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<td>Character:</td>
<td>Harry Potter, Draco Malfoy, Hermione Granger, Ron Weasley, Ginny Weasley, Minerva McGonagall, Katie Bell, Oliver Wood, Teddy Lupin, Rubeus Hagrid, Pansy Parkinson, Blaise Zabini, Viktor Krum, Original Characters, Neville Longbottom</td>
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**Shadow Play**

by white_fox

**Summary**

It had been eight years since the Wizarding World had seen Harry Potter after the defeat of You-Know-Who and Draco had become a teacher at Hogwarts. When a new teacher comes in to fill in a post, Draco starts to see the Boy-Who-Lived in the man and become curious. Meanwhile Harry is running from something and is reluctant to tell anyone what it is.
Arrival

Draco sighed as the new row of students filed into the Great Hall. It was his fifth year as a Hogwarts teacher and he still hated the Opening Feast. The students would file in, excitement filled the room and the first years would be Sorted. Everything was the same, never changing from year to year. Monotonous.

Draco looked down the teacher's table as the new Deputy Headmaster, Flitwick, lead the students to the front. McGonagall had a time finding replacement teachers after the war and had hired Pansy as Transfigurations teacher and Hermione Granger for Muggle Studies. The students say they were learning more then just theories on Muggles, but also facts. The Defense Against the Dark Arts position was hardest and she hopped from retired Auror to retired Auror till she finally found someone who seemed competent enough to hold the position.

'And late,' though Draco looking at the empty seat next to him. He heard a cheer and looked over to see a boy proudly walk to Slytherin. He politely clapped as the head of Slytherin House should.

Draco had trained in a university for a couple of years and got a degree in Potion making. He applied at Hogwarts and had been working as the Potions professor ever since. He also became Head of Slytherin since there were had been none since the death of Severus Snape.

"Lupin, Theodore R."

Draco looked up to see a boy with sandy colored hair with brown highlights and brown eyes walk up to the Sort Hat. He gave Granger a small wave which she returned and sat on the stool.

"Gryffindor!" hollered the repaired Sorting Hat and the table cheered. Granger was clapping happily as the Lupin boy ran to the table. When the last student joined the Gryffindor table McGonagall stood to make her speech.

"Welcome all students," she began. She didn't have the flare that Dumbledore had but she made it as interesting as possible. "May I have your attention please as I list the following matters?

"Our caretaker, Mr. Filch, has asked me to remind you that no product that in not school related are forbidden in the corridors, this includes any Zonko products and Weasley Wizard Wheezes products." Filch nodded from his place beside the entrance doors. Draco had been amazed to find him and his cat still at Hogwarts.

"Tryouts for your House Quidditch teams will be conducted this October. Captains, please see Madam Hooch for scheduling.

"The Forest is out of bounds to all students and Hogsmeade to anyone below third years. Visits will be posted in the Entrance Hall.

"I would have liked to announce our new teacher, but unfortunately he seems to be….."

BANG

The doors to the Great Hall had been thrown open, throwing Filch aside as a young man rushed in. Every head turned to see the commotion. He looked to be in his late to mid twenties with dark brown hair that had a wild look to it if it hadn't been pulled in a tight ponytail at the back of his neck. His eyes were the deepest shade of green Draco had ever seen with a vivid alertness to them. His cloak was windblown and he wore a black Muggle shirt under a partly closed midnight blue hoodie, the
hood placed over the back of the cloak and a pair of Muggle blue jeans and sneakers. His bangs covered his forehead thickly and he made no attempt to keep the hair from his eyes. To add to the assemble he wore a silver hoop earring in his right ear.

"I'm so sorry, Professor McGonagall," he said in a thick American accent. Draco suspected he grew up in one of the Southern states. "I'm…"

"Late," said McGonagall. "A habit of yours, Mr. Black. Just don't be late for your classes."

"Of course," said Black, as McGonagall called him.

"Take a seat next to Mr. Malfoy."

Black nodded, apologizing to Filch for almost hitting him with the door and walked up to the teachers table, straightening his robes and hair as he did. He stopped by Granger after the witch placed a hand on his arm.

"What happened that made you so late, James," asked Granger. So his name was "James". James Black. It did have a nice ring to it. And he knows the Muggle witch. Draco had tried to refrain from using the term "Mud-blood" around Granger as much as possible. As Draco learned early one, the witch had a mean temper when provoked.

"I'll tell you later," said Black and took his seat next to Draco, nodding to the blonde as he sat down.

"Students, our new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, Mr. James Black," announced McGonagall. Black sighed, cleared his throat and stood.

"Forgive me for being late, but the train left without me, and you know trains. They're always on time." A few laughed at the obscured joke and Black gave a little chuckle. "Actually, being late is a bad habit of mine. Just set your clocks for after class and I'll be on time."

The students laughed and Granger and Katie Bell, now known as Katie Wood, had to stifle theirs in their hands. McGonagall coughed, as if to disapprove but Draco could tell she was hiding a laugh.

"I certainly hope not," she said as Black sat back down. Clapping her hands the tables filled with food and everyone began to eat. Draco filled his plate and ate his food as if he was in a social gathering.

"You're Draco Malfoy, right?" asked Black beside him. Draco looked at him and Black smiled. It was a genuine smile and not a false one that Draco was used to seeing. Somehow the smile held Draco captivated and he just stared at Black. When Draco didn't answer right away Black snapped his fingers in front of Draco to get his attention. "Are you okay?"

"Y-yes," he said. "What did you say?"

"Well, I was hoping you could give me some advice. See, it's my first time as a teacher and I don't really know what to do."

"Why don't you asked advice from Granger," asked Draco picking up his pumpkin juice. "You two seem to know each other."

Black laughed and rubbed his neck again. Why was it so familiar to Draco?

"You saw that, huh?" he said. "Hermione's sort of a sister. We're not related by blood but we're close, and through I have heard what she had talk about being a teacher here, I would like to have a
second opinion." 'Draco smirked. "Hn, you must be desperate if you're coming to me for advice."

Black's eyes flashed as he frowned. "Look, I'm just looking for an honest answer, but if you're going to be all huffy about it…..

"They're kids," said Draco. "A lot of them not really caring to learn. They won't respect you, especially from my House. If they push you, push them harder. Don't bother to help the reluctant ones. If they don't want to learn, that's their problem."

"An honest opinion," said Black. Draco didn't say anything as he sipped his pumpkin juice. "I suppose I can go with that." And he returned to his steak.

"Anything else," asked Draco. "What do you mean," asked Black. He gave Draco an interested look, his full attention on him. This man was showing him more emotion then his parents in his whole life.

"I'm sure Granger told you all about me and my involvement in the war."

"Oh, you mean how you made her and her friends miserable, foiled their club, created the passage that lead the invasion into Hogwarts and tried to capture them?" Black cut a piece of his steak and smiled at him. "Yeah, she told me all about you. But I just came from America. We don't discriminate. I want to hear your story from you."

He ate his steak. Draco stared at him in surprise. Here this man was, knew everything about him, and yet he didn't care. And his excuse was that he wanted to hear Draco's side of the story? It was like a parent trying to find out who lied to get out of a punishment.

"You seem to have me at a disadvantage," said Draco. Black looked at him in surprise and Draco smirked. "You know all about me, yet I know nothing about you. How did you and Granger met?"

"We were kids when we met," said Black. "Both nervous over what we had. My mother was a Muggle-born and my father a pure-blood, but they died when I was a baby. I hardly remember them."

"Oh," said Draco in sudden sympathy. To lose one's parents so young was a tragic thing for any child. Draco felt himself lucky that he knew his parents. "Did you grow up in an orphanage? Or with a relative?"

"Relatives," said Black. "My aunt from my mother's side, her husband and their son. I was happy to leave them behind."

"Why?"

Black had paused to answer, but was interrupted by McGonagall announced that it was time to head for the dormitories. Black turned to smile at Draco.

"I'll see you at breakfast, Mr. Malfoy," she said.

"Please, Mr. Black, we're colleagues now," said Draco. "Call me Draco."

He held out his hand. For a moment Black's face held one of recognition before he lifted his hand and grasped Draco's.

"Then call me James, Draco," he said with a smile.
"James," called Granger. She spoke the name as if unfamiliar with placing it to the person associated with it. "I'll show you to your room."

"All right," said Black and turned to Draco. "Good night, Draco."

"Good night, James," he said and looked at Granger. "Granger."

"Malfoy," she said and she led Black out. Black smiled at him one last time over his shoulder and followed the Muggle Studies teacher out of the Great Hall. Draco watched them leave before leaving for his own chambers.

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"What was that?" asked Hermione as they walked down the corridor. "James" just smiled.

"Just playing the part," he said with a shrug.

"Playing the part? You were flirting with him!"

"Oh, was that what it was?" He smirked at her and Hermione groaned.

"I mean that if you slip up….."

"That's what thick hair's for," he said and pulled back his bangs and let down the Glamour to show the lightning bolt scar. "With a bit of make up and a Glamour Charm I look like any regular guy. I'm not Harry Potter for nothing. This is what makes me who I am. Without it, I'm just a normal wizard."

"You were never normal, Harry," said Hermione. "You were always abnormal. I still don't see why you couldn't apply under your real name.…."

"Then that would involve the media, which I've been avoiding for the past eight years, in case you forgotten."

"I know. You're lucky Ginny isn't here or she'd have your hide on a platter."

"I don't need luck right now, so I'm good."

Hermione smiled. "She seems happy with Viktor, doesn't she?"

"Seeker and Chaser for Bulgaria, married to the Bulgarian coach and a baby on the way. I'd say she's pretty happy."

"They're thinking of calling it Amber if it's a girl."

"How's Ron doing? And the kids?"

"They miss me, but I promised that would visit them every other week end and on holidays," she said and smiled at Harry. "Ron's been hoping you'd visit sometime, Harry."

"I'll have to fit it in my schedule," said Harry and both smiled.

In the ten years since Harry's victory at the Last Battle, Harry had tried to live normally in the magical community but reporters and grateful people would stop him on the streets or visit his house and attempt to interview him or talk to him for hours over nothing. After a while Ginny got irritated by the reporters stopping her every few yards to ask how dating the famous Boy-Who-Lived was like and left Harry on good terms. Not long after she was enrolled as a Chaser in the Bulgarian team
and married Viktor Krum. She did get irritated at times when publicity took her husband away but she did get used to it. Viktor wasn't as popular as Harry, so the Bulgarian Quidditch coach had more free time then Harry ever would have if he didn't vanish.

Harry, on the other hand, had moved to the Muggle world. He told his friends that he had stopped Voldemort because it was the right thing to do, not for publicity. He couldn't handle the media attention anymore. He moved from continent to continent, working odd jobs to pay for apartments, hotel rooms and food.

It was only that summer when Hermione came to him during a brief visit in London and told him they needed a Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher at Hogwarts. Harry had needed money at the time and he had nowhere else to go. He also thought it would be an interesting occupation to teach children. So he applied, was accepted and created the persona "James Black" to fill the role of teacher, combining the names of both his father and godfather.

"I was wondering, why the flirtatious side?" asked Hermione. "I finally get you back in the United Kingdom after eight years, and the first thing you do is flirt with Malfoy! And this disguise of yours too closely resembles to your real self. I almost called you "Harry" back there."

"I hate changing my look," said Harry, taking out a plain box. "When I want to look in the mirror, I don't want to see a stranger. I want to see myself. I still have nightmares on when I look in a mirror and I see Voldemort. And the flirting," Harry smiled at her as he set the box on the table, "because it's fun!"

Hermione sighed. Harry had changed since the Last Battle, being more carefree, yet grounded. At times, she didn't even recognize the man in front of her.

"Why were you late?" asked Hermione.

"I told McGonagall why I was late. I missed the train." The look on Hermione's face told Harry she wasn't in the mood for excuses. "All right, I was late for the train, but because I had to visit them."

"Oh," said Hermione and didn't say anymore. Harry had become very tight lipped in his private life over the years, even to his closest friends. Both Ron and Hermione didn't say anything about it. The old Harry they knew kept secrets from them as well if he felt it would hurt them.

A knock on the door surprised them both and Harry quickly put a Glamour Charm on his scar before heading to open the door.

"Who is it," he asked.

"McGonagall," came the reply and both sighed. Harry opened the door to lead the Head Mistress in and quickly closed the door behind her. "While I don't abide to lying, an excellent performance, Mr. Potter. You almost had me fooled."

"I almost fooled myself," said Harry sitting down. McGonagall pulled out a scroll from inside her robes and handed it to Harry.

"Your schedule," she said. After Harry looked over the scroll and gave a surprised look at the workload she sighed and looked at him like he was a student again. "I'd never thought I'd see the day when Harry Potter would go into hiding. From what I don't know. You were fearless as a student in this school."

"Not really," said Harry. "I was scared shitless the whole time." McGonagall gave him a disapproved look at the swear word, but Harry ignored it. "I hid before, I can hide again."
"Mr. Malfoy seemed to have taken an interest in you," said McGonagall as Hermione giggled.

"Yeah, I got that idea," said Harry glaring at Hermione and she laughed harder.

"I'm sorry, Harry, but if you don't want to get attention then don't draw attention to yourself," she said.

"But a flower that grows by itself will get attention much more easily then one that is planted among other flowers," said Harry with his hands behind his head.

"Philosophical," said McGonagall. "And logical."

"Poetic," said Hermione. "Shakespeare?"

"Potter," said Harry with a smile. "But I did do Shakespearian plays at one point."

"You are just full of surprises," said Hermione. "Care to share anymore secrets?"

"Not yet," said Harry. "But I think a few more will crop up while I'm here."
First Day

Harry yawned as he walked down to breakfast the next morning. Sleeping at Hogwarts as a teacher didn't feel any different than sleeping at Hogwarts as a student, except he had a room all to himself and the room was bigger. As he slept he dreamed about when he was a student and that made him smile. After pulling his shoulder length black hair into a ponytail at the base of his neck he walked into the Great Hall.

"You're late, Black," said Malfoy who was almost finished with his breakfast of pancakes and sausages.

"I did ask you to call me James, Draco," said Harry with a flirtatious smile, taking up his "James Black" persona.

"Why were you late?" "I overslept." Harry started piling food on his plate and started eating. Malfoy watched him from the corner of his eye. James Black was neat eater, but not exactly voracious. He ate with the measure of someone in hurry and trying to be polite at the same time. Harry swallowed before continuing to speak. "I'm not used to early work schedules. But I'll get the hang of it soon."

The truth was, last night Harry had spent it walking the halls of Hogwarts, remembering old routes and secret rooms. Using one route he found himself in front of the Fat Lady guarding Gryffindor House. He knew Teddy was in Gryffindor and wished that he could see his godson. Harry missed Teddy even through he visited on the boy's birthday. Teddy was looking more like his parents each year.

"If you'd like, I can wake you up each morning," said Malfoy with a smirk. Harry could see an amused look on Hermione's face at the joke.

"Why Mr. Malfoy, are you suggesting we become roommates?" asked Harry. Malfoy's face flushed in embarrassment and looked away.

"No," said Malfoy. "I'm only suggesting I wake you up each morning."

"I suppose that can work, till I get an alarm clock of course."

"Of course." And Malfoy got up and walked from the Great Hall. Harry lazily watched the blonde leave as Hermione turned to him.

"Flirting," she whispered in his ear.

"I'm just keeping him distracted."

"By erotic imagery?" /Harry looked at her in mock surprise. "Why Hermione, if Ron were here…."

"But Ron isn't and if he was he'd get a laugh at the look on Malfoy's face!"

Harry chuckled. "You're right. Ron would be talking about that for weeks. And besides, it's too early for shameless flirting."

Hermione laughed. "I think you're a bit too into the role," she said. "But I'm not complaining. James Black is a lot better then your other personae. He's more laid bad, funny, easy to get along with, if a bit tardy all the time, and a lot like you, but yet not."
"Don't forget a very handsome guy," said Harry and Hermione giggled.

"Okay, Romeo, get to class," she said and stood up. "I have to get to mine. Better get going or you'll be late."

"I'll be there," said Harry taking another helping of pancakes. Hermione shook her head and left, leaving Harry the only person in the Great Hall.

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Ten minutes after class started, Harry walked into his class room to find a very rambunctious group of second years. Harry had known he was late; he planned on it, but not by much. Taking out his wand he sent a shower of sparks in the air to settle the students down.

"Settled down," he ordered and they quieted. "Take a seat. Don't need books or wands today."

Pointing his wand at the blackboard three pieces of chalk rose and began to write on it. "This is Defense Against the Dark Arts and I'm Professor James Black."

The chalk wrote his alias and the class as he walked to the front of the room and sat on his desk.

"But you can call me Professor James. I'm not like the rest of the teachers here. I'm not as forward, but just as strict. Through I may not be on time I expect all of you to be." He picked up a file of papers. "On these papers I want you to write a little about yourselves. It's kind of like a get to know you sheet. Your name, birthday, your parents names, you blood status, Muggle-born, half blood or pure-blood, anything you like or dislike. As soon as you finished you will pass them back up to me.

"Okay, let's see here…You and you." He pointed to a Gryffindor boy and a Slytherin boy. They hesitated for a second. "Don't worry, I don't bite. I just want you to pass out the papers." The two boys walked up and he looked at them. "What are your names?"

"Reginald Green," said the Gryffindor.

"Augustus Redwood," said the Slytherin.

"Any nicknames?" asked Harry.

Augustus shook his head as Reginald said "Reggie."

"Well, Augustus, Reggie, I'd like for you to hand out these papers. Don't worry, you're not being graded on these," He handed half to Reggie and half to Augustus. "Okay, Reggie, you take the Slytherins and Ravenclaws. Augustus, you take the Gryffindors and the Hufflepuffs."

Both boys' eyes widened.

"You have got to be kidding," said Augustus in an arrogant sophisticated tone that suggested he was well in wealth.

"No, I am not," said Harry sternly. "I don't do favoritism, but I also don't like being talked back to over insignificant things. You will pass these out, or should I have Mr. Harrison do it and Slytherin lose ten points?"

Augustus scowled at Harry, but took the papers and began tossing them to the Gryffindors and Hufflepuffs, slapping the papers down with a sharp smack. Reggie passed out the papers quickly but silent.
"While they are passing those out can any of you tell me what we're going to be doing in this class, besides the obvious defense against Dark spells?"

A girl from Ravenclaw raised her hand and Harry pointed to her. "Yes, Ms……"

"Amanda Stevenson, sir. And we learn how to defend against Dark Magic. We are also to learn how to use curses to defend ourselves in because we're attacked."

"Very good, Ms. Stevenson. You're here to learn how to protect not only yourself but also those around you. It's not to show you're the better man, or woman, or to terrorize those you don't like. The only reason for anyone to fight is to protect someone or some ones important to you. Never forget that.

"Any questions on the work sheet?"

"Why do you want our blood status?" asked Wolfgang Harrison, another Slytherin. Harry shrugged. "I'm naturally curious. When you're done you can talk among yourselves. If you have a question about me all you have to do is ask."

"Where's you're family?" asked a Ravenclaw.

"I'm an orphan. I grew up with relatives for over sixteen years before I moved out."

"Are you married," asked a Gryffindor girl a slight blush on her cheeks.

"No, and I'm old enough your father, young lady." The whole class laughed as the girl's blush deepened and Harry chuckled. "But a good thought. Keep it up, but make them more educational for your mind, not your fancies."

"Where do you live," asked a Hufflepuff. "When you're not sleeping at the school that is."

Harry shrugged. "Here and there," he said and smiled at them and the questions continued. Harry answered them truthfully yet evasively, keeping his real life from prying minds.

Draco walked into the room for his last class, this one full of first years. Some of them were talking about the new teacher from their last class.

"He says he's a fair Seeker," said one Gryffindor boy. "Maybe we can challenge him to a game."

"First years never play Quidditch," answer Gryffindor girl.

"Harry Potter did." /"He's not even married," said a Hufflepuff girl. "I wonder if he has a girlfriend."

"He wouldn't take a second glance at you," answered another girl. "You're too young."

"I can wait." /"He seems to know what he's talking about," said a Ravenclaw girl. "I mean, if unsophisticated."

"You don't know a lot about Defense Against the Dark Arts either," said a boy. "Only what you've read in books."

"My parents are Aurors."
Draco effectively shut the door, loudly, making every student there jump in their seats and look at him in surprise.

"Put away your wands and shut your mouths," he said walking briskly to the front of the room. "Both are not needed here."

He stood at the front of the class, remembering Snape standing there each year, with the same air and attitude that Draco adopted. "I can see there's some talk about our new teacher. Talking is reserved for after class, not during. Open your books to page 115 and start writing notes on the potion indicated there."

"We have to do work on the first day?" said a boy with sandy hair, highlighted a mousy brown, with amber eyes. By the color of his robes Draco saw that he was a Gryffindor. He looked up the student's name.

"Theodore Lupin?" Draco looked up at the boy in surprise, but his it carefully. "Remus Lupin's son?"

Teddy's eyes widen in anticipation at his father's name. "You know my dad?"

"Obviously." Draco turned to the rest of the class. "Page 115, now!"

The students hurried to obey. Draco turned to write on the chalkboard but spared a glance at Teddy. He barely remembered his mother's other sister. Narcissa had tried to make up with Andromeda when Draco was younger. Nymphadora had been older then, but all Draco remembered of her younger self was a smiling ten year old girl. He had never met Teddy till today. He knew the boy was a Metamorphmagus but chose to keep the original features of both his parents. The young boy's loyalty to the deceased knew no bounds. /Picking up a paper Draco started grading as the class took notes.

