a lot of baggage."

"Oh Draco," Riddle tutted, "Come on now. We're all Heretics aren't we? After all we literally practice magic," he looked up at the sky glowing with the Dark Mark thoughtfully, "and I don't see any of us going to church on Sundays and pretending we worship a man on a cloud."

"And yet Hell exists," Harry said, pushing his accusations towards Draco to the back of his head. Riddle smiled,

"And yet Hell exists," he agreed as if it explained anything. The burning gravestones had dimmed so they were only illuminated ever so slightly now by dying flames, "So Harry, great talking to you, as always," his eyes slid to Draco and with his heart skipping a beat Harry realised that Riddle's eyes had changed to the ones of Voldemort, with the vertical slits in them like a cats. His lips stretched into a creepy smile, "And Draco, no offence, not that you wouldn't make a great Deatheater because I'm sure if you weren't so conflicted you would have," the boy reached into the pocket of his robe and pulled out his wand, "But you know how it is. I have to get rid of the spare."

All Harry could think was *no*. He imagined Draco's body on the ground, frozen tense with his eyes

wide open, unseeing, the way Cedric's had been. He couldn't allow it, wouldn't allow it. He stepped forward, pulling his wand out. He raised it.

"*Expelliarmus!*" Riddle was faster again and Harry's wand went clattering out of his hand, landing back by the angel statue. Harry's heart plummeted and Riddle tutted, "Nice try Potter, very predictable. Don't worry, where young Malfoy is going you may be able to follow sooner than you think."

Harry growled in rage and took one step forward towards Riddle, ready to beat him up with his bare hands if he had to, but the boy just lazily swished his wand once more, "*Immobulus!*"

Harry felt his body freeze - every fibre of his being tensed and then remained like that. Harry couldn't blink, his body stuck, unable to move. Panic raged inside of him with no outlet as he realised that he couldn't fight, couldn't protect Draco, couldn't even *move*. Just like in Wrath, the Slytherin was left to his own devices. The blonde had pulled his own wand out and Harry could see his fear in his eyes. Neither of them had any chance against the Dark Lord, and now Harry would be forced to see Draco obliterated.

His heart beat painfully. He couldn't bear to lose Draco, he had already lost so much. His parents, Cedric, Sirius. And with the War against Voldemort unstoppable Harry knew he'd lose so many more. He couldn't take Draco being one of them, not now. Riddle didn't seem to care about that though as he raised his wand,

"Don't try to fight it, Malfoy," he seethed, sounding more like a snake than a human. Harry would've shuddered if he could, "Without you the world will be a better place - you're a traitor, a betrayer. You were going to turn against Harry here anyway. Just let me end it."

Doubt flickered in Draco's silver eyes. Harry wanted to scream at him to run, to get out of the Sixth Circle, to not listen to Riddle's poisonous words. But he couldn't do it and he watched with a desperate helplessness as Draco lowered his hand, biting his lip. He looked so small and alone in the graveyard, facing the greatest Dark Wizard to ever live. And he wasn't even going to fight - because he thought giving up was better. Harry couldn't believe he never saw how broken Draco Malfoy really was.

"Good boy," Riddle smiled, and pointed his wand at the blonde. Draco's scared eyes flickered to Harry's and the Gryffindor tried to convey his feelings to him but it was impossible. Draco closed his eyes and Riddle opened his mouth, "*Avada-*"

"*Petrificus Totalus!*"

A flash of light hit Tom Riddle square in the chest and he tumbled backwards, right into the cauldron, spilling the potion all over the grass which began steaming, his body frozen among the smoke. The second Riddle was down, the feeling returned to Harry's body and with a gasp he slumped, panting. Striding through the Graveyard, gold and black robes billowing behind him, wand raised, was the ghost of Cedric Diggory.

Harry forgot how to breathe.

The Hufflepuff came to a stop in between him and Draco, and grinned at Riddle's immobilised body as if congratulating himself on a job well done. He turned to Harry and his eyes sparkled with warmth,

"Saving you again, eh Harry?" he teased, putting his wand back in his pocket as if not a day had passed since their last conversation, "It's okay, I owe you for the clue about the Dragons anyway."

"H-How are you here?" Harry whispered, feeling as if he just jumped out of a plane. His stomach was flipping wildly in his stomach and emotions flooded him; regret, guilt, pain, sorrow. He had been fourteen and Cedric had been seventeen and now they were both the same age, standing together in Hell out of all places.

"I don't know," Cedric admitted with a shrug, "I never much liked going down to Hell, bit too drab for me," he smiled softly, "But I guess my favourite Gryffindor needed my help."

Harry didn't know where to start, "Cedric I'm so sorry-"

Tom Riddle let out an agonised groan and his body twitched. Cedric pulled a face and then his expression softened, "Look Harry I thought it was clear that there's nothing to be sorry about. I know you blame yourself for what happened but I just want you to know that *I* don't blame you, okay?"

"Harry-" this time it was Draco speaking, and he was staring at Riddle fearfully, "We don't have time."

Cedric clasped Harry on the shoulder, sending a shock through the Gryffindor's body, "You need to go. Your wand is a portkey, yeah? Just take it."

"Cedric-"

"I don't blame you," the Hufflepuff repeated again, smiling. Harry wanted to break down and cry. Instead he watched as Cedric turned to Draco, "Who knew you'd actually turn out okay, Malfoy," he said warmly.

"Draco, c'mon," Harry whispered shakily. Riddle was blindly groping for the wand he had dropped, ready to attack again any moment. Harry spotted his own wand, dangerously close to the stone angel. It was glowing. Without a word he and Draco ran for it together, the same way he and Cedric had once ran for the Cup all those years ago. When Harry glanced over his shoulder at where the ghost had been he saw only Tom Riddle struggling to his feet, and his heart pounded. The Sixth Circle was technically the easiest; there was no naked girls trying to force you to stay there, no poisonous sludge or skin burning gold, no battle of the Wizards. But to Harry it had been the hardest, because he had been taken back to his darkest moment and forced to re-live it.

He was glad to go and face whatever the Seventh Circle threw at him when he and Draco grabbed the portkey together.

## Chapter End Notes

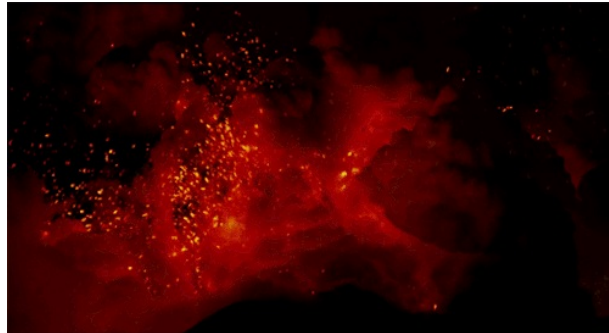
Comments and Kudos? Yes? No? Maybe so? ;)

# Kill Yourself With Bad Habits

## Chapter Notes

Featuring a lake, a tree, a desert and Harry trying to start a support group.

### The Seventh Circle: VIOLENCE



"Not *again*," Draco complained when he landed in yet another river. Actually, river was the wrong word - it was a lake. And not just any lake, the boy noted as he looked around, it was the Hogwarts lake. The Slytherin wrinkled his nose, "Hell is running out of ideas," he grumbled, glaring at the sky. It was grey again, the sun they saw in Lust left far behind them. Draco and Harry were standing in the middle of the murky lake, but they were only submerged to their ankles. Draco knew the lake was deeper, could feel it, but somehow he and Harry weren't sinking in. Dead trees were ringed around the water, their black branches trailing in the misty depths. On the hill close by rose the majestic bulk of Hogwarts, or the hellish version of it. Draco wondered if somewhere inside it was a never ending corridor that would take them back to Greed. He wished they could do that - pick their way back all the way to Limbo and climb that stupid cliff up to Dumbledore's office. But they had already come this far.

"Okay Einstein," Harry was peering at the water curiously, "Where are we?"

"Who's Einstein?" Draco asked, raising an eyebrow. Harry just waved him off and the blonde sighed. He remembered the warm nights he spent in his bed in the Slytherin dorm, the curtains around his bed drawn, reading *Inferno* with the light from his wand, scared of getting caught with a muggle work. He wished he paid more attention to it now as he gazed around at the Seventh Circle, "So...this is Violence. I think. There was something about a Minotaur and an earthquake caused when Jesus Christ died. Violence was meant to be split off into three rings of sorts. I suppose this is the first ring - violence against neighbours....," Draco trailed off when he realised that Harry was staring at him, a weird look in his eyes and a small smile on his face. Self-consciously Draco tucked a piece of his messy hair behind his ear, blushing, "W-What?" he stuttered.

"Nothing," Harry looked away awkwardly, hurriedly, rubbing the back of his neck. Then he frowned and shifted, "Um. I can't move my feet."

"Fuck off," Draco groaned. He tried to lift his feet from the water but of course it was impossible - as if someone had glued him down. The boy sighed, crossing his arms over his chest. He wasn't even impressed, "Great," he said sarcastically and glared gloomily at the dead trees, expecting a

dragon or a horned beast to come running at them from the mist. Nothing happened.

"I guess now's a good time to talk," Harry offered. Draco winced,

"No, not really," he stated. He could think of a dozen things he'd rather do than have a heart to heart with Harry now. The Gryffindor cleared his throat nervously,

"Look, I just...," he seemed unsure, adorably so, "It's just that...y'know, I thought you were different. That you were a heartless bastard, b-but now-"

"I am a heartless bastard still thank you very much," Draco scoffed. Harry's eyes were serious when they met Draco's and the blonde's heart skipped a nervous beat,

"Don't take the dark ma-"

"Hey!"

Harry's and Draco's heads snapped up and the blonde could feel the nerves in his throat. Across the lake, standing by the dead trees, was a boy. He was maybe twelve or thirteen, with a charming grin and windswept hair, dressed in silver and green robes. Draco's stomach churned,

"That Tom Riddle kid-"

"Voldemort," Harry hissed, wand already at the ready, "He must've followed us here."

"No, don't be stupid," Draco had to think clearly - he was the brains of the operations. Futilely he tried to free his feet again, "It's not *really* him, it's just an illusion. He's not real, but if he's here...I suppose he'll try to harm us."

"Well he's not there to organise a cake sale," Harry growled in frustration as he remained stuck, "Fuck we need to get out of this lake."

"Hey!" Tom Riddle's high pitched voice carried over the lake again, making Harry wince. Draco couldn't help but think that the boy looked and sounded freakishly human, and to think that he had now changed into the snake-like demon that resided in Draco's home...well, it was unbelievable, "I wanna try a new spell! I just learnt it in Charms!" he sounded giddy and excited, but that didn't stop dread from growing in Draco's chest. He tried to fight the lake but it held fast.

He thought that Riddle was shouting at him and Harry, but then an eerie echo rolled over the lake. *Do it!* a child's voice yelled, followed by a mix laughter. Draco turned as much as he could with his feet in the lake, but there was nobody else on the lake shore. Whoever was replying to Riddle was just a memory, an echo, less even than the mirage that Riddle himself was.

"Draco," Harry said in warning, but he didn't manage to say anything more than that. Grinning, Tom Riddle raised his wand and cleared his throat,

"*Incendio!*" he yelled. Fire bloomed from his wand like some giant serpent's tongue. Draco held his breath as it licked at the lake and to his surprise and horror, the water started burning. It would've been impossible if it wasn't hell. A wall of fire hid Riddle, crimson and golden and amber, and it spread through the lake queerly fast, seeming to devour the surface. There was no smoke from this bizarre fire, only terrifying heat.

Draco fought the lake, desperate to get free. He regretted his thoughts in Gluttony, when he had asked where all the fire went. It was right here, speeding towards him, ready to burn him alive. Draco didn't want to die like that. He didn't want to die, period. And yet no matter how much he

and Harry struggled, the lake didn't budge. Where the fire touched it, it burned away to darkness before being covered by the flames. Draco calmed himself down enough to think straight.

"Harry wait," he told the boy, who was struggling wildly in an attempt to get free.

"What?!" the Gryffindor asked, voice higher than usual from fear.

"Let the flames come to us," Draco was having trouble stopping his voice from trembling, "Right before the fire covers the lake there's a-a...a split second where....," the heat was pushing against Draco in waves and it was getting harder to breathe. Sulphur seared his nose, "where the lake melts. That's our chance."

"I'm not going to be *burned* alive!" Harry snapped. Draco felt his eye twitch in irritation,

"Okay brilliant Mr Potter, any better ideas?!"

