

The Bucket List by GallaPlacidia

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Summary:

Draco will die in six months if he can't get Harry Potter to fall in love with him. Since that's not going to happen, he might as well spend his last days working through his Bucket List. Tap-dancing lessons? Rock climbing? Poetry-writing? Threesomes? Cocaine? Getting to know his adorable cousin, Teddy Lupin? Draco will try them all!

Feat. Cheerily pessimistic Draco, devoted bitch queen Pansy Parkinson, and a Harry who can't help but notice that something seems DIFFERENT about Draco, these days.

Inspired by a lovely piece by khasael called Somebody To Love. Also indebted to You've Got The Antidote For Me by Kandakicksass and IDK My BFF Hermione? by lettered

1. #84. Break into Kew Gardens So I Can Enjoy It Without All The Bloody Plebs

"There's got to be a way to break the curse," said Pansy.

"Ah," said Draco. "There is, yes. Sort of. Not really? Harry Potter has to tell me he loves me, and mean it."

Pansy put down her wine glass.

"What the fuck sort of curse is this?"

"An extremely contrived one," said Draco, eating a salted peanut. He didn't love the bar Pansy had chosen, but the important thing had been to get out of the house, so they could have this conversation without being overheard by Blaise and Millicent.

"No, I mean, what will happen to you if you don't break it?"

"Oh! Death. Painful, slow death. In about six months," said Draco.

He had been walking home from his mind-numbingly dull job at the Department of Transportation when he had been roughly shoved against a wall and spat on. Although this sort of thing didn't happen as much as it had in the first year after the war, it wasn't totally

unprecedented. Draco had slipped out of the man's grip and wiped the spit away with his sleeve.

"The only reason you're not in prison is because of Harry Potter's goodness," said the man; and Draco had to agree with him, although he wasn't sure that it was relevant.

It did, however, turn out to be relevant.

"You think he likes you? You think he cares about you?"

"I really don't," Draco had said. The man appeared not to hear him.

"He doesn't. No one gives a shit whether you live or die." The man raised his wand and spoke a few words in a foreign language; not Latin—Draco didn't recognise it. But he felt the magic wash over him, like someone with bad breath breathing in his face.

"There," said the man. "You won't get him to save you from *that*."

He had gone to St Mungo's straight away, where they had diagnosed the curse and explained the rest.

"How the fuck are we supposed to get Harry fucking Potter to fall in love with you?" asked Pansy, now.

"I don't bloody know, do I?" said Draco. "That's why I'm asking you!"

Pansy nodded. Her long, tasselled earrings swayed.

"Okay," she said. "Fine. We'll sort it out."

"I haven't told anyone."

"Why not?"

"People will be boring about it."

"We'll fix it, Draco. You're not dying. You're twenty-two."

Draco made a non-committal sound and ate another peanut.

"What?" asked Pansy.

"We-ell. I've had a good run."

"Draco!"

"Look, it's not likely I'll successfully seduce Potter, is it? So I may as well make my peace with it." He tilted his head contemplatively. "I mean, in some parallel universes, I'm already dead. Probably. That's how that works, right?"

"We're fixing this, Draco."

"Oh, all right. But I'm writing a Bucket List."

The Bucket List kept him entertained while Pansy plotted how to get Potter to fall in love with him. They spent the next few days in coffee shops, scribbling in notebooks.

"What if you saved his life?" suggested Pansy.

Draco snorted.

"Fine. Back to the drawing board," said Pansy.

"I wish I could go to Petra," said Draco. "I've always wanted to go to Petra. And Cairo."

He was forbidden from leaving Britain by the terms of his parole. It would be up in a year, but that was useless, of course.

"Maybe if you date Ginny Weasley, he'll get jealous and fuck you," said Pansy.

"1. Ginny Weasley will never date me, and 2. Jealous fucking isn't the goal."

“Back to the drawing board,” said Pansy.

“Do you think I’d be any good at tap dancing?” asked Draco.

“No.”

Draco added “*Take tap-dancing lessons*” to the list, anyway.

Because there wasn’t much time, Pansy’s plan was slightly rushed.

That was her excuse, anyway.

“You get in the lift with him. I’ll take it from there,” she explained.

“Well, sure, you’ll trap us in a lift together. Doesn’t mean he’ll fall in love with me.”

“He just needs to agree to go on a date with you,” said Pansy.

“This would be so much easier if I could just *tell* him about the curse,” said Draco. “You know how he likes a *cause*.”

“The healers said no tricks. It has to be genuine. Telling him about the curse is too risky.”

“I know,” sighed Draco.

The plan was put into motion the next day. Pansy had used her considerable stalking skills to find out exactly what time Potter left the auror department. Draco lingered nearby, and the moment Potter got into a (conspicuously empty) lift, Draco dashed in after him.

“Malfoy?” asked Potter, glowering. “What are you doing on this floor?”

“Oh, I’m sorry, do you *own* it?”

The lift juddered to a stop.

“No fucking way,” said Potter. He jammed the emergency button.

Nothing happened.

“Looks as if we’re stuck,” said Draco. “I guess we have no choice but to get to know each other better.”

Potter glared at him.

“You did this.”

“I’m *with* you. You’re literally my alibi.”

Potter groaned and leant his head back against the wall.

He had quite a nice neck, reflected Draco. And a nice body, too. As long as he had to seduce someone, it may as well be Potter. Draco steeled himself. How hard could it be to attract him? Ginny Weasley had managed it, after all, and she was a ginger.

“So, I’m gay,” said Draco conversationally. “Are you?”

Potter’s head jerked so fast it looked as if it hurt.

“What?”

“You don’t seem gay,” went on Draco. “But then, I don’t like to assume.”

“Malfoy, what the *fuck* is going on?”

Draco could sense that he was losing control of the situation.

“Do you want to go on a date with me?” he asked.

Potter pulled out his wand and pointed it straight at Draco. A horribly familiar smell came to him; the bathroom smell, clean but old and wet, he hadn’t realised he had forgotten it until it returned, and then the tangy, metallic smell of his own blood, and then the taste, and his chest hurt, and he remembered the way the ceiling had looked as he bled, he had felt so calm, and there was the sound his mother had

made in the hospital wing, and he was staring at Potter's wand in a lift at the age of twenty-two at the same time as he was bleeding out on a bathroom floor at sixteen, and—

"Leave me the fuck alone," said Potter. The lift started moving again. Pansy had been watching the whole scene with some sort of spying spell, and had clearly decided to cut their losses.

Draco put his hands up placatingly. He didn't feel he could say anything. The lift came to a stop and he let Potter get out. Draco rode the lift down to the basement, where he found an old broom cupboard and had a little panic. Only a little one. He could breathe, and everything. It was just that there were so many books he would never get to read. His heart thumped in his ears. He would never go to Petra. He would never go to Cairo. He would never have children. He would never grow old. He would never—

"Draco?" It was Pansy, on the other side of the door.

"Yes?" His voice sounded fine.

"He didn't say yes, I take it."

"No, he had other plans," said Draco.

"We'll figure—"

"Don't say 'We'll figure something out.' We won't figure something out."

Pansy was quiet for a long time.

"Will you come out?" she asked.

"That's on my Bucket List," said Draco. "Come out."

"I don't want you to die," said Pansy. Her voice sounded fine, too.

"Don't—don't be boring about it, Pansy."

There was a pause. Draco used it to swallow, hard, several times, until the lump in his throat was gone. He suspected Pansy was doing the same.

"Get out of this manky broom cupboard, you terminal wanker," said Pansy, and he loved her so much that he nearly panicked again. But there wasn't time to panic—only six months—so instead he opened the cupboard door, called her a stupid bint, and took her out to get plastered.

"I've got about a month until the first symptoms set in," explained Draco. "So I've divided the list into energy categories."

"*Climb Ben Nevis*?" read Pansy.

"It's the tallest mountain in Britain. I'd have liked to do Everest, but."

"This is a long list, Draco."

"I know. I've quit my job."

They were sitting on the floor in Draco's attic bedroom. Pansy, Draco, Blaise, Millicent, Greg and the Greengrass sisters all lived in a rundown old townhouse that Millicent had inherited from her grandmother. At first, they had intended to live without house elves. Their resolve had quickly weakened when they realised how quickly everything got disgusting when no one had the knowledge or inclination to clean up after themselves.

"Well, you've got the money, I suppose," said Pansy.

"Exactly. But I do want to do *something*. Useful, I mean. Like healing?"

"There's not time."

"I know," said Draco. "Yeah."

Pansy flicked through the Bucket List. It was ten pages long, doublesided. That didn't include the list of fifty books Draco had chosen to finish his life with. Fifty was ambitious, but he thought he could manage it.

"What's this one? '*Befriend Aunt Andromeda*'?" she asked.

"Ah. Well, mother is going to be a bit... put out, when I die."

"Bound to be," said Pansy. Draco's father had died in Azkaban a year after the war. Natural causes, they said. It wasn't very agreeable to think of his mother, all alone.

"I figure, if she's friends with Andromeda, she'll feel a bit less, you know, *down* about the whole thing."

"Good thinking," said Pansy. "Doesn't Andromeda have a kid?"

"Grandson. Teddy, I think."

"Sure you want to spend your last months on this good earth with a toddler?"

"Not at all sure. But I've got to get started soon. The relationship things all have to come up top, because you can't rush those."

Pansy nodded.

"We'll have to colour-code them. All good plans are colour-coded."

"Yes. And I'm starting tomorrow. No time to waste."

"None," said Pansy, and she went to fetch her coloured pens.

The next day, Draco went to his Aunt Andromeda's house. He and Pansy had decided against owling ahead of time. An owl was much easier to ignore than a nephew.

"Draco," said Andromeda. She sounded more surprised than appalled, which Draco thought was encouraging.

"Hello. Can I come in? I brought candied pineapple."

Andromeda led him into a neat little kitchen.

"This is a surprise," she said.

"I hope you aren't angry that I've come without warning. I've been thinking about you and Teddy a lot. Family's important to me."

She looked rather shiny-eyed, like a Hufflepuff. Draco smiled at her.

"It would be good for Teddy to have more family," said Andromeda.

"Is he around? Can I meet him?"

"...and then I played with him for an hour, and by the end, Aunt Andromeda was practically inviting me to live with her," he told Pansy that evening, as they broke into Kew Gardens (#84 on the Bucket List).

"Don't you dare move out," said Pansy. "Oh, fucking fuck, Draco. I snagged my tights climbing over that gate."

"It's nice in here at night, though, isn't it?"

It was nice. No one else was around. They let themselves into one of the tropical greenhouses and breathed in the damp air.

"Too many plants," said Pansy. "How did you get on with Teddy?"

Draco wrinkled his nose.

“I plied him with chocolate so that he would like me. If someone’s child trusts you, you’re in.”

“And then, once Andromeda trusts you, you’ll get her and your mother to make up?”

“Exactly.”

“It’s a good plan.”

“Thank you,” said Draco. The air was thick with oxygen, and Draco felt more awake than he had in years. Kew Gardens, at night, with Pansy Parkinson. Check.

2. #45. Group sex. With men? With women? I'm not particular.

Draco went to Andromeda's house every day at four, because that was when Teddy woke up from his nap. This allowed him to do something from his list in the first part of the day, and still have time in the evening to spend with the Slytherins. (#2. *Spend time with Slytherins.*)

Although Draco moaned about Teddy constantly, in his heart of hearts he enjoyed the time they spent together. Teddy looked up to him and thought he was wonderful. Draco had always been partial to being adored.

Andromeda, too, was a revelation. She reminded him of his mother, but less feminine. Since his father's death, Draco had felt a lack in the world, the space where his father's love used to be, and Andromeda seemed to mend the balance slightly. She wasn't effusive, but it didn't matter. She loved him. Draco could tell.

It was six o' clock, and Draco was just finishing an argument with Teddy about who would win in a fight between a shark and ten lions on a barge, when the floo flared up.

"All right if I come over?" said a voice.

"Harry!" cried Teddy.

"Potter?" asked Draco.

"He's Teddy's godfather," said Andromeda.

"Ah," said Draco. "I'd better just—" he opened the pantry door and hid inside.

"Draco, don't be ridiculous," said Andromeda. "Come out."

"I'm gay," said Draco.

"What?"

"Coming out."

"Draco. Oh, hello Harry! How wonderful to see you!"

Andromeda had seven different types of pasta, arranged in jars along a shelf. Draco wondered how long Potter would stay. Draco couldn't disapparate from within the house because of the wards.

"Andromeda," said Potter, his voice sounding warm and kind, and not at all as if he had once almost murdered someone in a bathroom. "Teddy!"

"Draco's hiding in the pantry," said Teddy.

"You little turncoat!" shouted Draco.

The door was wrenched open. Potter stood outside, an expression of disbelief on his face.

"I was just checking whether Aunt Andromeda had enough pasta to get through the winter," said Draco, breezing past him. "Thankfully, she does. Well, I'd better be off, Pansy's rented a barge on the Thames and I plan to drink myself into a stupor by half past ten. Cheerio."

He left before Potter could point his wand at him again, went home, and had a little panic. Just a little one.

Then he went out on a barge on the Thames with his friends and drank himself into a stupor by half past ten.

Unfortunately, the next day, Potter was already there when Draco arrived at Andromeda's.

"Oh, ah," said Draco, turning to go.

"Malfoy. Wait."

"I think I left the oven on," said Draco, which was ridiculous, because he didn't know how to use his oven. He would have to learn eventually, for #122. *Bake cookies so as to impress the masses with my Modern Man domestic agility*, but at present, it was mystery to him.

"Malfoy. Look. I know Teddy's your cousin."

"First cousin once removed," said Draco.

"Right. And I'm his godfather. So we're going to run into each other occasionally. Try not to be such a git about it."

"I resent that accusation. I am doing exactly what you requested. I'm leaving you the fuck alone."

Potter rolled his eyes.

"For God's sake. There's a difference between trapping me in a lift with you and trying to strong-arm me into dating you for reasons I literally can't fathom, and being civil to me when we overlap at Andromeda's house."

Maybe he'll fall in love with me after all, thought Draco. *Because of my boundless charm.*

He started laughing then, slightly hysterically. Potter watched him with concern.

"Malfoy?"

"Yes," gasped Draco. "Fine, fine. Civility."

"Draco!" said Teddy, coming into the room. "Have you come to play Knights?"

Draco straightened his face.

"That depends. Did you memorise the Chivalric Code?"

Teddy nodded.

"Well, then, you're ready to play Knights."

"The Chivalric Code?" asked Potter.

"From Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*. Read a book, Potter."

Potter glared at him.

"Whatever, Malfoy. I'll see you around. Bye, Teddy!"

"You're not staying to play Knights?"

"He doesn't know the Code," said Draco. "So he can't."

Potter muttered something under his breath that sounded a lot like "twat" and left.

"Everyone hates my family," said Draco. "Because of the whole, War thing."

Pansy stopped pedalling to look at him. She had only reluctantly agreed to rent a pedalo boat with him.

"Yes," she said. "They do."

"So I'd like to do something to stop them hating us. I've come up with

a plan.”

“As always. What does it involve this time? Badges? Does Greg have to dress up as a little girl again?”

“No. I want to throw events. Charity events. I’ll raise money for war causes. I’ll be a *philanthropist*.”

“Brilliant,” said Pansy. “Amazing. Genius. Just one problem.”

“I believe I can foresee your concern.”

“Everyone hates you and no one will come to any event you plan.”

Draco nodded.

“Any event / plan.” He paused for effect. “This afternoon, I am meeting Luna Lovegood for coffee.”

“Lovegood!”

“She seemed like the only war hero I could talk to without getting punched.”

“Mhm,” said Pansy. “So you’ll plan behind the scenes, Lovegood takes the credit, money is raised. How does this improve the Malfoy name?”

“Once I’m dead, Lovegood reveals that I spent my final months slaving away for the cause of righteousness. ‘That brave young man!’ say the papers. ‘No one knew how reformed and selfless he was! Quick, send Narcissa Malfoy flowers and accolades and invitations to all the finest parties.’”

Pansy nodded thoughtfully.

“That might work, you know.”

Draco gestured at his face

“Not just a pretty face,” he said. Pansy snorted.

“It’s nearly lunch, we should head back.”

So they pedalled back to the dock, and Draco returned to the Manor for lunch, as he did every day. #1. *Spend time with Mother*.

“I think it’s a wonderful idea,” said Luna. She had smiled radiantly at Draco all the way through his apology, and then reminded him that he had already apologised by letter. Which was true. Draco had sent letters to everyone he could think of, after his trial, apologising all over the place. Only two people had responded— Luna and Hermione Granger.

“So you’ll do it?”

“Yes. But I’m not very good at hosting,” said Luna, chewing on her straw. She was drinking her latte through it, which Draco had resisted commenting on with difficulty. “Will you be there, at the events?”

“I can’t be. My involvement has to be secret.”

“Why?”

Draco studied her for a moment and decided she probably wouldn’t be boring about the whole death thing.

“I’m dying. I have about six months. I’d like it not to come out until after I’m dead.”

“I’m sorry,” said Luna, her eyes soft.

“I’m sure you’re not as bad at hosting as you think.”

Luna seemed to understand that he didn’t want to discuss his

looming demise any further.

"I think I make people uncomfortable," she said.

Draco sighed. She wasn't wrong.

"Well..." he thought for a moment. "I suppose I could glamour myself."

"Oh, that would be fun! You could have a secret identity!"

So it was decided. Draco would co-host the events as Lamorak
Toujours, an Anglo-French wizard with party-planning know-how.

"I don't really know how to throw parties," said Luna.

"That's all right," said Draco. "I do."

"I'm sad you're dying," said Luna, as they paid the bill.

"Three galleons for a coffee? That's outrageous," said Draco.

"Does anyone else know?" asked Luna.

"Just Pansy. It's easier that way."

Luna nodded.

"Yes, I can see how it might be. Thank you for telling me, Draco."

"Thank you for agreeing to all this."

"I'm looking forward to it."

So he and Luna began meeting up every few days, to plan their first event, which was to be a dinner party. Draco's days were very busy, but he knew he wouldn't always have the energy to do so many things, so he didn't mind the breathlessness of it all.

"You'll never guess who I saw in my life drawing class," said Dean Thomas.

"Who?" asked Ron. They were at the pub, and Harry was more or less fine. He was always more or less fine, these days. There was certainly no *reason* he shouldn't be fine. His life was perfect, just about. He was successful, he had money, he had friends, a good relationship with his godson, he went on frequent dates with beautiful women. There was nothing he could point to as the reason for why he felt so glum all the time.

"Draco Malfoy," said Dean Thomas. "He was the nude model!"

Harry nearly spat out his mouthful of lager.

"The *what*?" asked Ron.

"I know! He waved hello at me, took off his robe, and then I spent an hour painting his naked body!" Dean looked at Harry. "Was it you who gave him all those nasty scars, Harry?"

"What nasty scars?"

"All over his chest. Bloody nightmare to paint."

"Oh," said Harry. "Probably. Yeah."

"He's gone mental," said Ron.

"I think it's brave," said Luna, who had been mostly silent all night.

"Maybe he's not comfortable in his body."

It gave Harry an uncomfortable feeling in the pit of his stomach. All of it— Malfoy not being comfortable in his body, Malfoy's body, Malfoy lounging nakedly while half of Wizarding London painted him and probably wanked over the memories later.

Every time Harry had gone to see Teddy in the last two weeks, Malfoy

had been there.

"He comes every afternoon," said Andromeda.

"Doesn't he have a job?"

"He quit," said Andromeda

Harry snorted.

"So he's just pissing about now?"

"He seems pretty busy," said Andromeda. "Always going on trips. *Doing* things."

"Must be nice, to be a man of leisure," said Harry.

"He's no richer than you are, Harry. If you wanted to quit work and spend your days rock climbing and tap dancing—"

"Tap dancing??"

"He takes lessons."

"I'm perfectly happy with my work, thanks," said Harry, although he wasn't happy at all, with anything, really.

Malfoy always disappeared as soon as Harry arrived, which annoyed Harry for some inexplicable reason.

"I'm off," said Malfoy, when Harry stepped out of the fireplace that afternoon.

"Up to much this weekend?" asked Harry, trying to sound friendly, rather than inquisitorial.

Malfoy consulted a little notebook.

"I'm having a threesome," he said. "And trying cocaine."

"What?"

"I haven't organised it yet," said Malfoy, sounding a little worried. "But it's got to happen this weekend, because I'm hiking in the Lake District next weekend, and I just don't think there will be the time."

"You're fucking with me."

"Why, Harry, I didn't know you'd be interested," purred Malfoy. Then he suddenly looked contrite. "Ah. I'd like that stricken from the record. Don't hex me, I'm leaving."

"I wasn't going to hex—"

But Malfoy had already gone.

3. #50. **Buy one of those divine muggle suits so people can check out my arse**

The dinner party was a splendid success. Draco had glamourised himself to have curly dark hair and rather blunt features. He'd also changed his voice, so that it was a little higher than his own. He skimmed around the party, feeding off people's energy, introducing guests left, right and centre. He had agonised over the *placement de table*, but he was pretty sure the seating arrangements were perfect.

"Harry Potter," said Potter, holding out a hand to be shaken.

"Lamorak Toujours," said Draco, shaking Potter's hand. "It's a pleasure to meet you."

"I don't usually like these things," said Potter, looking around at the other guests. He seemed a little nervous, which Draco found unnerving. "Everyone always expects me to be interesting."

"I would *never* expect that of you," said Draco, and Potter—to Draco's great surprise—laughed.

"Good," he said.

"I've put you next to an acclaimed virologist," said Draco. "Just ask her about dragonpox, sit back, and relax."

Potter laughed again.

