

Seeker to Seeker

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Chapter One

"Seeker to Seeker"

Harry Potter was supposed to be practicing Quidditch moves. Instead, he was just making lazy circles around the field on his broomstick, idly wondering when exactly he was going to start training in earnest. All of a sudden, something whizzed by his head. Harry's Seeker reflexes kicked in and he swerved wildly, thinking illogically that it was a Bludger out to get him.

A moment later, something else came barreling by - only this was a person. A person on a broom, who shot by Harry with a rude laugh and chased the first flying object, finally snatching it out of the air.

The intruder stopped, turned, and waved a sarcastic hello. It was Draco Malfoy.

"Get out of here, Malfoy," Harry called. "You can use the field later. I'm practicing now."

Malfoy came a little closer - close enough for Harry to see that he had a brand new Firebolt broom, same make as Harry's, with shining silver handgrips. "Tough luck, Potter. I've got just as much right to be here as you do." He looked around. "Besides, you weren't exactly doing much hard training, were you?"

Harry sighed. He really didn't have any right to kick the other boy off the field - after all, it was big enough for the two of them - and besides, it might help him motivate if someone else were around.

"I'm supposed to be practicing speed and dives...are you doing anything special? We could race a little, make practicing more interesting," Harry said.

Malfoy looked at him a moment, as though sizing him up. "All right, Potter," he said finally. "You want to just race, or go for something a little more challenging?"

"Like what?" asked Harry, confused. After all, they weren't allowed to use Quidditch balls for just single-person practices - it was considered too dangerous, because the balls might escape or be lost.

Sidling a few feet closer on his broom, Malfoy opened the hand he'd had clenched in his lap throughout the entire conversation. In his palm was the thing he'd pulled out of the air before - it was squirmy, sweaty, and about the size of a Snitch.

"What's that?" he asked.

Malfoy rolled his eyes. "Trust *you* not to recognize a Snidgit, Potter... you've never seen one before?"

Snidgits, which were the magical birds that were used in Quidditch before the Snitch was invented, were endangered. "Isn't that illegal?"

"Oh, come on, Potter... aren't *you* the one who breaks school rules every time he gets the chance? Besides, it's a *Snidgit*, for goodness sakes... or does your girlfriend now represent Snidgit rights as well?"

Harry, irritated at having Hermione dragged into it, snarled, "Fine, you're on. Let it loose."

The Snidgit took off in mad flight, and Harry and Malfoy both zoomed after it. They followed its dips and turns, and then the thing went into a low dive. They both followed, neck and neck, straight towards the ground, then pulled out of the dive at the last possible second, as the Snidgit stopped dead and reversed its course.

They followed it high into the air, but when it put on a sudden burst of speed, they both just watched it go. "No," Harry groaned, "that would just take too much energy."

Malfoy sighed. "This game is lacking something," he said listlessly, reclining forwards.

Harry agreed, and folded his hands on his broomstick, then rested his head on them. He and Malfoy sailed around lazily for a few minutes. "Well, there's no incentive to win," Harry answered after a while.

"So, you want to up the stakes?" Malfoy asked casually.

Immediately Harry was on his guard. He sat up straight, and saw that Malfoy was already upright too, and seemed to be thinking. "Like how?"

With a nasty grin, Malfoy asked, "How about the loser has to do the most awful, humiliating thing the winner can come up with? Anything the winner wants."

Harry vetoed that possibility immediately. He could certainly think of a lot of really, really awful things Malfoy could make him do...taking a bite out of the giant squid...jumping up on Snape's desk and start dancing in Potions class...having a beard-growing spell put on him... "No way. Not unless we decide *beforehand* what constitutes a fair penalty. Because otherwise..."

Malfoy, though, was rapidly warming to the idea of total submission. "Come on, Potter, you scared?" he taunted. "Let's do it. We can set the rules beforehand...nothing that will permanently scar the loser, nothing that will ruin his reputation...nobody else will even have to know about it - it's all for my own personal satisfaction. I just want to see you *squirm*, so I can laugh about it for days afterwards."

"That's even worse!" Harry erupted. "Imagine what you could do to me under *those* conditions! Anything I could possibly think of that needs to take place behind closed doors...arrg! Definitely not!"

A pause followed Harry's outburst. Then a quiet chuckle. Then, "My, my, Potter, you have more imagination than I'd ever have guessed. I would never have thought of that on my own..."

"Thought of what?" Harry demanded warily, hoping he wasn't blushing as badly as he thought he was.

"Those nasty ideas that are passing through your head at this very moment," Malfoy answered with a smirk. "After all, that *would* give us good incentive not to lose..."

Harry flew a little closer. "I don't think I'm understanding you properly," he said.

"Oh, but you are. Think of what you'd least expect to hear from me, ever. Well, that's what you're hearing."

Although his first instinct was to refuse and fly off, disgusted, Harry felt himself laugh and then nod. Oh, why not? All he had to do was not lose. If *Malfoy* lost, Harry seriously doubted he'd insist on paying that disgusting penalty...so why not have the little Snidgit match? He'd win, laugh at Malfoy's horrified expression, and go back inside. Fine.

"Sure. So let me get this straight," Harry started, ignoring Malfoy's giggle at his choice of words. "We chase the Snidgit, and the loser...um..." He fished for a polite way of expressing the forfeit.

"The loser gets..." Malfoy whispered with a mischievous grin. He arched his eyebrows suggestively to finish the statement.

Still, Harry wanted no mistakes made. He wasn't quite certain that he and Malfoy were talking about the same thing...how could Malfoy suggest it so nonchalantly? "The loser gets...gets his guts massaged...from the *inside*."

"Exactly, Potter. Well put." Malfoy laughed again. "The object of the game is, don't lose!"

Harry sighted the Snidgit and took off after it, Malfoy right on his tail. Both boys were in top flying form today, and little surprise that was - this was clearly the most either of them had ever staked on a little Quidditch practice. Harry was still shocked, after almost ten minutes of hot pursuit of the Snidgit, that he had agreed to such a gamble. What if he lost?

Malfoy, on the other hand, seemed to thrive under the pressure. He kept making faces at Harry, flying right alongside him and jostling him half off his broom, and turning loops and twists and all kinds of other tricks in the air. Suddenly, his face took on an intense, serious look and he flew sharply downwards.

He sees the Snidgit! Harry headed into a dive himself, close behind his rival. Desperation made him fly faster than he ever had before, and soon he'd pulled himself almost level with the shiny silver handgrips of Malfoy's broom.

All of a sudden, Harry realized in horror that they were barely two feet off the ground. Malfoy pulled hard and spiraled off, and the thought struck Harry, *he was fainting. And now I'm going to crash...*

He didn't crash, though. Harry jerked hard on the top of his handle, pulled back and spun out of control in a circle. Forcing himself to keep his eyes open, he finally could discern which way was up and which down. He regained control of his Firebolt and headed upwards, praying that Malfoy hadn't found the Snidgit in the meantime.

Malfoy was off chasing something at the other end of the field. Harry flew up to him and got a grudging, "Pretty smooth, Potter," before his rival dipped away again.

The Snidgit wasn't sighted for another four or five minutes, during which time Harry was trying both to find the bird, and also to ignore the constant stream of comments from Malfoy...comments which were making his ears turn pinker and pinker. Finally he gave up, and just headed straight for the ground.

It was a magnificent dive, and for a moment Harry feared that Malfoy wouldn't keep up. He needn't have worried, though...a flash of silver and Malfoy was right beside him, squinting his eyes to see where exactly the Snidgit was lurking.

The Snidgit wasn't anywhere near them, of course, and Harry felt immensely proud of himself for deceiving Malfoy so thoroughly. He'd intended to perform a perfect Wronski Feint, better than Malfoy's, and pull out of the dive just in time, but then Malfoy made a move Harry had never heard of.

Malfoy slowed for a second, then suddenly veered right into the back half of Harry's broom, knocking him just a little bit off-course. It was enough to ruin the perfection of Harry's dive, though, and he had the option of either continuing with the risk of hitting the ground at a bad angle, or pulling out early.

He pulled out early. Malfoy followed him back up into the air, laughing. "Never heard of that one, did you, Potter? Whether your dive was for real or not, it stops you. Great to use against show-offs who *think* they can try all kinds of fancy m-"

Malfoy stopped mid-sentence and whirled to the left. He shot his hand out at what had just flown by him, but missed. Both boys grew serious immediately. The Snidgit was sighted, and nobody was willing to see it get away this time...

What followed was the best exposition of trick flying on broomsticks that Hogwarts had ever seen. Malfoy, ahead by a few yards, was trying to simultaneously chase the Snidgit and also interfere with Harry's flight path. He would dip, twist, and make sudden movements as though he were about to dive. If Harry ever fell for one of the fakes, he'd set himself back several seconds at least, before he could get on course.

Finally Harry flew a little lower, and got close enough to his rival so that a sudden burst of speed was enough to put him in the lead. He pulled up right under Malfoy and then knocked his head against the underside of Malfoy's broom, which sent Malfoy into a wild somersault. Harry wanted very badly to turn and watch him careen out of control, but he couldn't risk losing the Snidgit...it was right in front of him...

Then the little bird changed its mind, stopped suddenly, and headed downwards. Harry whirled back around as soon as he could control the momentum of his broomstick, and threw himself into the dive at an angle. He spun wildly the whole way down, sometimes seeing the Snidgit, sometimes seeing Malfoy (who was approaching very rapidly) and sometimes seeing nothing but a blur of green which was the grass he was heading towards...

Eventually, Harry managed to orient himself. The Snidgit was ahead and Malfoy was right next to him, matching his speed perfectly. They shoved at each other, trying to put each other off-course, as the ground and the Snidgit grew ever closer...

Both boys realized a second too late that the Snidgit was leading them into a trap. All of a sudden there was no more time, no way to get out of the crazy dive they'd thrown themselves into...

They both crashed to the ground, head-first.

Harry opened his eyes to see Malfoy standing over him with his wand out. "Hey!" he cried, moving to stand up and defend himself.

"Relax, Potter," Malfoy said wearily. "And just be lucky that I know how to mend bones. You broke *both* your arms trying to cover your head."

Harry looked down at himself. Malfoy's face was covered in blood, which seemed to be coming from his nose and also a gash in his forehead, but he didn't see any injuries on himself. "I'm fine," he mumbled.

"Now you're fine - *after* I went through all the trouble of putting you back together. Do you know what would happen if anyone saw the flying we were just doing? That kind of speed is banned around here..."

"For good reason," Harry said, blinking to clear his vision. "That really hurt. What happened to *you*?"

Malfoy tried for a smile, but ended up making just a painful grimace. "I leaned back and tried to let my broom take the fall. Then it connected with my nose and the ground connected with my head. Very forcefully."

Harry tottered to his feet. "Are our broomsticks all right?"

"Yeah. I checked *them* before I checked *you*," Malfoy added maliciously.

"Well, you certainly didn't check *yourself* very well," Harry shot back hotly. "You look like I just beat you up."

Malfoy's eyes narrowed. "I was busy - busy trying to make *you* resemble a whole human being again. Remind me never to do you any more favors, Potter," he sneered.

Harry felt a little guilty then, so he added quickly, "Anyway, self-healing charms don't work very well. Do you want me to try to fix that for you?"

When he got a nod in response, Harry took out his wand and tried the best healing spells he knew. After he'd finished, Malfoy touched the former injuries gingerly. "All right, you did all right with the bleeding, but it still hurts," he complained.

Harry shrugged. Then, he looked all around the field. "I can't believe we both had a horrible crash and that damn Snidgit still got away! That hurt a lot, and all for nothing!" Actually, he was secretly glad that they'd hit bottom. Malfoy

had seemed to be just a split second faster than Harry all day, and Harry believed that if they'd gone a few more feet, Malfoy could have pulled ahead enough to grab the Snidgit first.

"It wasn't all for nothing, Potter," Malfoy said. Harry looked over quickly, and saw the boy's cold eyes shining diabolically. A nasty, nasty grin crossed his face and he held out a bloody hand, and opened it...

Curling in his palm was the Snidgit. Harry had lost.

He stared dumbly at boy and bird for a few minutes. It was only just beginning to enter his head exactly *what* he had lost, what he had condemned himself to...

Harry looked at Malfoy with a split second of hope...but the hard look in his eyes convinced Harry that he was not going to let him off the hook. Not back down. Oh, dear...

"Well, Potter..." he drawled, "I suppose I'll be seeing you tonight, then?" His smug, arrogant tone made Harry groan in despair. "How about the Prefects' lounge on the fourth floor? I know the password and it'll be deserted. How's midnight sound?"

"Terrible," Harry answered firmly. "Absolutely awful."

Malfoy laughed coldly and patted him on the back with pretend friendliness, which made Harry jerk away and shudder.

"Tut, tut, Potter... do I still make you uncomfortable? That'll change, soon...we'll be getting to know one another a lot better..."

Harry shook his head and groaned again. "I can't believe this. I'll kill you, Malfoy."

Immediately the pale face lost its smirk. Malfoy stepped forward and said seriously, "If you want to try to kill me, then we'll duel...*afterwards*. We had a bet and you lost. Show up or you'll regret it."

Harry laughed bitterly. "I think I'll regret it if I *do* show up. But I'll be there - a deal's a deal." He turned and started to go back indoors. His insides were squirming with the horror of what was going to happen to him later...

And it's ONLY horror, he lectured himself. *Not curiosity*. He wasn't very convincing, though, and as it grew closer and closer to midnight Harry found himself thinking less and less of ways to escape. He'd just go at midnight, like he was supposed to, and make the best of it...

A/N: This doesn't come into play until later, but there's a correction I have to make.

A reader informed me by email that I have a somewhat serious canon violation: Percy Weasley appears briefly in the story as a prefect, but that would mean that Harry and Draco were still waaaaaaaaay too young to be doing what I have them doing. Unfortunately, I like using Percy and it's just not as funny with a different prefect. Please forgive the canon violation. The boys are old, in their last year or two of school, and Percy's appearance is, as you may have noticed, therefore impossible. Perhaps we can chalk it up to magic? Sorry.

Chapter Two

"The Payoff"

When he opened the door to the Prefects' lounge, Malfoy was already there. He looked mildly surprised to see Harry, and greeted him with a smirk. "I didn't expect it to be this easy. Come on in, Potter."

Harry closed the door behind him and sat down on a chair by the door, still as far across the room from Malfoy as he could get.

Rising from his seat and coming to the door, Malfoy cast a silencing charm and then looked around appraisingly. "Yes, this is as good a place as any. So, Potter," he asked, turning to face Harry with his awful smile, "...you looking forward to it?"

"No," Harry answered truthfully.

"Liar. All day you've been thinking about it."

"That's true," Harry conceded, "but I haven't been exactly eager."

Malfoy's cold look melted a little, giving way to an interested half-smile. "Then how *have* you been, if not eager?" he asked.

"Horrified."

With a snort, he answered, "If you were horrified, you wouldn't have come here. Deal or no deal, people just don't *do* this because they promised to." He came a little closer and stood right in front of Harry, arms folded across his chest. "Tell me what you're really thinking."

Harry sighed. He supposed that the idea of total humiliation included telling Malfoy exactly what was on his mind. Oh, well. So much for dignity, then. "I *was* horrified. I still am. I came because I promised to...and also...well...I'm a little curious."

Harry was feeling a little relieved - Malfoy was unbearable, certainly, but much less so than Harry had expected him to be. His mocking and superior attitude seemed to come from a spirit of fun, rather than any genuine malice.

Malfoy laughed and started to undress. "Without further ado, then..."

Harry followed suit, taking off his nightclothes and then his under things. Malfoy gestured towards the floor. "Let's go. Hands and knees, Potter."

Feeling extremely vulnerable and stupid, Harry positioned himself as his enemy had requested. He closed his eyes and shuddered, wishing for it all to be over. He had no idea what to expect, but was quite sure that he wasn't ready for any of it.

He heard Malfoy come up right behind him, sensed him coming closer...

Then, he suddenly moved away again. "Forgot something, Potter," he said. "I'd better use a good locking charm on the door..." Harry watched him magically sealing the room, and listened with amusement as he talked to himself the whole time: "...would be *really* bad if anybody walked in on us...might start thinking I liked *boys* or something...ugh..."

That, Harry decided, was a rather stupid statement under the circumstances. He took a deep breath as Malfoy came and resumed his former position, kneeling directly behind Harry's prone body. An overpowering wave of cold horror washed over Harry, and he nearly fainted with the shock of the sudden realization of what was going to happen to him. What on earth could have possessed him to agree to this? He was scared. He was hyperventilating. He was going to die. Oh, no-

Harry's panic attack was interrupted by a friendly tap on the shoulder. "Might want to relax a little, Potter, if you're looking to survive this. Otherwise I'll really tear you apart," Malfoy advised cheerfully.

Harry nodded and forced himself to calm down. "Yeah, okay, thanks," he murmured shakily, fighting the urge to leap up and run away. "It's just...this is very humiliating, and...and I can't see how it's even physically *possible*..."

"Oh, it's possible, Potter. You'll see." Harry heard Malfoy performing some kind of charm behind him, then felt his hips grasped firmly and something warm and slimy nudge up against him... oh, no, this was it...

At first it was just pressure. Just a little bit, something touching, that was all, no problem. But then, the pressure became more insistent, and then Harry felt something opening, giving way, and then the pain started. "Ouch, stop it!" he gasped. Malfoy instantly stopped moving, but didn't pull away. "What're you doing, trying to break me?" continued Harry through clenched teeth.

"Potter, I haven't even *begun* yet. Why don't you hold the complaining til after you feel...*this*." With that, Malfoy pushed forward quite suddenly, burying himself completely inside his victim.

Harry decided instantly that it was the worst pain he had ever felt. Never mind the Cruciatius Curse, never mind breaking his arm on the Quidditch field...this agony took the cake. Definitely. When Malfoy shoved in all the way, it hurt so badly that Harry believed for a moment that he'd actually been ripped wide open. He half-expected his enemy to leap back and gasp at the mortal wound he'd produced...

But Malfoy did no such thing. He reached forward to clap a hand over Harry's mouth, muffling the shriek, then just waited with infuriating calm. After a moment, when Harry had got enough control over himself to quiet down, Malfoy let go and even dared to chuckle, "Good lord, Potter, and they tell me people actually do this for *fun*? You're so tight it's almost painful." He paused, unmoving. "Ready?"

"Go to hell," Harry choked out. He was shaking now, as terrible cramps ripped their way from his rear all the way up to his stomach. Finally, after what seemed like an hour, he was breathing normally and had managed to relax the clenching in his gut. The burning pain had receded, leaving nothing but throbbing and aching. Harry could deal with that. "Ok," he whispered miserably. "I'm ok."

"Not for long, you're not" Malfoy whispered, and withdrew slowly. Harry managed to keep his mouth shut. Then, though, his enemy rammed all the way back in again, hard, and Harry couldn't bite back a little cry.

As Malfoy found a comfortable rhythm and grew more efficient, Harry's abused body began to be a little more accomodating. The sliding in and out grew easier with every second, but in consequence Malfoy could - and did - shove harder and deeper. *I can't win*, Harry thought. Just then, a particularly visoius thrust made Harry squirm and squeak, "No!"

This appeared to delight his tormentor, who began to take greater care that he hurt Harry with each individual stroke. By now Harry's breathing was really an audible mess of agonized panting and gasping, punctuated by occasional squeals of "Ow!" that he just couldn't contain.

It hurt. Harry couldn't believe that earlier he had worried about feeling degraded while it was going on. Right now he felt no such thing - the only thing he was conscious of at all was the awful physical pain Malfoy was putting him through time and time again. Harry wasn't quite yelping loudly enough to drown out the sound of their bodies slapping together with every thrust...Malfoy was certainly giving it to him as hard as he could.

After a while, Malfoy started to speed up. By now he was reaming Harry so forcefully that the tears refused to be held back any longer, and his victim was writhing and crying continuously. Then, finally, Harry felt a warm stinging flood deep inside him, and Malfoy sighed contentedly. "Done."

It hadn't even been fifteen minutes from start to finish. Now, Malfoy heaved himself back into a sitting position and began fumbling for his wand. A quick cleanup charm later, all evidence was gone. No one would ever have to know. He noticed that Harry still hadn't moved, so he rose and kicked at him softly. "You awake there, Potter? Don't tell me I was *that* boring..."

Harry groaned and stirred a little. He rolled over onto his back, and saw that Malfoy had started dressing himself again. "I'll kill you, you pervert," he threatened once he'd finally caught his breath. Harry was still angry at his own treacherous voice box for all the noises it had been making throughout the ordeal. Now, again, his voice had failed him - he certainly didn't sound half as menacing as he wished.

Malfoy just snorted, though. "Oh, stuff it, Potter. I didn't *have* to use that lubricating charm, you know. Don't pretend it was that bad - you're barely even bleeding."

A lubricating charm? So that's what it was, Harry thought. He took off his glasses and wiped the sweat and tears out of his eyes, then sat up and reached for his clothes. *Thank goodness for magic,* he reflected, *because this would have been ten times more disgusting without it...lubrication...cleaning up...eugghh.*

"Don't think you're getting off scot-free, you know," Harry warned. "I want a rematch." He was already starting to feel better, and he sounded rather good-natured, all things considered.

Malfoy responded in kind, giving him a quick grin. "Sure. I bet after four or five nights like this, you'll give up."

"You'd better not laugh, Malfoy. You'll regret it, when it's my turn. Be at the Quidditch field, same time tomorrow, to meet your doom," said Harry.

This made Malfoy laugh even more. "Tomorrow? You really think you can sit on a broom so soon? I'd give it a few days if I were you."

Burning with embarrassment, Harry realized that Malfoy was probably right. He couldn't even *walk* comfortably...

"Fine. Saturday, then. Be ready," Harry snarled with mock menace. Much as it disturbed him, there was now a strange atmosphere of camaraderie between them.

Malfoy seemed to sense it too, and instead of really capitalizing on Harry's humiliation as he usually would have done, he just smirked and said, "Oh, I'll be ready. You'd better put up a decent fight, though - no fair losing on purpose just to get me to-"

"*Malfoy!*"

"Just kidding, Potter. See you then." He undid the magical lock on the door, and opened it cautiously to leave. Standing in the doorway, he looked back once more. "That was really good flying today, by the way. Good match."

Harry followed him into the hall. "Yeah," he returned in a grudging whisper, glad to let his mind travel to another topic than his recent humiliation. "You flew really well too." As an afterthought, he added quietly, "It's too bad our whole *teams* aren't that incredible...there would be some really good Quidditch going on at Hogwarts if everybody flew like that."

Malfoy sniggered. "Oh, so now you want our whole *teams* in on this little arrangement? That's rather kinky, even for you, Potter."

Harry couldn't suppress a laugh, imagining himself explaining the new Quidditch rules to the whole Slytherin team. "You know that's not what I meant, pervert."

"I know, pervert. Sweet dreams..." they'd reached the staircase where Malfoy went down and Harry turned left. He watched Malfoy head downstairs, then turned and went to his own dormitory. As he made his way to bed, Harry forced himself to think about the broomstick riding and not the activities which had followed it. The feel of the air

whooshing by faster and sharper than he'd ever dreamed possible...the rush of adrenaline as he shot towards the ground...the lightheadedness that came from spiraling out of a deep, deep dive so quickly...the thrilling competitiveness that came from being perfectly matched against a worthy opponent...

Harry got into bed with a sigh, fervently wishing that such flying was to be had every day. It was the beautiful, free, insane feeling that could only be achieved when his whole heart was in it...when he had an all-consuming desire, a need even, to win.

He chuckled, thinking it a pity that he'd had to pay such a disgusting price for the feeling. But overall, he had to admit, it was worth it. The Quidditch had been absolutely incredible, and Malfoy, although punishing Harry with deliberate force and brutality, really hadn't overplayed his hand. It could have been worse.

Harry stirred in bed, a strange feeling still lingering inside him. He figured that was probably normal, though....at least as 'normal' as one could get under the circumstances. The sore, achy feeling was getting rather annoying - he wasn't used to having his bowels throb angrily as he was trying to get to sleep, and he really wished it would go away soon. *Well, so long as it's gone by Saturday...*, he thought.

Harry wanted payback for this horribly shaming, painful evening. Although obviously not as bad as the actual physical penalty, the sarcastic verbal barbs from Malfoy were still stinging as well. Of course, Malfoy was well within his rights in delivering them. After all, they'd agreed to *total humiliation* for whoever failed to catch the snidgit, so Harry couldn't really grudge his rival a few snide comments. Compared to his usual self, Malfoy had actually been quite decent.

Harry only hoped the decency would last forever. Visions kept coming into his head of all the different ways Malfoy could torture him, break his promise not to tell anyone, suddenly produce a video camera he'd had hidden the whole time...

It took him a while to calm down enough to finally go to sleep.

Just wait til Saturday. I'll get my revenge, he thought as he drifted off.

Saturday came, and with it, a rematch that Harry was hardly prepared for. After all, he'd had to skip practice for two days until he could comfortably ride his broom again (he'd told the team he had an upset stomach), and the pressure of *needing* to win this time was crushing.

The flying was executed just as beautifully as last time...better, actually, as both boys were slowly picking moves up from each other and incorporating them into their styles. But, like last time, there was a harrowing finish in which both brooms raced full-speed towards the ground. And, like last time, Malfoy arrived a split second earlier and won the match.

Now Harry was really miserable. He'd been beaten at Quidditch twice in a row, suffered a painful and humiliating punishment twice in a row, and *still* hadn't gotten his revenge. A third match was definitely in order...and this time, he would be ready.

Harry went to the Hogsmeade and bought a new volume of modern Quidditch strategies. Co-authored by a Bulgarian national sportscaster, the book contained a whole chapter on the particular style of the promising international player Viktor Krum. *Anything he can do, I can do*, Harry promised himself, and set about looking for a move he could use to win.

Finally he discovered something that might be useful. A special sort of turn that helped lead the opposing Seeker in exactly the opposite direction from the Snitch. *Perfect! Just what I need - if I can make Malfoy point the wrong way, I'll win for sure!* he thought gleefully.

He practiced and practiced in secret, determined to have it ready for their next contest.

When the day came, Malfoy kicked his broom into the air with an arrogant smirk. "Haven't you had enough, Potter?" he asked.

"Yes, I have," Harry said through clenched teeth. "But you haven't! And I mean to see that you get your share today. Right now! Say your prayers," he finished, narrowing his eyes with exaggerated menace.

A few moments later, he felt a quiet *whoosh* and sensed that the Snidget had rushed by, flying away behind him. Immediately, he widened his eyes at a spot far over Malfoy's shoulder, as if he saw the Snidget across the field that way. He took off, full speed, praying that Malfoy would follow.

He did. They were neck and neck, flying faster than ever, while Malfoy's eyes scanned the area for the Snidget his enemy was apparently chasing.

Then, without warning, Harry yanked his broom straight up, perpendicular to the ground, and threw his weight backwards. The special turn worked - he'd done an about face, was now flying upside down in the proper direction, and Malfoy was still speeding off the wrong way.

Harry didn't bother to right himself. Clinging to the broom, robes flapping wildly, he just kept straight on as fast as he could. He'd practiced flying upside down for a short while, and anyhow he couldn't risk losing any time. Malfoy, though it had taken him a moment to realize what had happened and another few precious seconds to slow and turn around the regular way, was coming up fast.

Not fast enough. Harry saw the Snidget hovering placidly, not too far...a few meters, a few feet, inches... *he'd got it!*

Clutching the little bird in his hand, Harry laughed gleefully and lazily turned himself right-side up. Malfoy crashed into him, not even bothering to slow down, and hissed, "Damn you, Potter! Damn you!" before sinking slowly towards the earth.

They dismounted and Harry could barely keep a straight face. For Malfoy's sake, he tried to look somber, but his joy was irrefragable. He would have vengeance! Finally!

Without a trace of a smirk, looking for all the world like he'd just been condemned to death, Malfoy muttered, "Oh, God," in a nauseated sort of way.

Harry shrugged. "Hey, I said you'd get what's coming to you, didn't I?" he said. "But don't worry - it's not so bad, I've survived twice already." He realized that the bleak look on Malfoy's face did not bode well at all. "And I was a good sport about it, so you'd better be, too. Show up like you're supposed to or I'll come after you, and you most definitely won't like what I do to you if that happens," he warned.

"I think I'd *rather* have you come after me and kill me," Malfoy mused. Then, he looked up and forced the horrified expression from his face. "Don't you worry, Potter, I won't stand you up. A promise is a promise. But listen, you'd better be ready for *next* time - if you do this to me tonight, I'll get you back in the most awful, horrible-"

"*If?*" Harry asked, laughing. "*When*, more like! Malfoy, I've been waiting for this for days, and if you think I'm going to let you off, you're nuts. I'm going to abuse you just as bad as you abused me, and you can't stop me!"

"Not tonight, though," Malfoy said seriously. "We've got a Potions exam tomorrow, remember? I don't want to fail the thing, and I know I will if I'm stuck up all night agonizing over what you've done to me."

"I'd think the terror of what I'm going to do to you would be worse, but all right, if you want to," Harry agreed amiably. "Tomorrow night, then. Sweet dreams tonight, and good luck on the Potions exam, and I'll see you tomorrow at midnight, in the prefects lounge. Okay?" He held out his hand cheerfully and they shook on it, while Malfoy gave him the most venomous look Harry had ever seen.

He went indoors to study for the exam, hardly able to keep his mind on his work. *One more day! One more day, and I'll finally get to subject Malfoy to the same torture I've suffered at his hands. And he's in terror, and it serves him right!*

Chapter Three

"The Payback"

This time, Harry headed to the Prefects' lounge in a wonderful mood. Malfoy, on the other hand, was definitely lacking the cheerful enthusiasm he'd possessed during their last two meetings. He arrived ten minutes late, wearing the most crushed expression Harry had ever seen on his face.

"Cheer up," said Harry right away. "None of that hands-and-knees business for you. I've got a better idea..."

Malfoy's jaw dropped, and Harry could see the thought running through his head: *Is he going to let me off?*

No, he wasn't. Harry pointed to the floor. "On your back, Malfoy. We're doing it that way. You get to watch."

Looking horrified by this information, Malfoy backed away. "That's disgusting."

"This whole *situation* is disgusting. So shut up and get down. Now." They undressed and Malfoy began to obey, lying down very slowly, looking the whole time like he was going to faint or be sick. Harry was thrilled. "That's it. Now bring your knees up like you're going to do sit-ups...yeah, like that...now spread 'em." Harry was all ready to go - he'd worked himself up quite nicely while waiting for Malfoy to show, and he actually found the idea of defiling him rather exciting. Since he could see that his enemy was already extremely nervous, he made sure to be as mean as possible. He smiled coldly and, pretending to be reassuring, promised, "I've practiced up on my lubrication charms, so don't worry. Just sit back and enjoy the ride."

"Potter, so help me, I *hate* you, you filthy little-"

"Don't you think that ought to wait until after I'm done?" Harry asked, getting himself into position. "Otherwise I could really make this hard for you, if I get angry." He performed the lubrication charm, then lifted Malfoy's hips a little to get a good angle. "Ready?"

Then, though, he noticed that his victim's eyes were closed. *That's no fun*, he thought. "What's up, Malfoy, are you *crying*?" he demanded. As he'd expected, the eyes shot open and locked with Harry's.

"Not on your life, Potter. The crying is for girls like you." Now, though, the victim was properly attentive, and Harry deemed it the right moment to align himself and press forward. Malfoy's eyes widened in shock as he was penetrated, and Harry watched greedily. Once Harry had inched slowly in all the way, he stopped for a moment to allow the convulsing body beneath him time to adjust.

"How are you doing down there?" he asked with a cheezy smile.

Malfoy was making little squeaky moans. Finally he managed to choke out a word. "Wait."

"Sure, sure, no problem," Harry grinned, loving the feeling of total control. "I know you want to savor every moment." He began humming, waiting for the go-ahead.

After a few minutes, Malfoy's shaking had nearly stopped. "All right."

The way he screwed up his face in anticipation was almost endearing. *Awwwww, poor Draco*, Harry thought sarcastically. "Here we go."

It didn't take Harry long to get the hang of it. He soon realized that the angle he was thrusting at determined how much leverage he could get and how deep he could go, and it became something of a game to him to see how loudly he could make Malfoy whimper with every stroke.

"Rot...in...hell....Potter!" Malfoy managed through his panting. Harry laughed. Then, all of a sudden he realized he wasn't being quite fair. He was certainly having fun pounding into his enemy with punishing force, but he wasn't seriously concentrating on his own sexual gratification. At this rate, it could go on forever.

After he noticed this, Harry began paying more attention to what felt good. Faster was better, he decided, and soon settled on a method of small but devilishly fast movements. "Ahh...ohhhh...oowwww!" Malfoy finally wailed, and though he wasn't technically *crying* (his eyes were dry), Harry was proud of having broken his resistance - he now felt a little less stupid for having cried the first time. He stopped paying attention to his victim entirely, and just pounded along at the most pleasurable rate. Orgasm didn't take very long, and he watched with intense satisfaction as Malfoy covered his face with his hands.

"There. That wasn't so bad, was it?" Harry asked, disentangling himself. He found his wand and cleaned himself up. He got dressed, expecting Malfoy to do the same, but when he turned back around the boy was still lying down, now curled up on his side. "Uh...did I really hurt you or something?" he asked, with the vague beginnings of a guilty feeling.

"My father would strangle me if he knew about this," Malfoy sniffed. "And he'd be right. I can't believe I let someone..."

"Oh, come off it," Harry said crossly. "Who cares? You did it to me, too, and I'm not sitting there wallowing in tragedy."

Finally Malfoy sat up managed to calm down a little. "Shut up, Potter, because I'm a total wreck and I know it and I don't want any of your stinking Gryffindor niceness right now."

Harry fished for something comforting to say; he was beginning to feel guilty that Malfoy was still clearly in distress. "Really, I'm not going to tell anyone, there's no reason to be so upset..."

"Oh, that's right, Potter" sneered Malfoy sarcastically. "Keep trying to make me feel better. Next you'll be telling me I took it like a *man*."

Harry found this so funny that he had to give up being nice, and just started laughing. Malfoy, too, had to smile at the absurdity of what he'd said, and his sarcasm melted a little. Harry helped him to his feet. "One thing's for sure," he snarled after he'd gotten dressed. "This isn't over - we'll have to have another rematch. Give me some time and I'll think of something even *worse* to do to you!"

"Bring it on," Harry smiled. "I'm ready." They walked together again to the staircase, and Harry was glad that this time it was *Malfoy* who limped off slowly towards his dorm, while Harry's step was light and joyful.

He got in bed and tried desperately not to imagine whatever horror Malfoy was concocting for him. *I'd better not lose our next match*, he thought, and resolved to wake up early the next morning and begin practicing new Quidditch strategies immediately. *I have to win*.

Chapter Four

"The Love Letter"

It was a great game, as usual. It was, however, a little more physical. At first it was just a little a little jostling and shoving, but within minutes they had escalated to heaving themselves full-force at one another in an effort to knock each other out of the air.

Still, though, Harry was holding his own...until Malfoy lifted his arm and quite deliberately whacked Harry in the head with it, causing his glasses to break. Disoriented by the sudden blurry turn the world had taken, Harry froze for a few crucial seconds - leaving Malfoy free to zoom away and grab the snidgit.

Harry cursed under his breath at the mere *thought* of what he would have to do now....

The next morning in Potions, Harry wrote a note on his lap and searched for the perfect chance to pass it to Hermione. The coast was clear - Snape's back was turned and everybody else was copying notes - so Harry whispered, "Psst! Hermione!" Nobody else seemed to have heard. She glanced up at him and nodded, so he balled up his note and threw it to her.