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Later that day, Harry was looking over the questionnaires the students worked on. So far they were normal students. They seemed to be good kids, some a little rough around the edges, but experience with smooth that out. /Placing another on the first year pile, he froze when he read the name on the sheet.

Name: Lupin, Theodore

Middle Name: Remus

Age: 11

Birthday: March 11, 1997

Parents or Guardian: Remus James Lupin and Nymphadora Andromeda Tonks

Hobbies: Quidditch, hippogriff racing wizard chess and reading

Ambition: To be a great wizard like my parents.

Harry put the sheet down before he could read any more and quickly wiped the tears from his eyes. He knew that Teddy idolized his parents more then the Savior of the Wizarding World, but it actually see it on the page made it more real, and reminded Harry how alike he and his godson was.
"Harry?" called a voice and Harry didn't have to look up to know that it was Hermione, but he did anyway. She was standing in front of his desk wearing a black robe and under it were a soft blue blouse and a skirt that came to her knees. She wore skin colored hoses and black inch heels. She portrayed the look of a Muggle business woman while Harry's was more street thug.

"Harry, are you all right?" she asked noticing the look on his face. Harry nodded.

"Yeah, I'm all right," he said setting the sheet aside. Hermione reached over and picked it up before Harry could stop her.

"Teddy," she said when she read the sheet.

"He's an ambitious kid," said Harry. "A lot like Remus was." He blinked his eyes several time before his vision blurred. "Damn!"

"Potion wore off?"

"Yeah." Harry dug into his pocket and pulled out an eye dropper but with bluish white liquid in it. Taking the top off, he put two drops in each eye and blinked a few times till his vision cleared.

"Two hours," said Hermione. "Potion only lasts for two hours."

"I'm just glad I can see without those damn glasses," said Harry. He stacked the papers, put them in a file and placed the file in a drawer. "Let's go eat."

"And flirt shamelessly with a certain blonde Potions Master," said Hermione as she walked out the door.

"Hermione!" called Harry running after her.

"Oh, come on, I can see it. You're infatuated with him." "I am not! He made my life a living hell!"

Hermione started laughing as they headed to the Great Hall. Harry's face became a deep red. They were intercepted by Neville when they entered the Great Hall.

"Hey, Hermione," said Neville smiling at her. Hermione smiled back.

"Hi, Neville how's Hannah?"

"She's all right. She is still trying to decide if she should use George’s new flavor drink."

"She should. It's really good."

Neville nodded and turned to Harry. "You're James Black, Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher."

"And you're Neville Longbottom, Herbology teacher," said Harry taking Neville's offered hand.

"So how was your first day?" asked Neville as they walked toward the table.

"It was all right," said Harry. "The kids were a bit rambunctious, but they are kids."

"They can be like that," said Neville with a smile.

Harry noticed that Neville had changed since their school days in Hogwarts. He wasn't nervous or clumsy as he was as a student and was more daring. Being the leader of Dumbledore's Army for a year had changed him.
Harry was welcomed by Hagrid as they attempted to sit down and Harry enthusiastically talked with him.

On the other side of the table Pansy and Draco watched Black walk in.

"He's cute, isn't he," said Pansy.

"You're married, Pansy," said Draco sipping his pumpkin juice. "And he's a half-blood."

"How do you know that?" asked Pansy looking at Draco in surprise.

"He told me."

"We really need to get you a date. How long as it been since you've gotten laid?"

Draco's eyes flashed. "Drop it Pansy."

Pansy just smiled. "Blaise was right. You have been a bitch since you two broke up."

"And then you married him," said Draco with a tight smile. "Ironic isn't it? I date you, you date Blaise, and then I date Blaise, then you and Blaise date again and get married. The great circle of life."

"Or more accurately, the Great Love Story of Draco Malfoy."

"Very funny, Pansy."

She nodded toward the dark haired Defense teacher. "You could date him," she said.

Draco's eyes narrowed. "Now I know you are joking."

"Why not? He's just your type. Dark hair, tan skin, bright eyes and gorgeously handsome."

"I say again, he's a half-blood."

"That's never stopped you before, Draco. What's your problem with him?"

"He reminds me of someone."

"Who?"

Draco opened his mouth to answer but a voice cut him off.

"How was your day, Draco?" asked Black sitting lazily next to him.

"Dismal, as always," said Draco eating a bite of his food as Black chuckled.

"You sound like an old teacher of mine. Never found any fun in anything, except tormenting a certain student he didn't care to have."


"Me," he said with a laugh.

"Why aren't you sitting with Granger, Black?"

"Are you always this serious?" asked Black. "Don't you just sit back and relax?"
"Why should I when life isn't easy?"

Harry looked over at Draco thoughtfully. This one was different from the boy he knew in Hogwarts. He was more reclusive and always came to the point. A lot like Snape. Harry had heard that Snape had taken Draco in as his assistant before he died, but Harry didn't know why. Snape had never taken on an assistant before and being the Headmaster of a school hardly required having a student assistant. Maybe the man had changed him. Whether it was a good thing or a bad thing he was going to find out.

"I know life isn't easy, but I've learned to take it one step at a time."

"I suppose you would," said Draco.

"The Muggles have a saying, if life gives you lemons make lemonade."

"And what does that mean," asked Draco looking over at Black in annoyance but Black shrugged it off. He gave Draco a smile Sirius would be proud of and took a bite of his dinner.

"James," said Pansy and Black looked over Draco to give her his attention. "Are you related to Orion Black? They're a very prestigious family."

"I don't know. I never knew my parents. They were British through."

"What happened to them?"

Before Harry could answer there was a cough from Hermione next to him, but Harry didn't need the signal to know he was treading on dangerous grounds. Pansy was curious about him. She wasn't the first and she won't be the last.

"They were murdered when I was a baby. Let's just leave it at that." And he returned to his dinner. Ten minutes later Harry and Hermione walked out of the Great Hall and headed toward the Professor's Lounge.

"What was that?" asked Hermione. "You asked me to keep it secret and you all just blurt it all out?"

"I knew where she was going. I don't need a baby sitter anymore." "Harry, you want to keep people from finding you, but how you're doing it is ridiculous."

Harry stopped and turned to look at his childhood friend. From all of his friends only Ron, Hermione and Ginny understood why Harry had left the Magical Community and traveled the world, only visiting once or twice a year.

"Hermione, I know what I'm doing. I didn't spend five years in hiding for nothing. Besides I can't help being a little laid back. For the first time in my life, I can express myself. I'm free to be me."

"Only everyone knows you as James Black. Even Neville and Hagrid, two of your closest friends that you've known for almost two decades! Is that really fair?"

Harry shifted and stuffed his hands in his jeans pockets. "Yeah, you're right, it isn't fair. I do feel bad about lying to them, but the less people know about me the less chance there is that I'm surrounded by reporters and photographers and tabloid writers that will twist everything I say and do."

Hermione crossed her arms. "You really don't like reporters, do you?" she asked and Harry smiled.

"Can you blame me?" he said and they both laughed. They started walking back toward the
"What's with the mixed clothes?" asked Hermione pointing to Harry's casual shirt, jeans and robes.

"I thought it would help the students relax around me, knowing that I'm as human as they are. Besides, formal clothes make me itch."

Hermione had a thought at that, tapping a finger on her chin. "I suppose you're right," she said. "I may have to try it."

"You should," said Harry. They entered the Professor's Lounge where they saw Katie sleeping on the couch, her slightly swollen stomach stretched under her robes. "I wondered where she was."

"She's sleeping more often now," said Hermione. "And with Quidditch season going Oliver can't stop to visit."

"And Magical Drama class keeps her from working all day. Who'd have thought wizards and witches would be interested in music and acting."

"This coming from the guy who spent a year on Broadway," said Hermione.

Harry smirked at his friend. A year after the end of the war, Katie had petitioned for a drama class that worked on not only magical aspects but also as a way for the students to vent their frustration. There was only one class a week but surprisingly the students loved the class and now held musicals once a year.

Hermione reached over and shook Katie awake. Katie woke with a jerk and stared sleepily at the two teachers.

"Oh, Hermione, how long was I out?" she asked.

"Almost an hour," said Hermione. Katie groaned as both helped her sit up.

"I only closed my eyes for a moment," she said. "Oh, hello, James."

"Hi, Katie," said Harry. "How are you feeling?"

"Dismal. Seven months pregnant is nothing to be proud of, no matter what anyone says."

Hermione smirked. "I know how you feel. I was the same when I was pregnant with Rose. How about you get something to eat and get some sleep, Katie. It'll make you feel better."

"Sounds like a plan. Can you help me up please?"

Both Harry and Hermione gently took Katie's arms and helped her off the sofa. When she was upright she sighed and held herself steadily against Harry.

"James, you don't know how lucky you are to be a guy," she said and Harry laughed.

"I bet you don't say that to your husband," he said and Katie scoffed.

"No, I yell and curse him for doing this to me, then I kiss him for giving me a miracle," she said. "Hormones."

And with that Katie walked out to head for the kitchens. Harry and Hermione sat on the couch and ordered a pot of tea from a house-elf.
"Being pregnant is a double edge sword," said Hermione. "Both a blessing and a curse."

Harry chuckled. "I remember. You used to order food from Ron that he had to come to me for. Cheeseburgers, French fries, milkshakes, barbeque wings…"

"Hey, he liked them too!"

"But the ice cream with chocolate syrup, spinach and pickles?"

Hermione's face flushed and she laughed. "Okay, you got me there." She looked over at Harry. "When are you going to settled down, Harry? Have your own kids?"

Harry gave her an amused look. "In case you haven't noticed, Hermione. I can't have kids."

"I told you I would help, and Ron has no problem with it. And neither does Ginny."

"I know, but I figured I'd never have kids, but now…."

Hermione smiled and put a hand on his shoulder. "You will. Someday, you will."
The first couple of weeks past fast for Harry and he couldn't believe how easy it was to be a teacher or how quickly the students grew to admire him, including a few the Slytherins. The older students were skeptical at having a supposed American/British half-blood teaching them Defense Against the Dark Arts, but the younger years found him fun to be around and often asked questions on the curses and jinxes they were learning and Harry would answer them like an uncle teaching his nephew a new sport.

Using the teachers of his past, Harry made a somewhat working rhythm for each year, and even used Muggle methods to help the children learn. He put up posters on the differences between a werewolf and a regular wolf, the antinomy of dragons and defenses against vampires. He also created a few posters he saw in Muggle schoolrooms he used to attend, with a few variations. One said A BEST DEFENSE IS A GOOD COUNTERCURSE! and HOW TO WIN A WIZARD'S DUEL: PRACTICE, PRACTICE, AND PRACTICE! Harry favorite so far read: THE 3Ps: PRACTICE, PROTECT AND PERSIST! The younger students seemed to have gotten a kick out of the last one and often quoted them to each other when they were stuck on something.

The hardest part was keeping Draco Malfoy from discovering who James Black really was. The personality Harry picked wasn't easy to maintain since it was a resemblance to the real Harry Potter, but Harry did love to play the role. Being laid back and serious at the same time was a hard combination. Every time Harry falter he thought of Sirius and Remus and the personality came back to him.

"So how's you first two weeks of teaching," asked Hermione as she and Harry sat down around his fireplace drinking butterbeer.

"Different from attending the school as a student," said Harry. "I got to stay up late, wonder the halls, and show up late for class…"

"Don't forget you get to enter the Forbidden Forest," said Hermione with a smirk.

Harry nodded. "Enter the Forbidden Forest and not get in trouble for it."

"And not a good example for the students," added Hermione with a serious look.

"That's only if I get caught," said Harry. "And I never get caught."

"Yes you have. There was first year with Norberta, and third year with Snape and Lupin, and…"

"All right, I get it," laughed Harry. "I'm a horrid role model. But I don't want James Black to be a role model. Just a good teacher."

Hermione smiled. "I do understand, Harry," she said. "I'm been through the war as well. Even I needed a break."

Harry chuckled. "So how's Ron? I haven't seen them since Hugh's birthday in May."

"They miss you. Why don't you come over? I'm visiting them tomorrow."

Harry shook his head. "Sorry, I have some papers to grade, short essay I gave the third years," he said. "I really would like to through."
Hermione sighed. "Oh, Harry, you can't lock yourself away forever. You have to get out sometime."

"I will, every once in a while. Right now, I just want to relax and be myself."

"Yourself right now, is a teacher with very bad habits."

"But a very good representative so far," said Harry smiling. "Quidditch will start in two months and then I will have something to do."

Hermione sighed dramatically. "Then I will have Ron talking about strategies and defenses. He should have become a Quidditch coach instead of an Auror."

"He likes the job he has," said Harry. "And just think. I'll be around more often," said Harry. Both smiled and continued to discuss teaching methods until Hermione left for bed.

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The next Monday Draco walked into his first year class and the students immediately quieted. Draco was proud that he had made himself as a cold uncaring person. He suspected that if Snape was still alive that the old Potion's master would be proud of him as well.

"Close your mouths, put away your wands and take out your books," he ordered. "Turn to page 342 and start on the potion from there. You have till the end of class." He turned to a Slytherin boy with an arm bandaged. "Prewitt, what happened to your arm?"

"Herbology, sir," said the boy. "We were working with Devil's Snare today. Wrapped around my arm before Professor Sprout could take it off."

"Obviously. I hope you've learned your lesson."

"Yes, sir."

"Good," said Draco. "Now start on your potion."

And he started class. Within half an hour there had been three explosions and twelve students were covered in pink goo. The last explosion was what got him.

"Shawn Donovan, you were supposed to stir seven times clockwise, and then stir seven times counterclockwise. Not stir seven times and then add the beetlejuice." He scolded the Gryffindor first year boy covered in neon pink goop and burn scabs. The children around him whimpered as their backs, sides and faces were also covered in the botched potion and burn scabs appeared on their exposed skins.

"Sorry, sir," said Shawn shamefully.

"Those covered go to Madam Abbot for burn cream," said Draco. "Twenty points from Gryffindor and detention, Mr. Donovan. I want you to brew this potion till you get it right."

"Yes, sir," said Shawn. Draco turned and went back to his desk while the students that got hit left, many of them Gryffindors. After five minutes of grading papers he made another round. There was still fifteen minutes left and it would take another ten to finish the potions. Most of the potions he observed were adequate, for first years. With a bit of practice one or two of them could make it to Potion Mastery, but right then they were first years fumbling their way through.

He stopped at one student's and observed it curiously.
"Mr. Lupin, what is this?" asked Draco.

"A Pepper-Up Potion, professor," said Teddy in confusion.

Draco looked at the potion. It was the light pink color it should be and the heated smell that indicated it was done. The boy had made the potion work perfectly, but in less then a third of the time.

"Very good," said Draco. He was about to move on to the next cauldron when something caught his eye. "Is that a burn on your hand?"

"Yes, sir," said Teddy moving his hand away where a large burn covered the back of it.

"Were you hit by Mr. Donovan's potion?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought I ordered all the students who were exposed to the Hospital Wing," said Draco crossing his arms.

"I hardly feel it sir," said Teddy. "I wasn't hurt that much"

"I want a sample of your potion, label it and got to the hospital wing," ordered Draco.
"Understood?"

Teddy nodded and began to scoop his potion into a vial.

"That goes for all of you," said Draco looking around at the other students. "I want sample phials on my desk by the end of class. Label by name and potion."

The class nodded and continued to finish the potions. Teddy handed his potion to Draco and left for he Hospital Wing. Class ended not long after that and Draco thanked the deities that it was his last class of the day. He set the vials in a carry box and left the classroom it was an hour till lunch and he wanted to gets some fresh air. He was almost to the exit when he heard voice.

"Teddy, I heard there was an incident in the Potions classroom," said a familiar adult voice.

"Shawn's potion exploded and several students were burned, Professor James."

Draco looked around the corner to see James Black talking to Teddy Lupin. Black's bright green eyes held a look of familiarity as he looked at Teddy.

"Were you injured?" asked Black, a note of worry in his voice.

"A little. Just a small burn on my hand," said Teddy showing his hand to the teacher.

"Have you seen Madam Abbot?" asked Black, the note of concern clear in his voice.

Teddy nodded. "Yeah, she gave me an ointment to put on my hand if it itches. It doesn't now, through."

"Make sure you do. What do you think of Hogwarts so far?"

"It's great," said Teddy with a wide smile. "I'm amazed at how big it is. And ancient."

"It is at that," said Black leaning casually against the wall with a far away look. "The first time I saw Hogwarts took my breath away. It still does."
Teddy looked at Black in confusion. "But you only saw it a few weeks ago."

Black smiled at the boy. "I never said that," he said. Pushing off the wall he ruffled Teddy's sandy brown hair. "Keep up the good work, and if you have any problem, or if you just want to talk, you can come to me. You know that right?"

Teddy smiled up at the older man. "Yes, Professor James," he said Black ruffled Teddy's hair again and left. Black paused for a moment and seemed to glance at the corner Draco was peeking around. Draco froze. After a moment Black left and Draco quietly left and went down a different corridor.

So Black had a familiar relationship with Theodore Lupin. But young Lupin didn't seem to notice the connection. Teddy saw James Black as a teacher and nothing more. But Black had almost a fatherly look on his face when he talked to Teddy.

'Yet another mystery about James Black,' he thought.

"Thinking about someone?" Draco looked up to see Pansy standing in front of him, an amused smirk on her face and her arms crossed. "Me I hope."

Draco chuckled. "You wish. No, I was thinking about our new Defense Against the Dark Art's teacher. He's a mysterious person. He's hiding more then he lets on."

"Draco, don't let this be like Potter," warned Pansy. "Your obsession with him nearly destroyed you."

"But what is he hiding? He's so private and secretive."

Pansy sighed. "Everyone's entitled to secrets, Draco. You should know that." There was a pause before Pansy spoke again. "I've got some papers to grade before lunch. I'll see you there, and leave Black alone."

And she walked down the hall. Draco watched her leave before walking down the hall and toward his lab. He had some potions simmering he needed to check.

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Harry walked into his class room and smiled at the students. He was, of course, ten minutes late which left fifty minutes for him to teach. This was his seventh year class and only had fifteen students in all.

"Calm down, everyone," he ordered. "Settled down." The few Hufflepuffs and numerous Gryffindors settled into their seat, but the five or so Slytherins continued to chatter. "Mr. House, I have asked you and your friends to be quiet. I would appreciate it if you did."

The Slytherin gave Harry a glare that would have rivaled Malfoy's in their school days if Harry was seventeen again. Harry just stared calmly back till Julius House sat down and faced the front, still glaring at Harry.

"Now, you are here because you've shown interest in Defense Against the Dark Arts," he began. "But know this; defense is only about protecting those around you. It is never about yourself or to show off your strength. Saving yourself is only a matter of coincidence. Even by yourself you're keeping people you don't know safe, people you didn't know who you may not met in the future.

"Now this semester we're going to do Stealth, Glamour, and Illusion Charms to disguise yourself from your enemies. We'll also have mock battles at random intervals. I shall select the date and the
person you would be battling during each mock battle."

"Is that even allowed," asked House turning to one of his companions. Harry turned to the Slytherin.

"Yes, Mr. House, it is. And for future reference, I would appreciate it if you direct your questions to me. I am not a house-elf for you to ignore, nor am I an object to overlook. I am a person and will be treated as such. Am I understood?"

House closed his mouth and turned back to Harry with a glare. Harry ignored it and went back to the lesson, but kept an eye on House. Harry knew the look of a troublemaker and was prepared for it. When class ended he called House to the front of the desk and watched as the seventeen year old reluctantly walked up to him.

"Mr. House, I am well aware that my being a half-blood is known throughout the school. I have kept no secrets but my own. I also know most pure-bloods don't think too highly on half-bloods and even less on Muggle-borns. What I don't appreciate is being ignored and being talked about behind my back in my classroom. Continue with this and I will begin to deduct points and possibly punishment."

House's eyes flashed in disbelief. "You can't do that," he said.

"Can't I? I am the teacher here and I don't make idle threats." 'He is so much like Malfoy when we were in school.'

"My father will hear about this"

"That may be, but he can't do anything that can scare me." House gulped as he glared at Harry. Harry knew the boy didn't know what to do next now that he is threat had no effect. "Dismissed."

House turned swiftly and stormed out of the room. Harry placed his papers in a file folder and left the room. He walked down the halls and headed toward Hermione's office and knocked.

"Come in," said Hermione. Turning the knob, Harry walked into the room, closed the door and rested against it with a sigh. Hermione's office didn't differ from her personality. Books after books from Muggle technical manuals to history filled the bookshelves against the walls. On the desk was a Muggle snow globe of a polar bear, Harry was sure that if you wound it up it would play "It's a Small World After All", a picture of her family and other non-magical items. Harry knew that if he walked into the classroom he'd find every Muggle electronic device form a television to a toaster.

"Tough crowd?" asked Hermione looking up from the papers she was grading.

"Tough student," said Harry sitting in on of the two chairs in front to of the desk. "I swear that student has been taking lessons from Malfoy on put downs."

"Let me guess, Julius House?" Putting aside her papers Hermione stood and went to a cabinet next to the next. Tapping it with her wand she opened it and took out a bottle of Fire Whiskey. She poured a generous amount in two glasses and handed one to Harry.