"As long as I don't have to be charming."

"Luna suggested that small talk is not your forte," said Draco.

"Seems to be yours," said Potter, sounding almost envious. "I've been watching you. You can talk to anyone."

"Easy enough, when no one knows who you are," said Draco, because he knew full well how this evening would go if he had his own face on.

"Yeah," sighed Potter.

Maybe I could get him to fall in love with Lamorak, thought Draco.

"Wouldn't work," said Pansy, when he suggested it. "No tricks, remember?"

"This spell is ridiculous," said Draco.

When he looked over at Potter midway through the dinner, he was chatting happily away with the acclaimed virologist. The food was delicious, the wine plentiful, the music tasteful, and the donations forthcoming.

"A quarter of a million galleons," said Luna, when they had counted all the checks at the end of the night. "That's a lot of money, Draco."

"I'm good at throwing parties," said Draco. "It's because I'm an unprincipled reprobate."

"Are you?" asked Luna curiously.

"I think so, yes," said Draco.

The fatigue came on him slowly. At first it was just difficult to get out of bed. Then it was difficult to fall asleep. Then he started nodding off whenever he tried to read, which filled him with dread, because he had a strict reading schedule to keep, and he couldn't possibly get through fifty books if he kept falling asleep mid-page.

He bought a barrel of Pepper-Up potion and kept some in a hip flask. If he had a swig every hour or so, he could just about function as he had before, although it had side effects: jittery fingers, a fluttery heart. He felt nervous all the time. But it was worth it, because he only had five months left, and there was a lot to do before then.

He and Luna threw another event— a wine tasting.

“Do I have to spit?” asked Potter, sidling up to him.

“I would certainly never make you swallow,” said Draco. Potter blushed furiously red and coughed into his arm.

“I heard you raised a ton of money after the last event,” he said.

“Quarter of a million galleons,” said Draco proudly. “Enough to add a new wing to the war orphanage. Have you been?”

“No,” said Potter.

“Oh, it’s quite nice,” said Draco, who had been a few weeks ago (#21. *Visit war orphanage and Think On Sins*). “Terrible art on the walls, though. All those poor orphans are going to grow up with warped aesthetics.”

Potter laughed again. It seemed that Potter found Lamorak funny, which was disorienting, because Draco was certain that if he had said the same thing without his disguise, Potter would have glowered at him.

“So is that what tonight’s money is going towards?” asked Potter.

“Better art?”

“Sadly not. Werewolf assimilation.”

“That’s a good cause,” said Potter. “How did you get into this? You weren’t at Hogwarts, were you?”

“You mustn’t get the wrong idea about me, Harry. I just like planning parties.”

“What’s the wrong idea? That you’re a good person?”

Draco grinned.

“Exactly.”

“Maybe I don’t like good people,” said Potter.

“You should have mentioned that in your RSVP. I’ve put you next to a famed environmental activist for dinner.”

“I don’t usually like parties,” said Potter. “But yours are... all right.”

“You just don’t like *bad* parties, Harry. Now, if you’ll excuse me, it looks as if that American senator is hitting on Griselda Friedricson and making her deeply uncomfortable. I must go to the rescue!”

“Call yourself a bad person,” said Potter, as Draco left.

“Oh, yes,” said Draco. “But an *excellent* host.”

“I wanted to go hiking in the Peak District,” said Draco miserably. It was eleven in the morning and he hadn’t been able to get out of bed yet. His head pounded and his eyes were heavy.

“Maybe you’ll feel better next week,” said Pansy.

“Yeah, maybe,” said Draco, although they both knew that his symptoms would not improve from here. The Pepper-Up potion was no longer working very well, and he was cold all the time.

“What’s on your list that’s a bit more easy-going?” asked Pansy.

"Get married and have three children."

Pansy poked him with her index finger.

"You're feeling sorry for yourself," she said.

"I want to go to my mother's funeral," said Draco. "I don't want her to go to mine."

"Is this helping you?"

"I've never been to an aquarium."

"Okay," said Pansy, sounding relieved. "Why don't you take Teddy?"

"Because he's too young to remember me and life is meaningless."

"Draco."

Draco slid under the covers. Pansy climbed in and held him. She stroked his hair.

"You can be upset if you want," she said.

"There isn't time to be upset," said Draco. He sighed. "I'm just so bloody *tired*."

"Draco..."

"Don't, Pans. Don't say you love me, or anything like that. Just don't."

"Okay," said Pansy. Her voice sounded fine. So did his. He could feel her tears where they landed wetly on his scalp.

"Do you think I could combine #222. *Visit an aquarium to check I still dislike fish* with #113. *Pet a shark*?"

"Definitely," said Pansy.

"Harry Harry Harry! Draco got bit by a shark!"

Harry stared at Teddy in consternation.

"A real shark?"

"Yes! It was so cool!"

Andromeda put the kettle on with a dry chuckle.

"It wasn't a very big shark, from what Draco tells me. He's all right, they healed him up at St Mungo's."

"How on earth did he get bitten by a shark in London?"

"He was trying to pet it," explained Teddy.

"Why— you know what, never mind. Andromeda, is he okay? It seems as if he's gone completely bonkers in the past few months."

Andromeda smiled fondly.

"I think he's just enjoying life," she said. "You should take a leaf out of his book, Harry."

"I enjoy life!"

"Draco took me to a pantomime and then we broke in to the backstage area and I got to meet all the actors!" said Teddy.

"Just because I'm not doing *unbelievably stupid things* does not mean I don't enjoy life," said Harry.

The floo burned green and Malfoy stepped out, wearing a three-piece muggle suit.

"What the hell are you wearing?" asked Harry.

"It was very expensive," said Draco defensively.

"You look handsome," said Andromeda, which Harry thought was beside the point. Obviously Malfoy looked *handsome*.

"It's a *muggle* suit."

"I always liked how they looked, so I thought I'd buy one," said Malfoy. He adjusted his jacket. "Actually, I bought four. I don't really understand muggle money but I think, from how the shop people behaved, that I was quite extravagant."

"Show Harry where the shark bit you!" said Teddy.

"It's all healed up, Ted. Now, are you ready to go to an 'amusement park'?"

"Draco," said Harry. "You can't possibly be going to an amusement park."

"Why not?" asked Malfoy, frowning. "I got my muggle friend to look it up on the internet thing and he said it was open."

"Your... your muggle friend?"

Malfoy looked extremely smug.

"His name is Jack and he works in HR. That means *human relations*. I met him when I was kayaking in Cornwall."

Harry felt as if the whole world was off-kilter. Draco Malfoy took kayaking trips to Cornwall and had friends who worked in HR. Harry filed paperwork at the Ministry of Magic all day. Nothing made any sense.

"Amusement park, amusement park!" said Teddy.

"Get ready to be seriously amused, Ted," said Malfoy, holding out his hand. Harry had noticed that he always treated Teddy as if he was just a tiny adult. It wouldn't have worked with all children, but Teddy seemed to rise to the occasion.

"Can we stay until it closes?" asked Teddy. Malfoy frowned.

"I'm a little tired, so we'll have to see."

"Are you sleeping any better?" asked Andromeda.

"Not really," said Malfoy. "But I'm getting used to it."

"You should try meditating," said Andromeda. Malfoy laughed.

"People keep suggesting that. I've tried it already. My head's too busy."

"Amusement park, amusement park!" said Teddy.

"I've got to give the people what they want," said Malfoy, gesturing towards Teddy. "I'll have him home by nightfall."

"No rush," said Andromeda, kissing Malfoy on the cheek.

"Potter," said Malfoy, with a terse nod, and he and Teddy stepped into the fireplace.

"You could do worse than learn from Draco, Harry," said Andromeda, once they were gone. "You need to get out of your comfort zone."

Harry was trying to get out of his comfort zone. He kept going to Luna's stupid events, didn't he? Although, he had to admit to himself that Lamorak Toujours was a compelling reason to go in his own right. He never had much time for Harry, because he was so busy chatting to everyone and introducing people to each other, but whenever they did talk, Harry felt shiny and interesting. He suspected that was just part of Lamorak's skill as a host, but Harry couldn't help falling for it. Ever since that baffling day that Malfoy had accosted him

in a lift and asked him if he was gay, Harry had been wondering if he should just... date a guy. He knew he'd like to. It wasn't as if any of his friends or family would have a problem with it. He just sort of *hadn't*, yet. And Lamorak was handsome, and clever, and witty...

4. #134. **Watch a 'movie'. Do these people not have books?
Are their imaginations faulty?**

Potter arrived at Andromeda's just as Draco was preparing to leave.

"Where are you off to now?" asked Potter, as he always did.

"The cinema."

"Cinema," said Potter.

"That's what I said."

"What film are you seeing?"

"I don't know. The film that's on?"

"Malfoy... There are a lot of different films."

"Does it make a difference?"

"Christ. Okay. Give me a second, I'll come with you."

"I beg your pardon?"

Potter laughed at him and said goodbye to Andromeda. When he came back, he grasped Draco's elbow and side-alonged him to a movie theatre, all lit up. Potter chatted to a man in a glass box for a few minutes, bought two tickets, and led Draco inside.

"There's a decent action movie on," he said.

"Aren't all movies action movies?"

"No, it's— you'll see. Let's get popcorn."

"What's popcorn?"

"It's part of the experience."

Draco liked sitting next to Potter in the dark, and he liked the frisson of excitement he felt when his hands brushed against Potter's as he reached for the popcorn. He even liked the popcorn.

But he did not like the movie, not in the least.

Within about fifteen minutes, it became apparent that he could walk out and have a little panic, or stay and have a big one. So he walked out.

He couldn't cry in bathrooms anymore, not since sixth year, which was an inconvenience. He walked out of the cinema and stood outside. He was shivering, struggling to breathe. The screen had been enormous. The voices—the shouting—the *explosions*— they had been so loud, and Draco couldn't shut them out, and it was dark, and he was trapped, and—

"Breathe in," said a voice. Draco tried to comply. "That's right. Now, out."

The voice continued to talk Draco through his breaths. It was a rough voice, scratchy. When Draco was sure he could speak, he opened his eyes. A homeless man was watching him with evident sympathy.

"Better?" he asked. Draco nodded. "Want to talk about it?"

"Very much not."

The homeless man nodded and took out a cigarette.

"May I have one?" asked Draco. (#91. *Smoke a cigarette like I mean it.*) The man gave him one and lit it for him when Draco's fingers trembled too much to work the lighter.

Draco took in an inhale, then coughed his lungs out.

“Fucking hell,” said the man. “Is this your first one?”

Draco nodded.

“Just—take a smaller inhale, next time.”

“What’s your name?” asked Draco.

“Seven.”

It was a fairly common name among purebloods— well, Septimus was. For the seventh son.

“I’m Draco.”

Seven didn’t seem any more surprised by his name than Draco had been by Seven’s.

“Panic attacks are shit,” said Seven.

“I’m dying,” said Draco baldly.

“Yeah, it always feels that way, dunnit?”

“No, I mean, I’m actually dying. I’ve got five months left.”

“Well, shit,” said Seven.

Draco took another inhale of his cigarette. It was much more successful this time. He was beginning to feel pleasantly lightheaded.

“Will you feel patronised if I give you money?” he asked.

“Nope.”

Draco got out his wallet. He had a fifty pound note and a twenty pound note. He gave them both to Seven, who beamed.

“I should help dying poshboys more often,” he said.

“Do you believe in magic?” asked Draco curiously. He had often wondered how much muggles guessed about the Wizarding world, but he didn’t dare ask Jack anything because he didn’t want to have to obliviate him.

Seven nodded.

“Absolutely. The government’s hiding it from us.”

“Remarkable,” said Draco, impressed.

“How you going to die, then?”

“A broken heart? Sort of? Painfully, anyway.” He kicked at the curb.

“I’ve had a good run,” he added.

“We all go sometime,” said Seven.

“Yes, exactly. At least I’ll still look nice in my coffin.”

“It’s a bit shit though, what with you being so young, and all.”

“My mother—” Draco stopped himself.

“Breathe in,” said Seven. “Good man. Now let it out.”

Draco managed to breathe, with some difficulty.

“Sorry,” he said.

“That’s all right.”

“Listen, when the guy I’m with comes out, will you bugger off? He’ll think I’m just talking to you to impress him, or something.”

“He sounds like a right twat.”

Draco laughed.

“He is.”

“You gay, then?”

“Very.” Draco tilted his head. “Is that a problem?”

“To each his own,” shrugged Seven.

"He's not, though. The guy I'm with."

"Then why's he on a date with you?"

"It's not a date. Just watching a film. Maybe we'll grab dinner after."

Seven laughed.

"Dinner and a movie. That's a date."

"Is it?" asked Draco, thoughtfully. He shook his head. "Can I have another cigarette?"

"You'll feel ill."

"I don't care."

Seven lit another cigarette for him.

"I had a heart attack once," said Seven.

"Did you really? What was it like?"

"Painful as shit."

"I'm scared of pain," said Draco. "I'm a terrible coward."

"Will it hurt? Whatever you've got?"

Draco nodded unhappily.

"Well, you're here now, that's the important thing," said Seven.

"You seem old and wise," said Draco. "Tell me a story, while I wait for my twat of a companion."

So Seven embarked on a long and meandering tale about the time he had hitch-hiked to Edinburgh. Draco had to inquire as to what hitchhiking was, and mentally added it to his Bucket List. He smoked four more cigarettes while Seven spoke.

The door opened. Draco widened his eyes at Seven, who hastily shrank into a nearby alleyway.

Potter came to stand beside him. He looked pissed off.

"You left," he said. "I thought you'd just gone to the loo, at first."

"I didn't like the film."

Potter's eyes were cold.

"No, of course you didn't. All those muggles."

Draco stubbed out his cigarette. Seven was right, he did feel ill, like there was a forest fire in the back of his throat.

"Let's just go," he muttered.

"Bless you, sir," said Seven loudly. "For your generosity!"

Draco smirked at him, and Seven winked back. Potter just looked bewildered.

"Did you give him money?"

"Merlin, just a few quid. I didn't expect him to go all Dickens on me."

"Dickens?"

"A *Christmas Carol*? *David Copperfield*? Any of this ringing a bell?"

"He's a muggle author," said Potter.

Draco was so tired. His headache had been building for hours.

"Why did you walk out of the movie?" asked Potter, and Draco could tell that he was in auror mode, and would not let it go.

"It was too loud, all right? It was loud, and—" *Oh God, not now...!* He took a few breaths. "I just didn't like it, okay?"

"Okay," said Potter softly.

"Potter... was this a date?"

The gentle expression on Potter's face vanished.

"Fuck's sake. Malfoy, if I ever want to date you—which I won't—you will know about it, okay?"

"Dinner and a movie," said Draco stubbornly. Seven had said that dinner and a movie was a date. "Sounds like a date."

"We haven't had dinner. Seriously, Malfoy, can you stop being weird? I'm trying to get along with you for Teddy's sake, and you're making it fucking difficult."

Draco twisted his mouth.

"Fine. I'll get dinner with Pansy."

He strode away, rounding a corner so that he could disappear out of sight. He didn't have dinner with Pansy. He fell into bed, head pounding, and was unable to get out for sixteen hours.

5. #37. Ride around on a horse as white as snow like a bloody fairytale prince

"Maybe he likes you, Harry," said Hermione. Harry scoffed.

"He does *not*. He's up to something."

Ron and Hermione exchanged glances.

"Harry, mate..." said Ron.

"I'm not saying he's doing... Death Eater stuff, or whatever!" said Harry. "But he doesn't want to date me because he likes me. I'm sure of that." He paused, thinking. "I reckon he's trying to do things that are out of character."

"Or maybe, he's stopped forcing himself not to behave *in* character," said Hermione.

"What do you mean?"

"You said he came out to you, Harry. Maybe he's finally being himself. Maybe all along, Draco Malfoy was a nude-modelling, tap-dancing, mountain-climbing gay adventurer."

This time, it was Harry and Ron's turn to exchange glances. There was a beat. Then:

"Nahhhhh," said Ron. "It's probably the Death Eater stuff again."

A few days later, Harry and Ron went to the same cinema he had gone to with Malfoy. The homeless man sat outside, as before.

"You get the popcorn," said Harry. "I'll be right in."

Harry approached the homeless man, who eyed him with suspicion.

"Hey," said Harry. "Sorry to disturb you. I was wondering if you remembered a guy who was here the other day? Blond, slim, sort of... over-the-top posh?"

"Draco," said the man.

"Er," said Harry. "Yeah."

"What about him?"

"I guess I was wondering—did he give you money? To say what you said?"

Harry had not thought it possible that the man could look more unfriendly than he did to begin with, but he managed it.

"You really are a prick," he said. "He gave me seventy pounds and told me not to mention it so that you wouldn't think he was doing it for attention."

"Oh," said Harry, flabbergasted.

"He's going through a hard enough time as it is."

"Right," said Harry. "Er, thanks."

"You're a twat."

"I'm just going to go and watch a film, now."

"Tell Draco, Seven says you're a miserable fucker and not worth his time."

"I'm not telling him that."

"Coward."

Harry fled into the cinema.

Maybe Seven was right, thought Harry, as he zoned out of the film.

Not about Malfoy being some kind of beacon of goodness— Harry didn't know why Malfoy had given him seventy pounds, but he was sure there was a reasonable explanation. No, maybe Seven was right: Harry was a coward. He liked Lamorak. He knew he did, and yet he hadn't done anything about it.

It was time to change that.

Luna's next event was a fashion show. As always, Lamorak floated effortlessly through the crowd, introducing models to fashion designers, designers to politicians, politicians to activists. Although, it wasn't quite effortless, noticed Harry. Every twenty minutes or so, Lamorak retreated to an alcove, leant against the wall looking exhausted, and took a swig from a hip flask.

"I'd think you were on Polyjuice if you weren't drinking that so often," said Harry, catching him as he emerged from the alcove. Lamorak startled.

"Harry!" He was still holding his flask. "It's Pepper-Up Potion. Here, you can smell it." He unscrewed the lid and held out the flask to Harry, who laughed.

"That's okay, I trust you."

Something flickered across Lamorak's face, but it was gone before Harry could analyse it.

"I had a bit of a late one, last night," said Lamorak. "You've caught me out."

"I wanted to talk to you," said Harry.

"Intriguing. What about?"

Harry drew his shoulders back, feeling fourteen again, asking Cho Chang to the Yule Ball.

"Would you like to have dinner sometime?"

Lamorak looked so astonished it was almost comical.

"Dinner? Like... a date?"

Harry nodded.

"I thought you were straight?" said Lamorak.

"Er... I'm not?"

Lamorak chewed his lip. He was silent for so long that Harry was on the verge of saying it had all been a joke when he finally answered.

"Well, *I'm* straight," he said.

"Oh, right, cool," said Harry.

"But I'd like to get to know you. Would you be up for that?"

Harry didn't hesitate.

"Yeah, definitely!"

Lamorak smiled.

"How about coffee, tomorrow afternoon?"

"Brilliant. Yeah."

"I'd better go, Neville Longbottom is languishing in a corner."

"Yeah, of course, go host."

Lamorak cast him a glance that Harry could have sworn was flirtatious before slipping away into the crowd. Why had he paused for so long before saying he was straight, wondered Harry? And surely it

wasn't normal for a straight guy to look at your lips so much?

"So the plan is, he falls in love with Lamorak, then you confess your true identity, boom bada boom?" asked Pansy, leaning against the enormous standing stones of Stonehenge.

"No. He'd feel betrayed and hate me more."

"So...?"

"So I become *friends* with him through Lamorak. That's not taking advantage. Then, a month before I'm due to die, I tell him who I am, and his anger is mitigated by the tragic sight of my piteous, bedbound form."

"He confesses love for you on your death bed."

"We marry in a small, tasteful ceremony. The groom's mother wears Chanel."

"Does this mean you'll stop running about like a headless chicken, trying to tick everything off your list?"

"No," said Draco. "Because the plan isn't going to work."

"It isn't?" asked Pansy.

"No. Be real, Pansy. Even if he falls for me as Lamorak, the instant he finds out I'm Draco, he'll be disgusted."

"So what's the point?"

Draco leant his forehead against a weathered prehistoric stone.

"It's for you, really. Got to have a plan, so that you don't go mad."

Pansy's neat black hair kept getting blown into her lipgloss. They looked at each other quietly for a moment.

"You're my best friend," she said.

"I can't—I can't think about—Pans. You know I can't."

"I know."

"I'm sorry. You don't deserve this."

"Don't be boring," said Pansy, her eyes flicking up to the sky.

"If you cry, I'm not helping you fix your mascara."

"You're a selfish prick. I don't know why I like you."

"It's because I'm terribly rich and rakishly handsome."

"These rocks are tedious as shit, can we get out of here already?"

Draco consulted his notebook.

"Salisbury Cathedral?"

"Nerd. Let's go."

Harry met Lamorak the next day in a little coffee shop off Diagon Alley. Lamorak was exquisitely dressed, as always. They got coffees and settled into a corner table. Lamorak looked strangely nervous.

"So," said Harry. "How long have you lived in England?"

Lamorak got out his flask.

"Mind if I Pepper-Up?"

"Don't you sleep?"

Lamorak just laughed. He drank, shuddered, and put the flask away.

"Harry..." he frowned. "I have a few secrets I have to keep."

"What kind of secrets?" asked Harry. Lamorak met his gaze

unflinchingly.

"Big ones. Can you accept that?"

Harry thought of Draco Malfoy, taking cocaine and having threesomes and giving away large sums of money to strange men on the street. If Malfoy could take risks, so could he.

"Yes. I can."

Lamorak looked relieved.

"Good. If something touches on something I can't talk about, I'll answer 'Pass.'"