"Accio!" Snape whirled around and snatched the note from midair. It flew to the front of the classroom and he unfolded it gleefully. "Well. Let's see what Mr. Potter feels is more important than working on his classwork right now. It must be a matter of life and death, mustn't it, to keep him from his work? Perhaps we'd better all hear about it, then."

Harry was almost paralyzed with dread. "No...please, Professor..."

Snape ignored him and began to read aloud.

Dear Hermione,

Listen. I really need some advice here, but before you read any further you have to promise not to tell Ron or anybody else. If you can't keep it a secret, just rip this note up right now, ok? Here goes:

The reason I'm asking your help instead of Ron's or anybody else's is that you're a girl, and my problem won't exactly make much sense to most of the guys I know. The reason I'm writing instead of telling you is I'm too embarrassed to say it out loud.

So enough procrastinating: here it is.

I'm in love. I'm desperately, horribly in love with someone who can't possibly love me back. It's a serious problem, because it's all I can think about and it eats up all my time and it's driving me nuts. Picture this:

Dark dark hair framing really fair skin. Eyes as mysterious as this castle itself. Moves like a cat - quiet and smooth and always beautiful. Sends shivers down your spine every time you walk by. Are you getting the picture of this person I'm in love with? Oh, and one more thing: it's not a girl.

Snape paused and there was dead silence for a minute. Malfoy broke it. "Oh, *dear!*" he choked out. Everybody lost control at that point, and the entire Slytherin section was laughing hysterically. The Gryffindors were just whispering among themselves and staring at Harry.

Harry tried again to stop him. "Ok, Professor, that's enough, please?"

Of course, it had the opposite effect. Snape cleared his throat and continued:

He is the reason I get up and slog through my classes every day. Just to be there, watching him and hearing him whisper my name, is enough incentive to jump out of bed each morning. I'm hopelessly, helplessly in love and there's nothing I can do about it.

So what I wanted to ask you is, what should I do? I can't seem to get over him. And I certainly can't tell him how I feel; he most definitely does not feel the same way. Actually he dislikes me strongly, so I don't even dare try to make friends with him or anything.

What the hell can I do? I feel so pathetic, slobbering over someone so far out of my reach. And worse yet, I can't even really talk about it to anyone, because they'd think I'm sick and disgusting. You'll think so, too, I'm sure, when you're done. But I have no choice - I'll go mad if I don't tell someone. Don't be harsh, ok? I mean, granted: he is a guy. And there is an impossible age difference. And we're not even from the same house. And he hates me. And you hate him. And-

Oh, what's the use of putting it off longer? Hermione, don't hate me for this, but...

Snape paused and looked all around the classroom. It was absolutely silent, as Slytherins and Gryffindors alike sat spellbound by the secrets he was unfolding. He licked his lips and cast his eyes back to the last sentence, ready to read it aloud...

And his breath caught in his throat. His eyes went rapidly several times back and forth between Harry and the letter. "Dear God, Potter..." he whispered in astonishment. Then, a sadistic smile crept across his face. He opened his mouth to begin, but Harry leaped out of his chair.

"No, Professor! Don't. Please don't," he pleaded. His voice was barely more than a whimper, and his face was flushed bright red. "Please, I'm begging you, sir, don't do it." Snape shot him a glance and seemed to consider mercy for a moment, but decided against it and prepared to read.

"No!" Harry repeated desperately, and took a step forward. Snape backed away, holding the paper high in the air so that Harry couldn't reach it. With a soft laugh, he continued mercilessly:

"Oh, what's the use of putting it off longer? Hermione, don't hate me for this, but here's the naked truth: I'm in love with Professor Snape! Help me!"

- Harry"

The class sat in dead silence for a few seconds. Then Malfoy started to chuckle, and that broke the spell. A buzz of whispers came from the Gryffindors, while the Slytherins all screamed with laughter and gave Harry the rudest stares he could possibly imagine.

At that moment, the bell rang. Wiping away tears of humiliation, Harry dove for his bag so he could run and hide in Gryffindor Tower forever, but he'd only made it a few feet before he was stopped by a firm, "Potter. In my office."

"But...Professor..." Harry sputtered inarticulately. He couldn't even bring himself to look Snape in the face. Why, oh why had he ever agreed to this humiliation? It was a thousand times worse than he had expected.

A chuckle from the doorway made Harry whip around. The classroom was already empty, except for the boy who leaned casually against the doorframe. "Oooh, Potter," Malfoy drawled sarcastically.

"Time alone with Professor Snape - isn't that what you've always wanted?"

Snape stepped between them. "Mr. Malfoy," he began, but Harry cut him off bravely.

"No, sir, I'd rather he stayed. I really think he ought to."

Snape made no protest other than an incredulous stare, and beckoned both boys into his office.

He looked from one to the other. "Well? Will someone please tell me the point of that charade?" When nobody answered, he sighed impatiently. "Or am I to take it at face value and begin brewing you an anti-love potion immediately?"

"No, no" Harry forced out. His throat seemed to have closed up from the shame of it all. "I...I..."

"Since he is unable to explain, Mr. Malfoy, perhaps you would care to," Snape snarled.

"Certainly, sir. Potter and I had a bet, and he lost." Malfoy glanced over at his stricken rival. "He'll be fine, sir. The letter was meant to be found and read aloud, that was the point."

Snape looked extremely perturbed. "I would like to punish you both for disturbing my class; however, that was an excellent prank on your part, Malfoy. Quite amusing. Therefore I am prepared to forgive both of you, since I most certainly don't want to give detention to Potter by himself. Heaven only knows what he'd try to do if he got me alone..."

Malfoy burst out laughing, and Harry looked away.

"Oh, and ten points from Gryffindor for note-passing. Now get out, both of you." Snape seemed to be having trouble concealing his nasty smile. He ushered them into the corridor and slammed his office door.

The minute the door was closed behind them, and it was certain that no one could hear, Harry turned to Malfoy in a rage.

"I hate you!" he spat. "That was worse than... worse than anything else we've done to each other! I think I'd rather get caught snogging a hippogriff!"

Malfoy laughed outright. "Come off it, Potter. You can't possibly compare that to the... erm ...other thing. And besides, it was fair and square, you have to admit."

"I'll get you back for this, you monster. You just wait. Next time, when *you* lose, you've got to..." he searched for a humiliation sufficient to compensate for what he had just suffered.

Malfoy helped him out. "I've got it, Potter. Next time, when *YOU* lose, you can grow long curly hair and wear it with a pink bow for three whole days. You'll have to tell everyone it's your new fashion statement."

Harry considered that. "Fine. So the loser has to grow his hair, wear it up with a pink bow, and also wear girly high heels for three days. And claim he likes the way it looks."

"Three days is an awful long time, Potter...but you've got yourself a deal." They shook.

Since Harry didn't have the usual problem of a painful recovery, he could insist that the rematch take place immediately. Still burning from his humiliation, he flew like a madman and had beaten Malfoy to the Snitch in a matter of minutes. He stormed off the field, still furious, and got a lot of weird looks on the way back to his room. *Three days of seeing Malfoy in drag*, he thought, *will just BARELY be able to make me feel better*. Just barely. He didn't think he'd ever be able to meet Snape's eyes again.

When he got to his room, he went to flop down on his bed, but discovered someone already in it. He poked at the lump under the covers. "Ron. Out." Receiving no answer, Harry snatched the blanket off, and then jumped back in shock.

"Hello, Potter. Atrocious ceiling you've got here." It was Malfoy, lying nonchalantly with his hands behind his head. When Harry snarled, he sat up suddenly and gestured to the bed. "Have a seat, Potter. We need to talk."

"You ?! How'd you get in here?" Harry demanded. He was torn between being furious that Malfoy had come, and amazed that he'd made it the whole way without being noticed.

Malfoy shrugged. "I just ran to the portrait faster than you and waited for somebody to open it. You're not the only one around here with an Invisibility Cloak." Harry's incredulous expression made him clarify, "My father told me about yours, and got me one of my own."

"Yeah, well what are you doing here? And get off my bed."

Malfoy leaned close. "Shhh. This is important, Potter. I've been thinking about it for a long time...since we started flying together, actually... and I've come to the conclusion that now, it's finally time."

"Time for what?" Harry asked, mystified. And Malfoy leaned even closer to whisper his answer....

Chapter Five

"Veronica"

There they were, sitting on Harry's bed, with Malfoy leaning in until his mouth almost brushed Harry's ear. "Potter, I think we-"

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?!?!" They both jumped at the roar from the doorway.

Harry leaped to his feet, immediately realizing how intimate the situation had looked. "Ron, it's not what it looks like, really, it's not."

Ron was looking at them as if they were a new alien species. "Get out of my room! Both of you! Sorry to disrupt your little snogfest, Harry, but I'm going to throw up! First Snape, and now *him*?"

"No! No, Ron, it's-"

Surprisingly, Malfoy helped him out. "Look, Weasley, if you imply I'd touch your precious little boytoy with a ten-foot wand, I'll hex you out of existence. Potter and I are talking. *Talking*. If you're having a little trouble understanding the concept, why don't you go to Granger and borrow a book that tells you all about it?"

But now Harry was angry. He shoved Malfoy off his bed and pointed to the door. "No, Ron's right, Malfoy. I don't want you here either. Whatever you want to tell me can wait until tomorrow. I need to crawl into a hole and die now, if you don't mind."

Malfoy lingered for a minute, but since it appeared that Weasley was not going to go away anytime soon, he decided to save the conversation for later. What he had to say could only be said in private, at least at first.

The next morning, Harry scanned the Slytherin table at breakfast but didn't see Malfoy. He was terribly disappointed - he'd been looking forward to the boy's humiliation eclipsing his own. Without something new to fixate on, the entire school was still buzzing about Harry's supposed crush on Snape. Even the *teachers* seemed to be looking at him funny.

Finally, after five minutes of the most hellish breakfast he'd ever endured, Harry was rescued by the loud sound of the Great Hall doors banging open. He turned to see who it was...

And almost collapsed in shock.

Malfoy had certainly gone all out on this one. He had grown long blonde curls halfway down his back, and had secured them with a green barrette at the nape of his neck. He was wearing heels, too - tasteful black ones that looked disconcertingly good with his school robes. And he had on makeup. Lots of it.

Harry didn't know all the names for the stuff Malfoy was wearing, but he could pick out lipstick, mascara (or had those eyelashes always been so long?), some strange grey-green coloring over his eyes, and a bit of pink on his cheeks. Oh, and *earrings*. And he'd shaved.

Instead of looking like a humiliated boy in a girl's hairdo, Malfoy looked almost like a girl.

And not a bad-looking one, either, Harry thought, before he could stop himself. He grinned as Malfoy strutted carefully to his seat, then flipped his hair behind his shoulders as he sat down. Acting surprised that the entire school was staring, the boy explained loudly, "I had a bit of trouble on the stairs." His voice was the same as ever.

"Mr. Malfoy. *What* do you think you are doing?" Snape's voice rang out from the staff table, smooth and too controlled for safety.

Malfoy pursed his red lips and spoke up briskly. "Well, sir, I'm having a bit of an identity crisis," he explained, obviously having thought out his story in advance. "See, I was told it might help me figure things out if I tried indulging my...erm...feminine side for a bit. So I'm trying it. My name will be Veronica, for now."

People laughed nervously. Ron poked Harry and demanded, "Harry, that's your fault, isn't it? Great job!"

Snape, too, had put two and two together. He glared daggers at the Gryffindor table and snarled, "Weasley, keep your mouth shut! Five points from Gryffindor for...for *making fun*."

Ron's shocked expression was comical. "But....He...he just *made that rule up!*"

"Quiet, Ron," Harry said, elbowing him. "I want to enjoy this."

It was rapidly transforming into the best breakfast of Harry's life. Later, in the halls, he overheard Draco trying to explain his costume to his friends. "...surprisingly pleasant," he was saying. "You should try it sometime. Seriously. You have no idea how nice it is to look in the mirror and see something you find sexy."

Harry couldn't resist. "An improvement over your usual ugly mug, I must say."

Malfoy batted his eyelashes and made a kissy face. "Shut up, Potter. You know you want some."

The temptation to say "been there, done that," was so great Harry had to wait a second before replying. "Want some?" he asked incredulously. "Um. No!" his scathing tone was perfect, and he got laughs from all his friends before turning and walking away. "What a freak."

Malfoy cornered him in the bathroom an hour later, making him jump. "You! Malfoy, get out of here! How am I supposed to piss next to a *girl?*"

With a smile, Malfoy backed away obligingly and just waited til he had Harry's attention.

"All right, all right, you stupid pervert," Harry conceded at last. "Have you been following me all day? What's wrong with you? What do you want?"

"Shh. This is secret," he whispered. "Come on, will you please listen for a minute?"

Something about his tone got through to Harry. "All right. What?"

"All right." Malfoy sucked in a deep breath, then started laughing. "Look, this is really hard to say when I'm all dressed up like this, that's why I wanted to say it yesterday..."

Harry laughed at him. "Speaking of that, how are you doing with your new identity, *Veronica?*"

Malfoy's smile was strained at best. "Not bad, so far. So far my idiot friends are buying my story and haven't made fun. But I'm just praying my father doesn't find out - he'll beat me black and blue."

"Your father beats you?" Harry asked, concerned, before he thought about it.

Malfoy shrugged noncommittally. "He will if he finds out about *this*," he said with a laugh, but then got back on topic. "Anyway. What I was thinking was...well, have you read this month's edition of Quidditch Today?"

"Yeah, of course," Harry snapped, annoyed. He was going to be late for class - this was hardly the time for small talk!

"So, you read about Ireland's new formation?"

"Yes, I read about it!" Harry snarled. Ireland had pushed through a rule change that abolished the old player designations. They wanted to do away with their Seeker in favor of a fourth chaser. Since Ireland's seeker never caught the Snitch anyway, Harry had concluded it was a good move on their part. Other countries, of course, had all retained the original formations. "So what?"

"Oh, Potter, don't tell me you don't see what I'm getting at..."

"I don't see."

Malfoy sighed and glanced down at his pink fingernails. "Listen up, stupid. You see how well we've been flying. We've got the best brooms and some of the very best moves out there. I've been thinking... when I was little I wanted to try out for England's team one day, but then once I got to Hogwarts, I saw *you* and I realized that I'd never have a shot. Not if they only wanted one seeker - you could beat me hands down. But now..."

"You mean you thought I would play for England? On the national team?"

"Of course. You'll be good enough to, one day, Potter. If you train hard."

The compliment was hard to absorb. It sounded so strange to hear Malfoy admitting inadequacy. "So...so you're saying now you have a shot, because theoretically we could both play at once?" Harry had to think about that some more. He couldn't remember the last time England had won the World Cup... and it wasn't just due to lack of skill on the part of a couple players. They were consistently outgunned every time.

"I'm saying we could *rewrite the game*, Potter. New plays. New formations. Nobody would have seen it before...we'd take every team by storm." The excitement in his voice was hard to argue with.

"But...but we're not *on* England's team," Harry finally answered. "We're kids."

"Not kids for long, Potter. Not for long. And we're not on the team yet...but we will be. Look, we are *good*. My father knows people, scouts...we can get noticed when we're ready. Do you want to? Tell me right now, swear to commit....we can do it, I *know* we can."

"Oh, jeez, I..." Harry's throat closed up. He nodded and held out his hand...but this time, instead of offering a handshake, he reached up. Malfoy slapped him five, and the sound echoed through the empty bathroom like a gunshot.

For a few minutes they just stared at each other, absorbing the situation. Then, Harry found the moment of understanding far too creepy. He cleared his throat. "Um. That lipstick looks really silly on you," he said finally.

Chapter Six

"Limits"

A/N: A part of this chapter is truly wince-worthy. I've marked it, so you can skip it if need be.

Also, this chapter is the site of a somewhat serious cannon violation - Percy Weasley makes an appearance as prefect, which would be impossible because he must have graduated by now, but I like the part so much that I'm not taking it out. Maybe he ingested some age-detracting potion?

When Harry got to the Quidditch pitch, Malfoy was there already. It was the first time Harry had seen him since the Veronica episode was over, and he blinked at the disorienting switch back from female to male.

"Worked through your crisis, did you?" he asked jovially.

"Shut it, Potter. Today we start for real. Training will be hell."

"Training already *is* hell," Harry observed, but let Malfoy show him a list of skills they'd need to develop. Harry looked it over and winced at some of them. "Flying with broken bones? Are you sure that's a good idea?" he asked skeptically.

Malfoy shrugged and handed him a pair of plain black Quidditch robes. "It helped you once, didn't it? You never know. Now put these on - from now on we're going to stop training in school robes. What's the point in practicing things we'll never need to be able to do? These at least won't flap around and annoy us."

Harry obliged him and they flew a few practice laps. "So, what are we doing today?" he called out.

"How about speed?" Malfoy asked with a wicked grin. "Let's see how fast these brooms can go. We have to work on killer acceleration, and fast sideways turns. That nasty little vertical spin you pulled off can wait - first we'll get the basics down solid. We'll steal from Krum later. Okay?"

"Fine," said Harry. "But at the end we'll do our usual, all right? Chase the snitch and humiliate the loser."

"You are a sex-starved little pervert, Potter, you know that?" Malfoy laughed as he soared upwards.

Harry arched his eyebrows. "Who said anything about sex?" he yelled after him innocently. "Get your perverted mind out of the gutter!"

They flew and raced for two hours. Malfoy had brought racing books and they watched the animated illustrations show different techniques for acceleration and quick turns, then tried it all until they were totally exhausted.

Finally, Harry noticed it was getting dark. "We'd better hurry up, or we'll be chasing the snidgit in pitch darkness," he suggested. "Let's finish up for now - we can work more on that stupid new hand position tomorrow."

"That 'stupid new hand position' is the fastest thing in Quidditch today, Potter," Malfoy scoffed. "But fine, we'll stop it here. That is, *if* you think you can handle a snitch-contest tonight. You're looking a little worn out to me."

Harry grinned. "This coming from a girl - excuse me, a *boy* - who takes twenty minutes to make it up *one* staircase..."

"Heels, Potter! I was wearing *heels*! Twenty minutes is great - I'd like to see you try it in less." Noticing Harry's annoying smile, he added warningly, "And don't you start making comments about my manhood, or I'll..."

"You'll what? Throw your lipstick at me?"

"Little boy, I'm more of a man than you'll ever be...don't think I don't remember how you *cried* the first time I fucked you," Malfoy jeered back. Although their argument was half-joking, mainly used to get them riled up enough for a serious contest, that one struck a nerve.

"Oooh, that's it! You're in for it," Harry warned. "This time I'll rock you so hard I'll drill through the top of your head!"

"With what, Potter? Not your tiny little excuse for a...ha, I was bigger than that when I was ten years old!"

"*What?*" Harry roared, really enraged now. "That's it! Not big enough for you, am I? Well! We'll fix that! Next bet: Winner gets to apply an Engorgement Charm before the *festivities*. How's that sound?"

Malfoy gulped and shuddered as a funny chill ran down his spine.

Harry's smile was icy. "So, want to take it back, hmm? Don't think you could handle the idea of anything bigger, do you? Admit it. You can hardly take me as it is."

His insecurity was so obvious that Malfoy couldn't resist. He met Harry's eyes squarely and said, "Potter, you're a runt."

Harry glared at him. "You'll make the bet, then?" He held out his hand and Malfoy took it. "Poor bastard."

Harry was fighting for his manly honor. Malfoy was just fighting to avoid torture - torture that was, by now, getting familiar. He couldn't quite force himself into serious overdrive, and Harry clearly had the upper hand from the start. He was literally flying circles around Malfoy, making him dizzy and cutting off his line of vision. So far, neither of them had seen the snitch, but Harry was wiggling with impatience and totally ready to go.

To further irritate his opponent, he began chanting in a singsong voice, "Malfoy's gonna get his arse ripped open, Malfoy's gonna get his-"

"Shut up!" Malfoy lost his cool and charged, but Harry spun upwards and avoided the attack.

"Watch it, Veronica - may I call you Nicki? - because a lot of refs would give you a penalty for that," he advised cheerfully. "Although, since you're a girl they might-"

A flash of golden wings.

They were off. Unfortunately Malfoy had the lead by a few feet, but he was wound so tightly by now that his feints were unconvincing. He pulled down desperately at the last second, hoping to lure Harry into a false dive, but Harry was expecting it and took the opportunity to use a short acceleration like they'd just practiced.

He hung onto the broom with one hand on the very tip, leaning far out forward and grabbing the snitch from a distance that would have been impossible only yesterday. "Hey! That stupid new hand position actually works," he exclaimed. "Isn't it great?"

Judging by the look on Malfoy's face, he didn't think it was great at all.

(THIS PART IS NOT FOR THE KIDDIES)

Harry stripped and took out his wand. "All right, here goes," he said. "*Engorgio!*"

Malfoy gasped "Merlin's beard! You're twice your size." He stared with his mouth open, suddenly remembering the horribly stretching invasion that Harry was *normally* capable of...what would *this* feel like? He didn't know if he could

stand to find out. "Potter..." he gulped, trying to keep the fear out of his face. "Um. A good lubrication charm, please? You...you could really hurt me."

Despite his original goal to make this as awful as possible, Harry found himself responding to the terror his victim couldn't quite conceal. "Don't worry, Malfoy," he said softly. "I'll go slow."

Malfoy got down on his hands and knees, bracing himself against the floor and forbidding himself to scream or cry. He heard the familiar lubrication charm and tensed up reflexively.

Surprisingly, though, he was not immediately split wide open. Instead, he felt a small, gentle pressure at his opening, and looked over his shoulder in confusion. "What-"

"Relax, Malfoy, that's my hand," Harry explained, working a slippery finger into him slowly. "I read someplace you're always supposed to do this first, you know, warm the person up. This time I think we'd really better. I mean, I'd hate for you to have to go to Madam Pomfrey looking like you'd had a cannon ball shot up your arse."

The laugh which escaped Malfoy had an undertone of panicked desperation. "Hey! Ow, what's that? Quit twisting."

"Malfoy, if you can't take two fingers there's no way I can get-"

"Just shut up and *do* it, Potter," Malfoy said. "We've managed every other time without touching each other. I'll survive."

Harry shrugged, zapping a second lubrication charm straight up Malfoy's ass as an extra precaution. "If you say so." He lined himself up carefully and forced his way in just a little, then stopped to give the boy a minute to adjust.

Some time passed, however, and he was still not adjusting very well. Harry could hear him panting, and feel the trembling he didn't even come close to controlling this time. "Malfoy...are you okay?"

"J-Just p-peachy, Potter," the boy snarled haltingly.

"Good." Annoyed at having his concern thrown back at him, Harry pushed in another two inches. "How about now?" he asked, sliding an arm around his enemy's waist for better control. He felt Malfoy's chest heaving with surprising violence.

"Even...even better," his victim gasped angrily, unsuccessfully trying to bite back a pained squeak. "Better than...than your usual t-tiny self, Potter."

Irritated beyond measure now, Harry surged forward and, in one smooth stroke, buried himself all the way.

Malfoy convulsed as if he'd been electrocuted. He actually screamed, then bowed his head so he could cover his mouth with his hands. Harry leaned forward slowly until his mouth rested close to Draco's ear.

"Hey...are you all right?" he asked quietly.

Malfoy made no audible answer, but shook his head *no* with such short jerky movements that Harry understood he really was in serious pain.

"All right, all right," Harry soothed, bending to kiss the bare shoulder beneath him before he thought about it. "Hey, it's okay. I'll-"

"Potter, don't k-kiss me," Malfoy snarled, believing he had his voice under control.

He was wrong, of course, but any sympathy Harry might have felt was destroyed by the snarky reply. "All right, I won't," he sniffed, and moved his hips a tiny bit. "Come on. You can't really take this, can you?" he asked smugly.

Gritting his teeth against the impossible burning feeling, Draco couldn't answer right away. Normally, this sort of agony was reserved for the very first moment of penetration, but tonight it went on and on. "D-Don't move," he grated out, managing to make the plea sound like a command. He was waiting for the cramps to stop, and the tearing feeling to be replaced by a steady unpleasant throb...but it never happened.

"Well? Can you?" Harry repeated, continuing to bait his enemy with tiny movements. When Draco's only reply was a whimper, Harry knew that he couldn't go through with this. "Oh, fine," he sighed. "Beg me."

"What?"

"You heard me, Malfoy. Tell me you can't take it, and I'll let you off."

Harry was shocked to hear Draco's pride take over. "N-Not in this lifetime, P-Potter." He could barely get the words out.

If he wants to dig his own grave that's fine with me, Harry thought. He pulled out a little bit and pushed in again. Draco groaned through clenched teeth. Harry did it again, harder this time, and Malfoy gave up.

"Stop," he gasped. It was nearly a sob and Harry reached around to see if he was crying. His cheeks were drenched.

"Thought so," said Harry grimly. "Now you just tell me what you think of my normal size, and then I'll let you go."

"F-Fuck you, Potter," snarled.

"You're only making this harder on yourself," Harry said prosaically. "The price has just risen: you want out, now you've got to ask nicely *and* apologize for calling me small. And hurry up before I change my mind - soon I'll be making you write sonnets of undying devotion."

"F-F-Fuck you," Malfoy repeated desperately, but couldn't keep it up. Another shudder wracked him and he capitulated with a squeal. "Come *on*, Potter, you can see it's t-too big," he pleaded. "I can't take it! Stop. It...it's ripping me, please!" Finally convinced by the pain to abandon his ego completely, he cried, "What do you w-want to hear? That I like you b-better the other way? Aaah...Oh, God, yes, anything! P-Please! You're not small, Potter, y-you're - ah - anything, please..."

Harry had never expected to hear such groveling submission from his arrogant nemesis. "All right, all right," he agreed. "Good boy. Now, hold still. This will probably hurt."

He began inching back very, very slowly. Although Malfoy had his head buried in his arms, Harry could still hear his sobbing without any trouble. He made the mistake of looking down once, and winced sympathetically. No wonder Draco was crying! The sheer *impossibility* of the size should have occurred to him before they even started, but it took seeing it to make it real.

At last he was out. Harry had tried to be gentle in withdrawing, but he knew Malfoy was still probably hurting pretty badly. He fetched his wand to de-charm himself and clean everything up, then tossed his tortured rival a pair of underwear.

Still on the floor crying, Malfoy pulled on the boxers without looking up. They were both not naked now, so Harry didn't feel as weird laying back down next to him and conjuring up pillows and a fluffy blanket. "Relax," he murmured. "It'll feel better soon."

"Think so?"

"I dunno. I hope so," Harry offered. "Nox." He snuggled in closer, facing Draco's back, and put an arm around his waist. "Just go to sleep."

As the boy's ragged breathing finally quieted, Harry thought he might actually be asleep. He wasn't. "Potter..." he whispered.

"Yeah?"

"I couldn't help it. That...that really hurt. Still does. You can't *imagine* how bad it was..." He was shaking a little with remembered pain.

Harry squeezed him briefly. "Don't worry about it, you did fine. I won't make fun of you for begging out." He couldn't help adding, "But you'd better not make fun of my...you know...anymore."

"Don't worry - I've learned my lesson. I brought this on myself, didn't I?" he realized. Harry's only answer was a quiet chuckle of agreement, and they lay in silence for awhile. "Potter..." Malfoy finally whispered.

"Yeah?"

"Get your hands off me."

Harry grinned in the darkness. He released his now-calm now-enemy and rolled over so that they were back-to-back. "Night."

"Night."

(KIDDIES CAN START READING AGAIN)

Harry had meant to take a short nap and then go back to his dormitory. Instead, he awoke many hours later, with light streaming in the windows and a warm body at his back. He tensed. "What time is it?" he demanded thickly, having trouble remembering where he was and what he was doing there.

"Saturday," came the half-asleep mumble. Aha. Malfoy's voice. Everything came flooding back, and Harry just pulled the covers back over his head and went back to sleep.

The second time he awoke, it was because a loud pounding was shaking the door on its hinges. "Who is in there?" demanded a loud, authoritative voice. Harry sat bolt upright.

Malfoy was already awake, stretching his back out uncomfortably and looking apprehensive. "That sounds like Weasley's voice - the prefect."

"Percy!" Harry gasped under his breath. "No! If he finds us in here, we're in so much trouble!"

The pounding continued. "Who has locked this door? What's going on?" Percy demanded pompously.

"Malfoy, we've got to do something," Harry said urgently. "He's not going to go away. What will we say?"

Malfoy bit his lip. "Fine. One of us has to be here, obviously, because somebody's locked the door from the inside. But there's no point in *both* of us getting in trouble. Here - you hide under your cloak and I'll take the blame - I owe you for letting me off last night."

"What - you mean for possessing a tiny shred of mercy? I'm sorry about last night, Malfoy, I really didn't realize it would be quite so bad, I never would have-"

"Quit destroying my one noble sacrifice," Malfoy said irritably. "The *real* reason is I don't trust you - I'm a better liar. If I let *you* handle things, Weasley would probably leave here knowing exactly what happened last night and with whom. So shut up and hide, and let me take care of it."

Harry nodded and slipped under his Invisibility Cloak.

Malfoy, not bothering to put on clothes, went and unlocked the door in his boxers.

"M-Malfoy!" Percy Weasley stuttered, taking one look at the almost-naked body and turning away. "Where are your clothes? What are you doing in the Prefects' Lounge?" After a moment, when Malfoy didn't answer, Percy persisted, "Well? What are you doing in here?"

"Wanking," Malfoy said decidedly. Harry sucked in his breath and prayed for strength not to laugh. He glanced at the serious expression on the pale face, and almost lost control.

"W-Wanking?" Percy echoed.

"Yes, Weasley, *wanking*. Is the concept unfamiliar to you? Judging by the state of your robes, I'd say not."

Harry couldn't help looking. Draco was right! Percy must have come to the bathroom for privacy's sake. Harry began to wonder if rumours of shagging in the Astronomy tower were all made-up - it seemed to him that every sex-starved student ended up in *here*.

At the thought of Percy Weasley doing that, Harry choked horribly on a burst of laughter. He froze. "What's that?" Percy asked, sounding panicked. "Did you hear that?"

"Hear what?"

"Th-that voice. Is there someone else in here?"

"Of course not," Malfoy scoffed, and Harry was struck by the effectiveness of the cold sneer. Just going on the tone, he would never have guessed that Malfoy was lying. "I came here for *privacy*, Weasley, and before you showed up I had it. Now, get out." Harry's eyes widened. Percy was a prefect! Malfoy couldn't just- "I said, *get out*, Weasley," he repeated. "I was here first. Unless you want me to tell everyone I caught you polishing your broomstick in the Prefects Bathroom, you'd better clear out and let me finish up. I'll be out in a second."

Percy backed out of the bathroom, still not looking at the half-naked Slytherin he'd discovered, and Harry burst out laughing the minute he'd closed the door. "Malfoy! That was brilliant."

"Yes, wasn't it?"

Harry sobered a little. "You know, you're lucky he didn't look at you too closely," he observed.

"Why? Think he'd have jumped me? You jealous, Potter?"

"No," Harry answered, "I don't think Percy would shag you if you *paid* him, but-

"Considering he's a Weasley, that says a lot," Malfoy interrupted, but Harry continued.

"I was just worried he might have noticed your shorts. *My* shorts."

Suddenly looking down in horror, Malfoy gasped aloud when he saw the gold lions glaring back up at him. "I put on the wrong underwear! Oh, no!" All of a sudden the meaning sunk deeper. "I'm wearing *your* underwear! UGH!" Malfoy tore them off and stood naked. "Where are mine?"

"Where do you think?" Harry snarled, and Malfoy's eyes widened. "You want them back?" He started to strip, but Draco shoved him and shook his head.

"No, you idiot, you can keep them! Forever! Now that you've been prancing around with your filthy arse in *my* underpants, we'll just have to switch for good."

Harry chuckled. "Don't you think that's a little silly, Draco? My 'filthy arse' was in *those* underpants all day. At least I've only been wearing yours for a *little* while..."

With another bellow of disgust, Malfoy chucked the gold-and-scarlet boxers across the room. "Fine! Fine! I'll just go starkers under the robe." He paused. "You, too. Give mine back to me - the last thing I want in my brain is the thought of you in my underwear all day."

They were both laughing as Harry removed Draco's silky black boxers and held them out. "I won't touch them," Malfoy declared, drawing his wand. "Let's incinerate them all." They made a bonfire of both pairs of underwear, blushing furiously and giggling the entire time.

"What's Ron going to think when I show back up in our room naked?" Harry wondered aloud, fastening his robe.

"Tell him you met Percy in here and-"

He couldn't finish the sentence because Harry had him in a choke hold. "Shut up, pervert!"

Chapter Seven

"Snape's Desk"

Several days and three Quidditch books later, Malfoy finally understood the vertical turn Harry had used on him early on in their games. During the snitch-contest that day, he and Harry were racing down the field when he suddenly yanked the handle of his broom straight up. Harry, of course, assumed he was using his new turn, and whirled around to head him off.

But he wasn't. Malfoy did a total loop and ended up in a dive straight downwards.

Harry bit his lip and tried to follow...

Within a few moments, Malfoy was circling him lazily, tossing the snidgit from hand to hand. "You lose, Potter. You lose and you're an idiot. You should have seen that coming a mile away."

"Don't rub it in," Harry begged. "I already feel like throwing up."

"Why? It'll be no different from any other day, will it? Every time you walk into Snape's classroom, you're fucked. Only this time, it happens to be literally."

"*On Snape's desk*," Harry whispered in horror, yet again. "I can't believe I let you talk me into that..."

"Tell you what, though. I'll let you choose tonight or tomorrow night - we've got the Gryffindor versus Slytherin match in the morning, and the last thing I want is an unfair victory because you can't ride the broom right."

Surprised that Malfoy would be so considerate, Harry thanked him and chose the night *after* the match. This game meant a lot to him - it would be the first Quidditch match since he and Malfoy started flying together, and he fully expected the two of them to have a spectacular time showing off their new moves in front of an audience.

Malfoy agreed to meet him midnight after the match, and they parted ways. Harry hadn't been lying - he *did* feel like throwing up. Could he really lie down in that hated classroom and...? What if Snape walked in on them? What if he had wards to tell him when students did something like that?

Well, at least I can put it off for one more day, Harry thought. And who knew - perhaps he would win the match tomorrow and demand that Malfoy cancel this last competition as payback. Trying to console himself with that thought, he went to bed and spent several hours tossing and turning. He always had trouble sleeping the night before a match, but this time was even worse than usual.

He was still wide awake when he heard the door creak. "Who's that?" he whispered, sitting up in bed.

Nobody answered. Convinced that he had imagined the noise, Harry lay back down again, but was startled half to death a second later when somebody whispered very close to his ear, "Move over."

The intruder shrugged out of an Invisibility Cloak and slipped into Harry's bed.

"Malfoy? What the hell are you-"

"Shhhh," Malfoy whispered. "I couldn't sleep. Neither can you, by the look of things." He stopped as though that should explain everything.

"But why are you in my bed?"

Malfoy's sneer told Harry it was the stupidest question in the history of the world. "Because it's cold out there," he answered, gesturing to the room at large.

"But why are you in my *room* in the first place?"

"Oh, that." There was a long silence, and finally he explained, "Well, I know I said I'd let you choose...but I read someplace that...that if you can't sleep it sometimes helps...I mean, well, I was kind of hoping you'd let me *do* you tonight."

"Do me? Come on, Malfoy, Ron and everybody'll wake up and they'll hang us both."

Malfoy just barely swallowed a laugh. "Not here, stupid. Snape's desk. You promised." When Harry opened his mouth to protest again, he added, "I won't hurt you this time - you'll still be able to play tomorrow. Please?"

Because Harry couldn't think of any other reasons to say no, he ended up under his Invisibility Cloak, stumbling towards the dungeons after his invisible companion, cursing under his breath the whole time. When they reached the Potions classroom, Malfoy unlocked it with his wand and gestured for Harry to precede him inside - a gesture Harry couldn't see, since they were both invisible.