"How did you know?" asked Harry taking a sip. "Does Ron know you have this?"

"He should considering he gave me the whiskey," said Hermione. "And I knew it was House because he ignored me for the past five years. He's definitely the Malfoy of the generation."

"I wish there was a Harry Potter to keep him occupied," said Harry taking a sip and sighed as the heat of the whiskey slid down his throat, warming his insides for a few seconds before the heat
disappeared. "How are the kids?"

"They're fine. They miss you. Especially Ron. He's been itching for a wizards' night out. He's been practicing his bowling arm."

"I swear I never should have taken him to the bowling alley," said Harry in a mock tone. Both smiled at the joke.

"You should visit. The weekend isn't far and it'll be good for you to be there. The kids miss you."

"I miss them as well, but I can't this weekend. I have to be somewhere."

Hermione nodded in understanding. "That's all right. You can come over some other time."

"Thanks, Hermione," said Harry and smiled gratefully at his friend.

Both spoke for a while of old school days until Harry left for dinner. Hermione stayed behind to finish grading papers and would have her supper in her office. Walking into the Great Hall Harry sat down next to Malfoy as always and began to eat the steak in front of him.

"I heard something interesting from Julius House," said Malfoy. "He said was thoroughly put down by a teacher that threatened to punish him if he didn't pay attention in class."

"I didn't threaten," said Harry. "I only gave him a warning. If he does it a second time I'll deduct points. If he continues a third time I will give him detention. Strike three."

"Strike three?" asked Pansy who was listening in. Harry nodded.

"Yes, it's a Muggle term based on an American sport called baseball. A person goes up to bat and has to hit a ball like a Beater does a Bludger, only not to hurt people but to hit the ball as far as they can. If they miss hitting the ball over a plate on the ground it called a "strike." If they miss three times then they're out of the game."

"Sounds almost interesting," said Malfoy.

"It's the only Muggle sport I think is closest to Quidditch, through I am a bigger fan of the latter."

Malfoy turned to him in interest. "You like Quidditch?"

Harry nodded with an amused smile. "I do," he said. "I was even a Seeker at my school."

"What was your favorite team?"

"The Kenmore Kestrels. Which are yours?"

"The Falmouth Falcons."

"Oh, dear," said Pansy under her breathe listening in. Katie next to her heard the sound and giggled.

"My husband's the same way," she said. "Except Oliver is a Quidditch player, so it's natural for him to talk about it."

"Weren't you a player once too?" said Pansy turning to the Magical Music teacher.

"In school. I'm a teacher now," Both women looked at each other for a moment before turning to the food. Meanwhile Malfoy and Harry continued their talk.
"What type of broom do you have?" asked Malfoy.

"Firebolt. You?"

"Nimbus 2001. Antique compared to the Spitfire."

"Just because something's new doesn't mean it better. Care for a Seeker's Game sometime?"

Malfoy looked at him in surprise. "It is appropriate for teachers to play in the Pitch?"

Harry shrugged. "Who says we can't? Is there a rule that says a teacher can't have a life?"

Malfoy looked at him in surprise. This man, who acted so familiar to Malfoy and yet so different, was an unpredictable person. He follows the rules set down for him yet he follows his own, and finds loopholes in the ones given to him.

"You would associate with us?" asked Malfoy. "Don't you know who I am?"

"Draco Malfoy, of the prestigious Malfoy family, formally of Slytherin House at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, formally a member of the Death Eaters that followed the Dark Lord Voldemort, and now a Potions teacher and Head of Slytherin House of fore mentioned school."

Harry turned and smiled at Draco. "Or is that too explicit?"

"I see Granger has warned you away from me," said Malfoy slightly irritated.

"I don't care what she says, I make my own friends," said Harry smiling at reassuringly at him.

Malfoy smiled back in a polite manner.

"So I'm a friend now?" he asked.

Harry continued to smile sincerely. "To me," he said.
News and Detention

Harry walked into the Great Hall a few days after his talk with Malfoy and saw that Katie wasn't at her usual chair next to Hermione. Walking over to Hermione he sat on the other empty chair.

"Hey, how was your weekend," she asked.

"All right. Where's Katie?"

Hermione's eyes lit up. "Oh, she had her baby last night! I got a letter from Oliver this morning. She's at St. Mungo's resting and had beautiful baby girl. They named her Olivia Katelyn." Hermione grinned. "I remember when I had my babies. It was like hell, but I was so happy afterwards…"

"I know, Hermione. I was there."

Hermione giggled. "Sorry. I keep forgetting. I'll stop if you want me to."

Harry shook his head. "No, it's all right. It reminds me on why we're living." Harry softly smiled before talking. "So when's the substitute coming in?"

"Not for a while," said Hermione. "He's doing a musical in the States and they don't have a replacement actor for him."

"A musical," said Harry in interest. "Which one?"

"I never found out. I didn't know you were interested in Broadway musicals."

"Only a select few," said Harry taking a sip of his coffee. He had requested it in the morning instead of pumpkin juice. The elves didn't protest and gave it to him whenever he wanted.

Hermione's eyes lit up. "You should take over till the substitute comes," she said. "It'll be a great opportunity."

"Hermione, I can't juggle Defense Against the Dark Arts and Magical Music class at the same time. My head hurts enough as it is."

"You're a musician, Black." Harry turned to see Malfoy looking over at him with a smirk. Pansy was next to him with an amused smile. "What instrument do you play?"

"Vocal," said Harry. "I never learned to lay an instrument."

"Pity. I was a bit of a pianist in my youth. I even tried the violin once." Malfoy paused as he sipped his morning tea. "Where have gone this weekend, Black?"

"I was visiting friends," said Harry standing up and refusing to look at him. "Excuse me. I'll be late for my class." And he left.

"Isn't he always late for class," asked Pansy and looked at Malfoy. "Was it something you said?"

"I don't know," said Malfoy looking at Hermione. She shrugged.

"He doesn't tell me everything," she said eating her breakfast. During the time that Malfoy and Hermione worked in the school they ignored each other unless they had to talk about a student or at staff meetings.
"But you are his friend," said Pansy.

"That doesn't mean he tells me everything," said Hermione. Wiping her mouth with her napkin she stood up and smiled at the two. "I'll head to my class now. Excuse me."

"That was strange," said Pansy as Hermione walked away. "They both left in a hurry. Like they didn't want to answer our questions."

"Yes," said Malfoy. "Very strange."

Harry walked into his class soon after walking around the castle for twenty minutes. He knew he should have stayed in the Great Hall longer but he knew Malfoy was getting curious and Harry didn't like where the conversation was going. And to say that he could gave something else for Malfoy to look into.

"Page 316," he told the third years. "We are to begin learning about chimeras and their cousins, manticore, and the appropriate spells to defend against them. Can anyone tell me the difference between a chimera and a manticore?"

And for the rest of the class he taught the third years while trying to come up with some excuse the next time Malfoy got curious. Harry didn't know why Malfoy found him interesting. Harry had tried to make James Black as normal as possible.

'It might have been the singing,' he thought as he wrote on the board. 'Or the baseball thing.'

"Mr. McDonald, you will leave Ms. Willow's hair alone," said Harry as he looked at the notes on the desk.

Adrian McDonald, a Slytherin, had raised his wand to cut the end of the Pollyanna from Jessica Willow's hair, a Hufflepuff girl sitting in front of him. Jessica turned to glare at the boy who smirked and set his wand back on the desk.

"Back to reading the chapter, Mr. McDonald, and if you continue to plague Ms. Willow I'll have to confiscate your wand."

"You can't do that," said McDonald with a glare.

'Slytherins never change,' thought Harry as he turned, crossed his arms and looked back at his student. "Want to bet?"

McDonald's face went red and he raised his wand. "Rictusempra!"

Harry's wand was out of his pocket and in his hand before any of the students could blink. He blocked the attack with a non-verbal Shield Charm and Summoned McDonald's wand.

"Give it back!"

"I'll be holding onto this for awhile," said Harry putting the wand in a drawer and placed a Locking Charm on it.

"You can't do this!" yelled McDonald.

"And you can't attack a teacher," said Harry in an annoyed irritated voice. "Detention with me tonight, Mr. McDonald. And if you still have a problem with it, take it up with Headmistress
McGonagall, but you are serving detention with me."

McDonald clutched his fist but sat back down in his seat, still glaring at Harry. Harry turned and continued to write notes on the blackboard.

It was lunch hour when he was confronted by Malfoy, walking toward Harry from the dungeons in a stiff stride. Harry put his hands in his jeans pockets casually and walked up to the blonde.

"Hey, Draco, what's up? Decided to have lunch with me?"

"Black, did you take Adrian McDonald's wand," asked Malfoy, crossing his arms and glared at Harry.

"I had ever right to," said Harry looking straight back at Malfoy. "He attacked me. I'm sure that's against the rules."

"It is, but we don't confiscate wands for an extended period of time!" The angry tone in Malfoy's voice irritated Harry and he glared at Malfoy, crossing his arms as well.

"Well, maybe you should. Doing things in the Muggle fashion for a while won't do any harm to the boy. I have for almost thirty years."

And Harry walked to lunch, leaving a very surprised and very confused Potions teacher. Walking through the teacher's entrance he sat next to Hermione and began to eat. Hermione studied his face for a moment before she turned back to her food.

"Problem?"

"Malfoy," he said in a low voice as the stated person walked in and sat next to Pansy.

"That is a problem. I assume it's about Adrian McDonald." She gave him a questioned look. "Did you really take his wand?"

Harry smirked at him. "So you've heard as well," he said and ate a carrot slice.

"I don't think there's a student or teacher in Hogwarts that doesn't know. You're lucky McGonagall won't do anything. She does want you to give it to Flitwick so he can use it in Charms. He'll give it back to you so you can hand it to McDonald after his detention."

"Anything else?" asked Harry.

"Hagrid wants to see Harry," she said. "Said it had something to do with Buckbeak."

Harry looked at her, slightly afraid. "Is something wrong with him?"

Hermione shook her head. "No, I'm sure Buckbeak's fine. He was grinning wider then the Cheshire cat when he spoke to me."

Harry sighed. He had feared for a moment that Buckbeak was hurt or ill, but if Hagrid was grinning then it must be important, and not in a bad way. Harry looked over and saw Hagrid at the other end of the table, talking about the differences between vegetable plants and bulbs with Neville in a supposed hushed voice but it was actually quite loud.

"I'll see what I can do," said Harry and paused as he ate his sandwich. "I wonder if I can get Malfoy to play a Seeker's Game with me."
He glanced at Hermione to watch her reaction. She nearly choked on her drink.

"Har…James, you can't play a Seeker's Game in the Quidditch Pitch," she said.

"Why not? It's not against the rules."

"It's unheard of."

Harry pouted. "You're no fun."

"I can be as un-fun as I want. We're teachers now. We have to set an example."

"I am. I'm giving them an example on how to have fun."

"You are so like Sirius," she said with a smile and Harry smiled back.

"Thanks," he said.

At six that night Harry greeted Adrian McDonald as the third year walked into the room.

"Good evening, Mr. McDonald," he said. "I have something to attend to this evening so I want you
to clean this class room, from top to bottom, and you are not to leave till you do. Without magic."

"And how am I supposed to do that?" asked McDonald, crossing his arms and glared at Harry.
Harry pulled out a variety of Muggle cleaning supplies and put them on the desk.

"I don't expect you to clean the top windows," said Harry. "I don't want you breaking your neck
standing on a desk or a chair."

"I'm supposed to use those?" McDonald pointed to the supplies on Harry's desk. "That's completely
barbaric!"

"It's your punishment. I'll be checking on you in half an hour. If you're not done, you are to keep
cleaning till you are and you'll stay here till then. Understood?"

"Yes, sir," said McDonald still glaring at Harry. Harry nodded and walked to the door. "Uh, where
do I start?"

"I would suggest the windows," said Harry and walked out the door. He met Hermione at the
entrance hall and both headed to Hagrid's hut. The half-giant was tending an injured Kneazle as the
two walked up.

"Hello, Hermione," he said. "Professor Black."

"I told you to call me James, Hagrid," said Harry. Through he would trust Hagrid with his life, the
man could keep a secret. "I was interested to hear about your hippogriff."

"He's not mine, he's Harry's. I was hoping he'd be able to come out, but I guess he's too busy."

"He did apologize, Hagrid," said Hermione looking over at Harry, who looked away. "And that he'd
be able to come by in a few weeks."

"Ah, well, I'll fix up this bandage on this here Kneazle and I'll show you to Buckbeak."

"What happened to it," asked Harry walking up to the injured animal and petted the cat-like creature.
"It got loose and ran into Fang. Both weren't very happy to see each other."

"How's Fang," asked Hermione.

"He's so scared he ain't coming out of the house."

Harry scratched the Kneazle as Hagrid wrapped the bandage around the creature's hind foot. When they were done Hagrid put it back in its crate and lead Harry and Hermione to the hippogriff pen. There stood two hippogriffs, a dark grey male and a female with the upper half of a gold eagle. When Buckbeak saw the visitors he bellowed a greeting and fanned his wings.

"So who's the girlfriend?" asked Harry leaning against the fence.

"That there's Goldwing," said Hagrid. "She went into heat a few weeks ago and paired up with Beaky there."

Hermione gasped. "So that means…..."

Hagrid grinned. "Buckbeak's going to be a daddy!"

Harry felt his heart flutter at the announcement and he grinned as he looked at the pair. He had given Hagrid custody of Buckbeak years ago but he still cared for the creature.

"How long," asked Harry still watching the two.

"Ten to eleven months," said Hagrid. "I hope Harry can come to visit."

"I'll make sure of it," said Harry in a low voice. Buckbeak squawked at Harry again before nuzzling Goldwing's neck. Harry knew his old friend recognized him. No amount of Glamour can hide a person from his pet.

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Draco walked up to the Defense Against the Dark Arts class room. He had more then one word to say to Professor James Black. He had to admit the man's method of teaching was efficient, if a little unorthodox. The man insisted a hands on method and held a casual manner with his students. And the man was an out right flirt! Draco didn't think that anything could bring him down.

Walking around the corner he opened the door to find Adrian McDonald cleaning the classroom, on his hand and knees with his sleeves rolled up, a scrub brush in one hand and a bucket next to him.

"Mr. McDonald, it is ten o'clock at night," said Draco. "Why are you still here?"

"Professor Black said I can leave when I'm finished cleaning the room," said McDonald. "I'm almost done."

Draco frowned and walked up to the office. Opening the door he found James Black stretched across his chair, his feet on the desk and a magazine in on hand and a Licorice Wand in the other. He looked up in surprise as Draco walked in.

"Draco, hi," he said putting his feet on the floor and set down the magazine and candy. "What can I do for you?"

Draco crossed his arms and glared at Black. "It's ten o'clock on a school night, Black, and you have that boy scrubbing your classroom floor! What kind of punishment is that?"
"An old one I'm afraid," said Black. "I used to have a Potions teacher that kept me in detention till all of his cauldrons were cleaned to his satisfaction. And my uncle used to make me do all of the dishes again if there was a single speck on one plate. I'd say I'm letting Mr. McDonald there off easy."

"He's on the floor on his hands and knees. Isn't that going a bit too far? He's tired and his shins are scraped. Shouldn't he be let go?"

Black frowned as if in thought. Sighing he walked to the door and vanished the cleaning supplies with a wave of his wand.

"You may go, Mr. McDonald," he said. "And have Madam Abbot check you over. I trust you won't be attacking anyone anytime soon?"

"Yes, sir," said McDonald, grabbing his robes after taking his wand from Black and left the classroom. Black turned to Draco, crossed his arms and smiled at him.

"Happy?"

"You are a strange man, Black," said Draco. "First you're joking with Granger on Muggle stories, discussing Quidditch strategies with Hooch and comparing music with Katie Wood."

"I'm a man of many talents," said Black. "If you want to know anything about me, all you have to do is ask."

Draco nodded. "No, thanks. I like a mystery."

"Then you should have been a detective," said Black leaning against his desk. Draco felt his stomach flutter at the sight. The man wore a green Muggle dress shirt and black pants. His jet black hair had been let loose from its hair tie and framed his face. Draco shook his head to clear it.

"Detective," asked Draco. "Is that anything like an Auror?"

Black shrugged. "Something like that." Black smiled at him. "I like you, Draco. You're easy to talk to."

"Can't you talk to your friends," asked Draco curiously. "I do, but there are things I can't talk to them about that I would like to."

"What things?"

Black just smiled as him. "Maybe another time," he said and pushed off the desk and went to the door. "It's late and we have classes tomorrow. Would you like me to walk you to your chambers?"

"Is this a way of telling me to change the subject?" asked Draco. Black smiled back.

"Maybe. If it is, do I get to walk you to your chambers?"

"No," said Draco and walked out.

"What? No good night kiss?" asked Black. Draco paused at the door and turned back to him with a smile.

"Good night, Black," he said. Black leaned on the door and smiled back.

"Good night, Draco," he said and Draco left.
Harry sighed walked back into his office and leaned on the desk as he looked out the window, his mind thinking about Malfoy. Malfoy showed real concern to the student; something the Draco Malfoy Harry knew in school never would have had for anyone. That had surprised Harry. Was it because Malfoy was head of Slytherin, or if he really was concerned?

He heard a hiss and turned to see a large South American boa slither through a small crack in the wall. The shine of her scales told Harry that she was owned and was being well taken cared of.

"Hello, Slytherin," said Harry giving the name of snakes to it. "Your scales are bright during this black sky."

That was a polite way of saying she was beautiful. Snakes didn't understand the concept of beauty but they did like to hear comments on their skin.

"You speak language!" said the snake enthusiastically. "You a Friend of Slytherin?"

Harry nodded. "I am a Speaker. My name is Harry Potter, but other Slytherin know me as Flesh Brother."

"I have heard of you!" said the snake enthusiastically. "My name is Ishara. It is the name my master has given me."

"How have you come to this stone den?"

"I was brought here by he who cares for me. He is a pale scale that smells of herbs and other things of the land. I call him White Dragon."

And with her words came the image of a man, Harry looking up at him as a snake would and see only his heat as a snake should. Harry learned long ago that if a snake couldn't describe something they would sent out a smell or image to help them describe the thing they couldn't. With Ishara Harry could see, smell and feel her master and had to laugh. Her "master" was standing over a cauldron that smelled horrid to a snake sense of smell and was crushing leaves into it. When Harry figure out who her master was he laughed again, only harder.

"And woe the tide that fortune has brought me," he said.
The first few weeks past quickly and Harry slowly began a routine that he agreed with. First class he had all first years, second was fifth years, then third years lunch, seventh years Monday, Wednesday and Friday to give him time to grade papers fourth years second years and lastly sixth years on Tuesday on Thursday. On the weekends he would go to Grimmauld Place to relax with Ron and Hermione.

"Why don't you join us this weekend," asked Hermione as they watched the students walk around in the courtyard. Harry had only been a teacher at Hogwarts for a couple of weeks and thought he had the routine down. "Ron managed to get some tickets from Oliver. They're playing Ireland against France. I'm even going to ask McGonagall for permission to bring Teddy. He wants to spend more time with you."

"Do you want me to come as James Black, or Harry Potter," asked Harry. One of the first years got tripped by a Trip Jinx from a Slytherin sixth year and the first year countered it with a Leg-Locker Curse. Everyone in the courtyard laughed as the Slytherin hopped back inside to look for the counter-curse.

"Personally, I don't see the difference," said Hermione. "Both personalities are so alike it's so difficult to tell the difference, but I'd appreciate it if Harry Potter came."

Harry laughed. "That'll make the headlines. Quidditch Match Halted On Account Of Return Of Harry Potter."

"Harry, it's been eight years. When are you going to quit running?"

"When is Rita Skeeter going to give to charity?"

Hermione glared at him only to keep from laughing. "Very funny."

"And what would that be, Granger?"

Both Harry and Hermione turned to look over to find Draco walking toward them, the usual Malfoy smirk on his face.

"Malfoy," greeted Hermione with very little enthusiasm.

"Hey there, Draco," said Harry with his most charming smile. He was leaning against the window to try and catch the last of the cool summer air with his arms crossed on the window sill. Draco nodded a greeting to both of them.

"Please tell me what could possibly be so humorous," said Draco with his arms crossed, acting like he was the teacher and they were the students. Hermione opened her mouth to snap back when Harry beat her to it.

"I just told her about a very vivid dream I had involving you and me," said Harry rest his head on his hands and turned to look at Draco lazily. "It also involved a very dark room, a bed and scented candles."

"Har-Hey! I told you that wasn't funny!" said Hermione with a bright red face.

Draco's eyes widen in surprise and his face flushed before he could control himself and gave a forced
cough. "You're right, Granger," he said. "It was not funny."

"I never said it was a joke," said Harry with a smile through slightly hooded eyes.

"Are you saying you're serious?" asked Draco and he blushed even more. Harry charmingly smiled at him.

"I'm always serious."

Hermione's and Draco's faces blushed a fierce red and Draco walked away as Harry chuckled softly.

"You are so flirting with him," said Hermione pointing her finger at him. "And out in the open!"

"It's only to throw him off," said Harry still smiling. "But it was so worth it. Did you see the look on his face?"

"You're enjoying this?"

"ImmENSELY. Rivalry is like an observation. You learn their strengths and weaknesses."

"And what's Malfoy's weakness?"