"Okay," said Harry. "Why did you come to England?"

"Pass."

Harry laughed and tried again.

"How do you know Luna?"

"Pass."

"Is there *anything* you can tell me?"

"Think opinions, not facts."

Harry considered.

"What do you think... of me?" he asked.

The look Lamorak gave him was definitely flirtatious.

"Well, you're handsome, obviously."

"Obviously?" asked Harry.

"Obviously," said Lamorak firmly. "And beyond that... I like that you get my sense of humour. People don't always."

"Why not?"

"I think because, with cutting humour, you have to trust that the person making the jokes isn't a dick."

"Do many people think you're a dick?" asked Harry.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because I am one. Or was one. Still am? I don't know."

"You don't seem like a dick to me," said Harry. "You seem pretty selfaware."

Lamorak flushed and looked away.

"What about you, Harry? Got any secrets?"

"A few," said Harry. "You want to know one?"

"Just like that?"

"Just like that."

"Go on, then," said Lamorak.

"I'm unhappy."

Lamorak sat back in his chair.

"Why?"

"That's just it," said Harry. "I don't know. Everything's going great."

"I've had that before. At school. For me, it was because I wouldn't let my friends get close enough to me to be real friends."

"I have great friends."

Lamorak suddenly squeezed his eyes shut, grimacing.

"You okay?" asked Harry.

"Headache."

"You need to sleep more."

“There aren’t enough hours in the day,” said Lamorak. He put his head between his wrists and pressed. “Sorry. Ahhh. Okay, I’m back.”
“Do you need...?”

“No, I’m fine. Socrates—I think it was Socrates—used to say he tried to be as charming when he was sick as when he was healthy. Apparently his visitors could never tell how he felt, because his behaviour never varied.”

“Are you sick?”

“No, no, I just...” he laughed. “Like the attention. Let’s get back to you. It sounds like you need a change.”

“Yeah,” said Harry. “That’s why I asked you out. There’s this guy I hated in school who’s sort of come back into my life. But he’s, like... trying new things all the time. It’s fucking annoying, actually. He keeps asking me out.”

Lamorak raised one eyebrow.

“Trying to make me jealous?”

“No! I just thought, if *he* can take risks, so can I.” Harry’s eyes drifted as he thought about Draco sodding Malfoy. “He really is the most insufferable tosser.”

Lamorak’s expression was pleasantly neutral. Ron and Hermione were never neutral, when he brought up Malfoy.

“I’m not talking, like, school bully stuff, by the way. Although he was that, too. I mean the guy was *literally* a Death Eater. Voldemort lived in his *house*.”

“I’m not sure I’m following your train of thought,” said Lamorak.

“He modelled nude for my friend’s life-drawing class!”

Lamorak looked puzzled.

“I see,” he said. “How... devious?”

“If you knew him, you’d get it.”

Lamorak grimaced.

“You okay? Is it your head?”

“Yes,” he said. “Give me a second.” He pressed his temples again, his breathing laboured. When he raised his head, he was smiling. “So, this old school mate of yours has triggered an ancient rivalry, and now you want to out-*carpe diem* him?”

Harry laughed.

“You’ve hit the nail on the head.”

“I don’t know if that’s the right kind of change, Harry.”

“What do you mean?”

Lamorak took a pensive sip of coffee.

“I think you need to write down all the things that make you happy—little things, like mint tea in the summer, or roof gardens, and big things, like spending time with family—oh, I’m sorry.”

“That’s okay. The Weasleys are like my family.”

“Well. That, then. And once you have the list, you can figure out how to do more of that.”

“You make it sound so simple.”

“I like to have a plan.”

"I'm more of a, act-first, bitterly-regret-the-absence-of-a-plan-later type."

Lamorak smiled.

"I admire that. I intellectualise myself out of bravery." Suddenly, he gasped and put his head on the table. "Fucking *hell*."

"Have you seen a healer?" asked Harry, starting to feel seriously concerned. Lamorak hissed slightly as he drew breath.

"Yes," he said. "I just get them. It's not a big deal. Just—fucking *toad on a tit*, that hurts. It's just—embarrassing."

"Don't be embarrassed."

"I think I'll have to cut this short, Harry, I'm really sorry," said Lamorak.

"Yeah, of course. Do you need help getting home?"

"No, no." Lamorak got unsteadily to his feet. "I really enjoyed this."

"Me, too."

"Write that list."

"I will. Can I see you again?"

Lamorak smiled.

"I'd like that."

When Harry arrived at Andromeda's that evening, Malfoy was sulking in an armchair, clearly nursing a hangover.

"Draco and I are playing The Quiet Game," said Teddy.

"You just lost, Ted," said Malfoy.

"You look like you had a good time last night," said Harry.

"I did," said Malfoy, slowly getting to his feet. He swayed a bit. "Right, I'm off."

"Haven't you heard of hangover potion, Malfoy?"

"There's not enough hangover potion in the world."

"What's 'hangover'?" asked Teddy.

"Well, that one's on you, Potter."

"I'm not the one who showed up clearly still intoxicated from the night before!"

Malfoy glared at him blandly. Harry hadn't known a glare could be bland, but Malfoy managed it.

"See you tomorrow, Ted," he said.

"Can we go to the amusement park again?"

Malfoy winced.

"I don't think so. How about a museum?"

"Okay," said Teddy, sounding resigned.

"What ridiculous thing are you doing tonight?" asked Harry.

"I was supposed to go horse riding, but I think I've left it too late." He scrunched up his face. "Stupid of me." He opened his eyes. "Night, Potter. Enjoy your time with Teddy."

Harry was too surprised by Malfoy being *pleasant* to answer. Malfoy left, knocking into furniture as he went.

6. #63. Take Ecstasy At An Underground Warehouse Rave And Dance My Stony Heart Out

“How did it go?” asked Pansy. They were in the Oxford Botanical Gardens. Pansy was eating an ice cream. #75. *Eat ice cream at the Botanical Gardens like that time Father took me the summer before Hogwarts*. But for the last month, Draco’s nose had been too blocked up for him to be able to taste anything, and more recently, he had stopped being able to keep food down. His appetite was shot, and he felt nauseous when he even thought of eating. So Pansy ate ice cream, and Draco went through his Bucket List, crossing off all the food-based ones with a heavy heart.

“It went well,” he said. “My mother was a bit awkward at first, of course. But after a few glasses of wine, they were chatting away like old friends.”

“That’s good.”

“It’s a relief,” said Draco. He had been so worried that Andromeda would not forgive his mother as readily as she had forgiven him. But Andromeda had been more than open to the prospect of reconciliation. It took a weight off Draco’s mind. He hated to think of his mother at his funeral with no one to lean on. He knew Pansy would do all she could to comfort her, but Pansy was already doing too much. He could hear her quiet sobs through the thin walls of the house. He never mentioned them.

“How’s it going with Potter?” asked Pansy.

“I like him,” said Draco.

“The saviour? You’re serious?”

“Deadly. He’s fun. And sort of wistful. I think he needs rescuing.”

Draco sighed. He met up with Harry, as Lamorak, a few times a week. Harry laughed at his jokes; complimented him; confided in him. He had taken Draco’s advice and written a long list of the things that made him happy. He and Draco—Lamorak—had gone through it together, figuring out ways that Harry could incorporate joy into his life.

“Maybe you should quit your job,” Draco had told him.

“It’s a good job,” said Harry.

“But you don’t enjoy it.”

“I’ve always wanted to be an auror. There’s nothing else I want to be.”

Draco shrugged.

“It’s got bad work-life balance, and that’s important to you.”

Harry laughed.

“Where have you been all my life? I could have used your wisdom four years ago, when I decided to join the force.”

It was disconcerting, when Harry said things like that.

Draco had wanted Harry to like Lamorak. He hadn’t realised how much he would end up liking Harry. He couldn’t have predicted that Harry wasn’t arrogant, or smug, or entitled, or attention-seeking, or any of things Draco had assumed about him. Instead, he found that

Harry was compassionate. Loyal. Funny. Curious. He found that his coffees with Harry were the highlight of his week. He found himself drifting towards Harry at Luna's events, catching his eye, smirking at him as if they were old friends. And Harry seemed to feel the same way. When they caught up with each other at the various drinks parties Draco threw with Luna, Harry always seemed delighted, even relieved, to be in his company.

This made the contrast between the two Harrys all the more stark. When Draco's illness bothered him as *Lamorak*, Harry was sympathetic and helpful. But if Harry came across him not feeling well as himself, Harry made snide remarks about Draco's drinking habits. It was sort of fascinating, how the same action, performed by Draco and by *Lamorak*, could provoke such a different reaction in Harry. Pansy offered Draco a lick of her ice cream.

"No, thank you."

"You're getting enviably thin," said Pansy.

"Death-curse chic."

"Mhm," said Pansy.

"I think I may have passed 'sexy thin' by now."

Pansy looked him up and down.

"Not quite yet. Do you have any other sex challenges on your list?"

"#15. Sex with someone I love."

"15! That's high!"

"Not happening, though, is it?"

Pansy nibbled the edge of her ice cream cone.

"I'll sleep with you, if you like," she said.

"Pans," said Draco, touched.

"What d'you reckon?"

"That you're the best friend a boy could ask for. But I doubt I could even get it up. You're so deliciously curvy."

"Blaise would let you."

Draco lay back in the grass.

"I'd have to tell him first."

"I told Astoria," said Pansy. Draco sat bolt upright.

"You betrayed me?"

"Oh, don't be so selfish. I was going mad, grieving all on my own."

Draco scowled.

"She's been acting perfectly normally around me. I bet she isn't upset at all."

"She's acting normally because I asked her to."

Draco decided he couldn't, in good faith, chastise Pansy for reaching out to Astoria. He knew how hard this had been on her. It wasn't as if Pansy could talk to *Draco* about how miserable she would be once he was dead.

"Do you think I ought to sleep with Blaise?" he asked.

"No," said Pansy. "I think you ought to sleep with Potter."

"I sense you're trying to tell me something here."

"I sense you're falling in love with him."

“That’s some mighty fine conclusion-jumping you’re doing there, Miss Parkinson.”

“‘He needs rescuing’? That’s Draco-speak for ‘If only I could take him home and brush his hair and fuck him silly.’”

“He’d probably die of shock at the sight of a hairbrush,” said Draco.

“He *has* to fall in love with you,” said Pansy, fiercely. “He *has* to.”

Draco closed his eyes, focusing on the throbbing pain behind his left eyebrow.

“Don’t be boring, Pans.”

“I just don’t think it’s safe to leave Teddy alone with Malfoy,” said Harry. Andromeda pursed her lips. “Not because he’s a Death Eater!”

“He was acquitted, Harry,” said Andromeda.

“He has a drinking problem!”

“He does *not*.”

“He can’t walk in a straight line. He’s hungover every single day. He keeps a hip flask in his suit pocket, I saw the outline when he took off his jacket.”

“Look, I’ll admit that Draco has seemed a little... off, lately, but he hasn’t been sleeping well.”

“He’s been taking ecstasy all night long at underground warehouse raves!”

“That was one time, just to try it,” said Andromeda, although Harry sensed that she was beginning to see his point. “He’s always *compos mentis*.”

“I don’t even know what that means,” said Harry. “He is irresponsible. He should not be allowed alone with Teddy unsupervised.”

As if to emphasise his point, Teddy suddenly shrieked “Granny!!!”

He and Malfoy were upstairs, playing Knights. Harry had come early to try and talk Andromeda out of letting Malfoy spend time alone with him.

Andromeda stormed up the stairs, taking them two at a time.

“Teddy! Sweetheart! What’s wrong?”

Malfoy was passed out on the floor.

“Merlin,” said Harry. “He’s blackout drunk.”

Andromeda swept Teddy into a hug, throwing Harry a look that was at once guilty and annoyed.

“What happened?” she asked Teddy.

“He said he wasn’t feeling well and then he falled over!”

Harry pointed his wand at Malfoy.

“*Enervate*.”

Malfoy’s eyelids fluttered, then opened. He struggled to sit up when he saw Harry’s wand.

“What...”

“You have some nerve, Malfoy.”

“Harry, put your wand away,” said Andromeda. Harry reluctantly obeyed. Malfoy instantly relaxed, falling back so that his head hit the floor with a thump.

"I fainted," he said.

"You passed out."

"Let me put Teddy to bed, then we'll talk about this," said Andromeda.

"Is Draco going to be okay?"

Malfoy didn't answer. He had covered his face with his hands.

"He'll be fine, Teddy," said Harry.

"Draco?" asked Teddy.

"Fine," said Malfoy, after a long pause. His voice was muffled.

Andromeda took Teddy and left the room.

"Sit up," said Harry.

"Give me a minute."

"You know, Andromeda seems to think you're this family-oriented... reformed... I don't even know, but it's completely irresponsible for you to be drinking when you're supposed to be taking care of Teddy."

"I wasn't fucking drinking!"

"I've had a word with Andromeda, and she's starting to agree with me. Teddy was terrified just now."

Malfoy propped himself up on his elbows.

"Andromeda agreed with you?"

"If she didn't before, she will now!"

Malfoy lay back down and breathed purposefully through pursed lips.

It looked as if he was counting.

"Malfoy—"

"I'll explain when she's back, okay? Just *give me a minute*."

"Fine."

Harry sat in one of Teddy's dinky little chairs and crossed his arms.

It was a long half hour, but finally Andromeda returned.

"Draco," she began.

"I have something to tell you," said Malfoy, lurching to his feet. He had to hold onto the wall to stay upright.

"Let's get you a cup of coffee first," said Andromeda.

"I haven't been drinking," said Malfoy.

"Just come have a coffee," said Andromeda gently. She took Malfoy's arm and led him down the stairs. Harry followed, trying to feel triumphant. It was harder than expected, because Malfoy looked so thin and miserable, the way he had at his trial.

They sat at the kitchen table. Andromeda handed out mugs of coffee.

Malfoy's head was bowed.

"Draco," said Andromeda. "You know I love—"

"A few months ago, I was hit by a fatal curse," interrupted Malfoy.

There was a deafening silence.

"What do you mean, a fatal curse?" asked Andromeda.

"My condition has recently deteriorated," said Malfoy, raising his head to look at her. "I'm sorry. Maybe I shouldn't have come into Teddy's life like that, since... Anyway, I'm sorry I scared him."

"Draco," said Harry, not sure what he was planning to say. "You can't—you're sure?"

Draco nodded, not looking at him.

"How long do you have?" asked Harry.

"A little under four months."

Harry's skin broke out in shivers. Andromeda started to rock back and forth in her chair.

"Can't it be reversed?" asked Harry.

Draco shook his head.

"Are you in pain?" asked Andromeda.

Draco laughed.

"It hurts like hell. I've been *incredibly* brave." His face grew serious. "I understand if you don't want Teddy to get any more attached, but I had to make sure that you and my mother—" his voice broke. "I don't want her to be... alone... she doesn't know yet..."

"I should go," said Harry.

"That's why you've been doing all those things," said Andromeda.

"Climbing mountains and all that."

Draco made a tragic little sound that Harry suspected had started out as a laugh.

"I can't travel, because of my probation. But I've tried to do some of the other things." He paused. "I'd have liked to travel."

Harry stood, and Draco finally looked at him.

"I'm sorry," said Harry. "I shouldn't have assumed..."

Draco laughed again.

"You have no idea how satisfying it is to have you proven so wrong.

It's almost *worth* dying tragically young."

Harry didn't know what to do with his hands.

"I'm sorry," he said again.

Draco smiled at him, a disorienting, warm smile.

"I'd be a dick to you, if I thought you were getting wasted around Ted."

"Narcissa," said Andromeda, who had been staring into the depths of her coffee all this time. "When will you tell Narcissa?"

Draco put his head in his hands.

"I don't know," he mumbled.

"I should—I'm going," said Harry.

Neither of them seemed to notice him as he stumbled to the fireplace and flooded back to Grimmauld Place.

7. #71. Visit A Den Of Iniquity And Smoke Opium Like A Tortured Romantic Poet

“Draco Malfoy is dying,” said Harry without preamble when he saw Lamorak the next day. He had already told Ron and Hermione (“How awful!” said Hermione. Ron had remained silent), but he found himself longing to talk to Lamorak the instant he got home. When had that happened? When had Lamorak become the person he felt most comfortable confiding in?

“Your old school rival?” asked Lamorak.

“Yeah.”

“You must be overjoyed.”

Harry spluttered.

“Lam! How can you think that?”

Lamorak looked puzzled.

“Don’t you want him dead?”

“Of course not! I saved his life, during the war. He saved mine too, actually. In a less obvious way, but it still showed character.”

Lamorak took a sip of his hot water and lemon (he had quit caffeine a few weeks before).

“Didn’t you try to kill him in sixth year?”

“I’ve never told you that,” said Harry, taken aback.

Lamorak blushed.

“Luna, Luna mentioned it to me, that’s how I know.”

“Oh. Well, I wasn’t trying to kill him. I was horrified when I saw what that spell did.”

Lamorak looked at him thoughtfully with his unsettling brown eyes. It made Harry uncomfortable.

“He’s been hit by some kind of slow-working death curse,” said Harry.

“He’s got four months. I feel terrible.”

“Why?”

“Because it’s my fault!”

Lamorak’s eyebrows flew up.

“How do you figure that?”

“Because! I knew everyone hated the Malfoys after the war. I mean, his father was murdered in prison, everyone knows that.”

“Natural causes,” murmured Lamorak.

“Please. He was hit over the head with a heavy object, I saw the report.”

Lamorak blanched. He hadn’t been through the war, Harry reminded himself; he probably wasn’t quite as casual about violence as Harry was.

“Look, the point is, I should have... I don’t know, I should have...

Whoever cursed him did it because of the war—I spoke at his trial, you know. He’s a prick, but he isn’t *evil*.”

“I really don’t see how this is your fault, Harry.”

“I accused him of being an alcoholic. He was ill, and I tried to get Andromeda to stop him from seeing Teddy.”

"Maybe he shouldn't be seeing Teddy," said Lamorak. "It'll be upsetting for him when Draco dies. Rather selfish of him, really, to spend time with Teddy at all."

Harry frowned.

"Come off it, Lam. Of course he should be able to spend his last few months with his family. I was being a total dick."

"*Quel surprise*," said Lamorak, and Harry laughed. Lamorak smiled back at him. He had such a lovely smile.

Draco had quite a nice smile—the one he did when he was with Teddy, not that horrible smirk he did when he thought he was being clever and cutting. Harry ran his hands through his hair.

"It's just... I thought I was *through* the war deaths. And yeah, I won't like, *personally* miss Malfoy when he dies, but Teddy is going to be so unhappy, and that makes *me* unhappy. I relate to Teddy, you know? War orphan and all that. What if Draco Malfoy is his Sirius?"

Lamorak was staring off into the distance with pursed lips, a small crease on his forehead.

"So you don't care about Malfoy dying," he said, "except on a conceptual level."

"Sort of?" said Harry. It wasn't exactly right, but he didn't know how to explain himself better.

Lamorak clenched his jaw, looking miserable.

"Your head?" asked Harry.

"Sorry?"

"Is your head hurting you? You look a bit upset."

"Oh. Yeah," said Lamorak. "It hurts." He frowned. "I'm not sure I'm the right person for you to talk to about this."

"Why not?"

"I—no reason, I suppose."

"You've been really helpful," said Harry. "It's nice just to talk things out with you."

"Oh," said Lamorak. He smiled, although it was rather weak. "Well, I like being helpful."

"It's always sort of... extra sad when good looking people die, isn't it?" mused Harry.

"You think he's *good looking*?"

"Oh, yeah. He's so hot."

Lamorak looked alarmed.

"So you fancy him?"

Harry shook his head.

"I really don't. I'll never be able to see past the Death Eater thing."

"Never?" asked Lamorak, idly stirring his drink. "Even if he had changed? Even if he regretted how he had behaved?"

"I reckon he *has* changed," said Harry. "Doesn't matter, though. I could never date a Death Eater. It's _____ on his fucking arm, Lam. The Dark Mark. Kind of a deal breaker."

Lamorak's right hand went to his left sleeve, where a Dark Mark would have been.

"Yes, that makes sense," he said.

"Lamorak...you're not actually straight, are you?"

Lamorak's eyes flew up to meet his.

"Pass," he said. He hadn't used a pass in weeks. Normally it didn't come up. They talked about Harry, or abstract ideas, or Quidditch.

"I like you," said Harry. "I like you a lot."

Lamorak sighed.

"Harry..." He stirred his drink some more, although it definitely didn't need it. "Let's talk about something else."

"Yeah, okay," said Harry reluctantly. "What's your next event going to be?"

Astoria came to the next meeting Pansy had with Draco.

"Rule one," said Draco. "Don't be boring about it."

"I haven't been so far, have I?" said Astoria blandly. They were on a rooftop bar. #28. *Visit a rooftop bar in Istanbul.* Islington was not Istanbul, but it was better than nothing, although it was fucking cold. Then again, Draco was always cold, and he was developing a painful sensitivity to magic, so he couldn't use warming charms anymore. He was wearing a thick cashmere coat and several scarves, but the view was worth it.

"How's it going with Potter?" asked Pansy.

"Badly. Apparently he finds the whole Death Eater thing a bit of a turn-off."

"You don't say."

"Have you given up, then?" asked Astoria.

"I gave up around sixth year," said Draco, honestly. "Everything else has just been an encore."

"Draco thinks he's some sort of tragic heroine, like Juliet," said Pansy.

"How dare you, Pansy. You know how highly I value my masculinity."

"Now that he knows you're sick, won't Potter notice that Lamorak has all the same symptoms?" asked Astoria.