After locking the door behind him, Malfoy cast a solid silencing charm and grinned. "All right then. Up you go."

Harry gulped and walked up to the desk. He couldn't make himself touch it - there was still some tiny part of him that (despite the locked doors and the silent hallways and the Marauders' Map that showed Snape still asleep in his bed) just *knew* the greasy old professor would barge in the moment he was undressed...

"Will you hurry up, Potter? It's not like this is the middle of Potions class. Nobody here but you and me. Get up there."

Harry had to smile, imagining this taking place in the middle of class. Okay, he understood - things could always be worse. Finally, he overcame his superstitious hesitation and reached out and slapped his hand on the desk. There. That wasn't so hard.

After that it was easy to climb up and get into position. They'd decided it was too cold for stripping down tonight, so Harry just rearranged his clothes a little and waited for the inevitable to begin...

The lubrication charm was followed by an unfamiliar sensation Harry realized must be Malfoy stretching him out manually. He looked over his shoulder, surprised, and received a shrug in response.

"Just returning the favor, Potter. I did promise I wouldn't hurt you." After a bit Malfoy deemed him ready and began, and Harry was shocked at what difference a little preparation made.

It didn't hurt nearly so badly this time. As a matter of fact, when Malfoy moved so smoothly in and out without the usual shoves and jerks, it was almost...

No.

Harry struggled a little, wishing it would somehow begin to hurt more so that he could forget that for a second he'd almost...

No.

Malfoy reached forward and pressed Harry's head down to the desk. "Hold still," he panted. "Quit flopping around." Keeping his hand on the back of Harry's neck to hold him in place meant a slight change in angle, and on the next thrust Harry gasped and shuddered under him. "What?"

"N-Nothing," Harry squeaked. "What was that? Don't do that."

"Do what?" Malfoy asked, and Harry could hear the nasty smile on his face. He did it again, and again, and Harry was having a hard time keeping his mouth shut.

Harry couldn't deny it any more. The spot Malfoy was hitting, with every stroke now, felt *good*. He tried to focus on something else. Right in front of his nose was an old ink-stain. Snape had probably graded papers on this very spot just a few hours ago.

Instead of making Harry feel disgusted, that thought made him want to laugh. He gasped as Malfoy pressed against that special whatever-it-was, and tried hard to pretend he didn't like it. He stared at the grooved wood and reminded himself that tomorrow his homework would probably receive its failing grade *right here*. Nothing to have fun about.

Malfoy apparently grew tired of tormenting Harry that way, and went back to his usual method of taking his pleasure however he wanted, without regard to the body beneath him. It certainly felt worse, now, but Harry was more comfortable anyway. He was profoundly relieved when Malfoy finally came.

"If Snape only knew..."

Harry laughed. "I'm afraid to think about it. I can't even *imagine* what he'd do to me." He sat on the edge of the desk. "It's less scary up here now. I suppose after all, it *is* just a desk....why're you looking at me like that?" he demanded, hoping he wasn't blushing.

"You're a pervert, Potter," Malfoy said, awed and disgusted. He sounded like a scientist who had discovered a particularly slimy new species of slug. "You *liked* that."

"Did not!" Harry said swiftly, immediately defensive.

Malfoy smirked. "That's not what your pajamas say."

Harry looked down. Damn! He hadn't realized it was so obvious, even through his clothes.

Having gotten what he wanted, and humiliated Harry to boot, Malfoy smirked one last time and turned to leave. "Hey, wait," Harry called him back.

"Yeah?"

"Um...I couldn't sleep either," Harry said, not quite able to say it yet.

"So?"

"So, um..." Harry gestured to the desk and shrugged. "Can I...um..." Malfoy's eyebrows shot up. "No, no, really! I'll owe you something," Harry offered. "Come on, please?"

There was a long pause. "Make me an offer. It had better be something good."

Harry thought for a moment. "Okay. The match tomorrow - never mind what team wins, but if I get the snitch you don't have to do anything. But if *you* get it..."

"If I get it, you'll..." Malfoy smiled. "I've got it. This isn't going to be easy. You'll go to the match in a brand-new pair of Slytherin underwear under your robes. Shining silver and neon green. And if you lose, you'll strip down in front of everyone and kneel at my feet."

Just the thought made Harry blush. "Oh, bugger..."

All common sense said no. But there was something else that was saying yes, something that was aching and throbbing *very* persistently...

"Okay. Okay, fine. But let's go, now, before I change my mind."

Malfoy grinned and strutted over to the desk. He ran his hands across it and murmured, "If Snape only knew..." then bent over it and hiked up his nightrobes. "All right, Potter, go to town."

Harry smiled as he prepared his enemy for a probable first at Hogwarts - a Slytherin getting fucked over in Snape's classroom. The thought of Snape finding out was almost enough to scare the lust out of him, though, so he discarded that thought and instead just appreciated the novelty of the idea. He slid in slowly, wondering if he could remember how to do that unspeakable *thing* Malfoy had discovered. *How would HE like it, to suddenly realize it feels good and he can't stop it*, Harry thought vindictively, but wasn't sure how to make it work.

Well, there was always next time. The desk suddenly lost its appeal when Harry noticed Snape's high-backed chair a couple feet away. "Come on," he whispered, dragging Malfoy over to it and pulling him down on top of himself. "Like this."

Malfoy gasped as he was suddenly impaled with all his weight. "Ooh, damn you, Potter. Never thought of this one," he muttered, shifting uncomfortably. Harry sucked his breath in. "What? You like that?"

"What do you think, you idiot?" Harry breathed. "Of course I like it. Keep moving. Yeah. Like that."

Malfoy sighed indulgently, as though Harry were a little child he were humoring, and contracted something. Harry squeaked. "Potter, you're hopeless, you know that?" he shifted his weight some more and moved in ways that reduced Harry to a helpless panting blob in minutes.

Finally Harry couldn't wait any more. He shoved them both into a standing position, then bent Malfoy back over the desk and finished up. When they were done, Malfoy laughed. "I have to say it again: If Snape only knew..."

Harry laughed back. "Yes, well, just don't say that during the next Potions class. If he takes it into his head to slip one of us Veritaserum we're really in trouble."

Torn between laughing and looking horrified, they headed back up to their separate dormitories. Harry felt satiated and pleasantly exhausted. He decided he'd have no trouble getting to sleep now.

Chapter Eight

"Truth Potions"

As soon as the match began, Harry decided to stick close to Malfoy. Much as he hated to admit it, he trusted the blond boy to find the snitch quicker than he could find it himself, and besides it would prevent the chance of the snitch surfacing where Malfoy had a chance to grab it with Harry too far away.

"Scared, Potter?" Malfoy jeered, diving abruptly and pulling out again after a few meters.

"You wish," Harry said, following him without effort. Malfoy began making more serious efforts to lose his pursuer, speeding around the stadium and dodging between players and goal hoops. Harry kept up.

"Get out of here, Potter!" Malfoy finally yelled. "Quit clinging to me, I'm not your mum!"

Certain that he'd spoken without thinking, Harry just answered, "You're right - you're not. My mum's been underground a little too long to fly this fast."

Malfoy winced. "Sorry."

"No problem." Harry glanced over his opponent's shoulder and noticed Fred Weasley setting his brother up for a direct shot at Malfoy. George came up fast and hit it hard, but the Bludger swerved of its own accord at the last second, missing Malfoy by inches.

"Hey!" He whipped around in a whirl of green robes to see where it had come from.

Harry grinned. "Should have put on your battle lipstick for this one, Veronica. This is war." He swung his broom around in a cocky little loop, so Malfoy shot under him and bumped him from underneath.

"I'll knock you off if I have to, Potter."

"You'll have to catch me first!" Keeping his eyes open for the snitch, Harry took off, keeping a second ahead. Being pursued was fun. His heart was beating in his throat as he zoomed above the teachers' box, nearly taking off Hagrid's head. Malfoy was right behind him.

Eventually Harry pulled to a stop above one end of the field. "This snitch is damned annoying," he muttered. "Our snidgit never takes this long to show up *someplace*. We've been over the whole field."

"Patience, Potter, patience," Malfoy panted. "At least we get a breather this way."

Harry felt, rather than saw, the Bludger come up on his left side. He threw himself sideways and executed a tight rotation around his broomstick. When he righted himself, he was just in time to see the Bludger slam full-force into Malfoy's chest and then take off.

For a split second Harry thought that his opponent would be able to hold on, but he'd been shoved so far off-balance that there was no hope. As though it were happening in slow motion, he watched Malfoy fall backwards and let go of his broom entirely, sinking into the air with a shocked expression on his face.

In the time it took to call his name, Harry realized a lot of things very quickly:

One: The ground was a long, long way off.

Two: There was nobody else, including teachers and Madam Hooch, close enough to get to him in time.

Three: Since the incident with Quirrel, there were blocks on the field to prevent spectators from casting spells.

Four: The Snitch. Down and to his right, close to Malfoy's trajectory but not really...

I can't let him fall. I can't miss the Snitch. Well, we HAVE been practicing quick turns lately...

Harry dove so sharply his broom hit him in the forehead. It was a textbook-perfect dive, arrow-straight and not a trace of wild spinning...

He reached the Snitch and executed a pivot, leaning out to snatch it with one hand as his other jerked the broom handle around to point in a different direction. He took off again just as his fingers closed around the gold ball, trusting his killer stomach muscles to snap his body back to the proper direction so he didn't bend his spine the wrong way. Perfect.

He still had time to get to Malfoy, crash into him and slip an arm around his torso, and pull out of the dive.

There were still almost ten feet before the ground.

Malfoy squirmed terribly and clutched at Harry's arm. "Watch it! Ribs," he snarled breathlessly.

"You broke them?"

"More than one, I think," Malfoy grunted, swinging a leg up to straddle the broom in front of his rescuer. "Thanks."

"No problem." Harry paused. "I got the Snitch." He was somewhat shocked that they were having such a calm conversation. The adrenaline rush was making him dizzy.

"Did you?" Malfoy sounded impressed. "Nice work. I wouldn't have thought...say, if you didn't have time, which would you have gone for? It or me?"

By now they had reached Malfoy's broom. Harry helped him on to it, ignoring his grimace and the tears that were leaking out of his eyes, and glanced at the hundred feet down. "The Snitch, obviously."

Malfoy grinned at him through the pain. "And here I thought you were getting soft. Good answer, Potter. And good game."

Harry breathed a huge sigh of relief. Nobody would be seeing these atrocious Slytherin underpants after all. He kept a hand on Malfoy broom stick to steady it, since the boy had both arms crossed over his chest in a futile effort to make his ribs stop hurting, and they flew slowly towards the center of the pitch.

There was a commotion on the ground, as a group of professors pointed at the Seekers and worried about what had happened. A Slytherin chaser landed, and somebody snatched his broom and mounted to come investigate.

Somebody who was tall and scary and flew reasonably well. Shit. Snape.

Harry backed off when he arrived, and hovered uncertainly a few feet away. Snape drew his wand. "Just ribs?" he asked tersely. Malfoy nodded, and Snape conjured a huge bandage around his torso, over his Quidditch robes.

Then he turned to Harry with a wide smile on his face. "Your Quidditch-playing days are over, Potter. You have *no idea* how illegal performance-enhancing spells are. You'll never touch another broomstick."

Harry opened his mouth to protest, already knowing how useless it would be, but Malfoy spoke up.

"No, sir, he's for real," he insisted, wincing with every word. "We've been training. I...hospital wing," he finally gasped.

Snape shot a final glare at Harry. "Don't you go anywhere, Potter. I'm having someone come to test you right away. Don't even reach for your wand. Watch him," he snapped at Malfoy and flew off.

"Sir, I saw him learn that, and-"

"Don't bother," Harry cut him off, glaring at Snape's back. "Forget it. He's not going to listen no matter what I say. Are you really okay? It's not just your ribs, is it?"

"Don't know." Malfoy strained visibly to take a hand off his chest and put it on his broom. "Anyway, Snape should believe *me*, at least. Come see me tonight. Bring the new book."

Harry nodded. "Okay. Sorry about that Bludger. I really didn't see it coming."

"Hey - it's war." Malfoy's grin was weak and he slumped a little farther over his broomstick.

Harry noticed a dark stain beginning to show through the bandage over his robes. "Wait...is that *blood*?"

"Dunno."

Snape was back, with Madame Hooch and Professor McGonagall behind him. Malfoy tried one last time. "Professor, I was *with* Potter when he learned that pivot. There's no performance-enhancing anything involved here, I'm sure of it."

Snape grabbed the front of Malfoy's broomstick and shot him a death-stare. "And I'm having you checked for a Confundus Charm as well," he snarled as he led him away.

McGonagall was trying to get Harry's attention. "Potter? Potter, give me your wand and look at this light here. Are you listening? Look right here and keep your eyes open...Potter?"

It was exactly like the paralysis he'd experienced his first year, when Harry had watched Ron get smashed to the ground by the stone chess player. Now, focusing on a stupid magical light was something of a problem, especially since, watching his half-collapsed training partner flown off the field, Harry couldn't even make his heart stop pounding.

"All right, Harry, what was that about?"

"What was what about?" Harry didn't think for one second he'd be able to fool or distract Ron.

"Come on, do you think I'm stupid or something? You and Malfoy. Spill."

Harry decided he'd have to tell the truth...minus all the interesting parts. He just explained that, out of pure competitive spirit, he and Malfoy had started training together after hours.

Ron wanted to come watch. Realizing that that would change the dynamics of their practices, Harry refused. The betrayal in Ron's eyes was really, really hard to bear, but Harry stuck to his guns. Sacrifices. If they didn't make sacrifices, they would never get anywhere.

Knowing he would no longer be expected at the Gryffindor chess table after dinner, Harry stuck the Quidditch book in his bag and headed for the hospital wing as soon as he'd eaten. "Hey. Draco, wake up."

Malfoy opened his eyes sleepily. "Potter? I'm drugged to the moon. Go away." Harry started to leave, but Malfoy called him back. "Wait, no. Stay. I just might not be making a whole lot of sense."

Harry sat by his bedside and pulled out the book. "Look, I read through this and I realized we've only been working on solo seeker maneuvers. Just silly training stuff all seekers are supposed to have down pat."

Malfoy nodded. "We ignored the Bludgers."

"We ignored everything else on the pitch, Malfoy, and it was totally negligent of us. From now on we train against everything."

"All right." His voice was still weak. "How do you propose we train against Bludgers?"

Harry gulped. "You're not going to like this. It's hard and we'll probably get hurt."

"Hurt. Bah." Malfoy smiled. "If I can take this I can take anything. Do you want to know what happened?" Harry shook his head no. "I'm telling you anyway. The pieces of my ribs went-

"Euw. Shut up!"

"Baby."

"Shut up, Malfoy."

"Girl."

"Shut up, Veronica."

Malfoy shut up with another weak smile. "Look, Potter," he said finally. "I hope Snape isn't giving you any trouble. I tried to explain things but he just looked at me really weird. *Really* weird. Well, the spell-tests will be negative anyway so that's okay. I couldn't be really nasty to him though because we're going to need his help eventually. We can't put a team together without any teachers knowing about it."

"Yeah." Harry looked around for chocolate. "Where's your candy? Let's eat something."

"Don't have any."

Puzzled, Harry said, "When I'm in the hospital wing people always send me loads of candy and flowers..."

"That's because you're Harry Potter," Malfoy said bitterly. "Besides, when you're here it's usually because you've just saved the world or something."

Harry laughed. "If only. Usually it's just because I'm an idiot. Look, if nobody got you chocolates we'll just have to raid Madame Pomfrey's supply. Where is she?"

"Not here," Malfoy said, relaxing a bit and almost forgiving Harry for being famous. "She went to eat a little while ago. She left this button to push if I need her."

"Don't push it." Harry started rummaging around in cabinets until he found a box of chocolate frogs. Between the two of them, they ate the whole thing in a matter of minutes. "I better go soon," Harry said around a mouthful of candy. "I'm not supposed to be here."

"Oh, and that's always been effective in keeping you out of places," Malfoy said sarcastically. He watched Harry licking chocolate off his fingers and an idea struck. "All right, I know what our next bet is."

Harry froze. "What?"

"Not telling yet." Malfoy's smile sent chills down Harry's spine. "Go. Leave me the book. I'll read up on Bludger tactics and try to figure out what Snape's problem is - he said he'd be in to talk to me later."

Harry nodded and went to the door. "Right. Well...feel better, Malfoy."

Malfoy laughed softly. "Right. You're just saying that so you can fuck me again. I'm onto you, pervert."

Harry laughed as he shut the door behind him.

Harry didn't get another chance to talk to Malfoy before the next Potions class. He was wondering whether Malfoy had taken care of Snape's suspicions. Within the first ten seconds of class, he found out the answer.

"Today," Snape said, with a quick glare at Harry, "We are going to be making Truth Potions."

Harry closed his eyes and firmly resisted the urge to bang his head against his desk....

Chapter Nine

"Chapter Nine" (Getting lazy with the titles)

At the end of class, pretending for all the world like he hadn't decided it hours in advance, Snape said, "I think we'll test the truth potion on...hmmm...Potter."

"Gee, I didn't see that one coming," Harry muttered sarcastically, but went to the front of the room anyway. Ron had agreed to somehow stop the torture if things went too far wrong - Harry was sure Snape wasn't allowed to ask him about certain things.

He just hoped his sex life had made it onto that list.

He went to the front of the room and stood stiffly. Snape handed him a steaming ladle and watched happily as he drained it.

After giving the potion a minute to sink in, Snape sat on the edge of his desk and regarded his pupil thoughtfully. What to ask?

Harry was giggling - his teacher was sitting right where.... Snape explained to the class, "The Truth Potion also contains a large inhibition-reducing element, because the brain is hard-wired not to respond to certain types of questions. The potion has to bypass these natural defenses, as well as the compulsion to consciously lie." He turned to Harry. "All right, Potter, what's so funny?"

Out of the corner of his eye, Harry saw Malfoy sit straight up. Despite the fact that he was compelled to answer truthfully, Harry knew there were ways... *Think. Try not to give anything away.* "I'm thinking about shagging, sir. On your desk."

Snape stood abruptly and curled his lip at where he'd been sitting. "Are you?" he asked conversationally, once the class's laughter had subsided.

"Yes, sir."

Ron twitched in his seat, but couldn't claim that the question had not been a fair one. *Dammit, Harry, stop laughing!* He thought desperately.

"And is that usually how you spend Potions class, Potter? Thinking about how you want to use my desk for...inappropriate purposes?"

More laughter. Harry waited for quiet. "No, sir. I don't really *want* to shag on your desk. And I don't think about it *regularly* or anything. Just today."

Harry didn't really know what he was saying, but judging by the looks everyone was giving him, it must be something strange. He reminded his foggy brain again and again *not* to let Malfoy's name come up.

"Potter, I thought I made it quite clear to you after I received your love letter that I am *not* interested." The class was in hysterics and Snape was clearly enjoying himself. Then, he changed tactics, hoping to catch Potter in an admission of guilt. He decided to set up a motive first. "So, Potter, it meant a lot to you not to lose the match yesterday?"

Harry took a deep breath. "You have no idea," he said finally.

"How do you feel about losing?"

"Um. It's horrible. Although it's not as bad as it used to be. I think I'm getting used to it."

The Slytherins all laughed. Malfoy laughed harder than most, although nobody else knew why...

Snape smiled. "You'd do anything to avoid it?"

"Almost anything," Harry said, mentally thanking his lucky stars that Snape was pursuing this topic in lieu of anything potentially more incriminating.

"Including, perhaps, using a performance-enhancing spell?"

"Never!"

After class, Malfoy caught him in the halls. "That was brilliant, Potter! I think my respect for you has risen to new heights...not that it was that high in the first place, of course..."

"Well, I'm glad," Harry sulked, "Because my self-respect has sunk to new lows. *Shagging on Snape's desk!* How did that come up? I tried to avoid-"

"Look, twisting the truth and resisting interrogation like that isn't easy. At least you kept quiet about the important things," Malfoy consoled him.

"Yeah - like your *name*. That's all you care about."

"Of course." He grinned. "You can't honestly expect me to be upset that you got tortured in class again?"

Harry was beginning to feel better. "Yeah, I guess nobody else noticed anything strange," he said, relieved. "Snape torturing me is nothing new. It could have been worse - he could have asked something really damning..."

"Like, 'so, Potter, have you spread for any sexy blond Slytherins lately?'" Malfoy mimicked Snape's silky whisper with an accuracy that made Harry roar with laughter.

They both stared at each other in horror as the sound echoed through the hallway. "Say...you don't suppose Snape's set charms around here to eavesdrop on corridor conversations, do you?" Malfoy asked nervously.

"Bugger," Harry breathed, wondering.

"Don't worry, I intend to," Malfoy whispered back, licking his lips. "Practice today. Four o'clock at the field?"

Harry nodded and started off towards the staircase. He was almost gone when Malfoy called out behind him, "Hey, Potter, is whacking off to the idea of Snape's desk a Gryffindor thing, or is it just you?"

"I don't know," Harry yelled back with a smile. "Why don't you ask Percy Weasley, next time you and he get together again for another circle-jerk?"

"Touche, little boy."

Harry bowed. "See you around, Veronica."

His satisfaction of having the last word was slightly diminished as Malfoy dipped a mocking curtsy and blew him a kiss.

Harry didn't like the huge first-aid chest Malfoy had brought with him to the field. "Don't tell me - we're doing Bludgers today," he guessed unhappily.

"You got it. Not that I have a lot of choice - I can't do a whole lot of trick flying until my ribs heal up. Madam Pomfrey was afraid to mend them because of all the little pieces. We have to wait until-"

"Didn't I tell you I don't want to hear the gory details?"

"Oh, right." Malfoy shut up and took a Bludger out of its case. Cradling it to him as it struggled to escape, he kicked off the ground and motioned for Harry to follow. Once they were in the air, he passed Harry the squirming ball and told him to hold on to it. "You'll go first, Potter. I'm going to spell this Bludger so it won't go too fast. You'll just dodge out of the way and not let it hit you."

That sounded too easy. "Where's the catch?"

Malfoy reached into his pocket and drew out a strip of black cloth. "Here."

He hovered right next to Harry and blindfolded him.

The minute his vision was taken away, Harry's other senses seemed to become more powerful. Malfoy was tying the blindfold behind his ear, and Harry shuddered, the touch seeming more intimate than he had first realized.

"You okay, Potter?"

"What? Yeah," Harry mumbled, caught off guard by the volume and closeness of Malfoy's voice. His own voice seemed too loud too, and now all of a sudden he could also hear breathing - his own and his partner's. And his heart was thumping, the vibrations echoing in his ears. He gulped. "Look, I could really get hurt..."

"Calm down," Malfoy said, taking the Bludger and flying away slowly. "I *said* I'd charm it to slow it down a bit. I'll add some sound to it too, at first. First thing you'll do is just wait and listen. It'll come from either your left or right, and I want you to use a rotation like you did at the match the other day. You seemed to have good instinct then. See if you can repeat it."

Thinking of the cracked ribs, Harry hoped he could. "I'm ready."

He held his broom steady, tense and ready. Soon he heard a quiet whistling sound coming up on his right. Closer and closer...

Somehow he knew when the right moment was to go into a roll. He lay flat and spun about, hearing the Bludger whistle overhead.

"Nice one, Potter. That was too easy. I'm taking the sound away now."

Without the whistle, Harry had to rely on the *whoosh* of air and subtle crackle of magic that preceded the Bludger's attack. He had much less time now, and had to lean and spin faster than he'd previously thought physically possible. He made one mistake, and ended up getting cracked in the back of the head. Woozy, he lay flat on his broom and waited to feel better.

"Oh, come on, Potter, get up. It only skimmed you."

"Thanks for the sympathy," Harry grumbled in Malfoy's general direction. The blindfold was no longer hindering him as much as he'd thought. He could sense the Bludger with ease now, always a split second before it got to him and usually with enough time to dodge it.

Malfoy decided it was time for the next step. "What do you do if it comes at you from the front or back?"

Harry had researched the answer. "A quick feint down and go up, or a quick feint up and go down. Then turn to face it and make sure it's not coming back for seconds."

Expecting an answer, he almost wasn't ready. A sudden feeling of panic warned him of an attack from behind, so he dipped down and lurched up. He felt a strong gust of air as the ball whizzed under him, having been tricked by the feint. "Hey! Malfoy, you could have hit me!"

"That's the idea, Potter," Malfoy said, close to him now. Harry sensed something approaching slowly, and then felt Malfoy's hands on his head to undo the blindfold. "You seem to have the hang of it. My turn now. We'll have to work on it some more, like with you not knowing what direction and stuff, and eventually without the blindfold, but for now that was fine. Make sure you spell it slow before you send it at me."

Harry nodded and settled the blindfold over Malfoy's eyes.

Draco was not as good at Harry. He was fine with the whistle, but once it was taken away he got hit nearly every time. "Damn it! I *knew* it was coming on the right!" he shouted after getting whacked for the fourth time in a row.

"Then why didn't you roll left?" Harry asked, mildly concerned about the blood dripping from Draco's nose. So far, except for that one crack in the face (he had stupidly turned to *face* the Bludger), he hadn't gotten hit at all in the head. Harry thought that was a good thing. Annoying as Draco was, he didn't want him to end up with any brain damage.

"Once more," Malfoy growled. "Just one fucking time I am going to do this *right*." He grabbed his broom tightly and waited.

Instead of letting the Bludger go, Harry flew up very, very slowly until he was hovering just a foot away from his partner. He reached out and touched him on the shoulder. "Boo."

Malfoy's surprise was so great he almost jumped off his broom.

"Whoa," Harry laughed, reaching out to steady him. "That's it - you're too tense. You'll never dodge it right if you're afraid. Just wait there. Listen for it and you'll feel it coming. The important thing is, you have to trust yourself to dodge out of the way. Don't worry about doing it or not doing it - it'll do itself if you're ready. This time I'll hex it away from you if you screw up, so don't worry about missing. I won't let it hit you."

Malfoy swallowed. "All right. Go."

Harry waited a bit and then released the Bludger. Malfoy felt it coming this time, but instead of rolling properly he whipped around to face it. Harry just barely managed to knock it aside with a curse.

"Damn it! Why do I do that? When something startles me, I react by *looking* at it. Why can't I do like you and just make myself twist around?" Malfoy tore off his blindfold. "I give up. I'm exhausted and pissed off. Let's leave this til a day when I can concentrate better, okay?"

"Sure," Harry said easily, still feeling elated that he, at least, had gotten the hang of it. "So...are you in any shape to chase the Snitch today?"

Malfoy sighed. "I've got a great bet in mind, Potter, but I'm not sure I can chase the Snitch in this condition. Would it be okay if we just raced for it instead? We need to practice speed anyway, and it's probably okay for me to go as fast as long as I don't whip around too many turns..."

"What's the bet?" Harry asked, always wary of Malfoy's "great" ideas.

Instead of answering verbally, Malfoy tossed something small and red to Harry.

Harry stared at it. "What? A lollipop?" He shot him a quizzical look and got a smile in return.

"Eat it - you'll see."

Still not understanding, Harry stuck the lollipop in his mouth and then looked up again. "Yeah?" Malfoy glued his eyes to Harry's lips and gave him a suggestive wink. Finally he got it. "Oh! Oh, no! Euw!" Harry spit out the lollipop and tossed it across the field. "You can forget about that. Forever."

"Oh, come on, Potter," Malfoy whined, obviously disappointed. "It would be fun. For the winner, at least. You know how people always say 'suck it!' when they're telling someone off? I'd like to tell it to you and be able to *mean* it." He smiled. "Just think how you'd hate it!"

"You're forgetting one thing, Malfoy," Harry said, bristling a little. "What if I win?"

"You won't," came the swift and decisive response. "Not with something like that on the line. I'd kill myself before I let you beat me and force me to do *that*."

Well, with bait like that thrown out, how could Harry refuse?

Chapter Ten

"Chapter Ten"

It had been a very, very good race. A good race. A very good race. Harry tried to tell himself that that should make him feel better. He needed something right now, anything, to take his mind off the blow job he was about to give.

Malfoy was staring at him expectantly, and Harry forced himself to make eye contact. "What?"

"What do you mean, what? You're still standing up - how do you think this is supposed to work, Potter? Do I look like Hagrid to you? Get down on your knees."

"Euw...Hagrid..." Harry thought aloud as he knelt. He was feeling stupid, just sitting there eye level with Malfoy's crotch and wishing this were over...

"You'll need to undo the pants, Potter."

Harry glared up at him and reached reluctantly for Malfoy's fly. "In this case, my lack of skill is a source of pride to me," he said primly.

"Oh, you idiot," Malfoy sighed, exasperated. He undid his own pants, stroked himself to hardness quickly, and smacked Harry on the side of the head. "Let's go. It's not that hard...difficult, I mean, you know what I mean. Just do it."

Harry scrunched up his face. This was easily the most degrading thing he had ever had to do in his entire life. He didn't know if he *could* suck on it. He couldn't force himself to come one inch closer.

"Just like a lollipop, Potter," Malfoy coaxed. "Come on." Harry hated that he was being laughed at on top of it all. Despite everything else they'd been through together, he now felt for the first time truly humiliated in front of his rival.

"I...I can't..."

"You're going to chicken out?" his voice was disbelieving.

"N-No," Harry stuttered finally. He parted his lips slightly, unsuccessfully trying to hide his revulsion. After leaning forward very slowly and hovering for a few seconds, he squeezed his eyes shut and flicked out his tongue.

There. There. He'd done it. He'd touched it.

Above him, Malfoy was giggling hysterically. "There you go, Potter. That's it. Do it again." Harry obeyed. "All right. Now open up."

Still with his eyes closed, wishing with all his might he were someplace else, Harry actually allowed Malfoy to put it in his mouth. He closed his lips around it, trying to forget what he was doing.

"Now suck, stupid. And use your tongue."

Harry did as he was told, focusing on his own motions and forbidding himself to remember what was actually going on. *Yup, rubbing on that part is a good idea. Lick it again. Careful with the teeth there...*

But then, all of a sudden, Malfoy gripped the back of Harry's head firmly and shoved in so deep that Harry's gag reflex kicked in. He fought free and gasped for breath. "Idiot, I can't breathe if you do that!"

Malfoy laughed. "That's why I move in and out, and you breathe when I pull out. It's not that difficult a concept, Potter. Rhythm."

Harry looked horrified. "You mean I'm supposed to let you choke me?"

The expression on his face was priceless. "You're supposed to sort of swallow, Potter, so it goes down easier. Something tells me you haven't gotten sucked off much in your life."

Harry just glared at him, then closed his eyes and put his lips around it again. This time, when Malfoy held him still and pushed forward, he didn't resist. Again, the thing hit the back of his throat and he wanted to throw up, but this time he forced his mouth to cooperate. *Swallow*, he reminded himself. He did, and was shocked to feel it slide down several inches into his throat.

"That's right, Potter," Malfoy said above him. "You can tap out if you really need air." He moved his hips slightly, grinding around in the boy's warm gullet. Harry didn't like the feeling at all. Occasionally Malfoy would pull back and Harry could inhale, but then he'd sink deep again and let his victim's tortured throat muscles massage him. The desire to scream or gag or thrash around was causing strange involuntary contractions in Harry's throat, which Malfoy seemed to find very pleasurable.

Too pleasurable. It had been a long time since he last allowed Harry air, and Harry was beginning to panic. "Mmmph, ggggmmmm" was all the noise he could manage. Unfortunately, instead of making Malfoy release him, the vibrations in his vocal cords made Malfoy groan and thrust harder. "That's good, Potter," he gasped breathlessly. Finally, realizing his enemy had forgotten about letting him breathe, Harry reached up and smacked Malfoy's hip hard. "*Mmmgghhmmmm!*"

Malfoy abruptly let go of Harry's head and withdrew. "Oh, right. Sorry." He was breathing hard. "Damn you, Potter, learn to hold your breath longer! That was finally getting good."

"Well sorry for being human and needing oxygen," Harry coughed. His voice was raspy. "You almost done? This sucks." He coughed again. "No pun intended."

"It wouldn't take so long if you were *better* at it," Malfoy informed him scathingly. "Use your tongue or tighten up your lips or something. You're useless, Potter, useless. I've had first-years who can do it better."

Harry seriously doubted that, but he just made a face and said, "Gross. I don't want to hear about your disgusting exploits, Don Juan." He resumed his work, this time trying consciously to make his tongue accomplish something.

Malfoy was chuckling. "Don Juan. Ha. I wonder what all the other kids would make of that if you said it in public?" He tangled his hands in Harry's hair, warned him, "Take a deep breath..." and pushed all the way in.

Harry gagged his way through that first blow job, finding it one of the least pleasant experiences of his entire life. When Malfoy finally came, way down in the back of Harry's mouth, he didn't pull out until he was satisfied that Harry had swallowed everything. "I had a girl once spit it back at me," he explained as he put his clothing back in order. "She'd told me not to do it in her mouth, and I didn't mean to, but..." he shrugged and grinned. "Accidents happen."

Harry had conjured a glass of juice to take the taste out of his mouth, but that last comment made him sputter and spit all over. "You're a pig, Malfoy!" he exclaimed, but couldn't help smiling at the mental image. "Serves you right." Now that it was over, he was glad he hadn't begged out. It hadn't been *that* bad, and he couldn't help but feel a little proud of what he'd done. Lots of guys, he knew, would do *anything*, including break a promise, to avoid it. He'd managed without begging, throwing up, or crying, which was probably more than Malfoy could have done in his place. Good for him.

But Malfoy was now giving him a nasty smile. "You look terrible, Potter - your mouth is swollen and your voice is gone."

"Oh, bugger! Really?" Harry leaped up and ran to the mirror. "Oh, no! And we agreed no healing charms - what should I tell everyone when they ask?"

"Tell them you were blowing Snape to get a better grade on your next Potions exam," Malfoy advised. Then he sighed. "Oh, all right, all right, you can heal the swelling. But I want you to keep the sore throat, to give you a little something to remember your first blow job by."

Harry was torn between gratitude and annoyance. "Damn you for the throat. But thanks," he said, and whipped out his wand to correct the bruising on his lips.

"Better be nice, Potter, or the next bet will have you calling me Don Juan in front of everybody."

That evening, Snape appeared unexpectedly in the Slytherin common room and called Malfoy out. "My classroom, immediately. We have to talk."

They sat staring at one another across the desk silently for a long time. Then, finally... "What happened to your nose?"

"My nose?" Draco echoed. "I...uh... fell down." He mentally smacked himself. What a stupid answer!

For a second it seemed that Snape would let him get away with it, but then he said quietly, "Nice try, Mr. Malfoy, but I know what you are doing."

"What do you mean, Professor?" Malfoy asked, forcing calm into his voice.

"Don't play dumb with me. I know that you are trading things - your pride, for instance - in bits and pieces to Potter in exchange for Quidditch knowledge. And I think-"

"It's not like that," Malfoy interrupted, slightly annoyed. "I teach *him*, too. We teach each other Quidditch things and practice together. It goes both ways."

Snape waved his hand dismissively. "I realize that. What you must remember, though, is that despite the fact that he is a Gryffindor - and a Potter - he may end up breaking more than your ribs," he warned, eyeing Draco's bandaged chest meaningfully. Draco shrugged. "It's a dangerous game you're playing, Mr. Malfoy."

Draco laughed. "Oh, it is, sir. You have no idea."

"No," Snape said heavily, "I'm afraid I have a very good idea - and I don't mean the broken bones - but all you'll hear from me on the matter is I want you to be careful."

"I will." He shifted uncomfortably, wanting to leave and have time to figure out what Snape was trying to tell him.