Harry continued to smile. "Now that would be telling. Just tell Ron I'll be at the game."

"Which you are you talking about?"

Harry laughed. "See you later, Hermione," he said and walked off. Watching the first years made him itch to be a student again.

Draco walked into his chambers and slammed the door shut. Damn that man! For the past few weeks James Black had taken every opportunity to be around Draco in between or after classes. Black's outright open bursts at flirtation were over the top and his tardiness was in annoyance. The man was more annoying then Goyle and Crabbe had been and still managed to be polite about it.

But there was something familiar about him. The way he moved, gestured with his hands and the slight tilt of his head. It was all familiar. So familiar it was plaguing him.

Draco went to a decanter of Scotch and poured himself a small glass before sitting on a chair. His chambers were of the most basic essentials. Tea table, two chairs and a sofa set around the fire place. Book cases full of books herbs and potions, both published and handwritten, a decanter of Scotch and Fire whiskey and a desk to grade papers. His bedroom and bathroom were the same and a door that led to his Potion's lab.

Walking over to his chair he received a hiss when he stepped on the tail of Ishara, his South American boa. She was given to him by Lucius when he had been accepted into Slytherin, but because of the school rule, he couldn't keep her in his dorms while he attended. Luckily he was a teacher now and he could bend the rules a little.

"Sorry, Ishara, I didn't see you there," he said. Walking over to a wooden box he reached in and pulled out a rat in a Suspension Charm. Setting it on the floor he lifted the charm with a wave of his wand and watched as Ishara chased after her snack.

A knock brought him out of his thought and he got up to answer the door, about ready to yell at whichever student that was idiotic enough o ruin his peace and quiet, and was greeted warmly by
Blaise Zabini.

"Blaise, what are you doing here?" asked Draco.

"Visiting my wife," said Blaise with a smile and walked into the room. "But that's no reason to not visit my lover."

"Ex-lover," said Draco closing the door behind him. "We're friends now."

"Best friends." Blaise sat on a chair and smiled at Draco. "At least I hope we're still friends."

"Did I say anything otherwise? Scotch? Fire whiskey?"

"Fire whiskey's fine. How can you stand that Muggle liquor?"

"It has its own taste."

"How are the classes going?" asked Blaise.

"All right," said Draco as he poured a glass of Fire whiskey for Blaise and another glass of Scotch for him. "They're the same as we were when we attended Hogwarts."

"Anyone new?"

"Nott's twins made it into Slytherin."

"Oh, yes. I remember Theodore and Millicent married right after graduating. What were their names again? Abacus and Alaura?"

"Abraham and Ambrosia. Thankfully they took after their mother." Draco handed the glass of Fire whiskey to Blaise and sat down on the opposite chair.

Blaise laughed. "Nott wasn't exactly a looker, even with Glamour. I'm amazed he even managed to get married."

"Apparently it was arranged by their parents on their seventeenth birthday," said Draco with a smirk. Blaise grimaced at the mention of an arranged marriage.

"Those are the worst," he said. "Which is why I'm glad Pansy and I haven't. With arranged marriages as soon as you have a male it's more or less called off. Which makes me wonder, why haven't you gotten married yet?"

"You know why I can't marry."

Blaise shrugged. "So we have a union ceremony. It makes no difference to me. And if you need an heir, just ask Pansy. We'll sign the paperwork."

"I'm all right, Blaise. I'm perfectly happy by myself and I plan on staying that way."

"Draco, just because of that stupid custom..."

"Blaise, I've dishonored my family name, and it will go down for ten generations. Better for it to end with me then to have my children and their descendents curse my name."

"Your father dishonored your name, not you. You're not to blame."
"I can't walk down Diagon Alley without someone pointing at me and whispering "Death Eater" behind my back. I don't want my children and their children going through that."

Blaise sighed and leaned back in his chair. "Going with the easy way out. That's the Draco Malfoy I know. The old Draco Malfoy. I thought the war changed you."

"It did change me," said Draco eyes flashing. "It taught me nothing lasts forever. It's better to end it now then wait for it to die out."

"Who is to say you are supposed to be the last Malfoy? It could be you twenty-seventh great grandson?"

"Merlin, I hope not," said Draco sipping his Scotch. They heard a squeaking and turned to see that Ishara had captured her prey and was now eating it whole headfirst.

"Ugh, that's disgusting," said Blaise. "Can't she take that somewhere else?"

"It keeps her happy," said Draco. After a minute of thinking Draco turned back to his friend. "Blaise, you work for the Ministry right?"

"Department of Magical Transport. Why?"

"Has a man named James Black come through in the last few months?"

Blaise looked at Draco in surprise. "The new Defense Against the Dark Arts Teacher? Pansy told me about him. What's he like?"

"Dark hair, green eyes and very flirtatious."

"In a good way," asked Blaise with a smirk. Draco gave him a glare. "Hey, I just want to know."

"Then don't ask," said Draco. "I want to know more about him, but every story he tells is slightly different."

"Pansy told me he came form America."

"He said he lived in America, never said he was born there. He did say both of his parents were British."

"Who are his parents?" Draco shrugged and Blaise sighed. "Well, that'll complicate things a bit. Dark hair, green eyes, mid to late twenties, just transferred from America and birth parents unknown. That could take a while. Why do you want to look him up?"

Draco shook his head. "I don't know. Something about him seems familiar."

"Familiar? Like how?"

"So familiar it's irritating. One second he's brash, charming, has the attention of the whole room and the next he's alone, not wanting any company and shrugging people off. He shrugged Granger off and their friends."

Blaise scratched his head to think. "You're right, that is complicated. I'll try my best at it."

Draco smiled at his friend. "Thanks, Blaise. Now go see your wife!"

Blaise roared with laughter that Draco softly joins in on.
Harry Apparated to the point near the Ireland stadium and looked around. His hair was free from the confines of the ponytail and his glasses rested on the bridge of his nose. His bangs still hid the scar on his forehead but that was hardly a problem anymore. Most people knew him by name alone nowadays.

"Uncle Harry!" cried three voice and Harry was barreled by two small objects.

"Hi, Rosie. Hey, Hugh," he said hugging the two Weasley children. Both were red haired and brown eyes, but both were as different as their parents. He smiled over at Teddy standing nearby. "Hey, Teddy."

"Hi, Uncle Harry," said Teddy. "I got into Hogwarts! Gryffindor House!"

"I know," said Harry pulling him into a hug. "I'm so proud of you. And I bet your parents are too."

Teddy's smile brightened and he returned the hug.

"Hey, Harry," said Hermione walking up with Ron, holding baby Julian on her hip.

"Hi, Harry," said Ron.

"Hawwy! Hawwy!" squealed Julian waving his chubby arms.


"'Gain! Again!" Julian squealed and Harry laughed.

"Please don't call him that," said Ron. "It's a silly nickname."

"He likes the nickname," said Harry. "Don't you, Juli?"

Julian laughed as Harry blew on his cheek.

"It's a girl's name."

"Oh hush, Ron," said Hermione watching after Rose, Hugh, and Teddy as they watched other young wizards fly around on training brooms. "No harms done. You really are good with kids, Harry. You should have one of your own by now."

"Why should I have one of my own when I have yours," said Harry handing Julian back to her. Hermione looked back at the two oldest. "And besides, I have Teddy."

"Still not the same, Harry," said Ron.

"Rose, Hugh, don't even think about getting on those brooms!" she ordered to her son and daughter. "Teddy, you as well!"

"Oh, Mummy!"

"Aunt Hermione!"

"It's all right, Hermione," said Ron. "They won't get hurt."
"But they're too young to ride a broom, Ron. They're not even in Hogwarts yet!"

"Teddy's in Hogwarts and he starts broom riding soon."

"He's still not ready!"

"I've rode a broom when I was only a year old," said Harry. "The only thing I broke was the vase my Aunt Petunia sent Mum for Christmas."

"You see, Ron, they're took young!" And she left to drag Rose and Hugh away from the booms and back to the group. Ron and Harry sighed as Hermione left.

"She's so much like Mum," said Ron. "It's really scary. Mum didn't like us learning how to fly early either." He turned back to Harry with a smile. "It's good to see you, mate. See you a few times a year isn't enough."

Harry sighed. "You know why, Ron. Ever since the Last Battle they've never left me alone. I'm a living legend. Every minute of my life is recorded. I had to get away."

Ron nodded. "I know, Harry. I understand. As one of your friends, I was interviewed over a dozen times, and before I married Hermione I was asked to marry at least twenty girls just because I knew you."

Harry laughed. "Boy, did Hermione have a fit about that."

"A fit about what," asked Hermione dragging Rose and Hugh behind her. Teddy was following reluctantly behind them.

"Nothing," said both men and Hermione gave them a skeptic look.

"But I am old enough to ride," protested Teddy, looking pleadingly at his aunt.

"Not until Madam Hooch says you are," said Hermione.

"I'll let you ride mine later," said Harry in low voice. Teddy smiled up at his godfather.

"Ron! Hermione!" called a voice and all three turned to see Katie walking through the crowd, one hand on her back to support herself. "There you are."

"Katie, you're here," said Hermione happily, then hit her husband. "Ron, go help her!"

Ron immediately went to Katie's side and helped her through the crowd. Hermione Configured a chair for her to sit on. Katie sighed as she did.

"Oh, thank you, Ron," she said. "And thank you, Hermione. The game won't start for a half hour so I thought I'd try to find you. I knew I was pushing my luck but I had to try, and I'm glad I did." She looked over at the sixth member of the party and gasped. "Harry? Oh my God! Is that really you? I haven't seen you since the Last Battle. Where have you been?"

"Oh, here and there," said Harry hugging her. He was glad to be able to talk to her without the pretense but he knew it wouldn't last long. "Staying away from the media mostly. Every time I walked out of my house it's like a reason to interview me on the latest rumor or political standing."

Katie laughed. "Well, be that as it may, I'm glad you're here. We all missed you, Neville, Luna, Oliver, even McGonagall, through you'd never hear it from her. Maybe someday, we all will get together sometime and talk."
Harry smiled. "I would like that."

A gong rang and everyone started filing to the stadium, the children cheering. Ron and Hermione followed the children with a smile as the children sang a child's wizard song about flying. Harry turned to Katie with a smile.

"Well, since I don't have a companion and you don't have an escort will you allow me to show you to the stadium?"

"Why, thank you, Harry," said Katie and took Harry’s elbow. Together they followed Ron and Hermione to the stadium.

Draco had just finished dinner in the Great Hall when the Evening Prophet arrived. After taking the paper and paying the owl he opened the paper to read. He nearly choked on his pumpkin juice when he read the headline.

*Harry Potter Spotted at Irish Quidditch Game!*

*Harry Potter, the man that saved the world at the age of 17 from the Dark Wizard called Voldemort, writes Sam Marshal, was spotted at a Quidditch match between the Kenmore Kestrels and the Quiberon Quattel Punchers. Witnesses have tried to speak to Potter but Potter had effectively evade them, how is still uncertain.*

*In the eight years since the disappearance of Harry Potter there have only been five actual sightings of the hero. The first was by Lisa Smith in New York City, Anne Thatcher in Loch Ness Scotland, Jasmine Hugo in Paris, France, and by Sarah Louis in Diagon Alley …*

The rest was various bits of information on what Potter had been doing before he disappeared. He had been training to be an Auror till he resigned and left, leaving his possessions to Ron and Hermione Weasley. Potter had just disappeared one day without a word, not telling anyone where he was going, not even his friends who he considered closer then family. Everyone he had associated with had been interviewed and each gave the same answer. They did not know where Potter was and even if they did, they wouldn't give it to the media.

The picture that was with the article was of Potter watching the Quidditch players fly. He was holding up a young boy of what appeared to be three and was pointing to the players, speaking but no sounds were heard. Wind blew aside a lock of hair to reveal the scar that was hidden underneath.

"What's wrong, Draco," asked Pansy. "You look like you saw a boggart." When Draco didn't answer she looked over his shoulder at the article. "Good Merlin, he is back!"

Draco looked at her in surprise. "You've heard?"

"Rumors mostly," she said. "But you know rumors. Rumors are like a day. They come once and then become old news." She looked back at the picture. "Is that really him? He almost looks like Black."

"Yeah, that's Potter," said Draco with a nod and pointed to a boy next to Potter. "See there's Weasel right there and the Lupin boy."

"I've seen better pictures," said a voice over his other shoulder and Draco looked up to see James Black leaning over his chair to look at the article. The look on his face puzzled Draco. "Where they going for a natural look or awestricken?"
"Stop breathing down my neck," snapped Draco turning the paper to the next page.

"I didn't realize I was that close," said Black with a smirk. Draco didn't turn back to him but his face had an obvious glare.

"Well you are, so back away."

Black's smirk turned into a smile. "But that article looks interesting."

"Then get your own paper."

Black shrugged. "News bores me," he said and chuckled as Draco looked at him in confusion.

"You're a strange person, Black," he said. Black laughed and pushed away from Draco's chair.

"I know no greater compliment," he said and walked out of the Great Hall. Pansy and Draco watched him leave in confusion.

"You're right," said Pansy picking up her pumpkin juice. "He is strange."

Draco nodded, still looking at the retreating form of James Black. He was so familiar, and his breath had been so warm on his neck. And the look on Black's face when he saw the picture before it changed to its usual expression. It was one of a furious annoyance. Why would James Black be annoyed at Harry Potter?

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Harry walked out of the Great Hall and stopped in a deserted corridor, nervously biting his nail. Damn! How could he have been so stupid? He knew there were reporters and cameras there, but he had hoped they would be paying attention at the game. And with his hair covering his scar so thorough he was sure he'd never get spotted, but the damn wind had to pick up.

It wasn't the first time he had been spotted. Over time wizards would recognize him and when they did Harry left again. He had lived in New York for his first year after he disappeared where he learned how to act in a Broadway musical. He had a good voice for musicals and workable acting skills. He stubbornly fought for minor roles, not wanting the publicity that came with the star roles. After a couple of years, Harry left to travel again, applying the acting skills he learned to stay hidden from wizards when he ran into them. He also added Glamour Charms to hide his scar and lighten his hair. Very rarely did the real Harry Potter appear and only when he felt he wouldn't be seen. /He bit down on his nail harder. What was he going to do now? He had spent eight years keeping off the media's radar and one day of indulgence could ruin it for him. If the media found out where he was then that meant pursuits and that meant interviews and interviews meant...

"Harry?" called Hermione and Harry turned to her.

"Hey, Hermione," said Harry with a smile.

"I just saw the article. I swear, if I had known…"

Harry waved off her statement. "It's all right, Hermione," he said trying to calm her with his most charming smile. "I knew this would happen sooner later. One picture would push interest and make them look every which way."

"And right at Grimmuald Place. Everyone knows its your last known residence before you gave it to me and Ron."
Harry shrugged. "Ron can handle himself. If not then he hasn't learned anything while we were hiding."

Hermione gave him a smirk that would have rivaled Draco's. "Oh, he's learned something all right," she said with a nod, the smirk gone. "He'll be fine."

Harry nodded. "Now, I have some papers to grade," he said and sighed dramatically. "The wonders of being a teacher."

Hermione laughed as Harry waved good-bye and left for his office. Through his face bore a smile his mind was still full of nervous thoughts.
Harry groaned as he looked over homework assignments during a teacher's break. October was quickly ending and Halloween fast approaching. McGonagall wanted all teachers to keep an eye out for pranksters and troublemakers as this time of year gave the students an excuse to frighten each other. Harry didn't mind the small stuff, a healthy scare was good for the soul, but drew the line when a pair of Gryffindor boys made the seventh year Slytherin's neckties into snakes. Some were poisonous and Harry discontinued he spell quickly enough before the students were harmed.

"Late night?" asked Hermione with a smile. Harry smiled back.

"Yeah, still not used to a teacher's schedule," he said.

"Well, we have our long nights and we also have our shorts nights. I prefer my nights with Ron."

"Whoa, Hermione way too much information," said Harry covering his ears.

"Agreed, Granger," said Malfoy walking with a sheet of papers in hand. "The thought of what you and the Weasel do is enough to make me go looking for a Dementor."

"Well, aren't you lucky I don't ask what you do with your bed partners," said Hermione with a smirk. Malfoy looked at Hermione with a disapproving expression.

"I do not take bed partners," he said sitting down at a nearby table. Moving his wand at the coffee kettle always kept full and warm at the corner of the room, he filled a cup, put in two lumps of sugar and cream and Levitated it to settle beside his stack of papers.

"Then where do you go every weekend," asked Harry smiling over at the Potion Professor. Malfoy gave Harry a disapproving look.

"I don't ask what you do with your personal days, Black," he said.

"I was just making civil conversation, Draco," said Harry still smiling. He generally liked to annoy or tease the blonde. It was fun watching the different expressions coming from the cool mask Malfoy always wore after a particularly good joke. "I mean since we know watch other so well, that's what friends do."

"Black, you know everything about me, yet I know next to nothing about you," said Draco.

"That's not true," said Harry. "You know a lot about me."

"Like what?"

Hermione giggled at Harry's smirk. "Why don't you make a list, Draco," he said. "You'll figure it out." The bell rang to signal a new class and Harry and Hermione stood.

"And we're not friends," said Malfoy as they left. Harry smiled at him as he left the room.

"Is it just me or did you just give him permission to out you," asked Hermione as she walked down the hall away from the Professor's Lounge.

"Just giving him something to do," said Harry. "He cunning enough to be a Private Investigator and he's wasting his talents as a Potions professor. I don't think that's fair."
"I suppose you're right," said Hermione. "Halloween is a few days away. What are you going to do?"

"I thought I'd stick around your place till Halloween weekend. There isn't much to do around here except keeping the students from hurting themselves. And I promised some friends I'd see them before the month was up."

"Why can't you invite them over?" asked Hermione. "Rose and Hugh would love to see you again."

"I was thinking about that," said Harry. "Here's my class. I'll see you later."

"Aren't you early," asked Hermione. "Not exactly in character."

"That's why I'm going on a walk down memory lane. See you at dinner."

"Later then," said Hermione as Harry walked down the corridor with his hands in his pockets.

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Draco straightened the snake green robes and smoothed the sides of the shirt underneath. The brooch with the Malfoy crest was pinned securely to his collar and his hair was combed in place, and in different style then the shoulder length his father had wanted him to have.

"I'm not Lucius," he said to himself before heading to the door. Ishara gave him one last hiss before curling up on the rug by the fire. Halloween was that Sunday so Draco had one day free to settle family affairs. Draco was not looking forward to Halloween. It was one of his least favorite holidays. Through he pretended to enjoy it with his class mates and colleagues, he secretly hated Halloween.

Straightening his robes on last time he turned a corner and almost ran into Pansy.

"Whoa, business robes," she said in amazement. "You, uh, going somewhere?"

"Out," said Draco walking around her and continued down the hallway. Pansy followed him.

"Obviously. You wouldn't be wearing that get-up if it was just around the school. For a moment I thought I was looking at Lucius."

Draco turned to her with a furious glare. "I'm not Lucius," he said through gritted teeth.

"Whoa, down, Dragon. I know you're not your father. You're still alive, aren't you? I just wanted to know where you were going. Is that so wrong?"

Draco sighed. "You're right. I'm sorry, Pansy. I'm just really…."

"Out of it?" suggests Pansy and Draco nodded, rubbing the bridge of his nose. "I understand, Draco. Why don't Blaise and I come over tomorrow? We'll get your mind off being a Malfoy, and later you can go to a bar and get laid."

Draco smiled at his friend and gently shoved her. "I have morals, Pansy. I don't get laid with strangers."

"That's where introduction comes in. Come on, Draco. We never went anywhere and Blaise was the last serious relationship you've had. Just because you can't find love doesn't mean you just throw it away."

"I didn't throw it away," said Draco, reaching the entrance hall doors. "I just put it on hold, sort of."
"Sort of?"

"I'll see you tomorrow, Pansy," said Draco opening the door and walked through. He walked past Hogsmeade and Disapparated right outside the village. He Apprated in London, cast Perception Charm, walked down the sidewalk till he came to the abandoned clothes store that was the entrance to St. Mungo's Hospital for Maladies and Injuries.

"I have come to see Narcissa Malfoy," said Draco taking down the charm. He felt himself pulled in and stood at the front desk of the hospital. Sighing Draco walked up to the desk as Healers ran back and forth from room to room. Patients waiting to be seen sat along one wall with various magical or non-magical ailments.

"Good day, Mr. Malfoy," said the witch stationed at the front desk. She was chewing a Bertie Botts Every Flavor Bubble Gum by the look of the package on the desk.

"Hi, Hilary," he said taking a clipboard from the witch and signed it.

"She's been waiting for you," said Hilary smiling as she took the clipboard. Draco gave her a friendly nod.

"I'm sure she has," he said and went to the elevator. He pressed for the fourth floor and waited for the elevator stopped. When the doors opened he was greeted by an olive skinned Healer with black hair and eyes.

"Mr. Malfoy, Hilary said you were in," he said.

"Healer Long, how has she been since my last visit," asked Draco. Walking out of the lift and followed Long down the hall.

"She has been as normal as a person can be in her condition," said Long. "She becomes lucid for a moment at times and that's when she's screaming your name and of her late husband's but other then that she has been the same."

Draco nodded. They had just entered the high security isolation room. Healer Long lead Draco to a room with a two sided mirror in it. Draco looked through it to see a once beautiful woman with wavy sun gold hair and turquoise blue eyes. She wore a simple white dress holding a doll like it was a baby.