Draco shrugged nervously. He *had* been worrying about that. He'd managed so far by clenching his fists under the table whenever his head twinged to stop himself grimacing, but it wasn't sustainable, particularly as the headaches were only getting worse, and he'd started sprouting random nosebleeds.

"I was counting on Harry's natural obliviousness to carry me through," he said.

"Dear *Harry*," said Pansy.

"There are a few charms that could help," said Astoria. "They'll only work in small doses, but if you save them up for when you meet with him, you should be all right. There's a headache one, and a coughsilencer, for when that becomes a problem."

"She's cleverer than us, isn't she?" Draco asked Pansy.

"Speak for yourself," said Pansy, but she cast Astoria a glowing look.

Astoria and Pansy, thought Draco. *There's an idea.* He decided to act immediately.

"#212. *Perv on two girls kissing*," he said. "Indulge me?"

They looked at him with matching, knowing expressions.

"Well, since you're dying," said Pansy.

"Can we refuse a death-bed request?" said Astoria.

"You wouldn't be so callous," said Draco.

Pansy put her drink down and turned to Astoria.

"You look nice today," she said.

"So do you," said Astoria.

They leant in and kissed, long, with tongue. Draco got out his mobile.

He had bought one at Jack's request. They texted a few times a day.

Jack: full moon 2nite!

Draco: Watch out for werewolves.

Jack: lol

Astoria broke away from the kiss.

"You weren't even looking, Draco."

"Hmm? Oh, something came up. You might have to repeat the experiment another time."

Astoria rolled her eyes, and Pansy grinned lecherously.

"Are you really dying?" asked Teddy.

"Fraid so."

Teddy scrunched up his face. Draco lay on the sofa and Teddy knelt on the floor beside him. Although there had definitely been an uptick in boringness since he told Andromeda about the curse (he kept catching her looking at him, misty-eyed), there were some advantages. He had stopped making himself go on excursions with Teddy. It was hard enough to leave his bed nowadays. His whole body felt heavy as lead.

Downstairs, Andromeda was telling his mother. He knew he should have done it himself, but he had always been a coward.

"Will it hurt?" asked Teddy.

"Yes," said Draco.

"Will I die?"

"Very likely."

"I don't want you to die."

"I've taken that into account."

Teddy started to cry, so Draco pulled him onto the sofa, and told him some tales from Arthurian legend.

"See, all those knights died, too: Tristan, and Lamorak, and Gawain."

"I'll miss you," said Teddy.

"I'll miss you too, Ted," said Draco, wondering when his mother would come upstairs. Not that she'd be any better, but at least she wouldn't cry on him. She was considerate, that way.

She appeared about ten minutes later. Draco had almost fallen asleep, despite Teddy yanking at his hair.

"Draco," she said. Her voice sounded fine.

"Mother."

"You ought to have told me earlier."

"I didn't want things to change before they had to."

Draco sat up, still cradling Teddy.

"You'll have Andromeda, at least," he said.

"I suppose there's nothing that can be done?"

Draco shook his head. His mother came to sit beside him and enveloped him in a hug. She didn't say anything boring. She just held him, and continued to hold him, long after Teddy had squirmed free of Draco's lap and escaped downstairs. She held him so long that Draco fell asleep—or fainted—it was hard to tell which it was, sometimes—in her arms. When he came to, they were both lying on the sofa, wrapped around each other, and Harry was standing in the doorway. He cleared his throat.

"Andromeda sent me to say that dinner's ready, if you want to stay."

"I can't," said Draco. "I'm going to an opium den with the Slytherins."

"You aren't still doing that shit, are you?" asked Harry. Draco felt his mother stiffen because she was a *lady* and had probably never heard the word "shit" before.

"Opium is a painkiller, Harry. When better to try it, than when I'm in pain?"

"Oh. Right," said Harry. He looked at Draco's mother. "Will you stay for dinner, Narcissa?"

Draco felt his heart flutter, and not in the sickening way it had started doing when he climbed the stairs to his attic bedroom. No, this was in an entirely different sort of way. Harry treating his mother with respect. It was nice.

"Thank you," said his mother graciously. "I'd love to."

8. #15. Sex with someone I love

The next time Draco arranged to meet up with Pansy and Astoria to discuss The Bucket List, Daphne came too.

"Astoria!" said Draco, accusatorially.

"She is my *sister*, Draco. I would never keep something like this from her."

"Blaise is coming, too," said Daphne. Draco made a betrayed noise of outrage.

"*E tu, Brute?*"

Draco's bedroom door opened and Blaise strolled in, followed by Millicent.

"Millie was listening at the door," said Blaise.

"Was not!"

"So you're dying, eh?" said Blaise. "A bit anti-climactic, after all the shit you survived in school, don't you think?"

He came to lounge on the floor near Astoria. Millicent pushed all of Draco's carefully organised possessions off his desk and hopped up on it to sit cross-legged.

"You guys are the fucking worst." Draco turned to Pansy. "So the whole house just *knows* now?"

"Except for..."

"Greg," said Draco.

There was a long silence.

"You have to tell him," said Astoria.

Draco made a long, drawn out sound.

"Oooooooo... is that what I should do, reeeeaallyyyy?"

There was an immediate and vitriolic outcry.

"Don't be such a baby, Draco!" said Pansy.

"Didn't you learn anything from sleepwalking into the Dark Lord's army?" asked Blaise.

"He deserves to know," said Astoria.

"It's like ripping off a bandaid," said Daphne.

"Coward!" said Millicent.

"You're coming in hot, Millie," said Draco. "And Blaise, I don't see what my youthful indiscretions have to do with anything. But *fine*. Upon further consideration, I have decided to inform Greg of my condition."

Blaise and Pansy bodily lifted him from the bed and pushed him towards the door.

"What, *now*?" asked Draco in horror.

"You haven't exactly got the time to be leisurely about it," said Blaise. Draco glared at him.

"He's going to be boring, Pans," appealed Draco. "You know he will."

"Sometimes life is boring, Draco."

The thing was, Draco didn't really speak to Greg anymore. He often wished Greg had moved in with Theo Nott after the war, instead of with them. Luckily, there were enough of them in the Slytherin house

that Draco could avoid him most of the time.

Greg had never really recovered from Vince's death.

Draco knocked.

"Come in," said Greg, in his deep voice. Millicent gave him a thumbs up. Draco flipped her off and let himself into Greg's room.

Greg was sitting at his desk, scribbling on a piece of paper. He gripped his pencil like a child discovering cutlery.

"Colouring, Greg? That's pretty advanced stuff," said Draco, before he could stop himself. Greg dropped his pencil and cracked his knuckles, looking murderous.

"What the fuck do you want, Malfoy?"

"Oh, ah, I have something to tell you."

Greg stopped frowning.

"I know you're gay," he said.

"I—what? How?"

"Vince figured it out in fourth year."

"Fourth year??? I didn't know until sixth! Why didn't you tell me?"

"Oh yeah? How do you think that would have gone down?" asked Greg nastily.

Draco looked at his feet. #6. *Apologise to Greg for ruining his childhood.*

"I'm sorry," he mumbled.

"What?"

"I'm sorry," said Draco, more loudly. "I'm sorry for treating you like a servant all the way through school. I'm sorry for making the Death Eaters seem cool and exciting. I'm sorry."

"It's not what you did to *me*," said Greg. "It's what you did to Vince."

"Look, I *know*."

"Do you? *Do you?*" Greg rose to his feet, and Draco was reminded of how huge he was, and how angry. "You never fucking talk about him. It's as if he never existed. He joined the Death Eaters because of *you*, he died because of *you*, and you've forgotten him!"

"I haven't forgotten him," said Draco quietly.

"Then why don't you ever fucking TALK about him?"

"Because! Because it's—it's—it's *boring*—"

There were black spots in his vision. Greg growled.

"You don't talk about him because you're a shitty, fucked-up person, Malfoy."

Draco mimed being stabbed in the heart, holding the wound and rolling his eyes to sky dramatically, like a martyred saint.

"Egad! Telling me things I *already fucking know*! How wounding!"

Greg was going to punch him, and it would probably kill him. Draco's heart pounded. He was out of breath with fear, with anger, with guilt and shame and fury.

The door opened and Pansy entered.

"Greg, Draco's dying. He has three months left. Draco, stop being a twat."

She walked out again.

Greg stared at him.

"What?"

"Slow-acting death curse," said Draco. "Watch out for those, by the way. Apparently people aren't keen on us? Who'd have thought?"

Greg seemed to crumble. He sank to his bed and put his head in hands.

"You're dying?"

"Yep. Right, just wanted to let you know, and now you know, so I'll just —"

"No one will be alive who remembers my childhood," said Greg.

Draco breathed out heavily.

"Well," he said. "That was disgustingly insightful."

"Oh, God," said Greg, and he began to cry. "Oh, God!"

Draco tried the doorknob. It was locked, and he had left his wand in his room.

"Pansy," he hissed. "Let me out. The waterworks have started!"

"Don't be a prick," said Pansy, through the crack in the door.

"I miss Vince," sobbed Greg. "I miss him!"

"Look, Greg, come on, pull yourself together."

"You were such a dick to us—"

Draco pressed the heels of his hands into his eyes, trying to pop the pain that was building in them.

"I know, I fucked up, okay? I know that."

"We worshipped you," wept Greg. "We would have followed you anywhere."

Draco thought of Seven, telling him to breathe in, breathe out, but it was hard, because his throat had closed up, and he was suffocating.

"I think I'm going to faint," he said, and then he fainted.

When he came to, he was in his bed, and Pansy was spooning him. He turned to face her.

"Hey," she said. "How are you feeling?"

"Awful. How's Greg?"

"He—" Pansy paused. "We'll look after him. He shouldn't have had a go at you like that, Draco."

"Had to, didn't he? It was now or never."

Pansy stroked his hair. She had always done that, ever since he was little. He closed his eyes and tried to remember what it felt like before he hurt all the time. Had he appreciated it?

"Pans," he said. "Can I be boring, just for one second?"

"Yes," she whispered.

Draco took a few steadying breaths and opened his eyes.

"These past few months have been the happiest of my life," he said.

He pushed a strand of dark hair out of her face; traced her eyebrows.

"You've made all the difference in the world, Pansy Parkinson."

Pansy's eyes were wide. She gulped.

"Time's up," she said. "That was your boring quota for the year."

Draco laughed breathily.

"It was rather Hufflepuff of me, wasn't it?"

“Horribly out of character.”

“Do you despise me for it?”

“Yes,” whispered Pansy, her voice shaking. “I despise you, Draco.”

When he woke up again, Pansy was gone, but Blaise was lounging laconically in his desk chair, reading Draco’s sixth year diary.

“How the fuck did you find that?”

“You’re not as clever as you think you are,” said Blaise, shutting the diary and stretching. “It’s quite boring, anyway. Mostly you whingeing about the Dark Lord killing your mother.”

“It wasn’t boring at the time,” said Draco.

“Pansy told me about your Bucket List.”

“Did she?” asked Draco absently, looking for his wand. He had stopped using it recently because casting made his teeth ache, but he would need it for when he saw Harry tomorrow for coffee.

“Mhm. Specifically, #15. *Sex with someone I love.*”

Draco froze. Blaise stood and pulled his t-shirt over his head.

“Blaise.”

“Draco.”

“What the hell are you doing.”

“Mmmm, taking off my trousers,” said Blaise, doing just that. He stood in front of Draco, wearing only his boxers. His hands lingered over his six pack. “I’ve read your diary, don’t forget. I know I was part of your sexual awakening.”

“You’re straight.”

“Straight-ish.”

“You can’t be serious.”

Blaise took off his boxers, revealing just how serious he was. Draco’s stomach dropped.

“Ah,” he said.

“Trust me, Draco, this is not exactly a hardship for me,” said Blaise.

He straddled Draco and kissed him. “And you love me, don’t you?”

“I do *now*.”

Blaise grinned.

“So,” he said. “Proceed.”

Draco had been mad about Blaise, in sixth year. If this had happened then, he would probably have lost his mind. As it was, he wasn’t going to turn Blaise down—he was a twenty-two-year-old man, after all, and sex was sex. But although Blaise was gorgeous, and he felt amazing, Draco was conscious of two things as he fucked him. One: Pansy was right. He was in love with Harry Potter, and two: he was far, far too ill to finish.

He was never going to sleep with Harry, he realised, as Blaise writhed beneath him, and the realisation was accompanied by a violent pain in his head. Blood dripped onto Blaise’s back.

“Fuck,” said Draco.

“Yeah, harder,” said Blaise.

“No, my nose is bleeding,” said Draco. He pulled out and tilted his head back. Blaise passed him tissues.

"You all right?"

"I'm falling apart."

"We can do something else? I'll blow you, if you like."

Draco laughed, choking a bit on his own blood, and shook his head.

"I've never slept with a guy before," said Blaise.

"You're a trooper," said Draco.

Blaise pulled on his boxers.

"Did it count? Have you ticked #15 off your list?"

Draco moved his head to look at Blaise, who looked surprisingly vulnerable.

"It's not really the kind of love I meant," he said. Blaise sat next to him and leant his forehead against Draco's shoulder.

"Better than nothing, eh?"

Draco rested his cheek on Blaise's head.

"I bet Ron Weasley wouldn't do that for Harry Potter," said Draco. "Oh *God* my head hurts."

Blaise put his hands on either side of Draco's head and squeezed.

"Is that better?"

"Merlin. No."

"There's some pain potion in the bathroom?"

"No, I'm saving that for coffee with Harry tomorrow."

"It's bloody awful seeing you like this, Draco."

Draco curled up in a ball on the bed and moaned, no longer able to talk. He was distantly aware of Blaise leaving the room and returning with Pansy, of them talking together, of Pansy rubbing his back, but he couldn't respond. He could only make low sounds that seemed sometimes to ease his suffering for a fraction of a second. The night stretched long.

9. #188. **Bungee Jump. What will these muggles think of next?**

In the morning, he felt physically better, but mentally worse. He was in love with Harry. All those afternoons chatting to him without the weight of history warping their chemistry had shown Draco a man he thought was frankly wonderful. He liked how earnest Harry was, how readily he trusted Lamorak, how willing he was to take Lamorak's advice. Draco liked being needed and trusted and believed in. He liked being *helpful*. It was such an unfamiliar adjective. Draco liked Harry's goodness, liked how devoted he was to Teddy, liked that Harry understood Draco's sense of humour (when he was Lamorak, at least), liked that he happily, easily entered into banter and jokes, even at his own expense. Draco just *liked* Harry. He liked him, and he loved him.

But Harry would never, ever think of him that way. His Dark Mark felt heavy and disgusting on his arm. He dressed in one of his muggle suits. It no longer really fit him. His body made him sad. He put it out of his mind, and apparated painfully to the cinema.

Seven sat outside. Draco had been worried he wouldn't be there.

"I fell in love with him," said Draco. Seven looked up in surprise.

"Where did you come from?"

"Magic," said Draco glumly. He sat on the ground next to Seven and pulled his knees to his chest. "I only went and fucking fell in love with him, didn't I?"

"Your twatty friend?"

"The very same."

"He came asking for you," said Seven. "I told him about how you gave me seventy pounds. He doesn't seem to think much of you."

"I have a bit of a bad track record," said Draco. He paused. "I almost killed his best friend, once. Among other things."

"Sounds like you should find someone else to fall in love with. You haven't got long, now, have you?"

Draco looked in his wallet and pulled out four twenty-pound notes.

"Before I forget," he said, giving them to Seven.

"Thanks, mate."

"I fell in love with him, and he doesn't love me back. He'll never love me back."

"You're so young," said Seven, in wonder. "I don't think I was ever that young."

The world clicked into humour. It did that sometimes, had done ever since the war ended.

"It could be worse," said Draco cheerfully. "There could be a sort of, magic snaky Nazi wizard forcing me to torture my father's friends."

Seven looked concerned.

"Yeah?" he said. "I guess that would be worse?"

Draco laughed.

"It definitely would be." He laughed and laughed. "Imagine— Seven, just imagine—if I had to murder someone or be murdered myself. That would be so *much* worse than being in love with Harry Potter."

"You're kind of a weird guy, Draco."

Draco closed his eyes.

"How dare you," he said faintly. "I'll have you know I have been lauded for my normality. Lauded, I tell you."

"Ciggie?" offered Seven, clearly at a loss for words.

Draco laughed again.

"And risk cancer? I would *never*."

"Are you okay, mate?"

"Fine, fine," said Draco. "My headache's stopped, it feels marvellous. Just let me lean my head on your shoulder, would you?"

He didn't wait for a response. His head drooped onto Seven's shoulder and Draco fell asleep. It happened so instantly that he almost didn't realise it had happened when he woke up.

"Draco," said Seven, shaking him. "Come on, mate, wake up."

Draco opened one eye blearily.

"Hm?"

"It's been an hour. Just checking you haven't died on me."

"I have to go," said Draco. Seven helped him stand. "I may not see you again." He bowed his head. "This is hard. I didn't expect it all to be so hard."

"Chin up," said Seven. "You're here now."

Draco nodded.

"Yeah," he said. "Yeah. That counts for a lot."

He and Seven shook hands.

"You sure about the money?" asked Seven. Draco nodded.

"Thanks for listening to me complain," he said, and disappeared, Statute of Secrecy be damned.

Harry was rapidly becoming obsessed with Lamorak Toujours.

"Lam said—"

"Harry. We *know* what Lam said. You've told us eight times," said Ron. "Just fuck him and be done with it."

"You know, I'm almost certain he's queer," said Harry, as if he was imparting important new information, rather than voicing his pet theory for the third time that pub night.

"I can't help but feel that your relationship with him can't progress until he tells you a bit more about himself," said Hermione.

"Yeah," said Harry. "I know. I know." He paused. "I think he might be lying about being straight."

Ron groaned into his pint glass.

Luna was no more helpful.

"I'm sorry, Harry. He's very private."

"I just want to know a bit more about him. Was he at Hogwarts?"

"He'll have to tell you himself, Harry." Luna fixed him with her big, round eyes. "But his heart's in the right place. And he's going through

a hard time. Try to remember that.”

“Yeah,” said Harry. “I know he’s been a bit under the weather recently. Everyone’s bloody ill. Did you hear that Draco Malfoy is *dying*?”

“Yes,” said Luna calmly. “He told me.”

“He *told* you? When?”

“Oh, ages ago,” said Luna. “We’re quite good friends, you know.”

“He kept you prisoner in his manor for a year!”

“We moved past that. He wrote me such a nice letter after the war.”

Harry snorted.

“Yeah, I got one of those, too.”

Dear Potter,

It’s time for your apology letter; strap in.

Sorry:

1. For making fun of your parents being dead. Bit of a low blow, that
2. For trying to get you expelled in first year, and every year after that, although you didn’t always notice. A lot of my schemes didn’t work out.

3. For dressing up as a dementor and coming to your match, although that was objectively hilarious

4. For making those badges in fourth year, although again, it was quite funny. Maybe you don’t think so yet. Give it time!

5. I probably shouldn’t have blabbed about you to the press so often in fourth year. See, at the time I thought there was nothing better than having your name in the newspapers, so it seemed relatively harmless, as pranks go. Now that my own name is in newspapers quite a lot (and needless to say, they never pick the photographs I send them, where my hair looks glorious), I feel a pang of guilt about my brief friendship with Rita Skeeter.

6. For being a bit, shall we say, tactless? About things like Hermione Granger’s risk of being killed by the Heir of Slytherin, or Cedric Diggory’s untimely demise. As explanation I can only offer that I have historically believed myself to be funny. Don’t laugh, I know better now.

7. The Inquisitorial Squad. In retrospect, it was a bit wanky, wasn’t it?

8. The Events Of The War, Including Sixth Year In Its Entirety I believe that covers the basics. Happy to grovel further at your discretion. Thanks for saving the world, etc.

Sincerely,

Draco L. Malfoy

“Oh, so you know,” said Luna. “That he’s spent the last few years soul-searching.”

“That’s really not what I got from his letter.”

Luna looked at him with a peculiar expression.

“You mustn’t mistake his humour for callousness,” she said.

“Look, I’m not here to talk about Draco Malfoy. I’m here to ask about Lamorak.”

Luna shook her head again.

"I've told you all I can, Harry."

But Harry was going mad. He thought about Lamorak constantly. He wanted to kiss him and touch him so badly it felt like a compulsion. He'd never felt this way about anyone before.

When he arrived at their coffee shop the next day, it was unexpectedly busy. Lamorak was leaning against a counter, scanning for a table. There wasn't one.

"Why don't we go to my place," said Harry. "It's near."

Lamorak hesitated.

"I'm not trying to... to pick you up, or whatever," Harry hastened to add.

"No, I know, it's just private, isn't it? I don't want you to regret showing me."

Harry raised his eyebrows.

"Chill out, Lam, yeah? Just come over for a cup of tea."

"All right," said Lamorak.

Lamorak was clearly deeply uncomfortable in Grimmauld Place. He kept looking around as if he recognised the place, and then lowering his eyes quickly to his hands.

"How've you been?" asked Harry. "How's your health?"

"Good today, thanks," said Lamorak. "I've been all right. Had a bit of a weird night."

"What happened?"

"Fought with one friend, slept with another."

Harry swallowed a mouthful of tea that was far too hot. It burned the back of his throat.

"Oh, right," he said. Lamorak gave him a knowing look.

"It was a mistake," he said. "I didn't finish."

"Oh, right," said Harry, much happier. "Are you okay? What was the fight about?"

Lamorak shook his head.

"Pass."

"Lam..."

"Just leave it, Harry. Please."

"Yeah, okay," said Harry.

There was an awkward silence.

"You know what's sad about the whole Draco Malfoy thing?" said

Harry, to change the subject. Lamorak didn't answer, so Harry plunged on.

