I did it so nobody would have to be afraid

by AspiringSatan

Summary

Harry comes back to Hogwarts as an eight year after a summer of working himself to the bone in Ministry. He has become even more influential and some people are scared shitless of him, he doesn't like that. Draco on the other hand is fed up with being who he is supposed to be.

warning for attempted suicide in the first chapter, later only mentioned

Notes

don't own Harry Potter, JKR does

also thank you my amazing Beta Rebekka aka QueenOfALotOfDifferentWorlds
Harry hurried back to the common room. Before he could give into the tiredness from the Quidditch practice, he had a Potions essay to finish. He felt like his eyelids weighted a ton. Despite the pressing deadlines he had stayed out past everyone. Flying was one of the few activities that didn’t include people needing things from him. The curfew was more of a guideline to the older students anyways.

One flight of stairs away from his bed – homework, he corrected himself – he was stopped by a person. Glancing at the man in front of him a small part of his brain wished it had been Filch. Harry felt his heart racing, tiredness pushed to a deeper part of his brain.

“Potter,” the blond greeted sounding slightly out of breath.

“I don’t have time for this, Malfoy,” Harry tried to reason, “I have to conjure up a potions essay and Hermione is busy tonight. I want to get at least a couple of hours of sleep.” He didn’t really expect Malfoy to understand. The royal prick would probably only take twice as long to get lost.

“I can do your homework,” Malfoy said, leaving Harry’s mouth open for a moment, his eyes narrowing in suspicion soon after.

“And why in the world would you do that?”

“I…” Malfoys sneered and his imperturbable posture shattered leaving a very irritated young man. He clenched his teeth together and rubbed his forehead with his fingers leaving red marks. “I need…” he stopped again.

Harry’s eyes widened realising what he was getting at. Reminding himself not to be naïve he rolled his eyes.

“What, Malfoy?”

The blond pinched the bridge of his nose.

“Can you…” his wand lit up causing Malfoy to stop mid-sentence biting his lip. Harry noticed because a dark red drop of blood appeared before he slid his tongue over it and covered his mouth with his hand.

"Fuck,” he breathed angrily, looking like he would rather be anywhere but here and do anything but whatever he was doing. "Listen, Potter...” He briefly looked at Harry and looked away again, furrowing his brows in distaste. "Can you just come with me?"

Harry was speechless. Malfoy was acting so weird and he hadn't insulted him once.

"Why?"

"I just…” His wand lit up with more fiercely and Malfoy looked at it alarmed. "There is nothing you should be afraid of. Just... Somebody needs your help.”

He looked at Harry who was regarding the blond, weighing his options.
"I swear to god Malfoy, if you're messing with me..." Harry shook his head. The git was way out of character to be lying. *Hopefully.*

“I am not. We need to hurry,” he said, setting off down the corridor.

Harry followed Malfoy, wondering what had happened. When Malfoy’s drawn wand exploded in a set of new sparkles, he completely lost his cool.

“Shit!” he growled, picking up the pace.

They were rapidly approaching the Astronomy tower, Harry barely keeping up with Malfoy who was now running full speed. He had never seen Malfoy out of his own skin like this, the blond, Harry realised, was worried. Furrowing his brows, Harry took out his wand. Their steps echoed from the walls as they approached the landing on top of the tower. There Malfoy stopped, breathing heavily, Harry passed him, looking around for danger, but all he saw was flashbacks, wind and darkness.

He turned to look at Malfoy, annoyed.

The blond didn’t look at him, he shoved Harry aside, looking around shakenly.

“Pansy?” he called. “Pansy, I swear to Merlin’s left buttock...” He frantically looked around, Harry almost felt tempted to say something comforting. Malfoy looked so anxious, so human. “If I just willingly spent five minutes running around with scar-head for no reason, I will be livid.”

*And there goes my sympathy,* Harry thought, rolling his eyes and postponing his annoyance. The girl in question stepped out of the shadows, wand in her hand, the wind lashing her short hair around. She looked small, face shining with tears, Harry realised shocked.

“Thank you, Draco,” she said, her voice uneven.

“What is going on?” Harry demanded. Two against one was no fair, but then, when had Slytherins played fair? Since Voldemort lost? Apparently not.

“I need to say something.” Pansy choked, her voice broken, tears streaming from her red eyes. She wiped her cheeks with her hand, looking up, forcing a deep breath.

Malfoy was staring, his face frozen wand still in his hand, beaming light upon the three of them. Harry was dumbstruck, he had been mentally preparing for potion homework, not crying Slytherin girls on top of a tower.

“Potter, don’t be stupid,” Malfoy ordered, his voice too high for him to be as calm as he appeared. *Hysterical is a more appropriate description,* Harry decided, affronted by the out of the blue command. “Pansy, listen, I got him here, like you asked.” The usually stone-cold Slytherin was begging her. Harry stared at him shocked. “You say what you have to and then we will go back to the common room and do whatever you want. I promise, anything.”

Pansy’s eyes snapped from the ceiling to her house-mate, tears still flowing down her face despite her attempts to wipe them off.

“Even colour your hair?” she asked smiling painfully.

“Anything,” Malfoy promised without a falter.

“Liar,” she determined, taking a step backward. Her dress caught a draft, surging around her
shaking knees.

Malfoy stared at her frozen, Harry stepped forward feeling uneasy. Malfoy was ready to promise anything, Parkinson was dressed in a fancy dress, her makeup was smeared, her hair looked like it had been carefully arranged in locks that now were being destroyed by the wind. Everything was confusing.

Malfoy stepped forward, but Pansy had her wand ready before he could reach her, she took one more step towards the edge.

“Don’t,” she ordered. “You know, if you lose consciousness, your amateur spell goes with you.”

Malfoy stepped back, lifting his hands, teeth gritted. He looked past his shoulder to Harry who was standing by the entrance, the silvery eyes felt like daggers.

“Potter,” Pansy said, moving her hair from her face with a shaky hand. “I apologize.”

Harry blinked.

“I don’t have a handy excuse, but I am sorry,” she said, her jaw shaking from the sobs she was so masterfully keeping concealed. “I was so scared that I would be killed.”

Her eyes were boring in to Harry with deep sorrow.

“I regret saying that stupid thing, I regret ever thinking that the Dark Lord was anything but a madman.”

Harry shifted from feet to feet. Why was she saying that?

“Now that that’s said, I feel better,” she said, but her expression didn’t convey anything other than suffering. “Bye, Draco.”

“Pansy!” Malfoy moved his wand, a silvery net revealing itself at the edge of the tower.

The words hanging in the air the witch stepped backwards leaving only one step between her and the edge. Harry finally spurred in to motion, realising what she was planning.

“Parkinson,” he said in shock. “What the hell are you doing? Listen to me… Pansy,” he growled anger rising from the pit of his stomach. “You can’t undo what has been done by one more death. Do you hear me?”

The dark-haired girl was standing on the edge, her watery eyes glued to Harry.

“Don’t scream at her!” Malfoy shouted over the wind.

“Sorry, right. Pansy,” Harry took a deep breath. “You claim that you’re sorry…”

“I am!” she cried, covering her shaking lips with her even more violently shaking hand.

“Then prove it. Rise above your mistakes. Be better. Your death will not correct anything, it will only hurt more people.” With each statement Harry stepped closer to the erratic girl, who stared at him like he was the Jesus risen again. When he mentioned hurting people, her eyes jumped to Malfoy guiltily.

“I tried to give you out to the Dark Lord… don’t you think I deserve death?” she breathed, her words coming out with such effort that they seemed to be cutting her throat.
“Nobody deserves death, besides, if I had gone to Voldemort then and there much less people would have died.”

Pansy trembled but she didn’t fall backward, Harry called that a victory.

“Come with me,” he extended his hand.

“You can’t be serious,” she said, her lips axing a bitter smile on her face. Regarding Harry’s serious expression, her agony-induced smile transitioned to violent sobs. Harry caught her by her elbows when her legs gave out, Malfoy joined them on the cold stone floor that must have frosted his bare legs.

All of Pansy’s body shook, her wand rolling out of her hand. Malfoy pocketed it, pulling Pansy in to a tight hug.

“I told you golden Potter doesn’t want your death,” he blurted, burying his face in Pansy’s hair. Her body was tremoring, as she gripped at the blond boy’s waist and wept.

Harry sat back, his heart still racing, the thought of another death – even if it was Pansy Parkinson – filled him with morbid dread. He clasped his clammy hands around himself, leaning back, resting his head against the wall. It was cold, wonderfully absorbing his surging anger and sadness.

When Pansy started to muss about her hair again, letting go of Malfoy, who had stoically moved between her and the edge, Harry got up. His stomach was howling for some food, besides some half-read article he had once seen said that food elevated happiness levels and shit.

“What are you hungry?” he asked. “Let’s go to the kitchens, I think we need a midnight hot chocolate and something sickeningly sugary.”

Pansy looked at him, but reverted her eyes again when they overflew with tears. Malfoy stiffly placed a hand on her shoulder, but his eyes were watching Harry.

“I think that’s a splendid idea,” he said. “Hear that, Pans? I just agreed with Harry Potter. Isn’t this an eventful day?”

Pansy didn’t look at them but her head tilted in a short nod. Face still hidden behind her hands, she got up. The Slytherins followed Harry, who had marched forward inconspicuously glancing at the Marauders map, which had so conveniently stayed open. The long journey to the kitchens was luckily uneventful, except for when Pansy had met Harry’s eyes and collapsed in sobs again. To her credit she was up and walking in ten seconds, wiping her eyes and refusing Malfoy’s help.

Reaching the big painting that covered the entrance, Harry searched for the giggly pear. After tickling the one, he pulled the door open with a victorious smile, looking to his unlikely companions. Pansy was still sniffling with her arms around her, her eyebrows raised in slight surprise, Malfoy was wearing an unreadable expression.

Harry motioned them to enter, but they both stayed in places regarding him suspiciously. Smile turning sour, Harry stomped in to the kitchens first, rolling his eyes. It was dark, but as soon as Harry entered the big room, a house-elf appeared, his eyes drowsy from sleeping.

“I’m sorry to disturb you, but we had a situation,” Harry said.

“Of course, Master Potter, sir. It’s no trouble,” the elf squeaked, bowing to the ground. “Say what you and your friends need and Finny will have it right away, Master Potter.”
“Hot chocolate and snacks?” Harry looked back to the two Slytherins standing by the entrance questioningly.

Pansy only rubbed her eyes, but Malfoy said something.

“What was that?” Harry asked trying to keep the usual edge out of his voice. This was really not the time to pick a fight, besides Malfoy looked devilish – his feet bare, hair wild, eyes darting back to Pansy again and again.


“Thank you, Finny,” Harry added after the small figure had bowed and nodded.

“It’s my pleasure Master Potter, sir. Please sit, sirs and lady,” he said pointing to the corner of the big hall. The fireplace there lit up, illuminating a couch and two soft-looking chairs around a low table. The rest of the gigantic room stayed in shadows, quiet.

Harry slouched down in one chair, watching as Malfoy and Parkinson sat on the couch. Finny ran over to the girl with a box of tissues, eying her worriedly.

“Mistress, say anything you need. Finny wants to help,” he said.

Pansy couldn’t even take the tissues, she started shaking so hard, eyes leaking like spring’s floods. Finny’s eyes widened in horror.

“I’m sorry mistress, lady, please, forgive me,” he cried.

“Finny, Finny, it’s okay, she is just dealing with a lot of feelings right now,” Harry tried to explain unsurely. To his surprise Malfoy looked at the elf with no intent of killing him.

“Just bring us the snacks,” he said. Harry suspected he wasn’t all that confident as you could think from his tone. The house-elf nodded eagerly, already retreating to the other side of the hall.

Sniffling Pansy blew her nose with a loud noise, Malfoy, despite the roll of his eyes, offered Pansy to lean on him as she wiped her face.

“I – I am fine, ho-honestly,” she said, fanning her face with her hand and blinking rapidly.

“Is that why you sound like the fucking Santa? Don’t bullshit me Pans. I am not in the mood,” Malfoy growled, forcing her to look up to him. The corners of her lips slightly tugged up as she shoved Malfoy for the Santa comment.

“You’re not su-supposed to see me like this a-at all. It was not going to matter, but now…” she dropped her hands in her lap, closing her eyes.

“It will stay between us or I will curse Potter right here and now,” Malfoy glared at the Gryffindor in question.

Before Harry could muster a proper response, Pansy opened one eye. Seeing how serious Malfoy was her trembling chest moved in lighter way - a shaky half-giggle that ended in a choked sob.

“Duel for my ho-honour… why, Draco, I didn’t know you were re-ready to lose to Potter for me. That’s so sweet,” she said patting Malfoy’s knee. The blond looked at her incredulously, while Harry stared at the girl who already looked less like the wreck she had been on the roof.

“What?” Malfoy spat. “You can’t possibly think I would lose to Potter.”
“Draco, he killed the Dark Lord, I think we would all lose to him.”

This day just keeps getting weirder and weirder, Harry concluded, staring at the girl. Malfoy was also staring, if he wouldn't have been so worried about Pansy, Harry suspected that facial expression could be his type of hurt. Now he looked more affronted than anything, his mouth opened and closed a couple of times as he wrapped his mind around his friend's words.

Before either of the boys could recover, Finny appeared, balancing a tray with three steaming mugs. He set them on the table in the middle, eying Pansy sadly. Harry wondered if house-elves often had to look after wrecked students. The raven-head thanked him again, earning a deep bow from Finny and an annoyed glare from Malfoy. Harry raised his eyebrows, asking 'what?' without actually voicing his irritation.

Malfoy looked like he was about to tell him exactly what, but Pansy sniffled again attracting Malfoy's attention. When his argent eyes returned to Harry, he had already suppressed his temper.

Harry made himself comfortable in the chair, as the silence was as far from comfortable as it could get… still… They weren't actively killing each other so that was something. Wrapping fingers around the mug he realised just how cold he had been and tucked his feet deeper under his bum. Pansy was sprawled on the couch, her dress spread out, her feet neatly tucked to the side. She really had gone all out to make sure her corpse looked good, Harry shivered. Pre-planned suicides were even more terrifying than the spontaneous ones.

"Quit, staring at me like that," Pansy demanded, in a quiet voice, meeting Harry's eyes over her hot chocolate. Her brown eyes were glistening with tears and her lip quivering as her hands shook clasped around the mug like it was her last life-line. To Harry's best knowledge, it was. He sighed, he needed to know some things.

"Sorry," he started, not really knowing how to breach the topic. "Pansy..."

Malfoy kept glaring at him. After glaring at him in return Harry turned his attention to Pansy, who was hiding her untrustly lips behind the mug.

"Why..." The end of the sentence dissipated in the quiet darkness of the hall, even the faint clinking of metal from Finny's rustling came to Harry's ears like through a thick layer of cotton wool.

"Potter, you honestly think now is the time to harass her? Do you have no brains?" Malfoy bared his teeth and hissed like a serpent, venom dropping down his chin. Figuratively, but not far off.

"I'm not harassing anyone, Malfoy," Harry bit, not letting the hot chocolate coated in the soft darkness to lull him in to any kind of sense of safety.

"Draco, honestly, don't say you don't expect an explanation," the girl placed a hand on his knee.

"Not in front of him I don't," he said his voice losing a significant amount of anger when he looked at his friend.

Harry pouted inwardly despite the fact that he shouldn't have been surprised, honestly, what had he thought?

So Harry bit down his concern, feeling that it wouldn't be appreciated and slurped some of his drink. The warmth seeped from his mouth and fingers to his stomach and settled, calming the cold storm that he had brought down with him from the tower. Pansy was trembling less and less by the minute, Malfoy hadn't touched his mug, he only regarded it sullenly, his arm around Pansy's shoulders in a careless but tight manner.
After Harry had eaten more than his upset stomach could handle, Pansy spoke.

"Potter…" She swallowed a piece of the lemon cake that Finny had provided. "I don't know what to say, to be honest." Her nonchalant voice was so even that all Harry could do was stare at her. If not for her red eyes and stains of mascara around her eyes, he would have thought they were having a simple tea-drinking party.

She breathed in a couple of times collecting her thoughts.

"I meant what I said, I regret offering to rat you out. I was terrified." She took a couple more breaths. "I am now too."

Harry looked to Malfoy but he was not giving away any of his thoughts, his eyes fell back to Pansy. What are you afraid of? His eyes asked utterly confused.

She smirked and took more cake, when she looked up, seeing Harry as lost as before conjured a confused smirk on her face.

"Of you, Harry Potter."

Harry almost dropped his mug in shock, but snickered shaking his head.

"What?" He asked, his face falling when he realised they weren't dragging him. Malfoy wouldn't meet his eyes. "You can't be serious…"

"To be clear. I am not afraid of you," he said, his furious storm-cloud eyes meeting Harry's in silent defiance.

"You shouldn’t be afraid of me…” Harry’s voice dried out. “I’ve never wanted that…”

"You can’t expect us…” Malfoy glared at her, she rolled her eyes. “Me. Not to be afraid. Potter you are the reason we are not all rotting in Azkaban, you can be the reason that we land there the next time we lose our cool. You’re practically running the new Ministry singlehandedly.” She shivered, her eyes mugging over with fear.

Harry didn’t know what to say.

“I just did what I thought was right…” Harry tried to meet either of the Slytherin’s eyes. No luck. “Listen to me. I defeated Voldemort for there to be no more fear. He was the one who fed off it. I am nothing like him, I don’t want fear. Shit, I don’t even care if you hate me, I just want peace and safety. For everyone."

After the Battle Harry had spent a couple of days resting his bones with Weasleys. Well… he had been half resting, half hiding. On the bright side not from a vindictive Dark Wizard with megalomania, just reporters.

And Aurors.

And Ministry’s officials.

And women.

And men.

Everyone just had needed a piece of their saviour, so he didn’t go out much, liking his bits intact. Fred and George had kept him entertained and he had been quite content with staying there till he
could return to Hogwarts as an eight year.

One unlucky morning he had accidentally looked at the Prophet. With an annoyed grunt he had postponed his lazy plans for summer and prepared his brain for the immense bullshit that was politics. Taking up on the countless offers he had gotten to assist the Aurors and Ministry of Magic in general, he, without even bothering to change his gardening clothes, had departed using Weasleys’ fireplace.

His arrival to the Mistry had caused a clusterfuck of awestruck and overexcited people, but Harry had held his wits in check despite his ever-rising temptation to hex some people out the doors. The new head of Department of Magical Law Enforcement, had been a grim man, but even he didn’t struggle much when Harry Potter came to him and vaguely hinted to the fact that they had been doing a shit job. In fact, he had been quite aware of it and happy to throw the responsibility on someone else’s shoulders. They happened to be Harry’s.

With only a three second delay Harry accepted the position they had offered. He had wanted nothing more than to go home, to rest… but he had been painfully aware that even if he chose to leave, he wouldn’t be able to relax. *I can just fix Ministry and then rest.* He had thought.

*Hah.*

That shit hole was so broken, Hermione alone could operate more efficiently.

It wasn’t even that after the battle part of the Ministry was still Death Eaters or their supporters, but even the people that hated Death Eaters with passion were acting like they were gods. In their minds anyone who was even remotely connected to Death Eater could be thrown in to the same cauldron and shipped off to Dementors. Harry surprised himself and infinitely pleased Hermione, when he came back to the Burrow cursing about the treatment of Slytherins.

She offered her council and they together came up with steps to heal the Ministry. It took them three weeks of practically living in an interested lawyer’s office, not sleeping and constant fighting against the tide of people who wanted to ‘offer guidance’. But they did it. They submitted it to the Wizengamot and to nobody’s surprise (to only Harry’s surprise), it was accepted. Then everyone had a paper to follow. Everything would surely be fine now and nobody would bother Harry any longer?

*Wrong!*

It seemed only strengthen the illusion that he was leading the Ministry, which he wasn’t. Not in his mind. But apparently *everyone* else had a different idea. Even Kingsley Shacklebolt had jokingly referred to Harry as the people’s Minister. And to Harry’s dismay, the man wasn’t that far off. He was *good* at making Ministry better, he and Hermione had worked all summer to undo what Voldemort had sown.

Progress seemed to be bent on trying Harry’s patience every single day. It took the long road, through sewers, sluggish decrepit men and blinded young people’s sorrows. People were still recovering and licking wounds – mental and physical – they didn’t want to hear that everyone should be treated fairly. Muggle borns wanted to see pure-bloods hanging on the wall of shame their insides turned inside out. Pure-bloods wanted to keep their privileges, Harry wanted to sleep one night straight without one or another emergency and summoning to a 3 am meeting.

*But how often do people really GET what they want?*

*Rarely.*
After Hermione had talked him in to starting giving interviews, he changed his answer to – almost never. He had agreed because the things that were being printed were just plain misinformative. He had been offered to take courses in ‘talking to reporters’, but after he had been advised to ‘smile more’ and ‘mislead people to create the right image’ he walked out of there without a second thought. Half of his problems had rooted in the fact that somebody had lied or kept something from him. He really doubted the fact that that approach would be good for the new and improved Ministry of Magic.

Talking with the press was something he wanted to avoid as much as possible, but he made sure loads of trustworthy representatives gave weekly updates to the public. He had chosen them himself and maybe they weren’t the most likable people, but they said things as they were, without trying to gain from it.


The last one wasn’t true, as Hermione said – yet. Harry spent his summer days buried in paperwork, which he loathed, talking to people that half of the time made him want to burp and attending endless hearings, meetings and assemblies. Only thing that kept him sane was his friends’ unfahtering support. Hermione was with him every step of the way.

On the nights that he hadn’t spent asleep on his table in the Ministry he had crashed in the Burrow. He had considered buying a flat in London, but Hermione had wisely advised against that as he wouldn’t probably leave the Ministry at all in that case. She understood, of course, and she was as keen as Harry to make Ministry better, but she also knew the limits that Harry was happy to stretch and stretch again.

Maybe that’s why she and Ron were still happily together, but Ginny had left Harry, who had barely noticed as he had been functioning mostly on magic sparkles and caffeine that day. Now coming to the Burrow was like he had a sister, brothers and parents. Shame he wasn’t a child anymore.

Harry snapped back in to the present, had he really spent all summer causing more fear in people? He was at a loss of words and his head hurt. Again. Headaches seemed to be a constant companion ever since he took up the reform of the Ministry.

“Let me be clear, Potter…” Malfoy started, with the sneer that Harry could barely tolerate on good days. It was night. And it was not good.

“No. Let me be clear. I do not want you to fear me.” He hadn’t noticed he had stood up, but now he tried to stand as non-threateningly as possible. He continued in a softer voice. “You have no reason to fear me. I won’t be using my position in Ministry for personal gain. It may come as a surprise to you two,” Harry exploded, soft voice – out the window, “but some people are actually decent in this messed up world.” The headache had settled at the base of his neck and behind his ears, chanting: *you’re feared. You’re feared. Just like Voldemort. You’re just like him…*

“How do you suppose we could do that?” Pansy asked, looking close to tears again. “If we – I could just turn off fear we wouldn’t be sitting here.”

Harry thought about that for a moment.

“What are the Gryffindors’ trades?” he asked.
“Recklessness, hot-headedness, infamous stupidity,” Malfoy recited happily. *If you presume snakes feel such primitive emotions.*

“Okay, okay.” Harry forced himself to rise above. “And you know what else?”

Neither of them replied.

“We keep our word. Okay?” Harry closed his eyes, recalling all the talks with Soyer – one of the few – well… the only one of the lawyers that he had bonded with. “I promise, to not use my position in Ministry in a way that would hurt you or humiliate you or harm you any other way.” He peeked at the stunned Slytherins who were staring at him with identical expressions.

Malfoy was first to talk.

“That won’t fly. You have the whole Hogwarts’ staff, students and all the wizard population of England behind you. Even without using Ministry, you could still stab us in front of the whole school while we were tied up and gagged and everyone would claim it was self-defence.”

“I tho-thought you were not afraid, Draco,” Pansy stammered, swallowing new wave of tears.

“Pansy. I get that you’re having a break down, but please. I want to be able to be friends with you tomorrow too.” His voice sounded desperate, still carrying a tinge of annoyance from the poem he had directed at Harry.

“Sorry, Draco.” She nuzzled her face against his neck, her shoulders shaking.

“Well! It’s fine. I suppose…” he mumbled, his voice losing all menace, his palm sliding along the girls trembling back.

Harry felt like they forgot he was standing there. Not that he minded… much. Clearing his throat he got Pansy’s attention, Malfoy was still staring at the hot chocolate that apparently wasn’t fancy enough for him to drink it. *Snob.* Harry swallowed his petty arguments, *I survived Fergus McKlinge, I can easily survive Draco Malfoy.*

“Potter. We’re not used to believing, anyone’s pro-promises,” she was still bawling her eyes out, but she seemed pretty coherent for the mess she appeared to be.

*Bloody Slytherins.*

“Well, what else can I do?” Harry flopped back down in the chair, unhappy with how his evening was going. He remembered certain blond somebody promising to write his potions essay, but it seemed inappropriate to bring up now so he bit his tongue. “If I had wanted… revenge or whatever you’re so worried about, I could have not testified,” he said tiredly. *How can they think I would do something like that?* Then it dawned on him. *They don’t know me.* Seemed stupid enough, but it was pretty simple. People often had the wrong presumptions about him. He had been acquainted with these two for roughly seven years, but they didn’t really know him.

The Gryffindor grunted and rubbed his eyes, only then realising he had disrupted Pansy’s stammering chatter. She looked at him with big dark eyes.

“Sorry… I just...” he forced himself to not grunt again. He wanted to talk to Ron and Hermione, they would surely have a better solution, but they weren’t here. “I might have an idea.”

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“Merlin, Potter!” Draco didn’t want to lose, his composure any more than he already had, but… “I knew you had a limited ability to translate people’s actions in to their intentions, but this is out of line!” at least, his voice was back to appropriate-to-talk-to-Potter tone.

He felt Pansy trembling against his side, it filled him with clammy fear all over again, it clung to his ribs and was fighting for the first place in the list of things that scared him. Pansy had almost died – killed herself, because she was scared shitless of Potter. Potter. The saint do-goddy Potty. And now the hero boy, had actually suggested… makes me sick to even think it.

“I don’t know, Potter…”

Pansy was looking at Potter with her familiar brown eyes. What wasn’t familiar was the utter desperation shining in them, Draco hadn’t seen it because she hadn’t been talking to him much for the past week. Before that he had only noticed flashes of tiredness, fear and regret now and then, nothing so deep. Or she was much more capable of hiding things from him than he had been aware off, or he had been distracted… but in any case, it was his fault. He should have been there.

Concentrate on the matter at hand, Draco.

Pansy seemed to think his preposition over. Draco looked at her feeling a sinking feeling. She can’t seriously be considering… THAT.

“Look…. I don’t like the idea as much as you, but… I don’t know how to otherwise prove that fearing me is a ridiculous waste of energy.”

Oh, sweet Merlin, release me. Potter is doing something he doesn’t want to, how mortifying for him I’m sure. Good thing he has his Gryffindority in place to ensure he does the right thing, Draco thought, hoping his glare conveyed what he thought. Judging from the clenching of Potter’s jaw it did.

“Being friends…” Pansy echoed Potter’s words. “Seems alien, doesn’t it, Draco?”

“Yes, Pansy. And I can assure you, I will not be doing that while I am sane or even remotely conscious, or, come to think of it, even my dead body would like to stay as far as possible from a friendship with Potter.”

“No hard feelings, Malfoy, I want nothing to do with your snobbish-arse either.”

“Well, when that’s out of the way, could we go?” he asked, flashing his teeth at Potter in the driest smile possible and really addressing Pansy, nudging her softly.

“Draco…” she sighed.

Draco stilled, felling that he was not going to enjoy what she was about to say.

“I am tired,” she stated.

“It’s okay, let’s go back to the common room… I will rub your feet and prepare a hot bath… just the way you like it,” he said, hating the sound of his voice. Pleading. Second time today. When she feels better, I will get her for this. Draco felt his cheeks heat up as he felt Potter’s eyes on him. Pansy’s tired resolve in her words not helping in the slightest.

“I am tired of living in fear… first You-Know-Who, now him… I can’t do that anymore,” she put her hands around Draco’s frozen fingers, but he didn’t move. How could he? His best friend was leaving him for the saint Potter.
Draco dropped Pansy’s hands from his, rising from the couch sharply. He steeled his heart against her begging eyes.

“I believe I have reached my limit of bullshit for the whole year, but I need to go to the classes tomorrow, so I should at least get some sleep,” his voice was ice cold, his throat burning, or it was his eyes, he wasn’t sure.

“Draco, please… don’t be such a melodramatic princess, it’s not like I am stopping being friends with you, if I just attempt fr-friendliness with Potter.”

Melodramatic?! Who the hell was melodramatic? Not Draco that’s for sure.

“Just use protection!” he bit as he exited the Kitchens with a loud bang.

He didn’t wait to see if Pansy would follow him, he knew she wouldn’t. She had made her choice, and if that was Potty over the magnificence of Draco Malfoy, it was her bloody loss.

Damned Potter!

The fact that he had all the wizards of England licking his ugly shoes wasn’t enough, he had to take my only friend.

»»-------------¤-------------««
Harry was stuffing his mouth with oatmeal while trying to figure out why somebody had thought it was a good idea to turn off the lights in the Great hall.

“Mate… why are you eating with your eyes closed?” Ron asked incredulously.

*That explains it.* Harry pried his eyelids open and sighed.

“It’s nothing, I am tired.”

“That seems to be the norm with you and Hermione…” Ron chewed on his food, irritably. Harry wanted to assure Ron that he had *nothing* to be jealous about but before he could, Hermione arrived. Her step was bouncy and both Ron and Harry perked up to hear what *amazing* thing she had come to tell them.

“Oh! Boys! I just talked to professor…”

The chatter of the students eating breakfast seemed to absorb Hermione’s voice. No matter how hard Harry tried he couldn’t divide the cluster of sounds assaulting his eardrums. He slurped up some more orange juice, with his last strength, deciding to rest his head for a second. He pushed his half-finished plate out of the way and placed his head on the cool wood. *Comfortable…*

“Harry!”

The earthquake was calling Harry’s name. He really didn’t feel like dealing with that now.

“Harry! We are going to be late.”

*Late to where?*

Suddenly everything was flooding and Harry jumped out of his seat, water dripping from his eyebrows.

“No my underwear!” he blurted. Flushing right after, he glanced around, but besides Hermione and Ron, who were giggling, there was nobody close enough to hear.

“Oh, man, Harry…” Ron snickered, putting an empty glass of water back on the table.

“Oh, Harry.” Hermione seemed more sympathetic. She extended her hand to the boy who had landed straight on his bum. “We are late for Charms,” she said as Harry took her hand. He would have done so sullenly, but he was too tired to muster anything more than a weak glare.

Harry dragged himself cursing his tiredness. Last night he had stayed with Pansy after Malfoy had so dramatically abandoned his friend. Harry wasn’t sure the blond even knew what that word meant. They had had lemon cake, it had been… Harry struggled to pull words from his sluggish brain. *Not catastrophic.* They had disagreed on many topics and she couldn’t care less about Quidditch, but… she could talk endlessly about books. Not textbooks, but novels, story books, fairy tales and so on. They had quickly not-not bonded over their love for Patrick Rothfuss. Harry
had expressed his surprise that she would enjoy a muggle author and she, after a second of consideration, had revealed that she couldn’t care whether the person was a wizard or a Muggle as long as the books made her laugh and cry.

Harry had accompanied her to the entrance to the Slytherin common room, making sure they didn’t get caught. Pansy had raised her eyebrows at the Marauder’s map but swallowed her curiosity and they had parted ways not quite as hostile as they had been before. Harry then had returned to his common room which had been so warm that he had fallen asleep in the middle of trying to start writing the essay. His friends had woken him up after what had felt like mere seconds, with questions about why he was sleeping on the couch, unfinished homework stuck to his face.

His drowsy mind hadn’t been able to come up with a better excuse than *Malfoy*.

That *had been* what had happened inherently, but his friends know him too well and had drilled the whole story out of him before they had reached the Great hall. After expressing how pleased she was with Harry’s attitude, Hermione had run off to talk to some poor professor who was making his way to the first meal of the day.

They entered the Charms’ classroom no more than two minutes late, but students had already taken their seats and professor started the topic of the day.

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*Unbelievable.*

Potter and his trusty sidekicks had just stormed in the classroom, ten minutes late and the professor hadn’t even bat an eye. Draco snorted, refocusing on his textbook, the silly man in front of the class, looked like he was about to fall from the book stack that he was balancing on.

Despite the fact that Draco had left the Kitchens at a considerably reasonable hour, he felt like he had been awake all night. He had kept startling awake from confusing nightmares about angry fat men with small eyes, dressed in button ups. They had demanded him to write story plots for them, saying that otherwise they will be eaten alive by slrignaf… whatever that was. As always the dream finished with a dose of scorching fire, sending Draco in an amok run for his life that ended in him falling out of his bed… twice.

Pansy had tried to talk to him before breakfast, but he had ignored her. She had looked fine. Mental break down – over. *Thankfully.* Draco wasn’t sure if he could support her very well, Slytherins didn’t have such problems often, or when they did, they dealt with them by themselves. *Comforting* wasn’t his area of expertise.

*Good thing she has Potter now.*

Draco’s wand exploded, sending the dummy he was supposed to levitate to shoot across the class, barely missing someone’s head. *Potter’s* head. Everyone looked at him, googling, like they had nothing better to stare at. *How about the friend-stealing-Gryffindor-that-everyone-thinks-is-something-special?*

“What are you staring at?” he snarled, shooting an angry glare, but not meeting anyone’s eyes.

The lesson resumed.

“Draco?”

The blond picked up his wand again, turning away from Pansy. It was hard considering they were
sitting right next to each other.

“Draco, please…”

“I am fine, Pansy. Go swoon over your new friend, leave me alone.”

“Okay, I’m done.” Pansy rolled her eyes, grabbing Draco by his wand hand, unceremoniously dragging him out of the classroom. Out of other’s earshots, Pansy let her friend’s hand go, putting her arms around herself.

“You have been attacking me every time I try to talk to you. I am not friends with Potter,” she hissed. “He is a complete tosser…”

Draco stared at her with blank eyes.

“I am just tired of living in fear… I told you.”

Draco’s face illuminated.

“You’re just using him,” he stated, relieved. The pressure on his chest that had been there since last night lessened. “Thank Merlin! I thought you really had gone off the deep end…”

“I’m not using him per say…” she denied, but looking up at Draco’s don’t-bullshit-me expression lifted her hands. “Fine. I might have weighted the cons and pros to being on Potter’s good side.”

“So you’re not abandoning me for a black-haired moron?”

“I would never! Draco. We have been through so much together, don’t you trust me more than that?”

“Never trust a Slytherin, they say,” Draco responded. “But I know about your crush on a Hufflepuff, so…”

“Well, I know about your crush on a Gryffindor…”

“I have no such thing!”

»»-------------¤-------------««

Pansy and Malfoy returned to the class when everyone was already packing. Harry watched them as they slid their books in to their bags. They seemed to have resolved their argument

Good.

As much as Malfoy irritated him, it was good that Pansy wasn’t left alone.

Ron and Hermione had run off to blow off some steam, but that left Harry with the perfect opportunity to approach Pansy. Standing outside the class, he puffed, digging in his bag for the parchment with the timetable.

“Potter,” Pansy greeted him with a nod, exiting the classroom. Malfoy, who was walking beside her, looked him over with his stone eyes – maybe silver – but didn’t seem about to punch him right away.

“Parkinson… er… Pansy?” Harry wavered, not feeling the surname, but name was almost just as weird.
“For Merlin’s sake, spare us your stammering,” Malfoy drawled, rolling his eyes. Pansy elbowed him in the ribs, watching Harry.

“She isn’t flirting with me, is she?” He shook his head, smiling nervously. Her grin seemed to be announcing trouble.

“I just wanted to ask if you were okay.”

“I’m fine. We Slytherins are different from Gryffindors.”

“Obviously.”

She snickered, dropping her hand to her hip.

“For example… I didn’t get as much as minute of sleep last night.”

Harry stared at her unbelieving.

“Doesn’t look like it, does it?” she smiled flicking her hair with her hand.

Harry shook his head. She looked as collected as always, hair combed, uniform spotless, not even her eyes were red. Nothing that could hint at the previous night’s ordeal.

“WELL, I will be going to the next class, you two…” Malfoy pointed with is fingers from one to other, “can just elope, in that cupboard, but I do not want to see it.”

“Draco.”

“Malfoy!”

They both looked at him with the same shocked expressions, it made Draco’s spine crawl.

CREEPY.

He shuddered, deciding that Pansy was on her own this time. Befriending Potter – no matter how profitable – made Draco feel nauseous. He would make his exit while he could so with dignity, doesn’t matter that it felt like Pansy was abandoning him. She wasn’t.

Draco stalked off to the next lesson.

After Malfoy had stormed off, Harry looked back at Pansy.

“I thought you weren’t fighting anymore.”

“We’re not,” was all she said. Harry raised his eyebrows, but she didn’t explain further. “What’s the next lesson?”

“For me? Erm… Potions,” Harry answered, glancing at the ripped parchment in his hand.

“That makes the two of us, let’s go. We can’t have our Saviour wondering about the dungeons alone.” Pansy stalked off her proud head high, Harry followed her wondering whether the Pansy he
had seen the night before was someone else.

Potions were going reasonably well, Harry had had to pair up with Pansy as they had arrived at one time, but it wasn’t all that bad. In fact Harry found himself warming up to the girl more and more. At the end of the lesson, they were asked to hand in their homework. As Harry had nothing to submit he approached the professor.

“Professor?” he asked. Behind him a person coughed. “Could you please, let me submit it tomorrow?”

Yermolay Vengerov looked at him and smiled. Not feeling reassured as the smile more reminded him of a shark, Harry tried to think of a good excuse.

“Mr Malfoy!” professor called. Harry looked over his shoulder, the Slytherin had been hastily exiting the class, now he glared at Harry and stalked back to the front of the classroom.

“Yes?” he said, eying Harry with a hateful glare.

“I believe I don’t have your homework on my desk…” professor Vengerov lulled, “but I do have one labelled ‘Harry Potter’ in a significantly neater handwriting than the usual scribbles I have to decipher.” He looked at both of the boys over his glasses. “Care to explain?”

“Well…” Malfoy started, but professor interrupted him with a wave of his hand.

“Wait…” he said, “I don’t care.” Then he set fire to the essay with the incorrect name. “Detention. Both.”

<…>

“Great!” Malfoy complained after the door to the murky classroom had fallen closed behind them. “Just wonderful, Potter.”

“How the hell was I supposed to know you were going to do that?”

“I said I would do your stupid homework, didn’t I, scar-face?”

“You should have said something, ferret-face.” Harry felt his face heat up. Malfoy was insufferable and to think he had actually thought he had seen a human the night before.

“You should have known better. Typical Gryffindor – quick to do stupid shit.”

“Because it’s so Slytherin-like to do as promised.”

Malfoy looked affronted.

“YES. Potter.”

“You’re a slimy little snake, Malfoy, I would never hold you to your word.”

“I hate you, scar-brain.”

“I…” Harry choked. He was irritated by the blond, but he didn’t hate him. Not after the war, not after working in Ministry. He had found out so many back stories, it sickened him to think about what had Malfoy and other pure-blooded children had gone through in their youth.

“What, Potter, did you choke on your tiny brain?”
We are late,” Harry said not meeting Slytherin’s eyes. He didn’t feel like arguing anymore, he felt tired.

Malfoy raised his eyebrows in surprise, but didn’t say anything. When Harry glanced at him again, he was wearing his thinking face. Don’t ask how Harry knew what Malfoy’s thinking face looked like. Being obsessed with a person for a couple of years has its perks.

Soon Malfoy was in front of Harry who happily followed the long-legged Slytherin to the next lesson. Harry noticed that Malfoy glanced at him a couple of times, but he just figured he was looking if Harry wasn’t going to attack him from behind. What an arse, to think Harry would fall that low. As they neared the classroom, Harry was on the verge of asking the Slytherin, what was he bloody smirking about.

Malfoy as if knowing what battle was happening in Harry’s mind, grinned. Harry’s hand clenched around his wand, his eyes followed to where Malfoy was pointing.

“Shit.”

“I wonder how many lessons you can be late to before professors have enough,” Malfoy said smugly, dropping his hand.

“Fuck. Malfoy.” Harry turned on his heel. Running down the corridor he turned his head shouting at the holding in laughter Malfoy. “I REALLY don’t like you!”

When he slouched down in the correct lesson, Malfoy’s laughter still echoing in his ears, all he could muster was: “I am going to get him for this.”

Hermione rolled her eyes, returning to listening to professor Binns. Ron startled out of his half-asleep state, questioningly wiggling his eyebrows at Harry.

<...>

Harry proudly fell back in to one of the armchairs – he had not been late for any of the afternoon classes and he had an hour before his Quidditch practise. Hermione’s brought news that he had two essays to finish before that, made his stomach twist uncomfortably. He was so tired.

“Harry,” it was Hermione’s voice. But… what was she doing, dressed like a toothbrush?

“Mate!” it was Ron… but he had an ears of a donkey. Harry decided to continue running from a muffin that was angry about his haircut. What an idiot. I told him – I was a plumber before.

“Harry! Malfoy is up to something!”

Next thing Harry knew he was staring at Ron who was red with laughter. Confused he looked around, surveying the common room.

“Harry, put away your wand,” Hermione said in a calming voice.

“Wha…” Harry cleared his throat. “What?”

“You’re late for your practice.”

“What? No…” Harry groaned, getting up. “Ron! What are you chortling about?”

“He is an immature ass, Harry, don’t worry.” Hermione regarded her boyfriend with slight disappointment.
“You still love me,” Ron smirked, stealing a kiss over Hermione’s book.

“Ron! Aren’t we late?” Harry asked, his voice only hinting at the desperation he felt, he was so tired.

“Yes, you are!” Hermione called, shoving the red-head slightly.

Next day was Saturday, but instead of it being a so longed for respite, Harry had to get up bright and early. Using professor’s McGonagall’s hearth, he arrived to the ministry through a specially arranged Floo connection. Breakfast he had had at the castle, but Soyer was waiting for him at the fireplace with a mug off steaming coffee which made him last through the day.

At the beginning of the school year they had agreed that Harry would spend one day a week completely devoted to the ministry’s ordeals and the rest furthering his education. So he did. The hope to return to the castle in time for dinner had been an illusion he had stopped having since one time he only got out of his office when it was already time for Sunday's breakfast. Only sheer spite and knowledge that if he wouldn’t do it, no one would, kept him going.

Harry held to a hope that by the end of the year he could get back to Hogwarts in time for dinner. That was his goal.

Coming back at midnight, he collapsed in his bed and slept through till Sunday’s lunch. Ron woke him up on Hermione’s orders and they together went to the great hall.

“Ah! And, Harry, Parkinson was looking for you yesterday,” Hermione informed him as they sat down. Ron choked on the bread he had already managed to stuff in his mouth.

“What?” he forced, spluttering. Hermione looked at him disgusted.

“Listen to me, Ronald. You get your manners straight or…”

“Sorry, ‘Mione…” Ron sat down.

Harry noted the information but didn’t dwell on it. He barely kept his head above the ocean of the homework he was late on as it was. He didn't have any spare time for anyone, even for suicidal...

Oh, look at that, I have a lot of free time actually.

After filling his howling stomach he felt much more awake and considerably more positive. His eyes travelled to the Slytherin table, Pansy and Malfoy were sitting next to each other, eating lemon cake. Malfoy was glaring at Harry.

What in the hell did I do now?

When Pansy noticed that Harry was looking at them her hand shook, so violently, she spilled orange juice over the Slytherin on the other side of her. Harry lowered his eyes.

When the pair of Slytherins got up, Harry left Ron and Hermione happily sharing a piece of chocolate cake. He approached the pair in the empty Entrance hall.

“Pansy! Hei, what did you want yesterday?”

Malfoy looked at Harry like he was the cause to all his problems - even more so than usual - and strolled off, leaving Pansy rolling her eyes.
“Just Draco was being the absolutely bitchiest bitch, because you skipped the detention on Friday.”

“Shit. I forgot.”

“That’s what I told him, but he wouldn’t shut up about it so I suggested finding you and taking it out on you.”

“That’s nice of you…”

“Come on, you get off on arguing with him too.”

“What? I do not.”

That caused the girl to giggle like somebody put a hex on her. Harry pouted until she could speak in whole sentences again.

“You know what? You’re so like Draco, now I know why we clicked.”

“I am NOTHING like him.”

“Okay, okay. Don’t get your Gryffindor pants in a twist.”

“Well, I was working yesterday. I am working every Saturday, so it’s pretty pointless to search for me then... just for future knowledge.”

“Oh, okay.” She looked to the direction where Malfoy had gone, but then turned back to Harry. “We were going to go to the library, Draco is insisting on getting flawless grades this year,” she said her voice conveying the likeness of that outcome. “He wanted no detentions too, but then he remembered you, and dropped that dream.” That caused Harry to snicker. “But what I am saying is – maybe you want to come with us?”

Harry blinked. Twice.

“Come with you and Malfoy? To the library? To not commit a homicide?” he felt the need to make sure.

“Yes,” Pansy said. Harry had the notion that she was keeping in an insult... or a couple. She is actually attempting to be civil... even nice.

Creepy.

“Yes, I could join you.” Harry heard himself agreeing. “But I need to warn Ron and Hermione. Meet you there?”

“Okay,” she agreed, trailing off in the direction of the library.

Harry shook his head at the situations he got himself in willingly, but decided to follow through.

When he told his friends what he was planning on doing, Ron jokingly insisted that Hermione should check Harry for curses. The witch dismissed her boyfriend viciously, praising Harry for overstepping his childish prejudices. Harry shut Ron up by saying that he was just trying to get better grades without taking up too much of Hermione’s time. At which, both of his friends beamed at each other. Merlin knew, they wanted all the time in the world.

Wishing him luck they left him at the library’s doors. Harry took two deep breaths, mentally
preparing to enter but in the middle of the second a third year Ravenclaw tossed the doors open a furious librarian on his heels. Harry slipped past them out of the way, hearing madam Pince’s sharp voice while looking for the two Slytherins.

He found them sitting in one of the further corners of the library, occupying a space worth of six people but the library was empty as it was Sunday. Harry groaned quietly. It was Sunday. His only relatively free day.

Nevertheless Malfoy had already noticed him so it was too late to turn back. The blond only spared him a half of a second then he bored back in to the book that was open in front of him. Harry wondered whether it would catch fire from the intent stare.

“Potter,” Pansy greeted.

"Parkinson." Harry hesitated a moment, then his brain went: error! "Malfoy."

The person in question looked at him and Harry remembered why they were nemeses. Because Malfoy just hated him. How motherfucking pleasant. Again confronted with the fact that he couldn’t hate Malfoy, Harry sat down avoiding the silver-dagger glare.

Pansy met Malfoy's unwilling eyes that rolled so back in to his head Harry wondered if they would just stick there, but, no, he was soon looking down at his book again. The witch kicked him under the table, causing a hiss, but the Slytherin looked at her again. Harry saw a message pass between them, it only alarmed him partly. What alarmed him was Pansy getting up.

"I need a book," she excused herself and disappeared in the aisles of books with one last pointy look at her house-mate over her shoulder.

Harry was already confused and he became only more confused when he looked at the pale boy sitting opposite him. Malfoy was furiously wriggling a quill in his fingers, not looking at Harry. The Gryffindor felt his stomach lurch with the anticipation – Malfoy looked nervous. What was he looking nervous for? Harry threw a look around, nobody suspicious was to be seen. Am I going to be cursed right now?

"Potter, listen..."

Harry's fingers twitched in a reflex to grab his wand.

"Merlin. Relax, you GAH."

Harry raised his eyebrows at the incoherent insult.

"Pansy insists that I be civil with you," he drawled, evidently unhappy, but forced to comply.

"Is she crazy?" Harry couldn’t imagine, being even remotely civil with the blond snake-boy.

Malfoy looked relieved.

“I know! How can she expect something so unlike us?"

“Girls.” Harry bobbed his head, reassured that Malfoy didn’t really expect anything impossible. “Hermione keeps nagging me about trying to find the human side of you.”

“A human? Side?" Malfoy exclaimed in mock horror. “Excuse me while I go vomit in Pansy’s flawless handbag.”
“Be my guest, I feel like joining you when I think about you and I being civil. I mean…” Harry met Malfoy’s eyes over the table. “That’s impossible.”

“Glad we agree at least on something, Potter.” Malfoy shifted in his chair, looking content. “What?”

Harry was still staring. He opened his mouth, but his breath got stuck between his ribs. “We just agreed…” he drew a ragged breath. “Is that considered civil? Because it wasn’t that bad…”

Malfoy considered.

“I think, involving the two of us anything that doesn’t end in curses flying is civil.”

Harry nodded.

When Pansy appeared, peering around the corner, she stopped on the spot, dumbfounded to see the two boys, she had surely thought would already had hexed one another, sitting in a silence that didn’t feel I-will-kill-you-if-you-make-a-SINGLE-sound silence. Recovering she couldn’t keep a smug smile off her face.

“Hey, boys!” she waved. “I see we still have the right amount of limbs in the right places. Can I officially call it an end of the Malfoy-Potter rivalry era?”

“Oh hell no! Pansy!”

“NO.”

They both looked surprised at one another and closed their mouths. Pansy reclaimed her place besides Harry, looking the two up and down.

“You two are similar!”

“WE are not!” They said in one voice.

“Scar-head is a moron.”

“Ferret-brain is a slimy git.”

Draco was having a terrible time concentrating. He was still mentally recovering from speaking in one voice with Potter and from Pansy’s manhandling him into being not-so at war with his favourite basket case. Draco considered if it was possible that she had fed him some sort of shroom to make him more cooperative with her manipulations.

In the middle of his musings, he became aware of somebody sighing and puffing every other goddamn second of every shucking minute. Dropping his quill he looked at Potter, who was scratching his forehead with his overused writing-stick. While he looked, the Gryffindor sighed again, pressing the depleted so-called-quill that looked more and more like something taken from the back of a dirty farm animal to his lips. With the next heavy exhale he bit in to it, causing Draco to hold in a groan. Instead he kicked the Gryffindor under the table, successfully stopping the huffs and puffs.

“What?”

“You sound like a fucking train, Potter! What are you trying to do? Invent the philosopher’s
“I am writing the potions essay. If you must know,” Potter said, his voice unpleasantly void of the usual passion.

Draco thought for a second, then decided.

“I said I would do it for you, scar-brain,” he said, grabbing the parchment that looked like a second year would have written it with his leg and eyes closed. “Merlin…” Draco looked over the wasted paper. When he looked up Potter was looking at him suspiciously.

“Well?” he asked seeing that Draco was looking at him. “We have been fighting since you defiled yourself in to my life and now you’re gonna just do my homework?”

“I did what? It was you, who broke in to madam Malkin’s and acted like the arrogant golden hero you are.”

“You insulted Hagrid before you even said your name! You couldn’t have expected me to act any differently. He was the first person to treat me like a human! And you basically reduced him to something lower! You can’t just do that! Nobody can. It’s wrong. It’s what Voldemort did. It’s what is wrong with the world. We don’t treat each other with respect.”

The golden boy was out of breath, thankfully. Draco would have slapped him otherwise.

“I was a child. Raised by an ancient pureblood family. I didn’t exactly have all the facts.”

Potter had the audacity to look affronted. The git. Then something clicked in the messy-haired git’s hollow skull, he cast his eyes down and nodded.

“I am just so done. Muggles discriminate for the colour of your skin and sexuality, wizards for blood and parents…. I mean… why?”

At the last word he met Draco’s eyes. The blond felt the wild forest-green eyes seeking an answer, any answer. To his own surprise Draco wanted nothing more than to soothe the deep ache Potter was now uncovering. Instead he lowered his head, glancing at Pansy who had listened and now had a similar vaguely regretful facial expression he felt on his own face.

Potter slouched back in to his chair, sloppily rubbing his eyes. Draco suddenly saw the man, who had taken up the burden of fixing things. He felt a lump in his throat.

<...>

Draco was having a hard time focusing on the schoolwork. Again.