"There is one question I must ask."

"Yes?" Draco wondered if he sounded as nervous as he felt.

"My desk..."

Maintaining eye contact was impossible. So was looking at the desk. Draco settled for staring at a spot on the floor, blushing furiously, and saying, "Um..."

Snape rose. "Just as I suspected. Back away," he ordered smoothly. Draco obeyed, and a second later the desk burst into flames. "Is there any other furniture I should know about?" Snape called over the roaring fire.

"Um, you might want to look at a new chair, maybe."

"*Incendio!*"

Harry had been dragged to the library against his will by Hermione, who was insisting that he start taking his classes seriously. Since beginning his practices with Malfoy, Harry had been really letting his schoolwork slide. Now he was paying for it.

He was just in the middle of reading a particularly boring text about a particularly bloody Goblin rebellion (the text was so bad that it even made a *battle* boring), when he was startled by a tap on the shoulder.

"*There* you are," Malfoy hissed. "I've been looking all over." He sat down and looked around. Judging Hermione to be too absorbed in her book, and everyone else out of earshot, he leaned close and whispered, "I talked to Snape last night and again this morning."

"And?"

"Believe it or not, he seems to have kind of guessed at our little arrangement, and weirder still, he didn't seem all that surprised. He said it's 'dangerous' but that a lot of Quidditch players do something of the kind. Everybody needs motivation, he said. Although he *did* suggest it was stupid, us both being Seekers and all, since it means we're helping our rivals improve. He says I should have trained with a chaser or something."

Harry hadn't yet gotten past the first sentence. "*Snape knows?*"

"It sounded like it." Malfoy shrugged. "Anyhow, I told him about the two-seeker thing, and he was kind of impressed. He agreed to help us get a team together here at school and test plays against other regular teams."

That got Harry's attention. Their plan was actually moving forward. "Really?"

"Yup." Malfoy paused. "Uh, Potter, what's a *Finite Famiglio* charm?"

Harry shook his head. "Dunno. Why?"

"Because that's the one Snape said he'll use on us if we do anything else on his desk or in his classroom."

A burst of laughter made them both whip around. Hermione was staring at them, looking horrified that she'd disrupted the quiet of the library. "He said he'd use a *Finite Famiglio*?" she asked, still giggling.

"Yeah," said Harry. "What's that?"

"He was only kidding," Hermione said firmly. "At least, I hope so. Haven't you ever heard of that charm? It's *highly* illegal in England."

Malfoy rolled his eyes. "Just tell us what it is, Textbook."

"Call me Textbook again, *Veronica*, and I'll use it on you myself," she said haughtily, but then dropped her voice. "All right, here: *Finite Famiglio* was invented by the Italians and outlawed right away in most countries. It's known as the Castration Charm. It makes your...uh...*thing* fall off."

Both boys stared at her, mouths wide open. "Well," said Harry finally. "I certainly *hope* he was kidding."

A moment later Hermione frowned. "Hey. Wait a bit...what were you doing on Snape's desk?"

Chapter Eleven

"Chapter Eleven"

"She didn't believe it," Malfoy said as Hermione stormed off.

"Well she's not stupid, Draco. You should have come up with something better than-"

"Wait a bit," Malfoy interrupted. "I have an idea. We have to be sure she won't tell anyone. That leaves only two options: We Obliviate her-" Harry shook his head vehemently. "Or, we involve her somehow. Make her an accomplice."

Harry's eyes almost popped out of his head. "You listen here, Malfoy. *I* may find your perversions amusing, but that does *not* mean you can involve my friends in any kind of sick, kinky sex ideas. Ever."

After making several very strange faces trying not to laugh, Malfoy managed, "I didn't mean we should fuck her, Potter. Just that we could get her involved. How about this: the winner of the next snitch contest gets to beat the living crap out of the loser. Think how much fun it would be. We can use Textbook over there to provide the healing charms afterwards, since I doubt if Madam Pomfrey would appreciate me carting you in gushing blood with multiple fractures of every bone in your body."

Harry glared at him. "The idea of kicking you in the head is very appealing right now. But let me guess: *I* am the one who has to convince Hermione?"

"Of course."

Harry swore softly and packed up his books to go chase her down, but Malfoy stopped him. "Wait a bit. One more thing."

"What?"

"Winter break is coming up. We can't stop practicing over the holidays."

Shaking himself loose, Harry started to leave again. "So what? I'm here and they don't close the Quidditch pitch. We can practice same as ever."

Malfoy shook his head. "I'm not here. My father will never let me stay for the holidays." He paused. "Which leaves us only one option: you'll have to come home with me."

"Oh, hell." Harry ran his hand through his hair. "Ugh. Look, that situation needs thinking about. One thing at a time - I'll go talk to Hermione. This bet is for tomorrow night?"

"Yeah."

When Harry and Hermione arrived at the Quidditch pitch, Malfoy was already in the air. "You weren't supposed to bring her *now*, Potter. She only needs to be here for after."

Harry kicked off the ground and chased him. "Quit being annoying," he snarled with a smile, and since they were only flying six or seven feet off the ground, he decided it was safe to leap from his broom onto Malfoy's and knock them both to the ground.

Hermione was horror-struck. "Harry, be *careful!*" she exclaimed, rushing over to them. "You'll hurt yourself." She turned on Malfoy with her best babysitter's glare. "And *you!* You're worse than Ron, egging him on...somebody is going to get *hurt.*"

"That's the idea, Granger," Malfoy said. He got to his feet. "All right, here are the rules. You can't cheat for him - you perform your duties no matter who's getting beat up. I figured you'd be fair," he added hastily, noticing how offended she looked, "But I just wanted to make sure."

She nodded. "For the record, I still say this is stupid." She turned to Harry and asked exactly what she was supposed to do.

"Well, pretty much you just watch, and when you think we've reached the end of your healing abilities, you call a halt. Okay? You let us inflict any damage you know you can correct."

"Harry, you're really an idiot, you know." She watched apprehensively as they picked up their brooms and flew away.

Harry really didn't relish the idea of getting beat up in front of his best friend. He performed some distracting maneuvers to get rid of Malfoy, which didn't work, and they ended up flying side by side scouring the field. Malfoy made a quick break, but Harry caught up and they slowed. "That was pathetic. The most obvious fake I've ever-

Harry shut up as a glint of gold flashed right by them. Instantly, they were off, diving almost straight downwards. The Snitch was faster than he'd ever seen it, and Harry barely managed to pull up before hitting the ground. He and Malfoy both wheeled left, spinning at breakneck speed, and took off in the snitch's new direction.

They could only see it in flashes. After a moment it seemed they had lost sight for good, but then Harry felt a tiny wave of magic radiating from somewhere above him. Aha. The Snitch was hovering where they wouldn't see.

Harry dipped the nose of his broom down and coasted slowly towards the ground. As he'd hoped, the Snitch took this opportunity to try and zip over his head. Harry felt the rush of air, jerked his broom up, and shot after it so fast it hit him in the chest before he got his fingers around it.

Malfoy was furious. "How'd you do that? We couldn't see it! It was above us! No fair!"

"Same as the Bludgers, Malfoy. It's that instinct thing you keep ignoring. It has its uses," he added thoughtfully, petting the angry little ball and wishing it would stop buzzing against him quite so ticklishly.

"Well, you're going to have to teach me somehow."

"As soon as I beat you within an inch of your life."

Malfoy flinched. "Yeah, there is that."

VIOLENCE WARNING.

Squeamish people should bust out the earplugs (eye-plugs, hand-plugs, net-plugs?) now.

When they landed, Hermione rushed up and threw her arms around Harry's neck. "Oh, Harry, you got it! And I was so worried! I don't know if I *could* have stood by and watched you get hurt. Although," she noticed with some surprise, "I don't know if this is much better." She looked at Malfoy and sighed. "You boys are so stupid. This is going to be horrible."

"Only for him," Harry said happily, shrugging out of his Quidditch robes. "Come on, Malfoy, off with the robes. They're like armor. No fair."

"Sadist." Malfoy just had pants and an undershirt under his robes, and he shivered slightly in the cold air. After a moment, when Harry still hadn't moved, he demanded, "Well, Potter? Are you just going to stand and look?"

"Well...I..." Harry had a hard time explaining that it was difficult to just walk up and punch somebody in cold blood.

Malfoy apparently understood his hesitation, though, because he stepped right up in Harry's face, cuffed him on the side of the head, and then shoved him. Hard.

Ah, *there* was provocation Harry could react to. He growled and shoved back, then hit Malfoy in the stomach and kicked his legs out from under him.

Now his enemy was on the ground, and it was even easier. Harry jumped on top of him and punched him in the face. A very loud noise, coupled with a startling fountain of blood, told Harry he'd broken Malfoy's nose. This was getting fun. Much easier now. A solid shot in the mouth had Draco spitting up blood and a tooth, and Harry grinned. He got to his feet in order to be able to kick, which he did repeatedly and very hard.

Malfoy groaned. This was no fun. A kick landed low enough on his torso that he got nervous and covered his crotch with his hands for protection. "Watch it," he growled, words garbled because of the hit his mouth had taken. He was lying on his side, and now that his hands were busy elsewhere, his face was exposed and Harry took the opportunity to step on it.

"I like this," Harry said, aiming a kick at Malfoy's stomach. The boy groaned and curled up.

"Gonna puke," he moaned.

Harry just laughed and dragged him to his knees so he could punch him in the face again, eliciting a funny "Ohhww" sound.

Hermione was looking ill. "Harry..."

"All right, enough," Harry agreed. Still, he looked at Malfoy one last time and thought, *This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, right? And she's going to heal him anyway, so it doesn't really matter...* Once his conscience had been taken care of, Harry grinned and aimed one last, solid kick right between Malfoy's legs.

It was quite a while before Malfoy's world consisted of anything but pain. When he could finally see and hear again, he could hear Harry chuckling softly over him. "You sick twist, you're *laughing*," he groaned.

Harry knelt down next to him. "Hermione's looking something up in her spellbook. She'll start in a second. Are you okay?"

Malfoy tried to glare at him, but his eyes had watered so much all he could see was a blur. "Oh, yes, Potter. I'm feeling fine," he enunciated carefully in a voice that oozed sarcasm. Then, he made the mistake of trying to move. Waves of pain radiated through his body again and he gave up, biting his lip and whimpering softly.

Hermione came back over, still reading from her book. "One second," she said irritably.

"I thought you said you knew healing spells, Textbook" Malfoy whined.

"I do - just not *this* one." She glared at Harry. "I didn't bother to read up on the spell for when you get kicked in the jewels, because I mistakenly believed that you two were gentleman enough not to do it to each other."

Malfoy chuckled despite himself and Harry looked abashed. "Don't worry, Potter, I'd have done the same in your place. And - not that I have a death wish or anything," he added, "But I could have taken more. I would have made *you* take more than this."

Hermione stared at him as if he were speaking another language. "I think you've taken one too many blows to the head," she said, pointing her wand at him. "You're bragging about being able to get beat up. Just hold still and let me concentrate."

A moment later *that* horrible pain faded, but there was still more. Hermione sat down and put his head in her lap, bending over him and beginning the long process of mending his facial bones.

"Madam Pomfrey doesn't take this long," he complained ten minutes later.

"She's had more practice than I have," Hermione answered patiently, finding it difficult to dislike Malfoy so strongly when he was in such a condition. "I'm almost done."

After the bones, Hermione started in on the bruising. Harry helped her, bruises being the one injury he knew how to heal, and soon Malfoy looked almost normal.

"Okay, how about a pain-relieving spell?" Hermione asked, shooting a dirty look at Harry. "Or is that against the *rules*?"

"Oh, go for it," Harry said carelessly, feeling generous. Malfoy looked surprised. "One thing, though: do me a favor and wait a bit before you heal up your eye. I want to see if I actually gave you a shiner or not."

They were both laughing, which gave Hermione serious doubts about their sanity.

Her doubts were confirmed when Malfoy stood, stretched out his aching muscles, and said, "So, do you want to do some more work with the Bludgers today?" and Harry nodded.

Chapter Twelve

"Chapter Twelve"

Draco sighed as he rolled out of bed. This was *not* going to be a pleasant day. Although he admitted it was kind of sick, he couldn't escape the feeling that he wished he were *anywhere*, including back on the Quidditch pitch getting knocked silly, than here.

First things first. He would talk to Snape. That couldn't wait, since he really didn't want to leave for the holidays next week before everything was settled. He knew where to find his Head of House this early in the morning, and he knocked on Snape's door with a bit of hesitation. Snape didn't like to be disturbed like this. Well, it was important.

The door opened. "What?"

"May I come in, sir? I need to talk to you."

Snape sighed and ran his hand through his morning hair, which was even greasier than usual. "Very well. If this is about Potter - and I'm sure it is - I am *not* in the mood. But just come in and we'll get it over with."

Malfoy followed him inside, wondering if he could read minds. Snape gestured to a chair and poked the fire to life with his wand. "All right. What?"

"I'm going to bring him to my house over the holidays - that is, if my father will let me. I was just wondering...I mean, I was hoping..." he let his voice trail away and just turned a helpless puppy look on his teacher.

Snape growled. "Just come out and say it, boy - you've set something in motion and now you've no idea what to do with it. Right?" Malfoy nodded and Snape rolled his eyes. "I suspected as much. All right, Draco, listen. Take Potter with you to practice with. Before you go, though, make up a composite team from Hogwarts. Take whomever you want from whichever house. I will help you bully them into participating, if they are reluctant. Try not to use the most talented players there are, because it will look even more impressive if your strategies run successfully even for less-skilled players."

Malfoy nodded. "I already have several people in mind, sir. We'd need to practice together for awhile, of course, after the holidays before we played..."

"Obviously. And over the break, I will put together another composite team, made up of very good fliers who will only use established Quidditch strategies."

"Like who?" Malfoy asked, puzzled. "I mean, aren't Potter and I the best fliers here?"

Snape's smile was wolfish. "You're the best *student* fliers, Mr. Malfoy. You're forgetting Madam Hooch, and myself, and perhaps others who have graduated but would be happy to return for another round of their beloved favorite sport..."

"You can do that?" Malfoy was amazed. "You can put together a team of random people, good ones, to play against us? You can do that?"

Snape arched an eyebrow and sat up straighter.

"Sorry, sorry, I forgot." Malfoy rolled his eyes and repeated the lesson that had been drummed into his head since his first year: "You can do anything."

Snape relaxed back into his chair. "That's better."

"Thanks, Professor. That's perfect. And we can have a scout come to watch us play sometime?"

"Of course," Snape said. "We'll have the two teams practice separately, and then have a big game. We'll let the whole school watch, along with whomever else you wish to have as witnesses. Word will get around to the right people."

As Malfoy rose to leave, glad that the meeting had gone much better than he'd expected, he couldn't help asking, "Why are you doing this, Professor?"

"Apart from the fact that it will be fun?" Snape grimaced. "I knew you would ask me that. Let's just say you've got an opportunity I never had, and I hope, for your sake, that it works out for you. It didn't for me."

Malfoy stared at him. "You wanted to play pro Quidditch, too?" he asked.

Snape could see the wheels turning in his head, so he added, "I never did, though. So don't bother looking for records or photos - there aren't any."

The bitterness in his voice told Malfoy all he needed to know. Along with a disloyal Death Eater, nasty teacher, and bad lover (or so the rumours went), Snape was also a failure at Quidditch.

Well, he's a useful failure, anyway, Malfoy thought ruthlessly as he headed back to his dorm. He can help us set an exposition up. This is going to be SO great...

He was glad of his sudden good mood, although he knew it wouldn't last - he was going to see Lucius this afternoon.

Draco met his father on a certain corner in Hogsmeade, as usual. They Apparated to the manor together for a brief talk while Draco was supposed to be hanging around the village. Random visits home were discouraged and rarely allowed by the school, but that had never stopped him. Lucius led him to the study and poured them both drinks.

"Now, Draco. What did you want to see me about?"

Having the first part of his plea prepared, Draco launched into it without hesitation. "Well, Father, I've been training hard at Quidditch this year. I don't know if anyone's told you yet, but I'm actually getting quite good."

"I have heard."

Draco smiled at the pride in his father's voice and explained, "And it's all because I've been training with someone. We've been working together every day after hours, and we don't want to get out of practice over the holidays. So, I was wondering if I might invite him here to spend the vacation with me."

Instantly the smile faded from Lucius's face. "Draco," he said slowly, "I am thrilled to hear about your progress in Quidditch, and I would have no objections to entertaining your little eromenos over the holidays...but does it *have* to be Harry Potter?" His voice was icy calm.

Not good. Draco swallowed and answered carefully. "We're not really...like that," he tried.

"That's not what Severus tells me."

Snape told! Damn him damn him damn him! Draco met his father's eyes with difficulty. "Well...as a bet, sir, we kind of...I mean, when I beat Potter to the Snitch I make him...you know. I'm not usually like that, really."

Lucius nodded, apparently satisfied. "Good." He paused. "You know that such a...friendship...is permissible in youth, Draco, but soon you will have to settle down and choose a suitable wife for yourself. Oh, you've got years," he added, silencing Draco's interruption, "But the fact remains that *eventually* you must show that your preferences are completely normal. For the sake of the family."

"Of course, Father. My preferences are normal, sir, it's just my *practices* that have gotten a little...unusual recently. This is temporary - it'll only last as long as Potter's got Quidditch moves he can help me with."

Lucius returned his son's cold smile. "Excellent, Draco. I'm proud of you. Yes, you may bring him here for the holidays, then. But keep him away from my house elves and for God's sake don't let him go poking around in any of the secret rooms."

"And guaranteeing his safety..."

"Dumbledore's probably going to want it in writing, isn't he? Well, tell him I'll sign," Lucius snapped. "But then we must be very careful not to let the Master find out about this. If worst came to worst, I could *probably* hold him off by insisting that we've got other plans...seducing Potter to our side slowly, for example...but it would be awkward, and might end in a bloody explosion with bits of Potter raining down from here to London. The Dark Lord is very impatient to do away with him."

Draco shrugged. "I think we can keep things quiet. This is good, really, because we can use it to our advantage either way - we can tell Dumbledore we're giving the poor orphan a home for Christmas, and we can tell You-Know-Who we're sinking hooks into the old fool's little golden boy."

"Now you're thinking properly, Draco...you're growing up. There's hope for you yet, boy. Go get changed for dinner - we're going to the Parkinson's." Draco made a face, so Lucius added, "I've already gotten permission from the school. And if that girl wants to paw you again, I'm afraid you'll have to let her. Her family proved *most* disagreeable last time you told her no."

The next day he cornered Harry in the hallway.

"All right, Potter, it's time to talk about the holidays."

Harry nodded. "Look, Malfoy, I've been thinking. And I have to say, I just don't think it's possible. I mean, it's really dangerous for me. Voldemort is after my blood, okay, and-"

"Voldemort doesn't live at our house," Malfoy said irritably. "And you're really self-centered. He's way more concerned about Dumbledore than about you. My father will guarantee your safety, in writing, and Voldemort wouldn't make a liar out of him in front of the Ministry. As a matter of fact, we don't even have to *tel* Voldemort you're there if we don't want."

"Ron and Hermione."

"Tell them you're going home to your Muggle relatives."

"They'll never believe that. Oh, wait...I can tell them I'm going with Sirius. That won't sound suspicious."

"Sirius?" Malfoy echoed. "Sirius Black? Isn't he..."

"Oh, bugger. Look, I didn't mean to tell you..."

Malfoy waved Harry to silence. "Later. You can spill the juicy gossip later. At my house."

"Dumbledore can probably give me lots of good protective wards," Harry mused aloud. "Maybe even an emergency Portkey in case something goes wrong. I guess it might work...but what about your father? He'll never let me in."

Malfoy grinned. "I already talked to him. It took a little convincing, but he says it's okay as long as you don't go near the House Elves...whatever that means."

Harry bit his lip, trying to look serious. "I'll agree to that," he said, "As long as he promises not to share any of his reading material with me."

"What?"

"He'll understand. Just tell your father I don't want him giving me any books or anything. He'll get it."

Malfoy shrugged. "Whatever." He gulped. "All right. Now here comes the hard part. We have to talk to Dumbledore..."

Nearly two hours later, after having undergone checks for jinxes of all kinds, having his mouth duct-taped shut for 61 minutes to ensure that he wasn't taking any Polyjuice, and explaining over and over again (in writing, because of the duct tape) the exact purpose of his request, Harry received permission to stay at Malfoy Manner over the holidays. He stared at Draco, mildly surprised that they had succeeded at all in their convincing, and then slapped him five.

Dumbledore smiled at the gesture. "You boys have missed lunch, so you may stay and eat here before your next class. I shall have to talk to Severus and Minerva, but I am confident we can arrange for the visit." He conjured them food and left them alone.

"So," said Harry through a mouthful of chocolate-peanut-butter-celery sandwich. "Who do we want on our team?"

Malfoy rolled his eyes. "Trust *you*, Potter, not to have thought beyond your next meal. I've had a dream team in mind for weeks now."

"Who?"

He took a breath. "That sandwich is disgusting. Anyway. Okay. Based on our best strategy, the one we'd use against a traditional team who's not experienced playing against a newer formation...the key player is a Beater. Right?"

"Right. We need one who's fast, strong, has good aim, and is intelligent."

Covering a slight wince, Malfoy said, "Well, I hadn't really considered the 'intelligent' part. I was thinking of Millicent Bulstrode."

"Her? That ogre?" Harry thought for a moment. "Well, she's vicious enough, that's for sure..."

"She'd be perfect, Potter. She doesn't have to be able to do Advanced Arithmancy to hit a Bludger at the other team. All we do is point her in the right direction. She's fast and shrewd and she *will* incapacitate people."

Harry grinned. "Okay, I see your point. So she sounds okay. Now, what about Chasers? We need good ones. They have to work together and be really skilled at interception, since they've got to help stop the other team from scoring in the absence of a second Beater."

"Now you're thinking," Malfoy said approvingly. "How about your Gryffindor chasers? Those girls are really good. Plus, since they're girls, it gives us more of a handicap, kind of. People will say, 'hey, those ideas are so good they even let a team with *girls* win'."

Harry agreed to that, but warned him, "Just be careful the girls don't hear you talk like that - they'll rip off your legs and beat you with them." He wrinkled his nose. "Ugh, we still need a Keeper."

"I was thinking of either the Ravenclaw keeper, or ours. Ours is definitely better, but the problem we'll have is people will complain we only chose people from our own houses."

"So what?" Harry shrugged. "It'll look even better then - like we don't even have to scour the land for talent, we can win with whatever we have." Suddenly a dampening thought struck. "What if they say no?"

Malfoy smiled. "Snape says they won't," he said with finality.

Shuddering at the mere *thought* of that arctic black gaze, Harry murmured, "Then that settles it."

It was the last morning before the holidays. They had chosen today because everyone, including all the teachers and Hagrid and Filch, would be at breakfast. *Everyone* would get to see.

And then there would be the holidays, when everyone would have a little time to forget.

Harry and Draco weren't quite cruel enough to condemn each other to long-term humiliation; they decided the loser would have to suffer for the day, and then could escape to Malfoy Manor for the holidays and hope the whole thing blew over before they got back.

Thinking up this bet had been fun. Laughing over the thought of winning had been great.

But now, squirming in his seat as the owl post flew overhead, Draco was cursing the moment the idea had ever appeared in anyone's mind.

He glanced over at Harry, who was staring at him with a ridiculous grin on his face. Draco bit his lip, looked towards the door, and then shot Harry the most pleading, groveling look he could manage.

Harry shook his head and pointed sharply at the floor - as if Draco were a dog being told to "stay."

He wanted Draco to suffer through this in person. Oooh, this would be *fun*...

Chapter Thirteen

"Chapter Thirteen"

A huge, blood-red Howler fell on the table in front of Harry.

Ron looked over at it curiously. "Who's mad at you, Harry? That's one hell of a...jeez, you'd better run! You can probably make it out the door before it goes off...."

Harry made no attempt to run. Instead, he opened the Howler with a straight face, and loud harp music filled the air. "DEAR HARRY."

Malfoy's voice was magnified loudly enough to be heard by every student of every house, despite the laughter that was sure to come. Harry glanced over at the Slytherin table, meeting his rival's horrified gaze, and winked.

"I AM JUST WRITING TO YOU BECAUSE I CAN'T KEEP THIS A SECRET ANY LONGER," the Howler boomed.

Malfoy was on his feet before the first sentence was even over. He rushed to the Gryffindors and leaned close to Harry's ear. "Please, Potter, let me leave," he hissed, face as red as the Howler itself.

Harry considered. "Kiss me and you can go," he whispered with a nasty smile. Understanding what he had to do, that he had to embarrass himself still *further*, Malfoy tangled his hands in Harry's hair and planted a big kiss on his lips, then stood and fled.

"Euuuw! That pervert kissed me!" Harry shrieked, as the Howler continued.

"AND I KNOW YOU SAID YOU WEREN'T INTERESTED, BUT I JUST HAD TO TRY ONE LAST TIME..."

Everyone was laughing at Harry's disgusted reaction to being kissed. He was scrubbing furiously at his face with a napkin as the noisy love letter continued: "I LOVE YOU, HARRY. I'VE BEEN IN LOVE WITH YOU FOR AGES. I TRIED TO HIDE IT, BUT...WELL, MY LOVE FOR YOU IS LIKE DIARRHEA - I JUST CAN'T HOLD IT IN."

Harry was laughing so hard he fell onto the floor. Malfoy was certainly the most creative writer of love-letters he had ever heard...

The Howler continued. "BEING APART FROM YOU IS LIKE HAVING A LEG CUT OFF AND TRYING TO DANCE THE TANGO," it said sadly. "I'LL SPEND THE HOLIDAYS JUST LOOKING FORWARD TO THE DAY I CAN SEE YOU AGAIN. IF I WERE PROFESSOR TRELAWNY...OR IF I HAD A WORKING CRYSTAL BALL...I WOULD USE IT TO WATCH YOU, *EVERY MOMENT* OF YOUR DAY."

The voice dropped into a low, seductive purr. "*QUIDDITCH* JUST ISN'T THE SAME WHEN YOU *PLAY BY YOURSELF*, YOU KNOW?" The sound of Malfoy licking his lips echoed throughout the Great Hall. "EVERY MOMENT I SPEND ALONE WITH MY *BROOMSTICK*...I'LL BE THINKING OF YOU."

Harry had his arms desperately crossed over his torso, vaguely afraid he might rupture something if he couldn't control this laughter soon. "I WANT TO TAKE YOU TO THE YULE BALL, HARRY. IF I HAVE TO DUEL EVERY FEMALE IN THE SCHOOL, AND LEAVE THE GIRL'S DORMITORIES LITTERED WITH BODIES, TO GET THE CHANCE...I'LL DO IT GLADLY. AND AFTERWARDS...I WANT TO TAKE YOU...SOMEWHERE ELSE. BY OURSELVES. I LOVE YOU, HARRY POTTER."

Still on the floor, Harry felt what might politely be termed a nudge with somebody's foot. Actually, looking up to see Snape towering over him, Harry re-termed it a "kick," but thought that no matter what Snape would do, the Howler was still worth it.

"Get up," Snape hissed, struggling to make himself heard over the harp music.

Harry forced himself to his knees, wheezing and panting.

"Shut that thing up, Potter!"

"I...I can't..." Harry choked out through his laughter. "It's a...Howler... Professor... .hahahahaha"

A magically magnified heartbroken sigh made Harry collapse again. "SO, FAREWELL, MY LOVE. I'LL BE MISERABLE UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN. YOU'RE A RAY OF SPARKLING SUNSHINE... GOODBYE. LOVE, YOUR NO-LONGER-SECRET ADMIRER, DRACO MALFOY."

Harry had a very nice rest of the day. The gossip about Malfoy's supposed crush (or, according to the Slytherins, his temporary insanity) was endlessly amusing, although Malfoy himself was nowhere to be found. Harry suspected he had hidden himself in his room until it was time to go.

As they'd planned, Harry said good-bye to Ron and Hermione and then slipped out a secret passage to meet "Sirius." Unwilling to give Malfoy the location of any of their secret exits, he had decided to just meet the boy in Hogsmeade. At precisely four o'clock, they both stood on the corner of 4th and Morgana, and pulled off their Invisibility Cloaks.

When they popped into view, they were standing right next to each other.

"Hullo," said Harry. "Fancy meeting you here." Malfoy just rolled his eyes. "You know, you shouldn't have hidden all day. It was great."

"Shut up." He led the way through the streets to the public fireplace where they could Floo home. "I wasn't hiding, anyway. I walked all around, in my cloak, to see what people were saying."

"They'll forget it eventually," Harry consoled insincerely.

Malfoy returned his smile. "They'd better. You know, if I do say so myself, that was one incredible love letter. Original and convincing, I'd say."

"Better than the one I came up with for Snape," Harry admitted. "You know, I've been looking forward to today since that horrible Potions class..."

They'd finally reached the fireplace. Malfoy instructed him on how to reach the Manor, then preceded him into the flames.

When Harry arrived, they were in a huge, luxurious fireplace in a room with coat racks and a rich carpet. Two House Elves stood on the hearth, and poked at Harry's clothes and shoes. The soot and ashes magically flew off.

Following Malfoy's lead, Harry hung his cloak on a hook, then asked about the strange room. There didn't seem to be any furniture or anything.

"Oh, this room?" Malfoy sounded surprised. "This is our Arrival Chamber - all Apparition and Floo and Portkeys lead into here. How do you... oh, of course, you don't use Floo and all that at your house."

"No," Harry agreed. "We don't have anything like this. Neither do the Weasleys, though..."

"Well, they're poor," Malfoy said shortly, managing to restrain the sneer and nasty comments that were clearly on the tip of his tongue. He led Harry out the door and through a beautiful corridor, then drew a deep breath before knocking on an impressive set of closed doors.

"Come in."

They opened and went inside, and Harry suddenly remembered one of the reasons he'd always thought he'd rather visit hell than Malfoy Manor.

Lucius stood by the fireplace, leaning against the mantle in what was obviously a studied pose to be found in when visitors arrived. "Ah! You're here," he said, with a fair approximation of a smile, as he turned to face them squarely.

Harry stuck by Draco's side and they came further into the room.

"Good afternoon, Draco, Harry," Lucius nodded at each of them.

"Afternoon, Father," Draco said promptly.

Trying to remember what little he knew about good manners, Harry tried, "Good afternoon, sir. I wanted to thank you for inviting me..."

Lucius waved him to silence. "My pleasure," he said silkily. *Pleasure, my arse*, thought Harry. "Well, I'm sure you boys have plenty to do. Your trunks and brooms arrived from the school; they'll be in the front hall. Dinner is at seven. Good day."

He swept out, and as the door closed behind him, Harry and Draco let out a collective breath they'd been holding.

Harry turned to his host with amazement on his face. "Does he always make *you* that nervous?"

"Of course not, Potter, he's my father," Draco said loftily. "He's just being polite because we've got a *guest*."

"Well, I'd go mad if I had to talk to him every day. D'you want to go make sure our brooms are all right?"

Draco nodded and led him through the house's labyrinth of corridors, rooms, and staircases until they reached the front hall. Harry was trying hard not to let all that wealth impress him, but he suspected from Draco's smug expression that his eyebrows had long since connected to his hairline.

"If you like the house," Malfoy said with a smirk, "Just *wait* till you see the Quidditch pitch."

The Quidditch pitch - the *full-size Quidditch pitch* the family owned for private amusement - was lovely. All the fixtures seemed to be made of gold or silver, and, unlike the school pitch, the spectator seating was small and floated elegantly in the air by itself - there were no towers to get in the way and disrupt the game. A light, shimmering veil of magic surrounded the pitch, so that playing there was like being enclosed in a big soap-bubble.

"That's so the balls don't get away," Malfoy explained when Harry asked about it. "We don't have any stupid restrictive wards on this field like the one at school - you know, the spells that stop the balls from going away, or going too fast." He paused. "So...want to fly a bit before dinner?"

They promptly lost themselves in the joys of diving and racing, and the next time Harry looked at his watch, it was twenty til seven.

"Oh, no!" he gasped. "Look at the time. Your father said seven o'clock. What happens if we're late?"

"Let's not find out," Malfoy suggested grimly. He pivoted and sped away on his broomstick. Harry followed, and they shot towards the house, dipping and twisting to avoid trees, each other, and the occasional random objects the Malfoys had somehow levitated and forgotten about.

As they approached the house, Harry started to get worried. "Uh, shouldn't we be slowing down?" he called.

"No," Malfoy shouted back, barely audible over the whoosh of wind and the flapping of robes. He whipped out his wand and screeched, "*Alohomora!*" seconds before they would hit solid stone. Instantly, a small section of wall opened up and Malfoy shot inside, barely slowing his speed at all to accommodate the much tighter turns of the indoors.

Not accustomed to flying inside, Harry had to slow quite a bit to make it around corners and through doorways. He landed several seconds after Malfoy did, in a grand bathroom with a sea serpent scheme. The tiles hissed and glared at him.

"Uh...Malfoy..."

Draco whipped around. "Oh! Damn, I should have brought you to the guest rooms, shouldn't I?" He glanced at his watch. "Well, we don't have time. This bathroom's mine, just jump in, the tub's huge, and we'll get dressed and make it to dinner on time."

He snapped his fingers and the tub filled with water. Before Harry could protest, Malfoy had shimmied out of his sweaty clothes and had one foot over the tub's edge. "Well? Let's go, Potter. Don't make me late." He dove in.

Dove? Harry watched incredulously as Malfoy surfaced, wiping his hair out of his eyes. "Yeah, it's bigger than it looks," he said, correctly reading Harry's expression. "Just hurry up."

Harry stripped down to his underwear and then hesitated. *It's a little late for modesty now, isn't it?* he asked himself, and cautiously stepped over the edge, half-expecting to fall into an ocean, but the tub was only a foot deep for him. "Hey," he whined, watching Malfoy struggle to stand on tiptoe. "How come it's shallow where I'm standing?"

"It's whatever you want," Malfoy informed him, wrestling with a snake-shaped bottle who seemed reluctant to share its shampoo with him. "Just look for the deep parts, and you'll find them."

"Oh." Harry hoped the next step would lead him into a deeper area, and lo and behold he fell into a sudsy waist-deep whirlpool in seconds. "Wow."

Realizing he didn't have time to subdue Malfoy's strange collection of cleansing products the hard way, Harry picked up a bottle and spoke to it hesitantly in Parseltongue. "Please help me out, here, will you? I'm filthy and I need a little shampoo."

The glass sea serpent in his hand went rigid and flicked out its tongue, squirting Harry a handful of fruity-smelling purple goo. "Thanks."

Malfoy watched him with envy. "Make it do that for me," he said. "I have to beat them into submission every time."

Sudsing up his untidy hair with both hands, Harry took pity on him and hissed, "That boy stinks. Can you do something for him?"

Three bottles pointed themselves at Malfoy and shot jet after jet of soapy gel at him. "Hey! Hey! Enough," he begged, trying to shield his eyes with one hand and fight off the attacking shampoo with the other. "Quit it!"

All it took to make them stop was a single word from Harry. Once the two boys had finished their record-time bath, and were drying off on the green tile, Malfoy used his wand to summon two plain sets of black robes. "What's this?" Harry asked him.

"Mine. Just wear it," Malfoy said. "We don't have time to get to your trunk."

"I thought you didn't want my filthy arse in your underpants," Harry reminded him as they got dressed.

"It's a special occasion."

Next came the hair. It was six fifty-three, and Harry's hair pointed in all directions. "That's awful," Malfoy said critically, and tossed Harry a bottle. "Here."

"Gel?" Harry read the label. "Come on, Draco, I don't wear-"

"Just do it!" Malfoy snarled, slicking back his own hair and buttoning up his robes. "There. I'm ready. Now come on."