Even if Harry had any, it was too late. Everything happened so fast. The fire was covering the lake from shore to shore, steadily coming forward. It was just a few feet away and Draco could hear the flames roaring, the heat pushing his hair from his face. His shirt stuck to his sweaty skin. It wasn't just a fire, it was an inferno. Somehow the mirage of Tom Riddle had changed the Hogwarts lake into the Phlegethon, which the Slytherin remembered being the river of fire and blood in *Inferno*. He was sure that the 'blood' part would be added when he and Harry were incinerated.

Though Draco wouldn't let that happen - they had come too far.

The fire was close now, too close. Draco felt the intense heat on his skin, charring it, and fought to turn away when his eyes started to water. He had to do this; there was no other way. He watched intently as the lake crumbled away before the fire, a mere few inches. Just a few inches to make it. He was vaguely aware of Harry going on about something in a panicked voice but the howl of the flames was too distracting for him to concentrate on the boy's words.

"Harry," he interrupted, voice hoarse. The air tasted like ash and death. Draco fought the cough that scratched up his throat. If he reached out he could touch the flames, "Ready?" he didn't wait for Harry to answer, their feet still held fast, "One....," the Slytherin didn't know if he was counting down for Harry or for himself, "Two....," he felt his feet give way ever so slightly as the lake melted. The flames were so close that Draco's eyes burned fiercely, "Three!"

His feet were just loose enough so Draco was able to rip them free of the water. He stumbled backwards, away from the murderous flames. He shielded his face and turned and ran away, almost blind. He could only pray that Harry was running with him as he slipped and slid across the surface of the lake, his feet splashing in the too-shallow water. He didn't realise he got to the edge of the lake until his feet hit the shore and he was sent sprawling forward onto the frozen, hard ground. He panted, head spinning, as his body finally got away from the offending heat. It all maybe took five minutes, or five years.

Draco tried to catch his breath desperately, pressing his head against the ground. *Close, too close.*

The Slytherin rolled over onto his back and stared at the steely sky. His cheeks still burned but it didn't matter, at least he was alive. *Harry*, Draco scrambled to sit up, remembering about the other boy. Harry laid a few feet away, panting, eyes closed, cheeks singed with black. Draco had never seen anything so beautiful, and he wanted to laugh and cry and throw himself at the boy all at once.

The fire had died out, and the lake was a dark crimson. A true blood river. Draco didn't want to

know what lurked in its depths, but knew there was no turning back now.

Image result for tree gif tumblr



They climbed the hill towards the Hogwarts. It wasn't ideal, but they didn't want to risk going to the opposite bank and facing Tom Riddle again. Both the boys were exhausted and despite the fact that Greed was easier than Violence, neither of them wanted to go through that again, and they both thought if they went into the castle that's what would happen, like a reset in a game. Draco's legs were aching, the wound on his temple throbbing. He wanted to cry and at the same time take out all his pent up frustration on the universe. If some horned Satan came to him right now Draco would probably punch the fuck out of him.

When they rounded a hill they saw the Whomping Willow standing exactly where it was in real life. Draco sighed and looked at the tree unamused. Its trunk was black, its gnarled branches twisted together and frozen. It was the only tree, the entire forbidden forest was gone, giving way to frozen ground. For once the Willow wasn't moving. Draco felt a chill go through him when he saw a noose gently swinging from one of the top branches as he and Harry advanced.

"There's a doorway near the roots," Harry sounded far away, "But I think it might just lead back to the Shrieking Shack. Jesus Christ, it's like a damn maze."

Draco wasn't listening to him, almost hypnotised by the noose swinging back and forth, creaking gently in his head. *Creak, creak, creak.*

"Draco!" Harry was in front of him, closer than Draco remembered. He blinked owlishly at the boy but the creaking continued in his head. Self consciously, Draco hugged himself. Harry's green eyes were desperate and urgent, and slightly annoyed. His hands hovered over Draco as if he wanted to touch him, but didn't know if it was okay. Draco wanted to tell him that it was but he didn't know how, "You said there were three rings?" Harry asked with a sigh.

"This is violence against self," Draco mumbled. His eyes involuntarily went back to the noose, and Harry followed his gaze upwards.

"What happens here?" he asked quietly, though he already knew the answer. Suddenly Draco couldn't stand his closeness, he felt as if ants were creeping over his body,

"I don't remember," he said, tone clipped, because it was true. He strode towards the dead Whomping Willow. He just wanted to get out. The boy circled the tree, looking for a doorway and he promised himself if he ever came back up in the real world he'd never be cruel again, he wouldn't be materialistic and care about money, he wouldn't get mad at people. As long as he got out.

"I told you if there is a doorway it probably leads to Gluttony," Harry said, annoyed.

"How do you even know so much?" Draco snapped, "You knew about the Room of Requirement



and now about secret doorways-

"I'll tell you when we get back, okay?"

"If we get back, Potter," Draco was exasperated and angry at everything and everyone. He reached out to touch the trunk, to find a hidden button to push to get them out of there. The second Draco's hand brushed against the rough bark it passed right through. Draco screamed when his palm disappeared and the bark started to crawl up his wrist rapidly, like a hungry animal. He tried to free himself but it was impossible, the tree just continued to eat him up. Where the bark covered his skin Draco couldn't feel anything anymore.

Harry was at his side suddenly, eyes wide, "Fuck!" he summarised the situation.

Draco's blood ran cold when he saw the bark continue up his forearm. Panic rose inside of him, strong and nauseating. He tried to tug himself free, bracing himself against the roots, but the tree wouldn't budge. A hysterical sob spilled from his mouth and tears burned his eyes. He was trapped *again*. Harry grabbed him by the arm and tried to pull him free but it didn't work. When he touched the bark by accident the tree didn't suck him in like it did Draco.

"Get me out!" Draco yelled in panic, "Get me out!"

The bark was up to his shoulder by then, hard and dead and cold. Harry wrapped his strong arms around Draco's waist and pulled but it didn't work. Draco's breath was coming out laboured, he was dizzy, his head spinning, his vision blurry. This was it, this was the end, he couldn't breathe he couldn't think he couldn't-

He woke up on the ground, staring up at the grey sky. Bile rose in his throat but Draco forced it down. His entire being throbbed with pain, his brain, his eyes, his heart. It took him a moment to realise where he was, and what happened. He had a panic attack, he blacked out. But he was free of the tree. He could feel fingers tracing the insides of his limp wrist and when he forced himself to look he saw Harry sitting by him. Draco's hand was fine, even though it had been sucked up by a tree. But his sleeves were ripped, the soft flesh of his wrist exposed. Harry was ever so gently tracing his scars, raw and red, and running vertically down.

Draco felt sick as he snatched his hand back. Harry didn't look at him when he spoke,

"What did you do?"

"It doesn't matter," Draco got to his feet, dusting himself off with trembling hands. *He wasn't meant to know. Nobody was meant to know.*

"Draco-" Harry stood up and reached for him and his eyes were so kind and understanding that Draco wanted to punch him. Because he *didn't* understand. No matter what happened in his past with his parents and his muggle family, Harry was the Golden Boy. He had amazing friends who accepted him, teachers who adored him. He got good grades without trying, never got into serious trouble for all the shit he pulled. When he came out as bi nobody ridiculed him. Everyone wanted to be him, or be *with* him. He had it all now - he had a career path set for him, he could be whoever he wanted because everybody respected the name 'Potter.'

And Draco? Maybe once upon a time he was happy with his mother and his father in their pretty house. But that had just been a bubble, and it was burst now. Draco's home was invaded by the Dark Lord and the Death Eaters. They shuffled down the corridors of *his* house, eyes dark and angry. In school people whispered about him, about how he was part of *them*. Even his closest friends turned away from him. They were afraid of him, and Draco was afraid of *them*. His father

was pressuring him to take the Dark Mark - it was that or be killed by the Dark Lord. Draco wouldn't get a choice. He knew too much, too many secrets that had been whispered in the rooms in his house. And now he would keep them forever, whichever way he chose to do that. And Draco didn't want to die, until he did.

He remembered that night - Blaise had snuck a girl into their dorm. They forgot to put a silencing charm on their bed and Draco tried to sleep, to ignore them, but it was impossible. He was hopelessly lonely but had nobody to turn to. He didn't want to be a murderer, a Dark Wizard like his father. When the 'I love you's' started being whispered into the darkness of the room, Draco couldn't take it, because he knew nobody would ever love him after that summer, where his wrists were marred with the mark. So he decided to mar his skin with something else.

The prefect bathroom was empty, even Moaning Myrtle wasn't there. Thinking back to it Draco wondered if maybe she was in Lust, quietly sitting on the windy hills and watching the sun that never set. Draco had caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror; messy pale hair and even paler skin - sallow, sickly. His eyes had dark circles underneath them, his cheekbones jutting out as if he hadn't eaten for months. He was just skin and bones and he didn't recognise himself. Nobody would love the shell he become.

He found it only fitting to kill himself in a muggle way - he didn't deserve to be considered a wizard. Still, as he slid the razor he stole from Blaise out of his pocket he wondered if this kind of death, bleeding out on a bathroom floor, still carried more honour than joining the Death Eaters. Draco remembered his hopelessness and misery - he had nobody to say goodbye to, only his mother, but the Death Eaters read all the letters at the Malfoy Manor. He had no friends left, all of them scared away by his sudden depressed state.

The blood had been shockingly crimson as it splattered over the sink, and the pain was even more shocking. Draco remembered that part dimly. He had no dignity, despite everything he was afraid to die. He vaguely remembered stumbling down the empty corridors, the torches burning cheerfully on the walls. By sheer luck he met nobody, but he barely knew where he was going. The pain in his wrists made his head swim, and he didn't realise he was crying.

He stumbled into the hospital wing and Madam Pomfrey was still up. It was a miracle the room was empty, because Draco was a mess.

*"Merlin,"* the nurse had whispered when she saw Draco's red arms.

*"I-I didn't mean to,"* Draco was blabbering like a baby, face red and puffy. There were dark spots in his vision and howling in his ears. He could feel death, and he was *afraid*, *"I didn't m-mean to...p-please I didn't m-mean to..."*

He didn't remember anything after that. In the morning he woke up in one of the hospital beds, his wrists bandaged. Madam Pomfrey didn't speak about it again, and Draco was glad.

Harry's hand on his shocked Draco out of his dark memories and he snapped his arm back. There were tears stinging at his eyes. That had been two months ago, and since then nothing changed. He still wanted to go.

"Draco," Harry whispered softly, "Please talk to me."

Something tugged on Draco's heart but he ignored him, "We're in Hell, this isn't the p-place to talk."

Harry opened his mouth to say something more but suddenly everything changed. A violent gust of

wind knocked both Draco and Harry down like dandelions, pressing them down. Wind roared in their ears and when Draco tried to look up from the grass he got a mouthful of sand. The grains got behind his eyelids and he blinked rapidly. The temperature changed and the Slytherin shivered at the sudden heat as his body was enveloped in sand.



"Sodomy," Draco said. He was lying in the warm sand next to Harry. Unlike the other Circles the Third Ring of Violence didn't feel that bad. The sandstorm had passed and stopped attempting to suffocate the two Wizards so now they were left in a barren, sandy desert. Draco was stretched out like a cat, absorbing the warmth from the invisible sun. The sky was a perfect blue, but it was empty. It was hot though, and getting hotter.

"What's sodomy?" Harry asked lazily, clearly as relaxed as Draco.

"If you have anything other than vanilla missionary sex," the blonde snorted, amused. He was sure it was more than that, but thinking was too tiring.

"Thought you were a virgin," Harry mumbled. Draco rolled over to look at him. The Gryffindor was sprawled in the sand, a small smile on his face. His cracked glasses were dirty but beneath them Draco couldn't see the boy's closed eyes. Their clothes were drying on their bodies, and they were dirty and ripped. Draco felt gross but there wasn't much he could do about it. He took off his cloak and left it in the sand,

"That doesn't mean I haven't done other stuff," Draco said mysteriously. He wanted Harry to be curious, and the Gryffindor took the bait, opening his brilliant green eyes,

"Like what?" there was a *hint* of something in Harry's voice, though Draco couldn't figure out what. He sat up and stretched, yawning and enjoying the pleasant heat,

"None of your business," he said happily. Harry rolled his eyes and also sat up, growing serious.

"Okay. If you don't wanna talk about that, then let's talk about something else," Draco didn't like his tone, "Like the fact you tried to kill yourself."

Draco huffed out a breath, "They're just scars, Potter," he said coldly.