Pansy, who apparently didn’t really plan on studying anything today, was chatting with Potter. To Draco’s utmost irritation he kept zoning out of the book he was holding in front of him to the conversation. Potter was just the embodiment of distraction. His voice although the right volume for library was echoing in Draco’s skull.

When their talk moved on from muggle novels to the night on the tower, the blond dropped the act of reading. Potter looked at him briefly but continued listening to Pansy who was talking in a detached voice, explaining her reasoning. Draco felt his skin crawl with protectiveness, Pansy was his friend. Potter was some Gryffindor from the side, he didn’t have any right to her secrets, yet she shared them anyways. And as surprised as it made Draco, Potter didn’t act all high and mighty about it, he didn’t act anything like Draco would have guess he would. He was just silent, his eyes
focused on the girl. Draco would even say he saw a bit of sadness, but why would the golden hero of the wizarding world be sad for some Death Eater child.

_He is such a fucking saviour._

“But now I feel better,” Pansy said, surprising Draco. “I really feel silly for being so afraid of you. You’re just the purest summer child, you wouldn’t harm a fly.”

Draco of course agreed, he had said that Potter was harmless since Pansy had voiced her worries. The raven-head was just too _good_, to be a real concern beyond everyday annoyances.

Potter laughed, the load of worries seemingly bouncing off his shoulders. Draco stared. _He is a moron. He is a Gryffindor. He is the golden boy who I HATE very-but-not-so-much-anymore._

_Shit._

Noticing that Potter was looking at him questioningly, Draco went back to creating two potions essays.

<...>

Draco felt the conversation growing as soon as they parted their ways with Potter.

“Listen, Draco…” Pansy said, placing her hand on his elbow. That was a bad sign, it meant she was going to say something he didn’t like. “I know you _really_ don’t like me spending time with Potter, but…” it seemed like she was shaken by the thought herself, “I think it might _actually_ be helping.”

Draco was aware. He didn’t like but he wasn’t blind. He didn’t say anything. She squeezed his arm.

“Not to be all Hufflepuff on you, but… I really can’t…” her voice broke.

Draco felt himself holding the dark-haired girl before he could even check whether the hallway was empty. Over her head he surveyed that it in fact was.

“Pansy, I might dislike Potter with a _passion_, but you’re my friend.”

He knew she understood as she closed her arms around his torso, burying her head in his shoulder.

»»-------------¤-------------««

Chapter End Notes

Uhuuu! hi.

I am going all out on those loooong chapter names ^^

Do leave a review and have a wonderful day

Rasa
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After a bit of a lay-back day that was Sunday Harry was having a wonderful Monday up until a point when an incredibly exited third year ran past him in a hallway. Not only that, but he also yelled like his pants had caught fire.

“I will be Harry Potter for Halloween!!”

When he noticed Harry, he choked, his eyes rolled out of their sockets and he preceded to fall on top of three Ravenclaw girls. They didn’t agree with the stumbling boy and he ended up klutzily walking away from the hallway to his friends that were giggling in the classroom.

Hermione winced.

“What does he mean?” Harry asked, mortified.

“You were asleep… McGonagall announced a Halloween ball on the 31st…” she explained already predicting Harry’s reaction.

“No, Merlin,” Harry groaned, imagining the great hall full of small children dressed like him, staring at him.

“The younger years will have a separate event, don’t worry. It’s…”

“I am not going. I dislike balls and I can’t dance for shit.” Harry tried to reason, all too well knowing that it was mostly pointless.

“Harry, you have to. Eight years will have an altogether separate party because we’re of age.”

“That’s stupid, I don’t have time…”

“It will be fun, promise,” she said warningly.

“I really…”

“Harry Potter!”

“Fine!”

Ron smirked sympathetically, he had been probably talked into going in a similar manner.

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“I have to what?”

“Dress up! Honestly, Draco, it will be fun,” Pansy tried to calm down her friend who had just realised what was required in order to go to the eight years’ party.

“I know it will be… I just don’t have nearly enough time to plan my outfit. SO MANY POSSIBILITIES!” the blond jumped from his bed where he had been sitting, to stand in front of a mirror for hours to no end.
Pansy laughed at her friend’s enthusiasm.

“Come on, cosplay boy, we have a lesson to go to.”

“Right!” Draco grabbed his bag, his mind still obviously away in the clouds as he forgot to put on his robe exiting his bedroom.

When he was shuddering outside Hagrid’s hut he blamed Pansy whole-heartedly. Without batting an eye she cast a warming charm on the complaining blond. But only earned a glare for her efforts.

“I would have done that myself if I had wanted,” he said, breaking her magic. “You always make my fantastic arse hot.”

“Isn’t it just always like that?”

“Yes! But…”

“Listen, as fascinating as the talks about Malfoy’s arse are, just try to listen to what Hagrid is saying. We wouldn’t want anything to happen to you because you ignored his instructions.”

Potter had turned his perfect-boy face to them.

“Nobody asked for your opinion, Potter!”

“Pfft… get your head out of your fantastic arse and listen, or don’t blame Hagrid when you get eaten by a pixy.”

“We are not even learning about pixies this year, Mr I-know-it-all,” Draco sneered.

“Orthoses. We are studying two headed dogs, I know.”

Potter had actually been listening, how unusual.

“Good on you, but did you know I actually had a two headed dog until I was fourteen.”

He felt Pansy glancing at him surprised, Potter had also noticed her surprise.

“Liar.”

“Pansy!”

“I am sorry… it’s just a weird thing to lie about… sorry, sorry.”

“Merlin! I am surrounded by people that want my death.”

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Harry turned his back to the Slytherin to hide his smile. He was starting to worry about the amount of smiling he had been doing around Malfoy and Pansy. He had dreaded the fact that they came as a joined package, but now he actually felt glad that they did.

Not-going-for-the-kill bickering with Malfoy was just exhilarating.

He wiped the grin when he noticed Hermione and Ron looking at him. They didn’t seem too worried, though, simply inquisitive.

The lesson went by relatively calmly – as it is possible when you’re learning about two headed
dogs. Malfoy got dog slobber all over his pants, the Gryffindor trio had a good laugh until the blond accidentally dropped the entire dog-snack box on top of Harry, sending the orthoses to lick him clean. When Harry had gotten to his feet, his dishevelled look had sent everyone into a fit of laughter, including Harry, when one of the more friendly dogs had placed its paws on the boy’s shoulders, licking his face from top to bottom, sending his glasses crushing to the ground.

To Harry’s surprise, when he half blind had searched for his glasses, it had been Draco Malfoy – the prince of Slytherin Draco Malfoy – who pointed to where they had fallen. Sure enough he hadn’t passed them over or anything, but it had been a long way from broken noses. Trying to not think about that too much, Harry had rummaged for his wand, sighing about his once again damaged glasses. And Malfoy had had the audacity to send him into confusing whirlwinds of thoughts again by sending a fixing charm from where he had been standing. When Harry had stuck the glasses back on his nose, staring at the blond, he had given him a ‘what?’ glare, continuing to pet a black orthos that Hagrid called Runner, despite the fact that it seemed to be more inclined on sleeping on Malfoy’s knees.

<…>

“Don’t say you didn’t see it! Draco Malfoy. The Mr I-hate-everything-that-moves. He fixed my glasses. He didn’t curse my blind arse, he helped.”

Harry was sitting in front of the Gryffindor common room’s hearth, neglecting his homework and complaining about the Slytherin being confusing.

“That seems highly atypical…” Hermione said, most of her attention focused on the book in her lap.

“Maybe somebody else fixed them, you’re so blind without them it’s possible you…” Ron tried to calm his friend down, while copying Hermione’s essay.

“No. I know what I saw.” Harry sat back, dropping his quill. His eyes searched the ceiling for an explanation, but he got nothing. “Maybe he doesn’t want to fight anymore…”

“HaH! Harry, that’s ridiculous.” Ron shook his head.

“Maybe he has changed,” Hermione reasoned, lifting her head for a second. “It is possible, you know.”

“Well… maybe, but not Malfoy, the bloody git is through and through rotten,” Ron disagreed. “Besides even now that you are on ‘friendly’ terms, all you do is quibble!”

Harry listened to their bickering with half an ear, his mind lost in the way that Malfoy had ruffled the black fur of the two-headed dog. Fair fingers contrasting with the dark animal. Something about it had been so affectionate, Harry felt shivers. Who knew Draco Malfoy could touch something without it dying.

Okay, that’s a bit far…

But he would laugh his arse off, knowing that I thought that

Why do I know that?

Not being able to clear his head from the uneasiness sowing thoughts, he decided to go for a walk. Ron grumbled about Harry always abandoning them, Hermione reminded him that he didn’t have much time to finish the Herbology essay, but he went nonetheless.
Strolling through the castle calmed him. The lessons had already ended so the hallways were mostly empty. Lost in thought he only became aware of his surroundings when he heard the unmistakable hoot of owls. He had reached the Owlery. Before he could make up his mind whether to go up pet some of the school’s owls, or keep away as he had no one to write to, the doors sprung open.

A blond wizard came through the doors, his face relaxed, hair being swept around by the wind. It was Malfoy – because, of course, it was him – Harry tried not to swear at his luck.

*I go for a walk. To get my thoughts sorted. And SURPRISE. The exact person I was thinking about. Is before me.*

*Lovely.*

Ripped out of his contemplations about karma, Harry noticed that Draco immediately after spotting him became defensive, all his calmness rumpling and overlaying with the stone cold distain Harry was used to.

“I am not following you.”

Harry felt like punching himself. Malfoy looked insulted.

“Why in the world not? I might be *up to something.*”

It was Harry’s turn to be irritated.

“In my defence, you *were* up to a lot of shit that year.”

“Touché. But if you’re not following me… why *are* you here?”

“I was just taking a walk…” Harry said, realising all he had to do to know why Malfoy had fixed his spectacles was to ask. “And wondering, why did you fix my glasses?”

“You will see tomorrow, Potter,” Malfoy said with a smirk that made Harry’s stomach turn with anxiety.

“What do you mean?” he said ripping his glasses off his face, but immediately regretting it as now Malfoy was blurry. Harry stepped back, holding the tainted thing away from himself. *I should have known! He is just the kind of person that would curse a blind man’s glasses.*

Malfoy laughed. Harry straightened up, listening. Malfoy’s expression could have been anything, but his laugh was genuine. Harry wondered whether the freak was actually happy about hurting his rival or was he that good at laughing the purest laugh on demand.

“Honestly, Potter…” he paused to laugh again. “Your face.”

Harry calmed a bit, he could imagine himself – leaping back at the same time as slapping his glasses away from his face. It might be funny. But not *that* funny, if the glasses might explode on his face.

“Malfoy? Did you curse my glasses?” Harry questioned.

“Merlin. You *are* paranoid,” Malfoy said straightening his back. Then took pity on the Gryffindor. “No, I didn’t curse them.”

Harry didn’t like the unsaid ‘but’ that he was hearing.
“But you did something! Right? Oh my Lord, Malfoy…”

“Relax, scar-head….” Seeing as his advice was not taken, he sighed. “Well, fine then. It was just a prank. Give them to me, I will break the spell.”

He took out his wand, stepping forward, Harry jumped back before he could stop himself. He felt ten times more exposed when he didn’t see properly.

“Calm down, Potter,” Malfoy said again. Harry shivered, the sliver-head’s tone was levelled and bordered with calming. Harry squinted trying to see Malfoy’s eyes, but it was no good. Sighing Gryffindor handed over the glasses, fully aware that, if Malfoy would decide to run off with them laughing, he would have to clamber all the way to the common room tripping over every object that camouflaged itself too well.

“So, how blind are you?” Malfoy asked, surprising Harry.

“Not that blind,” Harry said, aware himself that the lies came little too quickly.

“Never mind, I looked through. You are fucking blind,” Malfoy snickered.

Harry had seen the Slytherin’s silhouette as he raised his glasses to his head and down again. Harry was half sure Malfoy would leave him incapacitated, but the blond stepped forward, extending his hand. When Harry was hesitant to take them, Malfoy groaned.

“I am not going to murder you if the last thing you would see would be an unclear blob instead of my striking features. Where’s the fun in that?”

Harry took the glasses, turned them over in his hands, but they felt normal. With a resigned sigh he put them on his face squinting his eyes shut. Malfoy snorted and Harry opened his eyes, hoping to shut the blond the hell up.

“Did you bite your tongue, Potter?”

“No.”

Draco didn’t like the way Potter was staring at him, it seemed the Gryffindor was trying to wrap his head around Draco’s motives, which Draco didn’t have…

“Shall I escort you to the castle? I can’t let anything happen to the Saviour of the wizarding world.”

“Shut up with your… whatever it is you’re doing,” Harry blurted.

“I am not doing anything,” Draco stated coldly, walking past Harry, his smile gone. Golden Potter, always thinking I am doing something wrong.

Only three steps later he heard the Gryffindor moving as he caught up.

“Sorry, I really wasn’t following you…” he looked to the ground. “Thank you for the glasses.”

Draco smiled.

“That’s better…” His smile froze, stricken by the greenness of Potter’s eyes.

Harry waited for the silence to be broken again, but when it wasn’t, he shifted awkwardly.
“Fancy a seeker versus seeker?” the black-haired boy asked too fast and too uncertainly for it to be comprehended. Or maybe it was just that Draco’s ears were trained to filter out unlikely sentences.

“What?” was all he could say.

“You heard me… it’s dark now, but maybe tomorrow?”

“We have detention tomorrow you oaf,” Draco said, remembering how his tongue worked.

“Right… shit, I forgot… again,” Potter said. His eyes widened “I have a Quidditch practice tomorrow too! Shit, shit, shit…”

“Shit will be the last of your worries if you miss the detention again. Vengerov lectured me about the importance of doing homework for thirty minutes, before saying that we need to come together on Tuesday. I wanted to feed him something from Longbottom’s brews…”

“That ought to shut him up,” Potter snickered. “I don’t think he realises that potions is not the only subject we’re taking.”

“Potter.” The green eyes snapped to his. “Don’t agree with me on my masterful plans, that’s creepy.”

“Sod.”

The Gryffindor looked irritated.

They kept walking side by side, Draco hadn’t been paying attention to where they were going. Judging by the other’s angry stare that was bored into the floor, he hadn’t either. Draco sighed.

“Don’t be such a princess… fine you can agree with me, but we’re not friends.”

“I don’t need a special permission from you, Malfoy.”

“No, you don’t, Mr I-am-the-Ministry,” Draco teased, Gryffindor’s gloominess was interfering with his pleasant evening.

“Sod off.”

“You have no elegance, Potter…”

<…>

Stepping into the Slytherin common room, he didn’t notice Pansy until she was right in front of him.

“How did the walk to the Owlery go?” she asked, her eyes glinting in suspicion.

“It was fine,” Draco said, covering his smug smile.

“Okay. Listen, I was talking with Nott…”

They freed a place for themselves with a couple of practiced glares at second-years causing them to stalk off. Draco made himself comfortable in the chair, pushing off his shoes to tuck his feet under him. Draco listened to Pansy’s chatter. She seemed so good, but he wouldn’t presume anything again. He just listened, noting some of the interesting pieces of information, until she was done gossiping.
“I encountered our favourite cat-food brain,” he found himself saying. “That great moron dared to accuse me of tampering with his glasses… well, I did… but the audacity! He is way too cocky to be the chosen one.” Draco rolled his eyes, shivering. The mere thought of the Gryffindor made him feel funny inside. “Pansy… I can’t stand him… please… And have you seen his stupid staring balls? The greenness, I swear! He has put a shining charm on them or something…”

“And his HAir!” Pansy mirrored Draco’s despaired tone.

“I know! The git probably doesn’t even know what a mirror is. I should charm one so that it would follow him around, maybe then he would order his messy mop of hair.”

Draco was so caught up in complaining about Potter that he noticed Pansy’s amused look when he already knew his grave had been dug and the coffin nailed.

“Draco… I asked you about the weather…”

“I know…” Draco struggled to explain himself. “But that’s a pointless topic to talk about.”

“And Potter is not?”

“He just annoys me! With his perfect eyes and stupid glasses and hordes of adoring fans.”

Pansy was stifling a smile now. Draco didn’t like it one bit. He crossed his arms turning his head to the side.

“Draco, sweetie… I know you always say how much he annoys you, but could it be possible…”

“NO. Pansy, your concerns were heard loud and clear the previous time you talked about it. That is not the case.” Draco shook his head.

“It wouldn’t be that bad, Draco…”

“No, it would. Even if…” Draco couldn’t say the words. “What you’re thinking were true, it would be bad. As bad as when you were pining after that Ravenclaw.”

“You are too melodramatic for your own good,” Pansy drawled, but spared Draco the continuing of the topic he had dismissed long ago.

_I don’t like Potter. I DISLIKE him._

_And he hates me._

Chapter End Notes

the next chapters will probably be shorter than the first two, don't crucify me ^^

Do leave a review please ^^

Rasa
The following day leaving for the detention Draco couldn’t shake the feeling that something was off. He bid goodbye to Pansy who hugged him tightly, wishing him luck with the strict professor. He exited their common room walked to the end of the hallway and then stopped.

His gut was telling him something was wrong. Pansy had hugged him one second too long. He bit his lip, but didn’t hesitate. He ran back to the wall, hissing the password. Entering the room he had just left he scanned for his friend.

Pansy was sitting on a couch by the fire, reading the Prophet. Perfectly fine. Draco walked over to her and slouched beside her, stacking his feet on the coffee table.

“I changed my mind, I am staying,” Draco said, sullenly at his own emotionality.

“Go to your detention, Draco,” she said in a quiet voice. Her black hair was combed, but not styled, she was wearing a Slytherin green t-shirt and a black skirt. She looked so neat, Draco wanted to ruffle her hair just because his insides were ice cold with fear.

“I can’t!” he hissed. “I am fucking afraid that you will do something utterly Hufflepuff, if I leave you for more than ten minutes. And I can’t have that.”

Other Slytherins had learned to mind their own business when it came to Draco and Pansy long ago so the pair had the advantage of nobody sitting too close. They were like the platonic power-couple of Slytherins. Draco stared at the girl ignoring the fire that was cracking in the hearth despite it pulling on his nerves almost as much as the girl sitting beside him.

Pansy lifted her eyes to her friend, the Prophet forgotten in her hands. Draco felt an arctic stab in his gut as the girls eyes screamed at him.

“Come on, Pans’,” he said, taking her by her hand. They left the common room with secretive glances from other students nagging at their backs.

After making sure that the girl didn’t need madam Pomfrey right fucking now, Draco led her to a faraway corner of the caste and sat her down on a windowsill, settling down beside her. He tried to calm his breathing, but the mere thought of losing Pansy made his insides turn.

When he looked at her again, her eyes were shining with tears, but her cheeks were dry. Draco’s heart convulsed painfully as he wrapped his arm around Pansy’s tense shoulders. She clung to his shirt as her tears escaped her eyes silently.

Draco waited until she was able to speak. It took a while. He managed to contemplate the fact that the strong woman he had grown to lay on occasionally, had a weak side. As much as that scared him it also somewhat doused his fear that she might find out about his own terrors.

“I thought… I…”

“Just breathe, Pans’, just breathe…” he said, wiping her eyes.

Over Pansy’s shoulder he noticed somebody rounding the corner. Bewildered he recognised the
unwelcome somebody as the saint Potter. Draco sent him a glare that even the infamous brick-head couldn’t misinterpret and wide-eyed the Gryffindor stalked back from where he had come from. Like a stupid owl, Draco thought, like a green-eyed owl… that is stupid…. of course.

Draco shook his head returning his attention to Pansy who hadn’t noticed anything unusual. She was wiping her closed eyes with her trembling fingers, her lips half open.

“I thought…” she sniffled. “That being on good terms with Potter would help…” she wiped her eyes again, sending a desperate look at Draco. “But it doesn’t, honestly… I don’t know what to do. I am just afraid of him… and the Dark lord… and my parents… for my parents… the Dementors…” she whispered her voice bringing chills to Draco spine as he recalled the time in confinement. “I am a Slytherin, but all I can do is be afraid, that’s pretty useless…”

Draco was at a loss for words.

“Fear is not all you are,” he said looking in to Pansy’s eyes. “I understand, I do.” He wavered only half a second. “I may have lied… I am scared too… not of Potty-head, but of other things…” he blabbered, trying to squeeze some sort of magical words from himself.

“I know you’re scared, Draco… you never sit by the fire anymore…”

Draco widened his eyes at Pansy’s observations.

“Yes…” he swallowed the urge to cross his arms and shield himself from the girl. “Well, you see? I am not going to jump off a tower because of that…” Draco said before realising that the conversation for a change was in no way about him. “I mean… if I can do it, you can surely…”

Pansy snorted wiping her nose.

“I am not strong… not like that.”

“Of course, you are!” Draco argued keeping his voice low. “You’re the strongest person I know… we’ve been through a lot of shit, Pansy… don’t leave me…”

“I don’t want to hurt you… or anyone for that matter, that’s why I am not so keen on living anymore… I don’t really know…”

“You’re saying you don’t want to hurt me?” Draco asked.

“Of course, I don’t,” she sniffled. “But…”

“That’s case closed then. You can’t die. Besides I know you want to live, or we wouldn’t be having this conversation, Pansy…”

“I really…”

Her sentence was disturbed by a disaster that appeared around the corner, this time even Pansy noticed the clumsy Gryffindor. He was out of breath, his arms full, but he calmly approached the pair sitting on the windowsill staring at him.

“Good evening,” he said. “I believe you need a private place…”

“Please, don’t suggest the Room of Requirement,” Draco snapped before the advancing annoyance could say anything more. The Gryffindor’s plans could be read right off his face. “Just keep walking and leave us alone.”
Potter shook his head, smiling a small smile.

“No can do, Malfoy. Pansy,” he greeted. Then he returned his attention to the basket in his hands. “As I am skipping detention and a Quidditch practice I should really make sure nobody dies…” he opened the lid, letting the two Slytherin’s peek inside. “It’s completely illegal, so we should probably go somewhere where it wasn’t possible for professors just stumble across our little picnic.”

Inside the woven basket was food, a lot of it.

"This is the end of the castle, I don't think even classes happen here more than once a month. We should be fine as long as we're not blowing stuff up," Draco said.

"Phhh... And there goes my plan with the explosives," Potter exclaimed, pretending to discard something over his shoulder.

Draco shook his head. “How did you even find us?”

“I would tell you…” Potter started. “Oh, no, I wouldn’t,” he finished smugly, switching his gaze to Pansy who was watching him from where she was pressed against Draco’s chest.

Potter smiled at her. Draco saw it, Pansy did too. That smile was so full of light, sadness and hope, Draco felt his heart clench which was stupid, considering Potter hadn’t even smiled at him. What the Gryffindor had sold to get that smile was a mystery, but Draco sure knew it wasn’t his soul. Soulless people didn't go around smiling at people like that just because they could.

“Potter,” he managed to say.

Pansy looked at him, Potter looked at him too his smile losing the beam. Harry sighed.

“Look, I brought you food, I don’t really have any right to meddle in your business… I just want to help.”

Pansy turned away, burying her face in Draco’s shirt, she was mumbling and trembling, Draco hugged her tightly, having no clue what to do. Angrily he looked at Potter. The git was looking back just as lost so Draco rolled his eyes looking away from the useless Gryffindor.

They stayed quiet until Pansy shook Draco’s hand’s off, wiping her face. She clenched her hands, evening out her breathing her eyes closed. Bit by bit she collected herself externally, while both boys stared. When her trembling stilled she opened her eyes, revealing that they were the only window showing her real emotions. Whirling storm of hopelessness and fear.

“Pansy…” Draco said in a pained awe. “And you’re saying you’re not strong…”

“I agree, Pansy, that was fucking impressive,” Potter echoed.

“But it doesn’t help, I am still burning on the inside,” she said, her voice bleak. “I am afraid. Afraid of everything.”

“You’re not afraid of everything,” Potter stated before Draco could say anything.

Pansy focused her dark eyes on him, disagreeing.

“Puppies! Kittens, baby cows, flowers, ice-cream! New dresses!” he counted, motioning Draco to say something too. “Chocolate… or lemon cake…”
“Yes, Pans’, if we’re talking, you can’t say things so vague… you’re not afraid of me, are you?” Draco asked making sure to block out the offending Gryffindor from his peripheral vision, his thoughts and all the other ways he could sense Potter being there. The blond clung to Pansy now a little for his sake too as saying feeling things in front of Potter was mortifying.

Pansy shook her head weakly, lowering her eyes.

“Then I am not afraid of everything... I am afraid of..." She paused for a moment thinking. "...me. What I will do when I get scared the next time. What will I do to all the nice things you mentioned.”

“Good thing then that all you have to do to know is ask yourself...” Potter said softly.

“But I can’t. I would have never thought I would make a choice that made me end up with most of the students of this very school pointing wands at me, ready to maim.”

"You, Pansy, made one… or a couple…” Potter stammered as Draco glared at him. “I mean… what I am saying is – your mistakes don’t define you. You always have choice and you always have hope. You’re not alone. Everything is going to be alright...” Potter promised. "Let's have that picnic. Food elevates mood."

He rummaged in his basket pulling out a blanket, he tossed it on the windowsill. Draco was watching him. He couldn’t help it. The infuriating git was actually helping.

Draco didn’t want to, but he felt relief at the back of his throat, releasing the pressure on his chest a bit.

Maybe Potter knows what he is doing…

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Harry was sweating his brains out.

I have no clue what I am doing.

How was he supposed to help her if the thing that was hurting her was herself?

How?

Spitting his jelly insides, Harry kept himself moving. Not feeling comfortable just sitting in the middle of the shadowy hallway he looked to both sides. Noticing something at the end of the corridor he stepped a couple of steps that way.

“Sit there?” he asked absentmindedly walking to the piece of the castle he had never noticed before. At the end of the hallway was a circular space. It was ceilinged reminding of a small dome, the wall with the windows was pushed out, creating an alcove. The darkness behind the windows was pouring inside, only flashy shadows jumping around from the torches in the hallway.

Harry illuminated his wand, looking over the place. Nodding he turned back only to see that Malfoy was leading Pansy away. Harry rolled his eyes.

“At least take the food I stole for you,” he called.

“Fuck off,” Malfoy called. “We all know you didn’t steal shit. You just asked politely.”

Harry smirked. “Might have, yeah… but I still went through the trouble…”
“Oh, for Merlin’s sake…” Malfoy glared, but stalked back to take the basket. Harry extended his arm, but didn’t let go when Malfoy grabbed the handle.

“We could stay here,” Harry proposed now that Malfoy was close enough to see the place behind him.

Malfoy rolled his eyes, but abide looking behind Harry for a second. The raven-head lifted his wand enlightening the cold walls, Malfoy's eyes snapped back at him instantly. Harry stayed calm as Malfoy’s eyes jumped between him and the dome behind him.

“You won’t just give up, will you, Potter?” Malfoy sighed, looking back at Pansy.

She tottered back to where the boys were standing, her hands were wrapped around herself, her eyes glued to the ground.

They settled, Malfoy snarled at Harry as he tried to spread out the soft blanket. In return the raven-head tossed a blanket to wrap Pansy in at the blond head that was stabbing him with glares. The Slytherin slant backwards with a squeak. Harry watched him bemused as the blond plucked the cover from his flushed face.

"Shut up..." he gnarled, but stopped trying to disintegrate Harry with a mere stare.

After Harry spilled the tea barely missing Malfoy's extended hand the Slytherin removed Harry from the duty, which culminated in the beverage spilled all over the blanket they were sitting on.

That wasn’t my fault.

Well...

Pansy was sitting a tad away from Malfoy, her palms squeezing the mug Harry had passed her. She had said that she didn't want to talk so they had sat in an awkward silence until Malfoy had noted the crumbs on Harry's shirt from the cookie he had been eating. Harry had responded with a flourish tossing of the crumbs in the blond's direction and from that point on they had been bickering.

"Can you put it in your mouth? Not everywhere," Malfoy kept ordering Harry around, not minding that the Gryffindor was just disregarding everything the blond said.

At that Pansy surprised everyone by snorting.

"I'm not saying anything. I'm not," Pansy said showing her surrender under Malfoy's stare by lifting her hands a bit.

"You're indecent, Pansy. Stop gawking at me, Potter."

Harry moved his gaze to the apple in his hand, wondering whether it was ok that they weren't discussing Pansy. She seemed distracted listening to the two boys bicker about every little thing. Harry decided they can talk later.

"Stop being a prat, Malfoy. You must be capable of being civilised and not a royal pain in the arse," Harry said. Then he bit in to the apple looking at the blond, waiting for the answer.

Malfoy answered, Harry spilled more tea, they all ate till their stomachs were full. When the atmosphere had morphed from hostile to too-sleepy-to-care-but-still-arguing, Pansy breached the subject.
She had been silent for the most part leaving the other two to supply awkward banter that became insults two sentences in. Her hands were fidgeting with the hem of her skirt for a minute before she spoke.

"I think...." She paused like the thought no matter how true didn’t agree with her core. “Well, I think you're right."

Harry searched his brain for something he had said that would correlate.

"Everything is going to be fine," she explained. "When the battle was happening I thought we were all going to die. We didn't. When I was in Azkaban I thought I was going to die. I didn't." She took a shaky breath. "You're the cause for all of it."

Harry opened his mouth to argue but she wasn't having it.

"Shut up. You're still the Scar-brain," she said.

Malfoy smirked looking torn between her using his insult and her not sounding so sad anymore.

"Hell, if you haven't killed each other talking for hours on end, I think we're all going to be just fine." She clenched her fists. "I am done," she was growling now. "The Dark... Vol... Shit! Voldemo-ort is dead," she finished tears escaping her eyes, but she wiped them viciously. "I am afraid. And that's okay. But I am also not defined by that. Merlin, I don't know how, but I am gonna be okay." She reached over and lifted a cup of juice in the air. "Dementors feed on fear," she said her voice wavering at the beginning, but then bolstered by her nails digging in to her palms evened. "I am done catering for them," she finished and the cup in her hand caught fire.

Shadows danced around the edges of the circular space that was so remote from their usual daily paths. The collected light of Harry's and Malfoy's wands seemed misty and bluish next to the fiery pits of Pansy's anguish that was manifesting itself in wandless magic.

Malfoy clinked his glass to hers.

"Cheers to that," he said, but Harry couldn't help but notice as his posture relaxed after Pansy's words. When he looked at the Gryffindor again, Harry almost thought the blond would smile.

*False alert.*

Malfoy just watched as Harry repeated his motion and touched his mug with Pansy's which was still cracking with hot fire.

The fire went out when Pansy lifted her cup to her face to drink.

"Eww. It's warm now," she complained after tasting it.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading ^^

*This is an illustration* of the place they sat in, it's shitty but i tried

If anyone wants to beta, just send me a message at aspiringsatan@gmail.com
I would appreciate it immensely.

…. Ranto starto:

I got told that I won’t become a writer by four humans.

I was like???:.?? :?? ?? Who are you again? To tell me what to do with my life?

Even though I don’t agree with them it left me insecure :/ funny thing – authority. They tell you you’re bad at something, you start doubting yourself. Luckily I don’t need anyone’s approval or shit, but the people that are less brick-brains could really drop their dream because 4 grownups that are the direct authority told them that they won’t achieve it. School should be different.

Fin. ...

Carry on, leave a review ^^

Rasa
Draco was lying in his bed on his back arms wide and staring at the corner of his four poster bed. He was dwelling on the hot tea he had handled while with Potter and Pansy. Draco winced. He wasn't afraid of teacups.

Of course not.

But the tea he had poured that night had left him unsteady.

After the Fiendfyre he had discovered that an ice cold juice in the morning left him more refreshed then if he stared at a dooming coffee mug for the whole length of his breakfast. Fireplaces and torches were the real concern. It was a miracle really that some hyperactive first year hadn't set themselves on fire yet and that Draco hadn't yet started dousing every open flame he stumbled in a seeing radius of. He felt compelled to, the flickering lights made his stomach turn.

Draco rubbed his eyes.

He showered and went to sleep. Not much to dwell on, it was only tea.

And Pansy.

And Potter...

The week passed somewhat calmly.

The detention was tedious. *Would Yermolay Vengerov have it any other way?*

Potter hadn't yet spelled out what Pansy had tried to do to the whole school and Draco was 98% sure he wouldn't.

*He is too much of a hero.*

*Or is that what people call decency?*

*I wouldn’t know.*

At least the git got a passing grade for the essay Draco wrote him.

*Surprising he didn’t get an Outstanding.*

Teacher’s prejudice, he supposed.

Before Draco could collect his wits and continue ignoring Potter to the best of his ability – not so great with this particular task – like he had been the first weeks of their eight year, the Gryffindor had surprised him and asked him flying again. Draco had declined.

But then, you simply don’t say no to Harry Potter.
Some brick-brains need to know their place. Their place is not sulking around the castle’s halls like some kicked puppy. Maybe it’s in the air in the evening when the sun is big and red, maybe it’s laughing and balancing on top of the Quidditch hoops. Maybe it’s with their rival.

And maybe it’s not such a bad thing that that’s my place too.

The following night’s sleep had been filled with dreams of green grass under a cerulean sky and it smelled of wind and freedom (ended in fire, but that was nothing new).

A sunny Monday morning came all too soon, he had managed to feel rested. Pansy was prying every last detail out of him about the previous night all the way to the Great Hall and through the breakfast. Draco couldn’t quite comprehend why she was so caught up on him going flying until he realised he might have been a very smiley Slytherin that fine morning.

The morning is wonderful, why wouldn’t I be in a great mood?

His mood held out until the Care of the Magical Creatures. He smelled the burning wood before they even approached the darned hut. Before Pansy could persuade him he stalked back to the castle deciding to skip the class.

Whatever burning dangerous beast Hagrid wanted the class to be killed by, Draco didn’t care.

Pansy had let him go with a sigh continuing alone. He had looked back but a new whiff of smell reached in his nostrils and the corner of his eyes caught a sight of a big bonfire. Sure enough the fire foxes jumping in the flames looked innocent, but Draco knew better. He had read a story about a fox that had set its owner on fire by accident while they were sleeping.

Only inside the Slytherin common room he had stopped walking. His hands were shaking as he clenched fists angrily and paced through the empty room, time from time eying the fireplace that was burning without any supervision.

Frowning he settled down Accio-ing a book from his bedroom. Only then he realised how lucky he had been than no professor had seen him. Unmoving he sat in the armchair loosing himself in a book until it was time for the next lesson.

He could deal with fireplaces and sparks because this was a school of witchcraft and wizardry, it was inescapable. He would not deal with jumping, running, barking, uncontrollable, insufferable fireballs.

Dumbledore or no Dumbledore. This school is nuts.

Draco rubbed his eyes exasperated but dragged himself to the next lesson. When he approached the hallway was strangely void of any eight years. He wondered if everyone had died in a terrible accident.

»»-------------¤-------------««

Harry left Ron feeding his and Hermione’s fire fox that they had named Touka and walked to the Charms classroom alone.

As Hagrid wasn’t big on essays he had offered to grade them on how they would take care of the fire foxes for a week and a half. Harry thought it was a wonderful idea, the small furry animals were adorable, warm and smelled like firewood. While he had been petting one that had white fur with red patterns over it, everyone had divided in to pairs leaving him alone.
After the lesson Hagrid had motioned Harry closer and asked if he could take Malfoy as his partner. Harry had also noticed Malfoy’s subtle run back to the castle so he agreed, besides the fox he had been assigned to him was just too cute. Whatever prejudice the Slytherin had, he was sure to reconsider after seeing the ball of warmth that was Shiro.

Harry had clicked with the fox instantly. Unlike Ron and Hermione’s fox that required swooning and mountains of fire-crackers, Shiro had rolled up on his bed after just a couple and a petting session.

His thoughts were interrupted when he saw Malfoy standing with his back against the wall, staring at the ground. His hands were in his pockets and face passive.

“Hey!” Harry called.

The blond looked up.

“Scar-face,” he greeted looking back down.

“We got paired up for the assignment,” Harry declaimed, wondering what had happened between Malfoy laughing at the breakfast table – not that he had been watching – and now.

“What assignment?” Malfoy spat.

Harry faltered a bit, Malfoy was evidently in a sour mood.

“We have to take care of Shiro for a week. You weren’t in the class so I got to name her.”

“And what is Shiro exactly?” Malfoy asked, but his voice was quiet.

“Fire fox!” Harry exclaimed. “They are so wonderful! She likes if I scratch her ears and she sat in my hair while Hagrid was talking about things that were dangerous for them. You’ll see, it will be fun.”

“Fun?” Malfoy asked. “What part about hot, mischievous, on fire animals sounds fun?”

“All the parts. She is wonderful.”

“Let me be clear, Potter. I don’t care what grade I get and I don’t care if it burns down your hair I want nothing to do with it.”

Harry shook his head, in too good of a mood for it to be spoiled by one grumpy blond.

“Are you okay?”

Draco looked at the wildly-haired Gryffindor again. The git was so excited.

“Those foxes are really dangerous. I can’t believe that… Hagrid is just allowed to distribute them to students.”

Potter seemed to gleefully ignore his warning, he just looked at him with a content smile. Draco grew more confused by the second.

“What’s spoiling your mood, huh?” the Gryffindor asked again.
Draco dropped his gaze and sullenly glared at his shoes. He opened his mouth but before any words could pass his lips Potter talked again.

“And don’t say nothing,” he said, smiling at Draco’s suspicious eyes. “You look like a constipated ferret.”

“You’re a moron,” Draco said, hitting him on the shoulder, but the knot in his chest loosened a bit. Potter only snickered and slouched against the wall Draco was already leaning on.

“Don’t make me start guessing…” Potter tried to threaten.

Draco snorted and raised his eyebrows. *Be my guest.*

“Is it that Gilderoy Lockhart lent you your shoes?”

Draco looked down at his feet affronted and back at Potter.

“How dare you…”

“Maybe your tailored robe got stained in your late night endeavours?”

“Shut up!”

Potter snickered, but Draco didn’t offer any explanation. He didn’t really know how talk to this wildly smiling man that had barged his way in to Draco’s peaceful – not sad, peaceful – life.

“Oh, I know then.” Potter became serious. “It’s your hair, isn’t it?”

All Draco could do was put his hand to his head and run his fingers through his silky hair nervously, his eyes wide.

“It’s falling out, isn’t it?” Potter asked with a gleaming spark in his eyes.

“NO! You utter cock.” Draco shoved him, but the git was saved from further violence as other students appeared around the corner.

Harry felt even better after Malfoy stopped sulking, he even ended up smiling at Harry.

*A bit. He smiled a bit.*

*But he did.*

*Oh boy, he has the smile that will kill me.*

It had taken Harry a week to quit trying to keep up the I-want-to-kill-you vibe with Malfoy. The sod was funny, Harry had a big heart and he still could mess with him.

All win for Gryffindor.

Especially after the blond had answered in his place in Potions when Harry hadn’t been paying attention. Malfoy had denied everything and said that he just had known the answer, but Harry had felt warm and fuzzy inside nonetheless.

<…>
When after eating lunch Harry went to check up on Shiro he wanted to bite his own tongue off for jinxing stuff for himself. His carefully crafted Transfiguration essay was in ashes and the white fox was contently snoring on top of the pile, small sparks coming from her nose.

Though after Shiro opened one red eye and regarded Harry he didn’t hold it against her for long. After feeding the fox another couple of crackers he protected the rest of his belongings with the spell Hagrid had showed them. Then he took a powernap.

Come on, Draco!” Potter tugged at the sleeve of the other boy. “You will not pass the class without this assignment, that’s practically the whole credit.”

“I don’t care. Stop pushing me.” Draco stopped, blinked and looked at Potter again. “And don’t call me Draco. I have no desire to go in to your common room, I have no desire to pass a dumb class and I have no desire to spend more time with you.”

“Fine!” Potter pushed the other against the wall. “Stay here. I need to take something.”

Draco relieved that the other had dropped the stupid idea that he should hang out in the Gryffindor common room straightened his tie and sighed.

“As long as I am free after this…”

“Then you get the joy of saying how dumb I am over and over.” He rolled his eyes at the gleeful sigh the other gave. “I will be back in a flash,” Potter said disappearing behind in an obnoxiously pink dressed lady’s portrait.

“I don’t think you know what that means!” Draco called after him, settling to wait against the wall. The Gryffindor was out of control, first he made him stop sulking then he disrupted classes at least twice every day to throw badly – and I mean badly – drawn cartoons at him and then for the past week he had tried to make him help with the nursing that little fire devil he had called Shiro.

Draco shivered, what a git.

I said I won’t do it. That means…

Really didn’t take ages this time.

“Have I aged? I feel like you were away a century,” Draco drawled when the messy black hair he had a knack of noticing since forever appeared from the portrait hole.

“Miss me that much?” he asked, the portrait falling closed after him.

“Not as much as I miss when I didn’t know you.”

“Mean.”

“That’s my middle name.”

“I would have thought that’s prick…” Potter retaliated.

“And yours is crap-hair.”

“Don’t bring my hair in to this, Shiro likes it. And Soyer,” Potter said. His stance seemed
somewhat odd, but Draco was too busy.

“And who’s Soyer? Your imaginary boyfriend?”

“What? No, we work together in the ministry. He’s a nice lad.”

“I bet he has some weird quirks like you too…”

“Says you who missed breakfast because you forgot to make up your bed.”

“I said that was a joke!”

“Naha, that’s sticking with you pal. That’s wedding story material. That’s ridiculous.”

Draco didn’t know what to say to Potter after that. He supposed he better start either hitting him with a book, a very heavy book, or start calling him by his first name. Which he hadn’t been doing on accident for the last couple of days.

“I won’t be around for your wedding, moron,” Draco said instead. “Soyers or what’s his name, probably would mind a Death Eater in your perfectly light celebrations.”

Harry laughed.

“Quit with your Death Eater crap. On the dark side, he already is married and has a daughter, I think that ship has sailed.”

“Aren’t you a proper heartbreaker? I hear the ladies run crying from you…”

“Shut up. I promise, the next wedding I am invited to I will take you as the plus one,” Harry rolled his eyes. “Only so I can tell everyone what a weirdo you are.”

“I am not a weirdo!”

««-------------¤-------------««

They kept up the banter while going to the library where the Slytherin had so graciously – not missing a single opportunity to rub his outstandingness in Harry’s nose – agreed to aid Harry with the blank picture that was Potions. Harry had tried his best not to shake his bag too much on the way there, but when they settled between a window and a crowded bookshelf in a faraway corner of the library the fox in his bag was sleeping.

It was three days before Hagrid would take them back and listen to their reports, Draco still hadn’t agreed to see her once. Harry didn’t need help, taking care of Shiro was no inconvenience, but he wanted Draco to see how adorable she was.

Before he could think of a good way to breach the subject that he had brought a fire fox with them to the library Harry was thrown in to the mazes of Potions. He was mainly in the dark, wobbling after Draco and stubbing his toes on something unknown constantly.

“PAY attention! You utter buffoon!” Draco snarled, bringing his hand down on the table with a bang.

Harry straightened his back. The blond had been a surprisingly good tutor and never had lost his composure while explaining the basis, he no doubt knew if woken in middle of the night.

Draco gave him a look that he gave when he should apologize but didn’t feel like it.
“It stinks like burning quills in here, it’s making me nervous,” he complained.

“It’s fine,” Harry assured for the first time rethinking his decision to bring an animal that could set fire to things at will to a place full of burning things. “Draco… I might have made a bad decision.”

“I would be surprised if it had been otherwise,” he said looking up from Harry’s essay he was correcting.

At that second a tiny nose poked Harry’s elbow. Shiro had woken up and became bored with sitting in a bag, nothing interesting about old essays and broken quills.

“What the hell, Potter?” Draco said, leaping out of his chair staring at the fox sniffing the air with her paws on Harry’s bag.

“Draco, that’s Shiro, she wanted to meet you,” Harry said, ruffling the fox’s ears.

“You realise madam Pince will murder us,” Draco hissed, his eyes not leaving the small animal. He watched the fox as she jumped out of Harry’s bag and sniffed around the papers on the table. The small paws slipped on the essay Draco had been reading at the same time as a draught sent another one in to the air. The fox startled and her fur stood up, endings prickling with sparks.

Draco dropped books from the corner of the table loudly causing the fox to growl. Unfortunately that was all it took for a small fire to start beneath Shiro’s paws. The fox sensed the Slytherin’s panic and dislike. Harry started snatching everything flammable from the table and trying to talk down the distraught fox.

Stopping midsentence, he hit himself on the head and pointed with his wand to the things around Shiro, making use of his ability to do magic. The only thing he couldn’t douse was Shiro whose eyes were stuck to Draco’s.

Draco was staring right back.

The fox was in a new environment, there was a new person and the person didn’t like her. The cat sized fox decided to make the boy who was staring at her like she was the antichrist to like her. Everyone liked her. She could smell his fear so she relaxed her posture and leisurely ran along the table to the other side where the boy was standing frozen. She sniffed the boys hand but when he didn’t budge she settled on the corner of the table to nap again. Her fur was still laced with hot fire so Harry turned to the blond who was standing with a mask of horror frozen on his face.

Draco was staring right back.

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“Draco?”

It was Harry’s voice, but all Draco could see was fire and angry flaming chimeras. There was no place to go and Crabbe was already dead. His hand was burning.

“Shiro burnt your hand… are you alright?”

Draco couldn’t wrap his head around why he was back at the Requirement room, he had promised himself not to go back. Draco’s heart was racing but his muscles wouldn’t move, not even his tongue.

_I am going to die this time. Harry doesn’t know I am here. He thinks I am back at the library._

He was stuck two steps from a snarling fire hound. It was silent for some reason. Everything was
quiet except for Draco’s thundering heartbeat in his ears. The fire hound was moving closer, paws incinerating the rubbish that happened to be in the way. Draco wanted to run out of the damned room that was falling apart but his legs were glued to the floor.

He didn’t feel the hand on his shoulder, but he felt the world rock and shift as he fell to the ground the backwater broken. Not bothering to get up he scrambled backwards until his back hit a bookshelf causing a book to fall on his shoulder.

“Draco!”

His eyes snapped to the voice and he saw Harry with a look of concern written all over his forehead.

“Potter. Keep walking. I don’t need you in my nightmares. I get enough of you while I’m awake.”

Because Harry in his dreams never made it.

The hound was now one step away, Draco could feel the scorching flames that it breathed. Red hot sea of fire erupted from its nose and descended upon the world beneath its paws reaching for Draco’s legs. He couldn’t move further in to the bookcase that was pressed against his back.

“Sod.” Harry never went away. “You are awake.”

Draco felt himself being shaken and this time there was nowhere to fall. He closed his eyes, shielding from the fire with his hands. He braced himself for the pain but it never came. After a couple of shaky shallow breaths he peeked through his fingers, seeing Harry still alive and poking his chest with his finger.

“What do you think you’re doing?” he asked, though in his dreams, Harry was not much more articulate than in real life.

“Better question. Are you all right?”

Draco looked past the messy mop of a hair, but it was just library. No fire, no hounds, no chimeras.

“I’m fine,” he said, resting his head on his knees, hiding his face.

Deep breaths. In and out.

He felt a hand on his shoulder and lifting his head a fraction he saw that Potter had settled cross-legged, one hand on his own knee other on Draco’s shoulder.

Three embarrassing minutes later Draco was all right enough to realise why Potter was hanging with him.

“You are an UTTER MORON,” he informed, hitting the surprised Gryffindor on the head.

“Ow, ow, Draco…” Harry shielded himself.

Draco smacked him again and looked behind them to see if anyone had noticed the fire fox calmly turning the table in to an ash pile.

They were in luck.

“Take that ungodly creature and get it away from all these books. Are you actually planning on killing us all?”
Harry grumbled and rubbed his head swearing that there will be a bruise. Draco ignored him. They walked out of the library hurriedly avoiding meeting anyone’s eyes. Draco smacked the other on the head again before heading back to his common room. It was a safe space.

Harry gave him a look before Draco turned his back.

Draco was considering what that look might have meant when something crashed in to him from behind.

»»-------------¤-------------««

Chapter End Notes

Pfft… this chapter felt like shit, but turned out not extremely bad.

If anyone wants to beta, do feel free to write me an email (aspiringsatan@gmail.com).
(update: found a beta, thank you)

Also, remember that Halloween party? I wouldn’t mind suggestions on what Draco and Harry could go as so if you have cool ideas feel free to suggest.

Review if you will,

Rasa
Harry gave him a look before Draco turned his back.

Draco was considering what that look might have meant when something crashed into him from behind.

<…>

Draco elbowed the unknown attacker and grabbed for his wand. A familiar grunt made his muscles relax.

“POTTER. You’re unbelievable,” Draco exclaimed considering kicking the other in the shin.

“You’re one to talk! Who elbows people who try to hug them?”

“From behind? Without a warning?” Draco ridiculed. “I think there is a bit of a hole in your education. That’s assault.”

“I just…” Harry rubbed his side and looked down. “I just am not sure how to go about this…”

“Just take your flammable animal back to its place and don’t burn down the castle.”

“No hug?”

“NO.”

Harry huffed and stalked back over to where he had left his bag. Draco stared after him. Harry shouldered his bag with more force than it was sensible when it was an explosion waiting to happen. Before Draco could turn his back to the other he saw Harry smile. It was a wide smile accompanied by a short wave of hand, but to Draco it was the sky and the ocean. He suddenly felt like he could do anything.

Not sure how to respond Draco hid his coloured cheeks and broke all his principles by flipping the Gryffindor off. Harry’s laugh followed him and rung in his ears as he returned to his common room his step not as heavy as before.

<…>

Despite all Draco’s attempts to stop the time, the day before the Halloween party came without the slightest delay.

His plan to go as the most fierce and amazing thing he could think of had gone horribly wrong after an evening with Pansy. One single evening – when he had decided it was a good idea to mess with
her – *and then it all went to shit.* Draco still wasn’t sure how he had lost the bet, but Pansy now was in charge of the outfit he would have to wear.

*In charge of what he will have to spend an entire night in.*

*With LOADS of people.*

It didn’t help that she for some reason was annoyed with him, but didn’t say anything outright except for muttering about Draco being blind and a wuss, which was uncalled for and, needless to say, *untrue.*

Draco spent the day before the party anxiously probing her for what she had sentenced him with, but she only smiled in the most devilish manner that made Draco’s spine crawl.

*Why is she so evil?*

*Is it because I braided her hair to say ‘baddest bitch’ last week?*

*She laughed, she liked it… what then?*

*She probably just want’s my suffering as everyone else in this damned school.*

Eventually Draco nodded off. It had been a long boring Saturday after all. Sadly the boringness of the day didn’t matter to the fiery pits of nightmares that made him wake up every couple hours.

When he woke again it was the next morning and Pansy was shooing his roommates out of the bedroom in a pellucid voice. Way too bright for an early morning.

“It’s midday, Draco, dear,” she informed gleefully.

“It can’t be,” Draco grumbled. “I just looked at the time and it says *leave me alone.*”

“Now, now, aren’t you exited for the party?”

“It has become known to me that it will be happening in the Hufflepuff common room,” he complained turning on his back. “I am never getting excited for *anything ever again.*”

“Don’t be so melodramatic, they have the biggest common room and they are the only ones that agreed to sleep in the other towers for a night.”

“Did they? *Brilliant. I don’t care.*”

“Did that attitude stick to you from Harry?”

“What?” Draco was pulled from his sleepy state. “NO. What is it with you and talking about Potter all the time?”

“Oh, it’s *me* talking about him all the time, is it?” Pansy dropped on the end of his bed with crossed legs.

Draco didn’t answer but fell back into his soft pillows, staring at the top of his bed intently. He was evading thinking too much about Harry because it made him all giddy inside. Pansy ripped him from his *not* contemplations about Harry by grabbing his leg.

“Get up or I will *make you,*” she threatened. Draco lightly kicked at her hand and sprang out of the bed with a flourish of his beddings causing his pillow to fall on the floor. He took a set of clothes
and walked to the bathroom, all the way ignoring Pansy who had sprawled on his bed with her legs in the air and head popped up on her hands, looking at the potions book Draco had fallen asleep reading.

“You really ought to read something more… exciting than…” She paused to clear her throat and preceded to read aloud a line from the book, “the Fridge draught is used to relieve burning sensation in the stomach… this is tedious.”

“That will be on the test,” Draco informed from the bathroom.