Harry copied his movements and then looked in the mirror. "No," he said flatly. "I look like you - only worse. New rule: my hair doesn't go back like that. Ever." He snatched up a towel and ruffled it over his head.

"No! Potter, you look like an accident in a rug factory!" After one glance at the untidy, shaggy, sticking-up, partially gel-infested spikes, Harry had to admit that that was true.

He conjured himself a comb and parted it in the middle. "There."

"Now you look like a-"

"I look fine," Harry overrode him. "Human, at least. Now let's go."

They raced down the stairs and made it to the dining room at seven o'clock exactly.

Dinner was a boring, torturous affair with Harry and Draco at one end of a mile-long table and Lucius and his wife at the other. Narcissa was pale and fragile, and the more Harry looked at her the surer he grew that she was some kind of plant that somebody had accidentally uprooted. He amused himself by thinking of what he would prescribe if he were her doctor...*stick her in a vat of potting soil and put her out in the sunlight, and don't water her quite so much.* He pictured it happening, and almost started laughing in the middle of the meal.

Occasionally there was some forced, boring conversation conducted across the impossible divide. Mostly, though, Harry just passed the time worrying about which fork went where. He was very glad when dinner was over, and he and Draco could escape back upstairs by themselves.

"Do we do that every night?" Harry asked, careful not to sound whiney.

"Not usually," Draco said, sounding as relieved as Harry felt. "That was just because it's your first time here. They should leave us alone from now on."

"Good. Want to fly a bit more?"

Malfoy nodded. "Dress warm, though. It gets cold here at night."

Some inner demon possessed Harry to say, "Do you have a lake or something? I know what we can bet on tonight."

"Yeah. What?"

"Loser has to jump in naked."

"I'll freeze my arse off!"

"Not if you win..."

Draco shivered at the mere thought of jumping into the frigid water in the nighttime sub-zero cold, but he nodded his assent anyway. "You're on."

They could both hear the whistling of the wind, but since neither of them had looked out the window since before dinner, they didn't yet know about the two inches of snow already on the ground.

Or the six more that would fall before the night was out.

Chapter Fourteen

"Chapter Fourteen"

Inside the Quidditch pitch, snow fell evenly and softly, without wind. The magic veil was set to filter out any disturbing air currents, but allow other weather to get in, so that the actual conditions of real games could be simulated.

Harry found it very distracting to see his breath and see the pink gossamer shell surrounding them, and see the snow accumulating on his broom handle....

At least, that's the excuse he gave himself for why Malfoy snatched the snitch right out from under his nose during a sharp upwards race Harry was sure he'd win.

Bummer.

He thought about the lake and shivered. Malfoy looked out at the deepening snow and said, "Let's go get this over with before the weather gets worse. I don't know how good my frostbite charms are."

Refusing to be intimidated, Harry blew his bangs out of his eyes and did a somersault in the air. "Fine. Let's go," he said bravely.

They flew to the icy lake, and Malfoy watched Harry undress. "You know, Potter, we're in a lot better shape now than we were," he said. Harry got chills from the way he was being looked at.

"Quit it," he said, cracking his neck and flexing his shoulders. "All right, so what do I have to do? Jump in and swim around a bit and come out?"

"Do you know any buoyancy charms?" Harry shook his head, so Malfoy sighed and took out his wand. "Idiot. I suppose you think it's funny if you go and drown on me? I think this one should be okay. Just don't lose consciousness. *Aqua Leviosa!*"

Harry didn't immediately feel the difference, but he supposed he would once he was underwater. He stood at the lake's edge, trying not to see the chunks of ice that were forming along the banks. "Okay...one...two...holy shit." He took a step back, shivering. "I can't do this."

"Want me to push you?"

Harry raised his head proudly. "No." He closed his eyes, stepped forward, and dived headfirst into the freezing water.

When he surfaced, he was screaming curse words at the top of his lungs. Malfoy was sitting on the bank watching him happily, now wearing a fur hat along with his winter cloak and furry gloves. "A bit chilly, Potter?"

Harry tried to answer, but all that came out was an inarticulate mumble. *Swim*, he thought. Glad for the buoyancy charm now that his limbs felt like they were made of lead, Harry forced his arms up to thrash ineffectively about his head. "Iniommenayaya!"

"What?"

Good question, thought Harry, but decided to quit trying to speak. His teeth were chattering so hard that his whole head was shaking, and he tried to clamp his jaws together and couldn't.

Swim. Swim. Finally he managed a version of doggie-paddling, kicking and whacking at the water desperately until he made it back to the bank. Malfoy leaned over with a big smile. "Is it cold in there?" he asked, interested.

"B-bibittam-m-m-mehmeh."

"Ah. I understand perfectly." Malfoy reached down and offered Harry his hand. Harry couldn't even raise his arm enough to grab it, since his whole body was convulsing and clenching together. Seeing the problem, Malfoy sighed and plunged his hand into the icy water, closing his fingers around Harry's wrist and hauling him far enough out of the water that a levitation charm was possible.

"I can't cast it on you while you're still mostly under," Malfoy explained, maneuvering Harry's useless body onto dry land, "because I might accidentally levitate the lake itself, and then we're really in trouble." He plunked Harry down in the snow and stood over him. "How are you feeling?"

"C-c-c-c."

"Cold?"

Harry nodded. Malfoy helped him to his feet, which took a surprising amount of effort since Harry's knees kept wanting to lock. He stood unsteadily for a moment, hugging himself uselessly, but finally managed to talk. "Wh-where my c-c-clothes?"

Malfoy looked around at the spotless snow. There was no set of robes anywhere. "Clothes?" he asked innocently. "What clothes?"

Harry could have strangled him for the sparkle in his pale eyes. "K-Kill you, M-M-Malfoy! M-My clothes!"

"Oh, *those* clothes," Malfoy said, patting him on the head. "They're back at the house. They seem to have got hit with an unfortunate Banishing spell...just like your broomstick..."

With that, he hopped on his broom and rose slowly into the air. Hovering next to Harry, flying slow to match Harry's pace through the snow, Malfoy looked exceptionally pleased with himself.

Harry could barely make out the Manor in the distance, but he grit his teeth and started walking. Malfoy was impressed. "Sure you don't want to beg for a ride, Potter?"

"I'm s-sure." He trudged on, and after a few minutes thought, *this isn't so bad. I can't even feel the cold anymore.*

"Your lips are blue. Here - I don't want you to get frostbite and have your fingers and toes fall off." Malfoy pointed his wand and conjured socks and gloves, then chuckled softly, added, "Or anything else, either," and zapped him into a pair of furry underwear.

Harry thought it was a bad thing that he couldn't even feel the difference. He was wheezing and gasping for breath. The cold air seemed to burn his lungs.

"Potter..." He turned when he heard his name being called, then realized Malfoy had a hand on his shoulder and he'd been too frozen to notice. All of a sudden he could hardly see. Everything was getting dark and he felt warm and fuzzy. Time to go to sleep.

Harry collapsed happily in the snow, convinced that there was nothing wrong with his behavior.

Malfoy was off his broom in a second, kneeling beside him and shaking him savagely. "Wake *up*, Potter! Get up and I'll fly you home." He didn't move. "Hey! You're scaring me. Harry. Come on."

Harry tried to smile and say, "Goodnight," but he could hear that it was only a garbled mumbling sound. *Oh, well. He'll figure it out*, Harry thought, just before sinking into unconsciousness.

When Harry awoke, Malfoy was standing over him with wand drawn. "You're lucky I have a decent *Ennervate*. And you're an idiot. You know what this is about, Potter? Trust. We can't work together if we don't trust one another. Our whole partnership is built on *trust*. Right?"

Harry nodded wordlessly.

"Right. You obviously didn't trust me just now. Remember that time with the Engorgement charm...I trusted you to stop if something went wrong, or I never would have let you try it in the first place. And you trusted me that I was telling the truth and not just giving up lightly. Now this time, if you'd said you were too cold I would have believed you. Why didn't you trust me enough to admit it?"

Harry still didn't answer.

"When things get dangerous we've got to rely on each other. I want you to remember, from now on, that you can rely on me...after a certain point. You can't expect me to be nice, but you can trust that I really wouldn't do you serious injury. Ever. In this case, you should have spoken up and I would have-

"Hey, M-Malfoy," Harry stuttered through his chattering teeth.

"Yeah?"

"Can you g-give me this l-lecture when I'm n-not sitting n-n-naked in the snow?"

Malfoy glared at him. "You're an idiot, Potter. I'll fly you back to the house, but you're in trouble for not speaking up."

"T-Trouble? Like what k-kind?" Harry asked, already having a good idea as to the answer.

Malfoy took off his cloak and wrapped Harry in it, then sat him on the broom. "Like the kind where I've never shagged an ice cube before and I think it's time I tried it," he said, climbing up beside him.

But they didn't get around to any shagging that night. By the time they reached the manor, they were *both* freezing, and Malfoy elected to use his own bathroom again instead of fly through the house with a naked guest and try to explain that one to his father if he got caught. Now, since they weren't pressed for time, they didn't get in together. Instead, Malfoy perched on the marble counter around the sink and just *watched* Harry soak and thaw out.

"Will you quit it? I feel like an animal in a zoo," Harry growled. As if to illustrate his point, one of Malfoy's soap bottles hissed in his ear. *So do we.*

By now Harry had noticed the surprising amount of furniture he could talk to in the Manor. In an effort to distract Malfoy from his annoying scrutiny, Harry asked him about it. "Is your father a Parselmouth? You've got snakes in every room."

"No, and my father didn't build this house, Potter," Malfoy said, rolling his eyes and launching into a history lesson. "It's been in the family for generations. It's bigger than the grounds of Hogwarts - that was one of the criteria my ancestors used in choosing a site. The generation that built this was almost all from Slytherin, and loyal too, so that's where the snakes come from. They didn't used to be animated and alive like, but since my father noticed the whole *family* - except for a few oddballs - has all been in Slytherin too, he decided it was appropriate to make it our family totem and enhance the snake decorations and stuff."

"How'd he do that?" Harry asked, genuinely interested. "He can just make them obey him, without talking?"

"A...uh...family friend did it for us."

Under no illusions about who the 'family friend' must be, Harry couldn't help sharing something he'd learned from the banister this afternoon. "Well, that's great and all, but you should be a little bit careful since the furniture is programmed to find out where and when you sleep, *just in case*," he said.

"Quit talking to our furniture!" Malfoy snarled. He looked nervous.

The serpent on the wall flicked out its tongue. "The small one is ridiculous. His presence annoys everyone."

Grinning at the idea that even Malfoy's *wallpaper* found him annoying, Harry finished up his bath in quite a good mood. He pretended not to notice the suspicious and resentful glare he was getting while he dressed.

Harry's room that night was a long corridor away from Draco's. He slept with his wand under his pillow, half-afraid to wake up and find Lucius hovering over him malevolently. He kept jerking awake with every tiny creak, hiss, or house-elf-squeak. By the time he finally relaxed enough to really get rest, it was almost light out.

When he woke up for good, Harry could tell by the state of the sun that it was well into the morning. He glanced out his window and could make out, in the distance, the site of last night's torture. It was hard to tell at this distance, but...was that Draco sitting at the edge of the lake?

Harry thought so. *Everybody* here wore black, but he could make out that same funny hat the boy had worn last night. But why was he sitting there, hugging his knees to his chest and looking depressed? The holidays were just *beginning*, and Harry owed him a fuck besides. He should be in a good mood.

Harry got dressed and took his broom from under his bed, where Malfoy had apparently banished it to last night. Not knowing exactly how to make the walls open up, he just opened his window and exited that way. He zipped and sped through the cold morning air, blinking at the brightness of the sun reflecting off the new snow.

"Hey!" he said when he got close. He was in too good a mood to feel the cold, so he just landed right in the snow. But Malfoy didn't answer.

He tried again a moment later. "Hey...Malfoy, are you okay?"

"What?" Draco's eyes focused slowly.

"You've been staring into space...and you don't look so good. What's wrong?"

He made a face. "My father found out about that Howler I sent you."

Harry couldn't help laughing. "Oh, that." Then, though, he sensed the darkness of Malfoy's mood, and looked him up and down quickly. "Did he do something to you?"

"Huh?" Draco had been zoning out again. Noticing Harry's scrutiny, he said wryly, "Don't bother - you won't find any marks."

"Well, what...I mean...are you okay?" Draco's only answer was a terse nod, and Harry sat down next to him slowly. They stared out together over the lake, but after a minute Harry broke the silence. "My family doesn't take good care of me, but if my uncle ever *touched* me, I'd take out my wand and curse him."

"He couldn't curse back," Draco pointed out blandly.

Harry nodded. "That's true." Looking away, sure that Draco couldn't see the expression on his face, he said, "Look, I'm sorry. From now on we'll have to make it so that nobody else knows *anything*. We can't do public embarrassment if...if stuff is going to happen to you."

"Thanks."

Harry never did find out what had happened between Draco and Lucius that first morning. When they ran into each other on the stairs, Lucius behaved exactly as he had the night before, as though nothing had happened. It made Harry's skin crawl.

Draco decided that they would go visit Millicent Bulstrode today. "We have to do it early, Potter, so she can start practicing stuff on her own," he explained. "And we also have to work with her and teach her our strategies."

Although he didn't much like the idea of journeying to the lair of the ogress, Harry tried to agree without making any faces.

It turned out that Millicent's house was a lot less horrible than Harry would have expected. As the boys hiked through Malfoy Manor to the Arrival Chamber, Draco explained a little bit about the Bulstrode family.

"They're not like us, really," he said. "They're kind of new money. Not so new - their house has been around for about four or five generations now - but still they haven't quite lost their peasant-ness about some things. Just be careful not to..." he took another look at Harry and laughed. "Oh, never mind. You visit the *Weasleys*, for Merlin's sake - you know how to behave with people who aren't quite up to standard."

Not really caring whether Draco considered his family above the Bulstrodes or not, Harry just said, "Whatever. I'll be nice to Millicent - just don't let her eat me."

The Bulstrodes had an Arrival Chamber too, but instead of leaving house elves to greet the guests, Millicent was there in person.

She froze when she saw Harry.

"Uh...Draco, when you said you'd bring a friend..." Millicent looked at him dubiously.

"You didn't *tell* her?" Harry demanded. Blushing furiously, he searched for a suitable way to apologize for existing. "Look, uh, Millicent, I'm sorry," he said, stumbling a little over her name. It had been awhile since he'd thought of her in terms other than 'beast' or 'ogre.' "I know you don't like me and all..."

"No, no, it's okay. It's not *your* fault," she said, glaring at Draco. She looked back at Harry. "He does this all the time - springs surprises on people. It's okay," she repeated, "I should be used to it. Come on up to my room, you guys."

As Harry followed her through the house - still huge, but considerably less excessive than Malfoy Manor, he tried hard to erase his preconceptions of Millicent as a separate and dangerous species. It helped a little when she turned to Malfoy and said, "I presume you have a good reason for bringing *him* here? Like we get to kill him or something?"

Harry jumped half a foot and she elbowed him. "I'm *kidding*, Potter, kidding."

Well, that was good. Harry hadn't known she was smart enough to kid. Perhaps she would be a useful member of the team after all...

They talked with her for an hour, and then went out to fly for another hour or two. Her family didn't have their own Quidditch pitch, but they had plenty of room for Harry and Draco to fly around and show off some of the new stuff they'd learned.

Millicent was duly impressed. As a matter of fact, she was so enthusiastic that she didn't tear Draco limb from limb when he suggested reading up on unusual Beater tactics. It would be important that she understand their new strategies, so the three of them made plans to meet again in a few days for discussion and training.

As they went back to the Arrival Chamber to Floo home for dinner, Draco showed the first bit of uncertainty Harry had seen from him. "Uh...so...Millicent, do you think it's a good idea?"

She laughed. "If I didn't, I wouldn't let you assign me *homework* over the holidays, now, would I?" She turned to Harry and shook his hand. "Nice meeting you, Potter. Well...you know what I mean."

"Sure." His smile was shy. "Call me Harry, would you?" Draco was making gagging noises, so Harry smacked him in the head without looking and raised his voice. "I mean, since we're going to be *teammates* and all, we should get over all the *stupidity* between us." He shot Draco a pretend glare, and Millicent giggled.

"Sure...Harry."

"See you."

He and Draco stepped into the fireplace. When they reached the Malfoys' house, the first thing Draco did was smack Harry. "Trying to make me look soft, are you? Smacking me in front of my friends?"

He appeared to be kidding, so Harry raised his eyebrows. "Oh...I get it. You only like to be smacked in *private*," he purred, trying out his best seductive voice.

"Oooh, that's it," Malfoy growled, trying unsuccessfully not to look amused. He tackled Harry to the ground and they wrestled for a few minutes.

Eventually Harry came out on top. He was seated on Malfoy's chest, pinning his flailing hands above his head. "Gotcha."

But Draco didn't seem upset at all. "I have an idea, Potter," he panted.

"What?"

"Tonight...you know how you sort of...owe me?"

Harry shuddered as some kind of delicious jolt ran through him. "Yeah..." he said, trying to suppress the feeling.

"Well, I have an idea. How about...since you didn't really lose this time, you shouldn't have to just lie there and let me do it - you can try to kind of get away."

"Get away?"

Malfoy nodded, looking up at him excitedly. "Yeah - like if you can make it to the door or something, I don't get to do you. You try to get away, and I have to hold you down and make you take it."

Harry let him up and they stood facing each other. "Wow," Harry said after a minute. "That's really sick."

"Isn't it?" Malfoy asked, delighted. "Of course, it can't be *too* hard for me - I don't want to lose. We'll handicap you somehow, maybe tie you up or something."

"*Tie me up?* Malfoy, you really *are* sick!" Harry exclaimed, but on the whole it sounded like fun, for some reason.

"Come on," Draco whined. "Haaaaaa-rreeeeee."

Laughing at his puppy-face, Harry agreed. "Oh, why not? At least this way I have a chance."

Chapter Fifteen

"Chapter Fifteen"

They decided to have tonight's romp take place in one of the many fancy parlor-like rooms in the manor - Harry found the idea of shagging amidst antique furniture and scowling portraits of forefathers very amusing.

Besides locking the door, this time Malfoy put a very, *very* powerful Silencing Charm on the room. "All right. Now, how do you want to do this?"

"I don't know," Harry said petulantly, trying to forbid himself to participate and have fun. "It's *your* sick fantasy. *You* set it up."

Malfoy shrugged and started to undress. "Well, start with the clothes, obviously. And then a good oiling charm and I'm going to warm you up some, this time. If we're fighting while I do it it's liable to be more uncomfortable than usual."

Harry nodded and obeyed. "And what if something really goes wrong? Since I'll be yelling the whole time, how will you know the difference?" He paused. "Okay, how about this: stop and please and no and all that...that's just for show. 'Pumpkin' will mean stop for real."

"Okay. Now let me fix the floor - we'll have terrible rug burns otherwise."

"Yeah, no carpet. Not wood, either. That'll hurt. Make the ground soft, like a big bed."

Malfoy did it. "How kinky. Okay, now come here." Malfoy led him over to a couch and considered how best to proceed...

A few moments later Harry was naked, stretched, and lubricated, with his hands cuffed behind him and one leg tied to the leg of the couch. He was bent over the arm of it and really didn't see any way of escaping.

Malfoy seemed to read his thoughts. "Nope, you're not going anywhere, Potter," he said cheerfully. "Although you're welcome to try." He pinched Harry's butt cheek, and Harry went wild.

"No! *Nononono!* Don't even *think* about it," he snarled, thrashing about helplessly. He broke Malfoy's grip on his hips by twisting around and kicking out behind him. He covered his ass with his bound hands. "Oh, no you *don't!* Over my dead body!"

Malfoy laughed and began prying his hands away, while simultaneously dodging kicks from Harry's free leg. Realizing that he was coming close to losing already, Harry pulled his arms up and let his shoulders wrench and pop, so that now his hands were at least in front of him where he could do something more useful than ineffectively trying to hold his butt cheeks together.

He supported his weight with his arms now, so that he could try to struggle out of the bent-over position that made it just too easy for Malfoy to have his way. Harry managed to fight his way to his feet, trying without success to pivot on his tied leg and get his back against the couch.

Malfoy was still behind him, and braced an arm against the back of Harry's neck, trying to force him to bend back over. Harry was still kicking blindly backwards, and landed one lucky kick on Malfoy's knee. When his tormentor yelped and hopped backwards, Harry shouted with triumph and took the opportunity to try to leap away.

Ooops. He'd forgotten that his left leg was still tied to the couch. He wound up in a heap on the floor, and scrambled to undo the rope with his cuffed hands before Malfoy was back on top of him.

He almost had it...

Too late. Just as the rope was about to part, Malfoy threw himself atop his victim and flipped him onto his stomach. Harry's hands were now pinned beneath him, digging uncomfortably into his stomach.

Though he still struggled, laughing the whole time like a madman, he was caught. There was another couch nearby, and Malfoy dragged him forward and pushed his head underneath it. Now Harry was *really* caught, stretched out lengthwise and barely able to move at all. His hands were stuck and he couldn't raise his upper body more than a couple of inches before he banged his head. If only he could get his enemy off his back for a few seconds...maybe he could scrunch up like a caterpillar and get his head free, which would in turn let him get up and free his arms....

But Malfoy had no intention of letting him get so far. Now that he had his victim pretty well immobilized, he spread Harry's ass apart and eased into his body.

"AARRRGGGH! NOOOOOO!" Harry wailed, squirming uselessly. Even though struggling made it hurt a little, it was still more fun. "Stop it stop it *stop it!*" he shrieked through his giggles. It was like a child being tickled by a much bigger, stronger grownup...only the stakes were a lot higher.

Malfoy laughed and began to fuck him with short, quick jabs, which was all he could manage because of Harry's desperate attempts to twist his hips away.

All of a sudden Harry realized the rope around his foot was a little less tight than it had been. He'd created some slack before, then, and maybe he could work his ankle free. That meant he'd be able to get his legs under him and throw Malfoy off. Perfect. He just had to keep him distracted for a few minutes, with some theatrical squealing and pleading.

"Get off me, you pervert! Ow! Please, no! Please! AAAhhh...." *Come on, come on, almost there*, he thought. He wriggled his leg some more, trying to get out of the rope, while simultaneously bucking as much as possible in a vain attempt to dislodge his attacker.

Malfoy had Harry's hips in a death-grip, straddling him and using all his weight to try to hold him still. He'd managed to shift angles and sink in deep somehow, laughing as Harry groaned in protest and begged him to stop. Thinking he'd won no problem, he was totally surprised when Harry, carefully timing it to match Malfoy's 'out' stroke so he didn't hurt himself, succeeded in pulling both knees up under him and throwing his buttocks in the air.

Malfoy was catapulted backwards, and Harry wriggled his head from under the couch and scrambled to his feet. He was about to run away, but Malfoy launched himself at Harry's knees and brought him back to the ground.

With the wind knocked out of him by the fall, Harry lay gasping for just a moment...but it was enough time to let Malfoy position him on his stomach again and lie down on top of him.

"Noooooooooo! I'll get you! Don't you dare...AAAHH!!!"

Now that his arms were pinned and his entire body was covered by Malfoy's, Harry had even less range of motion than before. Malfoy shoved into him again, but Harry was still trying to wiggle away...

Until Malfoy somehow hit that magic spot like the night on Snape's desk...

Harry froze.

Realizing what he'd done, Malfoy repeated the motion, forcefully, and was rewarded with a loud moan. Harry lay quiet under him for a few seconds, but then, deciding to try and resist this sick pleasure, renewed his struggles with desperation. This, unfortunately, only made it worse - rubbing against the floor made such horrible (or delightful) friction...

Not only did Malfoy manage to stay on top, but he also figured out how to time his thrusts with Harry's desperate bucking. Now, Harry was actually contributing to his own reaming, as he unknowingly positioned his ass at exactly the right angle to be drilled into, deeply, time and again.

Malfoy hit The Spot again. "Oh fuck," Harry breathed, sweating and panting. Then he raised his voice. "No! No, you sodding pervert! Help! Get off me, let go, you're...you're *hurting* me!"

A low laugh close to his ear made him jump. "Somehow I find that hard to believe, Potter," Malfoy drawled, pressing slowly all the way in.

Harry moaned despite himself. "This is worse than hurting," he whimpered. "I'd *rather* you hurt me...come on, Malfoy, please...please, no more...come on, not like this, just *hurt* me, no..." He bit his lip and lay still, feeling like he was about to come and desperately praying it wouldn't happen.

This time, though, Malfoy didn't show the same mercy he had that other night. Knowing exactly what he was doing, he fucked Harry with ruthless precision, drawing strangled gasps and breathless pleas with every stroke. *No no no no*. Fighting a losing battle, Harry tried to wail out an articulate protest but it didn't really work. "No, no, NOOO...Ohhhhhhh."

Laughing as he felt Harry convulse under him, Malfoy finally let his own orgasm overtake him.

He had held back so long it was almost painful.

But watching the shock and shame on Potter's face made it all worthwhile.

"Okay," said Malfoy when they'd gotten dressed and set the room to rights. "That was so much fun."

"No it wasn't," Harry argued, sullen and humiliated. "It was gross. Let's not talk about it."

"Baby."

"Pervert."

Malfoy sighed. "Well, you liked it until you came, didn't you?"

Harry couldn't stifle a smile, remembering the struggle. "Maybe. It was exciting, at least. Much better than just having to lie there and take it...although, you've got to admit, the fact that I...ugh..." He let his voice trail away and Malfoy grinned at him.

"I did that on purpose," he said. "I wanted to embarrass you. Don't worry about it." He was laughing and bouncing about, in a mood too good to be contained. "That was so much fun."

"You know I'm going to get revenge on you."

"I know you're going to *try*," Malfoy corrected happily. "I look forward to winning and getting to force myself on you again. You're really quite pathetic when you struggle. It was cute."

Harry shot him a completely ineffective glare. "It's too bad that was actually kind of fun, because I would really love to hate you right now, Draco," he said. Of course, despite the fact that it had been fun, Malfoy was looking so smug that Harry thought he just might be able to hate him anyway.

The next morning, flying effortless loops and circles around the Quidditch pitch, Harry was thinking about what tonight's bet would be. Sensing his thoughts, Malfoy flew up next to him and startled him by whispering in his ear, "Same as last night?"

Harry bit his lip. Did he really want to risk *that* again?

"Come on, Potter. It was fun."

Harry's only answer was a quiet chuckle, so Malfoy elbowed him. "Admit it. It was *fun*."

"All right, all right, it was. A little. Role-playing is kind of..." Harry's voice trailed away and he gasped. "Malfoy! *Role-playing!*"

Having no guess as to what sick turn Harry's thoughts had just taken, Malfoy arched his eyebrows. "What?"

"Role-playing! I just had a great idea - *Polyjuice!* Think about it. Polyjuice Potion. The options are limitless."

"Options?" Malfoy still didn't get it, so Harry clarified.

"How would you like to fuck somebody who looks like Crabbe or Goyle?"

Oooh, now he got it. Draco's jaw dropped half a foot. He gaped for a moment, then came back with, "I could make you shag *Weasley*."

Harry shuddered. "I'd never be able to look Ron in the face again." He thought for a few seconds. "Dumbledore."

"Aaahh! Snape."

"Euw! Filch."

"Hagrid."

Harry gasped. "That's horrible! Hey - your father."

"*Potter!*" Malfoy managed to get Harry in a mid-air choke hold, and the brooms tossed crazily with their struggles.

"No, no, wait, I have a better one," Harry sputtered out, despite Malfoy's hands around his neck. "How about *yourself?* I could turn into you."

Malfoy loved it. "We could make '*go fuck yourself*' a reality!"

Chapter Sixteen

"Chapter Sixteen"

The day after their bondage game, Harry got an unpleasant surprise while he was eating. The back of his chair leaned close to his ear. "I'm trying to be as soft as I can," it hissed to him, "since you're probably still sore."

Harry jumped up. "What?"

The chair's serpentine carvings all winked at him. "We heard all about it," they said. "What you and the small one were doing last night."

When he got similar reactions from the banister, the mantle, and the wallpaper of Malfoy's bathroom, Harry decided that there would be no more shagging in this house. For all he knew, news of their sexcapades might get around to Voldemort himself next time he came to visit, and that was definitely something they could all do without. Better to be cautious and just wait until the holidays were over. Besides, they had to wait until they were back to school to use the Polyjuice, anyway. They could sneak out any day and buy some in Knockturn Alley, but to get hair from, say, Dumbledore, they would need to be in the castle.

They decided to just keep a running total of who owed whom what. As the end of the holidays approached, they were both going stir-crazy, having their long-indulged libidos suddenly completely denied, but they were amassing quite a tally. "You'd better not collect on all of these at once," Harry said when he lost an eighth fuck to Malfoy, "or I won't be able to walk by the end."

"As a matter of fact, Potter, I heard about a permanent-erection charm that lets you keep it up as long as you want," Draco answered happily. "I found it in a book for, um, *professionals*, if you know what I mean, so it should work fine...."

Harry gasped. "Malfoy, don't you dare!" he squeaked, but had to shift his posture quite suddenly, to hide the fact that his body for some reason found the conversation very interesting. This abstinence thing was really a pain.

One day, though, they were at Millicent's house for practice, and a bit of an accident happened. Within a few minutes of takeoff, Millicent got hit in the head with a Bludger. She insisted she was okay, but blood was dripping from her nose at an alarming rate, so they decided to fly her back to the house so she could heal and get a new shirt on. The boys stood in the corridor, and the minute Millicent disappeared into her room, Malfoy poked Harry in the back.

"No snakes here, Potter." Harry turned to him, eyes wide. "Come on, I'm desperate and there's a bathroom right on this floor. Hurry up. A quickie before she comes back."

Shocked by the sheer absurdity of what they were doing, Harry allowed himself to be propelled into the Bulstrodes' bathroom. Within seconds his pants were down and his elbows rested on the sink.

Draco zapped him with a lubrication charm and entered him quickly. In the mirror, Harry saw himself bite his lip to avoid making noise, and wince as Draco started thrusting in earnest.

"Careful," Harry said quietly. "It's been a little while, and you're not really...ow...giving me much...mmm...time."

"We don't *have* much time, Harry," Malfoy whispered back. "That's the whole idea of a *quickie*." He glanced up to see Harry watching his own facial expressions in the mirror. "Ooh, kinky. Do you like watching yourself take it?"

Harry scowled at his reflection. "Shut up, you. And don't you *dare*...aah...make it feel good this time. I can't go flying around with a hard-on, or Millicent will wonder what's up. She'll...ow...think it's for her."

Malfoy laughed and quickened his pace. He finished in record time, and as they buttoned back up, Harry glanced at himself in the mirror to make sure he didn't have that just-shagged look. Nope, he looked okay. The flushed cheeks could be attributed to the Quidditch in the cold air.

By the time Millicent came back out of her room, with new clothes on and her nose back to normal, they were standing innocently in the hallway. "Ready to fly a bit more?" Draco asked, and Harry had to admire his nonchalance.

By now they had worked up to three long practices a day. So, that afternoon found the boys alone at Malfoy Manor again, trudging through the snow to the Quidditch pitch. Once they were inside the bubble and safe from prying furniture eyes, though, Draco grabbed Harry's arm and took a deep breath. "Wait a second. Um...Harry...I've been wondering. Do you...um...like me?"

"Do I what?"

"You know," Malfoy said uncomfortably, "*like* me. Like romance-wise."

"Oh, that. Of course not." Harry answered automatically, but then paused to think. "Well, on the other hand, you spend an awful lot of nights with your cock up my arse.... Let me think." He thought some more. "I don't know. Do you like me?"

Malfoy shrugged. "Dunno. That's why I asked. How can we tell?"

"Kiss each other?"

They both made a face, but after a bit Malfoy said, "Maybe we'd better. I mean, if I like guys, I think I ought to know about it for future reference."

"Me, too," Harry said reluctantly. He approached and took off his glasses. "Do you want to do it now?"

"I guess so. Better now than in school, anyway." They stared at each other for a moment, each unwilling to make the first move. Draco overcame his hesitation first, and leaned in with his eyes closed.

Lips on lips. Just like any other kiss, only Harry realized with surprise he'd never had such a good kissing partner before. His lips were coaxed apart by a gentle touch of tongue, and for the first time in his life he opened his mouth and let somebody else explore it.

Harry thought about his brief attempts to snog girls before this, and realized that nothing had ever come close. He stroked the invading tongue hesitantly with his own, and Draco took that as encouragement to probe deeper.

A sudden inspiration had Harry tightening his lips briefly to suck on his partner's tongue for a moment, and he was rewarded with a soft moan into his mouth. A rustle of robes and then Draco's hands were on his shoulders. Harry slid his own arms around Draco's waist to pull him close. At the full-body contact, Harry uh, reacted, but he hoped the many layers of clothing between them would make it impossible for Draco to tell.

Harry was getting lightheaded now. He was being snogged absolutely silly, with first one lip and then the other licked and gently bitten... *Is that breathing coming from ME?* he wondered. A slight void opened up against his mouth and he realized he was being invited in. Now it was *his* turn to go exploring, and he discovered with some surprise that the feeling of tongue on tongue was velvety yet rough at the same time.

All of a sudden the hands moved from his shoulders to his face. Held immobile now, Harry was kissed much more roughly and aggressively, but he accepted the new urgency gladly since he was definitely heating up some himself. He, too, tightened his arms, and matched the forceful intensity of the kiss.

He now had a raging hard-on, which (if the pressure against him from Malfoy's similar situation was any indication) could definitely be felt through all his robes. Finally, though, Draco started to back away and Harry let go of him.

They both exhaled deeply, with matching smiles. "Wow," Harry said.

"Yeah." But then, Malfoy did a double-take and his lip curled in disgust. "*Potter!*"

"What?" Harry asked defensively, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand. "It was *your* idea!"

"Ugh! Eugh, arrgh!" Draco, too, wiped his mouth. "No more of that, not ever. It's disgusting."

Harry sighed and put his glasses back on. "But it was good."

"So? It was *you*. That cancels out any amount of goodness." He smoothed down the front of his robes and Harry tried hard not to smile.

Pretending he didn't see the evidence of just *how* good, he agreed, "Okay, no more of that. You *are* the best kisser I've ever had, but I see what you mean - thinking about it now, it's kind of nasty."

"You're not bad yourself, Potter, but...if only you weren't *you*."

Harry ran a hand through his hair and laughed. "So, does this answer our question about whether we like each other?"

"Not by a long shot...but at least it tells us we don't *want* to like each other. That's something, at least. Maybe we'll figure everything out later."

"Yeah, later. Okay, now let's practice a little."

They took to the air and flew a few laps. Then, all of a sudden, completely out of the blue, Harry's scar erupted into pain. Worse than pain. He was totally helpless and collapsed forwards onto his broom.

Realizing he was in danger of falling off, and not sure if Malfoy was close enough to catch him, Harry tried to guide the broom downwards. He was only about ten feet off the ground when he shuddered, convulsed, and fell. He lay in the grass for a second, and then, just as suddenly as it had come, the pain eased up.

Holding on to his scar with both hands, he scrambled into a sitting position and checked the sky for Draco, expecting to see him heading down in a dive to see what was wrong.

A whimper from off to his left told him that Draco was not in the air at all.

He, too, had fallen off his broom. Now he knelt on the ground, hunched over, clutching his left arm to his chest.

Chapter Seventeen

"Chapter Seventeen"

It didn't take Harry long to figure out why Malfoy was hurting so badly. He got to his feet unsteadily, but then the pain returned without warning. He saw Malfoy double up again and scream into the grass, but the next thing he saw was sky, since his knees had buckled suddenly.