"Vertical scars. Vertical cuts *kill* you, Draco," Draco didn't feel like listening to his lecture about how he 'wasn't alone' and 'could get help.' He was alone - all alone. And he couldn't get help, because he couldn't tell anyone what he would do in the summer. Scars were better than Dark Marks. Angrily, Draco got up, kicking up sand. He had forgotten about the time ticking and was tired of lying around aimlessly. He was drowsy but he just wanted to get back to Hogwarts. *For what?* There was nothing for him there, and Draco knew that, but he couldn't exactly stay here. *There's no place for me anywhere*, he thought with bitter amusement, *not even in Hell.*

Or maybe there was. Maybe he could pick his way back to Lust and lay on the hills and just let someone fuck him for all eternity. Maybe that someone could be Harry. Draco started to walk, and he heard the Gryffindor scramble after him.

"Draco, wait up!" Harry called. Draco's irritation spiked but he didn't say anything as he continued on. For a stupid second he let himself dream that maybe he wouldn't be alone after this. But of course Golden Boy could never love the Death eater. He didn't know where he was going, all he could see was sand. Harry didn't seem to care as he caught up with Draco, cheeks flushed from the heat, "I didn't mean to piss you off."

"Sure," Draco said sarcastically, rolling up his sleeves. He could feel sand in his ears and hair, on his skin. It was getting uncomfortably hot now and Draco wished for a pool to jump into. His throat felt dry.

"Look, we can talk about something else if you want," Harry offered, like a puppy. Draco rolled his eyes,

"I don't want to talk," he said grumpily, "and I wish you'd stop trying to."

Harry was silent for a while and Draco didn't know whether to be glad or annoyed. On one hand he wanted to get away from the boy and his kind, kind eyes, because he knew that back in the real world Harry would never look at him that way. But at the same time he never wanted to be by himself again.

"I didn't know you liked guys," Harry eventually said, awkwardly. Draco's stomach clenched,

"Yeah. Well." He didn't know what else to say to that. He wished Harry would stop probing.

"It's nothing to be ashamed of," Harry said softly, "It's okay, y'know."

"It's okay for you," Draco snapped, "I'm a Malfoy. It's *not* okay for me."

Harry reached out and tried to take Draco's hand, but the boy didn't let him. His heart wouldn't take it. Instead he rounded on Harry, "Stop it!" he said, voice full of venom that made Harry blink at him in shock, "Stop touching me, stop trying to be my friend, just *stop*."

"Draco--"

The heat of the desert was making Draco dizzy, "I never asked to come here with you! And you know what I'm going to do! I'm going to take the Dark Mark, so stop pretending like you don't know that, like you can change it."

"But...", Harry's voice faltered, "There's a different way," there it was - the chance, the choice. But Draco couldn't take it, couldn't turn on his parents. Because how could he? His mother was the only person who ever loved him, if Draco refused the mark he'd be among people who didn't trust him. And for what? To lose a war against the most powerful wizard?

Draco didn't even realise what he was doing as he threw himself at Harry. He just wanted to take his frustration out on *something*, and Harry was right there, the Golden Boy, sparkling in the light. The impact of Draco's body drove Harry down into the sand. The blonde didn't even think as he raised his hand, allowing his fist to connect with Harry's jaw, breathing hard. Pain bloomed on his knuckles and the fury built up inside him. He saw Harry's eyes darken with anger and he just wanted to *hurt him, hurt him, hurt him*.

Harry shoved Draco off and pushed him down in the burning sand. Everything hurt, everything was muddled and dizzy, and Draco just wanted it to be over. Both he and Harry were panting, and there was a bruise forming on Harry's jaw. The Gryffindor's body was so close, and so *real*. His face was twisted in fury, his hand curled into a fist and he raised it in the air. Draco waited for the blow, *wanted* it to come. But instead Harry hit the sand next to him like the

righteous bastard that he was, spilling grains everywhere. Draco could have screamed with frustration.

"*Do it!*" he growled.

"The world isn't against you, you prick," Harry spat, "why can't you see that?! I'm giving you a way out, I want to be your friend, why don't you just-"

Draco's eyes narrowed and his heart wept, "I wanted to be your friend six years ago."

"Is this what this is about?" Harry laughed bitterly, hysterically, "The fact I didn't accept your hand when we were *eleven!*"

"That's exactly what this is about," Draco seethed, and pushed Harry off, scrambling to his feet. *It's about the fact that I love you.*

He didn't know if he meant to say it, or if he even meant to think it, but that thought flew from his head when he saw the creature standing in the sand in front of them. He had no idea where it had come from or why but there it was. A mirage of a Hippogriff, exactly like the one who had hurt Draco in fourth year with its tawny feathers and proud neck. The blonde's mouth went dry.

"Buckbeak!" Harry exclaimed, wild with sudden joy, and threw himself at the majestic creature who pecked at his hair fondly. Draco's hands were trembling. He remembered all too well the humiliation of being beat by the animal, and now he saw images in his mind - Harry flying away into the sunset and leaving him on the sand, "Dray, come on," Harry's smile was almost too big for his face, his hand buried in the creature's feathers. Draco didn't know when Harry had come up with the nickname but his heart felt too big for his chest.

He had no other choice. Draco slowly, slowly came towards the creature. Its beautiful, proud eyes were glued to his, watching his every move. Draco held his breath, careful to not make any sudden movements. This time it wouldn't mean a few bruises - it would mean being abandoned in the Seventh Circle of Hell. Ignoring whatever pride might've still been rooted inside him, Draco bowed low, his hands at his sides. His lungs were aching with the need for air but he couldn't seem to breathe.

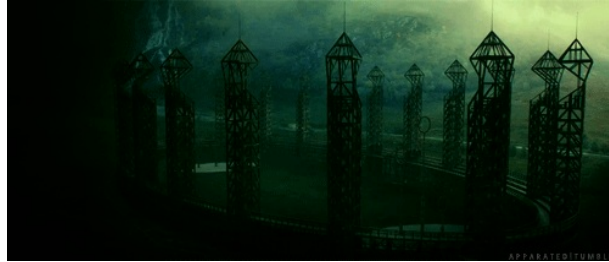
Buckbeak bowed back and Draco let his breath out in a *whoosh*. Harry climbed gracefully on top of the creature, and then offered Draco his hand. The blonde took it without hesitation. *We made it this far.* He let Harry pull him up, his head spinning.

# You Lie, Lie, Lie...

## Chapter Notes

Featuring arguments, a bunch of Ghosts, Quidditch and Truth Serums (kind of).

### The Eighth Circle: FRAUD



Buckbeak left them at the top of the abandoned Quidditch stadium, Hogwarts looming on a hill close by as if some ghost, haunting them. Half of the castle was brown away, collapsed in a pile of debris and rubbish. It was heartbreaking to see, but Harry didn't have time to concentrate on it as he looked around. Him and Draco were on the top row of the stadium, the wind whistling in their ears. The skeletal towers surrounding the pitch seemed to howl in the wind, and rattle like ancient bones. The grass was dead, and matted with frozen mud far, far below them. Harry looked at Draco, his hair tugged by the cold wind, and his stomach twisted. He never expected to find so much about the boy, and now he felt so different about him that it was dizzying. The scars on his pale wrists were burned in Harry's mind, and he kept thinking of Draco the way the other Death eaters were - wearing a mask, in dark robes, the Dark Mark etched into his skin, casting death spells left, right and centre. The thought made him want to pull the blonde into his arms and keep him safe from them.

Draco's eyes met his and he clearly realised that Harry would try and talk to him again because he turned with a roll of eyes, and started walking across the top row. With a sigh Harry jogged after him,

"Where are you going?" he asked in exasperation. He reached out to grab Draco's wrist, trying to get him to stop walking and just *talk* to him, but the blonde only sped up,

"Stop trying to talk to me," he growled. Harry's shoulders slumped. He was tired of constantly fighting the blonde. He clearly wasn't in the state of mind to understand that there were other choices for him other than joining the Death eaters. But Harry reckoned it didn't matter right now; if they never made it out of Hell it had no meaning anyway, and if they did make it out then Harry had until the summer to try and convinced Draco against his plan, no matter what it took.

Harry gave up, allowing the Slytherin to walk off angrily as he sat down on worn wooden floor and sighed. The air felt cool in his lungs as he inhaled, staring out at the Quidditch Pitch below. He didn't know how far they still had to go, but he knew it wouldn't be easy. He was surprised he and Draco even made it that far. Harry closed his eyes, steadying himself. *We made it this far...* he repeated again. When he opened his eyes Draco was standing in front of him, hands curled into fists at his sides, cheeks red with anger. For a moment he just glared heatedly at his shoes as if wanting to burn holes in them, and then he came to sit down next to Harry, shoulders brushing

together.

Before either could muster up the courage to speak, they heard footsteps and both of their heads snapped up. Ginny Weasley was casually walking down towards them, dressed in a jacket and a Gryffindor scarf, fiery hair twirling in the wind. Her other mirage from Lust flashed in Harry's mind; pale skin and lingerie, breasts small and perky behind slithers of thin material. It didn't stir Harry the way it did in the Second Circle, instead his guard went up as the girl casually walked over to them, grinning brightly.

"Harry," she walked right past Draco as if he were air and before the Gryffindor could react she packed herself into his lap, looping her arms around his neck. She smelled like lavender and felt freakishly real and warm in his arms, "Harry, stay up here with me, okay?"

"Ugh," Harry heard Draco groan next to him but Ginny paid him no mind, batting her eyelashes at Harry. He wanted to throw her off but was too polite to. His hands hung limply at his sides. It was clear that he and Draco had to get down to the Quidditch Pitch and the Gryffindor couldn't think of anything that would make him stay up here.

"Harry," Ginny whined, pouting, "It would be so beautiful though. Just me and you, and-"

She was hauled out of Harry's lap as fast as she got in it. She squealed as Draco tugged her backwards, his face bored and impassive, but his eyes flashing with cold fury,

"Stupid bitch," he grumbled and then, to Harry's surprise, he wrapped his slender fingers around his wrist and pulled him up. Without a look back at Ginny Harry allowed Draco pull him along the top of the stadium, towards the rickety stairs leading to the lower floor. He felt a smile appear on his face when he realised that Draco was jealous. Or at least he was acting like it. His hand was warm and although everything felt physically real around him, Harry felt as if the blonde was the only thing truly there.

"Are you jealous, Draco?" Harry asked, half a joke, and half serious, his heart pounding. Draco glared at him over his shoulder, eyes a smouldering grey,

"No. Fuck off, Potter."

When they reached the steep, wooden stairs Draco let Harry go, something the Gryffindor mourned as they descended. He saw Draco in front of him, his tense, slim shoulders and silvery, messy hair. The words were bubbling in Harry's throat, almost like he couldn't stop them. He wanted to tell Draco that he wasn't alone, that Harry would never let anyone hurt him again, that they were in this together now. But he knew that Draco wouldn't believe him anyway.

The air was heavy with rain when the boys walked out onto the second arch of the stadium. They were still far up, and the wind threatened to snatch Draco's voice away when he finally spoke,

"This is Fraud," he said simply, tone clipped, "Lies, deceit, corruption. It's all here."

Harry frowned but he didn't know how to reply, so instead he said something stupid, "Do you think that means we can't tell the truth?"

Draco actually stopped and snorted, eyes sparkling with amusement, "Yeah, sure," he drawled, "aren't you creative today, Potter?"

"Try it," Harry had this stupid feeling in his chest that told him he was right about his idea, which had come to him suddenly, "Tell me the truth."

Draco rolled his eyes but decided to entertain the dark haired boy, "I am a Gryffindor," the frown on the boy's face when he said it told it all. Harry grinned and Draco's brows furrowed, "I am a *Gryffindor*," he repeated, and then with frustration, "I am a Gryffindor! Merlin, this isn't happening."

"Wait...does that mean you were lying when you said you weren't jealous?" Harry felt lightheaded. Blood rushed to Draco's cheeks fiercely,

"N-No!" he spluttered, but of course that meant yes because they were unable to say the truth in Fraud. Warmth trickled from Harry's heart to his stomach. He had other questions on the end of his tongue, the most prominent one rattling around in his brain like a lost bird - *Are you in love with me?* But of course fate was taking the piss out of him and before he could ask the question, Rita fucking Skeeter clattered out of nowhere, down the stadium. She was in a brilliant emerald jacket, her notepad and self writing quill in hand, tight blonde curls tousled by the wind. Her red painted lips stretched into a smile when she caught sight of Harry's grimace,

"Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy!" she gushed dramatically, hurrying forward, "the two best Wizards of their age! Oh, and together as well! The romance of a lifetime!"

"N-no!" Harry and Draco spluttered unanimously. They gave each others uneasy looks, cheeks red. Draco looked like he wanted to say something but he smartly kept his mouth shut, knowing that Fraud could easily turn his words around.

"Oh you two boys *must* have an interview with me!" Rita stated, eyes like a hawk's, "you simply must! Malfoy and Potter, the duo of the century-"

Harry gave himself a split second to picture it; a moving photograph of him and Draco on the front page of the Daily Prophet, Harry's arm protectively wrapped around Draco's shoulders. The title, bold, read *Malfoy and Potter, the duo who made it through Hell*. It was a beautiful vision; and it would never happen.