A nonchalant noise came from Pansy and a sound that Draco presumed was a book ending up on the floor. He rolled his eyes while wetting his toothbrush. In the middle of his everyday routine of mouth hygiene he suddenly became aware of his face in the mirror. He was striking as usual, of course… But he saw that he had changed around the eyes.

He spat in the sink and rinsed his mouth, crossing out the possibility that he was getting wrinkles. He was simply different.

“Did you save me any breakfast?” he asked entering the bedroom and pulling the shirt over his head.

“I got up just before you so…”

“And you’re complaining about me sleeping in?” he asked, smearing the ointment that Potter had given him on his burned hand. It had supposedly came from the Gryffindors who were specializing in burning things that were not supposed to be blown up and later healing without professional help.

“I did wake before you…”

“Ugh.”

"<...>"

“I AM NOT WEARING THAT. Are you crazy?”

Pansy needed to giggle for a minute before she could answer. In horror Draco gawked at the most ugly pink dress he had seen in his life.

“Do you truly hate me that much?” he asked after registering that she won’t be able to string a sentence together.

“Don’t be like that, you know I love you…”

“THEN WHY?”

“Because it’s our last year! We can go wild. Also because it’s hilarious, and you talk about Potter more than you talk about your hair which is saying something. Though, I ought to be used to it after seven plus years…”

“What does HE have to do with anything?”

“Haven’t you seen him lately? You yourself told me yesterday that he doesn’t want a party. I am just trying to amuse him.”

“He won’t be amused! He will share my pain! He is not an evil person like you are!”
Pansy only giggled. “You lost, you’re obliged to do as I say.”

“It’s so ugly!”

“Wait, wait…” she put the atrocious piece of clothing down on the bed causing Draco to want to wash his sheets immediately. “You will love this!”

“I really doubt it.”

She conjured an equally pink, but – how is that even possible? – reaching new levels of ugly hat. Draco felt an undignified though justified need to hiss and throw the abominations out the window.

“It will look just lovely with your blond hair,” she said grinning like the Christmas had come early.

“It will not!” he said unhappily to the laughing girl.

Pansy was having the time of her life while Draco was contemplating some rather drastic measures to deal with the situation.

While trying to figure out a way out of this unpleasant situation his mind wondered into the opposite direction causing Draco to huff and frown. Internally. Mostly.

What if Harry would find it funny?

Maybe it wouldn’t be so bad...

In any case it was all Pansy’s fault.

Draco frowned. He hadn’t seen Potter since Friday because he was in Ministry on Saturdays, but he had looked rather gloomy when he had seen him in the great hall. Draco remembered wondering whether the spoon or the mug would break first as Potter had been attacking his dinner viciously while talking to both Granger and one of the exploding Gryffindors.

Shaking his head Draco sighed. He looked at the dress and at Pansy and sighed again. He extended his hand taking the hat in two fingers.

“Umbridge? Really? I would have been gracious in your place and chosen somebody worthy, not her majesty toad face,” Draco said sighing again and swallowing his distaste.

“You abso-fucking-lutely wouldn’t have,” Pansy said shaking her head incredulously.

“You’re… right. But I am still mad.”

“You are not.”

“I kind of really am.”

Pansy ruffled his hair and laughed. Draco looked over the flaring pink gown and sighed again.

<…>

Deciding to go all out if he already was doomed to being the laughing stock of the evening, Draco pulled on his dark boots that reached just over his knees. Pansy spelled the heels bit higher, Draco disintegrated the ribbons around the bottom of the dress and accidentally tried to flatten the hat.

Pansy though, being the good friend she usually is, made sure it floated unharmed just above Draco’s head.
He noticed it in the mirror and tried to strike the hat down, but it evaded his hand.

After a bit of negotiations Draco managed to talk Pansy into removing the sickening light pink lace around the sides of the hat.

When it was time to leave, Pansy was giggling as crazy and Draco was frowning at the unnatural look that he was… kind of pulling of?

Maybe almost.

But not really.

Pansy in retrospect looked fabulous. She was dressed in a simple black dress, but her hair was covered in golden glitter and she had spelled round lion’s ears on her head. Around her neck she had a heavy golden neckless. Her face was also covered in the golden make up, her eyes popping with black eyeliner. She was going as Sekhmet, an ancient Egyptian warrior goddess and goddess of healing. Draco’s only complaint was that the glitter spell made all his sheets overflow with the stuff.

They made it through the common room made it to the common room with only few odd glances form some exited younger years, making their ways from the loos to the great hall. Draco could hear the music from the Great hall as they turned a corner.

I hope at least some of the Eight years have better taste…

When he reached he entered the warm room that already was filled to the brim with people dressed in clothes of various levels of ridiculous, he sighed. Though he forgot all about the music as people recognised him and started either laughing or frowning. Draco only glared, daring people to make fun of him bit louder. They didn’t.

Much.

After twenty minutes of dancing with Pansy he overheard the Weasley telling Granger that Harry had left looking really wretched. She had repeated the same thing as before that not going with Harry to the ministry the day before had been a mistake. To that the red-head had said something reassuring and Draco had stopped listening.

Instead he frowned.

No longer did he take any interest in the two Gryffindors singing on top of a pyramid of chairs with sparks shooting from the end of their robes. He drank his glass of champagne and after making sure Pansy was having a good time left the loud room. As he exited he heard loud cheers and turned back to see the two guys on top of the chairs snogging, their hair standing in the air, possibly because of the steaming wand one was holding in an extended hand.

Who needs foxes when you have exploding Gryffindors?

Closing the round wooden doors behind him, he straightened his dress and tried to reach the atrocious hat that had continued to levitate above his head, but no luck. With a startle he realised he wasn’t alone in the quiet hallway. There was a boy dressed in a spotted mostly transparent shirt levitating above the ground.

Draco walked past him taking in his appearance. His long hair was dark, but the ends were coloured green. His pants were black and his ears were more earrings than skin. Draco raised his eyebrows at the various tattoos the boy had on his arms.
“Nice dress,” the boy said. “I would go with something green though, would go together with Harry Potter’s eyes…”

Draco blinked.

“What…”

The boy smiled, his yellow badger earrings swinging.

“I’m only joking. Lost a bet did you?”

Draco narrowed his eyes. “How is that your business?”

“Come on, don’t be like that, I mean nothing bad.” He extended his legs and lowered himself on the ground with ease. “Sorry… my name is Archibald, Hufflepuff, sixth year, pleasure to meet you,” he said extending his arm.

Draco narrowed his eyes but decided to be polite so he squeezed the other boy’s hand.

“Draco Malfoy,” he said shortly.

“I am pureblood, no need to be so curt.”

“I don’t care about that,” anymore, Draco bit. “What do you want?”

Archibald crooked his head. His hair was flowing behind him as he spoke.

“Nothing, I was just making conversation. You left the party early, isn’t that a sign that it wasn’t fun enough?”

“It’s also none of your business.”

“It’s all right. Parties suck in general.”

Draco tried not to frown. What was with this tattooed boy chatting him up all of a sudden.

“Why are you talking to me again?”

“Why not?”

“Weren’t you here last year?”

“I was.” He seemed to be considering something. “I saw you cry once.”

“Holy shit,” Draco growled turning his face to the ceiling exasperated. “Do you want money?”

The boy laughed.

“No, don’t be silly.”

“I am not.”

“Of course not…”

“Don’t coddle me.”

“Okay.”
Draco looked to the boy’s feet and closed his eyes.

*I am being blackmailed by a toddler wearing mismatched socks.*

*Oh dear Merlin…*

“What do you want then?” he tried to keep his voice even.

“I just saw the other day as some people were planning a rather nasty prank, I told them off, but you better watch your back.”

“I don’t need help.”

Archibald laughed again and Draco decided that at least one of those buns had been filled with hallucinations inducing potion. This was a nightmare.

“Listen to me, your socks are clashing I can’t…”

*Be seen with weirdos?*

“Haha, that’s cool, mate. I don’t mind.”

“I have to go, I am busy.” Draco didn’t feel like being around people that either were crazy or plotting an evil plan.

‘Don’t mind’ my ass.

“Last I heard Potter was in the upper floors.”

“I am not looking for him!”

“Erm… you both are always looking for each other…”

“Well… I am not this time,” Draco shouted turning a corner and making his way to the big stairs away from the Slytherin common room and the dungeons.

Archibald reopened his book and smiled calmly.

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Harry could hear the music from the Great hall and winced at the image of a horde of like him dressed children banging their heads in rhythm with the monstrous song. Sullenly biting into one of the buns he had snatched from the food supply that had been carried from the kitchens to the Hufflepuff common room.

Harry had thought it would be good. To have fun to not worry for one night. He had hoped that he wouldn’t get sad on Halloween.

But he did.

*Well, I mean, it’s kind of justified…*

Harry made his way through the corridors trying not to listen to the far away music. He felt tired and restless. Because of the bad day he had had at Ministry he had come back in the early hours of the morning, only a couple of hours away from the Quidditch practice he had had to manage. After that he had helped other Eight years to set up the Hufflepuff common room.
Harry smiled slightly remembering the room. It had been so warm and cosy. Couches and chairs were more pillows and colourful blankets than furniture. All along the room’s walls plants of various sizes and virtues were stationed on rickety wooden podiums, in shelves and hanging from the ceiling. Even the evening light through the window seemed to be flowing more mildly and warmly than in the remaining of the castle. All that, the wooden honey-coloured furniture and what looked like student made accessories made the room feel alive.

It was the home of the loyal, the patient, the amazing and the fierce, Harry had felt so wonderful seeing the common room for the first time. It wasn’t his home, but it was loads of other people’s home and he couldn’t help but think how fantastic it was.

But soon Harry was frowning again and biting into the next bun with too much violence. He remembered that Tonks had been a Hufflepuff, he remembered that Cedric had been a Hufflepuff and he remembered the war and the fact that his parents had died on the night of Halloween.

Over the years he had made loads of memories around the All Hallows Eve, good memories. Still, none of them could erase the memory of the flash of green light that condemned Harry to growing up without his parents and Sirius to spending twelve years in prison overflowing with Dementors.

Harry’s heart panged as he swallowed the sweet bun. Only memories of his parents he really had were of the day that they died, how nice is that?

Of course, I can remember that, but not the day before…

It’s not like I like to have good dreams sometimes. Pfft… Who does?

He thought about the things people had told him about his parents. He remembered how his father was an arse in his younger years. He thought about Snape, but not for a long time. Then he thought about Sirius bitterly.

Couldn’t even have a godfather, could I?

Of course fucking not, the Boy Who Lived DOES NOT NEED FAMILY, HE HAS A FANBASE ALL OVER THE FUCKING WIZARDING WORLD.

Harry stuffed his mouth again, munching furiously and repeating to himself that he is not having a break down in the middle of a random hallway. He was simply having a walk to clear his head.

Even if the next bun’s topping tasted somewhat salty he ignored it because…

Well what else can I do?

Wailing alone in a hallway won’t do anyone any good.

Harry sighed. He wanted to just turn off his brain and have fun. He sometimes managed to do that, not worry about the past, for a minute for an hour, but everything always came crashing back. Maybe he needed one more day to get his thoughts together. He just needed the 31st of October off this year. No obligations to be a good company or to save the world. He will just eat his buns until he’s full and he will figure out a way how to deal.

Guiltily he remembered how he had flipped out on the other party organisers.

How can you all just be this CHERRY? My brain will BLOW UP if one more of you ask me if I am going as myself to the party!
Harry scrunched his eyes shut. At least after that he apologized…

*I mean, SORRY that I am spoiling your party. See you later.*

And then he stalked away with a box of strawberry buns. Ron, of course, had not let him go that easy, but Harry had been pretty deflated at that point and he reassured the red-head that he just needed to take a breather and have a good night’s sleep. Ron had agreed reluctantly. Then he had ran back to where the food had been stacked and brought Harry another kind of rolls – with chocolate. Harry had even smiled at him. Ron did sometimes have the best thoughts.

Unconsciously Harry had wondered to the top floors of the castle only once tripping because of a disappearing step he had not known existed. Maybe it was a new addition to the castle. There were a number of those since the castle was restored in the summer. *But who would add a disappearing step?*

He paused his forceful walking at the end of a hallway. He hadn’t recognised it at first, but it was clear that this was the place he had had the night tea drinking with Draco and Pansy. Harry sat down cross-legged in the middle of the round place and sighed looking out the dark windows. He wasn’t sure how long he had been walking around, but luckily his bun supply had some magical property and didn’t seem to be likely to end any time soon. Or the box was meant for more than one person…

Harry tried to concentrate on the tasty buns filled with chocolate.

*It’s chocolate, for Merlin’s sake. How can it not help?*

Despite that Harry felt his chest clenching and his brain swirling down the tunnel of *goddamn idiocy aka all the dead people.*

*Hi, mom, hi dad! How do you feel that all I remember about you is how I was too young to do anything as you got murdered?*

*Hi, Sirius, I am less of a moron now. I know dreams are just dreams.*

*Tonks… Remus… I left Teddy with Andromeda. I can’t take care of him now, I am sorry.*

Harry pressed his fingers to his eyes to stop the crazy talk with his own brain. He leaned back, splaying on the cold floor. It was solid. A small flower erupted from the stone. It was grey and if it hadn’t been directly in front of Harry’s face he wouldn’t have noticed it.

Looking at it the boy wished he could sink into it and become one with Hogwarts. Only for a second. Then he remembered that he had things to do, people to see, morons to teach and a Ministry to nudge into the right directions.

If only for tonight, but he let himself feel all the confusing emotions that had piled up over time.

*Merlin, I feel lonely.*

*That’s fucking sad,* Harry thought after some time had passed and he felt cold and empty enough to eat some more buns. He was still stuffing his mouth when a sound of heeled shoes reached his ears. He froze wondering who had left either of the parties and wandered here of all the places.

He decided to glance inconspicuously over his shoulder.

Maybe he should have swallowed before he looked because the entity he saw was bat shit crazy.
Harry choked and started coughing. It seemed like it was Draco Malfoy dressed in a pink dress. And it seemed that he was heading straight for Harry.

“Potter. Don’t you dare laugh,” Draco warned. “I have been subjected to every joke you can imagine and I am in need of pleasant company,” he stopped in the door isle putting his hand on his hip, “but I obviously have been mistaken to search for it here.”

“Wow.”

That was all Harry could muster after he had rescheduled the imminent death by choking on a piece of strawberry bun – to be honest, that’s not the worst way to go. Draco was watching him as he always did but dressed in pink.

“Did you swallow your tongue? I can take you to madam Pomfrey… I believe she hasn’t seen my getup yet.”

Harry turned away from the blond boy.

*Pleasant company…*

*Not tonight*

“I didn’t think Pansy would go through with it… I owe her a cake.”

“YOU are the cause of this disaster?”

“She asked me about the scars I have on my hand and… somehow the conversation ended with the argument whether she could make you go as Umbridge to the party….”

“Scars?”

“Myeah… I shall not tell lies, I shall always talk with my head in the toilet, I shan’t ever look like a hurricane…” he chanted, lifting his hand so that the other could see the faint scarring. “But guess what? The toad-face can’t stop me.”

Draco opened his mouth to say something, but Harry decided he didn’t trust his expression.

“Shut up,” he ordered.

“I haven’t said anything yet!”

“Your face is doing something weird.”

“I believe it’s called looking decent.”

*Haha. Yes. You’re a ferret, I’m scar-face. We’ve been over this. You can go now.”*

“I will not go back to the party, I will not return to the common room early and I have no intentions on going anywhere near the horrific event that is happening in the great hall,” Draco counted.

“Conclusion – staying here.”

“I am not making any effort to be good company tonight.”

“Are you ever?” Draco asked. “Can I have a bun?”

“Sure,” Harry pushed the box to him.
Draco frowned slightly taking a bun. Potter looked like a mess. Well, he always did, with that wild hair of his, but this time it was different.

“My go to comfort advice is food. And you have got that covered,” he informed.

Potter looked up at him with furrowed brows.

“What?”

Draco crooked his head. “You look like you have been crying.”

“So what?” the other shrugged. “Am I not allowed?”

“It’s just that I was sure that the thing you are supposed to do when people are crying are to comfort them?” Draco trailed off.

“I don’t need your fucking pity, you goddamn menace. Why are you bothering me again?”

Draco raised his eyebrows affronted and swallowed the last of his bun.

“I am not bothering you. I am…” he stopped.

Potter looked really off. His eyes were red, his hair was as messed up as ever but his pose was all slouched and pathetic, even while he was glaring at Draco like a hell-hound.

“No, actually. What is wrong? Did you have a bad day at the Ministry?” he guessed.

Potter snorted, putting all his apparent annoyance into the movement.

“You could fucking say that.”

Draco waited.

“Well do I have to pull it out of you with pliers? Is the paperwork too much for the saviour of the wizarding world?” Draco said before considering that maybe an attack wasn’t the wisest course of action.

Before he could say something else, Potter was already standing in front of him.

“PAPERWORK? PAPERWORK? PaPerw0rk? Are you insane? Do you think I care about….” He looked at the ceiling and drew a breath. “You are unbelievable.” He clenched his fists and Draco’s fingers itched in the direction of his wand, but luckily Potter had more to shout before he would start punching.

“Soyer and Hermione deal with the paperwork! They are great with it. I get the JOY of bloody dealing with the people! You know how wonderful it is to listen to a ten year old talk about how her parents were murdered and now because of some bullshit ministry law she doesn’t have any money because her late fucking parents were forced to obey the Death Eaters. But you know? I dealt with that! But then in the next person comes and there is some reason why the Dementors are back in Azkaban and not rotting away at the bottom of the ocean. Then the next lovely soul barges in and, oh no! I have missed the meeting with the American ambassador who wants some shit I don’t even know… Politics.” Harry paused for a moment. “But the day is not over,” he continued with fake cheerfulness. “It’s ten fucking am and I have four more fucked up laws to disprove and replace! And then I get to deal with all the backlash. Because purebloods are all Death Eaters…
and because all boys have dicks and all moms are good people...."

Potter got out of Draco’s face only to furiously stomp over to the window.

“Like that makes any kind of sense...” He sighed. “But, no. You know, yesterday wasn’t even that bad... If you don’t count the fucking crazy person that tried to attack me and killed a fucking asshole reporter.” He placed his fingers on the glass, watching them intently. “Fuck.” He growled. “Fuck, fuck, fuck. Another person is dead and that’s bullshit. I should have. I mean, I noticed him. Everyone is always staring, but he... he was watching me like a predator.”

The window broke under Potters fingers, long jagged cracks reaching to the sides of the glass. He took the hand off.

Draco stood quite frozen in place. Politics hadn’t been his favourite thing in the world, but thanks to endless tutoring his father had done he was pretty able, he could imagine the situation in the ministry. But somebody dying in a press conference? That’s bad.

“Soyer said that it’s not my fault, but I was right there,” Potter said quietly and his pain induced voice made Draco want to push him into a billion blankets and give him food.

“That Soyer character is actually right for once. It was not your fault.”

“Fuck you. You don’t get it.”

“I... excuse me, I don’t get it?” Draco was starting to get angry too. “Listen to me. If I don’t get what it is to stand by while shitty stuff happens I don’t think you...”

“Malfoy. There is always a choice. You’re always able to do something. It’s just about what you’re willing to loose. I should have...”

“No, you shut up, you thick-headed altruistic moron. It was me doing as told or me and my family dies. Don’t you dare...”

“I know. I GET it! Why do you think I fucking talked on your behalf? For fun?”

“What are you saying then?” Draco spat.

“I am saying we were idiots, but now... at least one of us should be all grown up. I should know what I should do. How to fix things! I am not supposed to just wing it every single Saturday.”

Draco choked on his anger.

“ARE you saying that the war didn’t change me, you big sack of dicks!?” Draco felt his anger going berserk. The small hat that had still been floating above his head was disintegrated to dust without any noise. “How dare you!”

“I am saying you...”

“No wait! Fuck you. I don’t owe anything to you!” Draco said before reflecting. “If we count the slicing up my chest even with the – the – the. Oh fuck, you know. The thing. Fire.”

“I am not saying you do!” Harry bellowed. “I fucking want to... I don’t know!” he glared at Draco again. “I do not agree with you.”

“You pompous...”
“Oh it’s me that’s fucking pompous! Of course, because you are so fucking hipster I am going to gag.”

“How THE FUCK IS ACTUALLY WRONG WITH YOU?” Draco shouted, finally done with the Gryffindors bullcrap. He crossed the space between them and pushed the other into a wall. “You were fine with me being me just a day ago.”

“My parents are dead!” he shouted in Draco’s face. “They died on all hallows eve 17 years ago. And I can remember them dying and I see it in my dreams and…” Potter’s voice broke and his head slacked to the side. Draco released the hand he had pressed to the other chest and stepped back a bit.

“And Sirius is dead… all I have are my friends and the Weasleys. What if something happens to them? What if I can’t protect everyone? What if Hermione gets tortured again and I can’t do anything? What if some radical assholes get a hold of Ron… or you.” He pushed Draco away and wiped his hand over his eyes, shielded by his long dark hair. “What the fuck will I do if I can’t protect anyone?”

“Harry…” Draco couldn’t finish. His brain was clogged up with two words. Or you.

That big sap.

But also…

“And you’re saying you are not big-headed?” Draco asked angrily. “You can’t save everyone. You can’t be everywhere.”

“I know. I wish I could.”

Draco felt his fury change and morph into something different. His cheeks felt hot but he wasn’t angry anymore.

“You are one feelings-repressing bastard, Potter,” he said. “Have a bun and let’s go do something.”

“Do what?” Harry groaned. “I am not up for anything.”

“Read my lips.” Draco pointed. “I don’t care.”

Potter rudely flashed a middle finger and sat down. He took a bun though, so Draco was half way successful.

“Fine.” Draco rolled his eyes and clenched a fist. “Fine… let’s talk.”

“About what? I just want to have a night to order my thoughts… I don’t need to talk.”

“You don’t… need to talk? Are you mental?” Draco groaned. “You moron. I thought you were fine. But you’re fucking oppressing everything and it’s going to end fucking shitty.”

“And what rights do you have to talk about faking till you make it? You are always pretending to be… somebody too.”

“But I am in luck.” Draco stepped in front of the other, towering over the wretched man. “We’re not talking about me.”
“Why not?”

“Because you’re deflecting the question,” Draco said and then took a bun out of the box and shoved it into the others stupidly open mouth. Potter’s eyes widened as he tried to chew the food. “Don’t want to talk, yet? You will soon… Don’t move.”

Harry suspiciously followed him with his eyes as Draco went behind his back.

“Your hair is an atrocious mess. It is annoying me to no end, so I am going to order it and while I do that you’re going to tell me all the things that bother you.”

Draco almost fell off his heels as Potter straightened his back after a moment of doubt.

“I need a chair,” he said trying to not sound too shocked.

“You are just improvising,” Harry realised. “You arse. I thought you actually knew what you were doing.”

“You can do a lot of things if you just pretend that you know what you’re doing. Now, I have no clue about this comforting business, but I am great with sorting hair. Even the mess that is yours…. Are those failed dreadlocks… because I mean…”

“Shut up. I don’t have time for hair…”

“Clearly.”

Harry stood up annoyedly and conjured a chair out of thin air with a crack.

“You know that spell is not supposed to make noise, right?”

“Look at the back of the chair.”

Draco did.

“Real classy, Potter. A pink ferret? Seriously?”

Potter only stuck his tongue out... He stuck his bloody tongue out at me. The blond rolled his eyes and stepped behind the chair. “Well sit then, you grownup.”

Harry did as told, placing the box with buns in his lap and stuffing his mouth. Draco took out his wand and wondered how the hell did he reach a point when he was braiding Harry Potter’s hair and the other didn’t even blink when Draco pulled his wand.

As Potter was not talking Draco let his mind process the argument while he combed the tangled hair that still somehow managed to feel soft. Harry’s hair didn’t reach his shoulders but it was more than enough for a braid. Draco ignored the feeling in his fingers and chest as he ran his fingers though the dark hair.

“My mother is in France, she didn’t take father being in Azkaban well. She writes, but I wish we could meet more often,” he said, not even sure why. It was just on his mind. He remembered how he used to braid her long white hair when he was younger, when Voldemort wasn’t so close yet. Everything had changed so much, he went from the Slytherin prince to somebody people didn’t pick on only because he was scary – most of the time anyway. Draco straightened his back, he was good like that. Making people scared or at least wary of him.

*Father was too…*
 Well… Fuck that.

“I heard you shouted at the sods moving the couches around for no reason…” Draco said.

“They were all so happy. I feel bad that I tried to bring them down, but sometimes my temper is kind of bad.”

“Sometimes? I think your friends spare your feelings too much. Your temper is the utterest shit on this forsaken planet.”

“You’re mean.”

“Yes I am. Your deduction skills impress me.”

“I would kick you but…” he trailed off.

“She. You admit your hair is a disaster.” Draco smiled satisfied. “It’s fine I can do miracles.”

<…>  

“Potter, I personally hate your hair,” Draco said. “It’s like it’s trying to piss me off.”

Harry laughed. “I know. It’s like it has its own mind.”

“I feel tempted to cut it off.”

“Fun fact – it grows back to this length in about two days.”

“Merlin,” Draco cursed but decided that if he had started he would braid that damn hair no matter what. Draco was in the middle of a complicated system with his fingers all tangled up in hair and also holding a wand.

“Give me a bun,” he said absentmindedly.

“Whaaai! Don’t move,” Draco said grabbing on to the hair that was slipping out of his grip as Harry extended his arm with a bun. Harry stilled. Draco exhaled finishing the move. Potter was still holding the bun up so Draco made the logical choice to bite into it. He felt the other’s surprise as he accidentally brushed his teeth against Potter’s fingers. “My hands are occupied at the moment,” he muttered trying to sound comprehensible with his mouth filled.

“That’s cool…” Potter said, but his shoulders didn’t relax for quite some time as Draco continued the skirmish with the unruly hair.

After only two – maybe a few – more clangers Draco finally was at the finish line with the braid. He secured the end with a happy move of wand and walked over to Potter’s front to see. The braid was not his best, Draco frowned. As he looked a lock of hair sprung free.

Now it’s just taunting me…

Draco’s eyes narrowed and he pointed his wand to the damned piece of hair. With a deathly glare he tried to put it in its place but the spell only caused more hair to escape the confines of the braid.

As Draco sighed exasperated he noticed Harry, whose face was screwed up with his eyebrows halfway up the forehead and lips pulled into a holding-in-laugh smile. As their eyes met Harry couldn’t keep it in any longer and laughed shaking his head.
“Don’t look so soul-crushed, I warned you.”

“I am leaving it be for now, but this is not the end,” Draco proclaimed deflated at the result.

He took one bun and bit into it, mulling over the thought of what to do differently. Harry’s hair was different from his starting with the colour ending with the texture but it didn’t look half bad even in this mess of a braid.

Only when he met Harry’s eyes he realised he had been staring.

With the wave of his wand Harry turned the chair into a pillow and sat down on it heavily. Draco conjured his own pillow, twice as fancy as Potter’s, and followed his suit. He saw that a decision had been made and, despite the fact that he had wanted to hear what bothers Potter, he felt nervous.

“Now. You are the one who’s nosy, yeah?”

“Sure,” Draco agreed, straightening his back.

“I…” he stopped, frowning. “Like… erm…”

Draco bit into his tongue to not say anything that might make the other to reconsider.

Potter grimaced for a moment longer until he deflated.

“No, I can’t. I can’t complain. I am alive and more or less safe. I have no reason to complain.”

Draco reached over the space between them and slapped him on the side of his head.

“You have earned the right to complain more than anyone…”

“That’s not how it works. I murdered a bad guy so now I get to walk around saying how shitty everything is? I don’t think so. Don’t raise me to some higher standard. I am nothing special.”

“Nothing. Special? You all right, mate? I think you might have choked on that bullshit I hear.”

Draco shook his head. “Everyone who can eat a hundred of buns without feeling sick is special.”

Harry looked at Draco and suddenly the blond’s cheeks felt hot. Harry’s face pulled into a smile that made Draco’s insides dance.

“What?”

“You just said that I am special because of some stupid detail, not because I survived Voldemort about three hundred times.”

“That’s not special… Everyone can do it. I mean, I shared a room with him for one Christmas, now that was…” Draco stopped abruptly, placing a hand on his stomach. “I feel sick… I shouldn’t joke about shit like that. That was actually terrifying. You’re right it doesn’t make you special it makes you deranged.”

“Haha, thanks.”

“Let’s stop joking about the Dark Lord I have too many sweet buns in my stomach.”

“Right, sorry.”

“Forgiven, but you owe me one homework now.” He didn’t let Harry interrupt. “You basically just
“Shiro? All right… you’re lucky I didn’t get the time to report back to Hagrid last time.”

“Did McGonagall even authorise that… assignment?”

“I don’t know… She’s crazy busy with everything…”

“This school is riding on crazy people…”

“Says you, who is from the house of ‘I’m gonna just put this gigantic arse snake that can kill everyone in the girl’s bathroom’ guy. It has always.”

“You’re the one that can talk to snakes.”

“True. Can you apparate?”

“I can, I am not allowed to.”

“I am practically the Minister once a week…”

“Big-headed.”

“Fact.”

“Touché… where do you want to go?”

“To Godric’s Hallow.”

That name meant nothing to Draco, but the way Harry said it made him feel like it was something personal.

“Can you side-along me? I don’t know where that is.”

“Sure.”

On the way out of the castle they both summoned their cloaks. As they were of age they could leave the castle as they wished so they walked to where the wards ended, shielding from the wind. They pushed the gates closed behind them and Draco grabbed Potter’s extended forearm. With a crack they disappeared leaving only wind propelled muddy leaves behind.

<...>

Draco staggered to regain his balance.

“You all right?”

“Always.”

Harry snorted, Draco ignored him.

“Why are we here?” he asked looking around.

“My parents are buried here.”

Draco’s eyes left the shadowy buildings, landing on the other man who was standing calmly looking forward. Draco kept staring until Potter turned to him.
“What?”

Draco wanted to tell him exactly what. That Harry was right to trust him. That he would do his best to be good company. That he is sorry. But the words had abandoned him.

Besides in Harry’s eyes he saw that he already knew all of that or he at least hoped.

Draco shook his head not offering an explanation. Harry looked at the narrow street again.

“I think the cemetery is this way…”

Draco followed the Gryffindor into the murky night. They reached a square in the middle of the small town. It was encircled by houses decorated for Halloween but it took him a minute to realise what was the statue in middle. Parents and a child in their arms. At the foot of the statue there were many candles and a sea of flowers.

Harry stomped forward, only looking at the ground. Draco caught up.

“Look,” he quietly advised the young man lost in thoughts.

“Mh?” Harry looked up. Noticing the flowers his eyes widened.

The lambent flames of uncountable candles shone in the dark night. The light of the orange decorations of houses seemed pale comparing to the amount of people that had come here tonight and paid their respects.


“I can do it. But in the end flowers are not what matters, just the thoughts.”

*That was good. I am brilliant at comforting people.*

Harry nodded and turned to keep walking, but his step wasn’t as gloomy as before. They left the lit up square of the village walking through the desolated streets. When they reached the gate of the cemetery neither of them doubted which was the resting place of Lily and James Potter. The flower layer around it was covering half of the cemetery, even more candles spread out between other tombstones.

Long red candles that burnt unharmed by the wind, short silver ones that didn’t set fire to the flowers, candles that had been lit an hour ago and candles that had been standing there since the morning. Draco bent down to read what was on the strings of paper tied around one of the posies.

*Thank you,* he read. He picked up the next card. *We are grateful.* He looked at some more. All were thank you notes. He turned to Harry who had made his way through the flowers and was standing in front of his parents’ tombstone, the warm light from the candles shone around him as he stared at the dark stone.

Draco decided to go stand beside him hoping that Harry wouldn’t take it as intrusive.

“Do you want to see their house?” Harry asked in a scratchy voice when Draco stepped next to him.

“I…” Draco stopped confusedly. *I am SO shitty at this… what does he mean?*

“Because there are only ruins…” he sniffled, “not much to see.”
Draco felt a bit offended that Harry though he needed to hide crying from him.

Potter. You saw me ugly cry. What are you doing… but he realised that might – probably would – come out mean.

“Erm… Crying is okay?” he tried for it to not sound like a question.

Harry snorted wiping his eyes.

“Yeah, I know…” he sighed. “Just usually I am in settings were crying is an encumbrance.”

“Well, it’s more than acceptable now,” Draco said considering putting a hand on Harry’s shoulder.

Would that be too much?

He put his hand around Harry deciding to put any possible consequence on the fact that it soon would be two in the morning. Harry didn’t hex him, as a matter of fact, he didn’t do anything. He froze.

Harry was shocked when he felt the arm around his shoulders, even his tears paused as he assessed the situation. Draco Malfoy dressed in a pink dress is kind of sort of hugging me.

Then the tears came flooding back, burying his face in his hands he cried.

He cried for the childhood he had lost for the parents he had never gotten to know, for Sirius who died because Harry had wanted to save him, he wept for friends he had lost and for people that he had never met but who had gone to war and died while he hunted for Horcruxes. It wasn’t fair and he wanted somebody to come and fix everything for him. But he knew nobody would, so he cried to be able to do it himself.

After a bit he wiped his eyes and looked at Draco.

“Thanks…” he sniffled, “for coming with me… and for not being an arse.”

“The evening is not over yet,” Draco reassured conjuring a napkin from his cloak.

Harry wanted to ask for a hug, but how do you ask Draco Malfoy for a hug?

“Just like a regular person, Potter, honestly,” Draco said.

Harry felt his cheeks turn hot. He looked at Draco wordlessly asking whether he had said the last thing out loud.

“Yeah you did, and your time is ticking…”

Harry smiled through tears putting his arms around the other. As Draco returned the hug Harry felt a bit of the loneliness go away. Harry rested his head on the other’s shoulder, crying quietly. In middle of his second somewhat even inhale, his lungs contracted in a hiccup. He pressed his head deeper into the other’s cloak in embarrassment.

“Sniffling all down my coat why don’t you vomit on it while you’re at it…” he trailed off, “I said without menace,” Draco finished quickly in a much nicer tone.

Harry smiled a small smile though he knew Draco couldn’t see it.
“Sorry…” he said removing his hands from the other.

Straightening his coat Draco stepped back. Harry wiped his eyes, feeling like something that had lifted while he had been protected by Draco’s arms was back on his chest and twice as heavy.

Draco showed Harry the thank you notes, making the raven-head cry again. The sobs soon turned into a smile when the Gryffindor noticed Draco’s horror-stricken face. Draco huffed, looking mildly embarrassed.

Harry lit a candle and was ready to leave the cemetery with a slightly lighter heart. Letting a breath out he turned back to the blond man standing on the pathway.

“Aren’t your knees cold?” he asked, aiming for some banter that would distract him.

“Warming charms,” Draco replied shortly.

Harry nodded, looking at the ground.

“I am… not so good with being a pleasant company… I am sorry?” Draco said looking at Harry’s left shoulder.

“You’re doing fine… just be you, yeah?” Harry said, recalling their argument. My temper IS really bad. “I am sorry about shouting at you earlier…”

Harry peaked at Draco and was relieved he was smiling.

“Forgiven if you do better in the future,” he said nodding acceptingly. “Like talk to… your friends”

“I do talk with them,” Harry tried to argue full well knowing that Draco meant talking about everything, which he did… when he was out of options.

“Well why aren’t they here then? You didn’t tell them… why are you looking at me like that?”

“We,” he pointed with his finger, “you and me, we… aren’t we friends?”

“I guess… we are?”

Harry frowned, the idea of being friendly with Draco was wonderful, being friends though… something didn’t sit right. Oh well…

They walked through the village talking about this and that. Draco made Harry promise to talk about stuff with somebody. Harry agreed but he was fairly sure that it just didn’t work that way.

“By the way isn’t Granger going with you to the ministry on Saturdays?”

“Usually, yes. I convinced her to have a date night with Ron, he was starting to get really annoyed…” Harry glanced at the other sensing irritation. “You have a scary expression…”

“No, I am fine,” Draco reassured with a smile that would have made any vampire proud.

“Well anyway… what was I talking about?”

“About how you want to make time to learn wandless magic?”

“Oh yeah. I think that would be wicked cool.”
“Just because it’s cool?”

“Yeah! I kind of have all my life after the Ministry is on its paws… I want to do loads of cool stuff.”

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He wants to do cool stuff, Merlin save me…

But what is actually wrong with that?

You used to want to do wandless magic when you were younger.

And then I grew up.

You had to.

Well it’s over now.

It’s mostly over now.

“I wanted to learn wandless magic when I was younger too,” Draco said after a bit of a silence. “It is awfully complicated and drains energy like crazy. It isn’t that practical so I was strongly advised to drop it.”

“And you did as told?”

“Father wasn’t fond of me wasting my time when I could learn about his precious politics.”

“Hm.”

“What?”

“Well… he… isn’t… here… anymore. I know that sounds untactful… but…”

“It’s true, yeah I know,” Draco glanced at the dark sky sighing. The moon had slid behind a cloud but as the wind blew it out of the way it shone its pale light on the pair of boys who had both had not the best childhoods.

“Wanna play 13 questions?”

“Is that a muggle game?” Draco asked, adding, “I don’ know it.”

“It’s basically I ask a question, you answer, then the other way around, no lying.”

“That’s basically a conversation…” Draco said. Harry glared at him a bit from under his dark eyelashes. “Fine then. go first.”

Harry smiled and looked up frowning.

“Are you angry with me about Sectumsempra?”

Draco blinked at the concrete question. So much had happened with since then.

“I am bit amazed in a bad way that you used such a dark spell without knowing what it does and the scars were unsettling at first.”
“Scars!”

“Merlin, yes. What did you think? It literally means cut forever.”

“I am sorry! I am so sorry!” Potter pleaded, looking at the ground with his hands pressed together. “Fine, I guess I am not angry…”

Harry met his eyes. “You have to believe me, I never… never in my life wanted to do that to you.”

“Okay. You won’t do it again, will you?”

“Never!”

“Good.”

They walked for a bit until Draco remembered.

“Is it my turn?”

“Yeah,” Harry said looking at Draco expectantly.

“Well then Potter, what’s your deepest darkest secret?”

Harry’s eyes widened.

“Going for the kill, huh?”

“Draco Malfoy, always for the kill,” Draco said nodding, “but I was joking actually, so say that you have a crush on Syoyer and be done with it.”

“I don’t have a crush on Soyer…. Why do you always bring him up?”

“Why do you always mention him?”

“Because we’re friends… what’s your excuse?”

“Not your turn.”

Potter huffed and Draco could order his thoughts for a second. I do really bring him up too much...

“I died and I also…”

“Wow, hold up, you did what?”

“Died…”

“And my mother lied to the Dark Lord when you came back,” Draco exclaimed finally understanding the half-finished sentences he had overheard from his mother because she refused to tell him everything outright.

“You know it’s just a name, right?”

“What?” Draco couldn’t focus on the meaning of Harry’s words.

“Voldemort. It is just a name, he isn’t even alive anymore.”
“I know, it’s just habit,” Draco lied.

“Okay…” Harry didn’t sound convinced.

“Wait… you died. That’s insane. Good thing you didn’t actually, because otherwise this would have been an impossibly dull year. If you don’t count the…” Draco bit his tongue. “Well it would have been boring.”

“Count the what?”

“The people… that make the last year of my school experience eventful,” Draco replied trying to dig his way out of the hole.

“Who’s that?”

“Well… you know…” he met Harry’s sceptical eyes, “the various levels of die Death Eater scum and you are disgrace to our whole family tree… that particular one was from a letter my mother received before we decided to avoid owls altogether.”

“What?” Harry asked in a tone that promised a lot of broken bones.

“Everything’s under control.” Draco furrowed his nose in distaste. “Of course it is. I am being treated in a different way than before that’s all.”

“Which is worse?”

“Well it’s not better… why are you so surprised by this? Haven’t you seen your housemates terrorising young Slytherins?”

“Of course, I have and I have also shouted at people until my lungs were sore.”

“Have you? As far as I know that has caused them to be much more sneaky and also some rumours that you’re not all home in here,” he said tapping on his temple.

Harry’s face was gravely tired and at the same time laced with unflinching determination.

“I don’t need your protection,” Draco said firmly unsettled by Harry’s expression.

“Goshdarn, sorry to disappoint, but that ship has sailed…”

“I can’t be seen covering behind you! That will incinerate all the things I value.”

“What’s that exactly?”

“My friends, my pride, my integrity… don’t laugh at me!”

“Sorry, it’s just… integrity? Above your hair? That’s so unbelievable.”

“My hair goes with one boat with my friends if you must know,” Draco informed curtly.

“Okay, okay, Mr,” Harry laughed.

Dark road led further but they stopped at the edge of the small town looking at the starry sky.

“I don’t feel like going back to castle yet,” Harry informed.

“We can go break into the Leaky Cauldron…” Draco proposed absentmindedly.
“Don’t think that would be wise, but what about the Hog's Head?”


“I know the owner…” Harry looked at Draco’s incredulous expression. “Not to break in, you tosh. Just to have a drink or something…”

“I don’t think the owner will be happy to see us at this hour.” Draco wasn’t convinced. “We could go to London. Something is bound to be open.”

“Let’s not go where other people are, I have gotten enough interaction with people for a lifetime.”


“Sure, you know somebody?”

“No. I have a house.”

“Of course you do….” Harry said rolling his eyes. He turned his back to the dark terrain and bowed to the softly lit houses. “Thank you…”

Turning back to Draco his eyes were wet with tears again, but when he extended his hand to Draco he was smiling. “Thank you too.”

Draco felt cheeks go red so he quickly smiled, grabbed Harry’s hand and looked to the ground. They apparated with a crack.

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“Holy!” Harry cursed into the cold darkness.

The wind hit Harry in the face before he had even regained proper footing. In attempt not to fall he stepped back. With a shock he realised that they were on top of the hill and in addition to the wind he was hearing waves hit the rocks beneath him. Before his brain could take over he grabbed Draco’s hand with both of his and stepped away from the cliff.

“Harry?” he heard Draco’s voice, through the wind.

“There... there is a fucking cliff there!”

“Right,” Draco said rather shortly in Harry’s opinion.

“Right!? I almost fell down…” he died down as he realised he was clenching Draco’s hand. “Sorry,” he said stepping back.

Sure enough, he shouldn’t have done that.

Before Harry could say another word he was falling.

Before he could brace himself for the impact the ice cold water hit him square in the back. Sea water filled his nose and he was dragged around in rhythm with the waves, despite his attempts to reach the surface. Everything was dark no matter how much Harry blinked and his chest started to hurt from the lack of oxygen.

After one half water half air inhale, his lungs were pressed empty as the sea slammed him into the rocks that he had luckily avoided on the way down. When he somewhat regained his ability to
think about anything other besides the pain he was pushed against the rocks again. He didn’t see the rock that he hit, but he felt the pain. The upside was that he managed to grab a hold of one of the sharp cliffs and keep his head above the water for long enough to breathe in.

After regaining his breath he reached for his wand, but after a while of clumsy searching he had to admit that it was gone. Half-heartedly he attempted to summon it, but he didn’t feel anything but cold pain when nothing happened.

He pressed his cheek into the edgy rock as the next wave of salty ice water hit the shore. Careful not to lose his lifeline he stretched his neck peering into the darkness.

Only things he saw were big rocks in front of him and sea behind him.

“This is not good,” Harry muttered.

“DRACO?” he called. “SOMEBODY!!”

Nobody answered, but his mouth filled with new layer of salt.

Wonderful.

He strained his eyes to see if there was any way he could get from here to land. But he wasn’t even sure where the land was.

Cliff-safety. He thought leaning against the sharp rock that didn’t even offer him any real footing. He could only cling to it with his bare hands as each wave tried to suck him back into the whirling storm.

Wizards are unbelievable. No sign, no railing, no nothing.

I hope Draco is okay…

Probably, since you thankfully didn’t drag him down with you…

Harrys head went under the water again. He emerged coughing and spluttering.

“…POTTER! HARRY! I AM WET AND YOU BETTER FUCKING ANSWER ME RIGHT NOW!”

The slightly irritated and many times amplified voice reached Harry’s ears.

“DRACO!” he shouted. “I AM HEgrbl…” he unwillingly swallowed some of the sea. “DRACO!”

The potential saviour didn’t answer. Harry supposed that he was trying to find him underwater.

“Shit, shit, shit,” he said slapping the rock that he was holding on to. “Sonorus,” he said.

“Draco!” his voice was still normal.

“POTTER! I AM NOT GETTING ANY YOUNGER!” the blond was shouting again.


Making a bad decision Harry released one of his hands from the sharp rock in attempt to reach the next one. The wave that came did not appreciate his efforts and he was slammed face first in a sharp edge.
“SONORUS YOU MOTHERFUCKER!” he screamed and with a relief he felt his own ears recoil from the sudden level of his voice. “DRACO! I AM BY THE FUCKING CLIFFS! DRACOO!”

“HARRY? HARRY!” Draco yelled back. “HARRY, DO NOT STOP TALKING, DO YOU HEAR ME?”

“I HEAR YOU LOUD AND CLEAR. IF YOU DIE I AM GOING TO KILL YOU.”

“I LOOK FORWARD TO THAT YOU SOD!”

A wave submerged Harry again and when he could open his eyes again a bright light was shining from above.

“HARRY!” Draco was shouting much closer now. “I TOLD YOU NO TO SHUT THE FUCK UP!”

“DRACO!” Harry managed, his energy rapidly nearing end. He slacked against the wet rock when the next wave hit. His fingers and legs were numb and he didn’t feel his face. “DRACO,” he called again.

Then the cold submerged him and he didn’t feel anything.

Chapter End Notes

Hi, lads,
So this chapter took a long while, but thank you for reading nonetheless ^^
I drew Harry, Draco and Pansy and posted on my tumblr if anyone wants to check it out.
Leave a review and have a wonderful day
Rasa
“DRACO!” Harry managed, his energy rapidly nearing end. He slacked against the wet rock when the next wave hit. His fingers and legs were numb and he didn’t feel his face. “DRACO,” he called again.

Then the cold submerged him and he didn’t feel anything.

Draco’s breath was heavy and ragged as he ignored the fact that he couldn't move his fingers due to the seawater and probably sweat that had turned into ice on his hands. Draco hadn’t dared to Apparate again so he had carried Harry to the house trying to concentrate on one thing at a time. Now he stared at Harry who was lying on the couch unmoving just like Draco had put him there a moment ago.

He stared at the drenched man whose skin was terrifyingly blue instead of the usual warmly brown tone. His lips were dark purple and Draco's whole arm was shaking as he pointed his wand at Harry willing for his magic to undo what his carelessness had done.

He almost dropped his wand as a stream of heat enveloped not only Harry but also Draco's fingertips. The ice melted and Harry's hair gradually dried. Draco prayed for a sign that Harry was still alive that the sea hadn't... That Draco hadn't cost Harry his life.

Draco's stomach turned as all the corpses he had seen during war flashed before his eyes once again. He couldn't even step forward to check the others pulse, he was petrified, drops of water frozen to his skin and in his hair, his eyes wide. He didn't even notice the fact that his fingers were scorching as he helplessly tried to pry away the panic that was lurking in the pit of his stomach.

Draco imagined in horror that he would have to carry Harry's body back to school. He briefly saw the whole wizarding world, enraged. Then that image was washed away by an overwhelming, cold fear that he would never see Harry laugh again. That the infuriating raven-head would never nag Draco about his flawless hair or tell him about his impish adventures while venturing around the school at night.

Draco’s terror was pressing on his throat and his hand was shaking with each passing moment more as the heat kept flowing, leaving him cold and empty. Harry changed from sickly blue to a more natural colour, but Draco still couldn't see any signs of life. He concentrated all his remaining strength on making Harry more warm, holding back breaking down for when nothing else would remain.

When a barely audible groan escaped Harry's lips Draco crumbled to the floor, relief softening his joints, his eyes glued to Harry’s face. The spell ceased as Draco’s wand slipped from his fingers. He stayed on the floor looking at the other, who was now clearly breathing. Draco wanted to reach out to reassure himself that Harry was really alive, but his limbs had given out he didn't even have enough strength to pick up his wand from where it had rolled.

"Harry?" Draco whispered his voice uneven and hurting his lungs.
Harry frowned, but his eyes remained closed.

Draco struggled to clear his head.

“Harry?” he said lauder this time.

“I taste seawater,” Harry muttered barely audible, “and I feel like a carrot that is burned on the outside but still frozen on the inside…”

Draco couldn’t reply, something was broken.

Harry glanced at him from under his eyelids briefly.

“Was that you executing all those threats on my life?”

Draco felt a violent shudder go through his bones at Harry’s words, but he couldn’t respond. Broken was his will to ever be hopeful of anything ever again.

Harry opened his eyes again.

“No. Don’t tell me, that!” Harry said wincing in pain, “I was joking. Why do you look so scared? Don’t tell me…”

Draco shook his head too shocked. How can he joke about that! How…

Harry huffed relieved, relaxing back on the couch. Draco made the mistake – or not, depending on whether he wanted Harry to bleed out or not – of looking away from Harry’s face. Next thing he knew he was grabbing for his wand frantically.

Harry’s back was in a shit shape, the blood making the red shirt dark. Before Harry could voice any objections Draco was already casting a spell he had once read in passing.

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Harry had missed what spell Draco had said, but he felt the warm bliss of a healing charm reach his back. Harry relaxed his face, the corners of his mouth turning upwards. Soon, though, he was forced to bite into the blanket under his head. The pleasant warmth had turned barely bearable. Harry yelped in relief when Draco ended the spell.

Harry now could open his eyes more than for a couple of seconds and he relished the privilege by looking around. The living room was warm even though the fireplace was dark and empty. It looked impersonal and unlived in despite the perfectly matching furniture and decorations. Harry forgot all about the unsettling tidiness of the room as his eyes landed on Draco.

“Draco, are you all right?” Harry asked trying to focus, but he couldn’t read Draco’s expression as his face was cast down.

“Of course,” the other answered in an empty voice.

“You’re still drenched…” Harry informed unsure, of what was wrong. “Did you hit your head?” he asked innocently.

“Don’t be stupid,” Draco said in the same voice with a tinge of irritation this time. He stiffly got up and dragged himself across the room. He disappeared behind the corner leaving Harry confused.

Harry tried to dig in his head for a possible explanation for Draco’s weird behaviour. Before he
could wrap his head around it Draco walked back into the room dressed in an oversized grey jumper, the high boots still on his legs. Harry tried to be as small as possible on the soft couch as Draco slapped a bunch of clothes on the coffee table.

“I hope something fits,” he said and the alien voice made a shiver down Harry’s spine.

“Draco?” he asked timidly. The other was either incredibly angry or incredibly upset, neither were good things.

The blond ignored him.

Harry felt light-headed, but not so bad if you didn’t count…

Alright he felt pretty bad.

*I feel like an ocean tried to kill me.*

*Oh wait.*

Despite that the thing that nagged him the most was the salty inside of his mouth. It was disgusting. Trying to distract himself he noticed that his clothes were, though mostly dry, uncomfortably rough against his sore skin. He pulled his tattered – more like completely destroyed – cloak over his head with a huff, but restrained from throwing it on the ground. He placed it on the end of the couch, wincing as his back stretched.

He watched Draco walk back and forth from the mantelpiece to the door isle and back. With each clicking step Harry felt the other’s irritation grow.

“You are driving me up the wall right now,” Harry said hugging his knees and trying to calm his temper. “What is wrong?”

“Not…”

“I swear to Merlin’s damned left buttock! If you say *nothing,*” Harry clenched his teeth to keep more profanities from escaping, “I am too tired for bullcrap…” *props for trying.* “You’re the one that said that *talking is important.*”

“I don’t think I have ever said *that,*” Draco argued, stopping his pacing.

“You said something along those lines, so… Spit it out,” Harry ordered.

“You have no right to boss me around, scar-head!”

“Oh, we’re back to scar-head, ferret. Great. Maybe I should just leave…” Harry growled. He got up and started staggering in the direction of the lit up corridor. His legs were shaky but he ignored that as he neared the doors. His head was swimming but not bad enough to settle.

“Don’t be daft,” Draco bit from behind, “I…” he paused, “I got scared,” he finally muttered so quietly Harry had to take a minute to register the words.