"He's on probation, so he can't travel. He'll never get to go to Petra, or Cairo. He's always wanted to go."

"...how do you know that?"

"Everyone knows that he's on probation."

"No," said Lamorak. "I meant, how do you know about Petra and Cairo?"

"Oh," said Harry. He wasn't sure how, in truth. It was just part of his store of Malfoy-information, like how Malfoy took his tea (although he'd quit caffeine because of his illness) and what food he liked, and

his birthday. Stuff like that. Normal stuff. “Everyone knows that about Malfoy. It’s like, general Draco knowledge.”

Lamorak looked unconvinced. Harry decided to move on.

“I’ve also been thinking about how he keeps asking me on dates. I thought he was doing it, like, to piss off his mum or something, or just to prove a point; I don’t know. But I think it must have been on his bloody Bucket List. I think he might *actually* want to go on a date with me!”

“You talk about him quite a lot, Harry.”

Harry waggled his eyebrows.

“Are you jealous of Draco, Lam?”

Lamorak laughed so hard and so long that it triggered a horrific coughing fit. Harry had to fetch him a glass of water.

“That’s never happened before,” said Lamorak sombrely.

“You okay?”

“Yeah,” said Lamorak. “Listen, maybe you should go on a date with Draco. See if there’s anything there.”

Harry shook his head.

“I’m not interested in him. There’s a difference between pitying someone and liking them.”

Lamorak flashed Harry a quick, pained smile.

“Good point,” he said. He checked his watch. “I should get going.”

“Okay,” said Harry, disappointed. He led Lamorak to his floo. He wasn’t sure what he had said wrong. Did Lamorak want him to date Draco so that Harry would stop hitting on him?

When they got to the fireplace, Harry was suddenly aware that they were alone, and standing closer together than they ever had before.

“I really like you, Lam,” whispered Harry. “I know you don’t want me to, but I do.”

Lamorak’s breath huffed out in a jagged sigh, and he leant his forehead against Harry’s.

“You’re the highlight of my week, Harry.”

Harry smiled. Their noses were touching, and then their lips were touching, because Lamorak was kissing him. Lamorak! Lamorak had kissed him! Harry kissed hungrily back, but it was over long before Harry was ready.

“Shit,” said Lamorak. “I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to take advantage.”

“What are you *talking* about? I’ve been dying to kiss you for months!”

“There’s so much you don’t know about me,” said Lamorak, stepping away from him, his fingers nervously playing with the buttons on his shirt. “It’s not fair to you.”

“Lam,” said Harry, putting his hand on Lamorak’s left forearm. “I know you. I respect you. There’s nothing I could learn about you that would change that.”

10. #141. **Get an eyebrow piercing...?**

“There’s nothing I could learn about you that would change that,” finished Draco.

The gathered Slytherins went wild. Pansy made out with Astoria. Blaise kissed Draco on the mouth. Millicent made loud whooping noises. “I knew it!” cried Daphne.

“So then what did you say?” asked Pansy eagerly.

“I came back here, to tell you guys,” said Draco.

A stony silence fell.

“You *what?*” asked Millicent.

“I panicked, garbled something about a prior commitment, and fled the premises.”

The gathered Slytherins were vocal in their disapproval.

“I know!” said Draco, ducking as Millicent threw one of his own slippers at his head. “I know!”

“When are you going to tell him?” asked Pansy.

“I don’t—I don’t know if I will,” said Draco.

There was a pause. Then Pansy stood.

“Right. Everyone out. Now.”

Although the others protested, Pansy was adamant, going so far as to drag Blaise out by his feet. (Astoria helped.)

When they had all gone, Pansy locked Draco’s bedroom door and put up several privacy spells before turning to him.

“Explain,” she said.

“It’s not going to happen, Pans,” said Draco, sinking to sit on the bed.

“He’s never going to love me as Draco Malfoy. He knows I’ve changed. It doesn’t matter to him. I can tell him, but it won’t save my life—and it will fuck him up.”

Only someone who knew Pansy very well would have known how distressed she was. Her voice was calm and steady.

“How will it fuck him up?”

“Because then... his friend Lamorak will die. And he’s lost too many people, Pans.”

“I’ve lost people too,” said Pansy in a low voice.

“I can make him believe Lamorak is returning to France or something.”

“That’s stupid, and you know it.”

“It’s hard enough as it is!” said Draco, louder, less controlled than he had meant to. He forced himself to be calm. “It’s hard enough, to be dying, and in unrequited love, and in pain. It’s hard enough, without him rejecting me.”

Pansy sat next to him and wrapped her arms around him.

“If there’s even the smallest chance, Draco, you have to tell him. For me. For your mother.”

“I don’t think there is,” wept Draco, and there was no hiding it. His voice wasn’t fine. He wasn’t fine. “I don’t—I don’t want to die, Pansy, I don’t, I’m so scared, I’m so—”

He couldn't speak anymore. He cried and cried in Pansy's arms, and she didn't say a word about how boring he was being.

Later, as they lay in bed together, bitching about Daphne's new haircut, Draco apologised.

"I'm hideously embarrassed," he said.

"By the crying, or by how long it's been since you washed your sheets?"

"I washed them less than a week ago!"

"A likely story."

"I am cleanliness itself."

Pansy stroked his hair out of his face. It was thinner, lankier than it used to be.

"You're not actually embarrassed, are you?"

It was dark, so he could tell the truth.

"I didn't mean to lose control like that."

He felt Pansy nod.

"I'm going to tell Harry if you don't," she said.

Draco was not surprised. He had expected something like this.

"I've still got three months," he said. "I don't have to tell him yet."

Maybe by the time Harry found out, Draco would be too ill to notice any further heartbreak.

"A little under three months. You're running out of time, Draco."

"Give me one more month," said Draco.

"Okay," said Pansy. "And in exchange, you have to tell Daphne that her hair makes her look as if she's wearing a fur helmet."

"That's not quite it," said Draco. "There's something about the way it's been cut that makes her look a little slothlike."

"Yes! Just like a sloth!"

"They're rather sweet, sloths," said Draco, trying to be fair.

"True, but I wouldn't want to fuck one," said Pansy.

"Ah, unlike me. #3. *Fuck a sloth.*"

"Sloths everywhere will rejoice at your passing."

"Crumbs, Pansy, I'm not a monster. Only loving, consensual sloth intercourse."

"On that note, I'm going to bed."

"Stay," said Draco, before he could stop himself. He had found himself waking up in the night and feeling uncomfortably *existential*, lately.

Pansy, because she was perfect, did not say anything. She just lay back down, said "Goodnight, then," and fell asleep.

"So then he just left?" said Hermione.

"Yeah," said Harry. "Said something about not wanting to take advantage, and then he scarpered."

"What a weird guy," said Ron.

"I tried sending him an owl, but it couldn't find him."

"Maybe Lamorak isn't his real name," said Hermione.

"Yeah, maybe," sighed Harry. "I guess I'll see him at Luna's next

event.”

“Try to put it out of your mind, Harry,” said Hermione.

So Harry did. He got back to work on his pet project: getting Draco Malfoy’s probation shortened.

Draco had taken a turn for the worse. He still came to visit Teddy and Andromeda, but he spent his visits lying on the sofa. Harry took to coming at the same time as him so that he could play with Teddy nearby. He knew it cheered Draco up to hear Teddy, even though he could no longer entertain him himself.

“I’m hungry,” announced Teddy abruptly. “I want raisins.” He stood and left the room.

Draco chuckled loosely from the sofa.

“Raisins,” he said. “He’s really living it up.”

Harry went to sit on the floor next to the sofa.

“How are you feeling?”

“Bloody awful,” said Draco. “Feel like cutting my head off, it aches so much.”

“I doubt that would help.”

“It might solve a problem or two.”

“Messy, though.”

“True,” said Draco, with a soft laugh. “Wouldn’t want to inconvenience anyone.”

Harry wasn’t sure why he did it. It certainly wasn’t something he had planned on doing. But he reached up behind his head, took Draco’s hand, and squeezed it.

Draco squeezed back.

“If there’s anything I can do, you’ll let me know, yeah?” said Harry.

Draco started to laugh, then began coughing, a horrible, wheezing cough that sounded as if it hurt.

“Thanks, Potter,” he said in a raspy voice, when he could talk. “Would you get my mother?”

“Sure,” said Harry, and went to fetch her from the kitchen.

Harry took particular care dressing for Luna’s next event, but he needn’t have bothered. Lamorak wasn’t there.

“Something came up,” said Luna.

Harry thought he knew what had come up: his anxiety about kissing Harry. Since he only ever made plans with Lamorak in person, he was at a loose end. He redoubled his efforts to shorten Draco’s probation.

It was no doing. Kingsley was adamant that the rules had to be stuck to. But Harry needled away, until Kingsley agreed that Draco might be allowed to travel out of the country for one day, under auror supervision.

It was better than nothing.

Draco looked exceptionally miserable when Harry found him at Andromeda’s that afternoon. Teddy was with Andromeda in the kitchen, and Draco was alone in the upstairs sitting room, languishing under about eight blankets.

"All right, Draco?"

"Teddy's scared of me," said Draco.

"No, he's not."

"He is. I was hacking up a lung in here and he burst into tears and retreated like the Allied forces at Dunkirk."

"He just doesn't like seeing you suffer."

This didn't seem to cheer Draco at all.

"I shouldn't be so bloody obvious about it, then. Socrates was always charming, even when he was sick."

Harry froze.

"What did you just say?"

Draco looked at him sharply.

"Don't tell me you didn't know that anecdote, Potter," he drawled, aggressively posh all of a sudden. "Everyone educated knows about Socrates and his stoicism."

"No, I... I knew it," said Harry, slowly. Draco tried to sit up, and was seized with another terrible coughing fit. He held a white handkerchief to his mouth, and when he was done it was splattered with scarlet drops of blood. Draco observed them with interest.

"That can't be good," he remarked, showing Harry the handkerchief. He widened his eyes dramatically. "Do you know, I think I might be coming down with something?"

Harry laughed, and Draco's face softened with pleasure.

"I have good news for you," said Harry.

"Oh?"

"I got permission for you to leave the country. Only for one day, and I have to go with you, but still. What do you want to see? Cairo, or Petra? I doubt we can do both."

Draco stared at him blankly.

"You did what?"

"I just had a chat with Kingsley, it wasn't any trouble," lied Harry. It had, in fact, been a great deal of trouble.

"And you're coming with me?"

"It was one of the stipulations."

"Are you asking me on a date, Harry?" asked Draco sarcastically.

Harry took a deep breath.

"Sure."

"What?"

"It's on your bucket list, right? To go on a date with me?"

Draco's eyes hardened.

"Something like that. It's good of you to take pity on me, Potter."

Harry didn't bother denying it.

"So, Petra or Cairo?"

"Petra," said Draco. "Soon, though. I'm not sure how much longer I'll be able to...well, to do anything, really."

"Tomorrow?"

"It's a date," said Draco. "Watch out, Potter, I'm extremely—" he coughed up more blood— "seductive."

"I'll be on guard," said Harry, laughing.

Pansy tried to fix his hair, and Astoria insisted that he take the coughsuppressant potion, even though each time he used it, it became less effective.

"None of your clothes fit you," said Pansy.

Draco shrugged. He was brimming with an uncomfortable sort of anticipation that felt very similar to anxiety.

"Well, you're still handsome," said Astoria. "In a gaunt, morbid way."

"Maybe I should get an eyebrow piercing," said Draco.

"It wouldn't heal," said Pansy, which was true. Draco's immune system was so bad these days that even a paper cut took weeks to close up.

"I've packed you a potions case," said Astoria. "Pepper-Up, more cough-suppressant, head-ache potion, a general pain-killer..."

"I'm just going for the day. I'm not opening up a chemist's."

"Just take it," said Astoria.

"Thanks," said Draco. He frowned. "Not looking forward to the portkey."

"How's the magical sensitivity?"

"Worse than ever. Aren't I good at suffering in silence?"

"If by silence you mean constant, uninterrupted whingeing," said Pansy. The floo flared up ("*Fucking fuck*," said Draco, gritting his teeth) and Harry stepped out.

"Hey," he said. "Oh, hello, Pansy, Astoria."

Pansy and Astoria nodded at him. His smile faltered at their forbidding expressions.

"Right, er, shall we go? I have the portkey here."

Draco stood, shouldered his potions case, and nodded.

"I'm ready," he said.

11. #20. Visit the Treasury at Petra. The Treasury! Where they kept the treasure!

Draco looked better than he had in ages. He walked around the pale pink buildings carved into stone with bright eyes, tugging frequently at Harry's sleeve to give him snippets of information.

"That's Al Khazneh," he said excitedly. "The Treasury! It's bigger than I thought. God. There's nothing like this in Britain, nothing at all."

The sights were impressive, but Harry watched Draco more than anything else. Draco flew through the ancient city with a fierce joy that made Harry more than ever conscious of his own apathy.

But after a few hours, Draco began to flag.

"Do you want to rest for a bit?" asked Harry.

"No," said Draco grouchy. "But I think I'll have to."

They found a lonely little building and perched on a stone ledge.

Harry had brought sandwiches. Draco peeled his apart and ate the ham very, very slowly.

"Haven't got much of an appetite," he explained.

"Do you want my ham?" offered Harry. Draco smiled lecherously.

"Is that what the kids are calling it these days?"

Harry laughed.

"You know, I always assumed you were popular in school because you were rich and people were scared of your father. It never occurred to me that you might actually be funny."

Draco observed him for a long moment.

"I was popular because I was rich and people were scared of my father. No one actually liked me back then, except for poor old Vince and Greg."

"But that's changed," said Harry.

"Well, Greg certainly doesn't like me anymore," said Draco drily.

"You're always off on adventures with your Slytherin friends. They seem to like you a lot."

Draco munched on some ham with a thoughtful look.

"I've had a good run of it," he said. "I was so sure I would die when I was sixteen. Instead I got all these extra years, and now I'm here in Petra."

Harry smiled.

"That's a lovely way to think of it."

"I'm famously lovely," pronounced Draco.

"I died, you know. During the war."

"I beg your pardon?"

Harry explained about the forest, the train station, Dumbledore. Draco seemed particularly interested in the concept of going "on."

"Why did you choose to come back?" he asked.

"Because I had things I wanted to do," said Harry, and Draco fell silent.

Draco had so many things he wanted to do. Harry knew he couldn't possibly have got through more than half his list.

"It's not your fault," said Draco. "That I was cursed."

"I know," said Harry, surprised.

"It wouldn't have made a difference, if you had done more."

"It might have," said Harry. "I could have publicly endorsed you, or something."

"You did. You spoke at my trial."

"Right, but—socially."

"It's been a bit of a journey to get me down to an acceptable level of twatishness," said Draco. "Right after the war I was a bit better, but I was still a prick." He frowned. "I'm sorry about my apology letter. I should have—I was sincere, you know. But it's hard for me to—to say what I mean, sometimes..."

He seemed to have lost his words.

"Luna said not to mistake your humour for callousness," said Harry.

"Did she?" asked Draco, sounding pleased. "Well, I'm afraid callousness *is* one of my flaws. But I meant my apology. That is—I mean the apology." He looked at his hands. "I'm sorry."

"You know I wasn't trying to kill you in sixth year, right?"

Draco went very still.

"I realised that recently," he said.

"I'm sorry," said Harry. "It scarred, didn't it?"

Draco nodded.

"They've started reopening, because my life is a nightmare."

"Oh, God!"

"Yeah," said Draco, grimly. "Turned on yet?"

Harry laughed.

"Nearly. Tell me more about how my mistakes have haunted you for years and caused you untold pain, and I'll probably come."

Draco bit his lip and moaned sexually. An American tourist passing by paused to look at him. Draco winked and the tourist hurried away, scandalised. Harry and Draco caught each other's eyes and laughed.

"Thank you for doing this." Draco gestured around him at the stone building.

"Yeah, of course," said Harry. "I tried to get them to shorten your probation, but."

"Why are you helping me? Is it because of Teddy?"

"No, it's..." Harry stalled. "I don't know; I wanted to."

Draco stared at him, then slowly, purposefully, rolled up his sleeves. The Dark Mark bruised across his forearm. It provoked a visceral reaction in Harry, like seeing maggots seething in a dead body. He flinched and looked away.

Next to him, Draco rolled his sleeves back down, nodding to himself as if he had just won an argument.

"You don't have to..." said Harry. "It's hot, you can keep your sleeves rolled up. I know it's there."

"You shouldn't have to look at it. He killed your parents."

Harry didn't know how to respond to that, so he cast about for something else to say.

"Why did you want to go on a date with me, anyway?"

"So that you'd fall madly in love with me, of course," said Draco lightly. "Is it working?"

He glanced quickly up at Harry, and suddenly Harry *knew*. He had seen that look many times before: in the eyes of a girl he'd been partnered with in auror training, on a healer he'd been to a lot for a few years, on a girl he'd dated for nearly six months when he was twenty. It was the look Ginny had had, when he told her they had to break up so he could hunt horcruxes.

Draco Malfoy was in love with him.

Harry was filled with pity and... disappointment. Draco didn't know him well enough to fall for him. People fell in love with Harry all the time, because he had saved the world, but it had never occurred to him that Draco might fall prey to that. Then again, Draco had always been attracted to the powerful. Perhaps it wasn't surprising that he wanted whatever Harry symbolised.

"It's not working quite yet, no," said Harry gently.

"Oh, well, give it time," said Draco. "If we keep going on dates for a few more years you'll probably go quite mad for me."

"Shall we go have another look around the city?" asked Harry.

Draco nodded, but when he stood he gave a cry of pain and his hands flew to his head.

"Oh," he said, and he sounded, briefly, as if he was going to cry. "Oh, it hurts!"

"There must be some pain potion in here," said Harry, frantically looking through Draco's potion case.

"I took it all," said Draco. "Oh, it hurts!"

He dug his hands into his eyes.

"Draco," said Harry, frightened, "what do you want? What can I do?"

"Oh God, it hurts!" said Draco again.

"Do you want, do you want water? Sit down. Are you okay?"

But Draco just stood there, pushing his wrists into his eyes, saying "It hurts, oh, it hurts!" until Harry thought he'd go mad with helplessness.

"Let me take you home," said Harry, and this seemed to get through to Draco.

"But we haven't seen half of it," he said, his voice taut with pain. "I'll never get another chance, and we haven't seen half of it!"

"I don't know what to do," said Harry wildly.

Draco took several deep, shuddering breaths and slowly lowered his hands from his face.

"Let's go home," he said.

"Are you— are you sure?"

Draco's eyes flickered desperately around him, as if he was trying to fix the beauty of the stone city in his head, and he nodded.

"How's the pain?"

"It comes in waves," said Draco. "It just went away a little, but it'll come back worse."

"Okay. I'll take you home, then." Harry started to get the portkey out of

his pocket, but then he paused. "Would you like me to kiss you?" Draco seemed to war with himself for a few seconds (and Harry could well imagine that his pride was battling with his infatuation) before nodding.

"Okay," said Harry. He put his hands on Draco's waist, tilted his head, and kissed him.

It was a much nicer kiss than he expected. Draco was good at this, he realised. It felt familiar, comfortable. Draco pulled away first.

"It's starting to hurt again," he said, not meeting Harry's eye. "We should go."

It was abundantly clear that someone had miscalculated how much time Draco had left. He spent the next few days in agony, clutching his head and wishing it would end. Finally, Blaise and Millicent gave him opium. The pain lingered, but far away, as if it was at the other end of a long tunnel. It was enough of a reprieve for Pansy and his mother to take him to St Mungo's.

"He should have over two months left," Pansy told the healer.

"That was an estimate," said the healer, casting diagnostic spells.

Draco was cheerful and glassy-eyed, fading in and out of reality. "I would give him a month at most. He's deteriorating fast."

The healer gave him vials of high-strength pain reliever, but warned Pansy and his mother (Draco was not in a state to take warnings very seriously) that it would have diminishing returns.

He took it that afternoon, when the opium wore off.

It was a miracle. Whereas the opium clouded his sense, the magical pain reliever left him feeling... not quite whole, but at least as well as he had two months before. He could think straight again, and with his sanity recovered, he knew what he had to do next.

He didn't have a way to contact Harry as Lamorak, so he went to see Luna. He took the tube, texting Jack when he had signal to pass the time. (Books were beyond him. He had read twenty off his list of fifty. He tried not to think about it.)

Draco: I've been sick

Jack: m8 that sucks

Draco: Yeah

Jack: 1 time I chundered on my dad

Draco: what is chundered

Jack: lol

Luna was happy to see him. He had been too sick to make the last event, and she filled him in as she made him a glass of hot water and lemon. He looked around her comfortable kitchen, wondering if he would ever see it again. He had passed so many pleasant hours there in the past few months, planning parties.

"You seem better," she said.

"I'm worse," said Draco frankly. "I won't be able to do any more events."

"Oh," said Luna. "I'm so sorry."

"I wanted to discuss what will happen... after."

"Yes, of course."

"I want the events to continue. I suggest you hire a party planner. I've made a list of recommended planners here. I've also put down some ideas for events, along with the locations you could hire, guest lists..." He handed her a notebook. It was filled with parties he would never be able to attend.

"Thank you," said Luna. "I've made you something, too."

She gave him a truly hideous scarf made out of old bottle caps. He held it like a snake and tried to smile.

"Thank you," he said politely, and put it around his neck. *It's the thought that counts*, he reminded himself.

"I'll tell everyone how wonderful you've been, Draco," said Luna. "I could start now, if you like."

"No," said Draco. "No, wait until after. Thank you."

"Harry is going to miss you," said Luna softly.