Lying on his back, Harry could hear himself squealing, and hated himself for it. Get up, he ordered his body savagely. You haven't been hit with a leg-locker curse. It's just pain.

The need to know was easily as strong as the compulsion to just lie there and hope it got better. Harry somehow got his legs back under him and made his way over to where Malfoy shook and twitched in the grass.

Every step sent beautiful fireworks through Harry's vision, and he was holding on to his head so hard he wondered if he might crush it, but he discovered that motion was possible despite the agony.

Good job, he told himself. Now bend over...careful, don't fall...now grab his arm and look at it.

Finally he pried Draco's twisted form apart and jerked up the sleeve of his robe.

Yup, there it was. Glowing a bright, poisonous green was the Dark Mark, branded clearly in the baby-soft flesh of Malfoy's forearm.

Curiosity satisfied, Harry could no longer fight the urge to fall in a heap and just wail like a lost soul. He and Draco tossed and writhed together until the pain finally passed for the second time.

When speech was at last possible, the first thing Harry did was demand, "Why didn't you tell me?"

"You never asked," Malfoy gasped, still lying on the ground.

Harry bent over him and shook him. "What the hell do you think you're playing at, Malfoy? You let me be friends with you! And you're a...you're a Death Eater. I don't believe it."

Malfoy sat up. "Well, believe it," he said harshly, pulling up his sleeve again. "There it is. See for yourself."

Harry watched as though mesmerized, while the Mark faded from bright green to a dull reddish tint, sort of like blood beneath the skin. When the pulsing was totally over, he said the first stupid thing that came into his head. "Snape's is black."

"So is my father's. It turns Dark once you, uh...the first time you kill for him." Malfoy explained, no longer making eye contact.

"Oh," Harry said calmly. His powers of speech and reasoning seemed to have disappeared along with the mark, and he stared blankly at Draco's white forearm. "Well...now what do we do?"

"Do?" Draco asked, haughty once again. "We don't do anything, Potter. Nothing changes - Quidditch is Quidditch and politics are politics. The two are unrelated."

"Unrelated?" Harry, finally finding his anger, grabbed for Malfoy's arm and wrenched it painfully. "That is related to everything! How can we fight over a stupid little gold ball when ten minutes later you might be handing me over to get murdered by Lord Voldemort?"

Draco stared at the ground. "Don't be stupid," he said quietly. "You know I'm not going to do that."

"Well what about when somebody else does it, then? And you show up to a Death Eater sleep-over one night and there I am, ready to get killed...what'll you do then?"

Still not meeting his eyes, Malfoy just shrugged. "That won't happen. Only the senior members get to stand in the circle when something important is going on, and I won't be included like that until after I graduate. So I have ages to figure it out."

Absolutely disgusted, Harry stood up and towered over him. "You make me puke, Malfoy. The idea that you could actually believe any of that rubbish that old maggot feeds you... You really think it's a good idea to kill Muggle-borns? How does that make any sense? Let me tell you something. Ron and I are both as full-blooded as you can get, and we'd be lost fifty times a day without Hermione - our Muggle-born best friend. So you can take your pure ferret little bloodline and shove it. I've got a Portkey and I'm going back to Hogwarts and to Dumbledore right now."

"No! Potter, wait. Wait a second," Malfoy pleaded.

Harry took a few steps backwards. "Toss me your wand and I'll listen," he said impassively.

Malfoy obeyed, looking murderous, and the minute Harry was seated he let him have it. "You've got a lot of nerve over there, acting like you're in any position to judge me. Like you can understand why I do what I do, or even what exactly I did... I wanted to tell you - you have no idea how long I've wanted to - but I knew you would react like this! And I hate it! You have no right to say anything about me. You don't know anything."

"Well, why don't you tell me, then?" Harry demanded. "Why don't you say why in God's name you have that thing burnt into your arm, and if I think the reason's good enough, maybe I won't go make sure you spend the rest of your sorry little life in prison. In Azkaban. Don't think I won't do it. And yes-" he added, silencing Draco's protest, "I do have the right to judge for you, because you're obviously not capable of making judgments for yourself. Do you even know...never mind. You just tell me what you were going to tell me."

Malfoy took a deep, calming breath and exhaled it slowly. Trying for a reasonable tone, he said, "Remember how you told me about your uncle, how he reacted when he found out you were a wizard?"

Harry nodded, throat closed up, as he remembered the easy familiarity of yesterday's conversation.

"Well, multiply his anger times about fifty," Draco said, methodically ticking off points on his fingers. "Then give him a really, really short temper and a habit of being obeyed without question. Take away any lingering hesitation he has about doing you serious injury. Then give him a wand, and a complete arsenal of all the Dark curses." He paused. "Now you've got my father if I'd said no. Does that help you understand any better?"

Harry finally found his voice. "No," he said. "I don't think a thousand Uncle Vernons, with baseball bats and pet Lord Voldemort's besides, could make me agree to kill people."

"But it's not like that," Draco protested desperately. "You still don't get it! It's not like they convinced me I ought to be killing people. It's not like somebody said, 'here are the ups and downs of it' and I got to think about whether I wanted to be part of it or not. It's not even like my father stood over me with a wand to make sure I did it. Nobody ever asked my opinion! It was like, 'Good morning, Draco, today you're eighteen, tonight's the night. Repeat these words, hold out that hand, bow to that guy there, and congratulations, you're a Death Eater. Now you don't have to sit at the kiddie table anymore at Christmas.'"

Harry was appalled. "But that's even worse! You mean you don't even believe in it? You mean you're a Death Eater just because?"

"I wouldn't say it was quite that casual," Draco said with an apologetic shrug. "But yes, if I had to give a reason for this brand I've got, the word would be circumstances."

They sat in silence for a bit. Harry finally smacked himself in the head. "This is really fucked up," he said.

Malfoy threw out his arms in a gesture of total helplessness. "Potter, if I could change things, I would," he said tiredly.

Harry sighed. "I believe you," he said, wondering if he really did or not. All of a sudden an idea struck. "You can change things," he said.

"How? I'm not one for heroics, Potter - there's a reason the hat didn't put me in Gryffindor. Anything that will get me killed is totally out of the question."

"I know a spell," Harry lied. "Me and Hermione figured it out once by accident. We were trying to find ways to detect the Mark, and instead we stumbled on a way to erase it."

"Really?"

"Yup. Will you let me do it to you? If we take the Dark Mark off your arm, I'll believe that you're not evil and I won't turn you in."

Malfoy thought for a little bit. "When I graduate Hogwarts and I'm invited to important meetings and stuff," he said slowly, "And Voldemort happens to notice that I haven't got his Mark any more...he'll kill me. If we do this, and he wins, I'm really in trouble."

"Wins," Harry scoffed. "The only way he'll win is over my dead body. And yes, I mean that literally. It's him or me. So if you don't want to see me go down..."

"Don't do this to me, Potter." Malfoy's voice was defeated and exhausted.

Harry debated being quiet, but then persisted anyway. "Come on. It's Azkaban if I turn you in. You'd throw away your life for Voldemort? He's a psycho. And an idiot. Admit it. All he's got going for him is superstition, and idiots like your father who feed his ego but are really just waiting to stab him in the back."

"Don't talk about my father," Malfoy shot back reflexively, but then nodded. "You're right, though, that I like living, and I like you, and if it comes down to a choice - which I'm sure it will - Voldemort isn't worth it. I never chose this - it just sort of happened. I have until summer to think of a way not to get Crucio'd for disloyalty...maybe I'll ask Snape how he manages it...or I could always blame Dumbledore... Anyway, go ahead. Take off the Mark." He pulled up his sleeve but Harry didn't move. "Well?"

"Well nothing," Harry said dejectedly. "There is no spell - I made it up. I just wanted to see if you were serious or not. Here." He handed Draco back his wand.

"Oh...thanks." instead of sounding relieved, he sounded almost regretful. "Oh, well, then. I guess I'll just keep the damn tattoo. Say...how do I know you won't tell?"

Harry almost smacked him. "If I can trust you not to murder my best friend Hermione, I guess you'll just have to trust me not to rat on you," he snarled. "You're the one who was going on about trust when we came here...now here's the test. You be good, and I'll be quiet. Let's swear it."

Malfoy nodded soberly. "I know you still don't like me, Potter, and your instinct is to not believe me...but I swear" he said slowly, giving full weight to every word, "I've been an inactive member since I was initiated. And I promise to stay that way. I swear it, on the snitch, seeker to seeker." He drew his wand across his palm, muttering a soft incantation, and in its wake a cut opened up. Harry did the same, and they touched their bloody palms together in a long, tight handshake.

"Yes," Harry echoed, "Seeker to seeker."

While the oath had gone a little ways to assuring Harry that Malfoy was for real, he found himself remembering over and over what a good actor - and good Slytherin - the innocent-looking little blond actually was. If he was making it all up, I wouldn't be able to tell, Harry admitted to himself.

Consequently, when they got back to school, Harry found himself deciding that he just couldn't keep it a secret. The boy was a Death Eater. He said he would be good, but you never knew. If something went wrong, somebody ought to know who to blame. Besides, the whole problem was weighty. It was a secret Harry didn't want to bear alone.

His first thought was obviously Ron and Hermione. But closer consideration led him to chuck that idea out the window immediately - Ron hated Malfoy so much he would surely blow his cover, and it was unfair to ask Hermione, a Muggle-born herself, to help lie for a Death Eater who might one day kill her. Besides, knowing her love of the rules, Harry wondered if she would turn him in purely out of a sense of social duty... no, Ron and Hermione were definitely out.

Dumbledore? Despite his trust for the old man, Harry really didn't think he ought to be told. Even if he managed to keep it under wraps and not let Draco get expelled, chances were good (no, it was certain) that he would want to talk to the boy himself and try to make him see reason. That would mean letting Draco know Harry had told on him and broken their promise.

A promise to a Death Eater doesn't count, Harry tried to tell himself, but it was no good. The thought of Draco's face when he saw he was betrayed....no. Not an option.

Okay, then. Who? Who could Harry trust, who knew how to be discreet, but was also clever enough to be useful if something went wrong? Who would know what to do with the information, and not spread it around lightly? Who, indeed...

The answer smashed into him as he was heading down the great staircase, not really paying attention to the steps in front of him...

"Watch where you're going, Potter!"

Harry grabbed on to the banister to steady himself. "Professor Snape!" he gasped.

Snape looked at him strangely. "Yes?" he asked, obviously puzzled by the shock in Harry's voice.

Remembering the thousand-and-one times he had told himself: Listen to Dumbledore and just accept that the greasy old git is on our side, Harry forced himself to speak. "I ought to tell you, sir. I mean...well...Malfoy-" His breath suddenly caught, as he remembered something else...

Draco's words echoed through his skull. It turns Dark once you, uh...the first time you kill for him...

Harry blinked and fixed a falsely honest expression on his face. "Malfoy and I won't be disturbing things any more, sir," he substituted. "We talked it over and decided to keep things private from now on, you know, no more bets in public."

Harry could tell from Snape's eyes that his lying had not gone undetected. Still, knowing the futility of trying to extract information from him, Snape just nodded and said shortly, "Good," before sweeping away down the staircase.

Harry didn't tell Draco about his near-slip-up that day at practice. They flew together like they always did, both of them tense but neither acknowledging the new problem between them. As they got off their brooms to go inside, though, Draco stopped and grabbed his arm.

"Potter, I'm scared. I didn't tell you before, but...I've been invited to a Dark Revel this weekend."

"A what?"

Malfoy hissed with impatience. "It's a party where the Death Eaters do things. I might have to kill someone. Or something else gross, I don't know. I mean, I'll probably just be supposed to watch, but I don't know...What should I do?"

"Don't go, obviously," Harry said with finality. "Make something up, an exam or something. Tell them you're sick."

Malfoy shook his head. "If I don't go, they'll know something is wrong. My father told me I have to."

When Harry looked closer, he noticed that not only was Malfoy paler than usual, but he had rings around his eyes that spoke of several nights of little sleep. Harry did fight down the urge to hug him, but he found himself compelled to reach out and rub his back. "Your father can go fuck himself. Draco, you can always tell him Snape told Dumbledore about the Revel and they'll be keeping an eye on you to make sure you don't go. There are a thousand ways to get out of it without him realizing what you're doing. And even if he does suspect something, so what? It's safe here at school."

"No. It's not safe here - not for me. The Mark can call me wherever I am, Harry, and it can do really horrible things if you don't obey it. Why do you think Snape's such a grouch all the time? Dumbledore's given him every potion and spell known to man for the pain, and he's had years to get used to it, but still look what it can do to people. And that's just Voldemort being annoying - imagine what he can do if he really takes it into his head to punish me."

Harry sighed and ran his hand through his hair. "All right," he said firmly, "Then we'll just have to get it off you. Here's the plan: owl your father today and cancel this weekend. We practice tonight at eight on the pitch - with Millicent and whats-his-face and our Chasers. Then we'll hit the books - restricted section with the invisibility cloaks - and figure out what to do. This is magic - there's got to be a way. Afterwards I'll go and shag you silly. Okay?" He paused. "What? What are you looking at me for?"

"Nothing," Draco said. "It's just that I was kind of expecting you to say 'tough, now deal with it.' Thanks."

Irritated by that unflattering assumption, Harry snapped, "Well, friends don't do that. And we appear to have become friends somehow, so I guess I'm stuck with you."

Draco wrinkled his nose to help hide his smile. "None of that Gryffindor friends-to-the-end business, if you please."

"Would you rather have the Slytherin take-what-I-can business from me?"

"As long as the 'take' bit refers to this evening's activities in the prefects' lounge...yes, I would. Plan to stay awhile. I hear sex is a great stress-reliever."

Harry smiled thinly. "It better be."

Chapter Eighteen

"Chapter Eighteen"

Harry's head spun as he made his way to the Quidditch pitch to practice with his team. Thankfully, though, by the time practice was over his head was perfectly clear. Quidditch somehow had the ability to empty his mind of all distracting thoughts, and put him in a good mood to boot.

Consequently, he decided to switch the order of events for the evening. Judging by the impish look Malfoy gave him in the showers, he was having the same idea. "D'you want to save the books til, uh, later?" he asked, careful not to reveal anything in case anyone was listening.

"Sure." Then, seemingly out of the blue, Malfoy added, "I like that new *roll* we were working on today. It's a lot of fun when we *play* with the whole team together." He waggled his eyebrows. "Know what I mean?"

Harry loved the idea of having a secret conversation in full hearing of other people, but he forced himself not to reply in kind. The last thing they needed was anybody to guess that they had several bottles of Polyjuice Potion hidden away, and a wide selection of hairs with which to torture one another....

Oooh, this would be fun.

"All right," Malfoy said as soon as they were alone in the lounge. "Who goes first?"

"Me," said Harry instantly. "I won more."

"As if that matters," Malfoy laughed. "We both know we're just going to fuck each other to exhaustion anyway."

Harry smiled and told him who his first impersonation was going to be. Then he dipped a ladleful out of the cauldron. He added the final ingredient and held the potion in front of his face, still hesitant, as Malfoy squirmed before him, no longer giddy.

"Please, Potter, don't do it," he begged. "Look, I'll do something else, anything else, *please*, I'd rather fuck Filch's *cat*! Not this..."

Harry laughed. "Filch's cat. That's a good one, Draco. I'll think about it. But first..." he drained the ladle in one gulp. "Close your eyes," he said.

Draco turned away and squeezed his eyes shut. Harry transformed and transfigured his clothes, then stood and tried hard to suppress manic giggles. "All right, Mr. Malfoy," he said mildly. "You may turn around now."

Draco did, and instantly covered his eyes with both his hands. "Oh, *Gods!*" he squealed. "Potter, no!"

Harry blinked behind a pair of half-moon spectacles and adjusted his beard. "I believe we had a bet, Mr. Malfoy. Those robes will have to go. Get down on your back, please."

"Oh, god, Professor...I mean, Potter, come on, don't..."

"Don't be so melodramatic, my dear boy," Harry said, mimicking the Headmaster's quirks to a nicety as he patted him on the shoulder. "Come, come. Down."

Instead of lying on the floor, though, Draco just knelt. "Please. Potter. I'm on my *knees*. I'm begging you. Please don't do this."

Harry was grateful for the facial hair which disguised his evil smile. "Ah. On your knees? Perhaps you'd like to do something *else*, then?" he asked, and put a hand on the back of Draco's head. His other hand went down to his fly, and Draco screamed, horrified.

"NOOOO! Not that!" he scrambled backwards in a panicked crabwalk that took him across the room until his head slammed into a wall. He lay on the ground, shaking.

Although Harry was definitely having fun torturing Draco this way, he wasn't really cruel enough to go through with it. He glanced down at himself unhappily. Come to think about it, in this body, the matter was really out of his control, wasn't it? He doubted the old man could get it up even surrounded by a horde of naked veela.

He sighed. "Mr. Malfoy, apparently your prayers have been answered," he said softly. "I'm afraid I'm not in quite as good, erm, *condition* as a younger man might be...it appears that we won't be able to do anything fun after all."

Malfoy breathed a sigh of relief. Then, he jumped up, scooped out another dose of Polyjuice, and added a hair from a vial in his pocket. "Here - this one's yours. Take it and look normal again, for Merlin's sake. I'm going to have nightmares for the rest of my *life!*"

After they calmed down for a few minutes, Malfoy declared that it was his turn. "I promise mine won't be *quite* so bad," he consoled Harry.

"As long as it's not Dobby, Hagrid, or your father, we're okay."

"Ugh! My father is *off limits*, Potter. To both of us," Malfoy reminded him. "But don't worry - I'm sure you'll be perfectly disgusted anyway."

Harry covered his eyes while Malfoy transformed. "Are you ready yet?" he asked finally.

A pause. "Mr. Potter. What a pleasant surprise."

A shiver went up Harry's spine at the unfamiliar amusement in the familiar silky tones. "I should have known," Harry groaned, and opened his eyes to see a perfect replica of Severus Snape smiling nastily at him. "Oh, no."

The ordeal began. Malfoy watched him undress, with such a perfect imitation of Snape's smirk that Harry knew he must have practiced. "Get down." The command was perfunctory and almost bored, much the same way Snape delivered his instructions in Potions class. Harry didn't think he'd ever be able to listen to those lectures again...not after hearing that same voice correct him: "No, not like that. Aren't you paying any attention? How am I supposed to see your face if you're on your knees? Lie *down*, you stubborn little brat."

Harry sat on the floor and gulped.

"Just lie back and think of Gryffindor," Snape/Malfoy advised with a twisted smile. Harry lay down, but it took all his willpower not to jump up and run again when he saw his professor hovering over him malevolently. "Now, Mr. Potter, I suppose a bit of preparation is in order. I believe I am more...shall we say, *favorably proportioned* than the *boys* you are used to."

Oh, gods! Harry closed his eyes at this information, wincing for a moment, but then decided it was a blessing in disguise. At least it wouldn't feel good this way - he didn't think he'd *ever* get over the humiliation of coming with his least favorite teacher inside him.

He kept his eyes squeezed shut while he was made ready, but finally Snape's silky voice commanded, "Open your eyes, Potter, I want you to watch this."

Some sick, morbid curiosity prompted Harry to obey. He propped himself up on his elbows, and had to blink several times to process the view. His brain refused to comprehend the image of Professor Snape kneeling before him naked, with one of Harry's legs in each hand, poised at his entrance and ready to-

"Oh Merlin no! You're enormous," Harry exclaimed.

The grin was all Malfoy. "Told you so." But then he slipped back into character and pursed his lips. "Are you ready yet, Mr. Potter? I assure you, waiting will only make it *harder*."

Harry couldn't bring himself to laugh at anything said by Snape - even if it wasn't *really* Snape - so he just gulped and nodded.

Malfoy/Snape got a good grip on Harry's thighs and forced in just a little.

Harry gasped. Thanks to plenty of lubrication his body gave way relatively easily, but it still felt like something way too big was being shoved into something way too small. Harry forced himself to meet his tormentor's eyes, and found the exact same expression there as when Snape was watching a delicate potion in class. "Discomfort or pain?" he asked in his usual preemptory manner.

Harry had to think for a second. For some reason, being fucked always made thinking more difficult. "Discomfort, Professor," he answered after a minute. It didn't occur to him until much later that he'd used Snape's title, and indeed was having trouble thinking of this person as anybody other than his horrid Potions teacher.

"Good." Still with the same concentration on his face, Snape/Malfoy pushed forward all the way, slowly, watching Harry for signs of trouble.

Harry knew by the crotch-on-crotch contact when he was impaled all the way. His whole rectum throbbed unpleasantly, and he was cramping up something awful. He finally had some idea what Malfoy must have suffered the night of the engorgement charm, and so his discomfort was increased by a sudden pang of guilt. "One second, sir, it's really big and-" all of a sudden he broke off and laughed. "*Malfoy*, you ass. This is really confusing."

"I don't see anything *confusing* about it, Mr. Potter," Snape/Malfoy said, but then relented and grinned at him. "Yes, isn't it? It was great, though - for a minute you really thought you were being fucked by Snape. That'll be something, next time you see him for real and-"

"Shut up," Harry ordered, shuddering at the thought. "Just get it over with, will you? Be careful, though, it kind of hurts."

In an effort to not meet Malfoy's eyes, Harry ended up staring at their crotches. He was shocked to notice that, although each in-stroke brought a new wave of dull pain, he found the sight of a cock disappearing into his body sort of arousing.

"Mr. Potter." Harry gasped, since Snape - *Malfoy*, he reminded himself - had chosen to get his attention by not only calling his name, but also pinching his erection lightly. He looked up and their eyes met. "Watch," Snape/Malfoy said.

Harry knew he meant maintain eye contact, not watch what was happening. He certainly didn't like the idea of Malfoy seeing his face while he fucked him, but he forced himself not to look away. Snape/Malfoy pulled all the way out and waited a bit, giving Harry's aching body a little time to close up, and then positioned himself and surged all the way in.

The sudden re-entry was *just* this side of excruciating pain. Harry's jaw dropped at the intensity, although he didn't scream, and he kept his eyes on Malfoy's even though they filled spontaneously with tears. His reward was a soft pat on the stomach and a single teasing caress between his legs. "Good boy."

Malfoy/Snape now switched to strokes that were slow and smooth; if it weren't for the painful width he was accommodating, and the unprecedented depth to which his body was being invaded, Harry would say it was almost gentle. "How is it, Potter?"

Harry grimaced and looked away. Snape's face! That was just wrong on so many levels... "Fine," he managed in between breaths. "But still kind of...big. Goes in...ahh...too far. It's really..." Harry searched for a word to describe this feeling of being a hand puppet with somebody's fist filling up his entire torso. "...jeez, ow."

"Sorry about that," Malfoy said, and there was no mistaking him for Snape now. He grinned and gave a particularly forceful thrust. "Snape's really *built*. Who'd have thought?"

"Gross," Harry said, making a face. He wished his erection would die down a bit, but at least he was in no danger of *embarrassing himself* this time.

Malfoy seemed to read his thoughts. "Do you want to come?" he asked conversationally, curling Snape's long fingers around Harry's cock

"No," Harry said firmly.

"Okay. Well, I do." Malfoy put both hands on Harry's hips to hold him steady, and began to really pound him.

A couple months ago this would have KILLED me, Harry thought, wincing as he was ravaged, but by now he was used to sex and relaxed enough that he weathered the storm without screaming or fainting. "Oh. My. God. That's. Ree. Lee. Hard. And. Huge. And. Ow. And ow, ow, ow, ow," he mumbled in time with Malfoy's savage thrusts. His glasses were in serious danger of bouncing off, and he had to reach up to adjust them several times.

Finally Malfoy's body went rigid and Harry sighed with relief. Done. Yup, there was that icky squirtiness, and Malfoy pulled out immediately.

Too immediately. Apparently he *wasn't* done, and they were both equally surprised when Snape's cock spasmed again, making a mess all over Harry's chest.

Harry jumped up, totally horrified. "Euw! AAAAAAAHHH! Euw eww *euw!*" He ran around the room looking for a towel or clothes or *anything*, but the first cloth he came across was the curtains. Fine - this was an *emergency* - they would do.

As he wiped himself off, he heard Malfoy laughing his head off on the floor behind him. He whirled around, glaring and wishing he were a basilisk. "I'm going to *kill* you," he said.

"Sorry, *sorry*," Malfoy said, spreading his hands in surrender. "It's not mine - how was I supposed to know it would do that?" He paused and a devilish smile stole over his borrowed face briefly. "Think we should have asked Snape for an instruction manual?"

Harry's disgust was suddenly eclipsed by a very great idea. "Okay, you're stuck being Snape for the next half-hour with nothing important to do, right?"

"Right," Malfoy said warily.

"I have a suggestion. Bend over."

"*Potter!*" Draco exclaimed, but finally agreed for the sheer perversion value. "This is so messed up," he said. "How do you want to do it?"

Harry thought a bit. "Well, I want you to watch - like I want to be able to see you when I do it - but I also like the hands-and-knees business. It's more demeaning, you know."

Malfoy laughed. "Okay. Since it's sort of not me you're torturing, I guess I'll help. I have a better imagination for this kind of thing." He paused. "Mirrors. Set up a mirror in front so you can see his face. And - if you really want to be thorough - conjure the floor into a mirror, too. That would be *really* sick."

Harry did it, and they both laughed at the absurdity of what they were doing. "All right, now get in character," Harry said.

"Kinky." But Malfoy turned away and took a deep breath, and when he whirled around to face Harry again he was in perfect Snape style. "Mr. Potter! Where are your clothes?"

"Get down," Harry ordered. "Hands and knees, now."

After a brief shocked expression, Malfoy/Snape did as he was told. Harry regarded him critically, admitting to himself that Malfoy was infinitely more attractive, but all he said aloud was, "I suppose you'll want some lubrication, as I don't think you've got a line of people beating down your door for sex every night."

Snape snorted. "If you're implying that I am not in the habit of being buggered by my students, you're correct. If, on the other hand, you believe I haven't got a sex life-"

"Be quiet, Malfoy!" Harry shuddered. "That's just nasty." He used a lubrication charm and positioned himself, adjusting his pose a little due to Snape's much larger frame. "Okay, *Professor*," he said with a low laugh. "Watch."

Malfoy/Snape raised his head and met Harry's eyes in the mirrored wall. "Potter, so help me..."

Harry eased in slowly, acclimating himself to the different feel, and was pleased to watch Snape flinch. "Yeah," Harry answered the unspoken question, "I used a weaker lubricating charm this time. Wouldn't want you to get too comfortable or anything." He started to establish a rhythm, and added unnecessarily, "If it's too-"

"I know, I *know*," Snape spat at him. "You haven't lost any of your nauseating sentimen-ohhhhh." His head dropped suddenly against his chest and he stopped talking.

"What?"

"Fifty points to Gryffindor, Mr. Potter," he said hoarsely.

It took Harry a moment to understand, but once he did he began to laugh. "Aha. So *that's* how you do it," he said, and tried to recapture the same angle and depth that had elicited such a groan. "Watch. Come on, *watch*," he repeated, as Malfoy still kept his head down. When the boy disobeyed a second time, Harry reached forward and grabbed a handful of Snape's greasy hair. "I said, *watch*."

While Malfoy didn't exactly resist, he didn't cooperate either, so Harry had to pull his head back by main force and continue to yank on his hair to make him maintain eye contact. He found he quite liked the show of dominance, and the fact that Snape/Malfoy let him do it, so he shoved suddenly as deep as he could and flashed a cocky grin at the tense, flushed face in the mirror.

Malfoy/Snape growled inarticulately at him, but was holding his head up on his own now, so Harry could use both hands to get a good grip around his victim's waist. "Potter, so help me, you'll be in detention for this until you're forty y...ahhhh...mpgh." Harry had decided to silence him by grinding his hips around in a big circular motion.

He giggled, then went back to regular fucking. He was apparently hitting The Evil Spot, as he'd privately termed it, since the mirrored floor showed evidence that Snape/Malfoy was *quite* enjoying this. When he speeded up, though, approaching release, Malfoy squeaked under him. "No - come on, Harry, like you were before."

"Huh?"

"Do what you were..." It was strange, hearing Snape's voice so reedy and desperate. Malfoy apparently thought so too, and made himself shut up.

But Harry understood anyway. "Oh," he said, shifting back to what he'd been doing earlier. "Like this?" He stabbed forward hard.

"Ow...yeah. Yeah, that."

Forbidding himself to come early and spoil the fun, Harry reached around hesitantly, not sure if he really wanted to *touch* it... "You want to come?" he asked, echoing Malfoy's earlier offer.

"Yeah." Either looking like somebody else was really liberating, or Malfoy was just too far gone to care about embarrassment, because he said it without hesitation.

"Beg me."

Putting on his best silky Snape-voice, Malfoy purred, "Mr. Potter, you have created quite a...a state here and I would *really* like some release...if you would just, *please*...ohhh...finish me up, I'd be most...umhh...grateful."

Harry giggled and, without quickening his pace, closed his hand around Snape/Malfoy's straining erection. "All right, that's good. Now as you."

"You fucking tease." Abruptly the voice had lost its purr, and was as close to Malfoy's regular tone as this body was going to get. "Come on, Potter, just...ooh...just do it, yeah like that like that, please I'd do it myself but then I'd fall on my face..."

"You're babbling," Harry panted, immensely proud of having reduced his rival to such a state. He pressed at The Evil Spot with every stroke, fast and hard, and squeezed Snape's undeniably impressive cock with the most coordinated gestures he could manage, in this state. It wasn't long before Malfoy/Snape shuddered and came all over the place, which made his ass contract so deliciously that Harry's orgasm followed immediately.

"Wow," he breathed, pulling out and collapsing on the floor. "Oh, boy."

Malfoy stood up shakily. "Mind if I get rid of this body?" he asked, then adjusted his tones. "Mr. Potter, while it has been a rare *pleasure* doing business with you, I have a class to teach in an hour and so I shall take my leave..."

Harry laughed and watched him drink a Polyjuice that returned him to his normal state. He was still sweaty and flushed, and collapsed in a limp heap next to Harry. "That was really good, Potter."

"You got to come twice," Harry remembered with a twinge of envy.

"Yeah, well Snape's resilient." Then Malfoy shuddered. "Ai. Snape. That's gross."

Harry reached out lazily to ruffle his hair. "You did a good Snape, though. It was scary."

"You *did* Snape pretty good, too," Malfoy said, wriggling a little closer. Harry didn't protest, so he shifted around to rest his head against Harry's shoulder. "I'm exhausted."

"Me, too." After a minute he added, "Draco?"

"Yeah?" Malfoy tensed a little.

"Nothing. Goodnight." Harry's arm hovered in the air for a minute, but then he draped it determinedly across Draco's naked chest. The only thing his brain allowed him to register about the gesture was, *his heart is pounding*.

A loud squawking woke Harry up an hour later. "Huh? Wh-what..." He shoved Malfoy off him - *how DID he end up like that anyway* - and shook him. "Hey - what's that noise?"

"Mmph. Alarm. My wand," Malfoy grunted, obviously not a morning person.

Not that it was really morning. Harry found Malfoy's wand on the floor and kicked it. The dying-duck noise ceased, but the time still glowed in bright letters across the floor. "Ugh - it's midnight. Why'd we have to wake up, again?"

"Library," Malfoy answered, sitting up and cracking his neck.

"Oh, right." Harry paused. "I, uh, since we were going to be using the library..." He didn't finish the sentence.

"Don't tell me - you invited Textbook?"

Harry glared at him. "Look, she's good, okay? And I think we need all the help we can get about this."

They dressed and headed off to the library, just barely suppressing the temptation to blow it off and spend the rest of the night playing with Polyjuice some more.

"I still can't believe I'm actually doing this," Malfoy complained as they snuck into the darkened library. "I mean, taking a stand with Harry Potter against evil and all that..." he shook his head. "It sounds like the kind of ridiculous thing Trelawny might predict."

"Yeah, only her prediction would have us both dying halfway through the project, so let's not think about that," Harry suggested.

"Her predictions could have you dying of toothpaste poisoning first thing in the morning," Hermione's voice broke in. "So it's not such a big deal. Hi, both of you. And will you please tell me what this is all about?" She stepped out from behind a bookcase and looked at Draco. "Harry said I'm here for something important, but it's your secret, not his, and I should ask you."

Draco's eyes shot reflexively to Harry. "Thanks, Potter." He shook his head. "Look, Granger, I really can't tell you. Not yet, anyway."

"How am I supposed to help you if I don't know anything?"

Draco fished about in the pockets of his robes and finally found a rolled-up scrap of parchment. "Here - here's what I remember of the spell. There are some words missing and it might be garbled a little, and it's definitely not English. We need you to find out what the spell does."

"What it does?"

"Yeah. We're trying to, uh, counteract it, and we can't because we don't know exactly how it works. You know? Like you don't have to totally understand it, just tell us what you can about its nature and the theory behind it and all."

A pause. "Okay." Then her personality asserted itself again. "Right, so I'll do that and you two look up whatever else you might need, and let Harry get the books for you, Malfoy, because they scream if you don't handle them properly and he knows how. We'll meet back here in twenty minutes - that should be long enough for me to gather what books I need from this place. We can go back to the Common Room and do the actual research there."

Waves of relief washed over the boys - it was so nice to have someone else take charge and solve their problems, for a change. "Thanks, Hermione," Harry whispered.

As Hermione went off to translate the spell they'd given her, they searched the Restricted Section for whatever there was about curse scars, protective amulets, and combating generalized evils. Malfoy grabbed one book on exorcism, and Harry looked at him strangely. "You're not possessed, are you?"

Malfoy made a spooky face but then shook his head. "No - but smell it. I noticed a really nasty smell coming from it..."

Harry sniffed the book. "Gross. So what?"

Malfoy waited a few seconds while he added the book to the pile, to allow his smirk to fade. "Intelligence, Potter. That smell - you've been in the restricted section before, right?" Harry nodded. "And the smell is relatively new, right?" Harry nodded again. "Right. Now, that nasty odor is coming from the stain on this book. The stain is obviously old, rotten potion of some kind. Students aren't allowed to see this book. Teachers don't do Potions. Except Snape - another person trying to get rid of the Mark. And look how worn the book is. It's been paged through a lot over the years, and unless Snape's got some secret desire to be an exorcist..."

"He must think exorcism can help erase the Mark. Wow, you're good," Harry said admiringly.

Malfoy allowed the smirk free reign.

Hermione didn't even wait the twenty minutes. The boys were still sifting the restricted shelves when she came barreling into them with an armload of dictionaries and texts, which she threw down on the floor in front of them. "All right - both of you - *what is that spell?*"

They looked at each other. "Um."

"Er. Why?" Harry asked innocently.

"*Harry!* You're not thinking of trying it, are you? Either of you? You *can't*."

Malfoy sighed. "Just tell us what it is, Granger," he said flatly. "We have to know."

"Is it illegal?" Harry asked.

"Illegal? Harry! It's *beyond* illegal! It's beyond Dark! It's some of the worst magic imaginable - it's unwilling possession, soul-subjugation, a draining magic-bind of the worst sort. It's like...it's like you're enslaving the person on behalf of an evil spirit, Harry, something really disgusting!" Her voice lowered. "Some of the ancient texts say it's so dark it's only *legend*, only theory - they don't think *anyone* is evil enough to put it into practice."

Harry glanced at Draco, whose face was chalk-white.

Hermione didn't miss the meaningful look they shared. "Well, what is it? Who wrote this? *How* did you write this spell? There have been whole *covens* who've tried to write something like this, but it's never been successful. Does this one work? How did you do it? I hope you're not going to *try* it..."

"It works, but it wasn't us," Draco said finally, then turned to Harry. "Look, Potter...I'm going to tell her."

"Don't," Harry protested without thinking first. "That's so dangerous..."

Hermione bristled and shoved him. "How *dare* you, Harry! Where exactly do your loyalties lie? How long have I been your friend - and have I *ever* betrayed a single thing you've said or done? Ever?"