“And you’re angry now because…”

“I am frustrated. Okay? This is me, being frustrated! You know… *because I don’t ENJOY being scared.*” He flashed a glare at the standing Gryffindor. “Stay on the couch and get changed,” he ordered roughly.
Harry was about to comply in the most irritated manner possible but before he could Draco grabbed the mantelpiece in a frantic way, knocking over an expensive looking vase.

“Draco?” Harry walked over forgetting his own pains.


Harry took the blond by his elbow, he almost jumped back – Draco was stone cold. The blond walked over to the nearest armchair ignoring Harry’s hand. Harry tottered after him awkwardly.

“Are you all right?” he mused. “Draco?”

“Leave me alone, Potter, I’m tired and I don’t want to deal…” Draco leaned back in the head rest and Harry stood feeling his chest tighten, expecting to hear the words deal with you, Potter, “with my brain right now,” Draco said instead and Harry’s lungs relaxed a bit.

“Do you need anything? Something warm? I could make food, probably,” Harry considered looking to where the kitchen presumably was.

“Don’t bother, I wasn’t trying to murder you, there is no reason to poison me,” Draco said his eyes still closed, chest lifting evenly. Harry noticed his wand hand’s fingers were red, contrasting with the rest of his pale skin.

“For future reference, my cooking is brilliant…” Harry said, sitting down on the couch.

“I am sure it is…” Draco said, peeking from under his pale eyelashes. “What’s that face?”

Harry smoothed his frown, shaking his head.

“I had to cook for my aunt and uncle, they wouldn’t eat if it wasn’t good. So I am pretty sure, I am good.”

Draco frowned.

“Is it just me, or am I hearing a tragic backstory?” he asked, popping his feet up on the coffee table.

“Let’s not talk about it today.”

“Tomorrow?”

“If I wake up…”

“Why in the world wouldn’t you?”

“Well for one, I think my whole body is one big bruise. It hurts like I was a male chick in a chicken farm…” He tenderly poked his own chest. The front of his body hurt a fraction less than the back. A very small fraction. “A meat grinder,” he clarified for good measure. “I am not a fan of swimming at night. Not in a storm at least.” Harry tiredly sat down on the couch. “But at least I can move after that fire charm or whatever you did…”

Suddenly Draco straightened his back and looked at Harry with wide eyes.

“I am sorry,” he said in a rush. “I forgot the cliff… I didn’t think. I am sorry. I didn’t…” his voice broke and he looked down ashamed. “Just as I think…” he clenched his hands, “no, I am not having a meltdown,” he looked at Harry again. “But I am sorry and Merlin help you if you ever
breathe a word of my brief episode to anyone.”

“Like anyone would believe me if I said you jumped into the sea for me.”

“Not what I meant by an episode,” Draco sighed.

“Oh? The fact that you have feelings of remorse? That’s the fact you want to hide?”

“Yes. No. The image I want to make in the future is under revision at this time, please ask another time.”

Harry shook his head, his eyelids felt heavier with each blink.

<...>

Harry didn't remember falling asleep, but when he woke it was a murky though bright day behind the window. He was still on the couch and a blanket was covering most of his body. Muffled rain was splatting against the glass, wind picking up and dying down pressing against the white window frames. Despite the weather, the light from the window was enough for the room to be lit up.

Harry glared at the bright window disrupting his slumber. He was still dead tired and all his body ached. With a huff he got up to move his strained muscles. Stretching his neck he yawned.

In the middle of the second yawn, with a jump of his heart Harry realised that it was Monday and he was supposed to be at school.

"Shit..." He cursed weighting his options. After a moment of consideration he shrugged and threw a look around for his wand. Wouldn’t be good to worry Hermione and Ron. Remembering yesterday with a sinking feeling he tried to summon his wand, but it was a lost cause. Instead of the wand magically appearing Harry felt his stomach lurch from hunger. Setting his mind to easier matters Harry decided to make some food.

He quickly changed into the clothes Draco had brought before and walked over to the double doors opposite from the front door and the stairs. The doors were almost as wide as the wall. He pushed one side open and looked in the spacious kitchen. The worktop was in middle of the room, a couple of identical stools pushed against it. The corner of the house was entirely made of glass, the storm outside drawing patterns on the windows, wind catching on the edge where the two glass walls met.

Harry walked over to see outside and gasped at the view. The unruly sea crashed together with the tree covered coast. He saw over the forest that disappeared in the mist and rain, trees moving under the fury of the wind.

Harry decided he liked this house. He disliked the unhomey feeling, but he liked the house. Shaking his head absentmindedly he glanced around for food. Six minutes later he concluded that people who kept their cupboards void of any food related items were seriously to be pitied.

Even if nobody lived here all the time. They should at least have a stash of unspoilable sweets or something.

Devastated Harry resolved to look elsewhere, he went back in the living room and shivered.

The rooms were normal temperature even though the windows should have made them cold, but Harry's feet were bare and the stone floor in the kitchen had chilled his toes. The carpet in the
living room warmed them as he passed the couch to explore the rest of the house.

He didn't find anything worthwhile in the fake looking study on the first floor, but after looking into one of the bedrooms upstairs he decided that his quest for food could wait.

Draco was lying on top of a bed, but he hadn't even taken off the clothes he had changed into the previous night. What distraught Harry and caused him to enter the room despite the feeling like an intruder was Draco's scratchy breath and the memory of how cold the other’s skin had been when Harry had tried to help him the night before.

Quietly Harry walked in. Tentatively he approached the sleeping man. After only a moment of doubt Harry extended his hand, pressing it lightly on Draco's forehead. The skin was still weirdly cold under Harry’s fingers.

Draco winced baring his teeth at Harry.

"G’away..." he murmured wearily.

"Draco, it's me... You're not warm," Harry informed removing his hand. "Do you need anything?"

"Bloody peace?" He said sighing and turning in his back. "Also get those boots off..." He said tiredly struggling one boot against the other.

Harry obliged awkwardly loosening the straps and taking off the heeled boots. Draco muttered again, curling up, hiding his knees under his oversized jumper. Draco opened one eye after a bit of a struggle and caught Harry's gaze.

"Ufo," he said and then drifted off leaving Harry wondering whether Draco had lost it or Harry was missing something.

A loud crack indicated that neither of those things were quite true yet.

A small being reminding of a house elf appeared in the bedroom with a short bow.

"Young lord?" he enquired.

Harry took in the neat creature. His skin was pale, the white garment he was wearing reminded of a Greek toga. It was held together by a silver ornament on the elf's shoulder.

"You don't have to call me lord," Harry said.

The elf's green watery eyes drifted up from the ground and met Harry's gaze.

"Thank you..." Ufo's eyes drifted to Harry’s forehead briefly, "But I consider it a needed courtesy."

Harry stared at the unusually pale creature as he stepped forward, his legs not touching the chill wooden floor any longer. The elf drifted through the air in the direction of Draco's bed.

"Young lord, needs to rest," Ufo said after examining Draco while being suspended in the air. "Young lord Potter, should also rest..." he said flying closer to Harry, stretching his long fingers before Harry's chest. Harry felt magic, even before Ufo’s fingers gently pressed against his shirt.

Harry felt his legs clumber and his consciousness slip. His last thought on the way to the ground was how he would have liked to at least have gone down with a fight.

»»-------------¤-------------««
Draco woke from the painful emptiness of his stomach and the divine smell of pancakes drifting from the open doors of his bedroom. His head span as he got out of the bed, but after washing his face in the bathroom he felt capable to descend the broad stairs.

Crossing the living room he noticed that the clothes he had given to Potter were gone. He also noticed that the burn on his hand had been treated and mentally thanked Ufo. He followed the smell of food into the kitchen but the sight made him freeze in the door isle.

Harry was standing with his back to Draco, making pancakes on the hot stove. He was whistling a song that was played nonstop on the radio station that Pansy and therefore Draco usually listened to. Ufo was sitting mid-air above the counter, snacking on the pancakes. A storm was banging at the glass walls of the room but around Harry the air seemed to bend, making it fuzzy around the edges. Harry's dark skin was beaming form the hotness of the pan and Draco stood still hoping not to be noticed until he would be able to collect himself.

He had never seen such an easy image in this house. In any house. People didn't usually cook, whistling and feeding elves in the process. Nor did they flip the pancakes in the air and they certainly didn't make the dreadful stone cold kitchen feel like the best place on Earth.

Harry turned on his heel to drop the pancake from the pan on the plate that stood on the counter next to Ufo's plate and froze for a moment noticing Draco.

"Mornin'," Harry said smiling and waving a wooden spatula at Draco. "How do you feel?"

“I don’t think it’s anywhere near the morning anymore…” Draco trailed off considering what he should say. He settled on something in between of 'hungry' and 'you truly scare me, Potter'. "I might actually believe you on that cooking claim, Potter, these smell rather edible." Harry snorted and poured a new portion of batter on to the scorching pan. Draco looked away. "What's in them?"

It was Ufo who answered.

"It's my recipe, young lord. It consists of flour, sugar, baking powder, soy milk, oil and a bit of dried yukaleli for good luck."

"They are really good, I don't know what's that yukaleli business is, but tastes amazing. Here," Harry said, pushing the stack of pancakes in Draco's direction.

Ufo rotated and snapped his fingers. A cupboard clicked open and a pot of jam jumped form the shelf, settling on the counter, opening itself up.

Harry glared amusedly at the elf.

"I swear I looked everywhere. There was no food!"

"You might have looked, lord Harry, but you certainly did not find," the elf stated the obvious calmly, submerging another pancake in the jam. "It's apple and chilli, young lord, you must taste it."

"If you insist," Draco said sitting down on one of the benches.

“Ufo here is telling me a story…” Harry said, leaning against the stove while the pancake was heating up.

“What story?” Draco asked wide-eyed, remembering his childish endeavours when he and his parents had spent their holidays here once more than a decade ago. The pancake was dripping jam
on the counter top, frozen on the way to Draco’s mouth.

“About how we met, young lord,” Ufo informed. “I was just getting to the part when you were running out of the forest, the flitterfairies on your toes. I had been just minding my own business further down the path after our first encounter, but your cries, young lord. It was impossible for me not to intervene despite your strict instructions.”

Draco looked down, remembering the day.

“You were really something. I remember that the moth-fairies fled even before you could lay a finger on the despicable creatures,” Draco said, deciding to just ignore Harry who was smiling bemusedly. “I recall I wasn’t that gracious afterwards. Believe me, I was glad that it wasn’t father who had to chase the flitterfairies away.”

Ufo nodded.

“I recall you were saying things mostly like Disgusting creatures! I am going to burn down this forest! Then, I think… you stumbled over a root of a tree and started crying.”

Draco hung his head feeling his cheeks get hot.

“As I see it, it was a culture shock. The forest was crawling with living things,” Draco defended himself, finally biting into the pancake. Next thing he knew he was trying not to bless Potter and his golden pancakes.

He only opened his eyes again because he felt Harry’s stare.

“They are not bad,” Draco said taking another pancake.

“Yeah, I can tell from your blessed expression,” Harry said smiling widely.

“It’s hardly your merit,” Draco said. “Thank you for the recipe, Ufo,” he said to the levitating, old elf.

“It was my pleasure. Do I have to make sure you two rest up properly?” he asked eying Harry.

“I am rested now,” Harry said.

The elf rose higher in the air.

“You are exhausted, lord Harry,” he stated. “You might want to rest for a week. The house dislikes being empty, it will be happy to accommodate two lovely men like you.”

“I really can’t…” Harry tried to argue, but Draco already knew it was a lost cause.

“Potter. Leave it if you don’t want to spend the week unable to step further than two steps away from the house.”

Harry looked at Draco stunned.

“Ah, young lord… you do learn,” Ufo praised smiling at Draco.

“I can’t. I have school and Quidditch and ministry work. I can’t just take a week off!”

“I see,” Ufo said.
Draco crooked his head. The elf was as likely to give in as Harry listening to anyone’s advice ever. As he had feared, the elf’s magic was gathering around his fingers. Harry stared at him in shock.

He grabbed the wooden spatula from the pan and the wood turned black at the tip as Harry was attempting to do wandless magic. Unfazed the elf snapped his fingers.

“I told you…” the blond muttered looking at his half-finished breakfast.

“Lord Harry will be able to leave the house for walks, the weather will be pleasant tomorrow.”

“What did you do to me!?” Harry bellowed, glaring at the elf.

“You would really do well to calm down, Harry,” Draco said getting up. “Ufo, maybe we can come down to visit tomorrow, but I think we can manage the rest ourselves.”

“Young lord has really grown up!” Ufo said contently. “You should rest as well… farewell.”

And the elf was gone leaving only a faint smell of pine trees behind.

“What the hell!” Harry said. “And you just let him curse me.”

“Calm down, it’s useless to just scream at me. You look terrible,” Draco said to somehow level out his urge to tell Harry that the pancakes were miraculous.

“I do what now? Have you seen yourself?” Harry took a pancake, stuffed it in his mouth and seemed to be cursing under his breath all the way. “Sod this,” he bit, his teeth and hands clenched. “Side along me to the beach, I need to try and get my wand. Then we’re leaving.”

“Beach?”

“My wand is in the sea.”

“Oh,” Draco said. “The house is no Apparition zone, the closest passage down from the cliff might be too far from the house. You got cursed, remember?”

“I don’t care.”

“I am positive we will end up in shit. Literal as well as metaphorical, considering the amount of creatures dwelling in that these woods and cliffs.” Draco remembered his father’s face when they had realised in middle of what they had bought their house – a heaven for magical creatures. “I can go down to the shore,” he said, torn between being unsettled – try horrified – of putting Harry in any kind of danger and leaving the safe confines of the house.

“I am just gonna go myself.”

“You won’t be able to apparate or go too far.”

“I can do whatever!” Harry said angrily turning off the stove.

“You really can’t,” Draco called to the other room as Harry pulled his boots on, but he was only half sure.

“I need my wand,” Harry growled from the hallway. His words unpleasantly reminded Draco of the way he sometimes talked about fire.

Draco heard the doors open. He felt his stomach lurch and with an annoyed grunt he ran after
Harry who was stomping down the hill. Water immediately slapping him in the face Draco exited the house. His heart was beating so hard he thought it might jump out of his chest.

By the time he caught up to Harry his legs were ice cold and covered in mud. Running downhill Draco couldn’t stop in time and crashed into the other who was still walking furiously down the hill. The blond grabbed Harry’s sleeve trying to regain his breath.

“Don’t! Potter. Go back to the house. I will get your wand, I will bring you anything you want, just go back. Sit tight and…” Draco was saying things but all he saw was Harry falling backwards into the darkness. His green eyes wide. “Don’t GO NEAR ANY CLIFFS AGAIN.”

Draco was shaking despite the fact that he felt like his feet were on fire. He clenched his shaking arms trying to find a way to persuade Harry to go back, to stay safe. A violent tremble shook him and Draco almost collapsed in the mud as Harry’s arms circled him. Draco pushed his head in Harry’s shoulder strangely.

“Go back to the house, moron.”

Draco heard his own name being said against his ear, but the blond was too occupied with holding tears. A lot of them.

“You are an idiot!” he said, pushing Harry angrily. His fingers stayed dug into Harry’s shirt so that the raven-head couldn’t even step back. Draco pushed his head into the other’s shoulder again. The words ‘I hate you’ were in his head, but he knew too well that they were as untrue as it got.

Harry was drawing circles on Draco’s back and slowly, the blond’s breaths evened out, heart-beat calmed and he started feeling his freezing feet.

“Draco?” Harry asked.

Draco didn’t answer. He stepped back, with one hand still in Harry’s jumper. With the other hand he took his wand.

“Accio Potter’s stupid wand!” he said. They stood, water pouring from the sky. Draco wiped his face with his sleeve, but nothing was dry anymore. When the wand poked him in the chest he jumped almost slipping in the mud.

Harry picked up his wand with a wide grin.

“Thank you!” he said. “Can I give you a hug?”

“I don’t want to stand in the rain anymore,” Draco said, fighting the need to jump from one leg to another as they were at the same time burning and freezing. He tried a warming charm, but as he was already thoroughly wet, it did nothing.

“Of course,” Harry agreed. “I have to send Patronus messages to Hogwarts.”

“Let’s get inside first,” Draco urged, shivering, his legs were shaking and there was not a spot on his body that was dry anymore.

Harry nodded starting up the hill, Draco followed him. The way back seemed to last for ages and when Draco once again hit his toe on a sharp rock, his wand mostly by itself sent a blasting curse at the ground. Draco closed his eyes to calm down.

“What the…” Harry started startled, “hell…?” he finished shocked. “Where are your shoes? And
pants for that matter?”

Draco glared at him and pointed his wand to the house now only ten steps away.

“Are your feet okay?”

“They bloody well won’t be after I kick your slow ass in! Let’s move.”

Harry snorted, whipping his wet hair away from his face. Draco finally looked at his feet, with a start he noticed blood in more than one place. He swore at the sky for this day being so nerve – and feet – wrecking, but walked after Harry to the house.

Chapter End Notes

Hei,

Hope you’re all having great time. I am done with school this year so I hope to write much more.

Leave a review please ^^

Rasa
he had just said that he was marrying a troll

Draco sat – not slumped, because he never slumped – on the chair and spelled his feet clean. One of his toes was bleeding but he was too wet to care. He wanted to go and change, but he imagined his feet would disagree now that immediate panic had worn off and Potter was safely sending silvery Patronuses from the hallway.

He contemplated drying his jumper and risking it becoming rough. The option not appealing he stayed in the armchair aching feet stacked on the coffee table. When he felt his feet flare up, he jumped up almost tipping the armchair over with his weight.

“Potter! What the hell?” he said when he could get his heart back to its place.

“Your feet were bleeding… even I can do a bit of scratch healing.”

“You should warn me before things like that!” Draco said stepping down form the chair. He muttered a thank you angrily, pretty sure that the other didn’t even hear.

“Are you all right?” Harry asked tilting his head and Draco didn’t like the look in his eyes.

“Yes! Why wouldn’t I be?” he said flopping his dripping sleeves and crossing his arms around his chest.

“You…” Harry scratched the back of his head. “Why are you angry with me?”

“I am not angry with you!”

“Okay, what the hell is wrong then?” Draco rolled his eyes. Then he dug around in his brain and gritted his teeth. “And I am warning you if you say ‘nothing’ I will hex you and make you tell the truth.”

“You wouldn’t.”

“Try me,” Harry said staring at the blond in a way that unsettlingly reminded him of McGonagall.

“Fine! Fine…” Draco bit down an infuriating desire to fidget. “I can’t believe I am considering telling you this…” he paused wondering what half-truth he could get away with. His brain went blank when he met Harry’s eyes. The raven-head looked like he actually wanted to help, like he cared. “It would be inconvenient if you died,” Draco said with his face as blank as it could be considering he was quite distracted, distressed and freezing. He bit down how Harry was one of few people that Draco would die for without a second of hesitation.

*Merlin help me I am so doomed. Dumb feelings.*

“I am fine,” Harry said slowly. “You don’t have to worry…”

“You’re… fine? Potter, I…” Draco took a deep breath before continuing, “You almost died yesterday,” the moron blinked confusedly. “Because of *me*.”
“You’re the one who saved me!”

“Not denying that it looked heroic, but I did it because I was scared,” Draco said sighing. “And now I am very confused, everything feels wrong and like it’s about to fall on me,” he finished eying the untrustworthy mirror above the fireplace.

“It’s going to be fine, I can take care of myself and…” Harry trailed off shrinking under Draco’s glare.

“You?

Take care? Of yourself?” Draco repeated in a vicious tone. “Potter, I caught you stuck in a disappearing step the other day. You were upside down.” Harry was about to object but Draco glared at him and continued. “You dip your toast in your cereal milk and you seek out the nearest danger like a niffler seeks gold even when it’s none of your business – which is always, might I add. You barely sleep and fly more recklessly than a drunk firework. If I can say one thing for sure it would be YOU CANNOT TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AND ANYONE WHO SAYS OTHERWISE NEEDS TO CHECK INTO ST MUNGO’S.”

Harry stared at him.

“Can I give you a hug now?” he asked, and Draco noticed that his hands were clenched in fists and shaking. He took an uneven breath.

“I…” he didn’t let himself think too much. He nodded trying to relax his hands.

Harry stepped forward and Draco closed his eyes. He felt Harry’s arms and had to restrain from clinging to the other’s shirt.

“Is there a reason why you’re still so wet?” Harry asked quietly not moving a finger to distance himself.

“Shut up,” Draco said. “Can you give me a promise?”

“What promise?”

“Don’t die.”

“I am gonna fucking try, Draco, but you know…”

Draco stepped back and slapped a wet sleeve on Harry’s shoulder making sure that the water dripped down the others back. Those green eyes of his behind those stupid glasses of his. And the black hair – it was everywhere. Draco sighed and stepped back looking away.

“I hate hugging,” he said turning his back to Harry. “I am going to change.”

Harry made a noncommittal sound.

Draco’s graceful ascend up the stairs was interrupted by a pulsating light blazing into the house. Scarily life-like for a Patronus a sleek animal settled in the centre of the living room furiously snapping its teeth and glaring at Harry who had jumped out of the armchair and now was peering over it at the silver otter. Draco leaned over the banister carefully wondering why it wasn’t yet saying the message.

A sharp angry inhale let him presume that the sender had been too angry to talk.
“HARRY JAMES POTTER!” Hermione Granger’s voice shouted and Harry winced. “SNEAKING out of the castle with only MALFOY when you were almost killed just a day ago! What did I tell you literally hours prior, Harry? What did I ask?” a small pause in which the otter stomped closer to the crouching Gryffindor. “I ASKED YOU TO USE YOUR BRAIN FOR ONCE!” a bit of heavy breathing. “I am personally going to make sure you are sent every assignment you miss and I DO NOT want to hear any excuses,” she said in a less furious tone. “You’re the most careless idiot in the whole universe and I honestly have no idea how you have survived as long as you have. THE GNOMES at this point probably have surpassed your brain activity! Honestly….” She trailed off and Draco could hear people snickering in the background. “DON’T you DARE not respond, Harry,” she said at last and the otter faded out with a fuming turn.

Harry let out a trembling breath and looked at Draco who was still standing on the stairs. “Stop grinning like a loon, Malfoy!” 

Draco couldn’t keep his laughter in anymore. “I honestly think that’s the best thing that has happened in my life…” Draco struggled to form words while Harry pointed his wand at him. Before Harry could hex the other another silver streak shot to the middle of the room and a misty dog figure appeared.

“Mate!” it was the Weasley. “Harry, I am so glad you’re okay! You can’t imagine what happened when we couldn’t find you in the morning…”

“THE WHOLE CASTLE WAS SEARCHED TOP TO BOTTOM AND THE CLASSES WERE CANCELLED,” Hermione’s angry voice interrupted Ron. “EVERYONE THOUGHT THAT DEATH EATERS GOT TO YOU!”

“Hermione…”

“Oh fine…” she said and Draco imagined her slopping down in a chair her arms crossed. “Anyways Harry, the classes were cancelled and it was awesome, but…”

“AWESOME? Awesome? Ronald Weasley! I am going to…”

“Harry, tell us the place and we can come by after lessons. Keep in touch or she will kill me,” Ron said unevenly like he was running. Hermione’s voice was indistinguishable but it seemed to be chasing Ron. The shimmering terrier disappeared and Draco had to run up the stairs to avoid the things flying at his head that Harry threw in attempt to stop Draco’s laughter.

Draco listened to Harry’s miserable voice while he changed. Lightning fast he was back down stairs. He entered the room with all his grace.

“Potter, you can’t possibly be answering your friends half naked!” he exclaimed in shock but his smile was wide.

“Malfoy!” Harry groaned. “Hermione, I have pants on, ignore him.”

“By the way, did you tell them about…”

“Be quiet!”

“The fact that you snore like an old person that had caught Dragon Pox…”
“You’re the one to talk!” Harry said forgetting about the message, “You hear three notes of Welcome to the Black parade and act all emo the rest of the day!”

Draco’s smile faltered.

“That’s not true!”

“Really?” Harry asked, with a smirk. “Tum… tum, tum…” he said.

“Shut up that’s not fair,” Draco said covering his ears. “I saw you lick Pansy when we were walking from the potions the other day!”

Harry turned red.

“IT was crowded, I was trying to mock Ron across the hallway!”

“Keep telling yourself that.”

“Merlin’s pants, Malfoy!”

“Also I think your message went away before your rickety excuse for licking Pansy,” Draco informed smugly.

“MERLINS PANTS!”

<…>

“What the hell was Ufo thinking?” Harry shouted.

It was the next day and Draco was seriously considering leaving the hyperactive Gryffindor to stew by himself.

“He wants everyone to be rested,” Draco said for the umpteenth time, “will you calm down if I tell you a story?”

Harry dropped something in the study that he was destroying (he called it redecorating) and peeked around the corner.

“Depends on what it’s about…” he said and Draco was quite sure the peace wouldn’t last longer than twenty minutes. He waited till Harry settled down on the sofa.

“I came here after the trials after my mother went away to France. I was rather fucked up and spent most of my time…” Draco wondered how to call the days he spent mostly staring at the ceiling and thinking about how he should have died, “sulking…” he decided, resenting the word. “Ufo appeared one morning and announced that he was going to make me well again. I didn’t really care so I let him have his way,” Draco said remembering the miserable days. “Little did I know, his magical capabilities were – and are – colossal.” Draco shook his head. “He cursed all my shirts and books to either run away from me or nudge me until I went for a walk and the only time when everything was calm was if Pansy came. But then Ufo did to her the same thing that he did to you. We were stuck here until we kind of weren’t as dead inside anymore.” He shrugged. “The point is, even if you don’t like just sitting in the house, maybe it’s what you need.” He looked at Harry briefly, but the green-eyed sod was listening attentively. “All I know I went from ‘Merlin why am even still here?’ to ‘I want to finish Hogwarts’ and I think that’s a good thing?”

“Of course that is a good thing…” Harry looked at his lap frowning. “I can’t just leave, though. I
“Potter! The Ministry is going to be fine for a week. Your Quidditch team probably is celebrating the fact that their captain-flying-every-free-hour-of-the-day is gone and all the professors will understand if you take a week off. You’re a grown man, act like it!”

“You’re a prat,” Harry said and Draco smiled smugly, “but don’t ever tell me to act like a grownup. I’ve been doing that,” Draco’s face openly questioned that, “– I will admit rather badly – but since I was eleven. I stopped being a grownup right after the wannabe white walker quit being a problem, I am still an adult every Saturday. At all other times I am going to be whatever I feel like.”

“Fair enough,” Draco said thoughtfully.

“Yeah…” Harry said.

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Harry was restless despite how hard he tried to relax. Being bound to a house might have worked for Draco but Harry couldn’t help but feel like every second he wasn’t around something terrible happened that he could have prevented. What if somebody attacked Hogwarts? Hermione had sent him a message just a couple hours ago but that didn’t stop him from worrying.

What if there was an Emergency at the ministry? What if he would return and everything he had done would have been destroyed?

Useless questions like that kept swirling around in his head getting more and more ludicrous until Draco distracted him by throwing a book at his head and glaring. Harry wondered if the blond even liked him at times like these.

Why would he after all, Harry couldn’t even control his own wondering thoughts, what could he offer to Draco? It was a mystery why Draco was even still around. After this morning’s walk it had been clear that only Harry was bound to the house.

Apparently they were friends… and apparently Draco didn’t want Harry dead despite the vibe he often gave off.

I shouldn’t expect him to want to stay with me. I should tell him that he can do whatever.

He usually does what he wants anyways, doesn’t he?

He busied himself with making food from the ingredients Ufo had pulled out of various previously empty cupboards. Harry forgot for a moment his contemplations when Draco praised the food.

Harry noted to try his best for the next meal, glad that he could do at least something for Draco, who was the main thing keeping him sane in this house.

Spiting that realisation, he tried to provoke Draco who was surprisingly resilient to Harry redecorating the former study.

Harry had done his best to transfigure the neat, matching armchairs into something more appealing. An ancient looking sky-blue armchair, a dark green bean-bag which had turned out surprisingly well and another cosy armchair that reminded Harry of Andromeda’s house were positioned on a rug. To Harry’s delight Draco had been so shocked by the changes he couldn’t have even said anything. The blond had just peeked in, stared like Harry was raising the dead and then practically ran upstairs.
Now Harry was cranking his brain trying to remember what were Ufo’s given instructions. They had visited his house in the morning and the elf had given Harry some seeds when he had complained about boredom.

Harry brushed the wet soil off his hands and pushed the pot he had transfigured into the corner of the room. He stayed on his knees looking out the window. If he hadn’t spent last year camping in various forests he would love it here, he realised. He clenched his hand and pushed an angry breath out of his nose.

“They have no power over me,” he reminded himself. “Not anymore.”

He watched the forest, following the movement of the wind that never seemed to cease around the house. He blinked refusing to acknowledge the nightmares he saw creeping in the shadows of the trees, he blinked again. He saw his failure, he saw his dead friends and he saw everything he feared he saw it all regardless of whether his eyes were open or closed, but the trees moved behind the glass and Harry’s focus shifted.

With his eyes he followed a bird whose blue feathers sparkled in the autumn’s sun. It was free in the sky, wind carrying it higher and higher. Harry sighed, leaning on the pot that came up to his shoulder as he was sitting on the rug. He wondered who would take care of the plant when he would go back to Hogwarts. If it would even take root because Harry’s gardening skills had never been exceptional.

After one more minute of consciously reordering his thoughts and separating his bad experiences in forests with the current situation he rubbed his face and got up. He wanted to go find Draco but he didn’t want to annoy the blond too much. As fun as it was he didn’t want to stay here alone. Of course if Draco wanted to go, Harry would not be the one to stop him.

Knowing his tendency of becoming an utter pile of sadness Harry kept himself busy, waiting for Ron and Hermione come by after their lessons ended.

<…>

“GRANGER,” Draco greeted with little of his usual restraint, “just the brainy witch I wanted to have a word with!”

He entered the room and the temperature seemingly dropped a little.

“Malfoy,” Hermione answered turning away from Harry who she had been just hugging. Her eyebrows were raised, she also had noticed the chill that ran through Harry’s bones.

“What the hell were you thinking?” Draco snarled at her, “you must realise Potter has a bounty on his head and a couple hundred people who would love to have him as their torture puppet.” Hermione was stunned by this turn of the conversation, Ron struggled to decide between being enraged and baffled and Harry just stared at the angry blond. “Brightest witch my arse! I have spent like a week with him and I never let him out of my sight because he’s a dumbass. But you! You let him go to the ministry alone! What’s worse you actually listened to him when he said he could take care of himself. What a golden friend you are! He gets himself stuck in disappearing steps more than anyone I know! He walks around growling like a starved werewolf! And by now he probably has more coffee in his system than water! His golden squad is supposed to make sure he doesn’t die off, isn’t it?” he asked now glaring at Ron as well.

“What do you care, Malfoy?” the red-head asked trying to step in front of Hermione who glared at him with a look that made him stand by her side instead.
“HOW dare you!” Hermione turned her attention to the blond, “we have been there for Harry and if you care…”

“Please, spare me your pathetic excuses. You are supposed to be bright,” Draco said like it offended him personally, “act like it.” He lifted his hand to shut up Ron who was turning red. “Harry cannot take care of himself. You, his so called friends, are supposed to make sure he doesn’t overwork himself. In my opinion he shouldn’t even be the captain, the team is hopeless without him anyways…”

“It abso-bloddy-lutely is not!” Ron exclaimed. “And I want you to try to make Harry let it go, he will actually bite you.”

Draco looked at Harry briefly who bared his teeth in a grin. As long as he was able to breathe nobody was taking away a thing he loved, not even his friends.

“Believe me we tried everything,” Hermione said, clearly still unsatisfied with the results.

“You almost let him get killed!” Draco stressed, “why did they attempt it on a day when he was alone? Because they know he trusts only a select few thus is vulnerable surrounded by people he doesn’t trust. You can’t expect him to stay safe if you’re not there!”

“I AM WELL AWARE, Draco.” Hermione took a breath. Harry snapped from staring at Draco to Hermione. Isn’t she supposed to be on my side?

“We know…” she continued. “I made a mistake. I am exhausted too you know.” Ron put his arm around her and she smiled a little. “We all need a break sooner or later.”

“Malfoy, honestly, do you think we don’t know the one thing Harry is bollocks at?” Ron asked shaking his head.

“Well that and getting lyrics to any song correctly…” Draco added thoughtfully. “So you two are not as useless as I presumed…”

Harry should have been glad that they weren’t about to start throwing curses but he felt unnerved that what had started out as an argument now was something to bond over.

He is perfectly capable of surviving a normal day. When he has those…

Okay.

But he is not some, as Hermione once described him ‘a four year old running along a cliff with scissors that are on fire’.

I did fall off a cliff yesterday, so they might have a bit of a point.

But they are taking it way overboard.

“I banned 5-hour energy in ministry,” Hermione revealed. Harry looked at her utterly betrayed.

“Everyone always walks on tiptoes if he’s dozed off in the common room,” Ron added.

“GUYS,” Harry finally found his voice. “Thanks and all, but I am capable…”

They all looked at him like he had just said that he was marrying a troll.

“Please,” Draco said rolling his eyes.
“Harry, we love you and all,” Hermione turned to him, “but you have to trust us on this.”

Harry looked at Ron, who nodded.

The raven-head opened his mouth but he discovered that he was too stunned to say anything in his defence.

“You seem keen on bashing us, but what have you ever done for Harry?” Hermione asked crossing her arms.

Harry was about to step in and say that Draco doesn’t have to do anything, he just has to be, but the blond didn’t even blink.

“What more can Potter want than my brilliant company?”

Hermione looked at Harry with questioning expression and he nodded. She looked back to Draco not utterly convinced.

“I also help him with potions,” Draco offered.

“That’s…” Hermione looked at Draco with the look that made all the younger years spill the beans. “That’s good.”

“Harry has a lot of people who would die for him, I hope he doesn’t need to watch his back around you,” Hermione said.

At her words Harry felt a physical blow in his stomach. He closed his eyes grabbing the back of an armchair for balance.

I don’t want people to die for me! I don’t want people to die for me! I don’t want people to die from me! I don’t want people to die! Idon’twantpeopletodiefrome! Idon’twantpeopletodie! Idon’twantpeopletodie! Idon’twantpeopletodie!

The only one with his face to Harry was Draco and Harry felt the silver eyes on his skin, he looked up despite his brain screaming to get away from people that could be so easily killed just because they were around him.

“Harry…” Draco suddenly had all his attention on him and Harry felt like he was falling.

“I…”

DON’T WANT PEOPLE TO DIE! I DON’T WANT IT. PLEASE DON’T.pleasedontdie! pleasedontdie!

Harry didn’t understand why Draco looked so hurt. He just didn’t want people to die. (Idon’twantpeopletodie! pleasedontdie!) Why did Draco looked like Harry was doing something wrong? Harry doubled over trying to take even breaths. His vision consisted of black and white spots more than the ornamented carpet it was supposed to be.

He felt Hermione’s hand on his back and concentrated on her presence.

“I am sorry. I know you don’t like that… everyone is going to be fine…”

I don’t want people to die for me! I have never in my life wanted that. Please don’t. please don’t. pleasedontdie!

“We are all right Harry, you don’t have to worry,” Ron said in his concerned voice.
Harry couldn’t stop blinking.

“Two things,” he choked, “don’t lie to me and don’t die for me. Please. I don’t care, just don’t do those two things…”

“We know.”

Soon Harry regained the capability to think clearly and he sat down in the armchair pulling his knees up to his chin. Draco’s clothes were comfortable and Ron put a blanket around him.

“Thank you…” he said, unsure that his tone conveyed how endlessly thankful he was to Ron and Hermione for being there even when he wasn’t completely sure he was there all the way. Through better or worse they were there when he needed.

“Don’t mention it,” Ron said settling on the couch. Hermione squeezed his hand with a small smile and sat down next to her boyfriend.

Harry looked at Draco who was still standing with a slightly shocked expression on his face. Then the blond blinked, snarled and stalked across the room into the kitchen. Harry wanted to shrink as small as possible feeling that Draco was upset with him.

Ron was looking around the room, Hermione dug into her backpack and pulled out a stack of books and parchments.

“Those are my notes, your homework assignments and books…” she set them down on the coffee table, “I couldn’t find your potions book, though.”

“It might have been given to the giant squid as an offering…” Harry said quietly, “I wanted to go swimming.”

Ron snorted smiling widely. Harry smiled back a bit, Hermione tried to hide her amusement and rolled eyes at the boys not really committing to the motion.

Harry was trying to listen to Ron but it was difficult to follow anything that wasn’t sounds from the kitchen. When Draco walked back into the room he was carrying a mug and frowning at the hot beverage inside. He put the mug down with a clunk and sat down in the other armchair. Harry watched him, Ron was still talking.

Draco looked at Harry then pushed the mug across the table. It smelled like peppermint tea.

“Thank you,” he said and again hoped that Draco could hear that it was for much more than just the tea. Draco nodded shortly then turned to Ron.

“Weasley that’s utterly not like Pansy, you’re exaggerating.”

“She actually looked like she was super upset and almost hexed Ron when he suggested you might have kidnapped Harry,” Hermione backed up Ron.


Hermione and Ron watched the two with open mouths. Harry’s eyes widened and he jumped to his legs wand flying in his hand.

“Expecto Patronum!” he said and the stag appeared in the room.
“Pansy! So sorry we didn’t message you earlier…” Harry started.

“Shut up,” Draco said. “Pansy, he got himself trapped in the house, come by when you can. Ufo sends his regards as well.” He shooed the silver stag with his hand. “That’s it, send it.”

“How heartfelt,” Ron commented as Harry sent the Patronus off.

Draco glared at him but didn’t say anything. Harry settled back under the blanked. He picked up the mug and blew on the hot tea, warming his fingers. He tasted it cautiously but his worries turned out to be unfounded, it was just like he liked it.

“I presumed you just sent her one when you were in your room changing,” Harry said to dispel the uneasy silence.

“No,” Draco said without further explanation.

Harry stayed silent trying to convince himself that Draco was being all stoic and curt because he didn’t feel comfortable around Hermione and Ron, but it felt like Draco just didn’t care at all. Harry hold on to the mug reminding himself that just a couple minutes ago Draco had been (unnecessarily) scolding his friends for not taking proper care of him.

The sound of the front doors being furiously opened interrupted Hermione’s attempts at small talk. “DRACO!” a voice shouted causing the blond to get up.

“Pansy,” he greeted as she stormed into the living room.

“You are a nightmare,” she said crossing the room and hugging the blond fiercely. Harry noticed how her knuckles turned white where she clenched Draco’s jumper. When they stepped back from one another Pansy looked at Harry.

“I am mad at you,” she said with almost only relief in her voice. “come here…”

Harry got up ignoring the fact that his heart was beating loudly in his ears and hugged the girl.

“I am sorry, I will make you cake as an apology,” Harry said against Pansy’s shoulder.

“You better,” she said giving Harry a bright smile that let the stone in his chest melt a little. Then she acknowledged the pair sitting on the couch, “Weasley, Granger.”

“Parkinson,” Hermione said. Ron merely gave a short nod.

“Take a seat, Pansy,” Draco said pointing to his abandoned chair.

“Thank you,” she set down her bag and settled in the chair. Harry offered her his blanked but she shook her head.

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Draco crossed his arms wondering who would break the uneasy silence.

Sure as hell not him.

He was too preoccupied trying to understand what was going on with Harry. Apparently he was exhausted, way more traumatised by the war than he had led on, but above all that the thought of trusting Draco had sent him into a panic attack?
He had seen Harry crying about what he had lost and what he had never even had in the first place, he had seen him so angry that even a god would succumb to Harry’s will and today he had seen him restless to the point that he might have as well been a hurricane. All those emotions painful, but proving that Harry was there and living. The sheer panic in retrospect made Draco’s insides shrivel and bleed out of his toes.

He had wanted to leave the room, that was half of the reason why he had gone to make tea.

Draco now felt like his over the school weeks somewhat regained sense of normality slipping. Harry almost dying in front of him, being back in this house, which was not the Manor, but it had a similar aura of everything Draco would rather leave behind, and being a rubbish friend with no excuse, was a bit too much.

He had ignored the nagging sense of guilt and memories that either kept him up at night or made not sleeping preferable to the nightmares. He kept ignoring all of that until Harry’s friends and Pansy retreated for the night. He even waited until Harry was snoring lightly in the next room.

Then he closed the door of his room and laid a hand on the cool wood. He had been on the edge of collapsing for hours, now all he felt was falling.

Behind his closed eyes, Draco saw Harry falling, Harry crying, Harry with panicked eyes doubling over, Harry smiling. His eyes never lied and he had said that Draco wasn’t a death eater. Draco of course knew that, he could tell the difference between a choice and an unsaid death threat. Still the mark on his forearm, reminded him of his bad decisions. Harry would have found a way out, he would have protected his parent’s form the Dark Lord, like he protected his friends.

Draco couldn’t protect Crabbe, he couldn’t even remember to notify Pansy about where he was.

Maybe the reason why he couldn’t cast his Patronus was because he knew that he deserved all the bad things that would happen to him.

Youth and immaturity can only excuse that much, Draco was even starting to think that that was a conceited assholes excuse because, Harry despite being an arse, had never been cruel or cowardly.

Draco couldn’t feel the arm that he was lying on but he had no energy left in him to move, he just lied on the floor until he was the same temperature as the floor.

Chapter End Notes

Next time i say that i am 'gonna write much more' i want somebody to kick me.

hope you enjoy, the chapter 9 is already being written.

Please do comment your opinion i am interested,

Rasa
Draco’s thoughts were making him fucking sad. He was cold and he was miserable and he hated every bit of it because he was WELL AWARE that lying on the floor was doing nothing to aid the situation. Everything was just too much.

“What the… fuck?” he grunted angrily at himself and shifted to lay on his back. All of his left side was numb.

His heart was beating too fast, his eyes were starting to tear up and in addition he was starting to get hectic. It felt like if he wouldn’t do something RIGHT THE FUCK NOW, his brain would explode. Draco sat up and tried to wipe his now flooding eyes. His hands were shaking.

He was biting his lip and taking short, shuddering breaths. His hands soon became wet with tears, but they didn’t stop. With every stifled sob Draco became angrier and angrier, trying to wipe his face frantically.

“What the fuck!” he said again after a couple of minutes of uncontrollable crying. This was getting outlandish, but his hands didn’t stop shaking and his jaw was hurting from the effort it took to be quiet. His eyes caught the sight of his forearm and he was overwhelmed by the sudden need to get the tattoo off him. Like it was somehow responsible for his breakdown.

*You chose this.*

He scratched at his skin despite the fact that the tattoo wouldn’t budge.

*It was your doing.*

His hands were shaking too much. He pulled his sleeve down.

*You will never be free of this.*

Draco whimpered and stuck his arm out, but you can’t really run away from your own forearm. He clenched his head with the other arm and shifted so that his back was against the wall. He cried some more, his sobs muffled by his knees. The feeling of the dark magic under his skin made him shake with new levels of whatever the emotion he was experiencing.

He only realized that he had failed to be quiet when the door swung open and almost hit him in the face. Potter was standing in the doorway, blazing wand in hand and hair up in all angles. He looked like a wild wolf. Draco’s shock was short-lived and he buried his face in his hands before Harry could spot him.

*I NEED TO CALM DOWN.*

But if Harry (THE golden saviour! The person who actually ENDED the fucking war!) if he was messed up by the hell that it had been, what right to be okay did an ex-Death Eater have?

At the same time it wasn’t like Draco had any right to break down. It had all been his own fault
after all. If he had been someone else he would have found a way. He had always been one brave action away from something that could have potentially saved him, maybe even ended the Dark Lord. But he was a coward and he had played it… safe. As if it was possible to be safe with a madman in your own house.

“Draco…” he heard his name. He shook his head weakly and tried to say for Harry to leave his room, maybe call him a scar-face, but it came out in a choked sob that made even more tears come from his eyes.

Draco resorted to tightening his hands around his knees and pretending not to exist. When a hand landed on his back he startled and when looking up he saw Harry’s face it only caused him to cry more. He looked so sorry.

Draco took a breath through his nose and wiped his already ruined jumper’s sleeve across his face.

*This won’t do.*

He was crying yes, but that did not give Harry an excuse to pity him.

It took him a ridiculous amount of time to calm his breathing to the point that he was able to speak.

“I’m fine,” he said and then decided that he was really messed up at the moment. Even Potter wasn’t that daft.

“Draco…”

“Fine,” he took a breath and looked at the boy sitting next to him. “I am not fine. Now go away.”

Harry looked like Draco had stabbed him.

“Can’t I help… in anyway?” he asked quietly.

*Don’t ever be in mortal danger or out of my sight.*

“I doubt you can remove… an atrocious snake from my arm….” Draco bit and hated how Potter looked so sad because of him. “I’m sorry,” he said.

“You have nothing to apologize for,” Harry said shifting closer and rubbing Draco’s back.

A new wave of tears made Draco look away.

“Why the fuck are you nice to me?” he asked angrily. “I can’t… I can’t even make you happy… all I do is almost get you killed, cause you panic attacks and take you away from your friends… I am not good, I am not nice… I am sure you could be spending your time more enjoyably… besides you need to get better… I thought you were mostly okay, but you’re not… and I can’t help. I am… well look at me… I am a messed up pile of nothing.”

“You’re not nothing, Draco…”

“You and your stupid hero complex… You can’t just go around forgiving people! It is going to end badly…”

“Are you planning to… hurt… me?”

“I don’t think I am capable not to… I mess everything up,” Draco said, wondering how Harry was understanding his words as he didn’t have much energy left for comprehensible speech.
“You’re talking bullshit,” Harry murmured and hugged Draco tightly, resting his forehead on Draco’s arm.

Literally feeling Harry’s attempts to make Draco feel better made his heart jump and fall at the same time and his chest hurt. Draco closed his eyes and let go of his knees, burying his head into Harry’s neck and hugging his upper body, which Draco unhelpfully noted was bare.

Draco didn’t understand how did he get blessed by Harry caring, but he was thankful and that made him cry even more.

“I don’t get it…” he tried to say against the warm skin of Harry’s neck.

“What?” Harry asked rubbing Draco’s back soothingly.

“I don’t deserve you, I don’t even deserve to be here, to be alive…” he felt Harry’s hands tighten around him. “So why am I?”

“I don’t know… but I know that I am glad you’re here.”

“What the fuck, Harry… what the actual fuck,” Draco murmured and felt Harry chuckle a little.

“Sorry, I shouldn’t be laughing right now…”

Draco inhaled deeply and let out a shuddering sigh.

“You abso-fucking-lutely should. Look at us…” Draco didn’t dare to look at Harry’s face so he just sighed glad that the tears were calming down now.

“Do you want to talk?” Harry asked feeling that Draco was a bit calmer now.

“I would rather forget this ever happened,” except the hugging, I don’t mind that. Draco felt Harry sighing deeply.

“I… it helped me a lot. Even if I didn’t enjoy it. Talking. With Hermione and Ron… but I understand if you don’t want to talk to me, I am bad at stuff like this, but I want to help. Should I get Pansy? Or your mother? Or…”

“Merlin. Stop. NO,” Draco had to move back to convey how against all of that he was. He shuddered now that Harry’s chest wasn’t warming him up anymore. “Don’t do any of that.”

“Okay,” he said and looked down.

Draco sighed and wiped his eyes, he felt his face being red and puffed up and was glad that it was dark in the room.

“What did you tell them about?” Draco asked wanting some more time to decide whether he even could talk to anyone.

Harry looked at him briefly and then frowned at his fidgeting fingers in his lap.

“About what happened when I died, about my childhood… I talk to them about everything.”

“Yeah about that… I presumed your childhood was all sunshine and hero worshipping, but…”

Draco tilted his head.

“Hah,” Harry laughed bitterly, “it was not hero worshiping. I had a roof over my head and clothes
on my back, occasionally I had a full meal, it was... Well, it was.”

Draco’s hair stood as he remembered the scrawny kid that Harry had been when he first saw him. He looked so thin Draco had already wanted to suggest getting some food. Of course it never got that far.

Harry looked at him and smiled sadly.

“You have the same look that Hermione had, Ron was just horrified and then angry,” Harry sighed, “I know it wasn’t okay. I know. I just… if for ten years all you know is people calling you a waste of space and a freak but at the same time saying you should be thankful, you’re bound to get that carved on your skull. When I visited Ron’s house I almost died from all the affection I was getting. It opened my eyes that it doesn’t have to be like with my aunt and uncle. It was so many times harder to go back after that.”

“You shouldn’t have gone back.” Draco was speaking before he realised. “I am sure the Weasleys would have taken you in, I’ve seen you together, you’re their family.”

“I had to. There was a protection spell from my mother that worked if I called her sister’s house my ‘home’.” Draco frowned. “That’s how I survived when I was one, my mother protected me,” Harry explained. “I never thought of it as home though…”

“That makes no sense,” Draco shook his head. “The Dark Lord wasn’t back until our fourth year. Did the spell protect you from Death Eaters too? You would have been as safe in any sensible wizard house and would not have to endure any mistreatment… Who the fuck thought it was okay to leave you there?”

Harry was staring at him, Draco knew his… ‘feelings’ were the ones talking at that moment but he couldn’t care. The darkness made it easier.

“It was Dumbledore…”

“That old pisspot! I am… I am so sorry…” Draco hugged Harry again.

“You are sorry for what?” he asked his voice choking a little.

“If I hadn’t been a dumbarse rich kid we would have been friends and I would have made sure that crazy old man would see reason.”

“It’s fine though, we’re friends now.”

“Damn straight we are. I don’t go crying around random strangers,” Draco said trying to smile. “Aren’t you cold?”

“It’s not too bad,” Harry said and if Draco wasn’t of sound mind – which he was, now – he would have thought Harry moved a tad closer to him, but he probably just shifted because his leg was numb or something. Though asking Harry that, Draco himself noticed that he wouldn’t mind a blanket and a cup of tea.

“You know I hate… talking about… feelings and things…”

“I’ve noticed,” Harry said biting down a smile.

“Now it was… just... overload I guess, I had some pent-up issues and then you almost died, I forgot to tell you to send Pansy a Patronus. I think also the fact that you had a panic attack, it just
shook me to the core because I wasn’t aware how… you know. You seem so okay most of the time.”

“Hah, I feel ok 0.01 % of the time. Are you okay now though?”

“I’m better, thanks to you…” He would have laughed at the confused look that Harry gave him, if the black-haired sod wasn’t being serious. “For being here? And calming me down? And in general just being an amazing human…”

Whoops, that was too much.

“Draco…” Harry started, but Draco already knew nothing of essence would be said.

“That’s a fact. You can’t argue with facts,” he said hoping that he wouldn’t remember any of this in the morning. What a sap he was under all the layers of mean and cold. “By the way, I will deny everything if you ever mention any of this to anyone.”

Then Harry smiled and Draco made a mental note to remember that smile the next time he felt like staying on the ground until the death would take him.

“You’re pretty amazing too,” Harry said rubbing the back of his neck.

“I absolutely am,” Draco agreed ignoring the part of him that was screaming that he was a worthless piece of garbage. He couldn’t indulge in that, Harry had looked devastated when Draco was crying, Draco hated that more than he hated himself. “It’s crazy how you just… change the room,” he said. Only after the words left his mouth he realised that that didn’t make much sense as Harry didn’t read his thoughts.

“I just mean… I am not sure how to explain…” he ran a hand through his hair. “When I was young I was taught how to behave myself around people – manners, dances, traditions and a lot of useless history facts. Otherwise I would embarrass my parents in public, but there were also rules when we were alone. Because of that I know how to stay still and control my emotions – most of the time –, but you… every time you walk in to the room it’s like you make it your own. Or you see something you dislike – like the study downstairs – and you just take it and ‘redecorate’ it. No questions asked, no doubts had. You fall asleep on tables and make it seem like the most comfortable place to sleep on.” Draco paused. “Everyone is telling you what to do with your life, but you just decide to finish Hogwarts, everyone wants you to run ministry until the end of time but you keep declining…”

Harry looked at him and Draco could see him thinking before he replied.

“For seventeen years that way or another my life was defined by a noseless bold man… now that I am… free… I want to decide things for myself. I am done living somebodies else’s plan. I have experienced a lot of media’s attention both good and bad so now I don’t give a shit… there are just very few things I really care about so… I guess that makes it easier, I don’t…”

Draco stared at Harry. He felt his heart starting to beat faster.