"She's been calmer since you gave her the doll," said Long. "She's had fewer attacks and became easier to handle."

"How's her medication? Is it on time?"

"Yes, I supervise the whole thing. I even keep your shipments in a Password Charmed cabinet like you asked, keyed to my voice only. If I didn't know any better, I'd say you were as paranoid as Lucius was."

Draco's eyes flashed as he glared at the Healer. "Careful, Long. You may be an old family friend, but I still pay the funds."

Long smiled and nodded. "Of course," he said. "I'll let you in."

Long took out his wand, tapped the door while muttering a password, and turned the handle to let Draco inside. Draco paused for a moment before walking inside the room.
"Tap when you want to leave," said Long. Draco nodded and Long closed the door.

In the ten years that had past since the last battle between Harry Potter and the Dark Lord, Draco struggled to regain the respect the Malfoy name had. Lucius had sunk into depression not long after the Ministry confiscated most of their assets and killed himself after a year. Narcissa had gone mad at the sight of her dead husband and lost her mind. She was now in St. Mungo's Mentality Ward closely watched by Healers since her first suicide attempt. Draco visited at least once a month and it was always awkward when he did.

"Hi, Mother. It's me, Draco," said Draco. Narcissa didn't say anything except a wizard lullaby to the doll. On her wrist Draco could see the bandages wrapped around them to protect her from future suicide attempts. "Adrian McDonald had been given detention. He's a third year that would have given me a run for my money. The one who gave him detention was a new DADA James Black. He's a hands on guy, kind of like Lupin had been, but also strict. He prefers to make them do things without any magical help. Always late, always reading Muggle crime scene or horror novels, interested in Quidditch, and an outright flirt if you ask me."

"It's all right, Draco," crooned Narcissa to the doll. "Daddy will be home soon, and he'll bring back a souvenir for his little Dragon."

Draco went on as if she didn't say anything, but listened to her all the same. "There's something about him, Mother. Something familiar. I can't put my finger on it. And to make matters worse, he looks like Potter. He could be Potter's twin or something.

"Don't be scared, Draco. There are not boggarts in the closet. Mummy took care of all the nasty stuff."

"Pansy's fine. She and Blaise are coming over tomorrow. I keep telling her she needs to have a baby. She'll mellow out, after the pregnancy anyway. She kept saying she'll think about it, but she has been saying that since she and Blaise got married."

Narcissa started humming the lullaby again, so low that Draco had to strain his ears just to hear it. "Soaring in the sky, flying so high. The dragon smiles freely. Looking at the sun, fears start to run, for he was a fledgling."

Draco cleared his throat and blinked to clear his eyes. It was the song Narcissa had made up to help him sleep at night as a child, when he was scared of the dark and thunderstorms.

"School's fine. Students are kids and Granger is being civilized. She would say I was the one being civilized. Some of the older years are getting rambunctious, but that's just hormones."

"Lucius, look at Draco!" said Narcissa bouncing the baby doll on the floor. "He's walking!"

"I'm not seeing anyone. Not from trying either. I was lucky Father died when he did. If he found out I was gay he would have had a hippogriff. You would have understood. You have a cousin who had a husband and a wife, if I remember correctly. I'm happy with my life. I always work better alone. I'm...I'm happy."

"Just wait, Lucius. Soon our little wizard will be more than a Malfoy. He'll be the best."

Draco cleared his throat to keep from crying. He had seen worse from his mother, but it was the "baby Draco" moments that got to him. Draco knew his parents loved him. Lucius protected him from the worst of the Dark Lord's wrath and Narcissa risked her life to keep Draco safe. He wished there was more that he could have done for his father before Lucius died. He was even considering
marrying Pansy despite his attraction to men instead of women, but after Lucius died he considered it for a long while, until he dropped the idea, backed up by Pansy who was insisted on it, and dated Blaise. They had dated for two years before both broke up with mutual respect.

"I miss you, Mum. I really want you back, but I know it's not possible. But I'm holding on that someday you'll see me, Draco the man and not the child. Even if it is for a moment, I want you to see me."

Walking over to Narcissa he smoothed back her hair from her face. It still felt like silk between his fingers. The assistants were taking good care of her. Leaning down he kissed the top of her head gently.

"I love you, Mum."

Turning back to the door he tapped it gently and waited for Long to open the door.

"Good night, Draco."

Draco turned back at Narcissa sharply but she was holding the baby doll gently and was crooning another lullaby.

"Draco?" said Long through the open door.

"I'm coming," said Draco and walked out of the room.

"Uncle Harry!"

Rose and Hugh immediately tackled Harry as soon as he walked through the door of Grimmauld Place. When he had decided to travel he had given the deed of the ancient Black home to Ron and Hermione to live in since Ron was trying to become an Auror and Hermione was still promoting rights for sentient magical creatures, not that she stopped trying even after getting a degree in teaching. Kreacher had died long after the Last Battle and they buried him next to Dobby with Regulus’ locket around his neck. Since Hermione had become a teacher she had been returning over the weekends to keep it clean, with the help of Rose who acted as a surrogate mother to her two brothers.

"Oh no, it's attack of the redheads," said Harry pretending to fall over as Rose and Hugh tackled him. "Quick, someone get the tear gas. They're everywhere!"

"You're silly, Uncle Harry," giggled Rose. Harry looked up at her with a silly confused face.

"Would you like me to be serious instead?" he asked.

"I would prefer you being Harry James Potter," said Hermione walking into the foyer with her arms crossed. "Twice in two months. Getting tired of playing pretend?"

"Only around you guys," said Harry, breathless from playing with Rose and Hugh. "Hey, you two, can I get up?"

"Sorry, Uncle Harry," said Hugh and both got off him. Hermione looked past Harry in surprise.

"Oh, you've brought guests," she said.

"Yeah, I did," said Harry looking behind him. Standing nervously in the doorway was a woman and small boy. The woman had wavy gold hair and aqua blue green eyes. Her skin was slightly paler
then the boy next to her, giving her a sickly look, but she held the boy's hand firmly. The boy looked around Rose's age with jet black hair and bright green eyes.

"Hello," said the woman with a Scottish accent. "We're sorry to intrude on your home."

"No, no, it's all right," said Hermione. "It's just rare that Harry brings guests over."

"Hermione, you remember Mary Wallace and her son James," said Harry taking Mary's free hand and leading her inside.

"Oh, of course," said Hermione in realization. "Harry's friend from his trip to Scotland. Was that six years ago? Harry's told us about you."

"Harry said it was alright to come over," said Mary nervously. "Even through I'm a uh….What was that word wizards use for non-magical folk?"

"Muggles, Mary," said Harry reassuringly. "And it's all right to talk to Hermione. She's Muggle-born."

"It means I was a witch born from non-magic parents," explained Hermione at Mary's confused face. James was looking interestingly at the sitting room and Rose and Hugh playing a wizard child's game. Julian watched from a play pen set in the corner of the room. "I'll make tea. Ron, we have guests!"

"Harry's here," called Ron from upstairs.

"With guests," called up Hermione as she went to the kitchen.

"Mummy," said James in a quiet voice. "Mummy can I watch them play?"

"I don't know, Jamie," said Mary looking anxiously at Harry.

"It's all right," said Harry. "It's a kid's game, Mary. Harmless."

Mary seemed to be a bit reassured by that and turned back to her son. "Go ahead, Jamie. Just be careful."

Jamie smiled at Mary and went to join Rose and Hugh. Mary watched her son join the red heads nervously. Harry put a reassuring hand on her shoulder.

"It's all right, Mary. He's a wizard. This is his world. He had better warning then Hermione or I did. We thought we were freaks."

"I know I shouldn't be scared," said Mary. "He's supposed to learn about magic, and you've been helping a lot by coming over and teaching him, but why does it make me so nervous?"

"Because, as fantastic as magic is, it can also be dangerous," said Harry. "A wand is like a gun. It can be used to protect of to kill. I should know," Harry sighed. "I guess that's what being a parent is all about. Worrying over your child even through you know it's the right thing."

"Oh, Harry, I'm sorry…..," started Mary but Harry cut her off with a wave of his hand.

"No, it's all right. I've made my choice."

"But, Harry, all you had to do was ask….." said Mary before Ron walked down the stairs.
"Did Hermione say Harry brought guests," asked Ron as he came down and noticed Mary. "Oh, hello."

"Ron, you remember Mary Wallace, and her son Jamie," said Harry. Ron had a confused look until Hermione walk in carrying a tray of tea.

"Harry's Muggle friend from Scotland," reminded Hermione. Ron made an "O". Hermione sighed annoyingly and set the tea tray on the table. "Supper will be done soon."

Harry grinned at the children. "And after that we can have...."

"Candy!" said all three children. Hermione smiled as she shook her head.

"Just brush your teeth afterwards," she said as she and Ron left to finish preparing dinner.

Harry smiled and turned to Mary, only to see her having trouble breathing and her skin became paler. She was clutching the wall like a life line.

"Mary, are you okay?" asked Harry worriedly. Mary nodded.

"Yes, I just need to sit down," she said. Harry led her to a chair and sat her down. Reaching into her purse he took out an inhaler and a bottle of pills. "Thank you, Harry."

"Mummy," called James at the sight of his mother. "Mummy, are you sick again?"

"Mummy will be okay, Jamie," said Harry pouring a cup of tea and handed it to Mary along with two pills. "She just needs to rest is all."

Jamie crawled up beside his mother and curled up next to her. He laid his head on her chest and wrapped his arms around her neck.

"I love you, Mummy," he said. "Get better soon."

Mary smiled down at him and wrapped her arms around her son. "I love you too, my little wizard," she said. Harry watched with a sad but happy look.

"Dinner," called Hermione. Rose put the game away while Hugh helped with serving dinner. Harry telling Jamie all about Exploding Snap and Jamie eagerly listening. Harry went over to the play pen and picked Julian up.

"Hey, Juli, are you ready to eat?" he asked setting the baby on his hip.

"At, at, at," garbled Julian excitedly. Harry smiled at the baby and turned to see Mary's face.

"What?"

"You're good with kids," said Mary with a smile. Harry smiled back.

"That's why I'm a teacher," he said and led her to the dining room while carrying Julian on his hip.
Harry stretched as he walked into the Great Hall at breakfast. The visit from Mary and Jamie at Halloween had been wonderful. It had been a long time since he had seen them. Jamie couldn't get over the wizard games or candy and Mary was half worried about Jamie hurting himself, but everything turned out fine, until he wanted to play Exploding Snap. Mary refused and Jamie wasn't allowed to participate, but he had fun watching.

Malfoy had been different since his return over the weekend. There was a slight stiffness to his walk and a snap in his voice. At first Harry thought he had gotten into another wizard/Muggle cultural argument with Hermione but she said it had nothing to do with her. Harry was half tempted to ask Pansy what was wrong with him.

Harry yawned as he walked into the Great Hall and headed toward the teacher's table. A few students greeted him and he nodded back. Everyone knew Harry didn't speak till he had his first cup of coffee.

Harry reached the table and stopped. Sitting in Katie's chair was a tall handsome man with blonde hair and bright blue eyes. He was talking politely to Hermione softly and she had a silly look on her face as she talked to him, reminding Harry of the Yule Ball fourth year when she was with Krum. He looked up at Harry and gave him a smile that sent a shiver down Harry's spine.

"Black?"

Malfoy's voice made Harry jump and he looked over at the Potions professor. Malfoy had a curious face as he looked at Harry.

"Black, are you all right," asked Malfoy and Harry nodded.

"Yeah, I'm fine," said Harry with a smile. "I just had a late night grading papers."

"Are you sure? You look like you just saw a boggart."

Harry chuckled. "Usually Muggle would say "You look like you had seen a ghost" but since we see ghosts around corners, you have to say something." Harry sat next to Hermione and picked up his cup of coffee. Malfoy smiled back as he sat on Harry other side.

"Wow, Professor James Black already speaking and he hadn't even had his first cup of coffee, and on a Muggle saying to boot. Is there anything you don't know?"

"Yeah, how to keep a date," said Harry and both chuckled. Hermione looked over at her friend and smiled.

"James, you're early today," she said.

"After that storm last night who could sleep," said Harry taking a sip from his coffee. He looked over at the man sitting on her other side. "Who's the new guy?"

"This is Lee Harding, Katie's substitute." She turned to her neighbor. "Lee, this is James Black, our Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, and the man next to him is Draco Malfoy, our Potion
A pleasure to meet you," said Harding holding out his hand to Harry. Harry looked at the man for a moment before firmly taking his hand, shook it once, and returned to his breakfast.

"Where are you from," asked Malfoy.

"America," said Harding. "New York, to be exact. I sang on Broadway a few times."

"Har-hey, James, you are into musicals theatre, right?" asked Hermione looking over at Harry.

"Something like that," said Harry. "Excuse me, I have to get to my class."

And he got up and left. Hermione and Malfoy watched after him with perplexed faces.

"What's up with him," asked Malfoy.

"I don't know," said Hermione. "I've never seen him like this."

"He's angry about something," said Harding. "You don't think it's me, do you?"

"Of course not," said Hermione smiling at him. "How can it be you? You got here last night."

"You're right," said Harding smiling back. "He doesn't know me, and I'll make sure he does."

Malfoy looked after Harry as the man walked out of the Great Hall.

Hours later Harry was teaching his third year class on Dark creatures. A picture of a vampire flashed on a white screen in front of the room.

"Vampire, Latin name Nosferatu, are the blood drinking species of our world. A pure-blooded vampire, born to two vampire parents, can live without blood for the first eighteen years of their life, however a person turned has have blood immediately upon awakening. They can eat large amounts of food to compensate for their caloric intact." He quickly checked to see if the class was taking notes and noticed them writing furiously to catch up. "For a pure-blood vampire on their eighteenth year they find a partner to give them blood so they can continue living. This is known as Bonding. The partner has to be willing or the bond will never be completed, but the partner gets something out of it too. In exchange for giving their blood, they get to live a thousand years. At that time, both the Bondmate and vampire die. That is equivalent exchange."

A knock sounded and Harry went to open it. Standing in front of the door was Lee Harding wearing a smile that put shivers down Harry's spine again.

"Hi, James," said Harding. "I hope I'm not interrupting...."

"Actually, you are," said Harry crossing his arms. "I'm in the middle of a class."

"I just want some advice," said Harding. "I've never taught before and was wondering if you could help. You just came in this year as well and I thought you might have picked something up."

"You won't some advice? Here's one: They're kids. A lot of them, not really caring to learn. They won't respect you, because they don't care to. Don't bother to help the reluctant ones. If they don't want to learn, that's their problem."
Harding gave Harry a surprised look. "That's kind of harsh."

"Life is harsh," said Harry. "Better to learn it now then later." There was a bang, a shriek and boys laughter. Harry sighed. "Excuse me, Professor Harding."

"Please, James, call me Lee," said Harding with a smile. Harry glared at him.

"Then you can call me Black," he said and turned back to the class room. "Mr. McDonald?"

McDonald groaned and lowered his wand. Across from him stood William Benson with pock marks all over his face and was attempting to hide it with his robes.

"What happened," asked Harry closing the door. McDonald glared at him and Benson hiccupped to keep from crying. "McDonald, you will tell me what happened."

"Benson attacked me, sir," said McDonald with a shrug. Benson shook his head vigorously. Harry didn't need to hear Benson's side to know what really happened.

"McDonald, I hate lying and I hate liars," he said crossing his arms. "If you don't tell the truth then you'll be doing detention with Filch for the next two weeks."

McDonald gulped but didn't say anything.

"Professor James," said a Hufflepuff girl raising her hand. Harry turned to her. Lucy Louise was a smart girl that kept to herself. "Professor, McDonald wanted to try a new spell on Celia, but she Shielded herself and it backfired onto Billy." /Harry looked over at Celia Dennis, a pretty Gryffindor Muggle-born. She held her wand at her side and was looking away from him nervously.

"Ms. Dennis, good job," he said. Celia smiled and sat back down. Harry turned to Lucy. "Next time, Ms. Louise, don't take the wrap for his work. If Mr. McDonald had something to say he will say it." Lucy nodded and sat back in her seat. "And you, Mr. McDonald, will be doing detention with Filch for the next two weeks."

"What?" shrieked McDonald. /Harry didn't say anymore as he Summoned McDonald's wand and pocketed it.

"Vampires are highly sensitive to garlic and sunlight..."
tells him there's trouble?"

"I think so."

Pansy set down her glass. "Well, now would be a great time to talk to Black about it. Ask him why he thinks Harding's trouble." Pansy paused for a moment thoughtfully. "What do we know about Black anyway?"

"He said he was an orphan and was raised by relatives. When he spoke about them the tone of his voice changed, like he didn't like the idea of thinking about them. But when he spoke about his family…"

"There is a difference in the term family for everyone," said Pansy. "For instance, Emanuel Parkinson is my father by blood, and I hate the bastard. You and Blaise are my family by choice and I would die for you guys."

Draco smiled, took Pansy's hand and squeezed it gently. "Thank you, Pansy, that means a lot," he said. "I'll talk to him. I could use another friend."

Pansy smiled at him. "That's a smart thing to do, Draco," she said. "You go talk to him and I'll go talk to Blaise."

Draco laughed, drained his champagne and stood. "All right, I can take a hint. I'm leaving. How is it coming anyway?"

Pansy laughed and pushed him out the door. "Just get to your class!" she laughed and closed the door. Draco laughed as well and went to his classroom.

Hours later Draco walked out of his classroom after lecturing a fourth year on the importance of correct measuring. The student had not only blown up his potion but melted his cauldron and now several of the students had boils. Right then he wanted to take a headache potion and some fresh air. He had already taken the potion and was now heading to the garden to get the air.

Opening the door Draco took a deep breathe and saw a figure leaning against a statue. His arms were crossed and he had an angry look.

"Black," called out Draco. Black looked up at Draco in surprise but quickly put on a relieved smile. "Are you feeling well?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," said Black with a smile, scratching his hair uneasily. "Why wouldn't I be?"

"Well, for one, you haven't flirted with me all day," said Draco crossing his arms. Black's mouth open in shock, but closed his mouth, put his hands in his pockets and shrugged.

"I'm all right, Draco," he said. "My head playing tricks on me."

"Does it have something to do with Lee Harding," asked Draco. Black's eyes flashed for a moment. "You may have noticed I tried to obscure my part a bit," said Black. Draco chuckled.

"You may have noticed I tried to obscure my part a bit," said Black. Draco chuckled.

"It may have come up," he said. "Look, Black, you don't have to tell me if you don't want to."

Black shook his head. "No, it's all right," he said. "Years ago when I lived America, I hung out with the wrong crowd. Harding reminds me of someone from back then."

Draco was silent before he smiled. "No more," he asked not really needing an answer. Black smiled
"No more," Black agreed. He looked at his watch and grimaced. "God, I'm late."

Draco's face fell. "You have a date?" he asked and for some reason it made his chest tighten. Black chuckled.

"No, I'm just going to have a couple beers with an old friend," he said. "You can join if you like?"

"Your old friend got a name?"

"Hermione's husband, Ron."

Draco grimaced. "Me having a civilized drink with Weasley? That'll be a cold day in hell."

"Michigan or Arizona," asked Black and Draco gave him a confused look. "Sorry, American joke."

Draco shrugged. "All the same, I'll stay here."

"All right. See you tomorrow."

"Good night, Black."

Harry smiled as he watched Malfoy walk out of the garden and headed out of the school. When he was beyond on the wards he Disapparated and Apparated in the alley a block from the bar he was meeting Ron. He found his friend easily even in the dim lights and crowded room, Ron towering a head above everyone else and his red hair standing out in the light above the bar. Ron spotted Harry walking in and waved Harry to a seat against the far wall. Harry nodded and went to the table.

Ron returned a minute later with two mugs of beer. He wore a blue t-shirt and black jeans. Harry had to thank Hermione on teaching Ron how to dress like a Muggle. He remembered the wizards at his first Quidditch World Cup and the wizards wearing pajama pants with a gold shirt and a nightdress was still unsettling to remember.

"Hermione finally let you out for a beer," asked Harry taking the glass and took a sip. Ron smiled.

"With how long she stays at Hogwarts I could get out every night, but then Rose would tattle on me," he said and both laughed. "Harry, we could go to another club if you want. I mean if you're not comfortable here…."

"Ron, even if we changed clubs, you would be uncomfortable. Besides, I'm fine right here. I came to talk to my best friend, not get laid."

Ron smiled at his friend. "Speaking of, have you found anyone yet?"

Harry laughed. "Ron, I'm living in a school. There's Hagrid, Firenze, Hermione, our old teachers, married couples and Malfoy. Where am I going to find someone to date?"

"Hermione did say you were getting chummy with Malfoy." Ron took a sip of beer.

"It's a cover, Ron," said Harry. "It's so he won't know who I really am."

"And a good payback for all the crap he gave us," said Ron with a smirk.
"That's just a bonus. Draco and I have a good working relationship."

At Malfoy's first name Ron choked on his beer and sputtered his beer as he coughed. Harry jumped back in his seat and quickly cleaned the spill with a wave of his wand before anyone saw.

"'Draco and I'" said Ron when he could speak again in surprise. "Geez, Harry, if I didn't know any better, I'd say you were starting to fancy the guy." Ron gave Harry and inquiring look. "You're not, are you?"