"Dray-"

"I know," Draco sounded bitter, as if he wanted to be in the spotlight for even just a moment, but knew it wasn't right. They pushed past the mirage of Skeeter, to the stairs leading to the lower section. They were still freakishly high, higher than the actual stadium in the real world went. The air tasted cold and crisp, and Rita's loud protests and flattery melted in the wind behind the two. They walked in silence, their moods dampening.

"I'm eighteen," Harry said quietly. The lie tasted weird on his tongue, like metal, and he tried again, "I'm sixteen." His lips formed the word *seventeen*, but it never made it past his throat. It was weird and unsettling.

"Stop trying," Draco said dully.

"We won't make it out," Harry said, and smiled. He liked the fact that he still had hope; he couldn't say the truth here and a part of his wished that it meant that they would be able to make it out - because it was the truth. It all sounded complicated and muddled, even in Harry's own head.

"You actually believe that," Draco said quietly as they reached the second stairs. His shoulders were slumped, "You actually think we'll be okay."

"We only have one Circle to go after this," Harry said fiercely, and Draco didn't reply as he climbed down. Something was weighting down on Harry's shoulders, almost like a physical force.



It had been building up since Limbo, everything negative slowly bearing down on him. Struggling down the creaking steps of the Quidditch stadium he felt them more than ever, maybe because Draco had somewhat turned against him.

Harry and Draco tiredly stumbled onto the next tier down. They were making steady progress, but looking down still made Harry anxious. He kept thinking he'd fall off, without a broom to keep him airborne. He couldn't even share his fears with Draco - not this time.

Professor Quirrel sat on the wooden floor, effectively cutting off Harry's and Draco's path. His ghost was see-through.

"Do y-you know w-why you're here?" his voice was trembling, the way it had been when he was alive. He didn't blink and his turban and robes were peculiarly still in the whistling wind. Harry decided that he belonged in hell, "Why you are here?"

"Because we went through a door?" Draco offered drily, crossing his arms over his chest defensively. Quirrel gave no indication that he heard him, sounding as if he was reciting from a book,

"The Serpent was cast from Heaven and upon the earth he created Hell, where all souls suffered eternal damnation. And he returned thou to Heaven to wreck havoc upon humanity. The Tempter seduced Eve, the virgin Queen, and she ate of the Tree of Knowledge. Humanity fell and Satan was condemned to his fiery Kingdom, where nothing good could ever be, for the Creator knew all and he cursed the place."

"We need to get past," Draco said feverishly, his hand scrambling for Harry's. The boy was staring at Quirrel, waiting for that horrible, inhuman voice to come, the same voice who haunted his life like a shadow. And he was not disappointed,

"God has a question for you," the soft hiss came out of the Professor's mouth and his eyes rolled into the back of her head. A chill went through Harry, "Do you believe in our only ruler, the Dark Lord?"

Harry tried to see a way around Quirrel, his heart pounding. He took up the whole floor, and if Harry tried to shove his way past her he might just end up over the edge and on the ground in a heap of shattered bones. It was Draco who saved them from that horrible end,

"Yes," he said, calmly, steadily. He was lying, that was the only thing they could do in Fraud, but the mirage of Quirrel didn't seem to realise this. His eyes rolled back around and he blinked owlishly before smiling palely at the boys,

"A-Amen," he stuttered. On edge and nervous the two boys picked their way around him hurriedly and then almost sprinted to the next staircase.

"What you did there," Harry huffed out as their feet thundered on the wooden steps, bringing them closer to the pitch itself, "That was horrible." He had meant to say brilliant but of course he couldn't say the truth. Draco seemed to understand though.

"You'll thank me later," he mumbled, and Harry felt that some of the iciness that had bridged between them in Violence was beginning to thaw. Harry realised that Draco didn't worship Voldemort the way that the other Death eaters did - there was still hope for him. For them.

They walked in silence to the next section of the stadium. Harry could now make out dull, muddy puddles in the feet-stamped grass below. Even he wasn't trying to start a conversation anymore, too

scared of this new 'truth serum' that Fraud was slyly invoking on them.

A low, melodic humming was heard as they came down once more. There were maybe four stalls off the ground now, not far, and Harry's palms were damp with anticipation. But between them and the fast approaching way out was Professor Trelawney. She was standing in their way the same way Quirrel had been, her colourful robes tugged at by the wind. In her hands was a glass orb full of swirling mist - the same one as the ones as inn the Department of Mysteries. Harry's stomach twisted as he remembered the day he had lost Sirius, not even a year ago.

"God sees you," Trelawney's dreamy voice carried over the boys. Harry expected her to try and stop them somehow, but the woman just moved to the side, holding out the glass orb in invitation, "It has all the answers you could ever want," Draco took a hesitant step forward, his eyes trained on the softly glowing orb. Harry felt sick; the orb might've held the secrets of the world, but the price you had to pay for it was terrible, "Come closer, Mr Malfoy," Trelawney cooed, eyes greedy, "You can see the outcome of the war, you can see if anybody will ever love you..."

"Keep walking, Draco," Harry said insistently, pressing a hand against the boys back and nudging him forward, "It's worth it." *Not.*

"It's not worth it," Draco sounded chocked up. With a wild panic Harry realised that the boy wanted to know what life held for him, but he wouldn't allow that. Harry roughly shoved the boy forward and then physically dragged him away from Trelawney, who looked after them wistfully.

"Let go! Let go!" Draco tried to fight Harry, but he had no chances against him. The Gryffindor wasn't the scrawny, weak kid he once had been and he easily managed to haul Draco to the the next stairs, and then down them. Only when they were on the third level did Draco go limp in his arms as if Trelawney's spell was broken. Harry slumped against the stairs, breathing hard. A part of him wanted to stroke Draco's hair and comfort him somehow, but he was sure the Slytherin wouldn't appreciate it. Slowly, the dark haired boy extracted himself from Draco.

"Come on," he said, voice hoarse and hollow. *How much further? How much longer?* The questions continued to pile up and Harry couldn't find any answers for them. Even Draco stopped supplying him with information he got from the *Inferno*, instead shuffling along like some corpse.

"Mr Potter!" the voice was familiar, carrying power that it didn't really wield. When Harry turned, too exhausted to care, and saw Cornelius Fudge hurrying towards them, looking as displeased as the day that Harry had blown up Aunt Marge like a balloon, "What are you doing in Hell?!" the man was almost purple with anger. He stopped in front of the boys and his eyes narrowed at Draco, "And with a Malfoy as well! Truly," he wrapped an arm around Harry's shoulders and the Gryffindor flinched away, but the man's grip was strong. He made as if to lead Harry away, "The company you find yourself in sometimes, indeed..." the man made a disapproving noise, "But it's alright, all of it can be undone. The press doesn't have to know, you're the Golden Boy after all"

Harry finally got his wits back together and he shoved Fudge off. It was surprisingly easy, and Harry couldn't help but think that the Eight Circle of Hell was long, but not particularly hard.

Draco was staring at him with wide eyes and Harry just shoved past Fudge, "Come on," he growled again, tired of saying it. Draco scrambled after him.

"You are making a mistake, Mr Potter!" Fudge bellowed, "The company you keep..." Harry didn't hear the rest of it as he and Draco reached the stairs leading down again. Harry was growing dizzy from all of it; the rain was still heavy in the air but it wasn't falling.

Dumbledore himself was waiting for them on the next level. He was casually leaning against the

wall, brushing his long fingers through his even longer beard. For a wild moment Harry thought that maybe he was real, that somehow the person who was his mentor, who he looked up to the most had made it into Hell to help them. But then he saw Dumbledore's eyes; one blue, one green, unlike the ones in real life, and he realised he was just another mirage. No person could make it this far into Hell.

"You need to get out of here," Dumbledore said merrily, pushing himself off the wall when he saw the boys advancing wearily. Harry couldn't tell if the *only-lie* rule of Fraud applied to the mirages as well.

"We can trust him," Draco said carefully, and Harry agreed that they couldn't. After all they've been through he didn't think he'd ever trust Dumbledore again, mirage or not. Still, he wasn't about to waste time as he and Draco made to hurry past. Dumbledore stuck out his arm,

"Actually," he mused, "You should stay. Past here are bad things."

"Yeah we'll stay," Draco said with an eye roll, and then continued forward.

"Yes!" Dumbledore agreed, "Go on! You're almost there lads, you're almost back."

Harry frowned, "Why are you contradicting yourself?"

"I'm a hypocrite, am I not?" Dumbledore asked with a shrug, then he stopped, "Actually, I don't think I am, no."

He was most definitely a hypocrite but Harry wasn't about to argue with him, a headache starting behind his eyes. Looking at his headteachers face made Harry sick; he couldn't believe than the old, wise man who was meant to protect them willingly sent them to Hell. He didn't try to stop them again as he and Draco shuffled past, confused and exhausted. When they reached the next landing Harry could make out the individual grass on the ground, and if he jumped he would've probably only break a leg.

An unknown Wizard waited for them there, old and crooked, with sharp, shifting eyes. In his wizened hands he held a wand that he was playfully tossing and catching.

"Who are you?" Harry asked cautiously. Draco was slumped against the wall, hiding from the wind. His eyes were closed and he looked like he wanted nothing more but to sleep.

"The name's Grindelwald," the old man croaked, with a grin. Draco flinched at that, his eyes snapping open,

"*The* Grindelwald?" he asked, "the Dark Wizard."

"Aye, that's me," he said with a sigh, "and before you ask - yes, it's really me. I'm dead, and I'm in Hell. Though I can't even tell the difference between it and my life," he broke down into hoarse laughter, "This is Bolgia seven, something you might've forgotten blondie."

"Thieves?" Draco asked. Harry was confused,

"Bingo, sweetheart," Grindelwald sounded bored, "Either way, I suppose I'm to stop you from continuing on?"

"Um...", Harry said awkwardly. Grindelwald shrugged,

"Well, I reckon I could give you the Elder Wand," he held it out to Harry and the boy instinctively

moved towards it. Grindelwald snatched it back with a laugh, leaving a bitter taste in the Gryffindor's mouth, "On second thought I'll keep it. You're free to go."

"Just like that?" Harry asked suspiciously. Grindelwald shrugged again,

"Not my business. I'm not like those illusions - I'm real, I'm here forever. Stopping two foolish schoolkids is not on my top list of priorities," he gestured to where the stairs led to the ground, "Be my guest."

Harry and Draco didn't question it as they hurried along, almost tripping over their own feet. They stumbled down the stairs but before they could come out onto the field, Severus Snape blocked their way in a swirl of dark robes. Draco flinched, Harry guiltily remembered leaving the Potions classroom what seemed like ages ago, telling his Professor that he'd be right back. He wondered how much time had passed since then,

"Mr Malfoy," Snape seethed, "Mr Potter. Where, may I ask, are you going?"

"We need to make it to the Ninth Circle, Godfather," Draco had clearly forgotten Snape was a mirage but Harry was more startled at the fact that the man was Draco's godfather. He mournfully remembered Sirius.

"Not before," Snape drawled, "You admit your feelings."

"W-What feelings?" Draco flushed to the roots of his hair, and looked everywhere but at Harry. Something twisted inside the Gryffindor's stomach, "I don't have any feelings for him!"

It was too confusing; Harry didn't know if Fraud was still messing with their lies, or what even was happening. Snape was just another shadowy blockade on their way and Harry wanted to get rid of him more than anything. Before the awkward, uncomfortable conversation could continue, Harry remembered about the rapidly running out time. He didn't know how he knew that, but he knew they had to leave Hell, and soon too.

He walked right through Snape. He didn't even get the cold chill he felt if he passed a Hogwarts ghost. He got something else.

The wind tugged at his hair, robes, lashed at his face. The smell of rain was heavy in the air, and Harry and Draco were back on the top of the stadium again.

"What the-" Draco started, horrified.

"Harry!" Ginny came out of nowhere, throwing herself at Harry in a blur, "Stay with me-"

Harry shoved her off in a blind, confused panic. With hysteria he and Draco stumbled back down to the pitch, legs aching and lungs burning at how fast they were going, passing the ghosts and mirages in a blur. The horror of the situation made Harry irrational. When they got back down to Snape, Harry ran right through him before the man could even speak. And they ended up on top of the stadium once more. Harry understood now why Grindelwald didn't care. He knew they wouldn't make it out of Fraud anyway. It was all a massive lie. He and Draco tried again, and again to make it out onto the actual pitch, and each time they ended up back at the top.