“FUCKNSHIT!” he exclaimed grabbing on to Harry’s forearms. “Plans! Did you know my father had my whole life planned out the moment I was born…” he trailed off. “I didn’t even realise…” he said to himself and then looked at Harry who was looking at him slightly concerned. “HIS ideas! His plans! They are so intervened with mine, I didn’t even realise I was still trying to be what HE would have wanted. But it doesn’t work. I can’t be both me and whatever the idea of me my parents had. I don’t care about who your parents are, what they are or whether somebody can
do magic or not. I don’t give a shit that the last 6 hundred years only purebloods had touched that doorknob.” Draco shook Harry’s hands looking at him with wide eyes. “Wow! This is euphoric…” Draco laughed and couldn’t gather anymore words for a while. “Oh Merlin… there are so many things… I have wanted to do but never have because insert some bigoted ancient tradition… I don’t even… that’s ridiculous,” Draco laughed some more and looked at Harry, who was smiling happily. “Fuck, Potter… you are an impossible person.”

Harry laughed.

“Thanks, I guess?”

Draco nodded and then a yawn interrupted his smiling. He felt like he could fly, he was so happy about the realisation. He was free now, thanks to Harry and all the other people who fought Voldemort, he was now free. He let go Harry’s hands.

“Do you want to go to sleep?” Harry asked also yawning.

“I am buzzing, Potter! I feel like I could…” Draco paused thinking then he looked around. “Like I could conjure a Patronus…” he finished for the sake of Harry who looked wildly confused.

“What do you mean?”

“I haven’t been able to cast a Patronus. Not even a little wisp of mist. I guess that’s what happens when you have yourself confused with your father’s image of you to my level. I remember I tried… actually never mind.” He found his wand and stopped himself from telling Harry how he once tried to cast the spell thinking about how Snape had made him fail yet another assignment.

“Expecto Patronum,” Draco cast his heart still beating and his smile wide. When a silver streak actually came from the tip of his wand he smiled even wider. He let it go and put his arms in the air. ”Oh, HELL yeah!” he stood up and tried again.

He concentrated on the newfound feeling of freedom and the fact that Harry was the one to help him realise. The next time he cast it wasn’t a shapeless cloud – he had always been good at spells – the end of his wand burst and a horse-like shape formed, illuminating the dark room.

It took a moment for Draco’s eyes to adjust.

“Woha,” Harry said behind him and Draco could only nod.

A silver Thestral was looking at Draco expectantly. Draco lowered his wand.

“I knew I could do it if I only had the right moment to think about.”

Harry laughed.

“Only you would have that problem with the most difficult defence spell ever.”

Draco nodded extending his hand, the Thestral stepped forward.

“Tell Pansy hello from me, don’t wait till the morning,” he said with a smile. The Thestral opened its wings and disappeared in a silvery swirl.

“Can she cast a Patronus?”

“Only mist,” Draco said smiling smugly. “I want cake… do we have cake?” he asked skipping out of the room. “This is my first cake as a new man!”
Harry laughed and shook his head.

“Why would we have cake?”

<...>

“I think they… are sleeping in there…”

“Shusssh…”

“We can just drop off the stuff Harry asked in the kitchen…."

“Be quiet.”

“Be quiet yourself.”

Then Draco drifted back off to sleep with the happy mental image of Weasley’s face when he saw him and Harry soundly asleep in the middle of the living room where they together had constructed a pillow fort after Harry had discovered that Draco had never made one. He as well had been introduced to it belatedly, when Weasleys had found out that he had been deprived of such activity as a child.

They had stayed awake way past dawn and Draco was pretty sure it was the most fun he had had in forever.

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Harry woke up when somebody pulled his blanket off him. He grunted and tried to take it back, but his hand collided with something that was most certainly another human body. He jumped up, blinking frantically until he focused on Draco’s blond hair sticking from under Harry’s blanket.

He smiled a little and rubbed his eyes. He had slept surprisingly well and the nightmares were soon washed away with the afternoon sun that was shining thought the kitchen doors. He made his way out of the pillow fort without waking Draco or dropping the whole thing on top of him, which would inevitably land him in trouble.

As he was reaching to take a mug to make some coffee he noticed a note next to a bag that hadn’t been there when they had finally gone to sleep. He smiled reading Hermione’s clear handwriting.

Brought your bag, hope you’re having a good time and resting properly. Ministry is good and your team is happy to take it easy for a couple of days.

McGonagall is pleased you finally used your brain (I’m paraphrasing) and took a week off.

Defence Against the Dark Arts essay is due tomorrow.

Also Pansy sends her very warm regards.

Hermione

P.S. You shared the sacred pillow fort making secret with the ferret, you must have it hard. Ron

Harry ignored Ron.

He could imagine how warm exactly were the regards from Pansy, she had sent them a furious white Patronus ball that blazed the whole time that she ranted about how Draco had literally no
manners and he should stick his ‘magnificent magical abilities’ up his arrogant arse. By the end of it Harry was pretty sure some other girls were snickering in the background. Draco had only listened and smiled warmly. He had said: “She’s very proud of me you can tell because she mentioned my magnificent arse.”

He was probably right too.

Harry put on the kettle and opened his bag.

When they had been unsuccessful at getting the curse off – though Harry didn’t get the feeling that anyone other than him were really trying – he had let them have their way. For once. He had to admit that staying here with Draco was not half bad. It was great actually.

Harry smiled thinking about how Draco had lit up after figuring out the stuff about his father, Harry felt so happy that he had said something right for once even if it had been by accident. He wished there was some way to keep telling the right things to Draco so that he would never stop smiling.

Other than being happy for Draco Harry was also baffled that Draco had called him ‘an amazing human’, it kept surfacing in his thoughts and though it made him smile a little he also couldn’t help but shake his head, hoping that Draco hadn’t jumped on the ‘saviour worshipper’ train.

Draco would never. He would never.

Then Harry concentrated on making breakfast – or late lunch if you like nit-picking. As Hermione had brought him speakers and his MP3 he could put on music, which he did. He missed music while he was in Hogwarts, but the level of magic there made all his electronics go screwy.

Unhappily he poked at the food in the pan. He had just thrown together some potatoes, tofu, green peas and sunflower seeds. He might have made a mistake.

“Smells good,” Draco said from behind.

Harry jumped a bit straightening his back from examining the food.

“Huh,” he laughed uncertainly.

“What is that?”

Harry glanced at Draco.

“Speaker and Mp3, it’s…”

“I meant what is that song?”

“’Here Comes The Sun’, I think? By the Beatles,” Harry answered deciding that he wanted some cucumbers with whatever it was he was cooking.

“How are you feeling?” Harry asked when the song ended.

“I am okay, I think,” Draco said snatching a piece of cucumber from the plate Harry put down. “It’s weird though…”

“What’s weird?”

“Yesterday – while we were making that,” he pointed to the pillow fort, “and messing around – I
felt like nothing will ever be wrong again, but now… I guess it’s not that easy.”

“Yeah, I know. One minute everything is wonderful and then BooM, no it’s not.”

Draco nodded.

“I am just tired. I would like to be okay.”

Harry related so much his chest hurt. He gave Draco a sad smile and hoped that that conveyed what he thought.

<…>  


Draco was looking at Harry’s outburst with raised eyebrows.

“The metal bird guy, apparently… You sure get into the movies, don’t you?”

“I am sorry… You liked it though, right?”

Draco shrugged.

“A lot of stuff was quite weird, but it wasn’t boring, I guess.”

Harry stayed quiet watching as the credits rolled. He had been anxious to watch the new Spider-man movie ever since Hermione had talked about it fondly. She was the one that got him into movies in the first place, it was the only way that she had forced Harry to take a break from the Ministry’s hardships. He was happy to spend time with her and Ron never stopped being amazed by Muggle technology. It had been his favourite part of the summer.

In a magical castle though having movie nights was next to impossible.

Harry had hoped Draco liked the movie because he had stayed still throughout it, but maybe he had just been weirded out. Harry deflated a bit, watching movies usually elevated his mood and he had wanted to share it with Draco.

After the second end credit scene Draco shifted. Harry closed the laptop, slightly concerned what Draco’s intent glare was about.

“And that wasn’t real?” he asked.

“No.”

“Muggles just made up a guy who sticks to walls? And then made a muggle guy pretend to be him and… filmed him?”

“Yeah? And then added a bunch of… well like doctored the footage, removed all the ropes and added the magical stuff…”

“What the hell.” Draco kept frowning at the now closed laptop. “But… that’s like magic.”

“It’s only on the screens though,” Harry said smiling.
Draco looked at him incredulously.

“The moving portraits are ‘only on a screen’ does that make them any less magic?”

“I guess not…”

Harry pushed a pillow more comfortably under his head. They were lying in under the blankets of their fort and Harry felt so wonderfully safe. Harry had to admit that he felt better than he had in ages, he was still ignoring all the homework that had piled up but he and Draco had already made a deal to deal with that tomorrow. Today was just to watch a movie and eat snacks.

Draco had asked whether Harry had requested Hermione to bring all his belongings and he had to explain that he had asked Hermione to place an Undetectable Extension Charm on a bag in case he had to leave on a moment’s notice. She had obliged albeit sadly. It was just in case. He didn’t actually think something would happen, it was just in case.

He had kept it under his bed until now, when it actually proved to be useful.

Harry watched the make-shift ceiling that was littered with fairy lights Harry had found under his pile of vires that he didn’t even know how ended up in the bag. Draco was silent as well, lying next to Harry so close they would touch if one of them breathed deeper. Harry smiled thinking about the improbability of him feeling completely at ease next to Draco Malfoy of all people.

But he had changed… or he could finally be himself.

Either way Harry was rapidly starting to worry whether it was normal to like another person so much so soon. But then, when had anything been remotely normal around him. It would be weird if something normal actually happened at this point. Deciding not to worry about it tonight he closed his eyes.

Next thing he knew he was in a graveyard.

“No,” he whispered painfully even though he recognised it instantly. “Please, no…” then his voice abandoned him.

His wand was gone. It was freezing cold and a shadow was walking toward him. Harry was dragged to his knees as he stared at the hooded figure. Something was shifting under the cloak, Harry felt like his eyes were bleeding watching the person approach.

Harry couldn’t move, his heart was beating faster than he ever thought possible and cold sweat was running down his face. It was like a Dementor had already taken his soul leaving only the things that made him stay frozen in fear. He had done something so wrong nothing would correct it.

Next thing he knew his wand was in the cloaked person’s hand and another person was standing in between Harry and the shadow. Then a green flash and Harry felt his heart stop. He saw Draco’s face.

Nothing would ever be all right, he realised while trying to say Draco’s name. If he could only make a sound, Draco would stand up and be alive. His dead eyes were boring into Harry who couldn’t even scream. All he had to do was say Draco’s name.

*Draco. Draco!* *DRACO. DRACO!!!*

There was only silence.
The hood of the murderer was pulled back by a wind that chilled Harry to the bone. Harry’s face turned upwards against his will. What he saw made him wish he could move to gauge his eyes out.

It was his face under the hood.

The other he started laughing baring a sharp set of snake teeth. Then Harry felt his own lips pull into a wicked grin, his tongue ran across his sharp teeth. His fingers were holding the wand that had killed Draco. His laughter was making his brain boil.

Frantically trying to hold on to something, he bit as hard as he could and woke up from the sharp pain in his cheek.

Harry stumbled out of the blanket fort and glanced back to where Draco was calmly sleeping. Harry shook his head and looked at Draco again to make sure he was breathing.

He was.

It’s fine.

It’s your stupid dreams again.

At least I didn’t wake the whole country this time.

Harry’s heart was still racing and his hands shaking. He ran his fingers through his hair and let out a shaky breath, a bit of blood dripped on the carpet.

He walked into the kitchen to rinse his mouth. He spat out the bloody water and took a mouthful again.

How can I be allowed around people when I was mindlinked to the psychotic murderer of the century?

I should be locked away.

What if I can’t tell what’s real one time? What if I kill somebody?

He could still feel the snake’s teeth in his mouth and the laughter was ringing in his ears. He shook his head violently. He spat the water in the sink, pushing a thumb in his mouth and dragging it along his teeth.

He left the water pouring in to the sink because his head started hurting so much, his teeth were normal but the sickeningly vivid memories of the dream made him want to just run. He stepped out of the house in to the wintery morning.

He walked and walked until he was so deep into the forest that he couldn’t hear the sea. There he stopped, staring at a big tree that had no leafs left, they were in a muddy carpet on the ground. Wind was blowing somewhere behind him, but he just touched his teeth again.

Draco woke up because he was cold. First thing that he noticed was that Potter was gone. He dragged himself up and looked out of the blanket fort. The house was freezing.

“I swear to Merlin, if he left a window open…” Draco murmured, tucking a blanket around him. He felt surprisingly well rested and he wanted to sleep some more before he needed to start doing homework. He walked in to the kitchen thinking that Harry was washing something, but the
kitchen was empty.

Draco closed the tap and looked around. He walked back in to the living room, searching for the open window. All the windows were closed. He kneeled down to pick up a pillow that was for some reason in the middle of the room – probably because Harry had gotten a bit too agitated during the movie.

A stain on the white part of the carpet seized his attention and he looked closer wishing for there to be a not terrible explanation for blood on the carpet. He couldn’t come up with one.

“POTTER?” he called. He walked in to the hallway and noticed the doors ajar, his blanket slid off his shoulders as he gripped his wand tighter. He was at the door in three furious steps.

Once outside he walked forward looking around.

“Oh my actual fucking Merlin…” Draco swore when he noticed Harry.

He ran over to Harry who was sitting with his back to a tree and a face to the sea. “Potter! Are you insane?” he asked but the other didn’t seem bothered. He was sleeping. “POTTER!”

He jumped awake blinking uncoordinatedly, then he shifted and winced.

“Morning,” he said, presumably trying to grin. Draco was fuming.

“What happened?” he asked pointing to Harry’s scratches and cracked glasses.

“I went for a walk… I am fine,” Harry said rubbing his hands together and getting up. Draco was torn, he had already run all the worst scenarios of what had cause Harry to leave in his head. *He had just gone for a walk? He was fine?* Draco felt his worry now spill out of him in anger.

“Do you even know what reasonable precautions are? To not getting killed?” Draco questioned putting his wand against Harry’s chest.

“I just…” he was looking anywhere but Draco, “I just needed to get out…” he murmured.

Draco felt his anger subsiding in an instant, he lowered his wand like it burned.

“I shouldn’t have shouted…” he said his stomach so cold he forgot his toes were numb.

“I shouldn’t have left without a warning,” Harry said shaking his head and smiling.

Draco *hated* that smile. He hated that Harry thought he had to smile at him like that. On one hand he didn’t deserve any smile Harry was capable of, but on the other that was a smile that meant he had hurt Harry’s feelings, but Harry thought it was *fine*. It burned him worse than if Harry would have been angry.

Draco felt even worse when Harry’s smile wavered because Draco wasn’t saying anything.

“I met a bird…” Harry said frowning and looking up. “It fell on my head.”

“Of course you did. Let’s go the fuck back to house,” Draco said. “Accio blanket.”

He caught the blanket in his hand and threw it on Harry’s shoulders.
“Thanks,” Harry said pulling it around himself.

Draco gave him a short nod and pushed him in the direction of the house.

“Did you cut your finger or something? I found blood on the carpet,” Draco asked quietly.

“I bit my cheek…” Harry said. Draco looked at him sensing that that was only half of the story. “I had a nightmare,” Harry finished looking down.

“Fuck that.”

Then Harry laughed. Draco shook his head, the Gryffindor was probably completely out of his mind.

Chapter End Notes

Hi,
My logic is that time is bullshit so Spiderman Homecoming is out and you can sue me or just ignore it ^^. Loved the movie btw, also Wonder Woman, it’s the shit, go watch it if you haven’t.
Pillow fort idea credit
Idea for Thestral being a Patronus
Please leave a comment and thank you for reading ^^
Rasa
“That’s not a bird.”

“Shit off.”

Harry was holding eye contact with the feathered being that was sitting on the window sill. He had already tried offering it oatmeal, muesli and even cereal, but the only thing he had achieved was waking up Draco. He was not happy.

Now the cold air was blowing from outside, but the being sat unfazed watching Harry with dark eyes.

“Harry, I am serious…”

“Shhhhh…” Harry glared at Draco accusingly. “I think it wants to be friends.”

The animal stretched its front paws making indents in the window sill.

“It almost bit your finger off,” Draco hissed. The animal glared at Draco who glared in return.

“To be fair, I was trying to feed it plain oatmeal. I kind of deser- OH SHIT!”

Startling Harry, the being shifted to the side with a surprised screech when the window moved in the wind almost squashing its tail, Harry dropped the slice of bread he was holding. The being settled and glared at Harry twice as intently as before.

“You are making it nervous,” Harry accused.

“It is making you nervous.”

Harry was trying to think of a way how to close the window without upsetting the animal, who readied to launch at him with all his teeth and claws every time Harry either tried to get his wand or move closer to the window.

“We want to close the window,” he finally said to the beast on the sill, “it’s cold.”

The being looked at Harry and flicked its tail one more time before stretching its wings and jumping to the table. Draco closed the window with a flick of his wand and shuddered.

“Now it’s inside. Great.”

“It understood what I was saying!” Harry marvelled. “How did it do that?”

“It’s a magical creature, like an owl or a gnome.”

“Hmm…” Harry frowned thinking.

<…>
After a couple more trials and errors Harry discovered that the creature likes fresh fruit. Ten
minutes later they were out of everything but apples. The creature had gobbled up all the pears, but
when Harry offered it apples, it jumped up, making some nice adjustments to the spotless white
ceiling with its claws.

“Don’t drop the house on us,” Harry pleaded. “You don’t like apples. I get it, I will put them away
for Draco…”

The creature landed on the counter in a swift motion, barely opening its wings. Harry slowly
extended his hand. The creature looked at him judgingly for a moment, but Harry felt that that was
mostly to keep up the appearances. After all the not bird – as Draco had kindly informed him – had
basically exorcised the left-over nightmare when Harry had run into the forest.

That was yesterday, today it was sitting on a windowsill in Harry’s room when he had woken up.
He was fairly sure that he had not left the window open with it being ungodly cold outside and all.
Harry’s walking up and down stairs after food had woken up Draco, who was quick to drag Harry
for calling the creature ‘a bird’, the fact that Draco didn’t have a clue what that was either, of
course was completely irrelevant.

The creatures feathered head touched Harry’s palm, but before he could pet it, it jumped and
settled on his shoulder with its head in his long-ish hair. Harry smiled and scratched the creatures
back. The sound that it made was nothing like purring, but it conveyed contentment all the same.

“I need to do some homework or I will never catch up with everything when I go back to
Hogwarts,” Harry said. He already felt sad that he would have to leave the creature behind. Trying
to put off all the no-good thinking he walked into the living room, where Draco was writing his
essay.

“Oh, you’re cuddling now, wonderful,” he said after one look at Harry.

“Shush, grumpy,” Harry said, trying to locate Hermione’s notes.

He found them in the pillow fort. He tried to be careful with the stacked up furniture, but balancing
the creature on his shoulder, the stack of papers and a treacherous pillow turned out to be too
much. Harry lost his footing, pulling the whole sheet construction down with him. While he was on
the way down, the creature jumped and landed on the back of the couch. Traitor.

“Graceful as ever,” Draco commented not looking up from the essay he was writing.

Harry was too busy trying to untangle himself and not destroy Hermione’s notes to answer. Pulling
the sheet off his head the first thing he saw was the creatures feathered ass as it prepared to jump at
Draco.

“Watch…” but it was already too late.

“Oh!” Draco shouted, pulling his essay from under the creature and putting it up in the air. “NO!
Down, you wicked witch! Harry, get her away from me,” he ordered even though the creature was
already leaving the unsteady grounds.

“Her?” Harry questioned plopping down the notes on the coffee table.

“Obviously,” Draco said watching the creature innocently walking towards the free armchair.

“We need a name for her, you can’t call her a wicked witch.”
“A name comes with attachments, Potter,” Draco said looking at him. Harry was refusing to look at the blond, that lead to scrambled thoughts and poor – poorer than usual – coping mechanisms. “You do know we’re returning to school in three days?”

Harry didn’t answer. He was well aware.

“Of course, you can come back anytime,” Draco said and Harry’s head turned so fast he feared it might roll off his shoulders, “but I don’t see why you would want to…”

“I would!” Harry tried to keep calm, Draco looked at him surprised. “There is the sea,” he pointed the left, “there’s a forest,” he pointed to the other side, “the wind could knock me over on a good day and-” Harry bit down on his last words. (You’re here.) “And now her,” he scrambled to finish his sentence, pointing to the creature. “…” he hung his head.

_I don’t want to go back._

Everyday dealing with people that needed everything spelled out for them. Repeating ‘you’re welcome’ countless times a day after they tell you something heart-wrenching. Voldemort was dead, but it seemed like the fight was just beginning. Just a couple of weeks ago they had uncovered two Death Eaters that had been undercover in Ministry. Harry had had a couple of friendly conversations with one of them.

Last Saturday a reporter died because he was in the way of a curse that was aimed at Harry.

_I don’t want to go back. Idon’twanttogobackIdon’twanttogoback_

A week before that he had advised on a case where 13 Aurors had lost their lives.

_I don’t want to go back!

A week before that he talked with war orphans.

Harry couldn’t hear anything but his heartbeat, he might have bent over, but he wasn’t sure. His eyes were bleeding.

_How can I even think that? What is wrong with me?

I have to stop them. I have to save them. I have to –

“SCAR-FACE!”

Harry snapped out of it. He was kneeling on the floor and Draco was shouting in his ear.

“TELL ME what is wrong or I swear to MERLIN’S ASSHOLE I WILL…” he stopped when he saw Harry looking at him. “Harry…”

“I have to go back,” Harry said, he felt tears go down his cheeks. There was no blood. “There is this case on which I was working with Baka… I have to help them.”

“Harry…”

“This fanatic,” Harry didn’t even care that he was disclosing confidential details to an outsider, “is murdering muggles that are married to wizards. He skins their children… he… I have to stop him.”

“Merlin,” Draco’s face pulled in horror before it softened and he put his arm on Harry’s. “Harry… Harry. Look at me.”
Harry was sure his eyes were looking at Draco, but all he saw was skinned children. Once Aurors had got to the scene of crime so fast that one of the children was still alive. Harry had seen the photographs. He had been safe at school that day.

“HARRY.”

Harry focused on Draco’s silver eyes. He wasn’t crying anymore.

His chest was in pain. Harry relaxed his fists and inhaled.

“Okay… that’s good, breathe with me,” Draco said. “In… out…”

Once his breathing was back to normal, Harry took Draco’s arm and squeezed.

“Thank you,” he said. Then he got up. “I need different books.”

“What?” Draco was sitting on the ground and his eyes were full with confusion.

“I can’t keep writing essays and doing tests about things that won’t help anyone. I need to learn about the dark magic that Death Eaters use. I need to figure out the best way to utilize Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes trinkets. I need things that are useful.” Harry didn’t like the expression on Draco’s face. Didn’t he understand? “I need to do everything I can! Going back to Hogwarts was a mistake, I can do more out there – fighting.” Draco was still staring at him, silent. Harry looked away. “I should have taken the offer to undergo Auror training.”

“No.”

“What?”

“No. You… Don’t do this…” Draco got up. “I can see you killing off the part of you that sees the end of the fight.” Draco clenched his fists, Harry frowned. “Just now! You gave up! You decided to stay an Auror or whatever you are till you die! You are not a soldier. You didn’t choose this, Voldemort marked you, but he is dead. You have no…”

“Shut up!” Harry shouted, but held back his anger. “The thing is – I can, therefore I should. It has nothing to do with obligations. I can help, I can defeat them. And I can do it again and again every day until the day I die. I can do it and if that will protect even one person it will be worth it. Don’t you dare tell me to leave them alone! You…”

“For fucks sake, I am not telling you not to do it!” Draco interrupted and the part of Harry that wasn’t angry was glad that he had, what he would have said would have broken him. “I am telling you not to kill yourself in the process.”

Harry’s eyes widened. The creature jumped on his shoulder again, but he barely felt it.

“Go fight. Fuck, I will go fight with you… But don’t ever consider giving up!”

“I am not…” he stopped when a set of sharp teeth dug into his ear.

“THE FUCK you aren’t. Do I look blind to you?” Draco stepped forward. “You were having a panic attack and then all of a sudden you stopped moving altogether and then when you looked at me it was like I didn’t know you.” His words felt like punches in Harry’s gut. “It was like you were dead!” Draco paused. “Please Harry…”

Harry couldn’t move.
Draco was right, he had given up. But it wasn’t just now, it was when he had gone back to the Ministry. He had known he would never be able to leave. Now he had just stopped pretending like he still had hope for a future where he was not fighting.

He buried his face in his hands and felt tears coming again.

“Harry,” Draco said and hugged Harry. The creature moved to his other shoulder.

“It’s too late,” Harry said, burying his face in Draco’s jumper.

“What?”

“I already gave up when… when I went back to the Ministry.”

“That’s not true.” Harry was about to argue, but Draco hugged him tighter and kept talking. “When you are thinking about something you love, the air around you emits hope. You look at people who are doing what they love and I see you thinking that you want that to be your future. You told me you want to teach… You told me you want a full house of children. People don’t need you to fight every battle, they need you to show that it is possible to move on and live a good life. They… We don’t need you to be a soldier, not anymore. You have a future Harry.”

“You think so?” Harry asked weakly.

“I know so,” Draco said.

“Okay,” he said. If Draco was so sure, maybe Harry could do it. He could win.

<...>

“Harry!”

Hermione hugged him tightly as soon as Harry opened the door. Ron was standing behind her watching Harry anxiously. He was holding a stack of books that reached up to his chin. Behind him was Pansy who was also clutching a fair amount of books. Next to her was Luna, which was surprising considering she hadn’t returned to Hogwarts this year. Last Harry had heard she had been chasing some unpronounceable creature in Northern Ireland. She was holding the biggest book Harry had ever seen and he is friends with Hermione.

“Hey, Ron,” he said patting the other on the shoulder as he passed to put the books down. “Hi, Luna. Pansy. Please come in,” he said stepping aside.

“Hi, Harry,” Luna said smiling and hugging Harry, the book still in her hands. Harry just went with the flow.

“Potter,” Pansy greeted walking past him.

Harry closed the door behind her. He had expected only Ron and Hermione, but now that Pansy and Luna were here he found that he didn’t mind in the slightest. When he turned he was pulled into a bone-crushing hug that Ron had inherited from his mother. He had managed to balance the books on a small table that had previously bore a fragile looking vase which was nowhere to be seen. Pansy’s books were already sitting there.

“You seemed really off,” Hermione said when Ron let Harry go. “Your Patronus looked so misty when it asked for the books.”
“It was kind of creepy.” Ron nodded.

“I had another panic attack, I am all better thanks to Draco,” Harry said hushedly.

Luna and Pansy had walked into the living room.

“You need to see somebody about that, Harry…”

“Hermione, I am fine now. I got this.”

“At times like these I really want to punch you,” Ron said.

“It’s okay to not be okay, Harry.”

“I know, I know… It’s loads better when you’re here.” He smiled at them and was glad that they smiled back. He hated worrying them.

“Harry?” Luna called from the living room.

Harry walked in followed by Ron and Hermione.

“You know you have a dragon on your armchair?”

“What?”

“The creature,” Harry explained but after the words left his mouth realised that that was not much of an explanation, he looked at Luna again.

“Draco?” Draco repeated walking into the room with a plate of fruitcake that Harry had made while waiting for his friends to arrive. “That’s just like you Potter. Having a dragon fall on your head. I am surprised I didn’t come to the conclusion myself.”

He put the plate on the coffee table.

“Hello, Luna, Pansy, Granger and Weasley,” Draco greeted and sat down on the couch.

Harry was sure someone had told him that Draco and Luna had made peace at some point, maybe Hermione? But it had been when he was angry and honestly… Luna was an odd angel that they should all be thankful for, no wonder she had made up with Draco.

What a talk it must have been though…

Luna smiled at Draco and settled in the armchair, the creature sniffed her hair and approved instantly. Harry quickly did the math and freed a stool from the half-done homework, Pansy sat down. Hermione sat in the other armchair which was partly covered in the collapsed pillow fort. Ron sat on the end of the couch that was the closest to his girlfriend.

“Please help yourselves,” Draco said as Harry sat down on the couch next to him.

Luna took a piece, Hermione and Ron both hesitated, so did Pansy.

“I baked it,” Harry said not meaning for it to sound as coldly as it did.

“Oh, good,” Pansy said smiling at Draco and taking a piece, he rolled his eyes.
“I was worrying about the fact that Draco had no experience,” Hermione elaborated taking a piece.

“Me too and then also about that one time I was poisoned…” Ron bit in his tongue. He looked at Harry quickly. “I didn’t mean… Shit.” He looked at Draco. “I didn’t mean anything. That was a shitty thing to bring up, I was joking. I know you had no choice and you’re all better now.”

Draco looked at Ron confused.

»»-------------¤-------------««

“What are you talking about?”

When had he ever poisoned Weasley? With a punch in his gut he put two and two together.

_The only time I poisoned anyone ever._

_How did he even get the stupid mead?_

Draco’s fingers felt cold.

“I’m sorry,” he said, hoping to relieve his knotted gut. Pansy put a hand on his and glared at Ron.

“A lot of things have happened since then,” Ron said. “But yeah, it’s nice to know Harry has not befriended the old stone cold Malfoy.”

Draco nodded, but he needed a bit more time to wrap his head around the fact that he had almost killed Harry’s best friend and Harry was even talking to him. _What the fuck?_

“I am warning you that if you act like a dick,” Pansy said glowering at Weasley, “I will relieve you of your dick without a second thought.” Ron sat back blinking in surprise. Pansy could be intimidating at times. “Apologize,” she ordered.

“I am sorry, Malfoy,” he said hurriedly even though his face said he was doing so out of habit to obeying furious women just to not get hexed.

Draco was having a hard time believing that he was being apologized to by the man that he almost killed.

“Of course,” he said, “I am sorry.”

“You already said that, honey,” Pansy said still glaring at Ron, who looked around for any help.

“Okay,” Hermione took pity on him, “this is going terribly. Can we start over?”

“I don’t even know what this is supposed to be,” Luna said taking her second piece of fruit cake, “I was just going to drop off this book for Harry, but they told me you were on vacation…”

“I am going to make some tea,” Draco said and stood up. He didn’t look at Pansy, but he didn’t have to.

“I can help,” she said, sending one last glare at Ron who was studying the rug.

Draco walked into the kitchen and slid the door closed.

“Are you all right?” Pansy asked.
“I have been in a house with Potter for four days. How do you think I am?”

“Incredibly horny?”

“Pansy, be serious!”

“I was, but all right.”

“I didn’t know anyone had even drank the poisoned mead. I didn’t even think to ask anyone. Weasley could have died.” Draco shook his head. “The worst part is, I am worrying that Harry wouldn’t have forgiven me, not that Weasley would have died.”

“Would you be happy if Weasley died?” Pansy asked.

“No. I would just have felt incompetent and guilty,” he answered but Pansy’s expression said to keep talking. “I would be sad for Harry,” he muttered.

“Then it’s fine. If you would break down for every person who has died…”


“Well, that’s obvious,” Pansy said crossing her arms. “Should we make that tea?”

Draco stayed still, Pansy sighed and took out her wand.

“Okay, okay, I am doing it,” Draco said. “Conjured tea is disgusting.”

“But it looks like there is only enough good tea for both of us,” Pansy said with badly concealed content in her voice.

Draco smiled.

“Immature…”

“As fuck,” she finished reaching for the mugs. Draco laughed.

<…>

When they re-entered the room with six steaming mugs floating in the air, Draco could feel the tension in the air.

“Did you tell them you’re planning to drop out of Hogwarts?” Draco asked.

“WHAT?” Hermione barked at Draco who barely hold on to his floating tea.

“WHAT?” Hermione barked at Draco who barely hold on to his floating tea.

“I was just getting to that part…” Harry said glaring at Draco, then he looked back at Hermione who was looking distraught. “Just listen to me, alright?”

Hermione took a breath and sat down. Cautiously Draco put his own tea in front of her, figuring that a disgusting tea was better than even angrier Granger.

“I thought you hated the Ministry work,” Ron said.

“I did… I do…” Harry stumbled. “But there I am making a difference. Sitting in lessons, doing my homework… I can’t…” he sighed. “I feel like that’s pointless, alright? If the next Voldemort comes around I can’t just chuck a list of poisonous plants at them.”
“Harry, we’ve talked about this, it is not your job to save everyone,” Hermione said, her voice was gentle.

“Maybe I want it to be my job. This summer, as much as I hated most of it, as little as I accomplished, it was something.” Harry looked at his friends one by one. “While sitting in class, I accomplish nothing. I help no one. I shouldn’t have gone back,” Harry said in a small voice.

Draco stared at Harry who was studying his, no doubt with at least one hole, socks.

*Does he also regret being friends with me?*

*I mean I don’t blame him, but…*

“You wanted to go back to Hogwarts,” Hermione said frowning.

“I wanted to learn. I am terrifically underqualified to do what I do in the Ministry. But in which lesson do they teach you what to say to a person who was Imperio-ed to kill a bunch of muggles? Or how to tell if a person is an undercover murderer?” He sighed again. “Hermione…”

“No, I get it.” She nodded. “That’s a good point. I mean, we had to learn defence from you one year…”

“Education sucks ass,” Ron concluded.

Luna sipped her tea and frowned at it.

“You are wrong about at least one thing,” Luna said putting her mug back onto the table. Everyone turned to look at her. “Harry, you have accomplished so much I am surprised they haven’t put some medal on you yet.”

Harry looked at his feet and rubbed the back of his neck.

“They did,” Ron said. “He just refused to make a big deal out of it.”

“If I get one so should everyone who fought in against Voldemort,” Harry said. “It was a team effort.”

“That was not the point Luna was trying to make,” Hermione said. “She’s right Harry, you shouldn’t only look at the parts of ministry that are still a mess.”

“Should I just pretend that everything is good then?” Harry glared at her. “No. I need to concentrate on stuff that is wrong so I can fix it.”

“Fair enough,” Ron said earning a look from Hermione, “but don’t sell yourself short. You took the rickety on ‘donations’ and fear built infrastructure and made it something that actually does what it is supposed to.”

Draco had to agree, but Harry looked like he was holding back an argument. Draco had to hold back not to throw something at that brick-head’s head.

“Harry,” Hermione said, she looked apologetic. “I want to graduate, if you want to drop out,” she paused, “I can’t do the same.”

Harry shook his head.

“You don’t have to! I would never want you to abandon something you think is important.”
Hermione smiled, but it was clear she felt like she was leaving him alone to the wolves, which she was.

*I could get my NEWTs in a month, probably. Those that matter, anyway.*

*Then I could go work with Harry…*

*Like somebody would let me.*

*Ha.*

*Work in the Ministry after my father.*

*I would probably be torched.*

“I can talk to Minerva, I am sure we can come to an agreement that would let me spend more days at the ministry and still graduate,” Hermione said.

“You could probably graduate if you decided take the NEWTs now,” Ron said with a smile.

“Ron,” she tried to disagree.

“He’s totally right,” Harry added, she smiled.

Draco looked at Pansy and they both sipped their tea at the same time. Draco grimaced. Conjured tea was a horrid thing.

“What will happen to your Quidditch team?” Luna asked.

Harry’s smile disappeared.

“They’ll be fine.”

“Won’t you miss them?”

“I’ll miss a lot of things about Hogwarts. That is not important.”

“Things that make you happy *are* important,” she said sadly. “What will make you happy if you spend all your time working?”

“Erm…”

“You have to take care of yourself Harry, if you burn out you can’t help anyone,” she said. For some reason she was looking at Draco.

“Yeah, I will,” Harry said. “I…”

“What about…” Hermione started. “If every day you would take a couple of hours to do something for fun or hang out with us?”

“Sure,” Harry agreed.

Draco felt like that agreement was only to get them off his back. It was pretty clear Harry was the type to take up more than he can carry and then keep on going.

“We’ll make sure he does it though, don’t glare at me Malfoy,” Ron said.
Draco blinked, he hadn’t realised he was staring.

“I will be there to make sure Weasley,” he said.

Pansy laughed and tried to hide it with taking a swig of the tea and almost choked.

“What?” Draco glared.

She shook her head.

“How do you have a dragon in your house?” she changed the subject looking at Harry.

“She fell on my head and then broke into my bedroom,” Harry said. The creature lifted her head, hearing that Harry was talking about her. “She ate all our fruits and then just slept around.”

“I think she may have chosen you,” Luna said.

Harry stared at her blankly, Draco rolled his eyes. How was it even possible to be so knowing about some things and so ignorant about others?

“You think she’s Harry’s familiar?” he asked.

“Maybe,” Luna nodded.

“Or she’s just exploiting your soft heart,” Pansy suggested.

Harry glared at her but she only smiled.

“I thought dragons were big and breathed flames…?” Hermione asked.

Draco almost flipped his shit. There is something she doesn’t know. HA.

“There are about as many types of dragons as there are types of owls. Small to big, some live in volcanoes, some in oceans. Charlie hasn’t shut up about them all my life, I am fairly sure she’s some kind of forest dragon,” Ron’s smile was wide as he informed his girlfriend.

“Very good Ron,” she said rolling her eyes, but not trying to hide her smile.

“What’s a familiar?” Harry asked.

“Like an animal guide,” Ron explained.

Harry looked at the creature which was ordering her feathers and back to Ron with raised eyebrows. Draco sighed.

“That’s a very simple explanation,” he said. “They are companions that can amplify your magic and if you really connect you can sense what they are sensing – see what they see and hear what they hear. Any magical creature can be a familiar, but it’s pretty rare and dragons are even rarer.”

“Like Fawkes was for Dumbledore,” Ron said.

“Oh,” Harry nodded. “Can a gnome be anyone’s familiar?”

Ron burst out laughing.

“That would be a person I wouldn’t want to meet,” he said.
Harry smiled. Everyone else was also smirking. Draco wasn’t sure what the amusement was about, gnomes were a garden pest, weren’t they? What’s so funny?

“Who wants more tea?” Luna suggested, taking out her wand.

Draco was about to politely refuse, but she was already refilling all the mugs.

*Okay, then, can’t be worse than the previous cup.*

Pansy was the first to taste Lunas tea and her eyebrows rose.

“Wow, it’s really good, Luna,” she said.

“I think it’s Harry’s fruit cake that’s good,” Luna smiled.

Everyone agreed and Harry’s cheeks turned a dark shade of red. Draco looked away.

Fuck.

“Luna? What was that book you wanted to give Harry?” Hermione asked.

“Oh, it’s from a friend in Northern Ireland, they wrote it and wanted to give it to Harry as a present,” Luna said giving Harry the massive volume.

“Wow,” Harry said opening the book. “It’s written by hand!”

“It’s all their knowledge about things they thought might be useful for you.”

“That’s incredible,” Harry murmured, looking over the table of contents.

“Who would write that down by hand?” Ron asked slightly horrified.

“Their name is Eamon Eomaire,” Luna said.

“Okay, but what possessed them to write a whole tome by hand?”

“Ron, not everyone is exhausted after writing two sentences,” Hermione scolded.

“Also they wanted to apologize for the couple pages that are half eaten. Their sheep got to them,” Luna said.

Harry laughed shaking his head.

“Wow, yeah, that’s crazy, can you give them my deepest thanks please?”

“I think they included an address, so you can write a letter,” she said.

“Okay, I might forget though,” he looked at Draco.

He had started doing that when he had to remember things. Draco wasn’t sure how he felt about that, but he couldn’t help but try to remind Harry whatever he could.

“You’re really going to drop out?” Pansy asked thoughtful.

“Yeah.”

“I think the normality of Hogwarts is helping me to get over all the shit that went down,” Pansy
“Normality,” Hermione repeated. “That school – as much as I love it – is a mess.”

“I second that,” Draco agreed before he could think who exactly he was agreeing with. Hermione looked at him surprised but he just met her eyes ignoring all the prejudices he had collected over the years.

“Changing the education system is one of the many things I am planning on doing,” Hermione said.

“Shitty thing is you have to undergo it before you can do anything, isn’t it?” Ron said.

Hermione nodded.

“Besides it’s too soon after the war, big changes are scary. People have been scared enough.”

“Don’t let the old men sink their teeth back into the deciding it all, though,” Pansy said.

“Never.” Hermione smiled.

Draco would have never thought that he would not hate having tea with Harry’s friends, but he couldn’t help, but enjoy his conversation with Hermione about all the imperfections of the schooling. Luna could conjure tea that Draco would never be able to surpass and Ron could actually play chess – or so he said.

Pansy complained that without Draco and Harry she’s surrounded by boring people. Hermione asked whether the Ravenclaw girl she had been snogging the other day was ‘boring’ and Pansy had turned a delightful shade of pink while Draco had laughed.

Overall, Draco could see why Harry was friends with all of them. Half of the time, anyways.

”“Comet!”

“Gluttony.”

“That’s mean. How about Yarrow?”

“Don’t think so. Altheda on the other hand…”

Harry shook his head.

“Lillian?”

The creature was sitting in Harry’s lap, watching their back and forth as they tried to decide on her name.

“Amaranth?” Draco suggested.

They were sitting on the couch. Harry was glad his friends understood him and let him choose what he wanted to do with his future. Now it was nearing midnight, he felt like he’d done more today than in the last month, and one of the armchairs was turned into a stone column that wouldn’t move despite what both of them tried.
Harry had been reading Eamon’s book, which he found truly incredible. There were new spells (illegal, but who cares?) chapter on familiars (what are the chances? (Eamon’s familiar was a puffin, how cool is that?)) and also lot of stuff about wandless magic, then there were also less captivating chapters about sheep, but Harry didn’t complain. His ear was tingling though.

He had refused when Draco offered to heal it. It was a reminder. Scars were good reminders.

A thought appeared and Harry felt himself smiling a wicked smile. He looked at Draco.

“I know,” Harry said. “I am going to call her Bird.”

“OH MY SWEET LORD, please no. Harry Potter that is not a bird,” Draco complained exasperated.

It was too late though. Harry looked at Bird and smiled. Draco groaned.

“I was not born for this shit,” he said looking like this was the bane of his existence.

Somehow that was when Harry’s brain kicked in and put together all the feeling pieces that were floating around in his head. He didn’t want just a future. He wanted a future with Draco. And not platonically either. Oh no. The gayer the better.

Oh Merlin.

Damn you. I can manage a crush... how will I manage the fact that I want to spend a forever with him?

You managed a dark lord, you can surely manage...

Love?

That’s crazy.

That’s unfortunate.

I am lucky enough to be friends with him.

He wouldn’t want me.

Nobody sane would.

“Harry?”

“Yep?” Harry blinked out of his thoughts and hid behind his mug.

“I take back what I said, Comet is a wonderful name.”

“Too late, she’s called Bird and there is nothing you can do.”

“Unbelievable... I need something to numb my pain...”

Harry flicked his fingers and chocolate flew from the kitchen counter to where they were sitting in middle of books.

“I would thank you, but I need time to recover;” Draco said taking a piece.
hey, people

if you want you can come hang with me on my tumblr

thank you everyone who reads this random ass fic, hope you're having a great day.

fyi comments make me both more likely to update sooner and (hella) happy ^^

Rasa
Harry grinned, bottling his fear like there was no tomorrow

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Harry had fallen asleep on the couch with the Sheep book on his stomach, Draco felt annoyedly jealous of the book that smelled like a farm.

Which was ridiculous.

Not to mention pathetic.

Draco wanted to get up and stop being a loser but today was the last of their timeout from the world. Tomorrow morning Ufo’s curse would let Harry leave. Then only death would hold Harry here and knowing him - even that not for long.

They wouldn’t stop being friends just because Harry dropped out, would they?

I don’t like this.

Shit’s hurting my brain. Can I just Obliviate myself?

Harry huffed in his sleep and Draco was ripped out of his thoughts and into the present. That moron had droll on the corner of his mouth, he had sleep in his eyes and he had the worst case of bed hair Draco had ever seen.

How is it possible that I don’t find him disgusting?

Because I really should.

Draco grabbed a book about shield charms and opened it with way too much energy. Then he tried to concentrate, but stupid Potter kept breathing.

What a stupid face.

With his stupid glasses that I had to take off after he fell asleep while reading.

And with his perfect dark skin.

Even that stupid lightning across his face.

And his hair, what the fuck is his hair.

It’s like wild and all over the place, but not ugly???? What the fuck.

There is nothing hot about a sleeping moron who is snoring and drooling.

Absolutely nothing.

THEN WHY DO I WANT TO KISS HIM?

“What’s up with the constipated face?” Harry asked in a sleepy voice causing Draco to throw the book he was holding in shock.
“You’re blind! You can’t see my face!” he scrambled to somehow keep his wits when Harry stretched on the couch. His feet reached over the armrest, his toes showing through the two different socks he had been wearing since getting here.

“I could tell you look constipated with my eyes closed,” Harry said, rubbing his face.

“No you can’t.”

“Why do you think so?”

“Cause I have a brain and no one can tell other people’s expressions without looking at them.”

“Okay,” Harry said, sitting up and turning his back to Draco. “Make a face.”

Draco rolled his eyes.

“That’s –”

“You rolled your eyes,” Harry said. “Now you are surprised and now you’re pulling your blank face, but I know you’re impressed.”

“Wrong,” Draco said. Harry looked at him.

“You’re smiling…”

“Indeed I am. You have pulled me down to your level, hope you’re happy.”

“I actually am,” Harry said smiling.

Bird – oh, how Draco hated that name – poked her head out of the blanket Draco had dropped on her when she kept staring at him after Harry fell asleep. Harry stroked her head and her dark eyes closed in happiness.

“What do you want for breakfast?” Harry asked, stretching his arms above his head and making Draco feel unfairly hot.

“I don’t care.”

“So I can make –”

“No, you can’t make pasta for breakfast, that’s disgusting.”

“You said you don’t care,” Harry said getting up.

“Potter!”

He only laughed walking into the kitchen. Draco sighed, rubbed his eyes and tried to get a hold on his thoughts.

“I was thinking…” Harry started. “What are you going to do after you finish Hogwarts?”

Draco sighed at Harry’s habit to talk when they were in different rooms and got up to sit at the counter.

“I am not sure,” Draco said. “I could do pretty much anything I set my mind to,” Harry laughed, “but I need to decide what is worth it.”
“What would you want to do?” Harry asked again. Draco noticed that he was making pancakes not pasta, he smiled.

“Anything involving potions, a high position and something that doesn’t let my good looks go to waste.”

Harry laughed again.

“I was thinking maybe you could… come work in the Ministry? With me?”

Draco froze, he couldn’t believe his ears. Harry was silent for a moment then he looked over his shoulder, Draco kept staring.

“You don’t have to!” Harry said after seeing Draco’s face, “I am sorry I suggested. It was a dumb…”

“Potter,” Draco said to shut the moron up, honestly, he says something like that and then doesn’t even let me collect my thoughts. “I can’t just show up. I was a Death Eater.”

“You have a pardon,” Harry said.

“That doesn’t matter, not really.”

“Hmpf…”

“Harry, listen,” he waited until Harry turned to him, “even if you could arrange that I work for you, I wouldn’t have achieved that myself. You have to understand that that’s not what I want.”

“With me, Draco. I would like you to work with me…” Harry sighed. Draco felt a lot of feelings somewhere in his neck. Is that were they are supposed to be? “But you’re right, I understand.”

Draco smiled. Harry actually considered working with me. What the fuck. Why did I have to be such a disaster? If I had developed a spine sooner than eighteen I would have avoided a lot of shit.

<…>

Draco was trying to act normal, but what is normal?

They were outside and Harry was trying out all the spells that he could get his hands on.

“Germinat!” he said pointing to the branch on the edge of the forest. It caught fire and shot straight up, disappearing in the sky.

It was a cold early winter day and Draco was cold even with all the warming charms. Harry seemed not to feel anything, maybe it was just that his spell casting involved a lot of jumping and avoiding stuff that was moving around.

Draco had a more methodical approach, he was trying out a spell that made him invisible for a moment while conjuring doubles that disappeared when hit with a charm, but served as decent decoys. So far he was only able to produce one double of himself and get a headache.

“Abscondam Distraho,” he said again. One double of him appeared, but it disappeared as soon as Draco lowered his wand. “Did I became invisible this time?” he asked.
“Erm… no, sorry. Maybe you should try something else,” Harry suggested ducking from a branch that he had charmed to try and decapitate him. “Germinat!” he shouted and the branch shot up in the sky. He brushed off his pants and pulled his jumpers sleeves higher on his forearms. “What is that spell you’re doing?”

Draco Accio-ed the book that was lying on the porch away from all the mud and showed it to Harry. He looked over the page and mouthed the words.

“Abscondam Distraho,” he said and disappeared in an instant. He appeared a moment later stumbling backwards. “It felt very weird, like everything was super-fast for a second, there weren’t any doubles, were there?”

Draco shook his head.

“Oh, so the first part – Abscondam – means hide and Distraho means distract, I can do the first part you the second... Let’s try it together?”

“You mean at the same time? How is that going to help?” Draco frowned, Harry had the weirdest ideas. Magic operated in complicated, but distinctive ways. Sometimes it seemed like Harry thought it was more like ‘point and hope’.

“I meant like holding hands, but...”

“That won’t help, it will probably kill me.

“No harm in trying is there?”

“No.”

Except I might die.

Draco grabbed Harry’s free hand and turned so that they wouldn’t be casting at each other.

“Abscondam Distraho.”

“Apscondam Distraho-o,” Potter mumbled and Draco lost his concentration on the double that had just appeared. “Potter.”

“Sorry, let’s do it again, your magic distracted me.”

“You feel my magic?” Draco asked slightly horrified.

“Maybe?” Harry wavered. “I think that’s what it is. Is that rude? I’m sorry.”

“No it’s just...” Draco didn’t want to say ‘weird’. “There are fairy tales about people feeling magic - some witch living in a tree and she feels the magic that flows through the forest. In real life people cast spells properly.”

“Whatever. Let’s try again,” Harry said raising his wand again.

They were standing with their shoulders together facing in opposite ways. They said the spell in one voice and this time Draco felt the weird fastness too. He stumbled backwards losing the focus.

“Woha,” he said. “Did you make doubles?”

“Maybe. I didn’t see, but this was an improvement, let’s try again,” Harry said. “Also I think
you’re doing the movement a little off,” he muttered.

“No I’m not,” Draco argued. “it goes like this,” he said motioning it viciously.

“I think it doesn’t have that bump,” he repeated Draco’s motion. “It’s just like this. Abscondam Distraho,” he said and then two Harry’s were blinking at Draco. “Shit,” they said in one voice and one wildly looking around Harry appeared on the ground.

“Oh fuck you Potter,” Draco swore. “Abscondam Distraho!” he called and felt his mind pull in two directions. He was invisible, but he could make his two doubles glare at Harry. He managed five seconds, not to fall down and to make one of them say ‘scar-head’ and the other ‘Potter’ in the most menacing tone possible.

After getting up from the ground Harry smiled.

“Well done,” he praised, “do you want a break?”

“Fuck you,” Draco said. Now that he had done the spell once he could only get better at it. “Abscondam Distraho.” He said and suddenly he was looking at Harry with two pairs of eyes instead of one.

“I did it,” one of him said.

“Not you,” the other one finished.

“Okay Draco,” Harry said. Draco blinked and he was himself again.

“This spell makes me feel weird,” Draco said shuddering and crossing his arms. “But it could be useful if I wouldn’t...”

“Well we can practice more later,” Harry said clapping on his shoulder.

“Later,” Draco echoed bitterly.

Harry looked back at him with wide eyes.

“What’s that tone?” he asked.

“Nothing,” Draco said relaxing his arms. “We could try some other spell?”

“Okay,” Harry said. “What about the one that turns shoes into sticky jelly?”

“That’s a –”

“Marvellous spell? Yes, it is!” Harry finished for him.

“I was going to say lame, but...”

Harry was already pointing his wand to the ground. Three pairs of the ugliest dress shoes Draco had ever seen appeared in the mud.

“Merlin.” Draco scowled and conjured a row of shoes that he could even wear if the occasion asked enough. “That’s more like it.”