"He'll miss Lamorak," said Draco. He fidgeted with the bottle caps.

"I'm going to tell him now."

"That's very brave of you."

"Well, you know me. Draco Malfoy the Brave."

Luna nodded seriously.

"Yes," she said.

"I thought I could floo in to his house from here."

"Doesn't the floo hurt you?"

"I can stand it right now, I think."

Luna helped him glamour himself into Lamorak. He felt his body thicken and fill out—Lamorak hadn't wasted away from illness as Draco had. The glamour stung.

"Will I see you again?" asked Luna.

"I don't really do goodbyes," said Draco.

Luna gave him a tight hug. It hurt. Pansy had bandaged up the bleeding scars on his chest but they were still sore.

"See you around, Draco," said Luna.

"Stay weird, Luna."

She smiled at him. She was always smiling. It was helpful; it made it easier for him to smile back.

He stepped into her fireplace and steeled himself for the wave of pain.

12. #38. Eat and drink like Henry the fucking 8th

Harry was going over some old case files in his sitting room when Lamorak stepped out of his fireplace.

“Lam!”

“Hello, Harry.”

“What are you doing here? Hello!”

“Is this a good time?”

“Yeah, yeah, of course, come sit— can I get you anything?”

Lamorak licked his lips nervously.

“Ah, oh, water?”

“Yeah, of course,” said Harry. Lamorak followed him to the kitchen.

He hovered anxiously by the kitchen table, fiddling with a bizarre plastic bottle-cap scarf around his neck.

“Luna give that to you?” asked Harry.

“I have to tell you something,” said Lamorak.

“Look, I’m sorry about the kiss,” said Harry. Lamorak shook his head, frowning.

“No, listen,” he said, but then he began to cough. It was by far the worst he had ever sounded. In fact, thought Harry, it sounded like Draco. Lamorak took out a white handkerchief and held it to his mouth as he hacked and wheezed. The handkerchief was stained with dark brown spots.

Luna was friends with them both.

Socrates.

“I’m not sure I’m the right person for you to talk to about this,” when Harry used him to process his feelings about Draco dying.

The way his face had drained of colour when Harry described how Lucius Malfoy had been murdered.

The fact that Draco Malfoy was in love with him, even though they hadn’t spent enough time together for it to make sense.

Draco Malfoy rolling up his sleeve to show his Dark Mark and nodding to himself when Harry balked.

“Shit. I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to take advantage,” when Lamorak kissed him.

Harry stroked Lamorak? Draco? absently on the back as he coughed.

When the fit started to pass, Harry passed him a glass of water, which Lamorak—Draco—gratefully accepted.

“You’re sick,” said Harry.

“Yes.”

“You’re really sick.”

“Yes.”

“You’re dying.”

“Yes.”

Harry paused.

“Draco,” he said. Lamorak’s eyes widened and he nodded.

Harry took out his wand and pointed it at him.

“Finite Incantatem,” he said, and Lamorak melted away. His brown

hair lightened to white, becoming thin and stringy. The pigment faded from his eyes, leaving behind only grey, and dark circles crept under them. His face became sharper, gaunter, prettier, and his body skeletal. Harry knew what Draco Malfoy looked like, but watching him transform from healthy to near-death in a matter of seconds made the change all the more awful.

Draco was staring at Harry's wand, his face tight with fear, and he couldn't seem to breathe.

Harry put his wand hastily away.

"I'm not going to curse you!" he said, but Draco still couldn't draw breath, although he was clearly trying to. Harry pulled a chair out from the table and pushed Draco into it.

"You're okay," he said. "I'm sorry I scared you."

Draco gasped, his eyes panicked. Harry sat next to him and put his hand on Draco's thin, shivering back.

"You're okay," he said again, and then he was quiet, letting Draco struggle on without hurrying him. But he kept stroking his hand up and down, up and down Draco's spine, reminding him that he was there.

Finally, Draco's breathing steadied.

"You're angry," he said.

"No," said Harry. "I'm confused, but I'm not angry. I told you: I trust you, Lam."

"That's not my name."

"Maybe it's your nickname, now."

"Don't be absurd."

"Are you okay?"

"You're not angry?" asked Draco.

"Did you really think I was going to curse you?"

Draco nodded. Harry tightened his grip around his shoulders and tugged him close.

"Idiot," he said. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to freak you out."

"You're not angry?"

"I'm not. So, what, you pretended to be Lamorak so you could...?"

"I wanted to raise money for charity," said Draco. "It was less selfless than that sounds. I wanted people to be nice to my mother after I die."

"That *is* selfless," said Harry.

Draco shook his head but didn't say anything.

All the sympathy Harry had felt for Draco had merged with the empathy he felt for Lamorak, and now he was filled with the deepest urge to protect, to *help*. He leant his head against Draco's.

"So you're not angry?" asked Draco again. Harry put his hands on either side of Draco's face and tilted it towards him.

"No," he said firmly. "This obviously complicates my feelings for you, but I'm not angry."

"Complicates how?" asked Draco, his eyes flicking to Harry's lips.

Harry touched his thumb to Draco's mouth.

"It complicates this. Me fancying you."

"Oh," said Draco.

"You've liked me for a while, haven't you?"

"Don't be boring."

"Why didn't you make a move? As Lamorak?"

Draco broke away, frowning.

"That would be some pretty dodgy consent, Potter. How do you think you'd feel if you found out you'd slept with a Death Eater?"

"Complicated."

"There's an understatement," said Draco.

Realisation was slowly settling on Harry.

"You're really going to die."

"I thought you weren't going to miss me, personally."

Harry shifted uncomfortably.

"I didn't mean it that way."

"How did you mean it?"

"I thought it was objectively sad you were dying, but we weren't, we weren't *close*. Or at least, I didn't think we were." Harry rubbed his cheek against Draco's shoulder. "I shouldn't have been figuring out my feelings about it with you. I didn't know that's what I was doing."

Draco sighed.

"It's fine, Harry." He stood. "Listen, it's all speeding up a bit now, so I don't know if I'll see you again."

"What??"

"I'll probably be bed-bound by the end of the week. I just had to tell you. So. I'll be going now. Oh, and by the way, I'm in love with you. All right, off I go, lots of sights to see, things to do."

"Draco!"

"Is this your floo powder? Do you mind if I use some? I'm using some."

"Draco, hang on."

Draco paused with his hand full of floo powder.

"Yes, Harry? You love me too? Is that it?"

"No," said Harry. "Shut up. I thought you had two months."

"It seems not."

"This is all happening so quickly."

"You always were slow."

"Shut up!"

"You liked me so much more as Lamorak," said Draco sadly.

"I didn't—I—this is fucking confusing!"

Draco sighed.

"I know. Look, let me know if you decide you love me back, yeah?"

"Draco. I can't—you've had months to process all this. I can't just love you all of a sudden."

"Because of the Mark."

"No," said Harry. "Well. A bit. But because you're *dying*. There's not—there's not time."

Draco looked at him with an unreadable expression.

"Right," he said. "You can't love me because I'm dying. I'm dying

because you can't love me."

"Don't be so dramatic," said Harry.

Draco grimaced.

"It would make a difference to me, Harry. If you let yourself."

"I wasn't even sure if I was in love with Lamorak," said Harry helplessly.

Draco stared at him for a long moment, then nodded.

"That's what I expected," he said quietly. "So. Don't worry about it. Goodbye, then, Harry."

"Don't be ridiculous. I'll come visit you."

"You don't have to."

"I want to. I *like* you, Draco."

Draco smiled.

"Isn't that something," he said, before walking out.

Pansy took one look at him and got him a tumbler of whisky.

"Bit extreme, Pans. I'm not about to go over the top at the fucking Somme."

"Just sit down, drink your whisky like a good boy, and tell me what happened."

Draco did as he was told. He had always been rather obedient, in fairness. It was not a trait that had served him well.

"I told him everything," he said.

"Everything?"

"Well, not about the curse."

"Why not?" asked Blaise from outside the door, where he had been listening.

"Christ," said Draco. "When I grow up, I'm going to live in a big house all by myself and tell secrets in safety."

Pansy's eyes filled with sudden tears. She blinked them back. Blaise opened the door, let himself in, and sat on the floor by Pansy's bed.

"I'll have a whisky, Pansy darling," he said. "Incidentally, have you always had a bar cart in your bedroom? Should we be concerned?"

"Why didn't you tell him about the curse?" asked Pansy, as if Blaise hadn't spoken. He crawled to the bar cart and poured himself a whisky.

Draco shrugged.

"Because he's worried about how it would make Harry feel, of course," said Astoria from the door. "Can Millie come in? She's been sitting in the corridor under a disillusionment charm for *hours* waiting for you to come back."

"One day I hope to be a reporter, just like my heroine, Rita Skeeter," said Millie, removing her disillusionment charm and sitting on the bed next to Draco. "Does Potter love you, then?"

"No," said Draco flatly.

"And if you told him about the curse, it would prevent him from falling in love with you naturally," said Pansy.

"Sure," said Draco.

“More to the point,” said Astoria, “Harry would then feel responsible for your death if he was unable to break the curse.”

Draco drank the last of his whisky and held it out to Pansy for a top up.

“Should you be mixing that with your meds?” asked Daphne, sidling in to Pansy’s room and starting to make a round of gin and tonics.

“Fuck it,” said Draco, at the same time as Pansy said “I checked; it’s fine.”

“At least he didn’t cut you open,” said Blaise. “Remember the last time you showed your feelings to Potter?”

“Who said anything about feelings?”

“Draco thinks no one knows he’s in love with Potter,” said Millie. “He thinks it’s a big secret.”

“I’ll haunt you if you aren’t careful, Millie. That’s a legitimate threat.”

“Your pain potion will be wearing off soon,” said Pansy. “You should eat something while you still can. Your mother’s staying the night, I told her to come at eight.”

Draco leant against her.

“What a fine wife you’ll make, Pans.”

Pansy swatted him and helped him to his feet. The others stayed in her bedroom as they went to the kitchen, where Draco sat on the counter and Pansy rustled through the cupboards.

“Eggs?”

Draco shuddered.

“Toast?”

Draco shuddered.

“Draco. You can’t only eat apple sauce.”

“It’s the only thing that doesn’t make me gag.”

“Have a boiled egg.”

“I can’t. Do another nutrition spell.”

Pansy sighed, cast a spell over him (it only burned a little, because of the pain killers) and gave him a bowl of apple sauce.

“He still might fall in love with you,” she said, as she handed him the spoon. Draco put the bowl down and hopped off the counter so that he could catch her by the elbows.

“Pans,” he said, “come on, don’t—that’s not fair.”

“He could! How did he take it? When you told him you were Lamorak?”

“He took it well, but that doesn’t mean—the boy’s been getting bad news since before he had teeth!”

“Don’t you dare give up, Draco Malfoy. Think of your mother. Think of me.”

“I am *tired* of hoping!”

Pansy shut her mouth, shocked. Draco took a few steadying breaths before speaking again, and it worked. He sounded fine.

“You can hope, if you like. But stop asking me to. It—it makes things harder.” He brushed his hair out of his face. “God, dying makes me so *boring*. Am I even funny, anymore?”

“Funny *looking*,” said Pansy weakly.

“2/10, very poor joke, neither original nor well-executed. Two points for good comic timing,” said Draco.

“Eat your apple sauce.”

By the time he’d finished, his head had started up a dull pounding.

The pain-reliever was wearing off. *At least*, he reflected, before it had got too bad, *I won’t be able to think, soon*.

13. #257. Learn to embroider. Why not?

Ron and Hermione stared at him in appalled silence.

"Say something," said Harry.

"But you're in love with Lamorak," said Ron.

"I almost was, yeah," said Harry.

"You haven't liked anyone this much since Ginny," said Hermione.

"Funnily enough, that's not that helpful, given that Lamorak is both secretly Draco Malfoy, and on the verge of death."

"You can't still like him, now that you know he was tricking you all that time," said Ron.

"But that's just it!" said Harry, pacing Ron and Hermione's living room.

"He *wasn't* tricking me. He was in disguise for perfectly legitimate reasons, and I just happened to fall for him! I've gone over it a thousand times. At no point did he try anything with me. I made all the moves."

"And he pretended to be straight," said Hermione thoughtfully. "He went out of his way to keep the relationship platonic. Even though, by the sounds of it, he's wanted to date you for months."

"I just keep thinking about all the times I complained about Draco to Lam," said Harry. "Fucking hell. And he just sat there and took it."

"He should have told you earlier," said Ron stoutly.

"I'm sure he liked having a friendship with Harry that wasn't bogged down in their past," said Hermione. "He has changed, you know, Harry. He wrote me a letter after the war."

"Was it ridiculous?" asked Ron. "Because mine was ridiculous."

Dear Weaselbee,

I've written this in nice, permanent ink because I know how much you are going to treasure it. You see, you were right about everything, and I was wrong. I'll write the next bit in big, in case you'd like to frame it.

I'm sorry - Signed, Draco L.

Malfoy

For what, you ask? To which I answer: everything! All those Bad Things. Truly sorry about them. Deepest regrets, etc. Accidentally poisoning you comes to mind, as do various mother-based insults throughout the years. And Weasley Is Our King, although I do still believe that to have been one of my finest pieces of writing. Isn't it tragic when bad men make good art?

Do let me know if you want a recommendation for a framer's. I know a marvellous chap off the King's Road who does it for practically nothing. I wrote this whole letter in my best calligraphy especially for you, Weasel, I hope you appreciate it.

I truly am sorry.

Yours sincerely,

Draco L. Malfoy

Harry handed Ron back the letter with a smile.

"What's weird is that... I sort of get it, now?" he said. "Like, it may be hard to believe, but now I realise that he wasn't *trying* to be a dick

with these letters. He was just too awkward to apologise without making jokes.”

“Surely that was obvious?” frowned Hermione. “It was obvious to me he had changed, because he was trying to include me in his humour, rather than using it as a weapon against me.”

“What was yours like?”

Dear Hermione Granger,

Listen. Look. Fine. I shouldn't have mocked your teeth. Which look great now, by the way, you're really quite good looking these days. Honestly! Much better, in my opinion, to be an ugly child who blossoms into adulthood, than the other way round. Of course, I'm fortunate to have been a beautiful child who has grown into a handsome young man. I'm actually not sure where I was going with this. Sorry for calling you a Mudblood. God, that was abrupt. Did you know this is the fourth draft I've written of this letter? They all keep turning out dreadfully so I've determined to send this one regardless of how poorly structured and rambling it turns out to be. Has your arm recovered where my Aunt Bella cut you up? That was a horrid incident. If you ever return to Malfoy Manor, I assure you that you will only be served tea, cake and gratitude. No more torture for you! Dear God I am uncomfortable writing to you. Ahh. Look. I've been a horrible little shit to you almost my whole life and there's nothing I can do to make up for that but you should know I feel utterly ashamed of myself and think about you at night and wince into my pillow and just want to die. This letter is incredibly self-indulgent, actually, isn't it? The third one was better but I burnt it in the optimistic belief that I could improve on it. I guess what I'm getting at is that I don't expect to be forgiven and you're quite within your rights to hate me forever but I thought you should know that I'm sorry. And that I know that you're cleverer than me. (That's not really related to the apology but I thought you'd appreciate it.)

Right, I think I've embarrassed both of us sufficiently. I wish you every happiness.

Sincerely,

Draco L. Malfoy

“That was way more genuine and heartfelt than mine!” said Harry.

“Luna says Draco's more comfortable around women.”

“I mean, it's still a shockingly bad apology letter,” said Ron. “Couldn't he have just followed a template? ‘Sorry I was a bigoted blood supremacist bully, sincerely, Draco Malfoy?’”

“I think he really thought about each person he was apologising to, and what he had done to them,” said Hermione. “He just... misjudged the tone.”

“He was coughing up blood,” said Harry. “He said he didn't have long.” He frowned. “He never got to go to Cairo. I rescued him from that fucking fire, I spoke for him at his trial, I thought he was safe, you know?”

“You've known Draco was dying for a while now, Harry,” said

Hermione.

"Yes, but I didn't know he was one of my best friends!"

Hermione and Ron exchanged looks.

"What are you going to do?" asked Ron.

"He's in love with me," said Harry. "I don't even know what to do with that."

"Do you love him back?"

"How can I? This is so confusing—and bloody hopeless..." Harry sank into an armchair and put his head in his hands. "I don't want to fall in love with him. It's too fucking sad as it is."

Ron and Hermione offered comfort, attempted solutions, but it was no use. The fact was, the only person Harry wanted to talk to was Lamorak.

Draco was lying in a little single bed in a tiny attic bedroom with a slanted roof. He looked very small, wearing old fashioned pyjamas and propped up on about ten fluffy white pillows. He was, bizarrely, holding an embroidery hoop.

"Is this where you live?" asked Harry. "It's a bit shit. Aren't you supposed to be some sort of millionaire playboy?"

"It has character," said Draco defensively. "How did you get in?"

"Your mother let me in. She's gone back to the Manor to have a rest."

Harry looked around for a chair, found that it was covered in clothes, and sat down at the end of Draco's bed instead. Draco moved his legs out of the way with a suspicious look.

"Shouldn't you be at work?"

"Nahhh," said Harry. "I quit."

Draco put down his embroidery hoop.

"What?"

"You were right. It's got terrible work-life balance. Anyway, this way I get to keep you company."

Draco looked truly alarmed.

"Keep me company?"

"If you don't mind? Only I realised the only person I want to talk to about you, is you."

Draco stared for a few second before answering.

"Who am I to deny the Saviour of the Wizarding World what he wants," he said.

Harry tilted his head.

"If you said that as Lamorak, I'd think it was quite funny, but when you say it as Draco, it feels as if you're lashing out."

"I'm not lashing out," said Draco.

Harry grinned.

"Okay," he said. "Cool. Good." He got out his rucksack. "You don't eat anything, so I brought you flavoured ice cubes."

"That sounds dreadful," said Draco. "Let me try one."

Harry handed him the tray of frozen fruit juice he had made the night before. Draco ate one tentatively, like a small animal in the wild.

"It's all right," he said.

“You know, this is actually great,” said Harry. “Because as Lamorak, our conversations were sort of one-sided. Now we can talk about *you*.”

Draco looked appalled.

“I’m a very private person!”

“Oh, come on, I poured my heart out to you! You can tell me a few measly secrets.”

“I think you know quite enough of my secrets already,” said Draco pointedly.

“You’re in love with me, I fancy you, we’re quits.”

“I thought you said it was complicated.”

“It is,” said Harry simply. Draco looked down, his fingers tightly gripping the embroidery hoop.

“How are you feeling today?” asked Harry.

“All right,” said Draco. “I’m on a low dose of morphine.”

“Muggle medicine?”

“Don’t start,” said Draco.

“I wasn’t! I just meant, surely magic medicine is better?”

“It has diminishing returns, and morphine is addictive, so I’ve been alternating. I go on the St Mungo’s pain reliever in the evenings, when the Slytherins get home from work.”

“So you’re bed-bound, now?”

Draco shifted on his pillows.

“I—I’m trying not to think of it as permanent. Maybe I’ll have another good day, and I can go outside again.”

“But in the mean time, you’re embroidering.”

“I’m making a delightful handkerchief for Pansy to weep into at my funeral.”

“Are you actually?”

Draco handed him the embroidery hoop. It was full of embroidered words and symbols: “I’m watching you”, a little ghost, “*Forget me at your peril*”, “*You’re going to get wrinkles and I never will*”, eight snakes with tiny embroidered names beneath them (*Draco, Pansy, Blaise, Millie, Daphne, Astoria, Greg, Vince*).

“This is by far the creepiest gift I’ve ever seen,” said Harry. “And I’ve been given a lot of creepy shit by fans.”

Draco looked pleased.

“Thank you,” he said. “What kind of creepy shit?”

“Oh, God, where to begin,” said Harry. Draco took the embroidery hoop off him and continued his work. “I guess the most horrific one was the person who sent me their ear in the post.”

“Their ear? Their actual ear?”

“Yep. It was under a stasis charm. It was in my first week starting at the aurors, and I was already overwhelmed, right, because everyone was being fucking weird about being in a class with me...”

Once he had told the ear story, he told Draco about the girl who baked him cookies.

“Normal, right? Cookies. Well, she watched me eat one, with this

crazed look in her eye, and then she said ‘I salted it with my tears,’ and told me that she’d been in love with me since I was a baby.”

Draco’s laugh turned into a blood-splattering cough. Harry summoned him a glass of water.

“Are you all right?”

“No wonder you don’t love me back,” said Draco. “You’re used to such high romance. If I gave you a cracker with my come on it, would you reconsider?”

“Oh, absolutely,” said Harry. “That would just about push me over the edge, I reckon.”

Draco smiled and leant back into his pillows.

“You’re not angry,” he said. Harry squeezed Draco’s ankle through the thick duvet.

“No. I trust you, Lam.”

“Are you going to keep calling me that?”

“Not if you want me to stop.”

“I don’t mind it,” said Draco.

“It reminds me of how I would feel if I met you for the first time now.”

“*Dear God, that man is dying?*”

“Dear God, I haven’t met someone this funny and easy to talk to in years.”

“Laying it on a bit thick, Potter,” said Draco.

“Oh, shut up and eat another ice cube.”

“Have you got any apple-flavoured ones?”

“Yep.”

Draco ate another ice cube.

“Go on,” he said. “Tell me more about your creepy fans.”

“I’m monologuing.”

“It hurts to talk,” said Draco. “This is the perfect opportunity for your egotism to have free reign.”

“You’re joking, aren’t you? If you said that as Lam I would think you were joking.”

“Assume 90% of what I say is a joke, Potter.”

“Was that true in school, too?”