Harry opened his mouth to answer, but couldn't find anything to say. The last couple months Harry had spent with Malfoy had been the most fun he had in a long time. Since Harry had started hiding. He had actually stopped thinking of Malfoy as the school yard bully he was a long time ago. Since he saw Malfoy through Voldemort's eyes when the blonde was forced to torture Dolohov.

Ron sighed. "You know, don't tell me. I don't want to know."

"I'm sorry, Ron," said Harry. "It's just, I've gotten to know him, and he's not that bad."

"He's a git."

"He's changed. He's not a bully anymore. Times changed him, like it's changed us."

Ron lower lip trembled for a moment, but he drank his beer and sighed. The war was one of the few things they tried to avoid but there were times it did come up, and talking about it still wasn't easy.


"Same shit, different day," he said. "Got anything planned with Hermione?"

"Yeah, I'm planning on taking her to an Italian restaurant that opened recently."

Harry nodded. "That's a good idea. She needs to relax."

"Yeah," agreed Ron and both spent the rest of the day talking about recent news.

Chapter End Notes

-Fun Fact: For anyone who didn't know there are two towns, both in Michigan and Arizona, called "Hell." I looked it up on the map.
November's cold chill came hard on Hogwarts and with it the anxiousness of Quidditch. Through the vacation wasn't for a couple of weeks the Quidditch teams still practiced vigorously, each wanting to be the best. House mates and scouts from other teams watched each other practice, learning strategies and combating them. Some just came to watch the players fly.

Harry was one of them. He watched the players dive and fly around the goal posts. He could still remember when he played Quidditch for the Gryffindor team and all the near misses he had trying to catch the Snitch.

"I figured I'd find you here," said Hermione sitting next to him. "How are they?"

"Neville was a better flyer," said Harry and they both laughed. "They could be better. They're just lucky they're only school teams."

"Racing as fast as an eagle, dodging Bludgers, trying to catch the Snitch…"

"You Confunding Cormac McLaggen," said Harry smirking at Hermione. Hermione blushed which made Harry laugh. "Don't worry. I wasn't going to recruit him anyway. How that boy made Gryffindor is beyond me."

"Maybe there are personalities so complex there are no other places to put them," said Hermione.

"Or maybe they had no where else to go."

Hermione gave Harry a curious look. "Those eight years traveling abroad really has changed you, hasn't it?" she said.

Harry shook his head. "No, that but if information was from the first eighteen years of my life. It was then I learned the hardest of hard lessons in life."

"Yes," said Hermione looking back at the practicing players. "All of us did."

They watched the players fly around the Pitch until practice was over and they headed back to the school with the other spectators as the players changed in the locker rooms. Harry opened the door for Hermione and both walked into the entrance hall.

"Want to get some tea," asked Hermione.

"No thanks," said Harry. "I have a ton of papers to grade and I don't drink tea anymore, remember?"

"Oh, that's right. You drink coffee now."

"Yes, you should try it sometime," said Harry smiling at his friend. Hermione shook her head.

"Too bitter," she said. Harry laughed.

"Did you try it with sugar and cream?" he asked and Hermione hit him on the shoulder.

"Oh, you," she said continuing to hit him. "Do grow up."

"Why should I grow up when I can stay young at heart forever?" asked Harry with a laugh and Hermione laughed back.
"Oh, so you're Peter Pan now, are you? Just remember, even Peter Pan grew up at one point."

"Yeah, well, I'm not there yet." He leaned down to kiss Hermione's cheek and left. "See you at dinner."

"But we have a staff meeting!" said Hermione but Harry just waved at her as he walked off. Hermione sighed and walked to her office.

Harry left Hermione and walked to his office. As he walked the halls his vision blurred and he cursed. The potion had worn off. He sighed, reached into his pocket and pulled out his glasses.

"Don't know when Hermione can make more," he said.

He walked through the halls without running into anyone, which Harry appreciated. He didn't want to explain why he wore glasses. Glasses that made him look exactly like Harry Potter. Walking into his office he closed the door and headed to his desk.

"Winky, coffee," he said and the house elf appeared.

Like everyone after the war, Winky had changed as well. The death of Dobby snapped her from her delirium and she took up Dobby's ideas on working for a wage and for whichever master she chooses. Winky became the poster-elf of S.P.E.W. and spoke to hundred of house-elves that thought the same. The most Winky had done so far was getting them wages and sick leave. She was now petitioning on letting them quit jobs they didn't like.

"Black coffee with two lumps and two teaspoon of powdered cream," said Winky setting the tray on desk. "Is there anything else I can get for you?"

Harry smiled at her and picked up the coffee cup. She had started referring herself in the first person recently and practiced it any chance she got.

"No thank you, Winky," he said and handed her a Sickle. "You may go."

"Yes, sir. Thank you Master Harry. Oh, I is sorry, sir. I is supposed to call you Master Black."

"We're alone, so I'll let it slid. Just be more careful."

Winky nodded, bowed and disappeared. Harry smiled and drank his coffee, turning to read the first essay.

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"All I'm saying is that I'd like to be told that my husband's doing something secret info research for you," said Pansy as she walked and Draco walked down the hall. They had come from another monthly staff meeting and again James Black was absent. "I mean, he is my husband."

"I know, Pansy, I'm sorry," said Draco. "I just want him to look something up for me."

"What's that?"

"I need to find out where James Black is from. He says he's from the Southern part of America. And he sounds it, but at other times he sound Scottish, Welsh, French and then British. It's like he's from everywhere and no where at the same time."

"So you wanted to check Black's 'Porting records?'" asked Pansy. "Why don't you just ask him? He's more then open about his life. Which is weird, actually."
"Exactly. Why would a man be so open about his life is there's something he's trying to hide?"

"Oh, Merlin, you're right." Pansy sat up in her chair in amazement. "He could be hiding something. Which is probably why he's so casual. Or he could be a fascist. Ew."

Draco laughed. "Well, it could be worse. I could have slept with Blaise instead of asking for his help." Pansy hit him upside the head. Draco laughed and they continued to walk down the hall. "Do you need any help with him?"

"No, I'll be fine. For all his mystery, he's a nice guy. He may be hiding something but he isn't a killer. That I know."

"All right, but if you need anything, just scream," said Draco with a smile.

"I'm sure I will," said Pansy and kissed his cheek. Draco kissed hers back and she went down the hall as he went to the dudgeons. She walked down the hall and knocked on the office of the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher. "James, it's Pansy. Can I come in?" There was no answer so she knocked again. "James?"

Still no answer. She reached for the knob and turned it. It was unlocked. She pushed the door open and cautiously walked in, a hand on her wand. The office was empty, but the coffee was warm and the candles were still burning.

"James?"

"Professor Zabini?"

Pansy shrieked and pulled her wand out, and found herself face to face with James Black's holly wand. James' green eyes were hard behind his glasses. Pansy couldn't help but see something familiar about them man.

"Potter?"

"N-no," said Black shaking his head and putting his wand away. "Sorry about that. Second nature thing."

"Yes, me as well," said Pansy she put her wand away with a laugh. "This might seem creepy, but for a moment I thought you were Harry Potter."

Black laughed. It seemed forced to him more then humorous but he couldn't help it. He did look like his old self in the wiry glasses.

"Harry Potter? I only wish I was."

"I've never seen you wear glasses," said Pansy.

"No many people do nowadays," said Black. He set the book he was holding under his arm on the desk. "I used to wear them all the time when I was younger, but they made me look geeky."

"I can see the reason in that."

Black smiled as he turned back to Pansy. "Drew the short wand?" he asked and Pansy laughed.

"Yes, McGonagall is furious. She wants to see you when you deem yourself ready."

Black laughed. "I just need to finish the essays and then I can see her," he said picking up a paper in
emphasis. "How's Draco? I haven't spoken to him since Halloween."

"He's doing fine," said Pansy. "He has several potions projects to grade." She paused for a moment before continuing. "He's curious about you."

Black smiled as he shuffled papers. "Is that good or bad?"

"Good. I haven't seen him like this since... Well, since our school days with his rivalry with Harry Potter."

Black looked surprised. "Draco didn't like Harry Potter?"

"Didn't like is such a small word," said Pansy sarcastically. "Loathed is more like it. Draco didn't like the fact that Potter could get away with trouble and that he could get whatever he wanted without even trying."

Black crumbled an essay before he could control himself. "Is that so? I never knew Harry Potter was greedy. Maybe he should have been in Slytherin."

Pansy shook her head. "No, he was a Gryffindor through and through. But he did like to use his name to get what he wanted."

"Just because you read it in the papers doesn't mean it's true," said Black with a bit of irritation. "Never believe second hand information."

"You mean I have to talk to Potter to find out if the stories are true?" asked Pansy as Black nodded, looking at an essay instead of her. "I could if I knew where he was. I guess I could do that."

"Hear all, trust nothing," said Black with a smile. Pansy smiled back before walking out of the office.

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Draco was testing the potency of a potion when his fireplace flared up.

"Draco, man, can I come through," asked Blaise in the other side. Draco smirked as he walked over and looked at his best friend.

"Have I ever denied you before," asked Draco with his arms crossed.

"Well, there was this one time..."

"You broke up with me to date Pansy," said Draco with an amused look. "I think I had a right to be angry."

"Are you still angry?" asked Blaise sheepishly.

"Blaise, that was five years ago. Do I look angry?"

"You never know." Blaise smiled and stepped back. "I'm coming through."

That was all the warning Draco needed. He stepped back as Blaise walked through in a whirl of ash and soot.

"Geez, Blaise, did your mother teach you everything growing up except how to travel," asked Draco.


"Oh, sorry." Blaise took out his wand and Vanished the ash and soot around him. "How's school?"

"Dismal. Black's still flirting with me like we're dating."

Blaise gave him a skeptic look. "Do you want to date him? Is that why you want me to look him up?"

"If that's all it took, then he would have saved himself the trouble." Both men looked up to see Pansy standing against the door she had walked through without Blaise or Draco noticing. "He's just down the hall."

"Ever hear of knocking," asked Draco sarcastically.

"Who knocks anymore? Hi, honey."

"Hey, dear." Pansy and Blaise kissed cheeks before they sat on the couch and Draco sat on a chair.

"I, uh, spoke with Black," said Pansy.

Draco looked up at Pansy interestedly. "What did he say?"

"He as curious about you as you are of him," said Pansy with a smirk. Draco's stomach clenched. Why did James Black asking about him make Draco's chest tighter? "Except he doesn't snoop around."

"I would just like to know who I am working with."

"You mean hooking up with," said Blaise humorously. Draco reached over and hit his arm. All three laughed. "Have you visited your mother again?"

Draco shook his head. "Not since Halloween weekend," he said. "She did even acknowledge I was there."

"That's what her condition is, isn't it?" asked Pansy. "I mean, she's stuck to the past when Lucius…when Lucius was alive."

Blaise and Pansy look over at Draco apprehensively at the mention of the late Lucius Malfoy. The details of the death of Lucius Malfoy had not been fully disclosed, but evidence concluded that it was a suicide. Draco had found Lucius lying on the floor with Narcissa screaming beside him, blood poling around his father's prone body and his ceremonial knife in his hand. Draco and Narcissa had returned from a shopping trip in Paris the day it happened. Narcissa had gone to look for her husband while Draco directed the house-elves in putting the purchased boxes away. He heard his mother scream and ran to his parents' room to find the scene before him.

"All she did was turn her mind back to happier times," said Draco. "I suppose it's better, considering."

His mind replayed to the last time he had visited Narcissa. Though she had still been playing with her doll, for a moment when Draco was leaving he swore Narcissa had become lucid and told him "good night" her tone of voice had changed, sounded like how Narcissa had been before she lost her mind. It was a small hope, but Draco had learned to cling to it.

"Draco, honey, what's wrong?" asked Pansy reaching over and taking Draco's hand.

"Nothing," said Draco patting her hand. "What did you find, Blaise?"
"Oh, you're going to love this, Draco," said Blaise reaching into his robe and pulled out a folder.

"You actually found something," said Pansy in surprise. Blaise laughed sheepishly.

"Yeah, but it wasn't easy," said Blaise still sheepish and rubbed the back of his neck. He set the file on the table.

"What's wrong, Blaise," asked Draco picking the file up.

"I found something on James Black, just not a lot."

"Not a lot?" Draco looked at Blaise in surprise. "How can you say you didn't find a lot? He should be listed. His background should be on file. You're telling me you can't find on Apparation ticket?"

"It took awhile because he didn't use a Portkey or Apparate to get here. He flew on what Muggles call…. What was it?" He picked up the file from Draco and looked through it. "Aero-plane, it's this big metal vehicle they flew over seas in. Well, Black flew on one from America so he could teach here. That's the first anyone's ever heard of him."

"The first," asked Pansy looking at the file. "No family? No friends? Surely there must be something."

"No, nothing," said Blaise. "Up till a few months ago, James Back didn't exist."

"A mystery upon a mystery," said Draco.

"But I knew you'd want something, so I dug further back," said Blaise going through the file and take out a paper. "It seems that about six years ago, a James Black flew to Scotland on one of those Muggle contraptions from London."

"So he had been spotted," said Pansy.

"Only in passing, not by reputation," said Blaise. "Other then that, he fell of the worldly map."

"So a dead end," asked Pansy putting the paper she was holding down.

"Maybe," said Blaise picking up another paper. "Maybe not. Any on of these guys look familiar?"

Draco looked at the pictures on the paper. They were of a men with different shades of dark hair and eyes either green, blue or hazel. Each wore glasses, but that wasn't the strangest thing from what Draco saw. Each man had the same face that was vaguely familiar to him.

"Potter," he said in amazement. Except for the picture in the in the paper at the Quidditch game Draco had not seen any evidence of his former rival.

"Or James," said Pansy. Both wizards looked at her in interest. "He was wearing glasses when I gave him McGonagall's message. He rarely wears them, or so he says, and I don't know how he can see without them?"

"These men here are Collin Wolff of Scotland, Theodore Fredricks of New York, and Cedric Evans from France," said Blaise. "They look alike, have almost to no background, and disappeared after two years."

"The same man," said Draco in thought. "But different names. Why would he do this? What could have been so bad that he wanted to hide who he was?"
"He won't be the first to run from the Wizarding World after the Dark War," said Pansy. "Hundreds of people separated themselves from the Magical Community, hiding where they were and changing their names. Why are their own reasons?"

"And you'll have to find his on your own," said Blaise. "I've done my part. I even had to pull favors from my contacts in Scotland, France and America. I can't do anymore."

"Thanks Blaise. This'll do," Draco gathered up the file and put the papers away. "I have gotten my answer and have more questions."

"I keep telling you to talk to him," said Pansy. "He's a nice guy with interesting stories."

"Stories that have me guessing for weeks."

"Is that so bad?" asked Blaise and Draco gave him a look. "All right. All right. But still, the only way to get more information is from the hippogriff's mouth."

"Hear all, trust nothing," said Pansy. "But just with rumors. Not the truth."

Draco gave them a humorous smile. "Of course."

"Seriously, Draco. This could be a good thing for you," said Pansy. "Unless he is hiding that he's a serial killer I suppose."

"I'm glad I have your approval," said Draco. "What about you, Blaise?"

"Hey, now, I've never met the guy," said Blaise. "All I hear are the good things about him, and if he's half as good as the stories say, then go for it. He's perfect for you."

"Is this all you found out about him," asked Draco. Blaise shuffled through the papers.

"I think that's everything….No, wait. There was something else." He pulled out a paper. "He goes to Scotland under the name of Colin Wolff once a month."

"Why?" asked Pansy.

"I don't know. He goes, stays a few days, then leaves. He's been doing it for five years. Maybe he's meeting someone. Friend, relative, lover, who knows?"

"So much information yet so little at the same time," said Pansy. "Is that possible in a man?"

"Is it possible for a man to disappear off the face of the earth?" asked Draco as a knock sounded. Draco walked to the door to open it at Blaise waved his wand and made all the papers stack in the file again and put in back under his robes. Only when the papers were hidden did Draco open the door to reveal a smiling James Black standing casually in the doorway wearing a pair of blue jeans and a black shirt with a skull wreathed in blue flames.

"Black, where in the name of Merlin did you get that shirt," asked Draco.

Black shrugged. "A Muggle store. I saw it, thought it looked cool and it was cheap so I bought it." He nodded a greeting to Pansy and Blaise. "Professor Zabini, good evening."

"Please, James, call me Pansy. And this is my husband, Blaise."

Blaise nodded a greeting. "I like the shirt. Think you can get me one?"
"Blaise, are you serious?" asked Draco Blaise shrugged nonchalantly. Draco turned back to Black. "What are you doing here, Black?"

"I was hoping you were still up to that Seeker's game I offered you a few weeks ago," said Black, putting his hands in his pockets and leaned against the doorframe. Draco looked at him in surprise.

"Now? It's pitch black outside."

Black shrugged. "That just adds to the challenge. You coming?"

Draco paused for a moment. He didn't know it he should or if this mysterious man was toying with him.

"Draco, remember that thing we talked about," said Pansy. "Now would be a good time to go for it."

"Fine, but just to get you off my back," said Draco. "Come on, Black, let's get this over with."

Black smiled in a wide grin. "Come on. I know the perfect place to play."

"Not at the Pitch," asked Blaise. Black shook his head.

"Too boring. Come on, Draco. Good evening, Pansy, Mr. Zabini."

"Call me Blaise," said Blaise smiling. Black smiled back with a nod.

Draco sighed, grabbed his broom and walked out the door. Before he closed the door he heard Blaise speak to Pansy.

"I like him. He's good for Draco."

"I knew you would agree," said Pansy.

Draco closed the door and followed Black down the hall. It was then he noticed the other man wasn't carrying a broom.

"Where's your broom," asked Draco. Black turned to smile at him. Draco chest tightened at the smile but quickly schooled his face.

"I left it where we're going to fly. Don't worry. You're going to love it."

Draco shyly smiled back and followed Black down the hall and out of the castle. Black led Draco to the edge of the Forbidden Forest and Draco paused in fear. Since his the first time he entered the forest he had been too scared to return.

"Is there something wrong, Draco," asked Black turning back as he picked up his Firebolt.

"Are we going in there?" asked Draco.

"Not very far." Black reached into his pocket and brought out a Snitch. "I had a friend of mine make this so that it would light up every few seconds. Like a firefly. It can only go a mile in every direction."

"Only a mile," asked Draco in a challenging voice, but the fear of the forest was still in him. Black must have seen the fear because he gave Draco a short look before setting the Firebolt back down.

"If you want to do this another time then….."
"No," said Draco sharply. He wanted to spend time with Black and see if Pansy was right on him being a nice man. "A Malfoy doesn't cower in fear. Let's fly!"

Black smiled. "Let's fly," he agreed and released the Snitch. Both mounted their brooms and flew after it. The followed the pulsing light it gave off as they wove around trees and ducked under branches. Draco had to admit that it was thrilling, lead only by the dim moonlight as they wove through the trees. It wasn't long until both were reaching for the Snitch and Draco felt his fingers close around the surprisingly warm metal.

"It's warm," he said as he pulled his broom to a halt. He looked up to see Black's smiling face.

"It's the spell that makes it warm," explained Black with a laugh. "I haven't had this much fun since I was a school boy!"

"Neither have I," said Draco with a small laugh.

"Best two out of three?"

Draco gave Black his classic smirk. "Are you up for it?"

Black gave Draco a smirk back that sent a shiver down his spine. "Oh, I am definitely up for it."

Draco smile and released the Snitch. Both were laughing like teenagers as they flew after it.
"Draco, what's up?"

Draco turned from the window when the first winter snow fell gently from the silver grey clouds. December came cold and every student rushed from class to class to keep out of the chilly corridors. Draco had been standing by the window watching the snow fall when Black up to him and stood beside him to watch the snow fall.

"Beautiful day," said Black putting his hands in his pocket. He wore a Christmas sweater with red, green and white strips.

"Yes," said Draco.

"Congratulations on the Slytherin/Ravenclaw match," said Black. "That move Morgan Montague did was brilliant. I wouldn't have thought of it."

"She heard of a move Potter did during his time here and improvised on it," said Draco. "She's brilliant on a broom. If she works at it, she could make it to a national team."

He nodded and looked out the window. Watching the match brought back memories of his time as House Seeker and all the other time he flew on his broom. Harry had always loved to fly and flying on an airplane wasn't the same as a broom. It was too confining and he had feared the plane would crash and second.

The Seekers Game he and Black played a week ago had lasted half the night and had both teachers laughing at the end of it. The nostalgia and thrill of flying made both men panting but still ecstatic over the challenge of flying in a forest at night. Draco agreed they should do it again and both left with a friendly handshake.

In the days after both James Black and Draco had been on friendly terms. They would discuss teaching methods and past events they were comfortable with. For Draco it was Quidditch matches he had won and his rivalry with Harry Potter. He stayed clear of the subject about his parents and Black never pushed. Black spoke about evenings with his family and never by name, which he thought was odd but he didn't push. Both were happy with the arrangement and spent hours talking over nothing.

"Want to go to Hogsmeade with me tomorrow," asked Black. Draco looked at Black in surprise.

"Go on is out….on a date?" asked Draco nervously. Black laughed in embarrassment.

"Actually I was thinking I could hang out with a friend for a bit but if you want to go on a date….." Black let the question hang and looked over at Draco.

"Hang out with a friend is fine with me," said Draco with a smile. Black smiled back.