“Show off,” Harry rolled his eyes. “Calceamentum Tenax,” he said pointing at the first pair of shoes.
Nothing happened, Draco looked at Harry who had a pained expression on his face.


“What...” Draco stopped when he looked down, then he burst out laughing.

Harry's shoes had turned into a steaming pile of goo.

“It feels like shit,” Harry whimpered. “My feet are in sticky shit... STOP LAUGHING AT ME...”

Draco couldn’t help it.

“DRACO!” Harry pleaded, but he was also starting to smile. “Draco!”

“The great Harry Potter has been glued to the Earth by his shoes!”

“Shut up and find me a counter spell or I swear I will Apparate and then you will have to take care of me for a week BECAUSE ALL MY SKIN WILL HAVE BEEN TORN OFF!”

“You better hope there is a counter spell or I will get you to actually eat three meals in a day,”

Draco threatened. He walked into the house and looked at the Sheep book that was lying on the counter. He found the right page and smirked, there was clearly written – ‘Calceamentum Tenax’ turns shoes into sticky jelly, shoes cannot be recovered.

Make your opponent preform the spell, the casters shoes are the ones that get ruined.

Counter spell - ‘Tenax Absens’.

“Tenax Absens,” Draco repeated and read the page to the end in case there were any other important notes that Harry had missed.

“DRACO!”

“Coming,” Draco called. He looked at the counter spell one last time and then exited the house.

“This is horrible,” Harry complained. “My toes are all sticky...”


The goo started steaming and as soon as Harry could he jumped a good distance from the crime scene. He scowled at the steaming pile of jelly.

Draco was smirking until Harry raised his wand and glared at the two rows of shoes.

“Germinat!” he growled. He was barefoot and the shoe he was trying to send off into the sky only flared up, which only added to his aggravation.

“Stop that!” Draco called covering his mouth and nose from the horrid stench that rose from the shoe. It was now slowly starting to rotate a bit above the ground. Draco took a couple of steps back. The stupid shoe was moving in his direction and it was hot and blazing. He stumbled, falling on his arse.

“Look out!” Harry called when the shoe suddenly lunged forward only to make a u-turn and almost go in to the ground, then it made a new cloud of black smoke and hurled in Draco’s direction again.
Draco could barely hear him because he was preoccupied by the fire-monster that was coming his way. Somehow he managed to get his wand up.

“Evanesco!”

Nothing happened.

“Evanesco!” he tried again. “Merlin! Somebody!”

Draco didn’t see the small shoe that had already mostly burned out, he saw a raging chimera that was toying with him and out to destroy everything. He was as useless as he had been last year, he couldn’t do anything. The monster came closer.

Suddenly two dark hands took it by the neck and threw it in the air, it took off spewing dark smoke. Draco stared after it stupidly, then he looked at Harry, who of course was the one to save him again.

“I am sorry!” he said. “Shit I am sorry. I am such a fuck, I am sorry…”

Draco looked at the ground, deciding to take a moment to collect his thoughts.

“You’ll get sick,” Harry said in a small voice. “Let’s go inside.”

Draco looked at him, he had extended his hand to help Draco get up.

“Could you… erm… not do that again?” Draco asked wearily.

“I won’t! I am so sorry. That was inconsiderate of me, I am a moron –”

“Shut up!” Draco stood up using Harry’s hand more roughly than it was strictly necessary. “You don’t get to call yourself a moron.” He looked more carefully at Harry’s palms. “I DO. And I am exercising that right right now, because you are… You are an IDIOT, look at your hands, genius! Merlin…”

Draco grabbed Harry by his forearm and dragged him in the direction if the house.

“Ufo!” he called. “Ufo?”

Nothing happened.

“Great.” Draco bit stopping in the kitchen. “He’s busy. What am I supposed to do now?” Draco stressed turning Harry’s hands over. His palms looked alarmingly red.

“It’ll be fine,” Harry said smiling. “It doesn’t hurt –”

Draco poked at one of Harry’s palms and the git winced.

“Doesn’t hurt my ARSE.” Draco was holding Harry’s hands gently, he didn’t know what to do. There had always been somebody to turn to with injuries. Mother, a house elf, madam Pomfrey, but now…

Draco just hold on to Harry’s hands willing the redness to go away with his vicious stare that was covering his helplessness.

“You shouldn’t have done that…” Draco whispered. “What were you thinking?”
“Your vanishing spell wasn’t working so I panic-improvised.” Harry shrugged.

“You shouldn’t have done that! Especially because I was just freaking out, the stupid shoe wouldn’t have probably even hit me.”

“It was right in your face,” Harry said unbelievingly.

“No,” Draco shook his head. “The chimera was right… oh.”

“Yeah,” Harry nodded wincing and walked over to the sink.

“What are you doing?” Draco asked, his hands empty and now feeling even more useless.

“Turn on the cold water, please?” Harry asked, putting his hands under the tap. Draco complied. “I think, that’s what you are supposed to do when you get burnt. And… yeah… that actually feels a lot better.”

“Why did you take with your bare hands of all things?” he asked slightly concerned. “Are you a wizard or not?”

In response Harry grinned widely.

“Ron once said that to Hermione,” he half laughed. “It was in our first year, Ron was captured by a Devil’s Snare and Hermione was stressing out,” Harry reminisced.

“You lot really are mental,” Draco said. “Where did you find Devil’s Snare as a first year?”

“In the… what was it…? Third floor corridor that we weren’t allowed in? Do you remember?”

“I do. But of course… how could I have not gathered that sooner,” he put one palm out, “a forbidden part of the castle,” he put his other palm out, “you three. The natural order of things is,” he clapped the hands together. Then he dropped his hands and glared at Harry. “Is that how you stole the House cup form us?”

Harry chuckled nervously.

“We just…”

“Seriously? What the fuck, the actual fuck. Mate. I am so not ok with that. You morons go sticking your noses where it doesn’t belong and Dumbledore goes and awards you??”

“Yeah… That was not what I was aiming for. I just didn’t want Snape to get the Philosopher’s stone.”

“It was in the school?”

“Yeah. Each teacher had made a chamber with an obstacle to guard it.”

“Why did Severus want to steal it?”

“Oh… He didn’t really. It was Quirrell, we just thought it was Snape because he was so shady and he got bitten by Fluffy.”

“Fluffy?”

“A three headed dog.”
“Naturally,” Draco did his best to keep calm. “Why did Quirrell need it?”

“He had a fetus Voldemort on the back of his head, he wanted to bring him to life again.”

Harry looked at Draco who was staring but didn’t say anything, he looked back at his palms under the cold water.

“You fought Voldemort when you were eleven?” Draco asked in a small voice.

Harry nodded.

“Mhm, I got hella lucky and Ron and Hermione helped me.”

“Merlin…” Draco swore. “What else have you gotten up to over the years?”

“Closed the chamber of secrets, saved Sirius,” that came bitterly, “then failed to stop Voldemort to come back to life,” even more bitterly, “then got Sirius killed,” Harry said frowning at his hands, “then was an idiot and used an unknown spell,” he clenched his hands into fists, “then let Dumbledore die, then camped a bunch. Came back and got more people killed, then died and then came back.”

“And then you finished off Voldemort and then fixed the Ministry, Harry. I will kick you if you only look at the bad shit that happened to you.”

Harry snorted.

“Still true though.”

“Oh for fucks sake. Tell me about the first time you flew,” Draco said, hoping to make Harry think about something he loves and wipe the sadness off his face.

“Well… A certain blond prat had taken my classmates Remembrall so I tried to teach him a lesson,” Harry said with a bit of a smile.

Draco rolled his eyes.

“Yeah, yeah.”

If that had been Harry’s first time on a broom he really was a natural.

“When did you fly for the first time?” Harry asked.

“When I was five, I think. I got a broom for Christmas and broke three windows before I was banned to use it inside,” Draco remembered with a smile, then he looked at Harry’s hands again and felt a stab of guilt in his chest. “I should get that dumb fear of fire under control.”

“Say if there’s anything I can do to help,” Harry offered without a second of hesitation.

Before Draco could melt into a puddle on the floor a loud crack disrupted the silent kitchen.

“Lords,” Ufo greeted.

“Harry burned his palms, could you please heal him?” Draco asked.

“Of course,” Ufo said walking over to Harry who sat down cross legged, back against the cupboard. “You should be a lot more careful while practicing your spells,” he said taking Harry’s
palms into his. He looked them over and then murmured something, putting his palms over Harry’s burnt ones.

“Ah,” Harry gasped after a moment. “Thank you, Ufo.”

“You should be more careful, lord Harry,” Ufo said in a serious tone.

“I will,” Harry said.

Draco didn’t know how to make him actually mean things. Harry just said shit to get others off his back.

“How are you both feeling?” Ufo asked levitating to Draco’s eye level.

Harry got up, still minding his palms.

“We are much better,” Draco said. He wasn’t sure if he was lying or not. He felt less tired and less stressed than he had in months, when he wasn’t fearing for Harry’s life or freaking out about his past.

“I figured out some stuff, so I guess I’m better.”

“If it was my choice, lord Potter, I would keep you here for a couple of years, but I fear you might start attempting to break the spell which would be a bother,” Ufo said. Draco wondered if Ufo thought Harry could break it.

Harry smiled sheepishly.

“Let’s not test that theory.”

“Better not…” Ufo turned his back to them at the same time as Bird soared down the stairs and crossed the living room, landing on the counter. “I wondered where you had gone,” he said.

“You know Bird?” Harry asked.

“I know every creature in the forest,” Ufo informed. “What kind of a name is ‘Bird’?”

“Thank you!” Draco said looking accusingly at Harry. “I said the same thing…”

“Lay off you two…” Harry said. “Come here, Bird, you like your name don’t you?”

She looked at Harry with her dark eyes and jumped. She landed on his shoulder only slightly brushing his face with her wing. Bird nuzzled around Harry’s neck and glared at Ufo who laughed.

“You’ve finally chosen yourself a human, huh? I thought the day would never come, then I can sleep a bit better, knowing that lord Harry is in good paws.”

Bird made a noise at Ufo.

<…>

“LOOK at this!” Harry shouted excitedly.

“You are shaking the book so much I can’t read anything.”

“Read!” Harry ordered stilling his hands a bit.
“Wandless magic… potential… awakening… elements…” Draco skimmed the page. “So?”

“So? Didn’t you want to learn wandless magic too?” Harry asked his excitement subsiding a bit.

Draco recalled their conversation.

“I guess… but it says here the spell should be performed by an experienced person.”

Harry had already turned the book back to him and read the rest of the page, murmuring along the words.

“And how do you get the experience?” he asked Draco, but didn’t let him answer. “By doing the thing! Elementum Praesens Evigilare Faciatis Tradite,” Harry read aloud. “You should do it, the pronunciation is hell.”

Draco was already wincing.

“Yes, I should.”

“I heard there is a transfer kid who can do wind wandless magic,” Harry said. “Maybe he could teach us.”

Draco shook his head.

“I heard he’s a dick.”

“Oh.”

Draco got up and walked into the kitchen.

“By the way have you written the letters to somebody in Ministry and to Eamon Eomaire?” he asked from the kitchen.

“Oh, no I haven’t yet,” Harry said, by the sound of it slapping his forehead. “Letters are hell… Expecto Patronum!” he cast. “Shit!”

Draco looked behind him. Harry was staring at him with wide eyes and his Patronus was a whiff of mist already fading.

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing. Do you have an owl?”

Draco frowned at Harry’s weird behaviour.

“Of course I do, who do you think I am?”

“Great! I will go write the letters,” Harry said and stalked off to the study. Bird followed him.

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Harry slouched down on the chair in the study and hung his head back.

His Patronus had grown wings.

Not butterfly wings, not bird wings… no.
Thestral wings. Harry was pretty sure what that meant but it didn’t make him feel better. Bird nudged at his hand and he brushed her head.

“I am so fucked Bird…” he murmured. He rubbed his eyes. “Better write some letters, Merlin knows I love that.”

He wrote out a letter for the head of the Auror department, asking to enrol in the training. Then he wrote to Kingsley’s secretary informing that he wants to take a permanent place in the Minster’s council. Then he started composing the thank you letter for Eamon Eomaire and that was when Bird’s patience ran out. She poked her head in the inkwell and spilled it all over the table.

“Bird!” Harry snatched up his letters that were only partly bathed in ink. “Oh, shit…” he said watching as the ink dripped from the parchment. “This sucks. Is there a reason why wizards only use ink and parchment?” he asked Bird.

She looked at him and bit into the letter he was holding above her. She was standing on her hind legs watching Harry.

“No! Don’t do that.” Harry tried to reason with the beast. She let go and dropped to the table with a rattling huff. “You’re bored? Go give this to Draco,” Harry said giving her a piece of paper. She swooped up and out of the room. Harry did his best to spell the paper clean and then put the finished letters in a drawer away from unruly dragons.

He sat back down and took the quill trying to get back into the writing. But when the half closed door to the room was kicked open he almost made the inkwell fly across the room.

“When I said that she’s a magical creature ‘like an owl’,” Draco bellowed, shaking the paper in his hand, barely holding in laughter. “I DIDN’T mean an actual owl!”

Bird was looking at them, from the doorway holding on to the ceiling, half in the hallway half in the study. She screeched proudly.

“She was bored, I just…” Harry trailed off when he met Draco’s eyes. That look always made Harry to forget what he was saying. “Ehm… yeah.” He finished looking down at the table. “Sorry.”

“I don’t mind,” Draco said. “I just can’t believe you sometimes.” Harry didn’t think he meant it in a bad way so he smiled, Draco was already smiling back.

“Okay, well I will leave you to it,” Draco said turning away.

“Hey,” Draco looked back at him, “is there a reason wizards use quills and ink?”

“What else would we use?” Draco asked incredulously.

Harry smothered a smile.

“Accio pen,” he said waving his wand. After a moment his half-chewed pen flew into the room, but before Harry could catch it, Bird caught it in her teeth. “Give that here,” Harry said pulling it out of her teeth. He wiped off the pen and scowled at the new teeth marks. “These?” he asked looking at Draco.

Draco stepped forward taking the pen from Harry.

“It’s muggle?” he asked, turning it in his fingers.
“Yeah.”

“Well the statute of secrecy was enforced in 1692, I bet that has something to do with it, and also most of the pure bloods wouldn’t want to use anything muggles have invented.”

“So no practical reason?”

“I don’t think so.” Draco shrugged.

“Okay then,” Harry said and walked over to his desk. He closed the ink bottle and looked at the letter he needed to finish. He clicked the pen a couple of times and looked up at Draco. “What?”

“Nothing… it’s just, you’re concentrating, I wouldn’t have though it possible.”

“Get outta here!” Harry laughed.

Draco flashed a smile and disappeared down the corridor. Harry looked back at the letter.

Okay, now business.

Then I need to get a hang of some more spells, and maybe some hours of sleep?

Only if I have done enough.

He finished the letter with his pen, reread it and wondered whether he should apologize for not using ink. He decided that a person living with a bunch of sheep and a puffin wouldn’t care. He took the letters and walked into the living room where Draco was reading.

“We should do something about that stone,” he said closing his book and looking at the stone pillar still standing in the living room.

“Yeah,” Harry agreed. “How can I send these?”

“Viridi,” Draco called. “He’ll be here in a minute, he delivered a letter from my mother yesterday.”

“Oh, okay.” Harry hadn’t noticed that, he put the sealed letters down on the coffee table, Bird put her paws and head on the table, watching them. “Please don’t eat them,” Harry pleaded. She made a rattling nose and with a backflip jumped onto the couch. “I was wondering maybe we should do try some more spells.”

“Sure,” Draco agreed. “Look at this,” he stood up. “Abscondam Distraho,” he said and two Dracos suddenly were pointing wands at Harry, Bird jumped onto his shoulders and glared at them. They circled him and then disappeared. “Tadaa!” Draco leaned out from the kitchen. “Now I can actually do it properly.”

“Wow, that’s great, any tips?”

Draco looked at the ground.

“My hand movement might have been a teensy bit off…”

Harry grinned.

“I am jealous, you’re good at potions and spells. I am going to have to go through hell if I want to become a proper Auror.”
“I am pretty sure you won’t have to.”

“I have been told that I am shit at potions since eleven I am pretty sure I am shit at potions.”

“Well, maybe that’s the problem. When I explained you the basics you actually got better.”

“Seriously?”

Draco nodded.

“I could keep tutoring you if you want,” Draco suggested.

“You don’t have to,” Harry said. He didn’t want to be a burden. “I am sure you find it annoying.”

“It’s fine,” Draco cut and that was that.

“I would like that then, thank you.”

“Make a slot for me in your schedule then.”

“Schedule… yeah, of course,” Harry said scratching the back of his neck.

Draco looked at him suspiciously.

“You have one, right?”

“Well…”

“Merlin, who decided that you’re allowed to adult?” Draco asked shaking his head.

Harry smiled.

“I’m getting by,” he said and then snorted. “Getting bi…”

Draco looked at him weirdly but before either of them could say anything an owl knocked on the window. Draco went over to open it. “Deliver some letters for Harry,” Draco asked scratching the eagle owls head. Harry walked over.

“These are to the Ministry, and this to Eamon Eomaire,” he said to the owl. “The ministry ones are more urgent,” he tied the letters to the owl’s legs. “Thank you,” he said as the owl turned his back to him. The bird glared at him with one yellow eye and took off.

“Okay.” Draco closed the window. “How is your Legilimency and Occlumency?”

“Could be better,” Harry said cautiously.

“You should learn that, I don’t know if that’s something they include in the Auror training, but they should.”

“Noted,” Harry said, relieved that Draco wasn’t suggesting to do it with him. There were heaps and heaps of things Harry had to keep to himself.

“Will you go to Hogwarts to get your things?”

“Yeah, and to say goodbye to everyone properly,” Harry said. “Not that I won’t see all of you anymore, but… this feels like an end of sorts.”
“Yes, it does.”

Harry looked at the book that was still open in the page about wandless magic.

“Can you do the spell on me?” he said lifting the book. “You’re so good I am sure you can do it.”

“Are you crazy?” Draco asked shaking his head.

“What? You can’t do it?” Harry tried to pull on the other’s pride.

“I can do it alright, but I have no desire…”

“Come on, Malfoy… don’t you have a sense of adventure?”

“Did you read the list of the possible outcomes?”

“I did, so?”

“One of them is death,” Draco said pointing at the bottom of the page.

“The outcome of life is death,” Draco glared at Harry viciously, “It’s only if you mispronounce the spell, Draco,” he tried to sway the blond. “When was the last time you did that?”

“Fair point, but I am still not doing it.”

Harry growled exasperated.

“Okay, fine then I am going to do it and I am probably going to botch up the pronunciation.”

“Don’t you dare,” Draco said snapping the book closed.

“Elementum Praesens Evigilare… Faciatis… and something on a t…” Harry paused thinking. “Tradite…?”

“Potter, no.”

“That’s it, isn’t it?” Harry grinned.

It was one thing he thought wandless magic was crazy cool, but another the fact that in some situations it was all he might have. If he loses his wand he is suddenly reduced to an average eighteen year old with more than average enemies. Wandless magic could change that.

Harry lifted his wand and let out a breath preparing to cast the spell. He vaguely remembered the movement, it was more complicated than what he was used to, but he could manage.

“What! No Potter.” Draco slapped his wand hand and glared at him. “YOU hot-headed bastard. Brick-brain! Fine. Merlin. Fine.” He opened the book again. “The fact that you have been so lucky at winging it to this day doesn’t mean it works that way.”

Harry smiled at Draco who only glared for a bit before reading the info about the spell again.

“You’re a moron,” Draco accused Harry. “It says here you need a to drink a potion.” He looked at Harry. “Do you have the Vacatio potion?”

“No, but it’s like two ingredients, how important could it be…” he trailed off as Draco looked on the verge of knocking Harry out with the book he was clenching in his hands.
“Without it nothing will work and your excrements will be rocks for a week!”

Harry frowned.

“Where is that written?”

“On your fuck-lord forehead.”

“Prick.”

“Merlin, what has this society sunk to,” Draco murmured. “Luckily to you this house has a basement.”

“It has a WHAT now?” Harry asked forgetting the petty insults. He had explored the whole house on the first days here and there had been no basement.

Draco was wearing his sneaky smirk.

“I’ll show you.”

They walked into the study and Draco looked over the bookshelf that Harry hadn’t gotten over to rearranging.

“Rogo Vestibulum,” he said tapping three books with his wand. The shelf fluctuated and moved to both sides like an automatic door. Harry stared with his mouth open.

“This is SO cool!”

Draco smiled and stepped on the first step.

“Don’t bang your head,” Draco said just as Harry knocked his goddamn excitable skull against the low wooden panel.

“Yep, got it,” Harry said rubbing his forehead.

Draco chuckled and walked into the room at the bottom of the stairs. The only light was what little flowed into the stairwell from the study. The room lit up at a single wave of Draco’s wand.

“We probably have everything we need here,” Draco said walking over to the supply shelf, on the way lighting the fire under the smallest cauldron that was standing on a table next to three other, each bigger than the previous. On the floor there was a cauldron in which Harry probably could have fit if the occasion called for it.

“This is so…”

“Practical? Yeah, you can never know when you will need a potion and shopping for ingredients is tedious, especially if you can’t send a house elf. And sometimes you have wait weeks before it even gets smuggled into the country – annoying,” Draco said rummaging through the shelf. He took a bottle out and read the label.

“Did you bring the book?” he asked. “I am not sure which one of these was the one.”

“I’ll go get it,” Harry said, still hung up on the ‘smuggling in the country’ part.

He run up the stairs and took the book from the table. He looked at the part about the potion and read the introduction.
Okay, it has four ingredients. Whatever.

He quickly ran his eyes over the rest of the text and headed back down stairs.

“Fuck,” he swore knocking his head against the top shelf again. Why couldn’t it just shift to the side like a normal book case? “Oh, fuck...” he sighed feeling a bruise forming.

“You okay there?” Draco asked standing at the bottom of the stairs.

“I am wonderful,” Harry grumbled.

“Give me the book before you accidently blow it up.”

“I am not prone to spontaneously combust, Draco, I just knocked my head.”

“Yes… twice.”

“Oh lay off and make the potion.”

“I will, but you pay attention.”

Harry walked over to the cauldron.

“I am watching,” he said staring at the dark water in the cauldron.

Draco pushed the book in his hands.

“What’s the first thing I have to do?” he asked.

Harry took the book and read it aloud. Draco knew how to make Harry actually pay attention. An hour later they were standing in front of a finished potion. It was bluish-green and bubbling a little.

“Doesn’t smell like anything,” Harry said poking his nose almost into the cauldron which only got his nose full with hot air.

“It’s not supposed to,” Draco said pulling Harry back by his shoulder. “Don’t drop your hair into it.”

“I wouldn’t have,” Harry pouted, but stepped back. Draco’s hand felt good on his shoulder and when he took it off Harry shivered for the first time noticing that it was cold in there.

Draco poured the potion in two glasses.

“You’re doing it too?” Harry asked.

“Might as well,” Draco said giving one glass to Harry. “It was my dream when I was little after all.”

Harry felt his chest flutter.

“Yeah, you said.”

“Well... To our childhood dreams?” he lifted the glass.

Harry clinked their glasses and smiled.

“And to new relation... I mean friendships,” Harry finished feeling his face heat up. Before anyone
could do anything he downed the potion in a one huge gulp. “Wbah…” he exclaimed as it went down his neck. It felt like water with mud in it.

“It’s freezing,” Draco said putting his empty glass on the table.

Harry frowned at him but his stomach didn’t feel steady enough to say anything.

“Okay,” Draco looked in the book again. “First I do the spell on you then you on me?”

“Can’t you do it on yourself?”

Draco frowned at him with one eyebrow raised – show off.

“I don’t think it would be wise.”

“Bugger. I don’t want to kill you accidentally,” Harry said suddenly worried.

“Oh. So you see why I opposed this in the first place?”

Harry nodded still feeling the taste of mud in his mouth.

“So?” Draco prompted.

“We started, might as well finish it.” Harry said and grinned, bottling his fear like there was no tomorrow.

“Okay then, stand still,” Draco ordered. Harry obliged watching as Draco read the spell for the last time. They had been practicing the movement in between brewing the potion. It wasn’t as hard as Harry had remembered.

“Ready?” Draco asked.

“Hit me.” Harry nodded.

“Elementum Praesens Evigilare Faciatis Tradite,” Draco chanted. A swirling mist flowed around Harry who smelled earth all around him. For a second he felt like he was being buried alive and then he saw the stones and the earth like it was a long-lost body part. He sank to his knees suddenly exhausted and felt the cold stone floor underneath his fingers.

He lifted his palm concentrating on his pointing finger. A stone forget-me-not flower erupted from the floor and Harry marvelled remembering that the same flower had appeared in the Castle on the night of Halloween.

“Harry?” Draco asked worriedly. “You all right?”

“I’m kaay, I think…” Harry looked up to Draco who looked amazing with his sleeves rolled back and hair a bit all over the place. Harry took the flower which broke off from the floor easily.

“Look,” he said giving it to Draco.

“Stone?”

“Earth, I think…” Harry corrected. The aftermath of the spell left him aware of the stone underneath his feet and the walls all around him. “You can keep it if you want,” Harry said not looking at Draco.

Luckily Draco didn’t question it.
“Do you feel all right?”

“I feel fine, are you ready?”

“As ready as I will be.”

Harry nodded, looked at the book for the last time and then let out a calming breath. He met Draco’s eyes and just as he had feared he was flushed with the memory of when he had cut open his chest. This time it was worse because Draco was standing calmly, trusting Harry. What if I mess up?

What if I hurt him?

“Harry?” Draco snapped him out of it.

“Elementum Praesens Evigilare Faciatis Tradite!” Harry said faster than it was sensible. The mist hit Draco straight in the face and ebbed down to his feet. Harry tried to recall if he did the motion right, but his brain was blank. “Draco?” he whispered.

“Woha,” Draco exclaimed stumbling back. The stone underneath him was covered in a thin layer of frost when the mist dissipated. “Wow…” he said again with his hands on his knees and panting a bit.

“Are you all right?” Harry asked feeling his heart beating in his chest which was suddenly too tight. “Draco?” he looked up. “I don’t know if I did it right!” It felt like he was back in the bathroom and Draco was bleeding all over the floor, looking horrifyingly close to death. “I messed up, I am sorry. Merlin, I…”

Harry felt his hands shaking. All he could see was Draco with his chest sliced up and covered in blood.

So much blood.

“I didn’t mean to hurt you,” he whispered.

“You didn’t,” Draco reassured. “Harry, look at me, I am fine.”

Harry blinked, focusing on Draco who was standing a step away, his light shirt unstained.

“Merlin,” Harry breathed his heart still racing. He bit back the tears of relief that were prickling at his eyes. Draco had the dumb stone flower in the pocket of his shirt, Harry wanted to do a lot of inappropriate things to him so he looked away.

Draco stepped closer and Harry almost started crying when he hugged him. Harry gratefully embraced the blond whose skin felt even warmer than usual.

“Mine is ice,” Draco said against, Harry’s ear. “Isn’t that cool?”

“It’s wicked cool,” Harry laughed. “How come you’re so warm then?”

“I have always been hot, Harry. Haven’t you noticed? I’m offended,” Draco leaned back pouting.

Harry laughed.

Haven’t? Noticed?
Are you kidding.

“Yeah, yeah,” he said instead and stepped back. “Let’s go outside and fuck some shit up!”

Draco laughed and followed Harry up the stairs.

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Chapter End Notes

Okay,
Thank you all the people who commented on my previous chapter as you see it works.

Here's the video that inspired how Bird sometimes sounds.

Next one won’t be up so soon sadly.
Comment your thoughts and i hope you have a lovely day,

Rasa
“Dracoooo… It’s already ungodly cold!” Harry complained through laughter. “You’re making it worse…”

Apparently giggling like a couple of fools was an after effect of the spell, potion and the fact that wandless magic had kind of been both of their dream since they were young.

“I’m TRAINING, Potter,” Draco bellowed making the wind full of small ice crystals, “you’re doing art….”

“Look! A rainbow!” Harry motioned to the faint rainbow that was gleaming in the afternoon sun. When Harry pointed it out, Draco lost his focus and crystals scattered to all sides.

Harry laughed and returned to the statue of a shaggy looking dog that could have been interpreted as anything from Crookshanks to a nargle. He was practically bursting at the seams from laughter because Draco was positively ecstatic and kept smiling like this was the best thing to ever happen. That kind of happiness was contagious even to people who sometimes felt immune to all emotions except bitter sadness.

Despite the fact that Harry was rubbish at making the mud and stone do what he wanted, he enjoyed it immensely. With a dramatic sigh he moved on to something less detail orientated – moving frozen dirt around. It was chunky and only part of it did what Harry was telling it to do, but just the fact that he made it defy gravity with a mere wave of his hand was so satisfying nothing else even mattered.

“Stop throwing dirt around, you buffoon,” Draco whined shaking mud out of his hair.

“Hek nO.”

Harry stuck his tongue out at Draco and a bit of mud got into his mouth. Draco laughed at him and Harry aimed some mud to fly above Draco’s head, but Harry being the flawless marksmen that he was all the dirt ended up on Draco’s chest.

Next thing Harry knew all the ground was covered in the slipperiest ice he’d ever seen. He swayed, regained the balance and then froze staying perfectly still.

“You bastard!” he whispered.

All the bad intentions that popped into his head made him loose his footing for a moment and he barely avoided falling flat on his back. Just as he was ready to spew the next profanity at the laughing Draco, Bird floated down from the sky onto his shoulders. Harry tried his best, but two seconds later he was flat on his arse with a flourish. Draco, who already had been laughing way too pleased with himself, lost it all over again.

So confident about his superiority Draco made one grave mistake. He stepped on the ice.
“Woah.”

He balanced still chuckling. Harry smirked making some dirt fly in Draco’s direction at the same time as Bird screeched.

Next thing Harry knew all the mud had turned into an open mouth, sharp teeth and all, flying at Draco. It was half the size as Draco but still looked like it could rip him to pieces. The blond fell over in surprise nearly avoiding the fangs that clashed before his face. The second the jaws clashed the head turned to dust.

Draco wiped his face while Harry stared stunned.

“That – and your disgusting chemistry – proves that she is in fact – as I said – you familiar,” Draco said satisfied with himself. He looked slightly shaken up, but otherwise okay.

“Woah…” was all Harry could muster at that moment.

“Try that again,” Draco suggested getting up and spelling himself clean.

Harry nodded and met Bird’s dark eyes. She looked as astonished as Harry felt, they both looked at Draco who lifted his arms.

“Not in my direction.”

Harry shuffled off the slippery ice, got up and turned away from Draco. He lifted his hand and tried to repeat the previous movement. He thought he was pretty close but Bird rattled quietly and hid her head in his hair. The dirt fell to the ground rather anticlimactically.

“You tired, Bird?” Harry cooed rubbing Bird’s back. “You did great… and I have dirt in my shoes,” he complained, pulling them off.

“You both did,” Draco said.

Harry smiled at him shaking the dirt from his shoes. He was so lucky to have him. Sometimes (all the time) thinking about it made Harry’s chest hurt. Before he could say something and inevitably ruin the moment, a Patronus plummeted from the sky and a silver tanuki materialised.

Harry’s felt his heart falling, any contentment replaced by foreboding.

“There is a hostage situation and a pickled bunny,” Baka said in a serious tone.

“Pickled bunny…” Draco repeated confused.


“Ufo!” Draco called. “This is an emergency!”

“I don’t have time for this,” Harry said starting to walk away from the house, when Ufo didn’t make an appearance.

“What are you doing?” Draco asked jogging to keep up with Harry.

“I need to get there, Baka wouldn’t have contacted me if it wasn’t important.”
“The spell doesn’t wear off till tomorrow morning…”

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“I don’t give a single crap.”

Bird was flying above Harry’s head as Harry rapidly approached where the wards and the spell ended. Theoretically he couldn’t leave the premises, but practically he was Harry freaking Potter.

Draco followed him until Harry ran face first into the barrier. “What doesn’t your brain comprehend about wards… just wait till morning,” Draco suggested despite how pointless that was. Bird landed on Harry shoulder and rumbled angrily.

“The hell I will,” Harry growled pushing his palms against the repelling barrier wand still in one hand. “Confringo!” he gnarled and the barrier became visible where he and Bird were trying to break through.

Draco stared amazed and at the same time worried.

“Oh hell,” he swore and pointed his wand at the barrier. “Do it again,” he ordered Harry.

“Confringo!” they both said at the same time as Bird screeched.

The wall exploded in blue patches and Harry walked through with a grunt. Draco followed him. On the other side Harry stopped to take a breath and Draco met his eyes, before the git could apparate without him, Draco grabbed his shoulder.

“Don’t even think about it,” he warned.

Harry grunted seeing that he had no choice and Apparated taking Draco with him. They reappeared in a dirty alley that could be in any city anywhere in England. Harry murmured for a moment scratching Bird’s, who was dazed from the Apparition, back.

“Fucking passwords…” Harry trailed off with closed eyes. Then he muttered a string of words and a window opened in the dark alley’s wall. A young woman was already staring at them. “Take two steps back, Draco,” Harry ordered. “Where is Aoyama Yasunori? Now.” He growled at the woman who scurried into motion with a faint ‘holy Flobberworm’.

Then Draco stepped out of the range of the spell, they disappeared from his sight and he felt the sudden urge to look at anything but the spot where they had been standing. Instead he found himself looking along the narrow alley. It was filthy.

When Harry stepped out of the cloaked area Draco blinked twice because he had been sure that Harry was supposed to come from another direction. He regained his composure fast.

“Don’t even look at me,” Draco said shaking his head, “I am going with you.”

“You’re not an Auror.”

“Neither are you.”

“I work in the Ministry.”

“And I want to help.”

“You don’t even know what’s happening.”
“You’re going to tell me,” Draco said without any doubt in his voice, “otherwise I will go in blind, which will be even worse.” Harry was still not looking persuaded so Draco scowled. “You can’t leave me here, I don’t know where we are and I am not allowed to apparate!”

“Crap.” Harry looked at the ground unhappy. Then he lifted his palm revealing a glass marble, Draco’s hand closed over his.

“This morning six Aurors were sent out to take in a pair of Death Eaters, but they were ambushed and captured. Baka says there’s a traitor so-”

Draco felt the unpleasant hook in the area of his navel. Harry closed his mouth as the Portkey pulled them away from the narrow alley. After the short but never failing to make him sick travel, they landed in a different alley.

“So, Baka need’s people that he can trust…” Harry finished looking Draco from top to bottom. They were both still dirty from the training in the mud. “The more the merrier, I fucking guess. I’ll vouch for you and I’ll kill you if you do stupid shit, don’t even test me.”

Draco rolled his eyes, not liking the edge to Harry’s voice, but before he could say anything a wizard approached from the end of the alley.

“Mr Potter! Please refrain from any magic! Sir, it’s such an honour,” he greeted with a bow. “Base is this way,” he said walking forward.

“Muggles?” Harry asked.

“We can’t use any magic outside without being located in three seconds, but they are staying in their houses for now.”

“The Noshers?” Harry asked.

Draco faintly remembered the ridiculous name being in headlines a couple of weeks back, but he usually tended to avoid news, which he now regretted. The Daily Prophet had become less ‘what Ministry wants you to think’ and more ‘here’s what you probably should know about the things that still might kill you, but that we’re also working on’. But what Draco had gathered they were a group of wannabe Death Eaters.

The Auror nodded as they approached the second Auror standing at a narrow passageway between two big houses. She wasn’t as inclined to ignore Draco as her partner and immediately narrowed her eyes at Draco who held back from glaring in return.

“Who is that?” she asked, but her voice indicated that she was only confirming a suspicion she already had.

“He is my partner,” Harry said with a glare that would make a dragon docile. Draco felt a bit like he was suddenly here with a stranger, that’s how different Harry was acting, even the first weeks of school he hadn’t been this serious.

She lowered her eyes and nodded stepping out of the way. The first Auror cleared his throat and lead them into the much narrower alley. He stopped in front of a door that looked like it led to a basement.

“Here it is. It’s quite stuffy in there, but that’s the best we can do at this moment.” Then he bowed to Harry for the last time and scurried back to his partner who was watching the street.
Harry knocked on the door curtly. It was flung open immediately. A bearded Auror glared at Harry and was about to move out of the way when he noticed Draco and his wand was in his hand faster than Draco could even think to reach for his. At the same time Harry’s body was suddenly in front of him.

“This is Draco Malfoy, he is with me,” Harry said warningly. The Auror moved his wand away from Harry’s chest but leered at them for a couple seconds more.

“If you say so Sir,” he said in a gruff voice finally lowering his wand completely. He stepped out of the way, letting them in. “Baka’s in the living room, but-”

“WHY ARE YOU CHATTING IN THE HALLWAY?” a voice – who Draco was fairly sure belonged to Auror Yasunori – bellowed.

Draco wouldn’t call this a hallway, it was more like a broom cupboard. The bearded Auror made a motion to the doors from where the shout had come. Harry opened the door and the smell of something horrible flowed out along with the rumble of voices. The small room was packed with Aurors who were sitting on all available furniture, which wasn’t a lot.

The room had a couple of tables pushed in one corner, three chairs, a bed and bookshelves that were packed with rolled up fabrics, books in terrible conditions, dusty jars of something grey and bowls full of rotting rose petals in water.

“Finally Potter,” the man in the front of the room got up. “Tolmach, close the door behind you,” he ordered and the bearded man complied with a scowl. The room was hot, stank and Draco didn’t like the fact everybody looked settled to stay here a while.

The voices died down as they saw who entered. Five Aurors nodded at Harry and ignored Draco, two stood up with their wands pointed at him and two were sleeping.

“SETTLE DOWN!” Harry and Auror Yasunori shouted in one voice. The Aurors that had jumped to their feet kept glaring at Draco as they tucked their wands away. One of the sleeping Aurors fell out of his chair and jumped to his legs with a shout.

“We are here until somebody gets me some good news,” Auror Yasunori said sternly. “If we’re detected before that we’re all done for, so I kindly advise you to go back to discussing the mistakes you’ve all made in your youth and leave Malfoy to me,” he ordered. The Aurors complied albeit reluctantly, even a few of those who had ignored Draco at first, sent glares his way once his name had been voiced. “I’ll repeat again, any magic more powerful than a simple transfiguration will get us all in shit, so don’t do it. Glue your hands to your butt for all I care. Also be ready to go at a moment’s notice,” he finished rapidly.

Then Auror Yasunori walked over to talk to Harry.

It was challenging for Draco to follow because he kept getting distracted by how strange Harry sounded. Every ounce of the happy laughing Harry was gone, even Bird was shifting uncomfortably on his shoulder.

“Why did you bring Malfoy?” Auror Yasunori finally questioned.

“I threatened to make him food,” Draco answered before he could decide whether it was the right atmosphere for this (it wasn’t). Harry snorted before steeling his face once more. Draco stared at him relieved, then he made a decision.

It was time to grow up. It was time to make his name something other than a Death Eater.
A Malfoy an Auror? That would be the first in centuries for sure.

Draco was aware it would be anything but easy, but he was more than capable. First thing was to leave a good impression on Auror Yasunori.

“Be quiet civilian,” Auror Yasunori reprimanded. *Great start.*

“Harry mentioned you were understaffed,” Draco said before Harry could say something.

Auror Yasunori raised an eyebrow looking Draco over.

“That we are, indeed…” he nodded shortly. “Fine. Potter, Malfoy, you’re partners, neither of you are official so *don’t* cause trouble *or* die.”

“He’s not-” Harry started.

“Neither are you, so I suggest you shut it up.” Auror Yasunori glared, Harry did even though his hands clenched in fists. “Now go sit down, we have to stay under the radar for a couple of hours until the scrote backup comes.”

They settled against the wall beside the door where the air was slightly less stinky. Draco could barely breathe.

“What is that stench?” he asked Harry discreetly.

“Cat pee,” he replied without looking up from Bird that he was petting.

Draco felt the sudden need to take a hot shower and scrape his skin off. Instead he bit his cheek and reminded himself to not think himself higher than the Aurors in the room. Come to think of it there were only twelve Aurors – if you counted Harry and Draco – in the room and two outside, Draco frowned. Auror Yasunori had said they were short on people but this was ridiculous.

“He said there are at least 35… Noshers,” Draco said. “Just how understaffed are they?”

“That’s why we shouldn’t take holidays at the seaside,” Harry said. “Baka has a plan we only need to wait until till the reinforcements get here…”

“I heard the plan,” Draco interrupted irritated. “It will take too long and it might not even work at all.”

“It’s the only plan we have.”

Draco frowned thinking. He ignored Harry’s tug at his sleeve and only peeked at the other’s face when Harry put a hand on his knee. Harry was still wearing his soldier face, it made Draco uncomfortable so he grinned.

“Auror Yasunori could give each Auror a different order… time to attack, you could share sight with Bird and report on where the Noshers move, finding the rat. Then…”

“Bird can’t get in undetected.”

“She can. The same way as in the original plan – at the same time with the person giving the ransom – at that moment all Aurors step through the wards with the orders to attack from different sides at different times, but when you see where the Noshers are concentrating that’s where the traitor is so…”
“Too narrow of a window,” Harry argued.

“Are you saying you can’t do it?”

“I’ve never done it before so I am being sceptical.”

“I believe in you,” Draco said with ease. Harry stared at him. “If anyone can do it, it’s you.”

Harry nodded silently. Draco had to hold back a serious urge to kiss the bastard. This was not the moment even if he felt like Harry wouldn’t exactly hex him in return.

“Then Auror Yasunori and you take down the rat and others rescue the hostages,” Draco finished.

“There is one problem,” Harry said after a moment of consideration, “that leaves nobody to go in with the ransom, because none of the other Aurors can be trusted one hundred percent.”

Draco looked at Harry without any emotion until…

“NO.”

“There you are, just as I thought you actually might be stupid,” Draco said.

“Draco, please…”

“You’re saying I can’t handle a couple of wannabe Death Eaters after dealing with the real ones at my dinner table for a couple years?”

“No, of course you-”

“I got this, Harry,” Draco reassured placing his hand on Harry’s knee. He looked down on Draco’s hand. “Let’s have pasta for dinner?”

He squeezed his knee when Harry kept staring at his hand without answer.

“Let’s wait a couple of hours, if the backup comes plan A could still work,” Harry said. Bird booped Draco’s hand gently.

“They did give us a ridiculous amount of time for getting the Time Turner from the ministry,” Draco said nodding.

“I am pretty sure there are like ten people that know it exists and about three where it’s located… most of them were destroyed anyway,” Harry explained. “The Noshers must have more spies-”

Draco had had enough.

“Do we really have to call them the Noshers? It’s embarrassing for everyone involved.”

“Their official name is Demise Consumers, I don’t think you can go any lower than that, besides as a wise witch once said ‘the fear of the name only increases the fear of the thing itself.’ And they would love to be feared like Death Eaters.”

“Good point,” Draco admitted. “Noshers they are. How are they liking the name?”

“We have received a bunch of complaints some untraceable, some from ‘innocent Daily Prophet readers’ that just want us to call things for what they are.”
Draco snorted. He was glad Harry wasn’t looking as serious anymore. He noticed that his hand was still on Harry’s knee but as neither of them seemed to mind he left it there for purely comforting reasons.

Ten minutes later their banter (only slightly more rude than usual because they were both equally stressed and refusing to admit it) died out. Draco was feeling uncomfortable because one of the Aurors kept staring at him and when he stared back she only blinked and kept staring. At least she hadn’t yet hexed him, he thought, trying to stay positive.

“We have to tell Auror Yasunori about our plan,” Draco said.

“No…” Harry said squeezing Draco’s hand. Because, yes they were holding hands now. Nothing weird about it. Except Draco’s stomach didn’t feel quite right with all the butterflies dancing Macarena inside it.

“You think he will approve it,” Draco said satisfied.

“Let’s just wait an hour, if no back up comes, we tell him. We have 9 hours until the deadline.”

“Fine, but you have to start trying to share vision with Bird, just in case.”

“I was going to do that anyways,” Harry said pulling his hand back from Draco’s. Harry looked at Bird who had been surprisingly silent the whole time. She lazily lifted her head staring into Harry’s eyes.

Harry wanted to run and kick some Nosher butt to hell, he wanted to go and wreak havoc and he wanted to shove Draco in a broom closet until it was safe. He couldn’t do any of that so instead he tried his best not to cause an earthquake.

Instead he concentrated on ‘sharing senses’ with Bird. She had been strangely docile since entering the stuffy room and Harry was worried whether they could even pull this off. He shook his head.

_I must. I have to protect them._

Harry stared into Bird’s dark eyes while she slowly blinked.

“I don’t know what I am supposed to be doing,” Harry finally admitted.

“I am not surprised,” Draco replied as if he had been waiting for Harry to say that. “Try closing your eyes and reaching out to her with your mind.”

Harry couldn’t help the glance in Draco’s direction.

“Go on, do it, I actually read stuff instead of just seeing a spell and trying it out.”

“And that’s why I’m the fun one,” Harry jabbed back.

“That’s why I’m the one who has shoes on,” Draco didn’t hesitate.

“That’s why my feet are cold,” Harry realised thoughtfully looking at his fingers poking out of his holed socks.

“For merlin’s sake,” Draco swore and conjured a pair of black trainers and two matching socks.
“Wow, thank you, Draco,” Harry exclaimed pulling the shoes on his feet careful not to disturb Bird who was dozing off, her head on Draco’s lap.

“It’s only shoes…”

“No, you’re really-

“Malfoys are not ‘nice’,” Draco interrupted.

“Wasn’t going to say nice… I was saying…”

Draco prompted with a leer.

“Okay. Fine. I was going to say…” Dracos glare made Harry rethink voicing his opinion, “that word… but,” Draco was warning him not to start being soppy, but the shoes were a bit too much for Harry. “I am so glad we’re…”

“Friends?” Draco supplied with a guarded expression.

Harry looked away.

“Yeah, I am really happy around you,” he murmured.

“I am never conjuring you another thing if that causes you to start crying,” Draco said with a smile that made all Harry’s world swing even though he had just got the conformation on ‘just friends’ again.

“Even if I ask you nicely?”

“Especially if you ask me nicely,” Draco said with a glare, but the corners of his mouth were holding in a smile. Then it hit Harry where they were and what was happening and he turned away. The dim room was packed with Aurors that were ready to go on a minute’s notice.

He had one task – to see with Bird’s eyes.

He closed his eyes, straightening his back. He tried to sync his breathing with Bird’s as if that would be possible considering the size difference. He settled for counting her breaths and trying to ignore an Auror, who was aggressively whispering about a lost pair of pants.

After what felt like an eternity he finally felt something.

Doing his best not to destroy whatever the strange feeling was he reached out. Next thing he knew he was hit straight in his nose with the most horrible stench he had ever smelled. He coughed and tried to stop whatever he was doing, but it only made him dizzy. He heard everything like underwater. Opening his eyes he saw everything slightly muddily until he blinked, but his eyelid moved sideways.

With a horrified gasp he pulled back, hitting his head on something behind him. It wasn’t a wall thankfully or he would have split his head open.

He was slightly scared to open his eyes, but his ears had started to work again.

“Harry!” Draco called and Harry opened his eyes. “Are you okay?”

Harry scratched the back of his head coming in contact with Draco’s hand.
“Did I squash your hand? I am sorry.”

“Didn’t even bruise,” Draco reassured rubbing his knuckles.

Harry frowned, Bird was watching him.

“Is that what you smell since coming in here? I am so sorry. Do you think we could try again?” he asked and she made a short rattling noise. “Let’s hope not to get the whole assortment of disgusting this time.”

He closed his eyes, feeling Draco’s hand on his shoulder. He was chuckling. Then his body became something he felt as if through a layer of mist. He opened his eyes this time knowing what to expect and not freaking after a blink.

Bird looked up at Harry who was sitting with his eyes closed, then she looked at Draco who waved a bit and Harry saw himself smile. Then he tried to say that he wanted to fly so he could see how that and the distance would affect the fragile connection. Before he could figure out how to make himself talk without losing the link with Bird she was already leaving ground.

Harry tried to not move his body but he felt everything moving, just before his connection with Bird’s eyes perished, Harry felt Draco’s arms on his shoulders. Harry calmed and tried his best to concentrate on only what Bird was seeing and nothing more.

After seventeen more broken links and falling on top of Draco once, Harry was fairly sure he could do it. Bird flew over to Baka and rattled in his ear interrupting his hushed talk about how his favourite restaurant had changed the location and now he had to apparate every time out with his partner.

Baka glared at Bird, then at Harry and then walked over.

“Yes?” he asked while Harry regained his senses.

Draco cast a discrete silence charm, making Baka raise his eyebrows.

“We have a plan,” Draco said.

“It’s a bad plan,” Harry said ignoring Draco’s scowl at him.

“If Potter thinks it’s bad you came up with it,” Baka concluded pointing to Draco. “I am listening.”

Harry frowned rubbing his eyes.

Draco recited the plan quite professionally, Harry had to admit that Draco could make a great Auror, he already had more ability and less recklessness than Harry. Despite how hard Harry didn’t want to admit it Draco’s plan involved less people being in danger for shorter amount of time which made it a better plan than the original.

That person in the most danger though…. That’s DRACO

Baka listened without an emotion in sight, then he growled.

“That’s a shitty plan,” he said finally. Harry perked up, Draco stayed motionless. “But it’s less shitty than whatever you’re thinking, Potter,” Baka finished and Draco looked briefly at Harry. “And it may be our best option as it looks like the reinforcements aren’t coming.”

“Draco is not an…”
“Potter, you brought him here, you’re the one practically sitting in his lap, he can’t be an utterly helpless kitten,” Baka said irritably, then he turned to Draco. “You’re a grown man, do you promise not to sue us?”

“I am the one offering…”

“Great! Sign this,” Baka said pulling a parchment out of his pocket. He conjured a quill and pushed it in Draco’s hands. Harry saw the battle in Draco between wanting to read the paper and complain about discrepancies, and to get it over with.

“It lasts only for this mission and if you actually get killed we will all feel horribly, but your – loaded – relatives won’t be able to sue us,” Baka elaborated with a sigh. Draco sighed writing his name on the parchment. “Now that that’s out of the way, where are we going to get the ransom – which still includes 13 wands and a stupid Time Turner – if we were barely able to set up a Portkey station and a base?”

Harry started digging in his bag.

“I have these,” he said pulling out a handful of fake wands from Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes. “They will pass for wands if nobody tries them out.”

“The heck Potter. Maybe you have a ready to go goblin army in there as well?”

Harry shook his head.

“We could transfigure something into a Time Turner and hope no one tries it out right away,” Draco suggested.

“Don’t like that option,” Baka shook his head. “Let’s do it. Go time in six hours if nobody shows.”

Draco and Harry nodded sitting back down. Harry felt the usual anxiousness in his stomach, he was worried and every time Draco moved beside him it only made him more jumpy. He did his best to keep it all inside.

‘Fake till you make it’ they say.

“Could you please sit still?” Harry finally snapped.

“Not if you’re ignoring me.”

Harry snorted unhappily and looked across the room. Two minutes later Draco started poking Bird who was sitting in Harry’s lap that did not help with the plan C Harry was trying to come up with (it kept ending up with him going in alone and kicking some Nosher arse – which nobody in hell would approve).

“Draco, please…” Harry pleaded.

Every time I look at you I feel like I might die. I am so afraid.

Draco scowled and started digging into Harry’s backpack.

“What’s this…” Draco asked pulling out The Marauder's Map. “Just a parchment, Accio pen,” he said. A pen flew out of Harry’s bag and Draco took it determinately holding it the wrong way up.

Harry winced casting a Muffliato.
“Don’t write on that…” he pointed his wand to the parchment, “I solemnly swear that I am up to no good.”

Draco’s eyes widened and he straightened his back as the map revealed itself.

“I’ve heard legends about this thing!” he marvelled. “Who do you think Wormtail, Moony, Padfoot and Prongs are?” without even pausing to let Harry reply he continued excitedly, “I think they were three Slytherins and a Ravenclaw that… why are you looking at me like that?”

Harry tried to not smirk too wide.

“Because… they were four Gryffindors,” he said trying not to disappoint Draco too much.

“Of course, you would think that.” Draco rolled his eyes.

“Prongs was my dad,” Harry explained.
Draco looked at him for a moment with his mouth open, then he recovered.