“All lot of my cruelty was me trying to make people laugh, yes.”

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to make you talk. Okay. So. Creepy gift number three: a love poem written in blood.”

“Was it good poetry, at least?”

“Stop talking,” said Harry. “This is my time to shine. Of course it wasn’t good poetry.”

Draco’s hands grew still as Harry talked. He winced from time to time.

“Are you okay?”

Draco would nod.

“Go on,” he would say. “It’s distracting.”

After an hour, Harry’s voice was hoarse, so Draco chose a book, and Harry cast a reading charm on it. Draco drifted in and out of sleep, but he always seemed reassured to find Harry still there, at the foot of his

bed, so Harry stayed.

14. #33. Experience Stendhal Syndrome at the Uffizi Gallery

"Draco! Draco, wake up!"

Harry and Draco both sat up, blinking. Harry had fallen asleep at the foot of Draco's bed, and Pansy Parkinson was back from work, shouting as she came up the stairs.

"Disgusting Sweaty Tim asked me out on a date!" she continued, barrelling into Draco's bedroom. "Oh," she said. "Potter."

"I'll go," said Harry.

"Stay," said Draco. "If you want," he added.

"Okay," said Harry. Draco hid his embroidery under the bed as Pansy kicked off her shoes and climbed into bed with him. He put his arm around her shoulders instantly, without any negotiation. It was clear that they often sat like this, cuddled up together, clicking into place like jigsaw pieces.

"Did you eat?" asked Pansy.

"Harry cast a nutritional spell on me earlier."

Pansy looked at Harry.

"I know he's persuasive, Potter, but he does actually have to eat food once in a while."

"It makes me nauseous," said Draco plaintively. "I hate feeling nauseous."

"You're only nauseous because you're hungry. Dipsy?"

A house elf appeared in the room.

"Miss Pansy?"

"Hallo Dipsy. Would you make Draco some mashed potatoes?"

Draco groaned.

"Of course, Miss," said Dipsy, with a wary look at Draco, and disappeared.

"You're a tyrant," said Draco. "You won't even let a man die in peace and dignity."

"God, you're whiny. Has he been whining all day, Potter, or has he been saving it for me?"

"Er," said Harry.

"Did Disgusting Sweaty Tim really ask you out?" asked Draco.

"Doesn't he understand you're out of his league?"

Blaise strolled into the room looking relaxed. He froze when he saw Harry.

"Ah, shall I just..."

"I'll go," said Harry, looking at Draco questioningly.

"Stay," said Draco, looking from Harry to Blaise. Blaise shrugged his assent and climbed into bed on Draco's other side. Harry was suddenly aware that Blaise was very handsome, and the single bed very narrow, and that Draco looked just as comfortable being held by Blaise as he did holding Pansy.

He remembered Lamorak saying he'd slept with one of his friends, and had a sneaking suspicion he knew which one.

"Isn't this cosy?" asked Blaise. "Have you been here all day, Potter? I hope Draco has been a good host. He keeps pretending he's ill to get out of things—did he offer you a drink?"

"Not everyone's an alcoholic, Blaise," said Pansy.

"I'm not the one who keeps a bar cart in her bedroom. Mops!"

Another house elf appeared. Despite the fact he was wearing a pillow case, he looked very well turned out.

"Master Blaise?"

"You dear old thing; aren't you a sight for sore eyes. I'm so comfortable, would you fetch us a round of gin and tonics?" His nose dipped close to Draco's face. Draco turned to look at him with easy intimacy. "You'll have one, won't you, darling?"

Draco shook his head.

"Doesn't mix well with morphine," he said.

"Some water and lemon for Draco, Mops, and better make it five gin and tonics; the girls are bound to be here soon."

"Is Pansy not a girl?" asked Astoria, walking in and sitting next to Harry on the bed as if she did it every day. "Hello Harry, Mops. Blaise, you're disgustingly lazy, we all know Boozy Parkinson has opened up a bar not ten metres away in her bedroom."

"The bar cart was on sale. It's an *antique*."

"Harry Potter!" cried Millicent, who had just walked in arm-in-arm with Daphne Greengrass. Harry widened his eyes at Draco, hoping for moral support, but Draco only smirked. "Oh! Stay right there!" She ran away.

"I never get to sit on the bed," complained Daphne, unceremoniously pushing Draco's clothes off his chair and sitting. "Hello, Harry, I'm Daphne, do you remember me?"

"A bit," said Harry, weakly. "Are all the bedrooms this, er... small?"

"Oh, no, Draco's is by far the worst," said Daphne. "It's damp, too, isn't it? And it gets such bad light."

Harry looked at Draco, but Draco's gaze slid away from him.

"Pulled the short straw?" asked Harry.

"He got the shit bedroom because he was a shit person," said Blaise cheerfully.

"Yes, Blaise, thank you," said Draco.

"It was sort of penance," said Daphne.

"It wasn't *penance*," said Pansy. "It was—proof of good faith."

"I moved in right after the war," said Draco, as if that explained everything.

There was a flash and a cackle from the doorway. Millicent had just taken a picture of them on a large camera that reminded Harry painfully of Colin Creevey. Amid the general outcry that rose up from the Slytherins, Harry heard Draco's voice; low, concerned.

"You all right, Potter?"

Harry smiled at him.

"Fine," he said. "Thanks."

"Look," Millicent was arguing. "When Draco's kicked the bucket, a

photo of him in bed with Potter will go a long way to help out Narcissa!”

“Oh, please,” said Astoria. “As if you’re thinking of *Narcissa*. You just want to see your name in print.”

“I’ll pose for a better photo with Draco if it’ll help Narcissa,” said Harry. The room fell silent. Millicent’s eyes were bright with something Harry didn’t trust, and a slow, delighted grin stretched across her face.

“What a good idea, Potter. A photo shoot. Would you do it topless?” Dipsy appeared with a plate of mashed potatoes before Harry could answer.

“Dipsy!” exclaimed Blaise. “You’re looking marvellous today.”

“Thank you, sir. Will Master Draco be wanting his potatoes now?”

“I’d like them five months ago, when I might actually have been able to enjoy them,” said Draco, but he took the plate from Dipsy when he saw her confused expression. “Thank you, Dipsy.”

“Can you do a Sunday roast, Dipsy my love?” asked Blaise. “I know it’s not Sunday, but I could murder a roast. For all of us. Thank you, you are an angel.”

Dipsy expressed her enthusiasm loudly and fervently before disappearing with a crack.

“So you guys don’t really cook, huh,” said Harry.

“Draco learnt how to make beef bourguignon,” said Astoria. “Not very well.”

“I should have started simpler,” murmured Draco. “Eggs. I’d like to have learnt how to soft-boil an egg.”

“You just boil the water...?” said Harry.

“You’re overestimating Draco’s cooking skills, Harry,” said Daphne.

“Look, does no one want to hear about how Disgusting Sweaty Tim asked me out?”

“Disgusting Sweaty Tim? Did he really?”

“You could do worse,” said Blaise.

“Than *Disgusting Sweaty Tim*?”

“Pansy,” said Blaise, with an evil grin. “You dated *Draco*.”

“True, but I never let him fuck me, Blaise,” said Pansy sweetly.

“Ding ding ding!” said Millicent. “That’s one win for Parkinson, and Zabini is out for the count!”

“Is Greg coming?” asked Draco, apparently unperturbed by all this.

“He’s at Theo’s,” said Blaise. His voice was gentle.

“Right, right,” said Draco. “I forgot.”

There was a pause. Blaise rested his cheek on the top of Draco’s head. He had a strange, pained look in his eye.

“He’s been... busy...” said Astoria.

“Come on, Pans, this Tim,” said Draco, falsely cheerful. “He’s disgusting. He’s sweaty. What are you going to wear on your first date?”

“Ha, ha. Obviously, I couldn’t reject him outright because he is my boss—”

“That’s really inappropriate!” said Harry.

“Mhmm, but I had a hard enough time getting this job, and he knows it,” said Pansy. “So. I come into work this morning, looking gorgeous as usual. Obviously I *understand* how he came to be so infatuated. However...”

Harry drifted in and out of the story, which took a long time to tell, because the Slytherins kept interrupting. Draco had closed his eyes, a small smile on his face. Occasionally he frowned, clearly in pain. Each time this happened, Blaise or Pansy would kiss his head or squeeze his shoulders.

Harry was surprised by how comfortable it all felt, how little seemed to be required of him. He drank his gin and tonic and watched Draco, wandering how many nights the Slytherins had spent like this, cramped in Draco’s terrible attic bedroom.

At eight p.m., Narcissa arrived. Everyone got out of the bed except for Draco, so that Narcissa could reach to embrace him.

She pulled quickly away.

“You haven’t changed your bandages,” she said.

“It’s not a problem,” said Draco. Pansy looked stricken.

“Potter was here; I didn’t want—”

“It’s *fine*,” said Draco.

Harry had a hollow feeling in his chest.

“I shouldn’t have stayed,” he said.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” snapped Pansy. “This is the happiest Draco’s looked in weeks.”

It was distressing that Draco was too weak to be outraged by this statement.

“Never mind,” said Narcissa. “I’ll help you with them, Draco.”

Blaise set up a cot for Narcissa to sleep in next to Draco’s bed with routine efficiency, and the Slytherins trickled out of the room.

“Er, goodnight,” said Harry.

“Have we scared you off, Potter?” asked Draco. “Will you be fleeing to the warm embrace of the Gryffindors?”

“See you tomorrow, Malfoy,” said Harry, with a grin.

Harry arrived at the same time the next day. Draco wasn’t surprised, but he was pleased. For the moment, anyway, he seemed to have Harry’s attention.

Harry sat on the end of his bed again and chattered away about his life, the way he used to when Draco had been Lamorak. Draco could not help but admire the easy way Harry talked about himself. It filled silences so well, and was so comfortable. He knew it wasn’t always; knew that Harry was surly and taciturn in interviews, but that made Draco feel special.

Around midmorning, Draco staggered to the bathroom. There was an IV drip there. The muggle healers had told him to leave it in, but he couldn’t stand it, so he unhooked the tube from his arm most of the time, and reconnected it only when the pain became unsustainable. There was a piece of plastic in the crook of his left elbow that made it

simple enough, and he understood the dosage. It wasn't all that different from potions.

He'd have liked to have been a healer.

There was another reason to keep the IV in the bathroom, even if it became harder for him to get out of bed: with it in, his left arm would have been uncovered, and he didn't particularly want to see Harry flinch away from him again.

When Pansy came in at five, she and Draco went to the bathroom and she changed the dressing on his chest.

"It's getting worse," she said.

"Everything's getting worse. Except for muggle technology, that's getting better. They can do some clever things on that internet of theirs."

Pansy lowered her voice.

"He stayed all day again?"

"He feels guilty," said Draco. "Don't read into this."

Pansy pursed her lips and stuck down a stray bit of gauze with tape.

When they went back to the bedroom, Harry looked as if he was steeling himself to say something.

"You don't have to leave the room to do that," he said. "I mean, maybe you're just shy or whatever. About your body. But, er, you did nude modelling? So it seems like you're not?"

"My body has changed a lot since then," said Draco.

"Okay, yeah," said Harry. "I just mean... I know it's awkward... because... I'm really sorry...I just..."

Pansy caught Draco's eye and they both burst out laughing.

"What?" asked Harry hotly.

"It's just," said Draco, wiping at his eyes, "oh, God, you're so..."

"*GUILTY*," said Pansy.

"He's the real bastard around here," said Draco. "I mean, I know I tortured people and willingly joined the Dark Lord, but Harry Potter; *what a screw up.*"

"He's so *unused* to it," said Pansy, holding her side. "No, come on, Potter, don't be offended. It's cute. Really!"

"I'm just trying to say you can dress his fucking scars in front of me next time!"

Draco and Pansy laughed harder. But the next day, Harry was still there when Pansy came in.

"Are we really doing this?" she asked.

"Oh, yeah," said Draco. "Let's give Harry something for his wank bank."

"Yeah, I get off on guilt," said Harry, but he looked nervous. Pansy helped Draco unbutton his shirt. The gauze underneath was stained with blood.

"You're hurting me!" complained Draco as she peeled it off, just as he always did.

"Stop whining," said Pansy. "Aren't you supposed to say *'tis barely a scratch*?"

"It's not a fucking scratch!" said Draco.

"Fuck," said Harry.

His eyes were wide with horror. Draco supposed they didn't look *great*, his scars. It was as if he had been slashed with a knife a few days ago. The muggle doctors had tried to give him stitches. It was only by confounding them that his mother had persuaded them to let him go with just the morphine.

"Fuck," said Harry again. Pansy rolled her eyes.

"Spare me," she said. "You weren't fussed when you did it to him, so don't start now."

"I was fussed! I was— it was horrible!"

"*Tis barely a scratch*," said Draco softly.

Harry was literally biting his knuckles.

"Fucking *fuck*, Draco!"

"I know I'm very attractive, but now's hardly the time, Harry."

Pansy snorted and carefully pressed the dressing onto his skin.

"Shouldn't you have a... a nurse or something?" asked Harry.

"St Mungo's offered, but I didn't want one," said Draco, buttoning his shirt.

"Does it hurt?"

"Everything hurts. I'm incredibly brave. I thought we had covered this already. Make sure that's in my eulogy, Pansy: '*However much he suffered, he never complained. He was almost saintly in his forbearance.*' Do they still make saints, by the way?"

"You have to be Roman Catholic," said Pansy.

"#365. *Convert to Roman Catholicism*," said Draco.

"That's not really on your list, is it?" asked Harry.

"See for yourself."

Draco tossed him the notebook with his Bucket List. Harry bent over it, reading it carefully.

"But... Draco...these are all travel," said Harry.

"No, they're not!"

"At least half of them. '*Visit the pyramids. Swim in the Dead Sea. Go snorkelling in The Great Barrier Reef.*'"

"I did go snorkelling, actually," said Draco. "Only it was in Wales."

Pansy shivered.

"God, that was cold."

"But..." said Harry, sounding increasingly upset. "I thought it was only Cairo and Petra."

"The world is big, Harry," said Draco quietly.

"Where even *is* the Uffizi Gallery?"

"Florence," said Draco, tapping his fingers against his leg. "I wanted to see Botticelli's *Primavera*."

"Sorry," said Harry. "I didn't mean to... Shit, sorry, that was really inconsiderate of me to bring it up. All of it. Sorry. Shit."

"Draco," asked Pansy, peering over Harry's shoulder to look at the list, "*how come 'use one of those Japanese toilets that wash your bum for you' is at 26, but 'tell Pansy you love her' is at 82?*"

Draco felt his face grow hot.

"The numbers don't necessarily—anyway, I crossed #82 off, didn't I?"

"You've never told me you love me!" said Pansy. She paused to consider him. "This is quite embarrassing for you, isn't it? I mean, you must *really love me*."

"Shut up. I do not."

"Do I even like you? Hmm. Let me think."

"I crossed it off because it was stupid," said Draco. "Words are cheap. It's much better to show that sort of thing. Merlin, can we change the subject?"

Harry looked at him thoughtfully, and turned the next page in the notebook.

15. #164. Watch the sunset at Grand Canyon

After a few days had passed, no one even questioned Harry's presence in Draco's bedroom. He stayed for a few hours every morning, sometimes overlapping with Narcissa. He would leave when Draco fell asleep around lunchtime, go work on his various secret Draco Malfoy projects, and return in the afternoon. With Harry around, Draco felt comfortable asking Teddy to visit, because Harry could distract Teddy from the grim reality of Draco's health.

Andromeda and Teddy started coming over a few times a week.

Narcissa and Andromeda would sit on the edge of Draco's bed while Harry played knights with Teddy. Draco didn't say much, but he would watch Harry and Teddy with a contented look on his face, and he was always better-tempered after they left.

"Look, there's an article about Luna's event!" said Harry.

"Show," rasped Draco. His throat was hurting that day. Harry paused, then moved on the bed to sit next to Draco, the way Pansy and Blaise always did.

Draco's body was hot all up and down, even though he clutched the duvet to his chest. He snuggled close to Harry to read *The Prophet* over his shoulder.

"It's good, isn't it?" asked Harry, as Draco read. He had learnt to ask a lot of yes or no questions when Draco's throat hurt. Draco nodded.

"Luna looks nice."

"Hair," said Draco.

Harry rolled his eyes.

"Yes, yes, she's fit because she has hair like yours," he said. Draco smirked, then coughed into his elbow. Harry rubbed his back. When Draco was done, he curled into Harry's arm.

"Is this okay?" asked Harry. Draco nodded.

"I didn't go to that event," said Harry. "I meant to, but then I ended up hanging out with your bloody Slytherins for about four hours after you went to bed. Ron and Hermione must think I'm abandoning them forever."

"Three...weeks," said Draco.

Harry's stomach turned over with dread.

"I don't know," he said lightly. "I kind of like your friends. Reckon they'll let me hang out if you're not around?"

Draco shook his head with a smile.

The door opened.

"Draco—oh," said Greg Goyle.

"Greg," said Draco, struggling to sit up. "Stay."

"I, er."

"I'm just going to get a glass of water," said Harry. For once, Draco didn't try to keep him. He didn't seem to even notice Harry, in fact. His eyes were fixed on Goyle. He looked more vulnerable than Harry had ever seen him, and Goyle seemed to be experiencing some equally complicated emotion, looking at Draco. He approached the bed as

Harry went to the door, and knelt before it.

"I came to tell you that I forgive you," Harry heard him say, as he went to the door.

Feeling quite certain that Draco would not want him to overhear this, Harry hastened down to the kitchen.

Harry did all the washing up by hand to pass the time.

Twenty minutes had gone by when the kitchen door opened and Goyle came in.

"Potter," he said. His eyes were red and raw.

"Heya, Goyle," said Harry, with a nerdy little wave that made him hate himself.

Goyle seemed so baffled by the wave that it looked as if it had made him forget what he meant to say. Although, thought Harry, maybe that was just Goyle's face.

"You spoke at my trial," said Goyle.

"Er, yes."

"Thank you."

"Any time," said Harry, then cringed, because that made it sound as if Harry would happily bail Goyle out of the next hate group he joined.

Goyle nodded and made to leave. "Goyle! Wait," said Harry.

Goyle paused.

"Can I have a look at your Mark?"

"Why?"

"I, I want to get...used to it," said Harry.

"Weird," said Goyle, but he lifted his sleeve and held out his arm.

Harry took a deep breath and looked at it.

Instantly he felt as if he was sixteen years old again, realising Dumbledore was really dead, and that he would have to continue the search for horcruxes alone, so alone...

"Potter?" asked Goyle. "You okay?"

"Yeah, yeah," said Harry. "Can I touch it?"

"Is this a gay thing?" asked Goyle suspiciously.

"Why, have a problem with gay people?" asked Harry, his hackles rising.

Goyle shrugged.

"No, I guess not." He paused. "Draco's gay."

"Just let me touch your Mark," said Harry irritably. Goyle held his arm closer, looking strained. Harry suspected that was his thinking face.

"I have problems with Draco, but not because he's gay," said Goyle.

Harry traced the snake on Goyle's arm. He tried to break the tattoo down into small parts. He felt tense. His heart was beating too fast, and he kept slipping away into memories. But he thought of how Draco had nodded to himself as he rolled down his sleeves in Petra, how Draco disappeared to the bathroom when he needed more morphine, and he knew he had to do this.

"First Vince, and now him," said Goyle, his voice wobbling. "It was always the three of us, growing up."

"Goyle..."

"I'm so angry with him still," said Goyle, starting to cry. Harry gingerly patted his Dark Mark. "But I don't want him to die!"

He lurched forward into Harry's arms and sobbed his heart out. Harry stayed, wondering what Ron would say if he could see him, and murmured "there, there" occasionally, until Goyle finally stopped weeping.

"Sorry," said Goyle.

"S'okay," said Harry weakly. "Er, is it all right if I have a look at your Dark Mark a few more times?"

"I'm straight," said Goyle.

"Yep, that's really fine, Goyle."

"I don't mind if it turns you on, though."

"It's not a sex thing, Goyle."

"If I was gay I would think about it," said Goyle apologetically. "You're not bad-looking."

"You know, I reckon I can probably find another ex-Death Eater to help," said Harry.

"No, no, I'll do it," said Goyle. "You spoke for me and Draco. You can use my arm for sex stuff anytime."

"It's not—you know what? Great. Thanks, Goyle."

In his tiny attic bedroom, Draco looked pale but happy.

"I can't talk," he wrote. *"Tell me about quidditch."*

Which Harry gladly did. With a strange lack of surprise, he realised he was glad to do almost anything for Draco, these days.

Harry seemed jittery and excited.

"I can't go downstairs," said Draco. "I told you."

"It's worth it. I promise," said Harry.

Draco sighed. He was reluctant to show Harry just how weak he was, but it didn't seem as if he'd have a choice.

He slowly, slowly, slowly got out of bed.

"Can I carry you?" asked Harry.

"No," said Draco, but he let Harry put an arm around his waist. By the time they got to the stairs, Harry was practically dragging him.

"Fine," said Draco. "You can carry me." He tried to sound imperious, which was hard when all he felt was hopelessness. How had he ever charged down staircases so easily? He knew now he'd fall down them if he attempted it. He was so dizzy.

Harry scooped him up as if he weighed nothing. It hurt.

"Ow, for fuck's sake, Potter!"

"I'm sorry," said Harry, who was, in fact, carrying him extremely gently. "We're almost there."

"Almost fucking *where*, Potter?"

"Your new room."

"My new what?"

But then he didn't have words, because he was in a room that didn't exist before. It was pale green, with a soft carpet and on-suite bathroom. It had huge, floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the

garden. There was a wide, luxurious day bed in front of the windows, which Harry settled him onto.