Eventually Draco collapsed on the floor, shaking, "I need to..." he didn't finish, just buried his head in his arms, exhausted. Harry looked around in distress. Ginny had appeared again and was coming towards him. This was worse than anything before - it was like the corridor in Greed but even more twisted. His head was pounding. The Gryffindor thought he was going to pass out from all of the confusion, fear and tiredness. He couldn't do it.

"Harry-" Ginny started. Harry wanted to throw her over the side.

Over the side.

He looked down at the green field, stomach churning far below.

"Draco," Harry pointedly ignored the girl as he forcefully hauled the half-asleep blonde to his feet. Draco looked at him sleepily,

"What?" he slurred. Harry grabbed him by the wrist, and on second thought his hand slid to intertwine their fingers,

"Do you trust me?" he asked breathlessly. To his surprise, Draco gave him an adorable, sleepy smile, something he probably wasn't even aware of doing,

"No," he whispered quietly, and it meant *yes*. Harry didn't hesitate as he pulled Draco into his arms and threw himself off of the top of the stadium, leaving Ginny and Quirrel and Grindelwald and Dumbledore behind, all of them. He and Draco hurled towards the pitch, wind whistling into their ears. Draco clung to Harry, suddenly awake, gasping. Harry just squeezed his eyes shut.

# True Friends Stab You in The Front

## Chapter Notes

Featuring a storm, a family, a book and the Dark Mark.

### The Ninth Circle: TREACHERY



Draco and Harry somehow ended up in a tangle of limbs on a soft bed, and not in a broken heap down on the Quidditch Pitch. For a moment Draco had to fight the sluggishness of his brain. The pillows were soft beneath his head, his brain was muddled and eyelids felt like lead. He seemed to be sinking into the blankets and Harry was cradling him in his arms. *Probably the only time he'll ever hold me*, Draco thought bitterly, fighting against Harry's warmth to snap his eyes open. He saw Harry's own eyelids flutter open slowly. For a second they just stared at each other, so close that their noses were brushing. Draco held his breath despite himself as he noticed the flecks of gold in Harry's green eyes. And then he violently pushed the other boy away, sending the Gryffindor sprawling over the side of the bed.

Draco sat up, heart pounding, and his stomach clenched when he saw that they were in his room in the Malfoy Manor. Draco's bed was the same way he left it in September; carefully done up, his white blankets crease-less. The cream carpet was his, the pale curtains in the windows also. The chandelier was on, drowning the room in golden light while outside a storm raged, rain viciously lashing at the windows.

"Where are we?" Harry asked, sitting up and rubbing the back of his head. Draco thought he didn't fit in with the classy, pristine room with his muddy, wet clothes and broken glasses. But then Draco supposed he didn't look much better. He scrambled off of his bed in fear of getting the blankets

dirty, but he saw that his body hadn't even left a dent in the blankets, as if he were a ghost.

"This...this is the Malfoy Manor," Draco said, looking around. He hesitantly reached out to the curtains, and as he brushed against them they didn't even sway, "The Ninth Circle of Hell; Treachery. This is it," his eyes fell on Harry, still on the floor, "There's four rounds in here-" Draco suddenly remembered.

"Of course," Harry sighed in annoyance, "It couldn't be just one - that would be too easy."

"Shut up and listen," Draco came around his bed and offered Harry a hand, pulling him to his feet and ignoring the warmth in his stomach, "The first round is Caïna."

"For Cain?" Harry guessed.

"Who?" Draco asked. Harry shrugged,

"It's in the Bible," he circled the room, peering at Draco's belongings; the few sketches he did over the summer, his family photographs. Draco felt weirdly like he was showing Harry something intimate, so he tried to concentrate on *Inferno* instead of his pounding heart.

"In the first round it's all about treachery against family," he said.

"Well, is your room the first round?" Harry asked. Draco hugged himself, feeling a chill. He wished he still had his cloak as his damp clothes pressed against his skin.

"I don't know," he admitted, "But I suppose we should go into other parts of the house and try to find that stupid Lockhart book."

"Oh. Yeah. I forgot about all that," Harry walked to the door and opened it. Past it was just a dark, gloomy corridor, "Shall we?" he asked, amused. Draco threw one last wanting glance at his bed, so soft and warm, and then stepped into the hallway. He and Harry trailed down it, the only light coming from behind the water streaked windows was pale and dim.

"Where should we go?" Harry was whispering in the gloom, and his voice made Draco shiver.

"I guess our best chance is checking room after room," he said as he turned towards one of the spare bedrooms. When he pushed open the door he just saw a dark, well made bed, and the shadows of the rain racing down the window. It was empty. He and Harry didn't linger as they hurried to the next room, which was a bathroom and also empty and dark, as if the lights weren't working. The next spare room that was often taken up by Aunt Bellatrix and when Draco and Harry stepped inside, they saw one of the Weasleys. He was standing by the window, his fiery hair glinting in the light. Draco didn't know him, but Harry did as he stepped forward.

"Percy."

"Harry," Percy Weasley offered them barely a glance, his eyes mournful, "Hello."

"What are you doing here?" Harry asked the mirage. Weasley just looked out of the window again,

"I could ask you the same question."

"He must be here because of treachery against family," Draco said carefully as he circled the room. His aunt's robes were in the closet, the same way that they were in the real world and Draco checked every creak and crevice for that wretched Lockhart book. Meanwhile Harry was too invested in Percy to care,

"Why did you turn against your family, Percy?" there was a hint of desperation in his voice, "Why did you choose the ministry?"

"The law is right, Harry," Percy murmured, "I can't stand by idly while so many things are happening."

"The Dark Lord-"

"Don't, Harry," Percy stood up, "It doesn't matter, not here."

"Well can you help us at least?" Harry asked softly, "do you know where the portkey is?"

Percy shook his head, "No. And you did not commit treachery against your family so I can't keep you here," his eyes landed on Draco, and he had no pupils, "And neither had you. Not yet, at least."

Draco's blood chilled, "What do you mean?"

Percy Weasley turned away from them. In the light it looked like the shadows of the rain were tears on his cheeks, "The book isn't here."

There was nothing more to say, though Draco knew that Harry wanted to ask more question. But there was no point; whatever happened here wouldn't happen in the real world, at least Draco hoped so.

"Let's go, Harry," he said. The Gryffindor lingered for a second but it was clear that Weasley was done talking, face turned to the window again. Draco didn't know how he betrayed his family, or why, but he knew they didn't have much time left. Harry followed him out into the corridor again. They went into a few rooms, but they were all dark and empty.

"What's the second round?" Harry asked.

"Antenora. Traitors to the country," Draco said as they reached the stairs. They descended to the first floor and the storm continued to attack the house. They reached the drawing room, and when they opened the door there was someone else present. The man was tall and pale as a skull. His long, white beard fell to his waist and his eyes were sunken and angry in his leathery face. He was dressed in robes of ebony and emerald, and there was a pendant with a snake on his chest.

"Salazar Slytherin," Draco had seen portraits of the man before, and now he was here, in his home, and he was *real*. His ghost was powerful enough to make it to the Ninth Circle of Hell.

"My son," his voice sounded like the hiss of a snake, "My child. What are you doing with the *filthy* Gryffindor?" he spat. Harry and Draco both flinched,

"W-Why are you here?" Draco's voice was trembling, "Who did you betray?"

"They say I betrayed my fellow founders, *ha!*" Slytherin's eyes were burning with cold blooded fury, "they were the ones who betrayed me, all of them. Aye, I created the Chamber of Secrets and aye, I was against dirty mudbloods coming into our castle, but what did I do to deserve this?! I did not betray wizards, I didn't betray anybody!"

"They were the ones who threw you out," Draco whispered. He knew how Salazar felt - isolated, alone, betrayed by his friends. He didn't deserve to spend an eternity in the Ninth Circle of Hell. He didn't murder anyone, not like the Dark Lord. All he did was have his own views, and he was shunned for them.



"Draco," Harry's hand was on Draco's wrist.

"Don't touch him, filthy Gryffindor!" Salazar roared and pulled out his wand, pointing it at Harry. Draco felt sick as he shoved himself in front of the dark haired boy on instinct, allowing the wand to point at him instead,

"Don't," he said, glad his voice didn't shake. Salazar glared at him, "Don't hurt him."

Salazar lowered his wand, "You're a traitor," he hissed, "a traitor to your own house, your legacy," he turned away, "But I cannot keep you here."

"Is the book-" Harry started,

"The book isn't here!" Salazar snapped.

Draco could feel the disappointment coming off of Salazar, and it tasted like failure in his mouth, too familiar from each encounter with Draco's own father. He felt the foolish need to go back and beg Salazar for forgiveness, to make it up to him, to show that he's worthy. But Harry's hand was warm and human on his, and so Draco allowed him to lead him back out into the corridor.

"You're not a traitor," Harry said, but it didn't make Draco feel better so he didn't say anything. The next half a dozen rooms were empty and when the two boys reached the master bedroom, Draco hesitated with his hand on the doorknob. He remembered his parents in Greed, fighting one another. It was sickening, but Draco knew he couldn't stop now. If he saw them again, he had to be strong.

The ticking of a clock floated up from somewhere downstairs, slow and steady, *tick, tick, tick...* Draco closed his eyes and pushed the door open.

Instead of his parents, inside the room was another stranger. He could've almost fooled Draco because in the feeble light his hair was the same pale blonde as Draco's and his family's. But when he turned Draco didn't recognise him. He wasn't a ghost, just a solid mirage. Which meant that somewhere in the real world he was still alive.

"Ptolomaea," Draco whispered to Harry as the man looked over them curiously, "Traitors to Guests."

"Like the Red Wedding," Harry whispered in awe, and then stepped forward hesitantly, "You remind me of someone," he said slowly, "My friend - her name is Luna."

"Luna!" the man brightened up, "is she here? Is my daughter here?"

"You're her father?" Harry asked, puzzled.

"Xenophilius Lovegood," the man introduced himself with a joy that had no place in Hell, "her own father."

"Why are you in round three?" Draco asked, "Did you betray your guests?"

The man's smile fell, "I'll tell you a secret," he said sadly, "Not yet, my friends, not yet."

"Not yet what?" Draco asked impatiently.

"I have not yet betrayed my guests," his eyes landed sorrowfully on Harry, "Not yet."

Harry fidgeted uncomfortable, "Does that-"

The man grinned again, "Never mind that! I am happy to say that neither of you two betrayed any guests, so you're free to go," before they could ask the questions he hurriedly added, "Don't worry, the portkey isn't here."

Draco was losing hope as they went back into the corridor,

"We don't have time to check every room in the house," he told Harry in distress as they hurried down the stairs to the ground floor, "If we don't find it soon-"

"We will," Harry said soothingly. Draco shook his head,

"And what then? In *Inferno* after that it's the centre of Hell, where you have to battle the Devil-"

"Hey," Harry reached out and squeezed his shoulder, "we'll cross that barrier when we get to it."

Draco exhaled, "We only have the last round left. Judecca - traitors to their Lords."

Harry didn't say anything because they reached the double door leading to the dining hall. With no hesitation and heart pounding with nerves, Draco shoved it open and stepped in. He stumbled back instinctively when he saw who was inside, but the doors had already slammed shut behind him and Harry, caging them in. The dining hall was shadowy and dismal and the Gothic table that dominated the room was surrounded by Death eaters. Their masks concealed their faces so Draco had no idea who was who. Still, they all made him want to throw up.

At the head of the table sat Voldemort himself; his face pale and smooth, his nose gone, his eyes like a snakes. It was exactly like the images he'd seen in his house for months, the invasion of evil in his own home. On the Dark Lord's right was Draco's father, his mask off. Harry sucked in a startled breath and drew his wand protectively. But when Voldemort spoke, it was to Draco, as if he couldn't see the Gryffindor.

"Mr Malfoy," he smiled a grotesque, lip-less smile, "Thank you for finally joining us."

"I-I...", Draco couldn't find his voice.

"Come closer boy," Voldemort said, "It is time for you to join us."

It dawned on Draco what was happening; somehow they had travelled forward in time, to the summer, when Draco would take the Dark Mark. Draco was frozen, unable to move,

"Draco-" Harry started, voice full of pain.

"Draco," Lucius hissed, "*come.*"

Draco couldn't disagree with his own father, he had to listen to him. He glanced wistfully at Harry, who looked lost and afraid. He was here now but Draco knew that he wouldn't be forever. When they returned to Hogwarts - *if* - then Harry would return to his life, to his fantastic friends and Ginny his almost girlfriend, and Draco would have to be alone with his choices. He'd have to take the Dark Mark eventually.

He started walking towards his father and the Dark Lord. Harry called out after him but Draco couldn't stop. This was his fate, his destiny. He had to be part of the Death eaters, he couldn't betray his Lord.