“Merlin…”

“Guess who Moony was. You know – knew him for sure,” Harry finished despite the slip and the bitter taste in his mouth.

Draco frowned watching Harry’s face.

“Give me a clue?”

“He thought us DADA one year.”

Draco closed his eyes for a second.

“Lupin! What? Seriously?”

“And Sirius was Padfoot,” Harry said nodding.

“Who was Wormtail then? Shacklebolt? I think they were in the same year… from your expression I guess not…” Draco trailed off. “Not the Wormtail…”

“No, ye, Pettigrew was the fourth Marauder.”

“Oh, fuck…”

Harry shrugged. They were all dead now. Only he was here… and Teddy.

I should go visit him.

Draco was looking at the map silently. Harry watched as Draco’s face animated all his emotions, from surprise to admiration to ‘how the fuck did they make this?’

“Did your dad pass it on to you?” Draco finally asked meeting Harry’s eyes.

“No, Fred and George snatched it from Filch.”

“Oh… is it why none of you got caught when out after the curfew?”

“That and my invisibility cloak, which my dad did pass on to me.”
Draco unfolded a piece of the map. Harry tried not to shift awkwardly as Draco looked at the Slytherin dorms. Not that he even knew where they were on the map with his eyes closed and in middle of the night.

“There’s Pansy,” he pointed at the spot. “Do you have any idea how they made it?”

Harry shook his head. Draco continued studying the map.

“There’s a passage under the Whomping Willow? Where does it go?”

“To the Shrieking Shack.”

“Wha… Why?”

“Remus used to go there every full moon while he was in school.”

Draco’s eyes widened.

“He was a werewolf while in school as well?”

“Greyback attacked him when he was five.”

Draco shuddered recalling his own experiences with the disturbing werewolf.

“Would you want to go visit Teddy?” Harry asked after a moment of silence. Draco blinked, surprised by the change of subject.

“Is he a werewolf?” he asked neutrally.

“Is that going to change you answer?” Harry asked with a glare.

“No.”

“Then what’s the difference?”

“I was just asking… we were just talking about his father…” Draco stumbled over his words. “Never mind…”

“So…” Harry prompted as Draco hadn’t yet answered the question.

“I don’t… love children,” Draco said carefully. “Besides would Andromeda even let me anywhere close him?”

“I am sure she will love you,” Harry reassured. “Maybe we could go together? I need to somehow make up for the fact that I haven’t visited since the beginning of the summer.”

“And bringing a Death…” Harry glared at Draco who rolled his eyes, “me would do that exactly how?”

“She’s lost most of her family,” Harry said. “I am sure she will understand that you did what you had to or thought you had to.”

Draco didn’t look persuaded.

“You can get her something ridiculously expensive that will inevitably just sit in her attic for all eternity,” Harry suggested.
Draco’s eyes lit up, but he tried to glare at Harry.

“Don’t.”

“What?”

“Don’t use my weaknesses against me.”

“That’s what they are for. You don’t have a problem using my love for chocolate, do you?”

“That’s different.”

“How?”

“That’s me doing it.”

“Oh, shut up.”

Harry laughed a bit for a second forgetting what situation they were in. Then he remembered and his laugh died out.

_What am I thinking having fun while half a dozen Aurors are in danger?_

He heard Draco sigh. Harry was about to say that he should train with Bird some more, but Draco shifted so that he was sitting with his shoulder pressed against Harry’s. Harry froze.

Draco didn’t do anything more he just explored the map watching some of the names he knew. Slowly Harry relaxed. Bird was sleeping in his lap, thankfully she had eaten before they left or somebody would get assaulted. Harry was quite sure he had some food in his bag, but he decided to check later.

Harry let his head rest against the wall wondering if he could do something to air out the horrid stench. If they opened the doors they could use no magic at all and if they didn’t they still couldn’t use spells that would destroy the smell that was seeping from every surface in the room. He sighed, the irritation about waiting parting to reveal the tiredness underneath, he closed his eyes for a second.

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Chapter End Notes

Hey everyone,
Hope you’re doing better than me, especially those in school (I feel your pain).

I’m sticking to the movie version that Hermione said the ‘fear of the name’ quote. I have some pent up anger about Dumbledore so he gets as little featuring as I choose. The next chapter will be up in a couple of days, probably.

Thank you for reading and please comment,
Rasa
“HarrY!”

Harry woke up with a jump, cutting his scream short. He didn’t even remember what the dream had been about (he wished he didn’t). He didn’t look at Draco who had shaken him awake, instead he petted Bird who rattled sympathetically. He ran his tongue along his teeth to make sure they hadn’t turned into spiky fangs.

“Do you want –”

“NO,” Harry snapped immediately feeling guilty. “I am sorry. But no.”

Draco stayed silent. Harry felt like a disappointment, but he couldn’t talk about the dream to Draco’s eyes alive and beautiful. Not when he still saw dream Draco’s dead eyes rotting away in his skull every time he blinked.

“I…”

“It’s fine, Harry, you don’t have to talk about it,” Draco said.

Harry looked at him.

Why would he put up with Harry if he couldn’t even talk about his dreams, not to mention all the other shit? At times it seemed that Draco thought that he could fix Harry up, but some things stay broken and get thrown out.

“Harry?”

“Yes?”

“Wanna hear a story?”

Harry nodded trying to distract himself with the fact that Draco was here and alive.

Then Draco dived into description of one of his Christmas parties when he and two other pureblood children snatched a fuckload of candy and fed them to somebody’s Crups who then shat all over the guests coats.

“You should have seen our faces when they turned their forsaken arses to all the coats – four to-be-Slytherins staring in horror as the last chocolate was licked up from their fingers – it was terrible and we spent the rest of the evening being the most perfect examples of pureblood children. Two of the people never ever showed their faces again and father remarked that – the Crups like that should be put down…” Draco trailed off. “But they weren’t his so it was fine,” he finished quickly. “Only animals we ever had were peacocks in the garden.”

“You had an owl.”

“Well, everyone who knows how to write has an owl.”
“Oh.”

“You have a dragon, Harry, I don’t think you need to feel neglected.”

“Yeah,” Harry agreed scratching Bird’s head. “I’m good. Are the peacocks still around?”

“I think Greyback tore them apart at some point,” Draco said with a frown, “and now nobody lives there now so it’s not like anyone could take care of them anyway.”

“Do you want to go live in the Manor again?”

Draco frowned considering the question.

“I don’t think it’s my home anymore,” Draco finally said. “I would like to go back and say my goodbyes, but otherwise… earth is welcome to open up beneath it.”

“That’s… well, when we have more hands on the table we will send a squad to investigate the house properly, but the pair that went there before your father’s trial reported that there is a whole lot of dark magic that they are not sure how to control.”

“Oh yeah, nobody should go into the tunnels under the basement, even my father didn’t know what the shit is in there. Also the bedroom in the attic belongs to a poltergeist, if you wake him up you get needles in your bed, razors in your shower and spikes on you tea cups for weeks. Not to mention… why are you looking at me like that?”

“Just…” Harry shrugged, he didn’t think Draco would appreciate that Harry thought (when he wasn’t worrying about sharp objects near Draco) that he was adorable.

“As I was saying, there are also two other ghosts who sometimes flew after me babbling in French for hours! It’s terrible.” He paused smirking. “I learned to swear in French to tell them to piss off and they…” he puffed in annoyance, “they corrected my grammar. I was eight!”

“Arseholes.”

“Connard française, Harry.” Harry laughed. “Does your house have any ghosts?”

Harry thought about how he had wanted Sirius to come back, his smile died.

“Harry,” Draco grabbed his hand. “Un-think whatever you just thought… please.”

Harry shook his head dismissingly.

“The Grimmauld place doesn’t have ghosts, but it does have a very loud portrait of your mother’s aunt.”

“Loud?”

“Every time somebody disturbs her the curtains snap open and we get a tirade of how we’re all a disgrace to her pureblood house. I’ll introduce you sometime.”

“Why don’t you just put it in the basement or something?”

“Nobody can take her off the wall! It’s stuck there to spew hell at Hermione every time we forget to whisper in the hallway. I permanent-glued the curtains, but the next time she went off the rails she just ripped them and now everything’s even uglier.”
“Sounds like you need to renovate your house.”

“I don’t have the time.”

“Then move?”

“I don’t wanna, it was Sirius’ house… I didn’t get to live with him, I’ll get to live in his house even if I have to die for it.”

“That’s a bit extreme…”

“I don’t give a shit.”

“Well, I wasn’t saying you should move.”

Harry glared.

“I haven’t been there since me, Ron and Hermione were there last September,” Harry admitted. “I don’t… It’s a big house.”

He had been switching through ‘I don’t want to be alone’ and ‘I should stop imposing on Molly and Arthur’ all summer.

“You could always get a roommate or two,” Draco suggested. “I bet people would pay you to sleep in your cupboard.”

“Nobody sleeps in cupboards,” Harry snapped.

“I was just…”

“I know, sorry,” Harry said rubbing his eyes. “Cupboards are not the places where people sleep.”

“I… know…”

“Good. Yeah, maybe I’ll get roommates.”

“That’s a lie, Harry Potter, don’t lie to me.”

“I don’t want to live with strangers, my friends have their lives and all my blood relatives are dead,” Harry tried to explain, “not a lot to choose from.”

“Okay, but have you asked all your friends? I am sure there is somebody who doesn’t have a ‘life’.”

“Ron and Hermione are moving in together at some point after they graduate. Neville is planning to go to Brazil, Luna is already only coming back to England to see Ginny who is going to be a Quidditch star in no time – moving around all the time. And I can’t even imagine Hagrid leaving his home even if I wouldn’t mind harbouring a million creatures ranging from ‘instant death’ to ‘painful slow death’. So, as I said – everyone has lives.”

Draco was glaring at him. Harry tried to pinpoint what he had said that could have caused a glare that intense.

“That’s everyone you’re friends with?”

“Erm… yeah? What did you expect?”
“I expected not to be left out,” Draco bit shifting away from Harry.

Harry felt his stomach turn.

“I didn’t think you would ever even consider,” Harry said dumbfounded.

Draco looked at him with a raised eyebrow.

“Have you not noticed that I don’t hate you – half of the time – anymore?”

“That doesn’t mean you would want to live in a dark mouldy house with a cranky shit like me.”

“Mouldy! That’s it. Never visiting you,” Draco said scandalised. “Seriously? You think a little mould is going to scare me?” he didn’t let Harry answer. “We have lived in one house for the past week, if you hated it that much, say so, don’t fucking invent some altruistic motive.”

Harry was so surprised about the outburst he couldn’t find the right words instantly.

“Well if that’s settled,” Draco said after a moment of silence. “I’m going to go sit next to some wizards that at least hate me openly.”

“What!? Okay, Draco… don’t go anywhere… listen. I would love if you came live with me. I didn’t hate any part of…”

“Liar,” Draco interrupted but the sharp edge was softening.

“Well, nobody likes to wait on the bathroom for two hours, what do you do in there?”

“Beauty is a full time job, you can’t rush it, Potter. Not that you would know.”

“The point is – I didn’t think you would want to, okay?”

“That’s why you should ask, moron.”

“Yeah, but… I didn’t want to make you uncomfortable.”

“In the name of Merlin’s saggy buttocks, Potter.”

“Okay, I am sorry,” Harry said feeling his face heat up.

“I hate when you ignore me.”

Harry looked at his hands.

“Sorry.”

Draco sighed.

“Don’t be upset now, it’s fine, come on…”

Harry looked up, Draco didn’t look angry.

“I swear I didn’t mean to ignore you.”

“I said it’s okay,” Draco said returning to his previous place, his shoulder bumping into Harry’s.

“Can I redecorate half of the house?”
“How do you know you won’t like it as it is?” Harry asked trying to make his heart calm down.

At least I am not panicking about the Noshers…

Oh fuck.

Now I am doing that as well.

For Fucks Sake.

Draco looked at him with a look that said it all.

“Yes, you can do whatever you want unless it’s something I want to keep, deal?” Harry proposed.

“Deal, Potter. Prepare to have a beautiful house.”

“You need to graduate first, dumbarse.”

“I need no such thing. What I need is to visit and find people that won’t mind working for a De-”

Harry glared automatically, “an ex-Death Eater,” Draco said stressing the ‘ex’ for Harry’s benefit.

“I might just use your name so it would go easier.”

“Whatever you need, Draco.”

”»»-------------太阳城-------------««

When more and more stomachs started growling Harry dug into his bag and like the saviour that he is fed everyone with the food he had packed. The amount of chocolate was overwhelming. The generally amicable glances towards him became liquid admiration, which annoyed Draco to no end. Okay no, the fact that Harry smiled at each of the people that thanked him, that annoyed Draco more.

Only when he sat back down next to Draco and sighed wiping the light smile off his face Draco forgot all his annoyment.

“Harry…” it came out more like a shocked whisper not the reprimand he had intended.

Harry’s head snapped to Draco.

“What is it?” he asked ready to jump.

Draco shook his head sadly.

“Did you know smiles are worthless if you don’t mean them?”

“C’mon, it doesn’t matter. Their thanks are meant well.”

“You don’t let me thank you.”

“Because, go thank Ron and Hermione and Neville and Luna and Dean and everyone else that fought…” Harry sighed. “You know better.”

Draco sighed biting into the chocolate bar. Harry leaned against the wall sighing and looking at the ceiling. He was absentmindedly disintegrating his bar inside it’s paper.

“Stop,” Draco said pulling the destroyed food out of Harry’s hands. “Now you’ll have to eat
crumbs.”

“I am not hungry.”

“Nobody gives shit, you eat or I will send you home this instant.”

“You can’t-” Harry started, but didn’t get far as Dracos chocolate bar was stuffed in his mouth.

“Great.” Draco scowled. “Now I have to eat crumbs.”

Harry tried to say something, but Draco threatened him with a glare so he resorted to just sullenly munching Draco’s bar. Draco sighed opening the wrapper of the destroyed chocolate bar.

“You owe me like good ten breakfasts for this.”

“Like I would let you cook under any circumstances.”

“Arse.”

After eating Draco nodded off a couple times waking from nightmares about fire to Harry grimly staring into the opposite wall. He wasn’t sure which one was worse until he discovered Harry could actually be made smile if Draco snored laud enough even though that made himself wake up.

“That’s funny, eh, Potter?” Draco asked rubbing his face.

“You just are so collected most of the time, snoring is so human.”

“Excuse you, I am collected all the time.”

Harry smiled. Then he closed his eyes and Bird lifted her head watching Draco with black eyes.

“Shouldn’t Auror Yasunori be already ordering the Aurors to go?” Draco asked. “You’re more than ready and the six hours-”

“There is still about an hour left,” Harry said shaking his head. “The backup could come.”

“If they haven’t shown up till now…”


Draco sighed.

<…>

Two hours later Auror Yasunori approached Draco and Harry, who was standing still, his hands clenched behind his back.

“You ready,” Auror Yasunori said forgetting the question part, Harry nodded regardless. Draco felt like he was with a stranger again, Harry wasn’t supposed to conceal his feelings and be (mostly) unreadable.

“Yes,” Draco said holding the fake wands and the fake Time Turner they had transfigured from a small muggle radio.

“Baka, you should let me go in,” Harry said. “I…”
“No. One - everyone knows your face, two – you’re reckless as no one I’ve ever seen, besides I need you here so you can tell me who the traitor is.” Harry tried to object. “No. Stop. This plan is the least bad of our two terrible plans so we’re going with it.”

“It’s the best chance for all of us coming back alive,” Draco added.

Harry’s face made Draco’s stomach turn. He would strangle every dark wizard in the universe without a second of hesitation if that would wipe that look off his face. For now he could just do this, come back and then not leave Harry side. Becoming Harry’s partner not to mention an actual Auror will require time, effort and patience – an unspeakable amount of patience, but once Draco had decided to do something, it required more than half of the wizards wishing him death to stop him.

Harry blanked his face and brooded.

“That’s as good as it’s going to get,” Auror Yasunori decided. “Malfoy, don’t do anything stupid.”

“Yes, sir.”

“They are going through the Noshers’ wards in exactly eleven minutes,” he made a swift motion with his wand in front of Draco’s eyes. Numbers appeared, moving along with Draco’s head. “That’s the count down, be punctual.”

Draco nodded, if there was one thing he could do, it was be punctual, it had been in his blood since his birth... or it had been put there by the relentless scolding he had gotten over the years, either way – that wouldn’t be problem.

He was about to leave when Harry grabbed his forearm. Whatever he was going to say was interrupted by Auror Yasunori who groaned annoyedly.

“Do I really have to deal with a couple right now?” he asked exasperated.

“We’re just friends,” they both said in one voice.

“That’s worse,” Auror Yasunori groaned as if in agony. “Malfoy, you need to leave in one.”

Draco nodded.

“Good luck,” Harry forced.

Draco wondered if all his energy was being used to stay in this room while everyone was out in the field or to keep all his emotions from showing on his face. His eyes were burning though so Draco was reassured that the soldier was only a façade.

“Let’s eat pasta for breakfast when we get home?”

For a second Harry’s lips pulled into a strained smile then he was serious again and nodded. Draco squeezed Harry’s arm and left the base, Bird flying above him.

Draco walked to the orange mansion, which Auror Yasunori had marked on the map. It was a ten minute walk down an empty street. Some cars had been abandoned in the middle of the street with their doors still open, not a muggle in sight. The houses were quiet. Through the window of the house that a black car parked next to it Draco saw a couple people sitting around a table unmoving.

Disturbing as the silent street was Draco kept walking until he was at the gate of the mansion.
was nowhere as big as the manor and it was orange, but otherwise it could maybe be considered quite big. The gates were open and nobody was guarding them, Draco didn’t blame them as he himself was already frozen half to ice in the wind.

Auror Yasunori had made an educated guess that the wards were at the gate and for everyone’s sake Draco hoped that he was right as he stepped inside at the same time as his clock counted down to 00:00 and blinked a few times before perishing from existence.

Now in the den of the dragon, Draco slipped into the unfeeling mask he had worn most of the two years before Voldemort had been defeated. Once again his life depended on how well he could lie and pretend.

Draco started on his way to the entrance. He was on a lit path in the middle of a dark garden. Trees whined in the cold wind, making the night seem even more forlorn. The white doors opened in front of him after the second knock. The two hooded figures threw Draco back in time to when his house had been littered with looming people that wanted nothing more than to kill something.

*Noshers not Death Eaters.*

With that thought Draco ripped himself out of the backwater to see two wands pointed at his chest, the third Nosher loomed above them.

“I told you we didn’t have to go outside, these fuckers are stupid,” the taller Nosher said, pulling Draco in by his shirt.

“What?” one drawled and walked over to a table where an open bottle of firewhiskey and a couple of vials of Pepper up potion stood.

The shortest one closed the door behind Draco, cutting off the wind.

“Release the hostages,” Draco said in his best hero voice.

“Sure, moron,” the taller one snickered sarcastically. “Let’s go,” he said ripping the bag with the ransom from his hands.

“Aren’t you the traitor Malfoy?” the Nosher that had sat down at the table asked from underneath his hood.

“What?” the tall one turned to have a look at Draco, who thought it best to keep down all comebacks. “I’ll be damned… you working with the Aurors now?”

Draco glared against his better judgement.

“Who would have thought that Malfoys would fall that low, huh?” the tall one drawled, pointing a wand at Draco’s chest. “Are you proud now?” Draco felt his skin heat up where the wand was pressing in. “A dog of the Ministry. Pathetic, if you ask me…”

Draco looked at the ground.

“I bet they all hate you there anyways… you betrayed the Dark Lord, how could anyone ever trust you?”

“Shaw, who, honestly who – tell me one person – fucking cares?” the short one asked. “I know I don’t, but what I do want is to be done with this today, so start moving your long-ass freak face.”
The sitting Nosher sniggered.

“Merlin, Price, the few times you open your mouth you are always so mean…” the tall one complained, turning his back to Draco. The one that was sitting at the table snickered in a way that made Draco’s skin crawl as the shorter one poked his wand in Draco’s back sighing. Draco had no choice but to follow the tall one, who started digging in the ransom bag. When he finally pulled out the fake Time Tuner, he turned it in his hands a couple of times. Then turned back to the short one.

“We got it!” he said exited.

The short one answered by poking Draco in his shoulder again and almost knocking him over even though Draco was walking without any resistance.

Overall Draco thought this could have gone worse – he still had his wand tucked in his sock and these two seemed rather unprofessional.

“Boys, we got another one!” the taller Nosher said pulling open a door at the end of the corridor. The cloaked person on the other side of the door was so fat that his cloak was adjusted with grey pieces of fabric, but the seams were still on the border of bursting.

“Good job,” he praised the tall one who strolled past him. “Got the Time Turner?”

“Hmmm…” the tall one hummed before revealing the small trinket. “Of course, we did!”

The Nosher behind Draco pushed him into the room. He glanced around, quickly doing the math. There were six Noshers in the room but two of them had their feet on the table and butts in chairs. Six hostages were sitting on the ground sullenly. By now Harry had probably identified the traitor as the Noshers weren’t on alert mode. Draco had a wand and none of the Noshers were focused on him.

The fat one looked away from the Time Turner that everyone was admiring, motioning for Draco to move next to the other Aurors. The other five stayed in front of the room laughing about something and clinking more vials of Pepperup potion. Draco was so focused on figuring out how not to die in the next few minutes he didn’t even comprehend their words, instead he pretended to stumble.

The second he had his wand he stupefied the fat one nonverbally and cursed the two still sitting in the chairs in close succession. Then his surprise momentum had ended and two dangerous looking curses flew at his head.

“Abscondam Distraho!” he yelled forgetting to be cautious.

His doubles jumped for cover away from the Aurors, who were quickly moving out of the crossfire. On the way to the doors Draco cursed two of the Noshers without them ever knowing what hit them and just before he became visible he managed to get behind the doors.

His doubles were gone but Draco luckily still was alone in the hallway. Breathing heavily he glanced into the room, the last remaining Nosher was the tall one. Draco prepared to curse him but before he could, he had to jump back to avoid a purple curse that blew up the other side of the hallway and knocked his wand out of his hand.

Thinking quickly (not panicking) Draco ducked into the room, a flaring curse closely missing his face, and made an ice spike go through the Noshers wand hand. While the man was doubled over in pain Draco walked the two steps separating them and kicked him in the face, successfully knocking him out.
As a piece of the wall in the hallway crumbled to the floor Draco swivelled, eyes wild and prepared to deal with further danger. He threw a look around for his wand, but it was somewhere in the hallway where at least two Noshers were loudly running this way. Draco flattened himself against the wall and waited for them to come within a soccer punching range. Not his preferred method of fighting, but he saw no wands anywhere near him and he wasn’t going to go down easy.

He almost pooped his pants when somebody put a hand on his shoulder. He turned about to kick everything and anyone, but before he could he was pressed against the wall with a hand over his mouth. A woman was looking at him with brown eyes. She had coily dark hair that was pulled back in two low buns and finally Draco recognised her as one of the captured Aurors. She pressed her finger to her lips and slowly let him go, Draco would have slid down to the floor if not for the wall behind him.

She Accio-ed his wand from the hallway and pressed it into his hand. He nodded in thanks, but she was already looking at the rest of the Aurors who had taken the other Noshers’ wands. She made a couple of gestures with her hands and the Aurors shifted their positions slightly, positioning Draco in the back. Draco wanted to think it was for his protection, but it was probably so he wouldn’t be in their way. The footsteps approached the room.

The couple of Noshers that had made the mistake of crossing the Aurors with no advantages were captured almost instantly. Draco barely could follow their movements with his eyes.

“Burgess and Slater, go secure the ones the civilian knocked out and find out what they did to the muggles,” she ordered. The addressed Aurors nodded and turned to the room.

Not wasting any more time she lead the rest of them down the corridor. Draco felt stark contrast between her and himself. She wasn’t afraid, or at least it wasn’t in anyway interfering with what she was doing. But he? He could barely recall what had gone through his head during all his fights ever. Mostly just ‘don’t die, don’t die, don’t die…’

Of course that in itself wasn’t a bad thing, but maybe thinking of curses would be more helpful.

“Walk in front of me,” another Auror said and Draco picked up the pace, leaving overthinking things to later.

They were moving at a fast pace, one of them was carrying the bag with the fake ransom. At the end of the corridor they ran into the bearded Auror that had greeted Draco and Harry when they arrived at the base.

“Danjuma,” he greeted in his gruff voice. “Take everyone in, without the tips they are a bunch of knobheads. Yasunori arrested Henderson. He was the traitor,” he brought them up to speed.

“We have a problem, Balzary. One of the Noshers said that they had done something to the Muggles, even if we take them all in, we still won’t save them.”

“They are just staying in their houses,” Balzary shrugged but started walking. “Did you hear anything else?”

“I am not a rookie, Balzary,” Danjuma said. “Don’t ask me your newbie questions.”

“It’s a habit,” he excused himself. “Did Malfoy give you trouble?” Balzary asked looking at Draco over her shoulder.

“He took out six of those berks by himself,” Danjuma replied coldly.
“Big deal,” he uttered but stopped glaring at Draco as suspiciously every two minutes.

That was until a big explosion shook the house. Everyone had their wands pointed at the dust cloud that had formed at the end of the hallway where the entrance room had been. All the Aurors pointed their wands to the two people approaching. Draco was the first to lower his wand as he recognised Harry’s mess of a hair.

Everyone else relaxed when the other person started shouting.

“YOU WILL BE DEMOTED, POTTER. CHAINED TO A DESK JOB FOR ALL ETERNITY. AND YOU WILL PAY FOR MY HAIRDRESSER TO HIDE ALL THE GREY HAIRS I HAVE BECAUSE OF YOU.”

Harry was ignoring him. He noticed Draco and changed his trajectory so that he was running right at him.

“THE FUCKER HAS A DEATH WISH, I AM TELLING YOU,” Auror Yasunori yelled.

Harry was about to crush into Draco, but the blond stepped out of the way and Harry ran into a wall. Only now Draco noticed that Bird was hanging around his neck tiredly. Harry turned his back to the wall and slid down to the ground breathing heavily. Bird hissed moving her head a bit, Harry took her in his arms.

“Worried about me?” Draco teased.

“Piss off,” Harry requested still trying to regain his breath. “One of these fuckers got Bird with a Stupefy. I didn’t know what was happening anymore.”

“SO YOU RAN FACE FIRST INTO THE CROSSFIRE?” Yasunori butt in before Draco could say anything.

Bird glared at the yelling man and put her head under her wing. Draco sat down on the floor taking an example from Harry to just ignore the winded up man. He put his hand on Harry’s shoulder.

“You are an idiot,” Harry said. Yasunori was still yelling in the background.

“Was it me who blew up the lobby?” Draco asked. “I think it’s safe to say you’re an idiot and I am way better than you think.”

“Merlin,” Harry swore. Then his eyes focused behind Draco, Draco turned to see Yasunori speaking to Danjuma in a hushed voice. One of the Aurors that had stayed back to secure the Noshers had caught up with them.

“I knocked them all out,” Harry said, putting Bird in Draco’s hands. “What else is wrong?” he asked desperately as he stood up again.

Balzary saw him approaching.

“Potter,” he said. “You have done all you…”

“Not a chance,” Harry growled straightening his back. “Fill me in.”

“The muggles are under Imperius,” Danjuma explained with a glare towards Yasunori who had brought Harry here in the first place, Draco was prone to join her as he walked to stand next to Harry.
“How many?”

“Every single one who is inside the wards.”

Harry opened the door of the house hastily. All the lights were on but the house was dead quiet, he walked into the living room.

Two men were sitting on the opposite sides of the table one was wearing at least three layers of plaid and the other was in a white shirt, their blonde teenage daughter was sitting at the end. They had untouched plates of food in front of them and when Harry walked in, they all turned their heads to look at him – their eyes indifferent. A German Sheppard was lying in the corner of the room. Dead.

“Hi, can you hear me?” Harry asked. They didn’t move or any other way indicate that they had hear him. “You have been exposed to a weapon, your actions are being controlled,” he said. “You need to fight back.”

He stepped closer.

“I know it feels like it’s easier to comply, but you can fight back. Whatever you were told to do…”

They all looked away from him and each gripped the knife from the side of their plate.

“Stop!” Harry yelled, he moved his wand levitating all the knifes from their hands. “Stupefy!” he yelled and the daughter collapsed on the ground. The man closer to him growled and knocked Harry’s wand out of his hand.

“You have to resist the curse!” Harry shouted as the green-eyed man kicked him to the ground. “You’re being controlled…”

Harry struggled to get the strong man off him as the other one watched them. He had a fork in his hand, his eyes were unfocused as he moved it to his neck.

“Stop! Merli-”

Out of nowhere the green-eyed man was pointing a gun at Harry, who barely managed to move out of the way as the bullets dug into the floor where his head had just been.

“No!” Harry yelled, shoved the brown-haired man off him and lounged at the man with the fork. “Expelliarmus!” he yelled, the fork flew out of the man’s grasp, but not before scraping his neck.

The injured man frowned and looked at his bloody fingers.

“CAS!” the brown-haired man yelled behind Harry and jumped to his legs. “CLAIRE!” he shouted when he noticed the girl on the ground.

“She will be fine, if she gets the curse off,” Harry said keeping an eye on Cas who at least wasn’t reaching for any sharp objects anymore, he was staring at the other man, who luckily seemed to be shaking the curse off.

“We know all about curses,” the man growled. “Cas, baby, do you hear me? It’s me Dean…”

Dean took Cas’s hands in his.
Please…”

“Dean?” the man asked in a raspy voice.

“Yes, that’s it!” Dean said squeezing Cas’s shoulder and his shoulders relaxing. “We got cursed, everything will be fine now.”

“Dean,” Cas repeated, his eyes focusing on Dean’s. “I need to kill myself…”

“No…” Draco shook his head. “That’s the curse. That’s the fucking curse!”

Cas nodded slowly. Dean wrapped Cas in a bone-crushing hug.

“Thank the bloody lord,” he swore and then turned back to Harry.

“Claire…” Cas said worriedly already walking over to her.

“She should be fine, if she snaps out of the…” Harry’s heart plummeted. “Keep an eye on her,” he said running outside

“Sonorus!” he said pointing to his throat. “THEY KILL THEMSELVES IF YOU APPROACH THEM!” he yelled, hoping that at least somebody will hear him and won’t do it. Draco was running down the street, locating from where Harry’s voice was coming Draco threatened Harry with his wand. “I REPEAT, SECURE THE MUGGLES IMMEDIATELY.” Harry cast ‘Quietus’ nonverbally.

“Harry Potter!” Draco shouted.

“No, go. We need to keep the rest of them from committing suicide,” Harry said. “Go inside, make sure Claire wakes up in the right mind.”

“Wha…”

“Draco, you came here to help, not to run after me and be angry!” Harry shouted exasperated already on his way to the next house.

Before entering he house he cast a ‘Homenum Revelio’, there were six people in the house all but one in the room to the right. He stomped over the neat roses besides the porch to the window and glanced inside. Five people were sitting around a coffee table.

Harry opened the window with a tap of his wand and cast five fastest ‘Petrificus Totalus’ he had ever done, then grabbed the window sill and pulled himself up in the room. He ran past the now immobilised muggles up the stairs where the sixth person was. He opened the door to one of the bedroom and saw a young boy sitting on his bed. He was no more than six, his eyes indifferent to Harry who pointed his wand to him.

“Petrificus Totalus,” Harry said apologetically.

Harry ran downstairs to the rest of the family. They were all lying on the floor, their eyes as indifferent as before

“Why the ever-loving fuck…” Harry’s rhetorical question was interrupted by an explosion and a flash of light. He ran outside.

The fire in the house across the street had subsided leaving a tree on fire like a wild candle. Through the broken window Harry could see some flames inside. He ran across the street before he
could even think.

“Aguamenti!” he said pouring the water on the tree and into the house. Looking inside he saw a lot of smoke, the chairs and wallpaper still on fire. “Sonorus. IS ANYONE INSIDE?” he called through the smoke.

If that was a gas explosion, which was most likely considering the black pile of remains of a stove that was in one of the corners – it shouldn’t explode again. Harry supposed… Then he heard something and any rational thought was swept away by the fact that he was already climbing through the window that was now about the size of half of the wall.

“Hello?” he called, covering his mouth with his hand.

“HARRY. There is none there! Come back here!” Draco yelled from outside.

Harry cast a ‘Homenum Revelio’ just to be sure, but turned to leave when the spell confirmed Draco’s words.

He froze when he saw what was actually still burning. Two people had been sitting in the chairs and now were burning to ash.

Harry stumbled out of the house and collapsed in the cold grass. Draco kneeled beside him.

“Let’s go get the rest of them.”

“Yes,” Harry said.

Draco helped him up and they went to the next house, cast a human revealing spell and petrified. Then the next house and the next until they met Danjuma and another Auror who were walking out of a house. Out of seventeen houses in nine they found only corpses.

“Potter! What the hell were you thinking running off on your own,” she scolded. “All the alive muggles are immobilised you can calm your tits now.”

“We need to break the Imperius,” Harry said.

“How? Do you propose we kill all the Noshers?” Danjuma asked. “They each cast a couple of Imperiuses, that’s why there were so many of them.”

Harry didn’t answer looking at his hands desperately looking for a solution.

“Where are they?” he asked.

“In the orange house waiting to be transported to the Ministry. Why?”

“I know how to get them to drop the Imperius without killing them,” Harry answered.

“I would love to hear that plan,” she laughed rather humourlessly.

Harry looked at her grimly.

“Well fuck,” she said sighing.

“You’re alright?” Harry asked Draco who was walking next to him.

“You can’t use Imperius on 35 people at once,” Draco said, ignoring the question.
“I can try,” Harry said petting Bird who had returned to her rightful place on his shoulder after raiding a kitchen or two.

Danjuma had ordered the guards to leave Harry alone with the Noshers. Their hoods had been lowered revealing thirty-six human faces, those who were awake were glaring at him, but unable to speak because of a spell.

Harry stood in front of them and even though they had condemned more than a hundred muggles to death he hesitated. Because those who didn’t look at him with hatred looked at him in fear.

Then Harry looked at the opposite wall where an abstract painting was hanging. Just three colours – blue, white and red – splashed on the canvas. Harry hated it as he raised his wand. He didn’t want to be feared but if that was what it took to save others, then that’s what he would do.


He wasn’t looking at the men and women in front of him, he felt every one of them at the tip of his wand. His palm was heating up. Majority complied quickly, the remaining gave in one by one when Harry refocused the newly free magic, until only one was left standing (metaphorically, because all the Noshers were sitting on the floor). Harry looked at the last Nosher, it was a dark-haired woman. Her eyes lit up when Harry looked at her and she smiled.

*You could control everyone. Make them do anything.*

Harry heard the disturbing thought at the same time as the woman lowered her eyes and gave in. He lowered his wand and walked out of the room as fast as he could. Danjuma on the other side looked to him with expecting eyes, but he couldn’t…

*I have to.*

“They released their Imperius,” Harry said straightening up and running his forearm that felt like it had been held above a flame for too long. Draco was by his side, he was fine. Harry could get this done. “Is the back up here yet?”

“No,” she replied. “I am going to have a serious word with the head of the Auror Department and you later. Good job, Potter, you saved the day.”

The only thing Harry felt was a sting of a scar that Bird had given him the other day.

*Future? When people that use Imperius on muggles exist?*

Harry knew it was pointless to ask for precise reports of causalities right now, even if they knew the numbers nobody, who knew him, would ever tell him them for some reason. He found himself walking towards the street again, he wanted to help. That’s all he wanted, he didn’t want to rule or make rules, he wanted to help.

*How can I do that when I have to stoop down to their level to defeat them?*

“Oh, Hey! You!” somebody called.

*How can I claim that I am different if use the same curses they do?*

“He just preformed a complicated…”
“It’s fine, Draco,” Harry said turning to Dean. “Did Claire wake up alright?”

“Yes,” Dean said. “I wanted to say sorry for…”

“You were under Imperius, there was nothing you could have done.”

“There is always something you can do,” he disagreed fiercely. “Thank you, for protecting my family.”

“No worries,” Harry said with the easy smile he was used to giving people. It didn’t work this time.

Dean’s face became hard, his eyes narrow. Suddenly Harry noticed that he wasn’t as young as he seemed. His expression reflected the pain of loss and the unending battle against evil.

“What’s your name?” Dean asked.

“Harry Potter.”

“You remind me of myself when I was younger, Harry. I knew I had my war to win so I tried to power through, but the truth is – there is no end. It’s shitty and it sucks, but that’s Earth. The point is,” he looked back at Cas and Claire who were hugging a taller man, “don’t lose sight of what’s important and never give up. Yeah, kid?”

“I’m not a kid,” Harry said.

“I know,” Dean agreed sadly.

“I…” Harry’s voice broke. “I can’t change anything.”

Dean grabbed Harry’s shoulder and leaned down slightly so that their eyes were on one level.

“You saved my family today, Harry. Change starts with one person that doesn’t give up, it’s hard and messy, but it’s not impossible.”

Harry nodded looking away from Dean’s face.

“I wish you the best of luck,” Dean said stepping back. “Now I need to go hug my brother because his dog just died and that’s just not on.”

Dean left leaving Harry on the brink of tears. He wasn’t the only one fighting some bullshit war that couldn’t really be won. He turned to Draco and pulled him into a hug.

“I am going to keep fighting,” Harry said against Draco’s shoulder.

“I would certainly hope so.”

“Using the Imperius was wrong?” Harry asked just to make sure.

“Using Imperius to hurt people is wrong. Saving muggles from suicides is not wrong.”

Harry blinked.

“I knew that.”

“Sure you did.”

“Excuse me!” one of Danjuma’s Aurors had approached them. “Auror Yasunori says that you
shouldn’t show him your face until tomorrow noon. Everything is under control.”

“I agree,” Draco said. “Let’s go home Harry.”

“Potter,” the freckled Auror stopped Harry before he could say anything, “You have the potential to be the best of the best if you don’t piss of the wrong people.”

“My intentions-”

“Everyone with ears or eyes knows what your intentions are, Potter,” she interrupted. “You need to get realistic, nothing will get done if you’re the only one bending rules. If we would have been allowed to kill on sight no muggles would have died tonight.”

Harry’s eyes widened.

“You’re right,” he admitted, “But if we went around killing people on sight, we wouldn’t be any better than Voldemort,” he said sternly. “There is no point in fighting evil with more evil.”

The Auror scowled and stalked off.

Harry sighed.

“You heard her, Yasunori says you have to go home,” Draco said pulling Harry in the direction of the Portkey station.

“Don’t tell me you agree with her.”

“No.” Draco shook his head. “People are crazy and shouldn’t be trusted.”

Harry sighed.

»»-------------¤-------------««

Chapter End Notes

Heey you people,
Hope everyone is doing good.

Hopefully I’ll get the next one done by next weekend.
Tell me what you think of this chapter, please ^^

Rasa
Draco closed the door behind them as they entered the house. Harry tossed his bag on the ground, giving off a vibe that Draco didn’t like in the slightest.

“Harry?”

“Can we talk about this later?” Harry said letting Bird down on the couch where she curled up and sighed sleepily.

Draco scowled.

“Okay, we can talk about you later,” he said. “I decided to sign up for Auror training.”

“What? Why?”

“I hope I can atone?” Draco said sighing. “Also you need a nanny and it seems like they could use every wand.”

Harry was looking at him wide-eyed, Draco waited for the reaction but it never came, instead Harry cleared his throat.

“I guess there is nothing I can say to change your mind.”

“No…” Draco agreed frowning. “You’re weirdly rational.”

“I am, yes, always, am I not?” Harry asked looking at the ground.

“What are you plotting?” Draco questioned.

“Nothing,” Harry said squeezing Draco’s shoulder. “You should go have a shower, you stink,” Harry walked past him.

“The fuck –”

“Abscondam Distraho!” Harry cast while Draco was busy being offended.

Draco’s hand closed around thin air where Harry’s arm had just been. Two fake Harry’s hurried out of the house without a glance backwards.

“You motherfucker,” Draco shouted pulling his wand. “Come back here, you absolute shitphiz.”

When the two fake Harry’s disappeared hit by Draco’s curses, the real one was already at the wards.

“Sorry!” he shouted before Disapparating before Draco could mutilate him.

Draco stared at the place where Harry had just stood. His fuming anger faded into a dull aching rage as the seconds passed.
When it was clear that the arse was really not coming back, Draco dragged himself back to the house. Bird screeched sadly seeing only Draco return and tried to jump on his shoulders. Draco wasn’t having any of that so he pushed her off and locked himself in the bathroom.

He had been looking forward to having a hot shower and changing into something that didn’t reek of old cat pee, but now he felt like he was only washing the hole in his chest bigger. After the shower he felt just as betrayed, but at least without the layer of dirt.

Skipping dinner, he took all the sweets from the kitchen. His master plan was to eat them all without leaving a scrap for Harry, but just looking at the food made him feel queasy. He left it stacked on the table. Already previsioning the hoard of nightmares that awaited him, he decided to build the coolest pillow fort as he had felt so safe and calm when he and Harry had slept in one. He dragged every piece of bedding including the couch pillows to his room, but then lost the motivation and just left everything on the floor.

He set an alarm to when anyone enters the house and spelled the shower so that only cold water would flow. Even done that he was still pissed so he charmed all the books read ‘potter stinks’. The only book he couldn’t charm was the Sheep book, so he pushed it under his bed.

When he settled under his blanket with the morning sunlight had already been illuminating the trees outside for a couple of hours. It looked warm outside, but Draco knew it wasn’t.

He felt empty and tired.

Bird had followed him while he had been walking back and forth through the house and now she was settled on the couch pillow stack, watching Draco who hadn’t let her get into the bed with him.

Draco glared at the sunny day that was starting behind his window until the sun was shining directly into his face, then he grabbed his wand and the curtains closed almost ripping themselves off the curtain rod. He fell back onto his pillow with a sigh.

He doubted he could live with Harry, not if he just ran off without explaining anything, not if he left him stranded. It was one thing to be an altruistic bastard, and another to be a suicidal dick. If Harry even knew the difference, Draco thought sullenly turning on his side.

Just as Draco was about to finally drift off Bird jumped on his bed and curled up besides his head. Draco turned to his other side, deciding to throw her into soap water when he woke up.

He had to paraphrase it to ‘when he would feel rested enough’ because the nightmares kept him either awake or in a half dream state where he couldn’t quite get the sense of what was real what wasn’t. When his own cross voice ripped him out of the blessed slumber Draco almost fell out of his bed.

“Decided to show up did you, arsehole? If you wake me I will maim you.”

Bird was awake instantly and after one look at Draco flew out of the room. Draco thought about rolling his eyes, but he was still too drowsy for that. Instead he grabbed for his wand on the nightstand and slammed the doors to his room shut.

He would never admit it but Bird had been a welcome presence during the night that consisted of all kinds of dead bodies. Some of them the muggles, some people Draco knew and some he was sure he had never seen in his life.

Draco rubbed his face, stretching his toes from under the blanket. Draco presumed the sun must
have already set and he should get up if he didn’t want to spend one more night awake. He listened
to Harry’s steps as he walked upstairs and into the bathroom. Soon Draco heard a satisfyingly
shocked shout and a string of muffled curse words.

Feeling slightly more awake, Draco stretched rubbing his sore neck and got out of his bed. He got
dressed and took an apple from the tray on his table. He didn’t feel like eating, he just wanted to
have something to throw at Potter when he inevitably pissed Draco off.

Draco looked in Harry’s bedroom, but the bed without the beddings was empty.

Downstairs Draco walked through the empty living room and into the kitchen, which at first
seemed empty as well. Draco was about to sigh and look for Harry in the study, but then he noticed
him.

“Potter,” Draco said coldly.

“Draco!” Harry looked up with alert eyes from where he had been sitting beside the window. He
stood up. It was dark behind the window and the lamp in the kitchen was too peaceful for Draco’s
mood. Harry had a bandage on his wrist.

Harry looked exhausted and sad. Draco felt the anger flaring up again, this time only partly
directed at Harry.

would stop to explain if I could have a do-over. There-”

“I don’t give a shit,” Draco bit. “There is always an emergency of some kind in the Ministry.”

“You are allowed to apparate again,” Harry informed weakly and pulled a parchment from his back
pocket. Draco glared at him until Harry put it on the counter wincing.

“Do you want me to kiss your boots now? Do you want me to fall to my knees and thank you?
Saint Potter, saving the day again-”

“No. Please don’t,” Harry pleaded shaking his head. “Please, I know you have no obligation to
forgive me, but please… I am sorry.”

“You can’t just leave and expect everything to be okay after a simple sorry,” Draco said rightfully
angry, but his chest was in pain from how sad Harry sounded. “What if…” Draco’s voice broke,
“you don’t come back one day? What then?”

“No, yes, Draco…” Harry scrambled to the bandage on his wrist. “I am sorry, look.” He extended
his arm. “I know. I don’t want to leave you or my friends… other friends.”

Draco stared at Harry’s forearm lost for words. He had gotten a tattoo.

But not just any tattoo. No.

It was a dragon.

Draco glanced at Harry’s face expecting some context, but Harry was looking at his feet. Draco
took Harry’s arm looking at the tattoo closer. The dragon was mid leap, its tail making a spiral.

“I am sorry,” Harry said again. “I honestly am. I didn’t mean to worry you. I don’t get… erm…
why you were…’’ he glanced at Draco who was glaring, “are worried about me, but you are and,
considering how worried I get, I don’t want anyone feeling remotely similar.” Harry looked at Draco again. “I didn’t leave because I don’t care about you.”

Harry looked like a puppy that expected to be kicked. Draco couldn’t quite understand the dragon on Harry’s wrist or his words, but there was one thing he knew.

“Harry James Potter. You are insane,” Draco stated. Harry winced looking to the ground. “Look at me,” Draco said. “I know you care,” Draco said calmly. “The fact that you think you have to say that because you’re an inconsiderate arse sometimes, makes me angry at the people that made you think that way.”

“No one made me think anything.”

Draco didn’t know his heart could hurt so much without a spell digging a knife through it.

“Stop looking at me like that. I got the tattoo to remind myself that some people need me alive as much as I need them.”

“Told you long enough to get it through your thick skull.”

“I know, I am sorry.”

“Better late than never. What made you realise?”

“Before I apparated, you looked like I felt when you were in the Noshers’ layer. My brain clicked.”

“Yeah… because Weasley and Granger don’t look at you like you might pass out at any given time.”

“I’ve learned to tune them out over the years,” Harry murmured.

Draco thought for a moment.

“Okay, so, I am not the person who should be giving advice about feelings,” Draco said looking at the tattoo again, “but you’re even dumber than me, so here it goes…” Harry was looking at him cautiously. “People generally spend time with you for two reasons; they like you, or they want something… actually with you it might also that they want to murder you, but let’s disregard that.”

Draco paused composing his thoughts. “We – who were beside you since you were a drooling first year – probably like you.” Draco paused. “I know you didn’t leave because you don’t care, even if that’s what it felt like, but even the fact that you thought that… you know there are plenty of people who care about you?”

“Because I defeated a dark wizard…”

“Two times and then you went and made the Ministry an institution people can trust again.”

“I was working together with Kingsley and Hermione, I was never alone.”

“Exa-fucking-actly, Harry. You are always so keen to share the credit but never the work. Not everything is on your shoulders.”

Harry’s eyes widened.

“Finally see your error? Good. Now don’t ever get a tattoo to apologise to me ever again or I will ma- murder you,” Draco finished with no anger.
Marry him? Don’t want something you can’t get.

He got a tattoo for me.

He got a tattoo because he is an idiot.

»»-------------¤-------------««

Harry’s head felt dizzy and he was glad Draco was holding his forearm, at least something he didn’t have to worry about – standing upright. Draco was quiet now, Harry wasn’t sure what he was supposed to do.

He hadn’t thought Draco would forgive him. Who needs someone who just runs off without an explanation? Harry felt terror creeping up his spine imagining himself in Draco’s place. Then he remembered what Draco had said, while Harry was too preoccupied with getting to Ministry to really react.

An Auror.

In danger every minute of every day.

Harry felt his heart starting to climb up to his head. His heartbeats were drumming in his ears and he didn’t know whether he was breathing properly. He probably wasn’t – his head was spinning. All he could hear was his blood rushing and offering nothing to soothe his worries.

Somebody might kill him because he had to obey Voldemort. Somebody might kill him because he betrayed Voldemort. Somebody might kill him because he was in the way. Somebody might kill him.

Somebody might kill him. Somebody might kill him.

Oh dear Merlin please…

Somebody will kill him and I won’t be able to save him because I can never save my family.

Harry didn’t hear anything, he just felt strong arms holding him. He wanted to run and live in a cave for the rest of his days, because all he could do was get people killed (please no. please, please. please). Now Draco was choosing a dangerous profession because Harry couldn’t be trusted.

Harry’s heart was beating so fast now he felt like it will rip out of his chest and flop onto the floor.

It was all his fault. Draco would be in danger because of him. 56 muggles died because he couldn’t allow Unforgivables to be used. They lost 3 Aurors on the mission Harry had been on and 27 in others that were happening elsewhere at the same time.

Draco will be in danger because of me. Draco will be in danger because of me. Draco will be in danger because of me.

Suddenly he became aware of his body again. He felt his aching muscles, throbbing head and the tears down pouring down his cheeks. Then he also felt his own teeth digging into his lip to keep the sobs inside.

Harry’s vision was still swimming, but Draco was sitting in front of him moving his lips but Harry couldn’t hear what he was saying.
I am going to die because of you.

You will become the next Voldemort. There is nothing you can do to make the world better.

I hate you because you didn’t save me before I was marked.

Harry buried his face in his hands and doubled over. His face felt hot. He couldn’t breathe.

Then he saw a flash of red through his fingers and everything went black.

<...>

“...exhausted. I will put him to dreamless sleep.”

“Thank you, Ufo...”

<...>

When Harry became aware of his surroundings, for the first time in forever, it wasn’t in a blinding blow rescuing him from a twisted nightmare. It was cold November sun outside the window and sound of another person’s breath on his left side. Harry had no idea when was the last time he had slept so well.

He blinked lazily wondering how he had gotten from the Ministry to here. Slowly the memories came back to him.

_Panic attack. Again._

Harry frowned rubbing his eyes.

At least he had been here, not in a broom closet in Ministry like one time in August – maybe a couple of times. _ Doesn’t matter._

Everything was blurry without his glasses but judging from the amount of sunlight it was the middle of the day. He had a sour taste in his mouth. Bird was nestled next to his hip and warmed him through the blanket.

It was quiet, Harry almost thought he could go back to sleep, instead he reached for his glasses. Draco was sleeping half on the bed half sitting in a chair. Harry took his glasses from the nightstand, which, for some reason, was on the other side than he was used to. Then he guiltily noticed that he was sleeping in Draco’s bed.

Harry had changed clothes after the freezing shower but he still felt the ash clinging to him from the house where he had seen the two burnt bodies.

Harry sighed, quietly slipping out of the bed. For a moment he thought about waking Draco so that he could get some rest in a proper bed, but then he decided against it. Harry sneaked out of the room, grabbing some food from the table to prepare after the shower.

<...>

When Draco sleepily walked downstairs in an oversized jumper and fluffy socks, Harry thought he was dead and in heaven – if that was possible. Draco looked at him with bright eyes and without even saying good morning, walked over. He pushed Harry down in the chair and started pulling his fingers through Harry’s wet hair.
“I made pasta…” Harry said, his eyes closed and heart throbbing with the feeling of Draco’s hands in his hair.

“What?”

“I thought you might be hungry.”

“When was the first time you were hungry?”

Harry opened his eyes, wishing for Draco to ask something else. Anything else.

“I was hungry for the first time in my sixth year, I didn’t understand what was happening until I realised the last time I had eaten was two days ago,” Draco revealed. “How privileged of me, isn’t it?”

Harry didn’t answer. He concentrated on Draco’s fingers and closed his eyes again.

“Do you want to talk about why you went to the Ministry yesterday?”

Harry ignored the question. Not now.

“What about your Muggle relatives?” Draco asked, he had a strained tone to his voice. That made Harry want to turn around. “Tell me anything, please…”

Harry swivelled, Draco’s face was trailed with tears.