"I was hoping you were going to say that," said Black. "I have some Christmas shopping to do. I have to get some gifts for the Weasley's and my friends overseas. Second option and all that. Kids stuff are the hardest."

"Kids?" asked Draco curiously.

"Just Ron and Hermione's and a friend has a son overseas. I do think of them as my niece and
nephews. I love kids. I always wanted a family."

"Do you have any kids?" asked Draco. Black paused for a moment before speaking again.

"I'll meet you in the courtyard at nine," he said. "Is that all right with you?"

"You're avoiding the question, Black," said Draco. "Why won't you answer the question?"

"I believe that's a question I have no right to answer," said Black walking away. "I'll see you later, Draco."

He left, leaving a very confused Draco.

"You asked him out?" asked Hermione a while later. She had asked Harry to join her on a visit to see Ron and the kids that weekend. When he refused, she asked why and he explained. Hermione had stared at him in shock for a minute before getting over it. "On a date?"

"I asked him to hang out with me for the day," said Harry. "It's not a date."

"If it quakes like a duck, it has to be a duck. You're sure you're not filming me here, 'cause it's not funny."

Harry smiled. "Look, Hermione, he doesn't have any friends except Parkinson and Zabini, sees his mother once a month and his father's six feet under. He spends his whole time in this school." He sat back in his chair. "He's messed up like Snape, paranoid and only living on past regrets."

"I'm amazed you said that, Harry," said Hermione. "After all the torture he put you through, you held great respect the man."

"I still do, I just don't want anyone else to wind up like him," said Harry sipping his cup of coffee. After a thoughtful moment he added cream.

"And you think Malfoy could be heading down that road," asked Hermione.

"Draco *is* down that road." Harry took a sip of his coffee, nodded in satisfaction and took another sip. He sat back in his chair with melancholic sigh. "My mother left her childhood friend, married my dad and never spoke to Snape again. All because Snape made a mistake all those years ago. Draco makes the same mistakes, but I'm going to do the one thing Mum never did with Snape. Forgive him."

"But Malfoy was never our friend. Snape was your mother's friend. There was betrayal in what Snape did to Lily. Malfoy never betrayed us."

"In a way, he did," said Harry leaning forward. "At least to me. A rival is either wants three things from their opponent; a reason to push himself forward, or someone who truly hates their opponent, or someone who secretly wants to be the other person's friend. Draco is of the third reason. We pushed each other to our limits, as any rival would, and in a way that made us friends. And when he became a Death Eater, my heart stopped for a second. I was in shock because a boy I saw as a bully had just became a villain. I felt like what Mum did with Snape all those years ago. I felt betrayed."

"And now?" asked Hermione.

"He's lost, like a lot of us." 'Like me.'
The next morning Draco woke early and started going through his closet, trying to decide on what to wear. Ishara was just curling out of her hiding place and looking for a meal. Draco quickly fed her a mouse and went back to his closet. He wanted to wear something that would complement the outfit he knew Black was going to wear. But he had more formal clothes than casual because of his role as a teacher, and the casual clothes he did have were fashionable. After a quick shower he went through his closet again.

And that was how Pansy found him an hour later, changing outfits around on his bed or hovering in the air.

"Big date," she asked in a teasing voice. Draco looked over at her with a glare.

"It's not a date!" he said angrily, a slight embarrassed blush to his cheek. "I'm just going to spend the day with Black."

"Going out with James Black? It sounds like a date."

"He calls it two friends hanging out."

"Must be a Muggle thing," said Pansy looking at the pile of clothes that occupied Draco's bed. "But you want to be more then friends?"

"I didn't say that," said Draco looking at the casual green shirt and black pants. He set the pants down and picked up another.

"You didn't say it vocally but the way you acted did." Walking over to the pile Pansy pulled out a casual white shirt, green sweater vest and black pants. "Wear these."

Draco took the clothes, gave them a quick once over and shrugged. "Better then nothing," he said and Pansy laughed.

"Oh, I'll bet Black would love that," she said.

"Ha-ha," said Draco picking up the clothes and went to his bathroom to change. A half hour later he walked out to the courtyard to meet Black. The man was already waiting for him in the courtyard, leaning against a wall and watched the snow fall. He wore a grey shirt that had a red fire emblem on its right shoulder and blue jeans. He didn't wear a robe but a Muggle jacket and his silver earring was in place. He looked up when Draco arrived and smiled.

"Ready to go," he asked and Draco nodded. Black still smiled and led Draco down the path to Hogsmeade.

"Three Broomsticks or Honeydukes," asked Draco.

"Actually, there is a new book in Hodgins I wanted to get," said Black somewhat nervous.

"Which book?"


"You read The Merlin Chronicles?" said Draco.

"Yeah, I know they're not very popular and are probably only read for their historical content more then the story line...."
"Oh no, that's not it," said Draco. "It's just that I read The Merlin Chronicles too."

"You do," asked Black in surprise.

"Yes, you didn't know?"

Black shook his head. "No, I've never met anyone else who reads The Merlin Chronicles, well except Hermione, and she only read them for their historical content."

"Yes, I read them all the time. I have a set at home and at the school in my chambers. Have you read the one where he's trapped by the dragon? Do you think it's still there?"

"Probably just bones now," said Black. "What about the one with the griffins?"

"He's probably the reason why they're afraid of bees," said Draco and both laughed.

They walked to the bookstore and each grabbed a copy of the newest Merlin Chronicles. Black also grabbed a copy of Nimue in Love for Hermione, hoping that a bit of fiction would take her mind off text books, and The Wizard's Brigade for Rose who was as much a book lover as her mother. Draco was looking over new potion books.

They left a few minutes later, each with a package bag in hand. They made a few more stops before buying sweets at Honeydukes and going to the Three Broomsticks.

"So, beside a teacher, what other jobs did you have?" asked Draco as they waited for their butterbeer. A fireball floated in the middle of the table to cast a soft glow and warmth for their cold hands.

"Well, they all were Muggle," said Black. "This is the first wizard job I've had. I was a waiter, a tour guide for the Loch Ness, a Broadway actor, and a racer."

"What did you race," asked Draco.

"Cars," said Black as Rosemerta handed them mugs of butterbeer. "The hard part was keeping the engine running."

"Do they really use oil to get cars to move?" asked Draco. Black nodded.

"Yeah," he said taking a sip. "It's actually called gasoline." And he went into basic car mechanics. Draco tried to go along but it was more difficult then potions in his opinion, but he listened attentively.

"Did you have to repair any cars," he asked. Black seemed surprised that Draco was interested in a Muggle invention.

"A few times without a wand. It was messy but it was actually fun to solve a problem."

"Which job was the worst?"

"The tour guide, definitely," said Black. "The tourists were always complaining."

"Sounds like the students," said Draco and both laughed. "Which was your favorite?"

"So far, racing. It the closest to flying that Muggles can get in my opinion." Black picked up his mug and smiled at Draco. "But I think I could get into teaching."
Draco smiled as they drank their butterbeer and continued to talk. They talked about Quidditch, books and music. The talk continued till Rosemerta closed shop and they walked back to the castle.

"Do you mind if I walk you to your room," asked Black.

"I think you asked me that one not long ago," said Draco smiling.

"Oh, and what was your answer?" Black was also smiling.

"I believe I said no," said Draco.

"And now?"

"I think I can handle it." Both smiled and Black hold out his arm theatrically. Draco laughed, took Black's arm and Black lead Draco in the school. The students were already at dinner and Black and Draco were hungry, only drinking butterbeer and eating finger foods all day.

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"How was your time at Hogsmeade," asked Hermione as they sat down and Harry smiled at her.

"I'm not telling you what I got you for Christmas," he said.

"Oh man," said Hermione humorously. "I thought I had you this time."

Harry laughed and turned to see a smiling Malfoy. Dinner was spaghetti, garlic bread and salad and it appeared with as much grace as Harry remembered. Large horned owl flew in the hall with a large rectangular package. Harry's face paled when the owl landed in front of him.

"Who knows you're here," asked Hermione under her breath.

"No one," said Harry as Malfoy reached for the card tied to the box.

"I'll continue to wait till we're together again," read Malfoy. "Do you have a girlfriend, Black?"

"Not that I know of," said Harry taking the card.

"A boyfriend?" asked Hermione and Malfoy looked at her curiously. Harry didn't answer. His gaze was fixed on the card. "Ha-Hey, James, are you all right?"

When Harry didn't answer the second time Hermione reached over and opened the box. And screamed. Everyone turned to Harry, Hermione and Malfoy. Pansy jumped from her seat with a look of disgust. Inside the box was a dozen of what had been white roses, but where now rotten and moldy with maggots crawling around it.

"Good God," said Hermione covering her mouth to keep from being sick.

"That's disgusting," said Pansy.

"I think I've lost my appetite," said Malfoy gulping down the bile that threatened to exit his throat.

"Agreed," said Harry taking out his want. "Evanesceo."

The note, roses and insects disappeared and Harry left the Great Hall. Hermione and Malfoy lollled him, leaving Pansy to settle down the students.
"James, wait up," called Hermione finally catching up with Harry and Malfoy caught his arm.

"Black, what's wrong?" he asked. "Do you know who sent the card? There was no name."

"Someone I thought I left behind a long time ago," said Harry.

"Who?" asked Hermione.

"I don't want to talk about it," said Harry in a stern voice and turned to leave.

"But…"

"I said I don't want to talk about it!" Both Hermione and Malfoy jumped at the intensity of Harry's voice and when a gush of wind almost blew them off their feet. Harry paused to collect himself and sighed. "I'm sorry, but this is something I want to forget."

Hermione made a protest but Malfoy touched her arm to silence her.

"It's all right, Black," said Malfoy. "We understand, and we won't bother you about it again. But if you're ready to talk, we're here to listen."

Harry sighed grateful. "Thanks," he said and looked at Hermione.

"I'll still be worried through," she said giving Harry what she hoped was a cheerful smile. Harry smiled back.

"I wouldn't have it any other way," he said. After kissing Hermione on the cheek in gratitude he smiled at Malfoy and left for his chambers, his fist clenched tight. When he was out of sight Hermione turned to Malfoy.

"Thanks for stopping me, Malfoy," she said. "I was about to say something stupid and I would have made him madder. Even after all these years I can't keep my mouth shut."

"I know the feeling," said Malfoy. "But save some of that anger for the students. They'll need it more, and I understand his reasons on keeping secrets. There are some things even friends shouldn't know about. Not yet anyway." He turned to her in thought. "You care about him. Like you do for Potter."

"There are times when I think he is Harry," she said softly as a voice called out and they turned to see Harding walking toward them.

"What's this I hear about James getting rotten flowers," he asked.

"We're trying to keep it quiet for the students," said Malfoy.

"Do you know who sent it to him," asked Harding looking over at Hermione.

"The card wasn't signed," said Hermione with a red face. "We don't know who sent it."

Harding nodded thoughtfully and turned to Malfoy.

"I heard you and James had a date today," he said. Draco could hear a bit of jealousy and anger in his voice.

"It wasn't a date," said Malfoy. "We just spent the day together and talked."
"That's what a date means," said Harding with a tight tone. Draco could feel the anger coming from the other man.

"I don't think any of this is your business," he said in a voice he used to order reluctant students to do what they were supposed to. Harding just shrugged and smile.

"I was just curious," he said. "I didn't mean any harm by it." He turned to Hermione. "How have you been, 'Mione?"

"All right," she said a bit surprised.

"How is your husband? Ron, isn't it? And your children, Rose, Hugo and Julian?"

"They're fine," she said even more surprised. "Thank you for asking."

Harding smiled handsomely at her and left. Hermione watched him leave with surprise confusion.

"That was strange," she said.

"What do you mean, Granger," asked Malfoy.

"How did he know my kid's and Ron's names," she asked. "And the nickname Harry and Ron gave me, only they call me "'Mione"."

Draco watched the American teacher leave with a confused frown.
The Rundown

As Christmas neared and anticipation for the winter holidays perforated the air everyone noticed how irritated Professor Black had become since the arrive of the rotten flowers. He would jump at the slightest unexpected noise. Everyone learned to be careful around Harry, even Hermione who had known Harry the longest. She was finding it hard to harm Harry with his nervousness.

The only person Harry didn't snap at was Teddy. The first year Gryffindor was the only person in the whole school that could keep Harry calm. Hermione privately suspected it was because Teddy reminded Harry of the boy's parents so much Harry couldn't get mad at him. But it didn't stop Harry from snapping at the other students.

"Harry, you have to stop snapping at everyone," said Hermione. "Whoever sent you those roses wanted to scare you, and from what I can see it's working. Come on, Harry, you've faced worse then this."

"Hermione, I'm fine," said Harry trying to reason his friend as he gathered his lesson sheets. "It's not as bad as it seems. I really am fine."

Hermione gave Harry an angry skeptical look "You're hiding something, Harry. You never hide anything from Ron or me. Not even when you killed yourself to stop Voldemort."

Harry picked up the test sheets and smiled at Hermione. "There's a lot about me you don't know, Hermione," he said and left his quarters.

And walked into his fourth year class. The entire class was silent and sitting in their seats, each with an anxious expression on their faces. Harry gave them an amused smile.

"I don't bite as you well know," he said. "Not to begin class. Voodoo, or the art of herbal magic, can only be affect if they are believed to be real. Now, how voodoo began goes back to the beginning of magic itself....."

Hermione paced back and forth in her office between classes. The way Harry was acting was strange to her. She had known Harry for too long to know when her friend was pushing her away from a subject. And the way Harry was avoiding her was also strange.

Harry had always confided in her and Ron, even when he was in hiding. Harry had never disclosed locations or names, in case his letters were intercepted by the media, but he would sufficiently tell them how he was and each time sign as with an alias. They would know it was him by the way he wrote and the stag stamped in red wax in the right hand corner below the name.

Her fire flared and she turned to see Ron's head in the green flames.

"What's this about Harry freaking out," asked Ron. "Does it have anything to do with the rotten roses that were sent to him?"

"I don't know, Ron," said Hermione sitting in the chair in front of the fireplace. "I mean, he's pushing me away and I'm afraid he's going to snap. He's lucky he hasn't already. Whoever sent him those roses is really freaking him out."

"Harry's never been like that," said Ron. "I've seen him mad but I never seen him freaked out. It's not
"Send me copies of Harry's letters," said Hermione. "I want to find any clues on who could have sent Harry those roses."

"Should I talk to Dean in Magical Transportation?"

"Please and thank you," said Hermione. She heard a sound on the other side and frowned. "What's going on?"

"Just a sec," said Ron and he pulled his head out for a minute before returning. "Yeah, the kids want to say hi."

Hermione smiled. "All right, let them through."

"Hi, Mummy," said Rose. Hermione smiled at her daughter. "Hugo wants to know when you'll be home."

"This weekend, honey," said Hermione. "Mummy and Uncle Harry are coming this weekend."

Rose cheered and turned back to the others. "Did you hear that, Hugo? Uncle Harry's coming!"

There came cheering on the other side and Rose turned back to Hermione. "Juli misses Uncle Harry. Keeps wanting to hear "On the Road Again" from him. Daddy's voice is scratchy."

"My voice is just fine, Rose," came Ron's voice and Hermione giggled. "And don't call him Juli."

Hermione looked over at the clock. "I'm sorry, honey, but I have to go back to class. Fifth years. I love you and tell the others I love them and to behave for your father."

"Yes, Mummy. See you this weekend." And Rose left. The fire went back to normal. Hermione smiled as she gathered her books for the class. A weekend at home might do Harry some good.

Harry hummed as he cleaned up after his last class. Nothing out of place had happened so far and his students were more attentive on the lesson. Harry supposed it was because they were scared of making their teacher angry but Harry showed not antagonism toward his students and avoided the teachers, at least Hermione. His old friend seemed determined to find out what had spooked Harry when he received the roses, but Harry wasn't telling. A secret was a secret.

Harry walked out of the classroom and walked down to the Great Hall. If there was one thing he wasn't late for it was a meal. When he walked through the doors the students looked at him in interest but quickly went back to their meals and conversations. Harry smiled at them and walked to the teachers table.

"The students are acting a bit jumpy lately," he said sitting down and sirloin ribs with peas, garlic mashed potatoes appeared. A basket of rolls and a stick of butter moved within reach and he grabbed a roll and smeared butter on it.

"Well, when one of their teachers is freaking out, that will make most kids jumpy," said Hermione.

"Ha-ha," said Harry cutting his ribs.

"Ron insisted that you come over this weekend. Think you could come?" Hermione paused to allow Harry a moment to think. "The kids miss you."
"Well, I do love kids." Harry smiled at her and he nodded. "I'll be there."

"How was your day, Black," asked Malfoy sitting in the seat next to Harry. Harry smiled at him. Ever since the roses arrived Malfoy had also been trying to find out who sent them. Harry didn't know if it was because Malfoy considered him a friend or because the blonde was naturally curious and was looking for something to hold against him.

"Uneventful, except for Lupin working a spectacular Flippindo. I have never seen a person fly that high since, well ever."

"I heard it was nearly ten feet high," said Pansy joining in. "Didn't Potter slip Weasley eleven and a half feet?"

Harry felt his face flush and he caught himself from choking on a piece of meat. He never liked people talking about his accomplishments and it made it even worse when they talk about school accomplishments. Through the people praised him, Harry wasn't proud of what he had done, and people reminding him made him feel worse about it.

"If I remember correctly, Malfoy had been taunting Harry before class started," said Hermione. "So there was a reason why Harry put some force behind the spell."

"I was teasing," said Malfoy with a mischievous smile.

"Taunting."

"Teasing."

"You guys know the Harry Potter," asked Harding and Harry coughed around his ribs. "The Savior of the Wizarding World? The Boy-Who Lived?"

"Are you okay," asked Malfoy in concern as Harry continued to cough. Hermione began smacking his back to get Harry to breathe again.

"Yeah," he said when he could breathe again. "Yeah, I'm fine. Thanks, Hermione."

"Hermione?" asked Harding. "Hermione Granger?"

"It's Weasley now," said Hermione, a slight blush on her cheeks.

"Ronald Weasley?"

"Yes," said Hermione and Harding laughed.

"God, I'm eating with a living legend! I've been dying to meet with you, Weasley and Potter for ages!"

"Don't rub it in," said Hermione glancing at Harry. Harry made every attempt he could to ignore them but the conversation could be heard even when he didn't want to hear.

"I have to go," he said putting his fork down and leaving his half finished meal. "A lot of papers to grade."

"All right," said Hermione. "I'll talk to you later then?"

"Sure," said Harry and left the Great Hall. He was about to enter his office when Teddy called out for him.
"Professor James," called Teddy running up to him. "My Flippindo, did you think it was too much?"

"No," said Harry. "That was the best I've ever seen. Remember that the further you throw him, the easier it will be to get away."

Teddy smiled for a moment before talking softly. "For a moment there, you sounded like my godfather."

"Your godfather?" asked Harry curiously, leaning against the wall and putting his hands in his pocket. He knew enough about Teddy to guess what the boy was saying, but it was best to hear it and to tell it to a stranger took more courage then anything.

"He's always away, but if I needed anything he would run to my side to help me," said Teddy. "He's a very important man, but he doesn't like people reminding him about what he did. But he's a great guy. You remind me of him." Teddy looked up at Harry. "Helping the students, making me laugh. I miss him."

"You'll see him again soon," said Harry putting a hand on Teddy's shoulder. "I'm sure of it."

"I'm proud of him," said Teddy. "I never told him, but I am. I didn't want to add to his problems."

"Mr. Lupin," began Harry before sighing and he smiled down at him. "Teddy, if your godfather is anything like you said he is I'm sure he knows."

"Thanks, Professor James."

"Hey, James," called a voice and both looked up to see Harding head toward them. Harry moved slightly closer to Teddy. "I never asked how you were. I heard about the roses. Talk about gross!"

"I remember not seeing you that day," said Harry. "And I'm fine. Thank you."

"Hey, listen," said Harding scratching his blonde hair. "We kind of got off on the wrong foot. I don't know why you don't like me, but I would like for us to be friends."

Harding held his hand out to Harry and Harry had a flashback of an eleven year old boy with blonde hair a shade lighter then Harding's and storm grey eyes holding out his hand to Harry as a token. Harry silently laughed at the thought.

"You've got it wrong, Harding," said Harry. "It's not that I don't like you. It's that you remind me of a guy I don't like."

"Anyone I know," asked Harding with a charming smile but Harry didn't fall for it.

"Possibly," said Harry. "I don't know who you've met before you came here." He turned to Teddy. "I'll take you to your House, Mr. Lupin."

"All right," said Teddy and they headed down the hall.

"Hey, James," called Harding and Harry turned to look back at him. "How about we go out and get a drink together sometime?"

Harry paused for a moment in thought. "I'll think about it."

And he walked around the corner toward Gryffindor Tower.

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"Still musing over Black," asked Blaise as he sat next to Pansy in Draco's chambers. Blaise had been visiting Pansy more and Pansy left for the Zabini Villa every weekend. Draco felt they were up to something, but didn't ask what. Whatever business they spoke of as a couple remained theirs.

"Ever since he got those roses it's like he's in a battle field," said Draco. "I've only seen that after the war, with Father."

When the war ended Lucius had nightmares and had been anxious for weeks afterward, convinced the Dark Lord was still alive, living in the Manor and terrorizing his family. He was set a curfew for Draco and insisting on knowing where Draco was going. The Healer, a Muggle they visited to avoid the press, called it Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. He explained that most war veterans came down with it and told Draco and Narcissa what to expect and how to help Lucius cope. He also warned that Lucius may never recover. A few months later, Lucius committed suicide.