"Remember the time you turned in the Firebolt Sirius sent me in our third year?"

Her jaw dropped. "You're going to hold a stupid *broomstick* against me-"

But Harry cut her off. "It's not the broomstick, Hermione, it's the point. For the same reasons you did that - and I'm not saying they're bad reasons - you might do something really damaging if we explain this."

Hermione took a step back and her voice turned deadly cold. "You had better explain it or I *will* do something damaging. I'll tell everyone I know."

"Potter," Draco repeated firmly, "I'm going to tell. But Granger, you have to listen to me. Hermione," he said, staring into her eyes, determined to get himself across. He bit his lip, then crossed the distance between them to grab her hand. "Listen. You can ask Potter for details if you don't believe me. But you've got to swear not to tell anyone, and especially not to run off until you hear the whole truth. Okay?"

She jerked her hand back. "What is this, Malfoy? Harry, let's get out of here. He's scaring me."

Malfoy sank down in a big armchair. "Please don't go yet. I need your help."

The frankness of his manner made Hermione even more suspicious than she had been already. "What - you're asking for the help of a *Mudblood*?" she scathed.

His head shot up. "Yes!" he almost shrieked, totally at the end of his patience. "I am! I need your help, Mudblood! Look!" He fumbled with the buttons on his sleeve, muttering an incantation while he did so, and finally yanked the fabric away. "There you go, Granger. See why I need help?" he snarled.

Hermione stared from one to the other. "Harry?" she finally asked quietly. He was still too horrified to answer, so she drew her wand. "All right - nobody move!".

Malfoy gestured to another armchair. "Have a seat, Granger, and relax. There's nothing weird and Dark going on here."

She sat, wand still at the ready. "You're wearing the Dark Mark, Malfoy," she reminded him coldly. "I fail to see how that doesn't qualify as Dark."

Harry finally managed speech. "Not really," he said inanely. "It only turns Dark for good once you kill for him."

"Don't scare her," Malfoy said. "And Granger, calm down. I haven't done anything, yet. I don't really know how I got into this, and we're trying to get me out before anything really bad has to happen. Okay? That spell we gave you is the one Voldemort used to put the Mark on me. We want to counteract it, but we didn't even know what it meant. Okay?"

She still looked dazed. "You...you seem almost regular," she said weakly. "How? Why?"

"What - you mean why this?" he asked, gesturing vaguely at his arm. "I don't know. Why not? It was expected of me. Why do Muggle girls pierce their ears?"

"Harry," she said without taking her eyes off Malfoy. "Why do you believe him?"

"I'm not sure," Harry said. "I just do." He shrugged, realizing he wasn't being very convincing. "Anyhow, he wants it off, so that's got to be a good thing, right?"

"I guess so," she said dubiously.

There was silence for a little while, and Malfoy stood and started pacing. Hermione stood, too, because she didn't like the boys looming over her. After a long time, Malfoy spoke. His voice was high and tight. "Is...is that spell really as...as *bad* as you said? I'm..."

Draco sounded like he was about to cry, and Harry watched with deep relief as Hermione's heart went out to him. "Hey," she said sharply, poking Draco to make him look at her. His eyes showed that pre-tears brightness and he looked really young, all of a sudden. "Not if I can help it. There's not been a spell I can't break, Draco, *ever*. Me and Harry and you will figure it out. Okay? I promise I'll help you on this."

She hugged him and Harry couldn't squash a feeling of envy - Draco would never accept a hug from *him!* *Well, on the other hand, I probably wouldn't offer,* Harry realized. He mentally gave Hermione permission to comfort the boy in his place.

Finally she stepped back and tossed her hair behind her shoulders. "Right," she said, all business. "Now, here's how we do it. I'll want to talk to you, Draco, to find out exactly what he did to you and how. If any spellwork is required, for any part of this, you shouldn't be the one to try it, since the Dark Lord sort of owns you now. No offence." She turned to Harry. "Like I said, the spell is some kind of enslavement combined with possession combined with a recursive magical branding. So you go check out the texts on the really Dark wizards and see if any of them did anything similar. I'm afraid this is going to be especially difficult because I think nothing like this has ever been done before. I mean, there are binding spells wizards have used kind of like leashes, but this one is the equivalent of a choke chain. It'll be tough to break."

Draco nodded. "Listen, Granger, I'm not going to start being nice to you or anything, but I really owe you for this. If you ever need anything, like *anything*, you know...."

"Thanks. One last question, though. You *do* know what you're getting into - don't you? You won't have the Mark anymore."

"Well, I'm obviously not going to broadcast that fact to Voldemort, am I?"

Harry spoke up. "What if your father sees?"

Draco turned to him slowly, his motions controlled and stiff. "My father may not have the same size noble streak as your mum, Potter," he said tightly. "But I'd like to believe he wouldn't hand me over to my death just because I disappointed him once."

"Harry didn't mean it that way," Hermione said quickly. "But he's right that you have to be careful. Death Eaters are funny like that - not that he'd turn you in on purpose, but also it could end up being *dangerous* for him. Not to mention Harry, and me, if our parts come into light. Just in general - you have to be careful."

Thus began one of the most long and depressing nighttime research sessions of Harry's life. It was dawn before they had the slightest idea of what to do against the spell, and not until breakfast did Harry convince himself to go through with it...

Chapter Nineteen

"Chapter Nineteen"

Harry was beginning to learn the value of constant-wakefulness potions. Until now, he had considered a full course load at school, in combination with his extracurricular Quidditch training, trouble enough. Now, though, he had added something more to his list.

He had to learn, in secret, how to perform an exorcism all by himself.

He'd tried at first to argue with Hermione. "But people make a *career* of this! How am I supposed to learn it in just a few weeks?"

"Those people have to train against all kinds of nasty spirits. You'll only have to deal with this one, and we know a little bit about it already."

"Why me? What if I mess it up? Hermione, why can't you or somebody? You're smarter than me anyway..."

She'd finally gotten angry and forced him to stop whining. "Look, do you want to help him or not? Why you? Because you're a Parselmouth and you've got weird powers and if anybody can control Lord Voldemort's pet spirit it's you. I doubt anybody else could pull this off, without being able to speak to the snake properly. Besides, you're the one who got us into this. I'm not risking my neck for Draco Malfoy. And believe me, Harry, if you go through with it you *will* be risking your neck. That *thing* easily has the power to possess you and drive you mad, and maybe even physically kill you. So shut up and *read* these books, so at least you'll know what you're doing."

So Harry had shut up and worked on exorcism - in between, of course, the three daily practices Draco had insisted the team hold in preparation for the big game. Their opposing team had been chosen, but the players' identities remained secret. They, too, were practicing hard and often, and the Quidditch pitch was charmed at all times to keep outsiders from seeing who was there or what they were doing.

Rumours were all around the school about who was on the secret team. There was even a date set for the match, and there came a day when Harry realized in panic that it was less than a month away. How was he going to clear Draco of the Mark, keep up with practice, and save his abysmal grades?

Hermione thought it was a very brave thing he was doing for Draco, so she agreed to write some of his essays to save him time. His marks were never perfect on those, and it annoyed Harry to realize that his best friend had such a low opinion of his writing style that she deliberately made mistakes to make it seem more authentic. Ron, too, was helping, although he hadn't been told a single thing about the whole exorcism problem. He thought that Harry was just too dim to be able to maintain Quidditch and school at the same time. It annoyed Harry that Ron thought so, but then again, at this point he couldn't be choosy. Draco, too, did his share. Due to his intervention, Snape not only stopped exposing Harry's lack of Potions knowledge, but also employed tricks like pairing him with Hermione to better mask the fact that he hadn't read a single chapter in weeks.

And through it all, Draco and Harry trained like Spartans and fucked like bunnies. Instead of exhausting them as they once feared it might do, sex seemed to be a good way of releasing tension and relaxing. They kept up using sexual torment in order to motivate their practicing, but now were also relying on the additional motivation of, *if we skip practice we won't be able to bet today*. They had perfect attendance on the Quidditch field.

One night, barely two weeks from the big game, Harry's scar began acting up. He awoke after a terrible nightmare with a sharp pain all across his forehead, but he didn't remember exactly what the dream had been about. Oh, well. The pain faded after a bit, and he dozed off again.

He started dreaming again. Now it was a pleasant dream, and one of those that he knew would end in a wet spot on his mattress. It was purely physical - there was no thought to accompany the imaginary massage of his shoulders, the alternating cool and warm all over his body, the soft, tickling touch...

And then his eyes flew open in shock. That something cold and wet and slippery between his butt cheeks... *that* was no dream!

"Wh..what.." he started, sleepy and confused.

"Morning, Potter," came Draco's cheerful voice in his hear. Harry was still struggling to be certain he was awake and not dreaming, although the subsequent insertion of a cock into his rear was sort of convincing on that account.

"Hey!" he hissed, wiggling a little bit and definitely awake now. "What are you doing?"

Malfoy laughed. "What does it *feel* like I'm doing?" he whispered, pumping in and out slowly. "I'll give you three guesses."

"Mmph," Harry said into his pillow, then raised his head and tried to sort out the situation. "No - really. Where are we?"

"In your room, Potter. Don't worry," he added when Harry gasped. "I enchanted your bed so nobody can see or hear. Boarding-school wizards *swear* by this charm."

Harry rubbed his eyes. "I didn't...mmm...hear you come in."

"Yeah, you were pretty out of it," Draco confirmed, no longer using his weight to pin Harry down. "I tried talking and poking you and it didn't work, so I thought this might be a better way. I even got your pants off without your feeling it."

"So I've noticed," Harry said wryly. "But did it ever occur to you...mm, yeah...that I might not *want* to be fucked this early in the morning?"

"You don't seem to mind."

"Wh-what time is it?" Harry sensed that Draco was almost done, and he carefully avoided the thought that perhaps he was distracting him on purpose to make it last longer.

Draco didn't answer. "Three o'clock," he finally gasped, then gave a short, manic giggle. "And all's well!"

He came a little while later, and Harry shivered at the cold when they separated. "Where are my covers?" he demanded grouchy.

"Around here somewhere." Draco lay down next to him and put the blanket over them both. "So...did you feel it?"

"No," Harry said sarcastically, "I'm such a deep sleeper that you can stick your cock up my bum and I won't even notice."

Malfoy snorted. "Not *that*, stupid. Your scar. Did it hurt a little while ago?"

"Yeah."

"Mine, too. That's why I woke up. I was going to come complain to you about it and see if there was anything I could do, but then it stopped on its own. I decided to pay you a visit anyway, though."

Harry folded his hands behind his head and stared at the ceiling, his insides buzzing pleasantly. "Not a bad way to wake up," he said pensively. "Better than my scar hurting, anyway."

"Do you know what it means?"

"Nothing special," Harry assured him. "I mean, mine does that a lot. Maybe you should ask Snape, though - the Dark Mark could be different."

"Ask *Snape*?" Malfoy was horrified. "Do you think I want to *die*? Potter, Snape gets tortured for information every time he shows up at a meeting. Voldemort's tried truth potions, Unforgivables, everything. And he's good. He was getting stuff, good stuff, until Dumbledore finally got wise and stopped telling Snape anything. The last thing I need is to tell *him*..."

Harry forced himself not to shudder or wince. He'd almost ratted Draco out to somebody who would get him killed! *Okay, not a soul from now on, Harry*, he ordered himself.

Still, it was obvious that Voldemort could reach Draco here at Hogwarts. That couldn't be allowed to continue. "Listen...I think I know enough now...want to try to get rid of the Mark after practice today? We'll be outdoors, on the field where nobody can see us, both of us alert...it's the best time there is."

Draco bit his lip. "Okay. If you want to. If you're sure..."

"I'm sure," Harry said firmly, glad that the butterflies in his stomach didn't flutter into his voice.

That evening, when everybody had gone, Harry mentally reviewed everything he knew about the procedure he was about to try. "Okay. Come here," he said when he was ready. Draco came and rolled up his sleeve.

Harry touched his wand to Malfoy's forearm and whispered the calling command in Parseltongue. As he'd hoped, the Mark manifested itself instantly, darkening to a reddish-brown color under the skin. All right. Now to activate it.

"I speak now to the serpent on and inside this boy," he whispered. By Draco's gasp he knew it was Parseltongue, so he continued. "Speak to me. I am a wizard and I command you by my powers to obey."

For a moment nothing happened. Then, the Mark began to glow, so brightly that Harry had to close his eyes. "That's what it did when he put it on," Malfoy breathed, awed.

It was green now, vivid and alive. The snake's tongue actually moved, flickering and tasting. "I hear you." The hiss seemed to emanate from Malfoy's whole body. "Why do you call me?"

"I want you to leave this boy," Harry said firmly. "You have no place in him. There are other bodies for you to possess, little snake. Go into them instead."

"No," the snake said. "This one is mine. My master gave him to me. He is mine forever."

Harry shuddered at the snake's cold, dire response. "He doesn't *belong* to you."

"I will never leave. He can't make me. He invited me in of his own free will, small one." The snake's eye glowed. "Harry."

"Don't call me by name, serpent," Harry snarled, but made sure to use the most respectful manner of address snakes had for one another. "Your master is my enemy and I *order* you out."

When the snake didn't move, Harry poked it with his wand. Sparks shot out and it hissed and slithered around a little, retreating partway back into the skull's mouth. Draco whimpered and shut his eyes tight.

"What's wrong?" Harry asked him, blinking away the beginnings of a headache. The books were right - exorcism was really tiring.

"Nothing - it's just that it hurts. That *thing* burnt me just now, after you poked it."

"Sorry." Harry turned his attention back to the snake and forced himself into a trance again. "Did you just hurt the boy? I *told* you he does not belong to you!"

"If you dare threaten me, Harry-who-talks-to-snakes, I'll burn him up from the inside out! I can do whatever I want to him. He belongs to *me*."

"He does not, and I'm not threatening you," Harry said, trying hard to hide how frightened he was. The last thing he wanted was to make things *worse* for Draco... "Listen, I'm just telling you that the boy isn't really yours. Your master made a mistake. This one doesn't want you. It was a mistake to come into him - he'll never share his power with you, and will only be trouble for your master."

The snake glowed brighter and Draco yelped again. "You lie, Harry."

"I *don't* lie! See for yourself! Search his heart and you'll see that it doesn't belong to you."

The snake coiled all the way around Draco's arm. "Do you want to fight me for him, Harry? Is that the problem? Do you want his heart for yourself?"

Knowing he had no shot, Harry shook his head. "I can't fight you, serpent. I know your power. But I am asking you to leave him alone. Feel his pride and his competitive spirit - he will never be a slave, to your master or to anybody else."

The snake blinked at him and abruptly tried something else. "May I see inside *your* heart? Maybe I belong in *your* body. Let me look, Harry. Touch me."

Aha. Harry had read all about that sort of danger. He refused to touch it, so the serpent finally hissed and offered a deal. "I will look into his soul, Harry-who-challenges-a-snake. If he is truly strong and stupid enough to refuse the power that my master offers, and there is no place for me there, I will leave. But if I find myself welcome, you'll touch me and let me slither through you as well. These are the terms, and I will not discuss any other."

Harry's glance flickered up to Draco's face. Oh, dear. He hadn't bargained on any of this. "He's not strong enough to fight you," he said. "He's not that confident yet. But he would like to be. And he'll never be your slave. That's what I say. Go and look, snakeling, and if you find me wrong I'll touch you. If I'm right, you'll leave." He took a deep breath and proposed the oath most sacred to snakes (one of the few useful things the furniture in Malfoy Manor had taught him). "Swear it on the fangs of the king."

The snake hissed loudly and coiled itself into a knot. "Harry asks for my word! Harry does not trust me," it whined.

"Swear it."

"I swear. On the fangs of the king," the snake snarled as it disappeared fully into the skull's mouth.

As soon as it did, Draco gasped and doubled over. "Harry..." he choked out.

Harry helped ease him into a sitting position. "Just hang on," he offered unhelpfully. "It wants to see something. It won't take long...I hope."

Draco was shaking and crying. "What's it *doing*?"

"No idea." He held Draco until the trembling finally stopped, and then looked at his arm.

The snake's tiny face appeared again in the mouth of the skull. "The boy's heart is not crowded," he said sadly, "but it is not a heart where I can live."

"I *told* you so."

"Perhaps I can just live here on his skin, as I have, for awhile longer? Sometimes hearts can change, Harry, and I will be able to sink into him. It has happened before, to other bodies the master has given me..."

"No," Harry hissed, horrified. "You said you would leave. You swore it. I order you to leave him. I *order* you!" He felt himself surge with magical energy.

The snake glided around Draco's wrist again, and the skull unraveled slowly to become part of it, until the whole Dark Mark had turned into coils around the boy's arm. "Touch me with your wand, Harry-who-talks-to-snakes," it said.

For a moment Harry was afraid. Realizing he had come too far to just say no, he touched his wand to the snake and hoped nothing bad would happen...

Ow.

It was like the time he had performed a *Priori Incantato* with Voldemort's wand. Harry was shaking with the raw power that seeped down through his arm, but he forced himself to pretend he felt some semblance of control. Once the snake had fully slithered from Draco onto Harry's wand, Harry stood. Grasping his trembling wand with both hands, he growled, "*Morsmordre*," and the Dark Mark erupted from his wand to hover at eye-level and glare balefully.

Harry's wand had calmed down. He looked at it, and it didn't appear to have picked up any funny Dark properties, so he tried a spell just to be sure. "*Finite Incantato*." The floating Dark Mark exploded into dozens of tiny fireworks, and he knelt by Draco's side to inspect the results.

The boy was alive and unhurt, and his forearm was bare. For some unknown reason, though, Harry's vision was increasingly blurry. He bowed his head to hide it, and consequently missed the sight of glittering fireworks raining down all around them.

Both spooked and shivering, they decided to retire to Draco's room for awhile to calm down. "Crabbe and Goyle are out," he explained, "and as long as you're gone before they come back nobody'll know you were there. We've got an hour at least."

They sat in silence for awhile. Harry stared into the fireplace and Draco stared at his arm. "That felt strange," he said finally.

"*You're telling me!*" Harry exclaimed. "It felt like I stuck my hand into an outlet."

"Outlet?"

Harry smiled. "Never mind. It's a Muggle thing. Hey," he added suddenly, unable to keep his trauma to himself, "Did you know it threatened to burn you to death if I didn't stop bothering it?"

Draco was properly horrified, although not for quite the right reason. "And you didn't stop?" he demanded.

Harry rolled his eyes. "You're not *supposed* to give it to them when they say things like that," he explained, "because it makes them more powerful and confident. If I would have backed off, it might have attacked *me*, too. It wanted to. It wanted to possess me but I wouldn't let it."

"How'd you get rid of it?"

Harry related the conversation he'd had with the snake, and Draco seemed surprised and relieved that his character was fundamentally unsuitable for minion-ship. When Harry had told the whole story, they sat in silence for awhile longer.

Eventually Draco spoke up. "Listen...um...Harry, I really appreciate it."

Harry nodded.

"No - I mean *really*. Like...remember that thing I wouldn't do the other night?"

Harry thought back. The other night they'd been working on paying off their winter-break debts, and Harry had asked to redeem one of his wins in the form of a blow job. Malfoy had gotten out of it by looking Harry in the eyes and saying seriously, "I really, *really* don't want to do that. Please don't make me."

"Yeah, I remember," Harry said.

"Well...tonight I'll do it, if you want," Draco offered, blushing a little. "It's just...I felt kind of weird about it before, but - you know - now we've just established that I'm nobody's slave." He shrugged and smiled at Harry. "So I guess it's okay if I make an exception now and again. Just for a little while."

Harry nodded, in a great mood all of a sudden. "Okay. Thanks - not so much for *it* as for *doing* it, if that makes sense."

"As much sense as you ever make, Potter," Draco said loftily, and went to shut the door. "Well...shall we *get down* to business, then?" They grinned at each other as the intense atmosphere of the exorcism drained out of the room, leaving them free to concentrate on...*other* things.

Draco's offer had for some reason left Harry in possession of an instant hard-on. He watched with avid interest as Draco walked over purposefully and knelt down. It seemed too good to be true.

Draco undid Harry's pants and made a face. "I can't believe I'm doing this," he muttered.

Harry reached down and ruffled his hair, which was only possible in the disarray after sex or Quidditch - at all other times, Draco's cement-like gel prevented the gesture. "Hey - it's not so bad, if you don't think about what you're doing."

Draco nodded. He didn't go through the same silliness Harry did, of tentatively venturing out with his tongue and scrunching his eyes closed theatrically. Instead, he just opened his mouth, leaned forward, and put Harry inside.

It was good, good, good. Soft and wet and warm. Just the feeling of *being* in there was incredible, but then Draco started to move his lips purposefully, sliding up and down and stroking with his tongue, and Harry whimpered. "Oh wow," he breathed, eyes squeezed closed.

Warm breath and delightful suction oh and that must be his hand down there and soft and wow what was that and-

Harry could hear himself panting. Finally he opened his eyes, curious to see what it looked like. Draco chose exactly that moment to tilt his head back and lick Harry like a lollipop, and when their eyes met for a second Draco smirked. *I must look so stupid*, Harry thought, realizing he was gaping like a fish. He tried to get a hold of himself and not act so desperate, but control was totally impossible while he was being stroked and sucked on so expertly.

So far he had managed to keep his hands to himself - there was something strangely erotic about watching Draco's blond head move over him without coercion - but now Harry was feeling compelled to grab ahold and shove in deep.

Understanding what he wanted, Draco gestured to his bed. "Lie down," he directed. Harry obeyed, and Draco climbed up to kneel on the bed by his side. Facing Harry's feet, he bent over him and Harry realized what he was going to do a split second before he did it...

His eyes closed again, Harry felt the tight ring of Draco's lips, the gentle pressure of his tongue, and then he was way at the back of Draco's mouth. Draco took a deep breath and then slowly, inch by inch, swallowed Harry's cock down all the way.

"Omigod Draco yeahyeah," Harry gasped. He felt some kind of rumbling vibration that was probably Draco's laughter, but by now he didn't care how stupid he sounded. Draco moved up and down on him slowly, taking him all the way in every time, and it felt so good that Harry (having forbidden himself to grab on and be domineering) was clutching the bedspread so hard it started ripping.

Draco noticed this, and with another purr of laughter, reached for Harry's hand and placed it on the back of his head. Despite his earlier resolve, Harry took this as an invitation to force Draco's head down and let his hips surge upwards suddenly, feeling himself sink all the way down Draco's throat. That was good. Harry held him still, thrusting over and over again desperately, and for a while Draco didn't resist. Then a pinch reminded Harry that it was air time, and he let go.

Draco sat up, breathing hard, and wiped his mouth. "I'm drooling," he said, mildly disgusted, and Harry could hear the blow-job-rasp in his voice.

Whoever thought a sore throat could be sexy, Harry thought, amused. Aloud he said, "Drool all you want. Just...just do that again, Draco. Wow."

Draco bent back over him, and again let Harry be in charge. This time, though, as Harry force-fed him cock, Draco remembered to use his hands for more than just air signals. Harry came before Draco even needed a fourth breath.

After sitting up, swallowing deliberately, and wiping his mouth, the first thing Draco did was smirk. "So. How was it?" He licked his lips.

For a minute Harry couldn't answer. Finally he said, "I think *I* should be the one on *my* knees now. I should be *worshipping* you. Draco, that was fantastic."

Draco laughed. "It wasn't as bad as I thought it would be," he said. "I thought it would be gross, but after a second I didn't really mind it."

"Was that really your first time?"

"Of course!" Draco was shocked.

"But...but you knew exactly what to do. You're so good," Harry mumbled, and immediately wished he hadn't said anything. He thought it must be pretty insulting to be told you had a natural talent for giving blow jobs.

"Muggle pornography," Draco confessed. "A lot of it."

At that moment, they heard footsteps outside the door. Draco gasped but he had the presence of mind to cast a privacy charm before the door opened.

Crabbe and Goyle walked in. "Hey - where's Draco?" Crabbe asked stupidly.

"Dunno," Goyle said, equally stupidly. "Want to go to bed? It's late and he'll probably come back eventually."

Crabbe seemed to consider it. Eventually his handful of brain cells seemed to reach a consensus. "Okay...let's go to bed. But first we should charm the door so we hear if it opens. Then we can say hi to Draco."

Thinking this was a wonderful idea, Goyle nodded stupidly. Together, they managed after several tries to manage a simple warding spell on the door. Goyle smiled, satisfied. "There. Goodnight."

"Goodnight."

They went to their beds, and Harry and Draco stared at each other in horror. "Oh, no! You're stuck here," Draco groaned. "They'll hear us if we go to break that charm."

"Can't they hear us now?"

"No," Malfoy explained, "All they see is an empty bed. They can't see us or hear us, but if we leave the confines of this charm then they can. Fuck!"

Harry sighed. "So I'm sleeping here tonight, then? Do you mind?"

Draco shrugged. "I'll live."

Harry stared at the ceiling and laced his fingers behind his head. "And I'm not going to get woken up by you fucking me again, am I?"

"I don't know." With a soft laugh, Draco stretched out next to him. Propping himself up on one elbow, he leaned over Harry and asked, "Would you like that?" Harry didn't answer. Draco took a closer look at the way they were lying, and reached for his wand. He waved it around and mumbled a few spells, and Harry found himself suddenly dressed in a toga.

"What?!"

Draco shrugged. "Dunno. I just felt sort of roman all of a sudden. Grapes?" He waved his wand again.

Harry couldn't help laughing. "There's something seriously wrong with you, Malfoy," he said, but let himself be fed without further protest. Half a bunch of grapes later, he broke the silence. "Your lips are really red," he observed, reaching up to touch them softly.

"No shit."

Harry grinned. "And your voice is *terrible*."

"No shit."

Smile widening, Harry felt the need to say aloud, "You just sucked me off."

Malfoy rolled his eyes and pointed to an imaginary person next to him, making introductions. "Mr. Obvious - Harry Potter. Harry - Mr. Obvious. I see you two are well-acquainted."

"You're an ass," Harry said lazily. He reached again for Draco's mouth. "You want me to fix that for you?"

Draco licked his lips. "Maybe in the morning. I'm tired - let's go to bed."

After a brief tussle for the pillow and blankets, they lay still, back to back.

"Draco - thanks. G'night." Exhaustion was making Harry slur his words.

"No problem, pervert," Draco yawned, equally sleepy. "Night."

This time, Harry didn't give Malfoy a chance to think up 'alternative' ways to wake him. When the light came in, he was awake for ten minutes, just lounging comfortably under the warm covers, before his host's eyes opened.

"Morning, Harry." Draco sat up, naked to the waist, and stretched towards the ceiling.

Harry forced himself not to stare.

"I'll never look at my bed the same way again," Draco said, lying back down and looking at his bed-partner.

"Well, how do you think *I* feel?" Harry demanded. "You actually *fucked* me in mine. Every night I wonder if I'm going to wake up in the morning with you on top of me..."

Draco grinned. "Wishful thinking."

"Sod off, Malfoy," Harry growled, "Before I do you right now so that you know what I'm talking about."

Draco's eyebrows quirked and he fought visibly to suppress a smile.

Shocked at the encouragement, Harry sat straight up. "Can I?" he asked incredulously. All of a sudden the awareness of Draco's body, near and warm and sexy, was overpowering. "Please? I promise I'll make it good," he offered.

"Will you?" Draco asked, stretching out in a deliberately seductive pose.

"Yes, damn you! Please." Harry, deciding this was a special occasion, made an exception to his personal no-begging rule.

"All right," Draco agreed. "Shagged in my own bed...that *is* kinky." He looked extraordinarily pleased with the discovery of yet another perversion, and eagerly wriggled out of his boxers and lay on his stomach.

Since the night they'd played with the Polyjuice, Harry and Draco had abandoned their old lubrication charm in favor of a weaker one. They found the added friction very pleasurable, and decided that a spell strong enough to oil ship engines (that was indeed their old charm's original purpose) was probably overkill. Now, they only used it for what they called "nasty revenge fucking," which was the result of an important bet when the loser was supposed to get really pummeled without having much of a good time. They didn't realize that the incidents of nasty revenge fucking were getting rarer and rarer.

This morning was definitely a weak-charm morning. Harry got Draco ready and entered him gently. His old practice of just shoving in and waiting for Draco to get a handle on the pain had ended, and he now eased in a bit at a time, using small in-and-out motions that got gradually deeper until he was buried all the way. The lessening of lubrication made him go slower as a rule, and today he was especially determined to be on his totally best behavior - *no* yanking and heaving and brutality.

Draco's body gripped him tightly and persistently. It felt so good that Harry was sorely tempted to just do it how he liked best, without paying attention to Draco's gratification, but that wasn't fair. Harry decided to do it right, and began in earnest.

By now able to find The Evil Spot without difficulty, he soon had his partner writhing and gasping. "Good?" he asked. "Like that?"

"Mmm yeah. Yeah," Draco confirmed breathlessly. Pulling his legs up under him, he changed their positions so that he was on his knees and no longer laying flat. "Deeper."

Months ago, while teaching him to give her a neck rub, Hermione had forced Harry to learn that 'harder' and 'faster' were not the same thing. Realizing that the same principle applied to sex, Harry made each stroke deeper without changing his pace or using undue force. Draco squeaked and managed words. "*Exactly like that.*"

Harry continued, exactly like that, pleased to notice the whimpers that Malfoy was making no attempts to stifle. He giggled. This was fun. Draco was cooperating to an unusual degree, pushing back against Harry insistently and

occasionally begging for more or breathing instructions like *faster* and *deeper*. Harry did everything Draco said, and when he eventually reached around to tease him, Draco came almost instantly. Since he was close to climax himself, Harry just tightened his arms around Draco's post-orgasmically-weak body and finished himself off with a few sharp strokes.

They relaxed in Draco's bed in silence for quite awhile. Harry finally broke the mood by saying abruptly, "Malfoy, I've just had a terrible thought."

Draco rolled over on his side to face Harry. "What?"

"We have class in about two hours." Draco gasped, then buried his head against Harry's shoulder and made loud crying noises. Harry laughed and resisted the urge to put an arm around him. "Baby."

Draco raised his head. "Baby-fucker." They were both laughing now, and Harry decided it was the best start to a day he'd had in a long, long time.

Chapter Twenty

"Chapter Twenty"

Harry and Draco were training alone with the Bludgers again. They were seriously running out of time, and Harry was worried by the fact that Draco *still* couldn't dodge consistently.

"Let's take a break," Draco suggested sullenly, after taking yet another solid hit.

"No." Harry was firm. "You *know* our strategy relies on us not needing Beater protection, and if you can't dodge right, we're still not there. We'll keep practicing until you get the hang of it."

Malfoy somersaulted angrily and flew right up in Harry's face to glare at him. "Potter, look at me!" he snarled, out of patience. Harry looked. He had to admit to himself that Draco really was a mess - he had a cut over one eye that was just beginning to clot over, a hastily-repaired broken nose that still oozed blood, and a huge bruise that covered almost his whole left cheek. "Look at me," he repeated, when Harry didn't respond. "Look at *this*." He opened his mouth and spat a mouthful of blood all over Harry.

"Hey!" Harry shouted at him. "I can see you're hurt, okay? But quit being a baby - we *have* to get this right."

"ARRRGGGHH!" Draco howled in frustration and flew a frenzied series of loops to burn off his blind rage. "Okay. Okay," he said once he'd calmed down. "I'll try for a little bit longer."

Harry smiled at him, relieved. All of a sudden he chanced to look down, and he noticed that they were not alone. There was somebody standing on the field.

"Hey! Draco, who's that? They've been watching us practice!"

Malfoy's eyes widened. They both watched the figure, who turned and fled when he realized he was being observed. "Let's chase him, Potter. We have to know who saw what."

They both made a mad dash downwards, but before they reached the intruder he'd thrown himself through the magical barrier around the field. Harry groaned. "I can't believe we didn't see that coming," he said. "I mean, we're protected from outside people watching our strategy, but we totally forgot about checking the inside ground today. Should we go out and chase him outside?"

"No," Draco said, "Because then people will think we're afraid of what he saw. Let's just act like we don't care if they spied on us."

"But we don't even know who it was..."

"I do." Draco contradicted. "I'm sure of it. It was Snape."

Harry swore. "I'm pretty sure he'll be one of the ones flying against us. We can't let him get away with this - we should tell everybody he cheated on the no-spying-on-training rule."

"No! You idiot, if we make him angry he'll quit making it easy for you in Potions. Merlin knows your grades need his help, and it took me *forever* to get him to do it. I had to beg and threaten and convince and everything. Besides, it doesn't really matter - all he saw is that I can't dodge Bludgers - not that big a deal."

Harry thought for a minute. "Wait a bit - this might actually be a *good* thing that he saw us."

"A good thing that the opposing team knows my main weakness, Potter? Maybe I've been hit in the head once too many times, because I really can't see the sense in that..."

"No, but it would be a good thing if they *thought* they knew your main weakness. If they counted on being able to stop you with Bludgers, and added that into their strategy, and then it turned out that you could dodge just fine. They'd have to think up something new on the spot."

Draco sighed. "You're forgetting the tiny detail that I actually *can't* dodge Bludgers. I haven't been holding back just to impress you at the last minute - I really *can't*."

"Bollocks. You haven't yet, you mean. You'll be able to by the time the game rolls around. Come here - I'll fix all those cuts and stuff and we'll keep going."

"Ridiculous optimism," Draco muttered, but he did what he was told.

As Harry worked on healing all the injuries, he talked and complained and muttered. "Mr. Sexual Confidence. Mr. I-can-suck-dicks-and-get-a-stiffy-while-being-fucked-but-that-doesn't-mean-I-like-guys. Mr. Voldemort-can-lick-my-arse-before-I'll-bow-to-him. Try anything in bed, will you? But not on the Quidditch field, oh *no*, of course it's just too scary to lean left or right when you're supposed to. You freeze up every time. What the hell are you afraid of, Draco? Getting hurt? If you do it right you won't get hurt. Me? I haven't done a thing to make you more nervous, have I? I don't get it."

When Harry's tirade was over Draco smiled a little. "You sound like an old man. No, it's not hurt I'm afraid of, Potter, and it's definitely not you. It's that I'm not *sure* which way to roll. Like, I feel it coming on my left. Common sense says I should lean right. Yet, at the crucial second I freeze because I'm not *sure*."

"You second-guess yourself?"

"I think so. I mean, I always want to be *sure* I've sensed the Bludger the right way. And by the time I'm totally positive I feel it, I get smacked in the head."

Based on this possible explanation for the problem, Harry designed a series of new drills on the spot. First, they blindfolded Draco and released Bludgers at him. Harry called out which side it was coming from, and Draco executed a technically perfect dodge each time. "You're right," Harry said after awhile. "It must be all in your head. Your technique is fine. Okay, now we're doing a different thing. Now I'll send it at you and *you* call out which side it's coming from. I'll blast it with my wand so it won't actually hit you."

This was a lot harder. Draco waited and eventually said, "L...um...um..." and Harry zapped the Bludger out of the way.

"You were going to say left, weren't you?"

"Yeah. Was that right?"

"Yes!" Harry snarled, exasperated. "Why didn't you just say it?"

"I don't know!" He tore off the blindfold. "Look, it's not my fault, okay? You know where I grew up. The serpent's den is not exactly the best place to learn to act on impulse and blind instinct."

"Not the best place to learn trust, either, but you believe me whenever I tell you which way to dodge," Harry argued.

"That's different. You're different," Draco said dismissively. "You're the type everybody can trust. I mean, other than the time you told Textbook you were coming to my house over the holidays, you've kept everything between us a secret, right? You don't tell anybody *and* you don't use unfair advantages you could get against me. You think I don't know you have plenty of cause to suspect I like guys? I mean, I don't, but if you wanted to you could make a good case against me. Yet you don't bother me about it, ever. You don't torture me about anything, really, which is why I can believe you when you tell me which way the Bludger's coming. I can't believe myself. I don't know why."