“I was hungry all the time I think,” Harry blabbered before he realised. “The first time I got to eat as much as I wanted was on the way to Hogwarts. I went to the ministry because even though we are understaffed, that situation was not normal and I was right, there were eleven big missions that turned out to be way worse than reported and a bunch of people were sabotaged. My relatives were scared of being out of the ordinary like it was the plague. I was the definition of a freak, we didn’t get along,” Harry did his best to talk calmly even though talking about stuff made him uneasy.

“Please, don’t cry…” Harry took Draco’s face in his hands. “Please, please…”

Draco wiped his eyes, sighed shakily.

“I got really scared yesterday.”

“You had to Stupefy me, didn’t you?”

Draco nodded.

“I am so-”

Draco put his hand over Harry’s mouth before he could finish.

“I don’t want you to be sorry, I want you to talk to me, get a therapist, or tell me how to help you.”

Harry gave an unsure nod. Draco sighed.

"Not that simple?"

"Not really."

<...>
Harry hold onto his belief that pasta could be a good breakfast food. While eating Draco kept glancing at Harry. He had braided Harry's hair into two braids and his looks made Harry self-conscious about his face, which most of the time was at least partly shielded by his unruly hair.

"Do the braids look good or bad?" he finally asked. "I can't tell from your looks..."

Draco dropped his fork and cleared his throat.

"You look... not as wild, but good."

Harry snorted.

"Wild?"

"Usually you look like somebody who had been living in a forest with no mirrors in sight for ten years."

Harry threw a cucumber at Draco for the comment. Draco caught it and looked at him disapprovingly.

"Don't play with your food, Harry, that's terrible manners."

Harry replied by stuffing his mouth to the brim with the last of his pasta and chewing loudly.

"Gross, Potter, gross."

"Make me stop then," Harry said after swallowing a good portion of what was in his mouth. Draco leaned closer over the corner of the counter and glared.

"That doesn't work on me," Harry laughed. "I've been subjected to your leers for eight years."

"Whatever," Draco said his eyes flickering to Harry's lips for a second, then he leaned back.

Harry drank the last of his coffee and sighed.

"We should get our stuff together," Harry suggested. "By the way, I get if you don't want to really move in to the Grimmauld place or with me in general, I'm..."

"Shut your face," Draco interrupted. "I can decide things for myself," he said with a stern look. "But you should make a habit to shout the reason of your departure instead of 'sorry'."

Harry looked at the ground.

"Alright."

<...>

Draco was cranky. It might have something to do with Harry running around the house a lot, but his stuff was everywhere. The third time Harry ran past him with a bundle of his dirty clothes Draco had had enough. He pushed him down on the couch and lifted his wand, casting the packing charm that Harry had seen Tonks use. Only Draco was as flawless at that as at everything else he did, Harry thought until a book thud against Harry’s head.

"Wait," Harry called catching a book from the air. "Draco, what the hell did you do to this book?" he asked looking at the title that said 'Potter stinks: Potter stinks'. "Correction, to all of the books!" he said getting a hold of two more.
Draco grinned.

“Nothing you didn’t deserve,” he bit. “It’s not permanent, calm your hippogriffs.”

“Okay, okay,” Harry said looking suspiciously at Draco. “Is everything alright?”

“Why wouldn’t it be?” Draco asked sharply as he finished packing Harry’s things. “Are you ready to go?”

Harry got up from the couch, Bird jumped on his shoulders with ease.

“I am as ready as I ever will be.”

“Then move your arse out the doors.”

“You sure are in a mood.”

“Shut up,” Draco said rolling his eyes.

It seemed Draco was a grouch when it came to moving. What a revelation.

They exited the wards and Harry teleported them to the Grimmauld place’s porch. The house looked as grimly as ever looming above both of them. Harry shuddered at the sight of it.

“I sincerely hope the inside looks-”

“It’s worse.”

“Don’t interrupt me,” Draco reprimanded. “Go first.”

“Honestly think I’m planning to murder you now?”

“The wards, Potter. I am thinking about the wards on a house that I’ve never been to.”

“Okay then, grumpy,” Harry said opening the doors.

At some point (probably when he had been distracted by three sad things and the lack of sleep) the wards had been reset, so no ghostly Dumbledore jumped out at him. The house was dark, mouldy and unwelcoming. Harry pointed with his wand to the old lamps and they lit up.

Harry walked around the troll umbrella stand and estimated the grim house.

“You know…” he started, “maybe you really shouldn’t bother. Look at this. It’s a wreck.”

“Shut up,” Draco ordered and squeezed Harry’s shoulder. “I said renovations – you get renovations.”

Harry exhaled happily.

_Please don’t ever leave me._

»»-------------¤-------------««

Draco could hear Harry huffing and stumbling on the way down the stairs, where he was sitting on the only thing in the kitchen that wasn’t covered in a layer of dust. The chair that he had conjured. Harry floundered into the room carrying three bags of food. Draco once again found himself wondering how this ragged mess of a man managed to save him, more than once in fact.
“You didn’t clean up,” Harry stated putting the bags down.

“I’m not a house elf,” Draco said. He walked over to the food Harry had brought. “You literally need a caretaker, Harry, I am absolutely not joking. Is there one fresh thing in there?”

“Apples?”

“That I am going to eat… You can’t live on spell-heated frozen foods forever.”

“I was just thinking that things will spoil and stuff…”

“No. One, because, you will have normal work hours and two because you’re going to have to cook for me.”

“You are in Hogwarts for like eight more months.”

“And who is crazy enough to try to stop me from Apparating here for a dinner with Harry Potter every evening?”

Harry laughed. Draco almost thought Harry was looking at him in the way Draco did his best not to look at him.

He got a dragon tattooed on his wrist.

Draco wasn’t sure what their relationship was exactly. They were more affectionate than the average blokes, but that might have been because they understood each other better than the average blokes. Draco tried to think back to when he had seen Harry with his friends, he hadn’t seemed overly cuddly with them, with the exception of Weaselette when they had been dating…

Draco frowned, partly in disgust of those two hitting it off and partly because Harry was moron enough to be leading him on without realising it. Draco could be reading into things, he rarely was, but at times even grand minds become clouded with what they wish was true.

“There are bats in the cupboard,” Harry said closing the doors with a click.

“Your wards must be rubbish,” Draco said.

Harry sighed shaking his head.

“They were reset a couple of months ago, I imagine there were more important matters to attend to in the Ministry.”

Draco gave him an incredulous stare.

“You got a Ministry person to attend to a pureblood’s house wards? You let a shit-wardy near them?” Draco asked.

“They asked me if any of my residences needed assessment… or something like that.”

“There are layers – I mean layers upon layers – of various charms on this house dating back centuries. A Ministry swardy can’t ‘reset’ them. I doubt anyone can. I am surprised this house hasn’t imploded yet. That’s ridiculous, everyone knows that Ministry’s forsaken ward department is useless with houses older than twenty years…” Draco trailed off.

“I think, we need help,” Harry said after a moment of staring at Draco wide-eyed.
“Mother of Merlin,” Draco exclaimed, “is this the end of the world?” he asked concerned. “The Saviour is asking for help, it must be.”

Draco could see Harry not being able to choose between being annoyed and amused.

“We’re going to Fukoro,” he informed Harry, who was trying to glare but his rather sheepish grin was disrupting the attempts.

“Who?” Harry asked.

Draco was busy transfiguring the vase on the table into a mirror. He ordered his hair, straightened his shirt and frowned at his shoes that were far from pristine. Still the threat of the house locking them in or reducing them to two bloody heaps of broken bones was looming above his head so he decided it would do.

“Who is that?” Harry asked again.


Draco had given one of his fancy cloaks to Harry so they could move through Diagon Alley without stopping every two minutes for one reason or another. Harry made a note to purchase a proper cloak as his old one did little to protect him from the attention (it kept slipping form his head in the most unfortunate moments.)

Without needing to agree they left the main streets behind as fast as possible. Draco led them through the narrow alleys confidently. He paused in front of a grey door frowning.

“I think it was an owl before,” he said thoughtfully looking at the winged wolf instead of a name on the metal plate.

“It looks new,” Harry observed, still not sure what they were doing.

“Wow, you have eyes,” Draco marvelled, knocking on the doors.

Harry’s retort was cut short when the doors creaked open in the creepiest manner possible. A black cat’s tail disappeared into the darkness. Harry instantly was in front of Draco, who pushed him slightly as a sign of disapproval. Harry ignored him and stepped over the porch. Draco followed.

As soon as they were inside, the door closed behind them, a spell shimmered through them and Harry grabbed his wand. Draco behind him shuffled and with the corner of his eye Harry saw Draco grabbing his forearm.

An ominous light came from the far end of the corridor, illuminating a person dressed in a neon green cloak, hood over their face, fingers with long pink nails pointing a wand at them both.

“I don’t work with Death Eaters.”

The voice amplified cutting into Harry’s ears.

“He never wanted to be a Death Eater,” Harry growled, reasoning that that would be the most effective thing to say (it was the first thing he thought of). His wand didn’t falter as he lowered his hood.

A second passed while person realised who he was, their wand wavered.
“Step aside,” they ordered.

Harry snorted making sure he was completely blocking Draco who was making it difficult by peaking over his shoulder.

“Potter,” Draco hissed, “stop acting like I’m incapable.”

“You’re the one that dragged us here so confidently.”

Draco dug an elbow in Harry’s side and forced his way past him.

“I’m Draco Malfoy,” he introduced. “I was here ten years ago, I am looking for Fukoro.”

“She died,” the person said, “my name is Okami.”

“We’re looking for someone,” Draco said.

“But, we aren’t interested in…” Harry wasn’t sure how to describe the ordeal with the cat, spell that revealed Death Eaters and the person in the bright cloak, whose voice made his ears hurt.

“It’s all right, Harry Potter,” Okami said their voice had lost the cutting edge. “The spell picked up the Dark Mark, which generally means nothing good. I have nothing against both of you.” Harry had a feeling that the hooded person was watching them with amusement. “Sorry for the act.” Then Okami clapped two times.

The right wall disappeared, revealing a cosy room. In middle was a big table with two chairs on one side and a… basically – a throne on the other.

“Please come in,” Okami said lowering the hood of her cloak. She was a woman in her late thirties, her blue hair was tied in two messy buns and, shrugging the cloak off her chubby form, she stuck her wand into one of them.

The room looked like a living room with an office table in the middle, the floor had darker lines indicating a way to the table and a box around it. The cat was looking at them from the top of a shelf filled with board games, one of its paws was brown, the other white and it had a glistening ornament on its forehead.

The witch ordered her scarf with one hand, as she walked to her table. Draco looked at Harry placidly for a moment and followed the witch. Harry’s heart was beating faster than it had any right to as he now apparently had to switch to a civilised discussion. He sat down staying alert to any future danger.

“So what can I do for you?” Okami asked.

“We need someone who can repair wards on a pureblood house,” Draco explained guardedly.

“I hope no one let a swardy near them,” Okami laughed.

Harry oppressed the urge to look contrite.

“It was a misunderstanding,” Draco said. “Do you know anyone who would work with us?”

She thought for a moment, rubbing her left arm that she was holding close to her body.

“I might,” she answered. “I want myself off the ‘suspected dark magic users’ list.”
“Why are you on the list?” Harry asked.

Okami looked at him.

“That’s a reasonable question,” she agreed. “Don’t curse me,” she warned closing her eyes.

First skin around her eyes turned from brown to grey and then light feathers sprouted quickly. Then her jaw broke with a blood-chilling sound and shifted into a muzzle, short white fur grew to cover the wrong looking skin. Feathers transitioned into fur halfway across her face and her eyes were black when she opened them.

“I was bitten when I was half way into transforming,” she explained flashing two rows of sharp teeth. “Now I can’t really turn into an owl anymore and the werewolf is small with a taste for high places.” She regarded Harry with her owl-like eyes. “When I signed up for Wolfsbane, they asked me about what abnormal meant in the Death Eater records. They said that they would contact me for further tests, but all that happened was I had to write my business over to my wife because that list had some mean consequences.”

Harry wasn’t familiar with the Magical Being department’s workings, it was more Hermione’s area. He knew she had made sure St Mungo’s could give out Wolfsbane to the werewolves that signed up. It was one of the few decisions that hadn’t been met with a lot of resistance as the alternative was a lot of irritated werewolves running loose every month.

“I’ll see what I can do,” Harry promised.

Okami watched him for a while longer. Harry glanced at Draco who was frozen in his seat, staring at the woman’s head. Her ears trembled and Draco’s hand twitched. Harry grabbed his forearm, throwing a glance at Okami, but she hadn’t looked at Draco.

Two more awkward seconds passed, until Okami blinked and transformed into a human again. Harry unwittingly crushed Draco’s forearm when her teeth grated against her bone. The cat jumped on the table, a napkin in his teeth. Just in time because when the witch’s nose turned back to human again it started bleeding.

“Thanks,” she said to the cat. “Now let’s stop traumatising Draco and start talking business.”

“I’m perfectly all right,” Draco said in a wringed voice.

<…>

Okami’s wife arrived just as they were almost done and before Harry knew it they were staying for lunch.

Her name was Sarah and she was a muggle, but if you didn’t pay attention for two seconds it seemed she was Apparating around the kitchen. Despite that her chatter never stopped except to let Harry and Draco answer her questions. At first Harry talked guardedly, waiting for the conversation to steer into unpleasant waters, but it never did.

By the end of the lunch Draco had surpassed Harry in charming the two women and gotten them both invited back for a board game evening next week, Okami had found a person who could train Harry and Draco in their newly attained wandless magic and someone else to fix Harry’s wards and help with renovating the house. A story about a wizard who tried to make a window in his new house but ended up decorating the chandelier with his bones erased all reluctance Harry had left about getting help.
They left in a good mood and their stomachs full. After the third stare Harry realised he had forgotten to put up his hood and Draco laughed about the kid that had fallen over in a puddle. After that the walk continued smoothly.

“Okami said shabby, but…” Draco doubtfully looked at the small doors to the basement.

Harry held back his agreement until later and knocked.

“She said ‘knock the door down’, Harry, you’re being too gentle,” Draco criticized.

“Shh.” Harry knocked again.

“Nothing is happening.”

Harry knocked again.

“Merk’s…”

“Alright! Alright.” Harry shouted pounding on the door properly. “You’re insufferable.”

Draco smiled proudly.


“I’ll knock your door down Draco, stop-”

The door was ripped open.

“I’m not marriage counselling!” the greasy-haired woman shouted and attempted to close the door, but it was stuck. “Circe’s garbagio,” she swore.

“We don’t need counselling!” Harry and Draco both snapped at the thin of herbs smelling woman.

“Okay, okay,” the woman stopped trying to close his door for a moment and looked at them. “What did you promise Okami for her to recommend me? Or are you Harry Potter?” she snorted looking at Draco.

“No…” Draco said slowly, throwing a confused glance at Harry.

“I’m sorry,” Harry started smiling politely, which earned him an annoyed glare from Draco. “We’re looking for Maolseachlainna.”

“EH,” the woman threw with his hand annoyed. “Call me Benna or whatever, that witch can never pronounce my name. Whatcha want?” She asked making the first three words sound like one. “I don’t do anything involving fresh body parts,” she added after looking Draco up and down.

After that everything went mostly smoothly. Maolseachlainna was ready to go after stuffing an ancient, brown wizard’s hat on her ash-coloured hair and grabbing an equally ancient looking shoulder bag. She made a version of the unbreakable vow to Harry that she would never disclose anything about his house’s wards or location, then they apparated to the Grimmauld place and after quite a bit of swearing (a mix of Irish, English and hellish) she set to work.

“You’re going to stand there staring?” she growled flashing a dark look at Harry and Draco. “Go somewhere, bring me coffee and a sandwich in the evening.”
“Sure…”

“And take your dragon,” she called snapping his fingers. Two windows flew open causing her to swear again while Bird flew out happily.

Two minutes later it was clear walking through muggle London with a dragon on your shoulders was not the best way to spend the evening so they decided to go to Hogwarts.

Not seeing Pansy in the Slytherin common room Draco, with the corner of his eyes making sure that some people were watching him, took out his wand.

“Expecto Patronum,” he muttered smugly. He froze for a second seeing the form the Patronus took. It was still a Thestral, but now it had antlers. “Come to the common room,” he said quickly and the Thestral flew off with a flourish.

Turning to the younger years that had gasped at the magnificent sight, he masked his slight anguish about the fact that the Patronus revealed so much and smiled a self-satisfied smile. Just when the young Slytherins had started to gather around him, Pansy entered the room.

“Look at what the cat dragged in,” she drawled hiding her delight well. She crossed the room and dragged Draco away from the younger years despite all the objections.

“Annoy your dreams into coming true!” Draco called as a last advice before he was forcefully removed from the room.

Pansy closed the door to Draco’s room and tapped on the doorknob with her wand, ensuring that anyone who thought of either disturbing or eavesdropping would be shouted at accordingly.

Pansy shook out her ponytail and sat on a chair that she conjured.

“I have had the most impossible week,” she started.

Draco smiled levitating his cloak on a hanger and starting to comb through Pansy’s hair.

“For one, Ginny and Luna, they are together by the way, did you know? Talked me into actually going swimming – in the lake,” she said, “That’s what I get for having tea with Luna and a bunch of Gryffindors, it was freezing! In other news, somebody started a rumour that our common room has windows to the lake, again,” Pansy complained. “The mermaids still were not ok with second year buggers staring at them, so no go,” she paused. “Also Granger was called to the Ministry two days ago and I haven’t seen her back, what’s with that?”

“Not sure what exactly. When we returned from Harry’s mission he also disappeared so probably something was wrong. Wasn’t it in the papers?”

“WE? Excuse the fuck out of you, we? Who the hell let you go on a mission?”

“Don’t move around,” Draco said tightening his grip on her hair.

“Don’t evade my question.”

“I am going into Auror training.”

Pansy was silent.
“The number of causalities was in the papers,” Pansy said. “Noshers killed like two blocks of muggles and a bunch of Aurors.”

“Exactly. They are going to parish without my excellent abilities.”

Pansy snorted.

“They? I think you mean Mr Harry Potter.”

Draco smiled.

“He is a constant in my calculations.”

“Ah,” she sighed. “Ah, ah, ah – you’re paying for my spa days.”

“I am most certainly-”

“Antlers!” she exclaimed and Draco lost his train of thought.

“What antlers?” he asked full well knowing how useless that was.

“Don’t play stupid with me,” she threatened. “I know where you sleep.”

“Not where I will sleep,” Draco said confidently.

“In Potter’s bed.”

Draco’s smile turned sour.

“You can’t know that.”

“But I DO! Oh my sweet Merlin, how I wish I was as oblivious as you two, but I have eyes,” she said passionately, but keeping her steady enough to not disrupt Draco.

“You’re ridiculous.”

“You with all your uncertainties are making Salazar roll in his grave!”

Draco bit his lip.

“It’s just…”

“Fantastic? Amazing? Due yesterday? Boy, don’t fucking tell me. I know.”

“I’ve never felt about anyone like that before.”

“More like you’ve always felt like that about only one person.”

Draco nodded. His hear was fluttering just thinking about it. It was at the same time the best and the worst thing in the world.

“You better just nodded, otherwise I’m getting up and kicking your arse.”

“I did. I nodded!” Draco said hurriedly and resumed braiding Pansy’s hair.

“Oh, by the way everyone found out you and Potter had a nice holiday together,” Pansy said after a bit of a thoughtful silence.
“HOW!”

Ron!” Harry called noticing the red-head in the library.

“HARRY!” he shouted, earning a glare from a nearby sitting Hufflepuff.

Seconds later Harry was crushed by the trademark Weasley-hug, or maybe it was just an affectionate hug that Harry hadn’t gotten much in his life from anyone else. Either way Harry was smiling widely when Ron let him go.

“Hermione is sleeping,” Ron explained. “She was exhausted from all the stuff in the Ministry.”

“Did she tell you everything?”

“Very briefly, she was falling off her-WHAT is that?!” Ron shouted seeing the tattoo Harry was absentmindedly scratching.

“Shhh!” somebody shushed angrily.

“Let’s get out of here,” Ron said throwing a glare at the shusher. He collected his bearings. “I was trying to do some homework so that I could give it to ‘Mione, she’s has so much on her plate,” he answered the question Harry was burning to ask.

Harry’s heart filled with warmth.

“Stop,” Ron tried to rebut Harry’s smile, but his ears were flaring red. “You have a Draco tattooed on you.”

“It’s not like th-”

“Sure!”

“Okay, it’s a bit like that.”

“So…” Ron looked at Harry expectantly.

“What?” he asked trying to suppress a smile.

“You’re now official?”

“Shut up, Ron.”

“No. It’s important, are you officially boyfriends?”

“NO, we’re not,” Harry bit. “And we’re never going to be,” he growled.

“Why, the, fuck, not?”

“We’re friends, Ron, want me to kiss you too?”

“Gross, Harry.”

“Exactly.”

Ron shook his head.
“Unbelievable,” he sighed. “Did you try to kiss Draco and he hexed you?”

“I am trying very hard not to kiss him,” Harry hissed looking to both sides of the corridor to make sure they were alone. “Let’s go to the common room, I need to pack my things.”

“Oh, right,” Ron remembered. “Where will you stay?”

“We were thinking Grimmauld place.”

“WE?”

“I asked Draco to move in…”

“ARGH,” Ron exclaimed exasperated. “So you’re moving in, but you don’t think he likes you?”

“He doesn’t,” Harry argued.

Ron hit him over the head with his hand.

“HE BRAIDED YOUR HAIR! He did that and he still hasn’t murdered you,” Ron tried his best to keep calm. “HE KEEPS STARING AT YOU,” he added with an agitated wave of his hand. “I honestly can’t believe you…”

“Says you, Won-Won.”


Harry sighed walking after him. They entered the Gryffindor tower and he greeted Neville who was sitting next to a plant that hadn’t been there last time Harry had been there.

“Hey, Harry,” he greeted with a smile.

“Hey,” Harry walked over to him, leaving Ron to wonder how to wake up Hermione as he couldn’t walk to her room. “I hope that isn’t poisonous.”

“No. I noticed that the Hufflepuff common room is full of plants and there really isn’t a reason why Gryffindor’s shouldn’t be.”

Ron had finally thought to use his Patronus and earned three glistening pairs of eyes looking up to him.

“Maybe because we would kill it in two weeks?” Harry guessed, trying to put off thinking about what Hermione and Ron will want to talk about.

Neville smiled.

“I thought about that, but this needs to be watered only once a week and it’s written right here on the pot, I am sure even Gryffindors can manage that.”

Harry smiled, but before he could answer he was assaulted by Hermione. She hugged him tightly.

“Good, to see you,” she said letting him go.

“Same here,” Harry smiled. “Let’s go to our room,” he suggested as Ron looked like he would burst. Thankfully he knew better than to start shouting about Draco in the common room. He
managed to keep his frustration inside until they were up the stairs.

“Hermione. They are moving in!”

“Harry and Draco?”

“Yes.”

“Shhhh…”

“That’s wonderful, Harry. I am happy you finally got…”

“We’re not together. For Fucks Sake.”

“Wha… Why not?” Hermione questioned her smile turning lopsided.

“I am a mess, Hermione, he doesn’t want to date me… or whatever.”

“He said that?” she asked coldly.

“He didn’t have to.”

Hermione snorted and looked unbelievingly at Ron who was already looking at her with an exasperated expression.

“Harry…” she started.

“I don’t want to talk about this,” he interrupted. “It’s fine.”

“I swear to all the fucking gods! Harry Potter,” Hermione started furiously. Then she let out a breath and continued calmer, “Draco Malfoy has been following you around like an irritating shadow ever since you decided to befriend him. If I’ve ever seen a lovesick Slytherin – that’s him.”

Harry sat on his bed looking down at his hands.

“Do you want us to go ask him?” Ron asked. “Because we will.”

“No. Merlin. NO. He already has done so much for me,” Harry tried to explain. “I can’t ask anymore from him.”

“Harry…” Hermione started.

“I really don’t want to talk about this,” Harry said again. “Did you ask McGonagall the list of spells I need to know to pass the NEWT?”

“I did, and Flitwick too,” Hermione informed. “But you can’t just ignore your feelings…”

“I can. I have for some time now,” Harry argued. “I am not risking losing him just because I couldn’t keep it in my pants.”

Hermione frowned.

“That’s all you feel for him?”

“I… it’s…” Harry stumbled over his own words. “All I know is I’ve felt much better since living with him.”
Ron took a pillow from behind Harry and shouted all the profanities in it. He removed it from his face and looked at Harry.

“Nope, I still want to kick you.”

“Okay,” Hermione said holding Ron away from Harry by his ear. “Maybe we need to go about this in a different way…”

Ron stopped fidgeting and looked at her.

Harry worriedly looked from one of his friends to the other. Once again he hated their newly acquired ability to understand each other through looks. Ron smiled and calmed down. Hermione started talking about what Harry would have to do in order to get the necessary NEWTs, all Harry hoped for was that they had decided to drop it.

<…>

After Harry had stuffed his things into his trunk, Ron and Hermione insisted on going to the dinner half an hour early. Harry didn’t really want to argue anymore so he let them have their way.

Nearing the last dinner in the magical castle’s walls, Harry felt sadness creep into his bones. Hogwarts – the first place, where he had felt at home and made his first friends, and now he was leaving. The corridors felt hallow as they walked to the Great Hall.

The emptiness of the rest of the castle was explained when they started descending the last stairs of flights and Harry could pick up the murmur of voices from the Great hall. The only person in the Entrance Hall turned on his heel and ran into the Great Hall as soon as he saw them. Harry frowned.

A red light blazed in the Great Hall and the voices died down.

“Harry, it’s fine,” Hermione placated seeing as he tried to reach for his wand. “Let’s go.”

As Harry entered the Great Hall he could feel curious eyes on him as always, but this time there was also something else hanging in the air. Harry noticed that instead of teachers there were student’s standing on the platform. The students sitting at their tables were shuffling and muffling laughter, unsure of what was going on.

Harry was interested as well.

Ginny stepped forward from the people on the podium. She tapped her wand on the Owl Lecturn which had been placed roughly in the middle of the platform, students amusedly turned their attention to her.

“We’ll keep this short,” she announced. “We all know you’re here only because we promised food, drinks and music till the dawn.” Approving murmur rose until she silenced it with her hand.

“Usually the dropouts themselves know to make an exit, but we had a feeling that this time he would need help.” She found Harry with her eyes. “In short: Harry’s dropping out and we wanted an excuse to have a party,” she said. “Thank you for making Ron into a tolerable brother, even though I think that’s more thanks to Hermione.”

The students laughed, but quieted down when Luna stepped next to Ginny.

“Thank you for dumping Ginny,” she said with an easy smile sliding her hand into Ginny’s. Her smile made Harry grin almost without realising it. He hadn’t known she was still in the castle.
“Thank you for the cake,” Pansy shouted, stepping forward as well. Harry felt his smile widening. The people around him were laughing and smiling.

“Thank you for being the best captain!” screamed Harry’s Quidditch team, with Ron being right in his ear, Harry couldn’t help but laugh.

Soon everyone was shouting something silly, until some fifteen year old boy with an afro jumped on the table and shouted at the top of his lungs.

“What team?!”

“Wildcats!” half of the hall roared back leaving the purebloods bewildered. Laugher and a murmur of voices rose until somebody banged their feet on the table.

“Yeah, yeah, everyone has something to thank Harry for,” Draco said in his unmistakable voice. Everyone else hushed down almost instantly. “But let’s be real, he would be nothing without his trusty sidekicks. So…” he paused meeting Harry’s eyes, seemed he couldn’t believe he was about to say something so beneath his level. “Let’s fire it up for everyone who helped,” he finished.

“Wait! Wait,” somebody immediately shouted from the back. “Wait!”

Then came a sound of fire catching.

“Okay, don’t wait! With the blessing of Weasleys’ Wheezes, get away!” a girl shouted through laughter, just before the fireworks exploded from behind the teachers’ table. Dragons, birds, winged-pigs and much more from the Weasleys’ Wheezes offered fireworks exploded against the charmed ceiling. A swarm of golden snitches erupted from the headmaster’s chair and sped across the hall.

Everyone was shouting something at the top of their lungs and Harry was almost drowning in happiness. Today wasn’t less tainted by loss, but it was joyful nonetheless. Harry felt his heart overflowing.

He felt so glad that his friends had thought to do something this crazy. He couldn’t even mind the other students because nobody was talking about him killing Voldemort, instead he heard somebody retelling how he had talked back to Umbridge and Snape.

Before the food appeared on the tables somebody started singing Hogwarts anthem. The first singers started grabbing people by their shoulders and soon all the students were standing shoulder to shoulder, shouting the approximate lyrics at the charmed ceiling. Harry was squashed between a Ravenclaw who was more enthusiastic than good and Draco who was rolling his eyes constantly and making Harry laugh without any mercy. Harry felt his heart beat as a bunch of younger years sang in front of him, their eyes glued to the marvellous fireworks above them.

When the teachers arrived half-way through the dinner they half-heartedly tried to figure out who to punish for organising the fireworks inside, but when all of the people at the Gryffindor then Hufflepuff and then the last two tables stood up it was clear either everyone or no one was getting detention.

Harry also noticed that no one was sitting at their appropriate tables. He, Ron, Hermione, Pansy and Draco had settled at the Ravenclaw table and nobody bat an eye. The room was louder than usual or maybe Harry just had gotten used to eating with one person instead of a couple hundred. The ghosts were floating from table to table and conversing with students.

<...>
Harry wasn’t sure who had persuaded him to stay for the dancing part, but here he was, watching Luna dance with Flitwick in the middle of the dance floor and at least two people dancing on a round table that had been placed to the side and should have had food on it. Ron and Hermione were dancing somewhere out of his view and Ginny had skipped off after making Harry dance two whole songs in a row.

Harry watched the razzle-dazzle of the students happily. He would have never thought that he could enjoy an event like this after the Yule ball and the Halloween party this year, but here he was, calm and content at the edge of a dancing mob. Even the part of the music that he didn’t particularly love was easily endured.

When the song that sounded like howls at times was finally coming to an end, Harry saw Draco approach. His heart did a flip and he tried to look normal. Should he stare at Draco, who looked smoking hot in the disco ball/candle/magical lighting? Probably not, but then Draco met his eyes and then he was already right in front of Harry.

“May I have the next dance?” he asked offering his hand.

Harry froze in surprise.

“It’ terribly rude to turn people down, Potter,” Draco informed, still the perfect example of a gentlewizard.

Harry jumped to his feet. The song ended.

“Yes, no, you can…” Harry felt himself become nervous. “I am a terrible dancer though.”

“Oh, I saw… everyone with eyes saw,” Draco reassured with a snort that somewhat disrupted his image, but also made Harry’s heart jump.

The next song was something slow, but Harry had hard time paying attention to it as he was dancing a slow dance with Draco. Harry tried to wrap his head around it, but Draco was talking shit about other dancers and Harry kept being terribly aware of Draco holding him and his voice in his ears. Harry met Draco’s eyes and had to look away to get his stupid grin under control.

When Draco said something about Luna’s dress and headpiece being absolutely inappropriate, Harry pushed on his shoulders disapprovingly.

“She can wear whatever she wants.”

“No, I know, I was just…” Draco trailed off wincing.

“Trying to be funny, but actually being a judgemental git?”

“At least I can look at the person I am dancing with for longer than three seconds.”

“Yeah, well…” Harry smiled bittersweetly. “Good for you.”

Then he stepped on at least three of Draco’s toes, Draco dug his fingers in Harry’s sides.

“Harry.”

“Sorry,” Harry apologised quickly, suddenly acutely aware of his limbs and the fact that he had no idea what to do with them. “I am sorry.”

“You need to relax.”
Harry tried he honestly did, but all that he accomplished was almost tripping over his own legs. Draco held him upright.

“Mother of Merlin, Harry… Relax,” Draco said with a smile, “it’s dancing, not Advanced Arithmancy.”

“Might as well be,” Harry mumbled.

“Look at me,” Draco instructed, “and breathe.”

Harry drew a deep breath through his nose and glanced at Draco. His eyes were even more beautiful up close. After some time Harry had somewhat regained his ability not to stomp all over Draco’s toes all the time. Then Draco finally spoke again.

"Granger and Wesley mentioned that you have something to tell me," he started watching Harry carefully. "And I am wondering what could be more embarrassing than showing your face out in the public every day."

Harry would have stumbled, but Draco was paying attention so instead Harry had to try to stop the room from spinning by stopping his tracks.

“It’s – it's nothing!” he said shaking his head and plotting how to get back at his supposed friends. "They said you would say something like that-"

"They're just being nosy, it's — I promise it's nothing," Harry tried to get Draco off his tail.

"If it's nothing, why are you so agitated?" Draco asked innocently.

"Because!" Harry exclaimed looking down at the floor.

"We can't stand on the dancefloor and not dance, Harry," Draco said attempting to return to the slow swaying they had been doing before, but Harry had lost the ease. "Do you want to go talk somewhere else?"

"There's nothing to talk about," Harry murmured.

"Are you sure?"

"YES."

"All right, calm down," Draco prompted, pulling Harry off the dancefloor and away from the crowd.

“You don’t- we can just keep dan- Draco…”

“They literally both danced with me just to suggest there is something you should tell me,” he said continuing to pull Harry away from the Great Hall. “They also vaguely implied that it has something to do with feelings, so…”

“It’s nothing.” Harry repeated. “It’s-”

“We’re going to move in together, Harry. We will have to talk about feelings sooner or later.”

“But it’s nothing.”
“THEN tell me!” Draco snapped. “If it’s ‘nothing’… tell me. Don’t you trust me?” Draco asked quietly.

Harry’s heart skipped a beat painfully.

“I do,” he said, his voice feeling empty. Harry drew a calming breath to not start rambling. There were times to bullshit his way through and times to soldier-up and face his fear head on. He felt like he was deciding to go to the Forbidden forest all over again, but this time he didn’t have the consolation of the promise of death in the end. At the back of his mind he was aware of how melodramatic he was being, but his pounding heart was keeping the rational thoughts vague and far away. “I have a crush on y-ou,” he heard himself say. His voice broke at the last word, but considering the effort it took just to not run the fuck away, he thought he did ok.

The statement came from the soldier-Harry, which Draco hated to deal with, so it took a bit longer to comprehend. When he did, it took a moment to react, so for now he just stood.

He had thought that maybe Harry didn’t want to live with him but didn’t want to admit. Or a million trillion other things, but he hadn’t dared to hope for this, and now he didn’t know how to react. From the great Hall started pulsating an upbeat song, ripping Draco from the backwater. He stepped forward half-sure that his chest would burst when he touched Harry.

“What are you doing?” soldier shadow of Harry asked turning his face away.

Draco frowned.

“You just said…”

“So?” Harry asked sharply, glancing at Draco whose smile was paling. “That’s my problem, not yours.”

Draco backtracked.

“You just said you have a huge, embarrassing crush on me,” Draco checked. Harry gave no indication of disagreement. “You’re right it’s not a problem… it’s a goddamn blessing.”

Now Harry frowned, watching Draco from behind his round glasses.

Draco rolled his eyes.

“I-” suddenly Draco’s unfailing tongue twisted and he had to stop speaking not to choke. “I ha-” it happened again. He frowned and looked at Harry. “What I am saying is…” it felt like the words wouldn’t come out without half of his internal organs hanging off them. Draco rolled his eyes and then screwed them shut for better or worse. “I LIKE YOUR DUMB FACE, and I would like to keep seeing it every day and like kiss it too, and sometimes slam you with a book but then also sleep in the same bed?” he exclaimed in one breath. Before he could add something else Harry lunged and half-laughed half-sobbed right in his ear.

Draco felt his chest melt as he wrapped his hands around the other.
Chapter End Notes

Well, then, so I am later than I said I would be, but I am not dead, so there is that...
I think one more fluff chapter and then that’s the end of this.
Of course feel free to harass me if you want more.

Please leave a review and thank you for reading ^^
Rasa
The sound of someone coughing woke Harry with a start.

“What!” He threw his head around wildly before straightening his glasses and focusing on Draco who was standing with his arms crossed. “Oh, hi…”

The paper that was stuck to his face unstuck itself and landed on the floor.

“Either your co-workers couldn’t wake you or they didn’t want sprouts coming out of their arses for weeks.”

“That is such a bullshit thing. I’ve never made anything like that happen.”

“You had grass in your ears just this morning.”

Harry quickly put away the paperwork that he had finished before passing out and showed Draco.

“I told you that was from playing Quidditch yesterday.”

“I still can’t believe I slept in one bed with a troll.”

Harry frowned and pushed Draco against one of the empty tables.

“Take that back.”

“Comb your hair once in a while and maybe that won’t be the first impression,” Draco tried to sound as snarky as ever, but Harry was satisfied to see that he was glancing at Harry’s lips.

“Never.” Harry shook his head proudly and stepped back.

Draco frowned unsatisfied and followed Harry out of the empty Auror headquarters. They passed the receptionist, who wished them a merry Christmas, spent a while in the elevator because Harry kept pressing the wrong buttons, but finally reached the Atrium.

“Good night, Mr Potter,” called a bearded man from the night guard’s booth.

“Good night, Anton,” Harry called.

“At least he didn’t wish us a merry Christmas,” Draco said in a low voice as they walked across the hall to the few lit fireplaces.

“It’s November, it’s a good thing that Margaret’s wife destroys any Christmas decorations she sees before December otherwise the whole headquarters would be buried in tinsel and shit.”

“That’s vile,” Draco said, motioning for Harry to go first. Harry smiled and kissed Draco’s cheek.

“Grimmauld place,” he said and clenched his teeth to keep his stomach in place. His hand scraped a chimney and he pressed them closer to his body, finally he was spat out on the kitchen’s floor.

“Ugh…”

nobody said that shit out loud if they had any little bit of common sense

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes
Draco stepped out of the fireplace gracefully and looked at Harry with slight disgust.

“Honestly, Potter…”

“Shut up and help me up.” Harry extended an expectant hand.

“And stain my pristine cloak? Bitch, you wish.” Draco stepped to the side out of Harry’s reach.

“Draco! Come on.”

“You look like a… what are you doing?”

Harry pulled the hand out of his cloak’s pocket. At that moment Bird crashed into the room and saved Draco from a week old, dusty pair of socks that were in Harry’s pocket. Harry put them away for later.

“Hi, birdy, how are you…”

Bird growled and nuzzled Harry’s chin.

“Disgusting…” Draco quieted met by two pairs of unimpressed eyes. He managed a half step back before Bird landed on his head. Harry jumped to his legs, wiggled out of his cloak and grabbed Draco around the middle. “POTTER! Merlin… Potter!” Draco tried to hit his untameable boyfriend on the head, but Harry lifted him from the ground and started to walk somewhere.

“HARRY POTTER LET me go this instant AHG,” Draco grabbed Harry’s shirt when he readjusted his grip. “DON’T YOU dare DROP ME.”

Harry laughed and bird screeched making Draco groan.

“This is highly un… MERLIN’S BEARD watch the doors!”

<...>

“Do you want to see my history essay?”

“Erm… not… Oh, alright.”

Harry took the scroll deciding to skim it and change the subject as soon as possible.

At the top sat the title in Draco’s over the top fancy handwriting, but the essay consisted of a single sentence – they all died and never discovered the necessity of shampoo. Harry was so surprised the laugh almost knocked him off the chair. Draco shifted smiling a small smug smile.

“Incredible,” Harry laughed and looked at Draco. “Incredible…”

He leaned forward wanting to saviour Draco’s flushed cheeks forever, next thing he knew they were kissing. Neither of them were super experienced in the field, Draco compensated by being a prude in public and Harry by having a ‘don’t give a single fraction of a shit’ attitude. Every kiss was the best thing in the history of all the things.

His fear didn’t matter, their past didn’t matter.

The… the… cases… don’t…

Don’t ruin it… the cases, the dead people…
Harry pulled back and buried his face in Draco’s neck.

“Did I do something wrong?” Draco asked offended.

“Of course not, I…” Harry bit his tongue.

“Thinking about work?”

“Sorry…”

Draco pushed Harry’s head up and pressed another kiss on his lips. Then he gave Harry a grin and bit his lower lip. Harry almost slapped the plates off the table and practically jumped onto Draco’s lap. Draco was flushed and Harry felt his own face burn hot.

The water for pasta started boiling, then going over the edges, but only when the stove made a loud noise Harry groaned and pulled Draco to the other side of the kitchen. Somehow in between making out they managed to finish preparing dinner.

<…>

“How do you expect me to eat if you’re practically laying on my lap?” Harry asked exasperatedly.

Draco’s response was showing his fork with over-salted salad in Harry’s mouth. Harry winced and made the food go down.

“If you’re full just say so,” Harry managed to say before another forkful was pushed in his mouth. Harry was pretty much holding Draco from falling under the table and he wondered whether Draco realised it. Harry, of course, was a patient man, but another salt ridden forkful and… yep, bye.

“Ow! Potter!” Draco shouted after landing on the floor.

“Want something, babe?”

Sounded like Draco choked on his answer Harry pushed his chair back concerned.

“I am sorry! Was that weird? Draco?”

Draco was looking at him wide eyed. Then he smiled and buried his face in his hands.

“Draco? What does that mean? Draco? Can I call you babe? Or…” Harry was interrupted by the chair being yanked from underneath him. He collapsed next to Draco and tried to pull away the hand that was still covering his face. “Draco?”

“Shut up,” Draco growled and pushed Harry down on his back. Harry was pleased to see that Draco was red and holding back a smile. Then he had to concentrate on kissing because Draco was not fucking around.

<…>

“Are you staying the night?”

Draco was already asleep on the couch, so that was a moronic question, but then when had his boyfriend…

“Boyfriend…” he murmured happily.
“Yeah, alright.”

Then he felt a blanket cover him and drifted off once again.

<...>

Draco opened his eyes only to glare at whoever was responsible for it being freezing, but his complaints died when he realised where he was. The room he’d been avoiding all year, but still visiting most nights. The room of requirement.

He scrambled to his feet hearing the fire just around the corner, in the body of a sharp-toothed toad it rounded the corner. The scorching wind turned the noise up by a million and almost knocked Draco off his feet. He felt the blazing flames on his heels and then didn’t think much of anything until his panic induced run was interrupted by Harry’s voice.

Before he could crush the instinct, Draco looked up with a spark of hope in his heart. Their eyes met.

Draco though the time stopped. Harry will save him.

Then he focused on the flames behind him. A gigantic dragon with open jaws was a second away from swallowing Draco’s last hope. The hot air didn’t even let Draco’s scream as everything disappeared in the darkness of smoke.

The fire was so loud Draco didn’t register that he wasn’t moving anymore, he just felt the flames at his ankles and the smoke in his lungs. The shelves dug into his back and when he tried to look somewhere else than the place where Harry had perished, it felt like his eyes were bleeding hot sand.

After what felt like hours of staring at monsters with green flame eyes, Draco woke up. He sat up and looked around the dark room confused. Then he fell back into the couch and rubbed his face. Everything felt sore.

For a moment he let the anger at the illogical nightmares simmer. It made him want to cry. Somehow the fiery dreams made him feel the cold fear that he had enough of while Voldemort had been around. Then he took a couple of deep breaths and got up. Walking sometimes helped with not wanting to sleep ever again.

This house even though similar to the Manor with its pureblood heritage was very different. Draco supposed it shouldn’t come as a surprise comparing his mother and her sister. While Malfoys carried being pureblood effortlessly and elegantly, Blacks seemed to have chosen their decorum depending on how dark-snake-esque it was.

Then Draco reached the attic which’s door stood out like a doxy on a wedding cake.

It had been (poorly) covered in a layer of white paint and the Weasley clan had then drawn on it with something that was definitely not meant for it. Possibly nail polish. He presumed it was them as the main focus of the ‘painting’ was on a lopsided building that had ‘the Burrow’ written above it and a horde of red-headed trolls running around it. There were also a couple of dragons and a hippogriff in the background.

Draco peeked into the room, but it was empty save for a heap of hay. He furrowed his brows and closed the door.

*Weird.*
He kept exploring the house, noticing more and more signs that it had been lived in by Weasleys. A booby-trapped closet was a telling one, but also colourful pillows on dark couches, knitted blankets.

What once had been the noble Black family’s house was no longer.

One door had a hole in it.

<...>

Draco was sneaking out of the room that Harry was sleeping in. It was Sirius’ old room all obnoxious and Gryffindor, which Draco only tolerated because Harry had told him about in a way that made him feel a lot of feelings. He would burn the velvet drapes soon though. That aside, he was also bad at sneaking.

“GHyGh!” said Harry pointing his wand at Draco, who slowly turned around and looked at the sleepy man growling at him.

“That’s not the wand I want you to be pointing at me,” Draco said and felt his cheeks go red instantly. Thank Merlin for night time.

“Draco. Merlin, Dracoo…” Harry complained catching his breath and rubbing his face. “What the hell are you doing?”

“I was getting paper to write down my notes.”

“In the middle of the night?” Harry asked incredulously and fell back into his bed.

“We have to get up in three hours, that’s barely any time to sleep.”

“You are so wrong,” Harry said and grunted pulling his covers up to his nose. After a moment he murmured something incomprehensible.

“What?”

“You could still come to bed,” Harry repeated sticking his face up in the air for a second.

All Draco managed was a soft, “Oh.”

He’d never thought that he could go to somebody after having a nightmare. Not since turning eight. He shouldn’t need a reassurance that nightmares are just dreams. It wasn’t even like Harry knew that Draco was just staying awake to avoid more nightmares, but…

He quickly got out of his clothes and into the bed. Harry lifted the blanket like a wing and Draco shuffled under his arm.

“Argh!” Harry exclaimed when cold fingers touched his chest. “Good grief, Draco, how long did you wander around?”

Instead of answering Draco tangled his even colder feet with Harry’s. In retaliation Harry moved his arm letting the cold air get under the blanket on Draco’s side.

“No! Potter stop!” Draco pressed closer, took over the control of the blanket and bit Harry’s shoulder.

“That’s literally the opposite of unpleasant,” Harry said and presumably tried to kiss Draco’s lips.
“That’s my cheek, Potter,” Draco complained. “Are you asleep?

Harry didn’t answer, but soon Draco calmed his heartbeat and managed to keep his eyes closed long enough to fall asleep. Harry smelled like safety and Draco was tired.

<…>

Draco was shaken out of the slumber by his own enraged shout, “Potter!” The goose bumps made him even more awake as the cold air washed over him. “I will Murder you!”

“Good morning,” Harry said innocently leaning against the door frame. His eyes were shining and the blanket that he had yanked from Draco was hanging on his shoulder.

Draco punched the mattress in irritation and jumped out of the bed to get a hold of Harry who was already halfway down the stairs when Draco reached the doors. On his way down Draco almost ran into a wall and when Harry was finally almost in the range of his arms, the git stepped aside and Draco crashed into the couch with a muffled curse word.

“Good morning, love,” Harry said and threw the blanket on his head.

Draco buried his head in it deeper and said something unintelligible.

<…>

Pansy’s hair had been braided, tea made and she was submerged in a blanket to her nose. Draco felt like he had done a good job, she was smiling. He was sitting next to her on the couch and trying to inconspicuously snatch the last cookie from the tray. He was successful only because his friend was busy looking around the room. Again.

“Are you…”

“Potter would love to be here to confirm for the tenth time that, yes, you can and are very welcome in our… his house,” Draco turned up his nose when Pansy grinned at him. “I…”

“It’s just weird being in this house, ok? And you don’t have to play it down around me,” Pansy laughed. “Blaise and I have been listening to you for years, besides I haven’t seen you this embarrassingly beaming since…” she frowned thinking, “since Blaise ate one of Weasleys’ unfinished treats.”

Draco grinned at the memory of the dark-skinned, otherwise stoic guy running around the common room screaming that he’s having a period from his nose.

“I think I might be going crazy though,” Draco said looking down.

“That train has long since departed, my boy,” Pansy said seriously, “You’re dating Harry Potter.”

“Haa. Ha. No, listen. Every time I try to tell him how I feel I either end up snapping at him or saying a bunch of incoherent tosh.” Draco paused looking at the empty tray on the table. “Harry does it so well – he just tells me I’m fantastic or something and then carries on with whatever the heck he is doing… like it’s no big deal.”

*He even called me ‘love’.*

Draco’s cheeks flushed at the memory.

Pansy was nodding like she was the old wise witch of feelings. Draco’s leer made her bite back a
smile and actually say something.

“Probably has something to do with our upbringing,” Pansy said. She shifted to look at Draco without breaking her neck. “For example, if I was to say,” she paused, “I love you.”

“What the fuck, Pans,” was Draco’s instinctive reaction. Even when it was friend love, nobody said that shit out loud if they had any little bit of common sense.

“Exactly,” Pansy shuddered, “We are different from those lovey-dovey Gryiff-puff people. We have class and finesse and other things they can only dream of. We convey feelings without acknowledging them. I think that if you want…”

Draco was already feeling that he wouldn’t like what Pansy was about to say.

“You’ll have to be more direct, because Harry, as we all well know, is as dim-witted as they come.”

Draco snorted. He had to make a fool of himself even more than when he had screamed ‘I like your dumb face’ in that dumb face? Isn’t the fact that he cares enough? He has to show it as well?

Pansy spent time gladly coming up with coherent sentences that Draco could throw at Harry without blabbering and Draco enjoyed making Pansy slightly jealous and grossed out from all the soppiness.

The clock chimed when Draco needed to leave and good thing too, otherwise Draco would have been late. He put on a clean shirt, grabbed his bag and ushered Pansy downstairs to the fireplace.

Draco hugged her goodbye and murmured in her ear, “I love you too.”

Pansy smiled and rolled her eyes.

“I know,” then she threw the Floo powder into the fire, “three broomsticks,” she said and disappeared in the green flames.

Draco quickly made his way to the front door and disapparated to the shady backstreet that he wouldn’t even associate with the Ministry if Harry hadn’t shown him the way personally. Honestly did they have to use the dirtiest alleys to get to the Auror training facilities? Which Draco was quite sure was just the Ministry’s basement. They had been advised not to use the main entrance.

Draco threw a quick glance around making sure there were no muggles around, but considering the extensive muggle repelling charms that was an unnecessary rule, which Draco only remembered because they had been listed to him the previous lesson and maybe also because he was used to obeying either all of the rules or none of them.

He entered the hallway where the other trainees were already waiting around for the lesson to start. Today was two hours theory and then two hours combat training. Draco still could feel all of the muscles from the previous combat lesson. The teacher was a beast.

“Hey.” Harry waved when he entered the hallway from the other side. Of course he could walk through the main entrance as he pleased. But to be fair he had been actually working with the Aurors all day. Draco nodded in greeting.

Harry leaned on the wall next to him.

“How is Pansy?”
“Good.”

Harry sighed and Draco accidentally met the eyes of one of the trainees. She was glaring at him. Draco had to hold back a smirk.

“I think I really like that all your attention is on me, when the whole hallway wants a piece of you.”

Harry threw a look back and the woman smiled waving. Harry snorted quietly and turned his back to them emphasising it even more.

“Oh, my, you’re being rude,” Draco said hushedly.

“I thought you liked that,” Harry said teasingly.

“Didn’t say I don’t.”

At that moment the teacher entered the hallway, also from the side where the elevator was. Harry rolled his eyes and pulled Draco to their seat in the back of the class. This wasn’t much different from Hogwarts, just much more dangerous and practical. Not everything, but some of the things.

“I don’t have a quill,” Harry said looking at Draco with two green eyes.

Draco rolled his eyes and pulled a pen from his bag.

“You’re lucky one of us has a head.”

“I forgot it on my desk,” Harry tried to excuse his unpreparedness. Not wanting the teacher to reprimand them Draco poked Harry with his knee.

Harry smiled and shifted his chair closer.

Chapter End Notes

heiya,
hope you enjoyed this lil chapter
i dunno when i will update again
but like maybe i will
Happy new year let it be better than the last two :) 
Rasa

Later EDit:
a chapter in my life when i was writing this fanfic has ended, i am taking antidepressants and i have made at least two new friends in the last two months. recently i was around the people which i was around at my worst and i felt slipping back into the black shit hole of depression. i do not think writing IDSNWHBA would make me feel worse, but i am sitting on a half finished new drarry fanfic and i can't get myself to writing another chapter for this.
I hope nobody's too disappointed.
This was a wild ride and i loved it, thank you all who read, will read and are reading :)
Rasa
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!