“Do you like it?” asked Harry anxiously.

Draco couldn’t speak. Sparrows and larks fluttered around a bird feeder placed just at his eye level. A small pond had been added to the garden, and the sunlight glinted off it as it rippled lightly in the breeze.

“Is it okay?” asked Harry. “You hate it. We can change it. Millie and I have been working with a Charms expert to get everything done on time. But he can change anything you don’t like. Or you can go back to your old room. But look, there’s a trundle bed for when your mother stays—it’s really comfortable, I tried it— and there’s space for everyone to visit you comfortably, and—”

“It’s okay,” said Draco. He shivered. Harry tucked him up in the thick, warm duvet. “Sit with me.”

Harry climbed into the bed and put his arms around him. For a few moments, nothing hurt very much, and Draco felt as if everything in his body was vibrating with the sudden relief. He had never once felt this content, when he was well. Things were more vivid when they were coming to an end.

The next morning, Botticelli’s *Primavera* was propped against the windows.

“Is this the right one?” asked Harry. “Pansy said it was the one you wanted to see the most.”

Draco tried to speak, but couldn’t. His throat was so dry and raspy. He gestured for his notebook.

“*You had a copy made for me?*” he wrote. His handwriting was shit. It gave him a newfound appreciation for how lovely his handwriting used to be.

“No, it’s the original,” said Harry. “I had a word with the Italian Mage King.”

“...*had a word?*”

“Er,” said Harry sheepishly. “I’ve agreed to go to one of his functions in order to tacitly condone his administration?”

“*He’s corrupt as fuck,*” wrote Draco.

“Yeah, I know,” said Harry. “Hermione’s pissed at me. Here, I’ll bring it closer. It’s really fucking old.”

“*Late 15th century,*” wrote Draco, as Harry brought the painting right up to his bed. It was huge.

“Why do you like it so much?” asked Harry.

Draco shook his head. He couldn’t tear his eyes away from the painting. It was spring. It was joy, and serenity, and peacefulness.

Draco stared at the painting for a long time, almost without blinking.

Harry stared at Draco. Finally, Draco wrote in his notebook.

“*Thank you.*”

“Is there anything else I can do?”

Draco studied him.

"Would you kiss me, if I weren't sick?" he wrote.

"Yes," said Harry, and Draco's gaze seemed to sharpen, to intensify. But when Harry leant forward to kiss him, Draco coughed, somehow managing to moan in pain as he did so. He shook his head.

"I...don't...feel...attractive," he managed to say.

Harry bent his head and rested it against the bed frame. Draco didn't like it when people showed how upset they were, so he formulated his face.

"You fucking tease," he said, when he was sure he could speak without his voice betraying him. Draco laughed.

"I'm frigid as fuck," he wrote.

"I have to have the painting back in about an hour," said Harry. "I'll just leave you with it, yeah?"

Draco nodded and returned to staring rapturously at the Botticelli.

Harry sneaked away to the bathroom, where he heaved with dry sobs for twenty minutes before he could pull himself back together.

Draco had a little under two weeks left when the magical medication stopped working.

"For end of life care, we can't really improve much on muggle medication," said the healer. Next to Harry, Pansy nodded. Draco was swearing loudly on the day bed, as if he could shout the pain away. The healer was able to give them magically modified morphine, which wasn't physically addictive and was administered slightly differently, although still via the drip.

"Come on Draco," said Pansy. "Off the couch."

"This is ridiculous," said Harry. He rolled the IV in from the bathroom.

"This should just stay in your arm."

"No..." said Draco. He gripped his head. "No...fucking *shit on a dick* that hurts!"

The healer looked vaguely affronted.

"I'll walk you out," said Pansy, and the healer gladly let himself be led away.

"Draco, I don't care about your stupid Dark Mark. Give me your arm."

"Hardy har," said Draco, through gritted teeth. "That's a good one."

Harry grabbed Draco's left arm and tugged up the sleeve. Draco's eyes flew open and he froze, staring at Harry in obvious trepidation. But Harry had been practicing with Goyle. He had stared at Goyle's Mark until it became almost meaningless. If anything, he now associated it mainly with Goyle gently and repeatedly telling him that it was okay if Harry was turned on, because Goyle wasn't homophobic.

Harry dropped a quick kiss on the Mark—"What the fuck, Potter??"—and connected the IV tube to the little plastic valve in Draco's arm. Draco's eyes drooped and his breathing steadied.

"What does it feel like?" asked Harry.

"Like falling in love," said Draco.

Yeah, thought Harry glumly. It really did.

The magically modified morphine obliterated Draco's pain. It also

obliterated Draco. He drifted, glassy-eyed, through waking dreams, and scarcely seemed to notice when people spoke to him.

"I'd like to be a bird," he said, when Pansy asked him if he was hungry.

"Such warm snow," he mumbled, when Harry tucked his white duvet cover around him.

It grew harder and harder to spend time with him, because he wasn't really Draco anymore. He was some far-away creature who asked things like "Am I dead yet?", who smiled too much and was enthralled by things Harry could not see.

"You need to take a break," said Ron. "This is really getting to you."

Harry just shook his head and apparated to the Slytherin house.

Pansy took a leave of absence from work. Narcissa was always at the house, wraithlike and absent-minded.

Harry tried to talk to Draco about quidditch, but Draco didn't seem to know he was there. Pansy tried lowering the dose. Draco's eyes went from vacant to agonised with no period of lucidity. He howled for his mother, not seeming to understand that Narcissa was next to him, holding his hand, her silent, icy tears coursing down her pale cheeks. They did not lower the dose again.

16. #77. See the Northern Lights

"I'm sorry," babbled Draco. "Father... I'm sorry..."

Narcissa stood by the window, transfixed with sorrow, and Harry couldn't bear it any longer.

"I'll just get... some... water," he said, and left.

Pansy was crying in the kitchen. He took her wordlessly into his arms and tucked her head under his chin.

"He's talking to Lucius again," said Harry. Draco did this a lot—had long, harrowing conversations with his dead father, in which he wept and apologised incoherently.

Pansy broke away and wiped her eyes.

"Sorry," she said.

"It's fine," said Harry. "What's he apologising for, anyway?"

"Being gay, I think," said Pansy.

Harry let his head bang into the kitchen cabinets.

"Fuck!" he shouted. "This is all so *fucked*!" He buried his face in his hands. "I've never lost someone I loved like this."

"What?"

"I've lost so many people, but always quickly," explained Harry. "I've never had to watch them... deteriorate..."

Pansy laughed, a wild, manic sound that set Harry's hair on end.

"You love him?" she asked.

"Of course I love him!"

Pansy laughed more. She had started to cry again.

"He's saved—the curse—you can save him—you can break the curse—you stupid fuck—"

"Pansy! What the hell are you talking about?"

Pansy gripped his elbow and explained. In low, urgent words, she told him that Draco had been cursed to die unless Harry Potter told him he loved him, and meant it.

Harry didn't bother hearing her out. Once he'd understood the gist of it, he all but ran to Draco's room. He was furious. He ached with anger. He wanted to hit something. But when he got to Draco's bedside, his hands gentled, and he stroked Draco's hair out of his face to get his attention.

Draco opened his eyes.

"I love you," said Harry. "You absolute idiot, I love you."

Draco closed his eyes and smiled.

"I love you too," he said dreamily. Harry kissed Draco's eyelids, his nose, his forehead.

"I love you," he said, over and over. "Don't die. You stupid fucking idiot. I love you. Don't you dare fucking die. I love you."

The healer arrived a few minutes later.

"Is the curse broken?" asked Pansy. "Will he live?"

The healer cast diagnostic spells for what seemed like an eternity.

Harry and Pansy clutched at each other, hovering nearby. Narcissa Malfoy sat on a chaise long near the windows, looking calmly out at

the bird feeder, statuesque and beautiful.

The healer stood.

"He's out of the woods," he said.

"What, what does that mean?" asked Harry.

"The curse has been broken," said the healer. "From here, all the symptoms will roll back, and the healing spells we cast should take effect. In six months, he'll be good as new."

"Am I dead yet?" asked Draco sleepily. Pansy rushed to his side.

"You're not dying," she said. "You're not dying, and you owe all of us about a million favours for looking after you so well."

"Cold," said Draco, with a small shiver, and Pansy, still crying, tucked fresh blankets around him.

"So he'll live," said Harry.

"Yes," said the healer.

Narcissa rose to her feet and folded Harry in a warm embrace.

"Thank you," she said.

"I didn't *do* anything," said Harry. "I didn't..."

Draco was high as a kite, and there was no getting through to him. He wouldn't be well enough to lower the morphine dose for another week at least. And there was something else, as well, a fear that had been born the instant Pansy told him about the curse, that had been shunted to one side as Harry tried to figure out how to save Draco's life, but now was blooming in Harry's mind.

Harry loved Draco. He had thought Draco loved him, too. But what if he didn't? What if all that had simply been a way to try and get Harry to love him? Not that Harry would blame him for it, not in the slightest. But his heart twisted at the sight of Pansy and Narcissa crowded around Draco's bedside. When Blaise came home and heard the news, his handsome face lit up with elation, and he kissed every inch of Draco he could reach. What if Draco had wanted to be with Blaise? "*It was a mistake*," Draco had said, after he slept with him. But there were a million ways a mistake could happen.

Draco's people, Draco's family, surrounded him.

Harry went home.

Two weeks later

Pansy Parkinson appeared in Harry's kitchen while he was having breakfast.

"Your interior design is tacky," she said, reaching over to steal his toast. "I knew it would be."

"How's Draco?"

"Better," said Pansy. She peered at him. "You've done something stupid in your head, haven't you?"

"How do you mean?"

"Some, *Draco will be Happier If I'm Gone* nonsense."

Harry buttered himself a fresh piece of toast.

"I've been busy," he said. "Thanks for your letters, by the way."

"Busy doing what? You look like shit."

Harry smiled grimly.

"Catching bad guys."

Pansy sat down heavily.

"You didn't."

"I did."

"Who was the bastard?"

"His name was St John Smith. His sister was tortured to death by Bellatrix Lestrange."

"How did you find him?"

"Hermione helped."

But Harry was the one who had caught the man. Harry was the one who had tracked him down; hours of waiting outside his flat, a furious, desperate scuffle, curses thrown left and right. Harry was the one who had been let off with a warning for doing auror work as a civilian.

"Don't suppose you could have found him earlier," said Pansy.

"It wouldn't have made a difference," said Harry. "He couldn't have reversed the curse, apparently."

"So what's going to happen to him?"

"Azkaban, if I have my say. St Mungo's, if not."

Pansy nodded.

"Draco's been asking after you," she said. Harry let out a breath.

"Yeah?"

"Don't be an idiot, Potter," said Pansy gently. "We all know you love him."

"That's not... that's not the problem."

"Salazar. You think he doesn't love you?"

"He *said*. Words are cheap. He only told me he loved me so that I would fall for him."

"He was going to *die* rather than risk you feeling guilty about not breaking the curse!"

"What?"

"You heard me," said Pansy. "Now stop being stupid and go visit him. He misses you."

"Did he say so?"

"Of course not," said Pansy. She tossed the crusts of the toast she had stolen onto Harry's plate. "*Visit him.*"

Draco stood barefoot on the lawn, wearing his dressing gown and pyjamas. He looked up when Harry came to stand beside him.

"My hero," he said sarcastically.

He was *standing*. He was being a little snot. He was staring at the pond, wiggling his toes in the grass.

"You're better," said Harry, his voice thick. Draco looked away.

"If you say something boring right now, Harry, I'll kill you."

I love you, Harry wanted to say. *I don't know how to go forward now that I've already come to terms with losing you. Do you love me? I love you.*

What he said instead was,

“So how long till you’re well enough to fuck?”

Draco smiled a slow, seductive smile, which was spoilt by the sudden onset of a coughing fit.

“A while, evidently,” he said, wiping blood away from his mouth.

“Merlin. Look at that!” He held out his blood-stained handkerchief.

“That must have been half my lung! Felt like it.”

“But you’re getting better?”

“Yes.” Draco squinted at the sky. “It’s a nice day, isn’t it?”

It was grey and overcast. Dirty city rain drizzled on them.

“Not really,” said Harry.

“It’s a bit anti-climactic; surviving,” said Draco. “Everyone’s gone back to treating me like normal.”

“You must hate that.”

“I loathe it. Say what you like about dying, but it does add a certain *je ne sais quoi*.”

Harry thought he understood.

“But all the same,” he said. “It’s a nice day.”

Draco looked at him with serious grey eyes and nodded.

“Yes,” he said. “Exactly.”

They ended up sitting on the grass. Harry took off his shoes and socks. There was something about the way Draco stared at the world, as if it was new and beckoning, that made Harry feel as if it really could be.

Within fifteen minutes, Draco’s head began to ache. He screwed up his eyes.

“It hurts,” he said.

“We’ll go back to Petra,” said Harry.

“It hurts,” said Draco.

“Let’s take a gap year,” said Harry. “Let’s go bungee jumping.”

“I already did that— oh, it hurts!”

“You went bungee jumping?”

Draco nodded and leant sharply into Harry.

“You poor thing,” said Harry, holding him close. “You’re being so brave.”

“I am, aren’t I,” said Draco, “Oh, God, it *hurts*...!”

Harry helped him back to his day bed. He climbed in with him and kissed his frowning forehead.

“You’re getting better,” he reminded Draco.

“But it hurts *now*,” said Draco. “I’m so bloody sick of it! I thought it was over!”

“I know,” said Harry.

“You don’t know anything,” said Draco. “No one understands. You’re all full of shit. Fucking *twat in a vat* that hurts!”

So Harry just stroked his hair, murmuring into Draco’s ear, “*you’re so brave, everyone’s going to admire how incredibly brave you are, just wait till the Pope finds out, St Draco, patron saint of... hmm, we’ll figure something out, listen to you bravely complaining...*”

When the headache abated, Draco let his lips brush gently against

Harry's.

"Pansy said you think I pretended to be in love with you for some convoluted reason only you can understand."

Harry ran a finger up and down Draco's knobbly spine. Draco was so fragile, as if his bones had grown frail since the curse.

"But that's not true?" asked Harry. Draco snorted.

"Of course it's true. I could never fall in love with someone who thought so illogically."

"So, you aren't in love with me because I briefly considered the idea that you might not be in love with me?"

"That's right," said Draco, kissing him again.

"Cool," said Harry, smiling into Draco's mouth. "Makes sense. How long until we can fuck, again?"

"Presumptuous," said Draco. "Maybe we won't."

"Whatever you want, Draco," said Harry. "I'm yours to command."

Draco flushed.

"God," he said, his eyes darkening. "When you put it like *that*..." He winced in pain, his hands flying to his eyes. "Oh, fuck OFF, head!"

"More morphine?"

"Please!"

Harry fetched Pansy, who knew about the dosage. Soon Draco was nodding off in a daze.

"Everything okay between you two?" asked Pansy.

A foolish, drugged up smile had crept across Draco's face.

Harry hadn't felt this awake in years.

"Yeah," he said. "Everything's great."

17. #3. Fall in love Five months later

CHOSEN ONE CHOOSES DEATH EATER

The Prophet is glad to report that Harry Potter is now in a serious relationship with none other than Draco Malfoy, divinely handsome Slytherin playboy and ex-Death Eater. In an exclusive interview with me, Millicent Bulstrode, Potter explained that he and the ravishingly good looking Slytherin plan on travelling the world together.

"I've sort of never taken a break," said Potter, staring besottedly at his handsome new boyfriend, "and Draco just recovered from a nearfatal illness. We both want to see the world."

The Prophet notes that Slytherins are generally a good looking group. It's not just Draco Malfoy.

When asked how he felt about his gorgeous blond lover's Death Eater past, Potter was definite:

"Draco has proven over and over that he has changed. He is brilliant, kind and determined. I know he deeply regrets his actions in the war and beyond. All of my friends approve of the relationship."

"No one is ever going to forgive me and this is all a waste of time," said the smoulderingly sexy Slytherin. Here at The Prophet, however, we feel that Harry Potter's judgment can be trusted.

"How come she never says anything about me being hot?" asked Harry in outrage.

"Did you bribe her?" asked Draco.

"You bribed her?"

"You're so darling when you're cross. Come here."

Draco really was horribly good looking, thought Harry, as he let himself be folded up into Draco's arms. Draco was almost completely better now, although he still claimed to be more tired than before. Harry dreaded to think how much energy he would have when he was better, if this was Draco tired. Draco went running every morning and swimming every night. He ate everything he could get his hands on. He went kayaking with Jack in Cornwall on weekends. He volunteered at the homeless shelter and had what Harry could only describe as therapy sessions with Seven. His body had become lean and muscular, strong and precise. His hair had grown lustrous and thick. The wounds on his chest had closed over, although Draco said they still ached when it got damp. *He's confident*, thought Harry, *and vibrant, and mine.*

Draco didn't panic very often anymore. The last time had been when Harry got his wand out and pointed it at him unexpectedly when they were having a heated discussion about artistic merit in Soviet Russia. (At least, that was what Draco had been arguing about. Harry had been arguing that Draco needed to come in from the cold—they had been in Lapland at the time, watching the Northern Lights.) Draco had a medium-sized panic, but it transpired that Harry had only cast a

warming charm on him.

"You were shivering," said Harry desperately, as he apologised. "I'm sorry— you were cold—"

That night, swaddled in fur and lying on blocks of ice (#48. *Stay in an ice hotel*), Draco rested his nose against Harry's.

"I used to think you wanted to kill me," he said. "In sixth year. I thought, I probably deserved it."

Harry kissed him.

"Darling," he said.

"I don't want to be boring," said Draco.

"Please," said Harry. "Be boring."

"It never occurred to me that you might love me."

It was dark, and under the fur their bodies were warm.

"It didn't occur to me, either," said Harry. "But I do. I love you so much, Draco."

"How much?"

"Loads."

Draco nodded.

"I suppose you know how I feel," he said.

"I do," said Harry shyly, "but... sometimes...it's nice to hear..."

"I love you, Harry." Draco heard Harry breath in sharply. They both said it so rarely. "*Loads*, as you so poetically put it."

Harry ran his hands up and down Draco's sides.

"Good," he said. "Let's keep doing this, then."

"Ice hotels?"

"*This*. Let's keep dating."

"I wasn't aware that was up for review," said Draco.

"Don't be a Slytherin for one second," said Harry.

"Okay," whispered Draco.

"I want to keep you," said Harry.

"I want to keep *you*," said Draco.

"I mean for a long time."

"Okay."

"A really long time," clarified Harry, as if Draco hadn't understood.

"Harry. This isn't a one-sided thing. We're both equally embarrassing about each other."

Harry sighed happily and wormed his way even closer to Draco under the covers.

"I love you," he said.

"This has gone far enough," said Draco sternly.

"I love how funny you are."

"Stop this nonsense."

"I love your sense of adventure."

"One more word out of you, and I'll shut you up the only way I know how."

There was a quizzical silence.

"With my dick, Harry."

"Oh! Well, in that case... your good humour throughout your illness

made me respect—”

Then Draco shut him up, the only way he knew how.

Harry said Draco still behaved as if he would die in three months. It was their biggest recurring argument. Harry was reckless himself, but he thought Draco went too far; for instance, when Draco wanted to go rock climbing in the Andes without rope or a harness.

“What’s the worst that could happen?” asked Draco.

“You could *die*!”

“Oh, that,” said Draco. “Should have happened ages ago. This is just the encore.”

That had caused their biggest argument yet. Eventually Draco had conceded. He wore the harness when he went climbing.

“So first you boil the water,” said Harry.

“What about the salt?”

“You don’t need salt.”

“Italians use salt,” said Draco. “I’m quite sure salt is an integral part of the process.”

“I’ve always boiled water just fine without salt.”

“If I wanted to learn how to make subpar boiled eggs, I would have done so by now,” said Draco. Harry rolled his eyes. He was so adorable when he was pissed off. Had he always been adorable when he was pissed off? Was that why Draco had antagonised him so much in school? But no—he used to be terrifying. Draco remembered the panic attacks.

“Forget about the salt!” said Harry. “Look. Then you just put in the eggs...”

“What if I would like to make one soft boiled egg and one hard boiled egg?”

“Then you just take one egg out sooner.”

“What about altitude?”

“What *about* altitude?” asked Harry in a strained voice.

“Altitude changes the length of time you boil the eggs for,” said Draco.

“Why are you making this so complicated?”

Draco drew himself up.

“*I’m* not making anything complicated. It is *you* who are underestimating the ancient art of egg-boiling.”

“Draco, come on. I don’t want us to miss sunset on the Grand Canyon because we’re bickering over fucking eggs.”

“I don’t think either of us should fuck the eggs, Harry. I must stand firm upon that point.”

“I’ll fuck *you* soon if you’re not careful,” said Harry.

They did not see sunset on the Grand Canyon that night. But that was okay, because they could do it the next day.

There was a lot of time.

Five Years Later

WITCH WEEKLY

SPOTTED: Loved up Lamorak Toujours and his longtime partner,

Harold Poitiers! The mysteriously private couple were seen at Luna Lovegood's Charity Fundraiser, looking more in love than ever. Rumours persist that the attractive pair are none other than celebrated healer Draco Malfoy and Hogwarts Professor of Defence Against The Dark Arts Harry Potter in disguise— but both Lamorak and Harold refused to comment for Witch Weekly. Luna and Lamorak's Charity Events continue to raise millions of galleons for war-relief charities. For more pictures of last night's event, turn to page 17.

Notes for the Chapter:

Well that's all folks! Thank you for reading and commenting and getting furious with Harry and enjoying Draco's Ways!