When he came to stand next to his father he felt the cold emanating from Voldemort, "My Lord," he bowed, hands trembling. He suddenly remembered Tom Riddle, appearing from the cauldron,

or the child he had been, standing at the lakeside. When he straightened and looked at Voldemort now, it was impossible to imagine him as that hopelessly human, human boy.

"Are you ready, Mr Malfoy?" Voldemort rose, towering over Draco. The Slytherin swallowed and hesitated. Behind him, his father seized his wrist and squeezed, his nails digging in,

"Do *not* disappoint me, son," he hissed. Draco wanted him to be proud of him for *once*.

"Draco!" Harry yelled. He hadn't moved from the door and Draco realised it was because ropes had erupted from the walls and wrapped around his wrists, preventing him from running after him. It didn't matter anymore though, "Don't do it!"

"I'm sorry," Draco said, turning to Voldemort, his heart clenching, "I have to. We'll never make it out anyway."

"No-," Harry fought his binds, "Let him go you piece of shit! I'll kill you if you hurt him!"

The Death eater closest to the Gryffindor ripped off his mask in fury. Draco's stomach flipped when he saw that it was Harry's muggle uncle.

"Do I look like a man who can be intimidated!" he roared. Harry gaped at him.

"*Draco!*" Lucius hissed and the boy turned back to Voldemort, who stepped away from the table and closer to the fireplace. He beckoned for Draco to follow.

"Come on Draco," Blaise was suddenly sitting opposite Lucius, his Death eater mask in his hands, smiling blankly at Draco, "Let him have you."

Reluctantly, feeling sick, Draco followed Voldemort. Harry was fighting more fiercely than ever but Draco knew he'd be unable to get free. It was over.

"Stop!" the Gryffindor yelled, voice echoing through the room. Draco paused, glancing at him, "Don't be an idiot! We have to get out."

Draco thought of Hogwarts, of all the people he could betray. It was better if he took the mark here, in Hell, where he couldn't really harm anyone. He almost missed it when one of the Death eaters near Harry took off his mask. The three faces of the Peverells kept shifting so that each brother possessed one body. They had all been invited to Treachery.

"Hungry for Power," they hissed at Draco, though he knew it wasn't true. He was hungry for love and acceptance, but he wouldn't get those. Power was all that was left, and this time Professor Lupin wasn't there to stop them. Harry started screaming at the three brothers and Draco tried to drown him out as he stood opposite Voldemort.

"I'm sorry," Draco said again, "But it's better this way. Like this I'll never hurt anyone in the real world. I just...," his voice faltered and he closed his eyes for a second, "I'm sorry that this means you won't make it out."

"Stupid boy," Lucius hissed, his eyes flashing with the gold from Greed, "Don't speak to that pathetic Gryffindor, *take the Mark.*"

Slowly, heart throbbing, Draco extended his arm towards Voldemort but when the wizard reached to him, he flinched.

"Stop being such a coward you piece of shit," Fenrir Greyback growled, wrenching his mask from

his face. He bared his teeth at Draco. *He will be my comrade*, the boy noted in disgust, but that disgust wasn't enough to make him drop his arm. He almost recoiled when the Dark Lord's freezing fingers wrapped around his wrist.

"Dray *please*," Harry stopped struggling, his face flushed from anger. He sounded helpless, "Don't."

"Shut up," Draco said through his teeth. His body was screaming at him to rip his arm out of Voldemort's grip, but he didn't.

"Don't try to fight it," Voldemort hissed lowly, pulling out his wand, "Just let me end it."

With a swift movement he made to press the wand against the soft flesh of Draco's wrist but the blonde wrestled it from his grip and stumbled back. He didn't know what made him do it, maybe because Harry was so desperately fighting for him, or maybe because he was tired of feeling like a pawn to everybody sitting at that table, including Voldemort himself. Their journey through Hell meant more than just this; than giving up. That old man Frank, and Moaning Myrtle, Lupin and his mother, Regulus Black and the ghost of Cedric Diggory, they had helped Harry and Draco, no matter what their houses or alliances or blood status' were. It was time for Harry and Draco to help themselves.

"Come back here," Voldemort seethed, his body suddenly flickering into the image of Tom Riddle and back again.

"Do not disappoint me, boy," Lucius was on his feet and reached for him. But Draco was done. Harry was right; he didn't have to do anything. He didn't know what he'd do in the real world, but in Hell he had a choice - stay or go. And he was going.

"I don't have a Lord," he said and leaped onto the table, out of the reach of his fathers arms. He sprinted down the length of it, avoiding the hands of the Deathaters as Greyback howled. Draco made it to Harry somehow, blindly, and his hands were scrambling desperately at the ropes. His heart was in his throat, the clock was ticking and he couldn't breathe. Where Draco's hands brushed the ropes they fell to the ground, like dead snakes, freeing Harry.

In panic, the two boys spilled back out into the gloomy corridor, their worlds spinning. They didn't have time to stop and speak, for *thankyou's* and *sorry's*. They were almost out of Hell.

"Where's the portkey?!" Draco asked frantically, hands trembling. He could almost see the cogs in Harry's mind turning as he tried to think of where-

"Your bedroom," he said suddenly, breathlessly, "Of course...the only place with light..."

The boys stumbled up the stairs, sprinted down the corridor and hurried up the next steps. Everything was happening too fast, but Draco didn't care. They were almost safe, almost out. They poured into Draco's bedroom, so different from the other parts of the house, and warm light greeted them. The windows were trembling in their frames as the storm continued outside.

The blankets were dented where Harry and Draco had lied before. A crack appeared on the glass of the window and Harry threw himself at the bed, ripping back the blankets. Lying casually on the sheets was *A Year with the Yeti* by Gilderoy Lockhart. Draco had never felt such relief, but Harry was hesitating. Now Draco knew why. He reached for the Gryffindor's hand, stomach flipping, as more cracks appeared on the window. When it broke, they'd be unable to leave, Draco knew that.

"It won't be like Cedric," he said softly. Harry's eyes met his and he held his gaze for a moment.

Then he nodded, his hand tightening on Draco's hand, and together they reached for the portkey.

# Epilogue

## Chapter Notes

Featuring Smut, Sex, Porn, NSFW.

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

## Epilogue



The book tumbled out of Harry's hand into the pavement, spilling old pages everywhere. Some witches and wizards spared them a second glance - Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy, muddled and ripped up, holding hands in the middle of the day, but in the end it was Knockturn Alley and with all the shady business going around nobody bothered to ask any questions. Harry was gripping Draco's hand, looking around. The houses erupted from the ground, the shop displays dark and gloomy. Noise spilled from the buildings as shoppers scuttled around. It didn't look like the centre of Hell.

"Where are we?" Draco asked softly, afraid. Harry just stopped and stared. The daze he had felt in Hell, the confusion and pain and fear was gone. In Hell every place was a mirror image of something that was in the real world, twisted and muddled like the never-ending Hogwarts corridors or 4 Private Drive with its seven doors. Knockturn Alley didn't have the same feel. Actually it had no feel at all. It felt *human*.

"I think we're back," Harry whispered, still not letting go of Draco. He couldn't bare to. He watched as people passed by, and they all seemed solid. Their eyes weren't all white, or crimson like mirage-Blaise's or all black. They were guarded and curious at once, the eyes of normal Wizards, "We're back," Harry repeated again and he knew he was right deep down, "there is no centre of Hell."

Draco slumped against him in relief and that *did* earn them a few looks. Harry didn't want anyone to report to Draco's father about this weird image so he nudged Draco away gently,

"I know a place on Diagon Alley," he said shakily, "We can get a room...um...rooms there."

Draco didn't protest or argue. The two veered in and out of side-streets, past grotesque shop displays that seemed somehow cheerful after Hell. The day was gloomy, the sky overcast but the sun that did peek through was real, and *wordly*, not like the parodies of it from Hell. Harry's

crushing tiredness caught up with him when they walked out onto Diagon Alley, as brilliant and colourful as ever. By the time they reached the Leaky Cauldron he could barely keep his eyes open, and Draco was shuffling like a zombie again, yawning. It felt surreal to be back in the real world and Harry couldn't help but wonder where Hell was. Maybe it was below the cobbled streets they walked? Or maybe it wasn't a place at all, just a state of mind.

When the two ragged, muddy, wet boys stepped into the pub the few customers sitting at the bar looked at them curiously. Harry flinched from their gazes as they slid over his body; torn clothes, broken glasses, scraped face. They were probably already making up a dozen scenarios in their heads, none of them being a trip to Hell. Tom the bartender spotted them, and his eyes widened as he shuffled over, as deformed as ever.

"Harry Potter," he rasped, bowing to Harry, eyes full of disbelief, "and Draco Malfoy too! Where have you been?"

"It's a long story," Draco said tiredly. Tom continued to stare at them,

"Everyone had been looking for you - the ministry is involved," only now Harry noticed the 'missing' posters plastered around the pub. His black and white picture moved beneath the bold *Have you seen me?* title. Draco was glaring from his own photograph, "You have been gone six months!"

"What?" Harry's mouth felt dry. Tom said something but he barely heard him. It seemed like just yesterday that he had left Snape's potions class. He missed half a year, *half a year*. Ron's birthday had passed, and Halloween too, and...Harry's world began to spin. He was dizzy - exhausted after not sleeping for *six months*, "We need a room," he said bluntly, interrupting Tom mid-word. The pub-owner nodded vigorously,

"Of course, of course," he said feverishly, as if he still couldn't believe that the boys were back. People were starting to whisper, making Harry uncomfortable. As he followed Tom up the backstairs he said,

"Don't tell anybody about us, alright? We want to rest first before all the questions."

Tom looked unconvinced but then he nodded again, "Of course Mister Potter," they had reached the hallway upstairs and it seemed like a different world. Harry remembered living here in Third Year when he ran away from the Dursley's, but that seemed like a different life. Tom looked at him guiltily, "I'm afraid there is only one room available-"

Draco snatched the key from his hand, "Thank you," he said icily, and then shoved the room door open. Harry offered Tom an apologetic smile and then slipped in after the blonde. The room was small, but cosy. Outside Diagon Alley bustled with beautiful life, pale light streaming in through the window. Draco walked up to it and shoved the curtains closed. There was one bed, and it was big enough for both the boys.

Harry swayed on his feet. He barely managed to pull his shoes off before he tumbled against the blankets, dirty and wet, and not caring anymore. He fell into his first sleep in six months.

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When Harry woke up he half expected to be back on the windy hills of Lust, or knee-deep in the sludge in Gluttony. For a split second he thought that maybe their return was just a prank that Hell played on them, to make them feel like they were safe. But when Harry opened his eyes he was still curled up on the bed in the Leaking Cauldron, facing the window. Soft, late afternoon rain

was *pit pattering* against the windowsill, drowning out the light of the sun. That made no matter though, because outside the window golden lights spilled from the streetlamps and shops dotting Diagon Alley.

Harry wasn't paying attention to that though - he was paying attention to Draco. The blonde was sitting cross legged next to Harry, clearly just out of the shower. He had washed his hair but didn't dry it so it fell across his forehead in pale waves that Harry had grown so accustomed to. The boy had changed out of his muddied, ripped school shirt and now wore nothing but a towel around his waist, allowing Harry's sleepy eyes to slide over his ivory, flawless skin. He was transfixed, unable to look away and at the same time afraid to be caught staring. The cut on Draco's temple that he got in Wrath was just a thin, small red line. He was staring into space, one of his hands brushing through Harry's hair absentmindedly, without looking at him.

For a while Harry allowed them to stay like that as he woke up a bit more. And then he closed his eyes and shifted, letting Draco retreat if he wanted to. The Gryffindor tried not to feel disappointed when he felt Draco snatch his hand away.

"You slept for eight hours," the blonde informed him neutrally when Harry opened his eyes again.

"What about you?" he asked groggily, blinking. His broken glasses were still perched on his nose somehow,

"Four," Draco shrugged, "I was thinking...about things."

"Right," Harry sat up and stretched, his muscles feeling stiff. He yawned and waited for Draco to say more but the boy had gone back to staring into space, "I'm gonna shower," Harry informed him, hesitating, "You should...um...sleep some more. Before all the people come and stuff."

Draco didn't say anything so with a heavy heart Harry dragged himself to the bathroom. It was small and smelled a bit off, but it had a shower, something almost unheard of in the Wizarding society. When Harry caught sight of himself in the still-steamy mirror from Draco's shower he almost screamed. He didn't recognise the reflection. His shirt was so stained and grimy that it didn't look white anymore. The left lens of his glasses had a massive crack across it and there was a violet bruise blooming on his chin where Draco had hit him in Violence. It was horrifying to think that the wounds were real, that if they had died in Hell they probably wouldn't have made it back.