Before he could respond to the main point of Draco's explanation, Harry had to ask, "You know I told Hermione?"

"Yeah. She came to me the day before we left for break and said that if anything happened to you at my house, she'd personally come and castrate me, and *then* turn me over to the proper authorities. I figured you must have told her *just in case*."

The bitterness in those last few words made Harry flinch. "Look...it wasn't you," he said uncertainly. "I mean, it was...your house, your family, everything...just in general I wasn't sure it was safe. But I didn't not trust *you*."

"Liar. You *still* don't trust me. You still think I'm going to tell everyone that you like it best on your hands and knees with me leaning forward so I can blow on your neck."

"Hey!" Harry exclaimed, blushing furiously. "First of all - how'd you know that? And second of all - that's not true! I *don't*..." but then he gave up and shook his head, laughing. "All right - you win, I *do* like it best that way. Okay? There, I admitted it. Now what?"

Draco shrugged, keeping a handle on his smile. "Nothing. It doesn't matter, I knew already. It's not like I'm going to go tell Weasley all about it. Let him figure it out for himself some night."

At first Harry was mildly surprised that this was the end of it, but then he realized he could use it to return to the original topic of the argument. "Okay. See? You're not going to do anything to me. And if even *I* can trust you, I'm sure *you* can trust you. Listen, try the Bludger again, but this time *don't* let yourself think. The only thing in your brain should be an alarm bell like oh shit here comes a bludger on the left, and then immediately roll *before* you have a chance to wonder. Okay? Come on, this shouldn't be difficult. We've just established that you're always right about which side, and when you decide where to roll you always do it perfectly. So just connect the two."

A black eye, broken ankle, and three bloody noses later, Draco finally got the hang of it. Once he started dodging properly, they practiced for another hour, thrilled to discover that he was barely getting hit one time out of twenty. It was pitch dark by the time they re-entered the school, and for the first time, they were too tired for their usual post-practice tumble.

The rest of the team was relieved to learn that Draco had overcome his mental block. Their last few practices before the big game were mostly strategy talks and technical fine-tuning. Their flying skills were now beyond compare, and they knew all there was to know about their respective positions, and by the time The Day rolled around, they were as ready as they were going to get.

Their team took the field first. As they stood on the pitch and were introduced by a deep, unfamiliar voice over the loudspeaker, Harry swallowed and elbowed Millicent, who was standing next to him. "Who's that on the speaker?" he muttered under his breath.

"An announcer," she said, awed. "A real one."

Harry turned his attention to Draco, who was on his other side. "Jeez, Snape really went all-out for this. It was in the paper and there's an announcer and everything. We owe him big."

"No we don't," Draco informed him. "I think he only helped us because my father would make his life hell if he didn't." He looked around. "He did a good job, though, whatever publicity stunts he used. Merlin only knows who's in this audience."

The stands were filled, and extra bleachers had been conjured to hold the students, so that the best seats could be given to the guests. Millicent spoke up. "I saw that ruddy old Durmstrang ship parked in the lake this morning, so I suppose Krum heard and wants to check us out."

"Oh, joy," Harry said sarcastically. "More people to watch me make a fool of myself."

Draco smacked him in the head. "No pessimism, if you please. You know we can do this."

Harry gulped. "Really...do you think we're in over our heads, Malfoy?"

"Not a bit, Potter." Draco's sharp and arrogant tone would have fooled Harry a few months ago, but they'd been talking enough now that he knew his teammate really was nervous.

"Good," Harry said firmly. "Me neither." They both held their breaths as the other team flew through the magical barrier and onto the field...

A whoosh of purple robes, and they were landed. Harry let his eyes move over them slowly, assessing, and almost gasped aloud.

Charlie Weasley. Their Seeker.

Keeper was Madam Hooch.

The Beaters were two Slytherins who had graduated after Harry's first year; he still remembered their reputation for injuring or disabling, by any means necessary, the entire other team by the end of the game.

The Chasers were the biggest shock. Remus Lupin and Professor McGonagall he could understand - she had coached him at school, most likely, and knew his style. But...whatever were they doing flying with *Snape*?

"I don't like the look of their Chasers," Malfoy whispered under his breath. "Snape's got something up his sleeve. Look at him."

"That smirk is a permanent fixture," Harry argued, trying to reassure them both. "Don't worry about it. We'll be fine."

They had a quick huddle before kickoff. "Should we still try to stick their Seeker?" Harry asked. "We didn't count on Charlie Weasley - he's *legend*."

"So are you," Malfoy said with a smile. "Let's both stick him for a bit, just to rattle him maybe. After that we'll take turns keeping him off the Snitch while the other guy looks. It's just like we practiced - he's no better than any other traditional Seeker..." He glanced over. "You okay, Millicent?"

She shrugged. "Depends on your definition of okay. These two taught me everything I know - about causing pain and damage. Luckily, if I remember correctly their strategy isn't so good. I might not be a match for them, but I'll be close. How about you and Harry?"

Harry smiled at her. "We'll be fine and so will you. Now...what about their Chasers? That's a really weird combination..."

Angelina spoke up. "Well, I know McGonagall was really, really good in her day. And I also know she coached the team when Lupin played, and they were *very* good back then. The other Chasers were Sirius Black and Harry's father."

"They played together?" Harry was amazed. "I should have thought of that! I knew they were best friends, but..."

"That's where they met," she said. "I asked McGonagall once. The reason they were so good is they were so close that they knew each other inside and out. They knew what each other was doing, and they could just *sense*."

"Potter and I know each other *inside and out*, too," Malfoy interrupted wryly. "So don't scare everybody. That was then and this is now - they've got nothing we haven't got. We'll work together *much* better than they can - they've probably never even flown together before this. I mean, Snape flew for Slytherin, and he didn't even play Chaser. He was a Seeker, and not a very good one, from what I hear. He wanted to go pro and couldn't."

Harry grinned. "That's good. We'll be fine. Just stick to strategy - the most basic game plan we have. Everybody ready?"

"Yup," said Millicent. "The more I think about it, the more brutish and stupid those Beaters are. They'll try to incapacitate you two, which as we know is a total waste of time. I'll leave you alone unless you really need help - you can dodge and I'll take out whatever of their Chasers I can. If possible I'll go for the Keeper, hit her or at least rattle her up some. She can really fly, you know."

Angelina nodded. "That's right. I hate to say this, but we'll need some help on offence. Us three...we're really outclassed here - their chasers may not know each other well, but they're *all* experienced and clever. Interceptions are going to be a problem. *We'll* do whatever intercepting we can, too, though, and we'll call if we need help. If Harry and Malfoy can draw the fire from those two big oafs, great, but if not, it's okay. We're used to hostile Beaters and we're not afraid to get hit."

Harry held his hand out in the middle of the circle. "Hands in, guys. We've got it. Draco and I will keep Charlie off the Snitch - Millicent won't have to even think about him. We'll catch it once we get ahead a hundred points or so. We want this game to be a *kill*."

"A kill," Malfoy repeated.

Katie blinked her long eyelashes, but for once, she wasn't giggling. "A kill."

Chapter Twenty-One

"Chapter Twenty-One"

After the kickoff, Harry and Draco both stayed on Charlie for a few minutes. Soon, though, it became apparent that their Chasers needed serious help. The other team's Beaters, afraid to hit Bludgers at Harry and Draco because they were too close to Charlie, could concentrate on aiming at the Gryffindor girls, who consequently had to abort many of their attempts to score. The other team's Chasers, on the other hand, were flying together with a seamless perfection that made Harry jealous. *How come the girls can't do that?* Harry wondered. The professors seemed to work as well together as Harry and Draco did, which was allowing them to run up the score rapidly. Millicent managed to hit Snape and Lupin once or twice each, but they waved off the mediwizards and kept playing.

And Hooch was unstoppable. She prowled around the goalposts confidently and blocked every single shot Angelina managed to get off. Soon Harry couldn't take it any more. "Look - I can cover Charlie. Help them run intercepts, and tell them to run that Bludger feint with Millicent."

Malfoy nodded without a word and flew off. Harry stuck by Charlie, following his dips and twists while watching what was going on with the rest of his team...

Draco's interceptions were good. He darted with unbelievable speed between Snape and McGonagall, forcing a pass to Lupin that Angelina was prepared for. She swiped the Quaffle out of the air and headed for the goals, passing back and forth with her fellow Chasers while avoiding the murderous attacks of the opposing Beaters.

Draco had told her how to get around Hooch this time. Instead of shooting the Quaffle directly, Angelina timed a pass to Katie that would have the ball flying in front of Millicent, who had come up between the Chasers as if she were one of them. She didn't have control of a Bludger, but it didn't matter. She pretended to swing at the Quaffle, and effectively used Hooch's own superior instincts against her.

The flying instructor saw a hostile Beater winding up to swing at a ball dangerously close by. Before she could force herself to notice that it wasn't actually a Bludger and Millicent wasn't actually going to touch it, Hooch had flinched and executed a quick turn to avoid getting smashed in the face. That momentary distraction was all Katie needed to put the ball through the hoop.

Finally, thought Harry. *One goal. It's about time.*

He was distracted from his relief by Draco shouting his name. "*Potter, he's diving!*"

Harry was horrified to notice that Charlie had a twenty-foot lead already and was hurtling downwards, compact and focused. *If he gets the Snitch we're dead.* Harry was panicking. He and Malfoy, searching for appropriate incentive for the game, had decided that if they failed to get the Snitch, there would be no more sex ever, and they would have to kiss each other in front of the whole school. It was the worst punishment either of them could imagine.

Harry's diving was faster but the distance between them was just too great. Knowing he couldn't quite catch Charlie, and sensing the Snitch ahead of them, Harry realized that unless he stopped the dive somehow they would lose. He had to resort to a dirty trick he'd picked up from Draco some time back. He sped up until the tip of his broom was just level with the tail of Charlie's, and jerked his handle slightly to nudge Charlie off balance.

The move was small enough that the referee wouldn't see, but it did enough damage to Charlie's momentum that the Snitch got away. Harry got a dirty look from Charlie when he realized the ball had escaped, but he forced himself to remember, *Hey, it's war.*

Now, though, Harry was panicking. He could tell by the girls' squealing that their team had scored several more times, but he'd also heard a deep masculine whoop or two that let him know the other team was still racking up points. He was so nervous over what was happening on the field as a whole, but had to concentrate totally on Charlie, who had adopted an annoying flying pattern of flips and stops and starts to try and shake Harry off.

Forcing himself to pay attention only to Charlie left Harry tense and stiff. His flying gradually got worse and worse, until in the end Charlie could get away by ten or fifteen feet before Harry could catch up to him. If the Snitch came near them now, Charlie's feints would definitely leave Harry pointing the wrong way.

Realizing he was hopelessly outgunned, Harry bludgeoned his pride into submission and called for help. "Malfoy, get over here!" he shouted. "I can't do this!"

Draco was at his side in a second. "Listen," Harry said breathlessly, "Let's switch. Charlie's too fast for me-"

"You mean he's too *smart*, for you, Potter," Malfoy corrected disgustedly. "He's not even flying fast! I've been watching. You're just falling for too many of his feints. Look - don't worry about it - we'll switch."

"Okay. I'll fudge up what their chasers are doing." They flew off in opposite directions, and Harry was immensely glad to be rid of the task of following Charlie Weasley's impossible trick flying.

Harry saw McGonagall snatch the Quaffle and take off. When her eyes darted to Lupin, Harry guessed that the next pass was going to him, so he flew unexpectedly between them and turned a wide, theatrical loop to disrupt the possible line for the pass.

Lupin snarled and reared upwards briefly. "Go to James!" he called, and veered sideways in what was obviously a Plan B to this particular attack.

McGonagall waved reassuringly, chucked the Quaffle to Snape who was flying low on the other side, and easily ducked the Bludger Millicent had shot at her. Now that they were past Millicent and most of the other players, the three chasers sped up into a close arrowhead and made for the goals.

Oh, no! Three Chasers, three hoops, and one Keeper. Not good. Harry knew his Keeper, decent though he was, couldn't possibly do this without help, so he flew after them as fast as he could. As he approached their formation, flying low to avoid being spotted when they glanced occasionally over their shoulders, Harry could make out a brief snatch of their conversation.

"-better not call me James again, Lupin!" Snape was snarling.

"Well, if you're going to play his position, you'd bloody well better answer to his- AHHH!" Lupin broke off and screamed as *something* catapulted itself right into his flight path.

The *something* was Harry, who had flown underneath them and re-surfaced a mere few meters ahead, then hovered in a total standstill.

There was a sharp collision, and the referee blew a whistle to award a penalty. Although his glasses were broken and his lip was bleeding from being slammed into by all three opposing Chasers, Harry knew the call would be in his favor.

"*They* crashed into *me*, sir," he reminded the referee, who had flown up to arbitrate.

The ref nodded. Harry was right - the rules technically read that to fly into an unmoving player, deliberately or not, constituted a violation, and the Quaffle would be turned over to the other team. Although the collision was clearly Harry's fault, he *had* been unmoving when it actually took place.

When the decision was announced, Snape let out a growl that reminded Harry of a wild animal. Harry couldn't catch a brief terrified expression before it flitted across his face, but he *did* replace it with a saucy smirk a moment later, which only made Snape madder.

That's right, he told himself, *keep them confused and annoyed*. A quick glance over at Malfoy confirmed that Charlie was well-covered, so Harry focused totally on being as irritating and unpredictable as possible.

It just didn't feel right harassing Lupin or McGonagall, so Harry singled out Snape. He flew right up to his teacher and went face-to-face with him. Snape leaned up and so did Harry. Snape leaned right and Harry leaned left. Finally frustrated with the inability to fly around this human wall that was currently making faces at him, Snape made a hand gesture that Harry guessed was intended to call a Bludger attack.

He thinks I'll need to turn and see which way it's coming from, Harry thought gleefully. Of course, he didn't, and he dodged both Bludgers without difficulty, continuing to fly in front of or directly beside Snape for the next few minutes. By keeping him away from his regular duties, Harry ensured that the Gryffindor chasers would be playing three against two. McGonagall and Lupin, good as they were, could hardly cover more than one player at once, now, could they?

The girls were doing great.

And then somebody got the bright idea to free up Charlie so he could catch the Snitch. Harry noticed with dismay that the ball had slowed to a crawl and was dancing lazily right in center field where anybody could grab it. Malfoy was suddenly besieged by Bludgers, hit at him over and over, and although he managed to dodge almost all of them, he was getting further and further behind Charlie as they got closer and closer to the Snitch.

Thankfully, the Snitch decided not to be caught just yet. It zipped away, closely followed by all three Seekers (Harry had decided that the Snitch was more important than harassing the other players at the moment). Harry and Malfoy flew on opposite sides of Charlie, sticking to him so tightly that he couldn't see to either side.

The idiot, idiot Beaters on the other team decided it would be a good idea to hit Bludgers at the trio, no doubt expecting to knock Draco and Harry off, leaving Charlie free and alone. Unfortunately, both younger boys felt the balls coming in time and spun off high or low. Charlie, on the other hand, was used to relying on sight and sound to predict a Bludger attack. Since he'd been clouded and distracted by the players on both sides, he wasn't ready, and both Bludgers slammed into him.

One glanced harmlessly off his shin guard. The other, though, whaled him in the side, and Harry could hear the crack of a rib or two breaking.

Malfoy was next to him in a second. "Oooh, going to beg out, now, Weasley?" he asked mockingly. "Did you get a wittle boo-boo? I hope you don't have to go to the hospital - lord knows your parents can't afford it...."

Charlie spun to face him, and in that second Harry took off. Knowing that Draco could distract Charlie and lead him to the wrong place for at least a minute or two, Harry took his time.

He closed his eyes and felt for the Snitch. Ah - Bludger on his left - duck. Hmm. Probably hiding up high for a change. Buzz, buzz. There it was. Somewhere high and to the left. Harry drifted slowly for a bit, until he was sure he knew where the Snitch was coming from. Yup, there it was.

Instantly he turned up the speed. The tiny magical prickle intensified as the Snitch sped away, realizing it was being followed. Harry chased it, anticipated it, and ended up catching it with both hands. A textbook perfect catch, a great end to a very un-textbook, imperfect game.

As the whistle sounded, Harry held the Snitch up in one hand. Draco flew up to him, spiraling wildly, and reached out as though for a high-five.

When Harry went to slap, though, Draco grabbed on and jerked him close to catch him in a hug. "Nice," he whispered into Harry's shoulder.

Harry and Draco got hugs from the rest of the team, too - even Millicent - and then had to go shake hands with their opponents.

Lupin and McGonagall were admiring. "Impressive, Harry. In all my years..." McGonagall was strictly professional, while Lupin leaned forward and whispered, "Sirius will be so proud," in Harry's ear.

Snape's handshake was cool and restrained, although he *did* mutter, "You fly well. Your flying persona is as irritating and objectionable as your ordinary one, Potter." Harry didn't quite know what to make of that.

The Beaters looked as though they would prefer to eat Harry than to salute him, but they did as they were told. Hooch was profoundly impressed with the techniques Harry and Draco had worked out, and told them so over and over.

It was awkward, though, shaking hands with Charlie. Harry stood by Draco while the blond boy made his peace. "Look, Weasley, it was a diversionary tactic, okay? Don't take anything I said personally."

Charlie looked skeptical, and glanced at Harry.

"Hey, Charlie, Quidditch is war. You flew a great game," Harry said, holding out his hand. Charlie shook it. "So did you."

Malfoy spread his hands and inclined his head. "Apologies for the name-calling, Weasley. Seriously. Good game, though. Honestly. Your flying is wonderful."

"Yeah," Charlie finally said, and pat him on the shoulder. "Yours too."

Then, though, it was time to meet the scouts who had watched them play. The first person to approach was a loud, pushy young woman who introduced herself as a representative of the American National Quidditch Team. She was interested in getting them both to move to the States and play there, bringing their new tactics and innovations overseas.

Harry and Draco looked at each other nervously. "Uh. We'll have to talk about it," Harry said after a bit. "I mean, it never even occurred to us that other countries might be interested..."

The lady gave them a business card that included both owl address and phone number, and departed, promising to contact them in a little bit, after they'd had time to think things over.

The one they really wanted to talk to, though, the scout whose team's posters covered Draco's walls, finally came to speak to them.

"That was impressive flying, boys," he began. "As you know, our Seeker was injured last season, and our replacement-

"We know," Draco interrupted. "And your second Beater hasn't hit anybody except his own team in about three seasons. We designed our strategies with your team in mind, sir, and-

"We, unfortunately, happen to be quite fond of our second Beater," the man said icily. "I didn't come here to scout outlandish strategies, but to find a replacement Seeker for our team. Now," he continued, voice brightening as he turned to Harry, "*you*, young man, exhibited some of the finest flying I've seen. Other than that single episode of nerves towards the beginning...you did very well, you'd be a welcome addition to our team..."

Harry, feeling Draco stiffen beside him, grabbed at his arm. The scout didn't miss the gesture, and told Draco condescendingly, "Of course we could take you, too, young man. There's nothing wrong with having a substitute in case something happens to Potter, here. Being a Seeker's dangerous work, I know, and-

He stopped when Draco turned his back and stormed off.

After Harry finished talking to the scout, he spent half an hour wandering around trying to stomach his disappointment. After all their hard work! Outlandish? It was *effective!*

Eventually, figuring that everybody would be gone by then, Harry went into the locker room to shower. He thought he was alone until a bitter voice from the corner said, "So, Potter, how much are they paying you?"

Harry glared at him. "Not a sickle. I don't want to talk about it," he growled.

Malfoy shoved him. "Don't tell me you were stupid enough to sign on a trial basis or any of that rubbish? I *told* you, Potter, that unpaid-first-season bit is only for people who can't fly worth a damn. It's just not *done* anymore, people who know what they're doing should get paid full salary starting from the first day they-"

"They're not paying me," Harry interrupted, "Because I told them I won't sign unless they sign you, too. If I play professional Quidditch I'll play it proper, with good plays and new strategies *and* my favorite training partner. I'll play that way or not at all." Malfoy just stared, stupefied, so Harry added, "They said they hadn't intended on changing their style, but I suggested maybe they should consider it, since their record is so bad anyway it can hardly hurt them. We sort of had words, but the upshot is they want to watch us play some more and they have to bring some higher-ups on the management, but they're actually going to think about it."

Draco stared at him. "You're kidding."

"Not a bit. I even offered to play *them*, but I think they're afraid of how bad they'd look if we actually won."

Draco was still staring. "You were offered a starting spot on a professional team and you said no?"

Harry shrugged. "Would you have taken it in my place?"

"In a heartbeat." They locked eyes for a minute, and Draco smiled. "Actually, maybe not," he conceded.

Not liking the tension and disappointment in the atmosphere, especially after they had just won the match they'd been training months for, Harry sighed and suggested, "Want to go for a quick post-game shag someplace?"

"Quick?" Draco asked, grinning widely now. "Potter, I'm in such a good mood I could do you for ten hours. Come on - let's shower and go to my room. Now."

They made it to Draco's room in record time, and once the door was locked Harry was naked on his hands and knees in seconds. They were both so eager that Harry couldn't understand why Draco didn't jump right on him the second he was prepared...

"Well?" he finally asked with impatience. "What're you waiting for?"

Draco smiled nastily. "I was just thinking that I do *far* too much of the begging around here," he said. "So I want you to start now. Ask me to fuck you."

"No."

Draco came and knelt behind him. "Otherwise I won't," he said, placing his hands on Harry's hips.

"So don't," Harry said, trying to sound nonchalant. He wasn't succeeding.

Draco moved to sit at Harry's side. "Harry, Harry, Harry," he sighed. "*Why* won't you cooperate?" His voice had taken on a coy and breathy tone that Harry recognized as the prelude to one of Malfoy's perverted new ideas. He was just wondering what new torment he was to be subjected to when-

CRACK!

The sound of Draco's hand connecting with Harry's rear was so loud and unexpected that Harry jumped. At first he felt nothing, but a second later a stinging heat began to radiate from Draco's handprint. Harry sucked in his breath, but it didn't occur to him to get up or complain so he just grit his teeth and waited for it to happen again.

It didn't. Instead of a slap, Draco's next touch was light, gentle stroking with his fingers. "Did that hurt, Harry?" he asked sweetly.

About to snap back, *of course it did, you idiot*, Harry was shocked to realize that now it *didn't* hurt, not anymore - the painful prickles had subsided to a soft buzzing, and Draco's touch felt wonderful on his over-sensitive skin.

Draco removed his hand, and Harry gasped, sensing it a moment before it happened...

CRACK! Harry bit his lip. *CRACK!*

This time he'd been spanked twice. He waited for the teasing touch to follow, but instead this time Draco just lay both hands over Harry's burning flesh. His palms felt deliciously cool and Harry whimpered softly.

The next time Draco drew his hand back, Harry received more than just a blow or two. He wasn't counting, but he expected it was at least a dozen or thousand, some light and almost gentle, but others hard enough to make him pitch forward and yelp. When Draco finally stopped, he blew a gust of air across Harry's tortured behind, and even that tiny stimulation was enough to make Harry shudder.

Draco cupped Harry's ass cheeks firmly with both hands. "How did that feel?" he asked, and squeezed. "Think you're ready to beg me now?" When Harry didn't answer, he added, "If you don't speak up soon I'm going to start thinking you *like* this."

Harry looked over his shoulder and grinned impishly. "Maybe I *do* like it," he said.

Draco laughed and continued to massage him hard. "Pervert." He let go and crawled around to Harry's head. "Come *on*, Harry, you know you want it. Beg me."

His tone of voice made Harry laugh. "It sounds like you're begging *me* to beg *you*," he noticed. "Interesting." Finally he rolled his eyes and conceded, "All right - here: I want you to fuck me, please. Okay?"

Although he didn't sound quite submissive enough for Draco's tastes yet, Draco nodded and came back around to kneel behind him. "Give me your hands."

Harry reached behind him obediently, now forced to lay his head directly on the rug without his arms to support him. Draco took Harry's hands and put them on his ass cheeks, then pulled a little so Harry was spreading himself apart. "That's right. Hold," he ordered. He stood up and backed up a few paces.

"Malfoy, what are you d-"

"Shhhhh. Wider."

Harry sighed and tightened his grip, opening himself up even more. "What are you doing?"

"Enjoying the view, Potter. Give me a minute." Harry glanced down at Draco's crotch. Yes, he was certainly *enjoying* it. Watching the pale eyes rake over him appreciatively, Harry wondered just what sort of picture he must present...

His face was flushed with excitement. The muscles of his Quidditch-toned body were stretched taut, his arms extended backwards to hold on to his thoroughly-spanked ass cheeks. He liked that he looked good enough to make Draco's breath quick with arousal even though he had yet to touch him. *If I was even the slightest bit ugly, he'd be the first to tell me*, Harry thought happily, proud to meet Draco's high standards. But he wanted to hear it said. "How do I look?" he prodded.

Draco smiled and searched for words. "You look...*gloriously fuckable* right now, Potter. Nice and naked and all spread open like somebody's whore." He smirked. "My whore."

Harry would have liked to feel offended, but he found the appreciation in Draco's face just too intoxicating to protest. "Yes, well hurry up and get over here, because *your whore* is impatient to be shagged silly," he said gruffly.

Draco knelt behind him again, but was still determined to have his way. "Come on. You know what I want to hear."

Harry sighed. Oh, *fine*, why not. "Please," he said. "Please do me right now. I want you inside me." He paused. "All the way."

With an amused "Good boy, Harry," Draco obliged him, and as they slid together like two pieces of a puzzle, Harry allowed himself one long, satisfied moan.

After a little bit, Draco pulled Harry's hair. "Speak up," he said. "How do you want it?"

"Huh?" Harry asked, confused. "I don't know. Just however."

"Like this? Like *this*?" Draco asked, changing a bit each time. When Harry didn't answer, he shoved in hard and brutal. "Or like *that*?"

"Ow! Of course not like that, you idiot!" Harry said, then laughed. "All right. Um...okay, not like that - no...you had the evil spot before and now you're not...okay okay yeah. That way."

Draco was amused - he called it the Good Place, himself - but did what Harry said. He moved his hands from Harry's hips to massage his shoulders.

"Mmm," said Harry, awash with sensation. His body was being completely taken care of and he loved it. *Face it, you're a pervert*, he told himself, *so you might as well live it up*. "Slower - just a little," he panted.

Even though Harry's comment was only a tiny deviation from his usual policy of non-expression during sex, Malfoy didn't miss the change in attitude that must have prompted it. He leaned forward and blew on Harry's neck. Powerful chills ran down Harry's spine and he shuddered. "Okay...Draco, yeah...you can...you can go a little harder...yeah..."

Draco was moving slowly but deeply, screwing him with long, hard strokes that didn't go fast enough to desensitize. Harry felt every inch, every time, and was whimpering and panting despite his half-hearted efforts to be quiet. His new determination to deliberately enjoy himself would not yet take him so far as to beg for release, though - the very most he could let himself do was push back against Draco, meeting his thrusts in a silent plea for more.

Finally, thankfully, Draco understood how very ready he was. He slid his hands down, put one on Harry's lower back, and reached around with the other. "Yeah?" he asked.

Harry nodded jerkily, the warm grip preventing coherent speech for a minute. "Yeah," he gasped at last. "Yup. Absolutely."

Draco giggled. "I can't believe you never let me do this before," he said softly, but Harry wasn't really listening. He was being stroked and filled in a perfect rhythm and he wanted it to never end.

On the other hand, he also wanted very much a certain *happy ending*, which he eventually couldn't wait any longer to achieve. He was ready ready ready and just a little more...

Harry bucked wildly with the power of his orgasm, and when he was done convulsing Draco slid out and sat back. Harry rolled over lazily onto his back and reached for his wand to clean up. For awhile they just rested in silence, but then Draco said, "So."

"As if I have to tell you how good that was," Harry answered. Then he remembered something. "Hey - you didn't...I mean...you can finish up if you want."

"Really? I wasn't sure if you'd want me to, once you..."

"I don't mind."

Malfoy's only show of nastiness was an arched eyebrow. "Oh, good," he said, and crawled up to lean over Harry.

Realizing he intended to do it face-to-face, Harry whined as he brought his knees up and spread them. "Aw, come on, Malfoy, like *this*?"

"Yeah," Draco said, adding more lubrication. "I like it this way."

They locked eyes as Draco slid in, and Harry stuck his tongue out in response to the obvious satisfaction on Draco's face. "Pervert."

Immediately, he regretted his impertinence as Draco made a retaliatory thrust hard enough that Harry winced and squeezed his eyes shut. When he opened them, Draco was of course smirking down at him. "Potter, *I own you*," he said.

Harry debated arguing, but settled for smiling and echoing Draco's blow job offer. "Just for a little while."

After that they shagged in companionable silence for a bit, until Harry finally remarked, "You're certainly...mm...taking your time today."

"There's no rush. Do you mind? Like are you getting sore?"

"No, it...feels good," Harry said, looking away and feeling his face heat up.

Draco pinched his cheek like a grandmother. "Awwwww, somebody is *bwwwwushing*," he teased in a high voice.

"Fuck you," Harry said, simultaneously amused and annoyed.

"No, fuck *you*," Draco corrected, grinding his hips around hard.

Harry gasped. He was definitely getting sore by now, but it was a good kind of sore and he didn't want it to stop. It was like the satisfying ache of his muscles after a hard day of Quidditch practice...just, different muscles.

Finally Draco started to speed up. Harry was staring sideways at the wall, as usual, until Draco abruptly grabbed his face and wrenched it forward. "Quit it. What are you looking at?" Draco growled. "You'd better not be not paying attention..."

Harry had to laugh, as his insides were jarred forcefully by each of Draco's fast, hard strokes. "Trust me, I'm paying attention," he said.

"Good."

Harry was going to answer back, but found his mouth suddenly otherwise occupied. Draco had leaned over him and kissed him without warning. Taken by surprise, Harry reciprocated the kiss and had his tongue petting Draco's during the last few fast and furious seconds. This time, in addition to the telltale shudder and warm pulsing inside him, Harry felt Draco's orgasm through the soft moan into his mouth.

The minute Draco got off of Harry, he blushed and said, "Look - I'm sorry. I don't know what came over me, I didn't mean to get all *mushy*..." His lip curled in apologetic disgust.

Harry laughed. "That's okay - accidents happen," he teased, then sobered. "No - really - it's okay." When he went to stretch out, a weak cramp flared up in his bowels. "Ow."

Draco, distracted from the awkward situation, grinned. "Yup, I did you pretty thoroughly."

With a nod of agreement, Harry started to get dressed and said, as they did after a hard Quidditch practice, "Yeah, I'll be feeling this tomorrow."

"Good." Draco paused for thought. "Of course, if you're not, I'd be happy to go and do it again for you..."

Harry balled up Draco's underwear and pegged him in the head with it. "Pervert!"

Chapter Twenty-Two

“Epilogue”

It was only the second night at the Dursely's, and Harry already wanted to leave. Thankfully, he was too tired and sore to stay awake for long, so at least he could dive into oblivion fast and forget his loud and piggish relatives.

The first thing he had done upon arriving was convince them that he had joined the wizard equivalent of the army, and would therefore be performing a difficult set of physical exercises in his room each day. This way, nobody bothered him while he stretched and did push-ups and sit-ups and got out his broom to work on small, tight turns. There were only so many drills Harry could perform in a tiny bedroom, but he intended to discover them all and learn them to perfection.

He was *still* angry that he hadn't been allowed to go to Malfoy Manor for the summer. Still, he knew that (for reasons the old wizard didn't even know himself) the decision was a good one. Given Draco's recent foray into the world of tattoo removal, it was likely that things at home were going to get a bit rocky. Draco had assured Harry that he would survive the confrontation with Lucius, but Harry had his doubts.

They were going to be able to practice together in a week. Even that, Harry supposed he should be grateful for. Dumbledore had given his consent for the team to meet for practice once a week back at Hogwarts, as long as they could get a teacher to accompany each of them from his or her house, oversee the entire practice, and drop them off home again. The precautions made it unworkable to practice more often, but Harry still felt that once a week was not enough.

After all, they would be playing for an audience again on the first of November.

Harry and Draco knew they had made an impression on all the right people, but the changes they wanted to make to establish Quidditch were very severe. Teams had to be totally convinced that it was a good idea before they would subscribe to such weird, innovative tactics. Consequently, another game had been arranged. Not at Hogwarts, on the seekers' home turf, but in a real professional team's stadium about twenty minutes out of London.

Their opponents would be a real professional team.

They weren't expected to win no matter *what* strategies they used, but at least the two-seeker method would be demonstrated on people of high caliber. Coaches could watch and decide for themselves whether or not the new method would be effective on a high level. There had even been a short write-up in *Quidditch Today*. Although the writer had called Harry a "Quidditch Juliet" because he was committing career suicide by refusing a position on account of Draco, in general the new ideas had been favorably reviewed.

It was more than Harry had really hoped for, so he didn't mind spending the summer sitting in a corner of his room with his eyes closed, envisioning new ways to use an extra Seeker against the other team. It was all worth it in the end.

Harry drifted off, thinking of Quidditch, but was awoken a little later by a banging at his window.

Instantly afraid it might be Voldemort's minions, Harry scrambled for his wand before opening his curtains.

His visitor turned out to be Draco, hovering on a magic carpet with a huge trunk and his broomstick. "Hi, Harry," he whispered. "Sorry to wake you. Can I come in?"

Harry helped him move everything in through the window. "Quite a set of wards you've got on this house," Draco said. "I almost couldn't find it."

"Almost?" Harry echoed, dismayed. "I was sort of hoping Dumbledore made them good enough so that people could *never* find me. I thought it was safe here..."

"It is. I stopped at Textbook's for directions - her house isn't warded like this one - and she gave me the town and a location spell that'll only work for somebody who intends you no harm," Draco assured him.

"Right. And you're not being followed by a horde of rabid Death Eaters?" Harry asked, just to make sure.

"A whole horde of them? No, Potter, even *I* am not *that* good-looking. Nobody is after me," he added, almost sadly.

As Draco shrugged out of his robes, Harry asked the obvious question. "Um...why are you here? Did you get thrown out, or run away, or what?"

"A bit of both, I guess."

"Are you okay? What are you going to do?"

Draco swallowed. "Stay here for tonight, I guess. After that...I don't know. I'm okay, yeah, sort of. I mean, how okay can you be when you're told you can never come home again?"

"Me? I'd be thrilled," Harry said bluntly. "Getting thrown out of here would be the best thing that's ever happened to me. If my family finds you here they'll probably eat us both....I mean, this house is a *nightmare*. But you're welcome to stay as long as you need."

They shut the window and Harry got back into bed. Draco hovered around a bit and then poked him. "Move over."

Harry let him under the covers. "Hey - that's my pillow. Quit it."

"My pillow."

"Your pillow?"

"My head's on it."

"This is my house, Malfoy. Off."

Draco sighed and said generously, "You can have half."

They lay without speaking and it was a while before Harry realized Draco was crying. He didn't mention it. If anybody had told him a year ago that he would someday be sleeping peacefully with his arm around Draco Malfoy, he would have probably laughed aloud or committed suicide. Now, though, he just gave a mental shrug and said, "Night."

Eventually Malfoy's shoulders stopped hitching and he whispered, "Hey, um, Harry..." he was quiet and for a minute Harry thought he was actually going to say something, but in the end he changed his mind and settled for, "Quit hogging the pillow."

Harry understood, though, and squeezed his bed partner reassuringly. "Yeah, okay. Goodnight."

Draco didn't throw his arm off.

THE END