Harry took the longest shower of his life, allowing the hot water to run over his tense muscles and wash away all the dirt of Hell. Every time he blinked he expected to be transported back. He soaped up and then shampooed his hair, and then soaped up again for good measure. By the time he stepped out, a good twenty minutes later, he was exhausted again, his body aching. He guessed six months of not sleeping would take more than eight hours to shake off. Harry picked up his ruined shirt in dismay - he couldn't wear it. It was too much of a reminder of Hell. So instead he just pulled on his boxers, which were still thankfully intact, *reparo'd* his glasses and stepped out of the bathroom, towelling his hair dry.

In the warm but dim light from outside Harry saw that Draco was lying down again, facing the window. His eyes were open.

"Are you okay?" Harry couldn't help but ask. There was a pause in which Draco contemplated the question, and then he shifted,

"No," he said quietly. Harry nodded and dumped the towel on the floor,

"Yeah," he whispered, "Me neither."



There was so much more stuff to say, but Harry didn't want to say it yet. The silence that settled over him and Draco as the Gryffindor climbed into bed was shockingly comfortable. The blankets were warm from Draco's body when Harry slipped beneath them, and he had to physically fight himself to not reach out and wrap his arms around Draco. A thought popped into his head,

"Are you naked?" he asked in a conspicuous whisper.

"Well I'm not going to sleep in a towel, am I?" Draco huffed. Harry couldn't help but start giggling against his pillows like some teenage girl. He heard Draco groan in annoyance and then the blonde rolled over, glaring though it had no heat behind it.

"You're like a child," he stated, unamused. The smile fell off Harry's face.

He didn't feel like giggling anymore. Draco was inches away from him, and Harry could feel his feverish body heat against his bare chest. He couldn't help but think that Draco was so close, and that he was naked beneath the blankets. Sudden heat pooled in Harry's stomach and he had to fight a groan as the heat travelled South. Mild panic seized him and he shuffled away from Draco ever so slightly, afraid to be found out for his arousal. But Draco didn't seem to realise, the blanket wrapped around him so only the top of his slim, pale shoulder could be seen.

"If you want to talk," the boy said quietly, face impassive, "Now's the time."

"Aren't you tired?" Harry questioned, fidgeting, "Why do you suddenly wanna talk now?"

Draco averted his eyes and in the half-dark Harry could see his cheeks darkening, "It's easier to talk in the dark. It still seems real here."

"It was real," Harry said, voice unwavering. Draco didn't say anything, his hands subconsciously picking at a feather sticking out of the pillow. Harry had so many things to say, so many questions. But he felt safe now, there was no time running out. He could take as long as you wanted, "So...you read *Inferno*."

"Yes," Draco scrunched up his nose.

"I didn't know you liked muggle books," Harry wiggled his eyebrows.

"It's a muggle *poem* actually," Draco scoffed, "I found it in the library. It seemed interesting."

"Well I'm glad you read it," Harry said sincerely, "Without it Merlin knows how we'd end up."

Draco was clearly fighting himself to say something, biting his lip, eyes shifting. Harry didn't know when he had learned how to read him so well,

"What is it?"

"It's...I-I..." Draco shifted nervously. He looked up at Harry through his eyelashes, almost shy, "I didn't know that they abused you. I'm sorry."

Whatever arousal Harry had been feeling drained out of him like a plug pulled from a bath. He cleared his throat awkwardly and looked away,

"It's not a big deal."

"Tell me about it," Draco asked. *Asked* not demanded, like he would've once upon a time before Hell. Harry didn't know if he should open up to Draco like that - a small, small part of him was still

afraid that the blonde would sneer and laugh in his face. But Draco just hooked his ankle around Harry's, as if to encourage him. His touch send a tingle up Harry's spine,

"I used to sleep in a cupboard under the stairs," he started. He didn't mean to but he told Draco virtually *everything*, it just came pouring out. When he told this to Ron the boy had gotten angry and wanted to report the Dursley's, Hermione had cried. Draco just laid there and listened as Harry told him about the years he spent in that horrible house - about his aunt and uncle, and his cousin the bully. He didn't want to sound like he was whining, but Draco didn't seem to think he was, smiling softly when Harry told him about the snake he released by accident during Dudley's birthday or when Hagrid turned his cousin into a pig. After he was done retelling his years of abuse, he felt lighter, as if some burden was lifted from his shoulders. Outside, night had fallen.

"I'm sorry," Draco whispered when Harry was done. His eyes were like deep pools of silver.

"You don't have to be, you didn't do anything."

"I did," Draco looked ashamed, "I picked on you all those years...I didn't know...about all of it..."

"It doesn't matter anymore," Harry smiled, "It really didn't seem so bad at the time."

The Slytherin closed his eyes and the two of them just relaxed into the blankets lazily, their feet still tangled together. It was the only part of them touching but Harry wanted to pull the other boy flush against him, to feel every inch of his creamy skin against his.

"Why are you scared of water?" the Gryffindor asked, before he could think about the question twice. He didn't want Draco to fall asleep. The blonde tensed and Harry realised he said something wrong, "You don't have to tell me if you don't-"

"In second year," Draco started softly, not opening his eyes, "We lost a Quidditch match. It was my fault. I don't know if you remember it, I was taunting you and too busy trying to distract you to pay attention to the snitch-"

"I remember," Harry said quietly.

"I never liked Quidditch," Draco admitted, opening his eyes, "But father wanted me to play, so I did. But I don't really like sports that much so pissing you off was more fun," he smiled that a little bit, like it was a fond memory, but then his expression darkened, "Let's just say...my team wasn't very nice."

An invisible fist wrapped around Harry's stomach, "Did they hurt you?"

"I deserved it," Draco sighed. Harry could put two and two together - dunking kids in toilets and sinks was a common practice in public schools.

"No you didn't," Harry said, surprised at his own fierceness, "You might've been a dick, but you didn't deserve that."

"Oh please," Draco rolled his eyes, unhooking his ankle from around Harry's, "I was a bigoted, prejudiced racist and we both know it. Compared to your life mine was heaven," he snorted humorlessly.

"Except now it isn't," Harry said tentatively. Draco tensed again but Harry wasn't about to give up. They were *finally* talking, "Draco you don't have to-"

"Not yet," Draco blurted, eyes wide, "Please," his voice was breathless and shaky, "I'm not ready to

talk about it yet."

"Okay, what do you want to talk about then?" Harry didn't want to push him. Draco shrugged and shyly went back to plucking at the feathers in the pillowcase,

"Are you and the Weaslette going out?"

Once that prospect might've excited Harry, but now it just dampened his mood. He was in bed with Draco Malfoy who was honestly looking freakishly like an angel right now. The last thing Harry wanted was to talk about Ginny the ginger menace,

"No," he said.

"Then what was the thing in Lust all about?" When Draco looked up at Harry he looked slightly more comfortable, "You want to have some kinky threesome with the Weaselette, Brown and Chang?"

Harry felt weirdly defensive, "Well do you want to have sex with Blaise?"

"No," Draco made a face. Then his expression shifted, "Well...I did. But not anymore."

"Oh, right, you're a virgin," Harry remembered. Draco flushed,

"You don't have to keep reminding me," he grumbled. Harry looked over him, his pale eyelashes casting shadows on his cheeks, his plump, pink lips, the messy hair falling into his eyes. He couldn't imagine how Draco hadn't had sex with anybody. If Harry shared a dorm-room with him he doubted he'd be able to keep his hands off of the Slytherin, "We're going to have to get clothes before we go back," Draco was clearly trying to change the topic. He impatiently blew a piece of his unruly hair out of his face, "I'm gonna need to slick that back-"

"No," Harry said, so suddenly that Draco blinked at him, startled. Harry felt gentle heat in his stomach again, "It looks better when it's...all wavy and stuff."

"Oh," Draco was blushing again, self-consciously touching his hair, "Thanks. I guess."

Harry never thought that Draco would be one to be insecure, but looking at him now, all bundled up, he realised how hard it must've been for him. Lucius Malfoy must've been a demanding father, and for Draco to be gay...Harry understood the accusations he had thrown at him in Hell, about how it was easier for him. Without really thinking about it, Harry reached out and brushed his fingers against the cut on Draco's temple. The blonde watched him with wide, silver eyes.

"What are you doing?" he sounded beautifully breathless. The air in the room grew warmer and Harry's heart started galloping in his chest. Despite his better judgement he shifted closer to Draco, brushing back his hair,

"Honestly," he said softly, leaning forward and pressing a small kiss to the cut, "I don't know."

He could feel Draco holding his breath, staring at him in disbelief. And then something shifted in the boy's face, a sudden vulnerability. He leaned forward and his soft, trembling lips brushed against the bruise that he himself created on Harry's jawline.

"Sorry," he murmured, but didn't pull away. Their bodies were an inch from each other, so close to brushing together that it was sweet torture. Draco's head was ducked, so his face was in the space between Harry's neck and shoulders. He was shaking, "I'm sorry," he said again, quietly. His hands were protectively cradled to his own chest and Harry was unable to resist his urge to take them.

They were small and delicate in his, so breakable. When Harry turned them over, revealing the two long, diagonal cuts on the inside of Draco's wrists the blonde's breath hitched. He tried weakly to wrestle his hands from Harry's, but the Gryffindor only bent his head and pressed gentle, barely-there kisses to the scars.

"S-Stop it," Draco whispered shakily.

"No," Harry murmured, in a kind of trance. He moved to kiss the faint bruise on Draco's shoulder and then down his collarbone, carefully sliding the blankets just an inch lower.

"*Harry*," Draco's voice was faint, trembling, "stop."

Harry's heart crumbled when he pulled away and saw that Draco's eyes were full of tears. One spilled down his cheek and the boy hurriedly brushed it away, as if scared for Harry to see. The Gryffindor suddenly remembered the mirage of Zabini in Lust, trying to forcefully push his hands down Draco's trousers. He felt sick,

"I'm sorry," he whispered numbly, "Merlin, I didn't-"

"N-No....," Draco said hastily, grabbing Harry's hand as if scared that he'd disappear, "It's n-not...you didn't d-do anything w-wrong..."

"What is it, then?" Harry asked carefully, frowning, "Why are you upset."

Draco shrugged feebly, eyes trained on the pillows, "I don't know."

Harry leaned forward and kissed him. He didn't know what else to do, how else to stop the tears. Besides, he didn't think his heart could take it much longer if he didn't have Draco in his arms. The kiss was just a brush of lips, tentative and shy, but when Harry tried to pull away, heart pounding Draco's hands tangled themselves in his hair, forcefully crushing their mouths together. Harry didn't mind - in fact his head was spinning with the sudden rush of arousal. Draco willingly parted his lips, surprisingly submissive, allowing Harry's tongue to delve into his hot mouth and explore. Their kiss became hopelessly heated and hard, almost desperate in a sense. Draco tasted the same way he did in Lust; like expensive tea, but somehow it was better now, because nothing was messing with Harry's mind, because he knew exactly what he wanted.

When Draco pulled Harry on top of him suddenly, the Gryffindor broke the kiss. His aching hard on brushing against Draco's thigh and Harry had to bite his lip to stop from moaning. Draco inhaled sharply,

"You're hard," he seemed dazed and confused at once, his cheeks flushed, "W-Why are you hard?"

Harry huffed out a laugh, "What do you mean why?" he asked, amused. When he saw Draco's lost expression the smile disappeared. He leaned in close, so that his and Draco's lips brushed together when he spoke, "Because you're in bed with me. Because you're naked," he pressed his hand against Draco's stomach as if to prove his point, "Honestly you could be fully dressed and I'd still probably be hard."

With a swift movement Draco reached to the side and grabbed the blanket. He clumsily pulled it over Harry's shoulder's, covering everything except their heads. Harry frowned at how unsure Draco looked,

"We don't have to do anything," he said gently, brushing Draco's hair from his forehead. In reply the Slytherin just cupped his face and pulled him down for another kiss. This one was slower and gentler and somehow more passionate than the previous one. Harry's and Draco's erratic breaths

mixed together when they pulled away. The Gryffindor was nestled between Draco's legs, careful not to brush against him with his lower half.

The Slytherin pressed his trembling lips to Harry's jaw again, and then brushed small kisses into his neck. It was heartbreakingly sweet...until Draco's hand trailed down Harry's chest suddenly, going down and down...Harry felt dizzy, a sudden shock of arousal going through him. But Draco's hand stopped when it reached his last rib, clenching into a fist. The boy wouldn't look at Harry.

"Do you want this, Dray?" Harry asked, nudging his nose against Draco's when the boy didn't reply, "We can keep going. If you want."

Draco's eyes finally flickered to his, and his pupils were blown. He nodded.

"You're nervous," Harry observed.

"O-Obviously, idiot," Draco's voice was hoarse, "I don't know what to do."

Honestly, Harry didn't know what to do either. He'd had sex before, with both boys and girls. But Draco looked like he could break if Harry pushed him too far, too hard, and Harry was deathly afraid of doing something wrong. He remembered how reluctant the Slytherin had been in Lust with Zabini, and now he was willingly allowing Harry to touch him. He didn't look like himself - hair dishevelled, eyes wide and unsure but aroused at the same time, lips swollen from kissing. He looked like a painting, too beautiful to be real.

Harry watched his face when he reached between them to wrap his hand around the Slytherin's cock. It was hard now too, Harry was pleased to find, but he was too focused on Draco's face to think about anything else. The boy's eyes widened, his lips parted at the initial contact. His flesh pulsed in Harry's hand, feverishly warm. The blankets felt too heavy and hot around his shoulders when Draco squeezed his eyes shut, pressing the side of his face into the pillows and letting out a tiny sound. Harry stroked him slowly, relishing in his every twitch and gasp. He slid their bodies together to kiss the blonde again, and to speed up his movements. When Draco whimpered into his mouth Harry's mind spun.

He pressed wet, warm kisses to Draco's neck, offering a second distraction. He licked down Draco's torso and the Slytherin didn't know what to do with himself, hands tangling in the sheets to steady himself. He was panting, cheeks flushed beautifully, eyes heavily lidded. His thighs were trembling when Harry disappeared underneath the blankets. He dipped his tongue into Draco's navel, nipped at his sharp hipbone. He couldn't see anything, just the blanketed darkness around him when he took Draco into his mouth. The most attractive noise poured from Draco's mouth, his legs hiking up automatically, hands delving beneath the blankets to settle in Harry's hair again.

Draco didn't use his hands to control Harry's pace, they just rested there as if he needed to touch him. The Gryffindor bobbed his head up and down, mind spinning. In the small space beneath the blankets the smell of sex was heavy and sweet in the air, intoxicating. Draco's cock was warm and nicely heavy against Harry's tongue. He swirled said tongue around Draco's head and the blonde cried out, bucking into Harry's mouth. Before Harry knew it, Draco was tugging at his hair, pulling him up with uncontrollable urgency.

"F-Fucking twat...," the blonde cursed when Harry re-emerged, panting. The blonde's hair was stuck to his sweaty forehead, his body boneless against the blankets.

"What?" Harry frowned. Draco glared at him, but then let his head fall back.

"I don't want to come in the first five minutes," he grumbled. Harry grinned, a bit proud of himself.

Draco cleared his throat nervously,

"What now?" he asked. Harry's smile softened,

"Don't worry about anything," he kissed the blonde's forehead, "I'll take care of everything."

"Like hell you will," Draco made to rise, but Harry pushed him back against the pillows.

"I'm serious," he said sternly, "I'm gonna take care of you right now, and your better let me."

Draco huffed out an impatient sigh, "Fine get on with it then."

Harry's eyes flashed with want. Up until then he had been so absorbed by Draco that he had almost forgotten about his own throbbing cock, restricted in his boxers. Looking at Draco, laid out on the bed like a cat, his body on show beneath the blankets, it made an animalistic urgency build up inside Harry. Draco crossed his arms over his chest and smirked,

"Enjoying the view?" he teased, gaining confidence, "Are you just gonna stare all day or get on with it?"

Harry had meant to prepare him slowly, thoroughly, to take his time. But the spark of challenge in Draco's eyes set him off like nothing else ever has. Fighting his urge to growl, Harry reached out to grab his wand, which he had left on the bedside table eight hours ago. He remembered a spell that Ron had told him about; he had never thought much of it, more a prank than anything, but now he desperately wanted to try it out.

"What are you doing?" Draco asked in alarm when Harry hovered over him again. Instead of replying he just pointed the wand at Draco and murmured the spell ever so softly under his breath. Draco's eyes flew open, as did his mouth. His body arched against Harry violently, and he let out a loud, high pitched moan that sent a desperate shiver down Harry's spine. He clung to the Gryffindor, nails digging into his back, panting against his shoulder,

"Merlin, f-fuck," the blonde cursed helplessly, "Oh G-God what did you d-do?"

Harry reached behind him, hand dipping between his cheeks. He felt the wetness there and smiled,

"It worked then."

Draco melted back against the pillows, panting, eyes shut, "F-Fuck...," he mumbled again, weakly, as if he had no strength left. Harry strained to keep himself at bay, to not just enter Draco swiftly, take him hard and fast. He had to remind himself that it was the boy's first time, that he had to be slow and gentle. Harry slid off his boxers and hitched Draco's legs around his shoulders,

"Draco, you still with me?"

"Screw you, Potter," the boy grumbled. Harry smiled and then took his own erection in hand. He bit his lip and fought the urge to stroke himself to completion, to come all over Draco's pale stomach and thighs. But he told himself that what would happen soon would be better.

He found Draco's hole easily, slick and wet, and started to slowly push in. He didn't ask Draco if he was sure because he knew if the blonde wanted to stop he would've. Draco's gasping breath came out louder and shakier as the head of Harry's cock disappeared inside him. Harry had to steady himself because the sudden heat enveloping him was almost too wonderful. Another inch, and then two more and another and Draco let out a low, irresistible moan. Harry closed his eyes because he knew that if he looked at Draco he'd come on the spot. He tried to go slow, but every second was

full of excruciatingly electrifying pleasure, every inch brought him closer to climax.

Harry thought he might've blacked out for a moment because the next thing he knew was that he was fully sheathed inside Draco, pressing his cheek against his knee and trying to catch his breath. Draco beneath him looked absolutely wrecked, but his eyes were staring at Harry.

"You okay?" the Gryffindor asked hoarsely.

"It doesn't hurt," Draco whispered, "Well. Not much anyway."

"Good. Good...," Harry tried to collect his thoughts but it was hard. Draco's hole was tight and hot and throbbing around his cock, seemingly sucking him in deeper, "You feel incredible."

Draco laughed weakly and pushed his damp hair from his forehead, "I feel like a mess."

"You don't look like one," Harry smiled at him lazily, "Okay, maybe just a bit. But you're honestly the most gorgeous mess I have ever seen."

Draco rolled his eyes fondly, and then frowned. He reached out and his hand barely brushed against Harry's chest,

"You're too far away," he mumbled, "Can't you come closer?"

The fact that Draco wanted him closer was enough to send Harry's heart spinning wildly in his chest. With some difficulty and a lot of self control he slid out of Draco,

"Turn around," he said hoarsely. Draco blushed and then shyly rolled over, so he was on his stomach. Harry gave himself to admire his perky ass, before he wrapped an arm around his waist and roughly pulled him up on all fours, eliciting a gasp from the blonde. Harry pressed the length of their bodies together, tugging Draco backwards so he was on his knees, and slid back into him.

Draco threw his head back against Harry's shoulder and cried out. Harry kissed up the side of his neck feverishly as he started to thrust. Every time he slid back into Draco's delicious heat the boy would let out a tiny whimper or moan. Harry's hands roamed Draco's chest and stomach, stroking him a few times but not too many. He didn't want Draco to come too fast, though right now Harry was afraid he'd be the one to climax first. His world narrowed down to just Draco pressed against him, and the bed below them.

Harry suddenly changed the angle and he hit something inside Draco that made him let out a broken sob. The boy slid from Harry's arms, the strength going out of his upper body. Harry gripped him by the hips to keep his lower half up as the blonde pressed his face against the pillows. Harry continued to thrust, more feverishly now. He aimed for that spot inside Draco and every time he did the blonde would cry out hoarsely, hands twisting in the blankets, toes curling and back arching. Harry felt heat coiling inside him, tighter and tighter with each of Draco's desperate cries. The boy was sweaty, flushed, panting, and most importantly he was *Harry's*.

The Gryffindor's hand snaked beneath Draco to stroke his leaking cock.

"*Fuck*," Draco chocked out. His hand came up to grip Harry's wrist, probably to stop him from bringing Draco over the edge. But the boy must've changed his mind because instead he slotted his fingers through Harry's and together they stroked him. Harry watched, mesmerised, as the blonde's entire body shook, pushed closer and closer to climax. Harry felt his own orgasm approaching fast, and he suddenly felt stupidly possessive over Draco. He flipped the blonde over again with his cock still inside him,

"H-Harry, *God...*," the boy's legs wrapped around Harry's waist as the Gryffindor continued to stroke him. The blonde was blissed out, barely aware of his surroundings, gripping at Harry desperately.

"Say my name," Harry growled, dominating Draco completely, "*Say it.*"

"Harry," Draco opened his eyes and they were so dark the silver was almost gone. He pulled Harry in for an open mouthed, sloppy kiss. Harry's thrusts got more uncoordinated but Draco didn't seem to mind, "Harry, H-Harry, *fuck*, Gods...oh Merlin, f-fuck I'm so close, Harry o-oh...*Harry.*"

"I love you," Harry murmured, pressing their lips together. He had no idea who came first, but there was only a few seconds between their climaxes. Harry's world went white as he leaned his forehead against Draco's shoulder, gasping for breath as he spilled come inside of the Slytherin. Draco clung onto him, trembling and letting out delicious whimper after whimper.

Diagon Alley was silent when their breaths eventually evened out. Harry finally pulled out of Draco and sat back. The sweat on his skin was cooling and Harry couldn't help but think that he needed another shower. Preferably with Draco. Though the boy didn't look like he was in the shape to move - the blankets were tangled around his waist, his face relaxed and sleepy. Harry pulled away from him and stood up but Draco sat up abruptly, his beautiful eyes full of panic.

"Where are you going?" he asked helplessly. Harry's heart melted. He came back over and sat down next to Draco, pulling him into his arms and peppering his face with kisses,

"Just gonna take a shower," he murmured, "don't worry."

But Draco just looped his arms around his neck and pulled him in for a soft, slow kiss, "Say it again," he asked quietly, "Say you love me."

Harry brushed the boy's hair from his forehead, "I love you."

"Again," Draco's bottom lip was trembling. He smelled like sweat and sex and Harry.

"I love you," Harry pushed him back down onto the blankets, their bodies slotting together perfectly, "I love you," he repeated again, "I love you. I love you. I love you."

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"Mr Malfoy I don't know if it's best-" Dumbledore was fretting. Draco rolled his eyes,

"I told you what the decision is, and I'm not changing my mind."

"But *France?!'*" Dumbledore shook his head, "The Deathaters might search for you there-"

"I'll be with him," Harry said firmly. They were standing just outside Hogwarts' borders, ready to apparate to the Malfoy country house in rural France. After Draco chose to not take the Dark Mark and basically became Deathater public enemy number #2, he had to spend his Christmas and Easter at Hogwarts. But now summer was around the corner and Harry was tired of being cooped up in the castle without a moment of privacy. He and Draco were eighteen, they could do what they liked, and they wanted to go France. Narcissa had rewritten that specific house under Draco's name and they had made it into a safe house, putting the Fidelius Charm over it. Narcissa was their Secret Keeper and she'd never betray her son so they were safe.

"Gentlemen-" Dumbledore tried again. But since sending them to Hell the headmaster knew he owed them one, and had no authority over them. Every time Harry looked at him he still couldn't



help but feel disgusted. He couldn't believe he risked two of his students' life instead of going by himself.

"If anything happens we can always floo to the Burrow," Harry sighed in annoyance, eager to leave, "Mione and Ron will be waiting there anyway. We'll meet up with them in two weeks."

Dumbledore sighed.

"We're going now," Draco said coldly, taking Harry's hand. They didn't wait any longer. They had already wasted six months of their lives and they weren't going to waste anymore. Harry felt the familiar tug at his stomach as he apparated from the castle grounds. The next thing he knew was that he and Draco were standing in ankle deep sand. Teleportation still freaked Harry out a bit because of the portals in Hell, but as he looked out over the French beach with its golden sands and lazy blue sea he knew that they weren't in Hell.

Up on a cliff nearby rose a beautiful mansion overlooking the water. Harry gaped,

"*That's* your house?!"

Draco rolled his eyes, "It's just a house."

Harry smiled at him. For the first time since their night at Tom's they were *truly* alone, with no snoring roommates in the next bed over, or prying journalists scattering through the halls. Nobody was asking them questions or for photographs. It was just them two and the sea, and some peace and quiet at last. Harry pulled Draco into his arms, unable to resist. No matter that half a year passed since they first confessed their love to each other, every time the Gryffindor looked at his boyfriend his heart still twisted the same way it did the first time. Draco had forsaken his family and his legacy for this, for him.

Harry took his wrists in his hands. They had scars but as Harry kissed them, Draco rolling his eyes fondly, and it okay because his wrists were unmarred by the Dark Mark.

## Chapter End Notes

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