"You think Black is a war veteran?" asked Pansy in surprise.

"He's a veteran of some kind of war," said Draco. "He's been on time for class now."

That only caught Pansy by surprise. "No way?"

"You didn't know?"

"No!"

"Why is that unusual," asked Blaise. "Aren't teachers always on time for classes?"

"Not Black," said Pansy. "That man's made a habit of being fashionably late for every class."

"That's different."

"You have no idea," said Draco with a smirk.

"Maybe it was a bad breakup," said Pansy thoughtfully.

"What do you mean," asked Blaise. Pansy scoffed.

"Now, honestly. The fact that the person sent Black roses says that whoever sent them is in love with Black."

"But there were worse then the roses," said Draco.

"That means that whoever sent the flowers hated how Black treated him."

"Black is a great guy," said Blaise. "I don't see him doing anything wrong."

"You'd be surprised," said Draco.

"Add the fact that Black knows who sent it makes it even worse," said Pansy.

"The person knows where Black is," said Blaise. "And might try to harm him."

"Do you think so," asked Draco.

"It's the only logical solution," said Pansy. "If you want to talk to him, talk to him. But take it slow, don't push him. He's a man with secrets and won't be willing to share them with just anyone."
Draco nodded and sipped the Scotch in his hands. Pansy and Blaise left a while later to spend some time alone. Draco needed to think anyway, so he walked out of his chambers and walked down the hall.

James Black had made life interesting at Hogwarts. Before the only thing Draco could look forward to was his monthly visit to his mother. Now he was listening in on the students' whispered conversations of their classes with him and couldn't wait until the next lesson. He tried to figure out what made Black such a likable guy, but couldn't quite piece the puzzle together.

Draco looked up when he heard footsteps and saw said mentioned man walking down the hall. Black was known for stay up late and walking the halls. It was also known only to staff that James Black had a bad time to get to sleep and since the rotten roses incident it had became increasingly hard for the teacher to get to sleep.

"Black," called out Draco and Black turned to him. "Still having a hard time sleeping?"

"Yeah," said Black. "I've tried everything except a Sleeping Potion."

"Why not," asked Draco and Black chuckled.

"What if I sleep and...that person attacks me. I don't think so. I'm also scared that Harding's going to try and molest me. The guy won't leave me alone. Like a love-sick puppy."

"He's hitting on you?" asked Draco following Black down the hall. "He doesn't seem the type to go for guys, always talking to the women."

"Trust me, guys like him don't care about gender as long as they get some."

"Personal experience?"

"Something like that. Knew a person who dated a guy like that. Love'em and leave'em."

"And Harding reminds you of the guy that left your friend?" Black didn't answer. "Listen, Black, if you don't want to talk about it, that's all right. You have secrets and Merlin knows I do. I won't force you to talk about something you obviously don't want to."

And Draco turned to walk down the opposite hall. He was almost out of hearing range when Black spoke softly.

"You have changed," he said and Draco turned back to him.

"Excuse me?"

"Nothing," said Black. "The guy that Harding reminds me of, well, let's just say he wasn't a very nice guy. He wanted to keep my friend all to himself, always pushed away from others. He wouldn't let my friend make any friends."

"He sounds possessive."

"He was."

"Did she get away? You're a wizard. You could have Confunded him or something and helped her escape."

"I, uh...ah, had sworn off magic for a while."
"Why? Did someone you know get killed by magic or something?"

"Or something," said Black and leaned against a window, looking down at the grounds below.

"You're evasive, Black," said Draco after a minute. "You agree with any story a person comes up with about you and tell your life in bits and pieces. You say you don't get along with your relatives that raised you, yet you talk about your family like it's the happiest thing in the world. And you don't name names."

"Family doesn't end in blood," said Black and looked back at a slightly confused Draco. "The family I mentioned cared for me 'cause my relatives never did. They never cared about what I did or who I was to others, just what I was to them. And as for my evasive life, before I left to travel, that's just who I am."

Draco studied Black for a long minute. Even when telling the truth he was evasive. Why would someone live like that, suspicious of everyone and keeping everyone a mile away? Obviously he wasn't a good liar or else he wouldn't be telling his life story, but he also didn't want people to know who he was.

"You're a mystery, James Black," he said. "I like mysteries."

"I think you'll find me a challenge," said Black pushing off the wall and smiling at Draco. "I happen to like mysteries as well. Like where you go once a month? Why the son of the richest wizard family in Britain is working in the dank dungeons of a castle, and why you haven't gotten serious with anyone in a while."

"How do you know I haven't been with anyone for a while," asked Draco.

"I have eyes, Draco, and a brain. I'm not as dumb as I make myself out to be."

"I can tell. And to your last question, I just haven't found someone who'll compliment me."

Black smiled. "I can understand that," he said. Draco smiled back.

"I thought you would."
Harry waved his wand and a string of fairy lights hung around the room. All around him the living room of Grimmauld Place was being decorate for the coming anticipated holiday. A corner had been prepared for the tree and the fire place would also be decorated with stockings but those came later.

Ever since Harry's talk with Malfoy, Harry had been less nervous and he managed to sleep more. That morning Harry had slept till nearly ten and both his friends let him sleep in. He did feel about the white lie he told Malfoy about his past but he did like that Malfoy was starting to become a friend. He found Malfoy interesting and enjoyable to be around. Back in Hogwarts, Malfoy had been a bully Harry tolerated. Now he was a friend Harry hoped would last a long time.

"Where is Ron with the tree," asked Hermione in a huff coming from the kitchen with a tray of cookies. "They'll be here any minute."

"Relax, Hermione," said Harry. "They're plane doesn't land for an hour."

"You never know! Schedules change all the time. They could have landed and we'd never would have known."

"If they did land they would have called me. I do have a cellular phone and it does work."

Hermione huffed. "I guess you're right. It's just it's their first Christmas here and I want everything to be perfect. Teddy and Andromeda's coming tomorrow and your guests are coming. I just want them to see what Christmas is like for our kind."

"Okay," said Harry in a firm tone. "Don't say "our kind". It brings back bad memories."

"Sorry," said Hermione shamefully.

"Second, Christmas is the same for them as it is for us. As you well know. Everything will be fine."

"I guess you're right," said Hermione. "It's just the first time we've had guests over for Christmas."

"Hermione, they're going to love it," said Harry putting a hand on Hermione's back and smiled at her. Hermione smiled back as the door opened and Ron walked through.

"Ron, there you are," said Hermione. "Where's the tree? We still have to decorate it."

"The tree's on the car," said Ron slightly disturbed. "I'll, uh, I'll go get it."

"Ron, what's wrong?" asked Harry surprised that something was wrong with his friend.

"Guys, I don't know how to tell you this, but I just got an owl from the head of my department. Katie's gone missing," said Ron. Harry and Hermione looked at him in shock.

"Missing?" said Harry.

"How?" asked Hermione.

"We don't know," said Ron. "Whoever did it used very little to no magic. Oliver came home for Christmas and found Katie gone, clean as whistle. No sign of a struggle, no evidence of who took her or when."
"The baby?" asked Hermione.

"Put in her crib asleep and woke up as if from a nap." Hermione sighed in relief. "I've asked the investigation to be put on hold but only for a little while. I wanted to see if there was any Muggle means that the culprit abducted Katie."

"You want me to check for fingerprints and strands of hair?" asked Harry.

"If you can," said Ron. "I told them you were a wizard who's working for the Muggle police department. I gave them one of your false names. I hope you don't mind."

Harry shook his head. "No, it's all right. Which name did you give them?"

"Colin Wolff. Come on, we better go."

Harry nodded. "Right, Hermione?"

"I'll hold down the fort here," she said. "I'll pick up Mary and Jamie and decorate the tree."

"Love you," said Ron kissing Hermione.

"Yeah, thanks Hermione," said Harry and kissed Hermione on the cheek. Hermione smiled back at him.

"I love you both, now go."

Harry and Ron hurried out the door and Disapparated when no Muggles were watching. they arrived just outside of the Wood Cottage and Harry lightened his hair to a sandy brown and changed his eye color to a hazel, keeping his glasses. With the disguise complete he quickly developed the person of Colin Wolff, once was tour guide in Scotland, but also a lover of crime novels and television programs.

Oliver Wood stood outside his cottage as Aurors worked around him, holding his daughter as if for dear life. He hardly changed since Harry first met him in his first year, only now burly instead of skinny. His daughter had pale hair and skin, natural for a baby, but Harry could tell she would look like Katie as she grows.

"Oliver Wood," said Harry and Oliver looked over at him. "Colin Wolff. Muggle London Police Department. I'm sorry to hear about your wife."

"I was already questioned by the Aurors," said Oliver. "I don't know who did this. Katie never made any enemies."

"I understand, Mr. Wood," said Harry and looked at the baby girl in his arms. "What's her name?"

"Olivia Kaitlyn," said Oliver. "Katie wanted to name her after me and I wanted to name her after Katie, so we compromised."

"It's a good name." Harry gently touch Olivia's head and turned to Oliver. "I will find your wife, Mr. Wood."

"Thank you, Mr. Wolff."

Harry nodded and walked inside, noting the six Aurors trying to detect any spells used in Katie's capture. Everything looked untouched and clean.
"We couldn't detect any spells used to unlock the door," said Ron. "According to Oliver, Katie locked the door the Muggle way. No spells were used. We can't even find a magical trace."

"He didn't use any," said Harry. "He picked the lock the Muggle way. Professional job too. Probably the same way Fred and George did our second year."

Ron nodded and wrote it down. Harry went up to Oliver.

"Mr. Wood, does your wife wear make up? Cover up or even blush?"

"Yes, why?" said Wood. Harry nodded and turned back to Ron. Waving his wand he created a box of latex gloves. He handed it to Ron.

"Pass these around," he told Ron. "Tell them to dust all hard surfaces. Do you keep fingerprint records?" Ron nodded. "Good. Tell them to catalog everything, finger prints, hair, and fibers. Anything and everything they find. I'll be right back."

"Why are we doing this?" asked an Auror.

"It's too clean. Too Muggle. More then likely he used chloroform then a Stun Charm. He made a lot of effort to avoid leaving any magical trace, strayed from any Muggle way that we might identify him with."

"I'll get right on it," said Ron and smiled at his friend. "You really are good at these things."

Harry smiled back at his friend. "You're just happy I dated a cop."

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Harry Apparated in the alley behind the police station of the 27th precinct in London, walked around front taking off the Glamours as he did and stood at the reception desk, waiting to be noticed. The deputy supposedly on duty was listening to an MP3 player with his eyes closed and moving his head to a steady beat. Harry picked up a desk object, and dropped it loudly onto the desk. The guard jerked and looked up at him.

"Hey," he said. "I need to see Dudley Dursley. Is he here?"

"Hold on," said the guard and picked up the phone. He spoke softly for a few seconds before turning back to Harry. "Your name?"

"Harry Potter," he said and the guard repeated it. The guard replaced the phone and looked up at him.

"He'll be out soon." And he returned to his music. A minute later Dudley walked in wearing a police officer's uniform. The whale like boy transformed into a burly man, but it didn't make him any less broad. It had surprised not only Harry but also Vernon and Petunia when Dudley turned down professional boxing to become a law enforcement officer. Apparently Harry's sacrifice to save the relatives that did him wrong had impacted Dudley and he decided to make something of his life and joined the London police force. Dudley graduated top of his class and never resented his decision.

"Take off, Mike, I've got this," said Dudley.

"Hey, Big D, long time no see," said Harry shaking his cousin's hands.

"You could say that," said Dudley. "Nine years and all I get are Christmas and birthday cards."
"I attended your wedding seven years ago," said Harry defensively with a smile.

"I didn't see you," said Dudley in confusion.

"You weren't supposed to. How are Winifred and Isabella?" 

"They're fine. Isabella just turned five. She likes to be called Bella through. She, uh," He looked apprehensively at the guard, but the man was still listening to his music, volume up loud and nodding to the music. Dudley lowered his voice. "Bella has the gift, if you know what I mean. Like when you were younger and you made strange things happen. It skipped Mum and me, but she has it."

"I can teach her if you like," said Harry. "I met another kid and I am teaching him to control his gift. But I need something from you first."

"Sure, Harry, anything."

"There's been an incident where I live," explained Harry. "A woman I know was abducted by normal means. Don't ask me how, but I need a portable UV light."

"What? A UV light? Do you know how much trouble I'd be in if they find it missing?"

"It's just for a couple of hours, Dudley. I promise." Dudley sighed and nodded. Harry glanced inside. "Is Sam still here?"

"Yeah, he's inside with the equipment."

"Good, that's good. He can help us. He's Muggle-born. You tell him it's from me, why and he'll help. It'll be fine. Trust me."

Dudley nodded. "Okay. All right. But only for a couple of hours. Anymore and I'll be in major trouble."

"Thanks, Dudley. I owe you one."

"Damn right you do," said Dudley and went back inside the building. Harry sighed and leaned against the wall to wait.

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Draco was reading about a new potion from the apothecary college when one of the house elves he was allowed to have appeared with The Evening Prophet in his hands. The article was hardly interesting. It was just a potion that could give a person any talent he wanted for a limited amount of time. Draco didn't think it was very innovative, but he tore it out of the magazine and put it in his potion scrap-book. The lesson Lucius and Snape taught him when it came to politics and potion making, save and recognize everything. You don't know what might come in handy. /Draco took the newspaper and started to read it when the elf vanished to finish its original job. When he read the headline Draco looked in disbelief.

HOGWARTS TEACHER TAKEN FROM HOME!

Kaitlyn Wood, mother of newborn Olivia Kaitlyn Wood and wife of Oliver Wood, Keeper for the Irish Kenmore Kestral, had been taken from her home at approximately 5:07 pm today at the Wood Cottage, write Dennis Creevey. According to Aurors on scene, Kaitlyn (Katie) Woods had been home with baby Olivia waiting for Oliver Wood's return from practice. When Mr. Wood returned at 5:30 pm he found Katie gone and Olivia put to sleep, unharmed.
An investigator had been brought on scene and refused to give names or faces, but had reported that Katie Wood had been abducted by Muggle means, capture with little trouble and had apparently left the house unharmed. He stated it is possible that Katie knew her kidnaper, which would explain lack of evidence. Possible identity of the attacker remains unknown by both magical and Muggle means of identification.

There was a single picture of the house. Wood stood on the porch holding his baby girl with Aurors all around him, including Ron Weasley. Only one man remained with his back turned to the camera, shuffling his feet and seemed to be talking to Weasley. /Draco set the paper down and stood to look out the window. He had known Katie Bell but had never really gotten to know her, and tried to steer clear of her since they became teachers. He wasn't sure if anyone told her who had Imperiused her and given her the cursed necklace. Draco preferred to be safe then sorry.

Draco looked at the clock. He had hours before Pansy and Blaise's visit so it gave him enough time to go to St. Mungo's to visit Narcissa. Setting the paper down to continue to read later he left the study and walked down the hall. Malfoy Manor was empty, most of the furniture and anything not bolted down sold to pay for their living after the Ministry siege control of their assets and Lucius died without paying their debts. Most of the widely furnished rooms were now bare or covered with white sheets to keep the dust of. The only rooms not abandoned were the few guest rooms, the master bedroom, Library, study, conservatory and family room.

Taking the cloak offered him by Tixy he walked beyond the wards and Apparated to St. Mungo's. Hilary the nurse greeted him at the reception desk in the hardly filed waiting room and smiled up at him.

"Hello, Mr. Malfoy," she said. "How is your holiday?"

"Better then yours I expect," said Draco signing in. "I've been coming here for eight years and you have yet to call me by my first name."

"And get caught by my boss? I don't think so, no matter how much I want to."

"Is Long here?" asked Draco.

"No, off spending the holiday with family. You'll be alone today."

"Thanks, Hilary."

Hilary smiled at him. "Happy Christmas, Draco," she said. Draco smiled at her and went down the hall to the Malady Ward.

Narcissa was standing at the barred window when Draco walked in. Her sunflower hair had been braided and washed and a vase of fresh flowers added a pleasant scent to the room. A small tree was placed at the table to add some holiday cheer. Snow fell outside the enchanted window. The doll Draco had given her lay on the bed.

"Andy," said Narcissa. "Come here, Andy. Look at the sky. Do you think Mother will let us play outside today?"

"Hello, Mother. It's…Draco. Happy Christmas," he said hoping she would hear him somehow.

"I know it's not dignified, Bella, but we're just kids. We want to have fun."

"A woman I worked with got kidnapped earlier today. The Aurors don't know how or what happened. Her husband returned and she was gone."
"What do you think we'll get for Christmas, Andy? Do you think Mother got that blue dress I was looking at in Madam Malkin's? I really look good in blue."

"You look great in blue, Mother. I would have gotten you something but the Healers don't permit gifts to the patients."

"Why do you keep asking for Muggle stuff, Andy? You know Mother and Father don't approve."

"Pansy and Blaise are coming over today. They said they wanted to talk to me about something. And knowing them it's probably not a good thing."

"You were always brave, Andy. Braver then I'll ever be."

Draco swallowed as he heard his mother talk to her disowned sister. He knew his aunt had been eccentric, but brave wasn't how Draco would have described her. When Draco met his Aunt Andromeda she was grieving for her dead daughter, husband and son-in-law. Draco remembered how Narcissa braved the Dark Lord and Death Eaters to find her son.

"You are brave, Mum. Happy Christmas." And he turned to the door. Just as he opened it, Narcissa spoke again.

"Happy Christmas, D. You're my best friend."

Draco turned to look at his mother in surprise. "D" was the name Narcissa had called him away from his father's ears, but it was also the nickname of his aunt Andromeda or Andy as Narcissa called her at times. Draco didn't know if she was talking to him or her sister.

"I love you, Mum," he said and left. He said good-bye to Hilary before Apparating back to the Manor. Walking into the study he pulled out a pen and parchment and began writing.

_Dear Aunt Andromeda…_

"Draco, we're here," called Pansy some time later. Draco had already finished the letter and sent it. Now he went do to greet his friends. "I hope you don't mind, Tixy let us in."

"No, it's fine," said Draco. "Tixy, tea."

The elf bowed and disappeared to the kitchen.

"I hope you don't mind us not bringing presents with us," said Blaise.

"It's fine," said Draco sitting across from them. "You're company is all I need."

"Actually we do have a gift for you," said Pansy staring firmly at her husband. "If you accept it."

"What do you want to give me?" asked Draco perplexed.

"An heir," said Pansy happily. "I'll be more then happy to have your baby."

"Blaise?"

Blaise shrugged. "It was her idea. She planned everything from the smallest detail."

"I told you guys. I don't want a kid. I want to be the last."

"Draco, you really should have a kid. You're not your father and there's no Dark Lord to threaten
you," said Pansy.

"No, just the rest of the world," growled Draco crossing his arms.

"Think about it, Draco," said Blaise. "All we want is for you to be happy."

"I am happy."

"Really?" asked Pansy skeptically.

"Yes."

"Just think about it, Draco," said Pansy. "If you ever change your mind our offer stands."

"Oh, yeah," said Blaise after a stern look from his wife. "Any-Anytime."

"Master Malfoy," said Tixy appearing with a tea tray and a small package. "This has come for Master Malfoy by post owl, sir."

"A Christmas present?" asked Blaise as Draco too the package. "From whom?"

"I don't know," said Draco. He opened the package to find a green glass Chinese dragon with ruby eyes and silver highlights, a crystal sphere in its jaw.

"Pretty," said Pansy when Draco set it on the table. "Someone has good tastes."

"Is that a card," asked Blaise pointing to a square piece of paper that fell out of the box.

"Yeah, but all it says is "Happy Christmas"."

"No name?" asked Pansy picking up the dragon to look at it further.

"No name," said Draco, not shaking the feeling that the handwriting on the card was familiar.
Harry walked down the hall, happy to be back at Hogwarts. Christmas with the Weasley's was like it was when he was a teenager, except for the spouses. Ginny came with Krum and both were welcome after the long year apart. Molly had invited Oliver and his daughter over to try and cheer him up, continuously saying that Ron would find Katie and glaring at Ron to agree.

Ginny was ecstatic on seeing Harry again and Harry mostly talked to Krum. They spoke through the night over Quidditch tactics and Ron and George would join in. Ginny sometimes spoke up a suggestion but mostly talked with Hermione and Molly, both admiring Ginny's large belly.

Unfortunately Ron couldn't find a more evidence on who had taken Katie. Harry gave as much advice as he could on Muggle investigations but even that didn't get far. Ginny offered to stay and help with Olivia Katelyn and the Krum's moved into the Wood's Cottage.

"Professor James!"

Harry turned and smiled as Teddy ran toward him, still in casual clothes. From the look on the bag on his godson's shoulders, he had just come back from home.

"Hello, Teddy," said Harry smiling at him. "How was your holiday?"

"Great," said Teddy. "My godfather came to visit and even stayed past New Years. He's never done that before!"

"That's great, Teddy. That must have been a real surprise."

"It was. I wonder why he stayed longer."

"Maybe he had more time on his hands," said Harry still smiling. Harry did have more time on his hands than vacations since no one in the media was looking for him anymore. Harry could actually spend the whole Christmas vacation with the adopted family.

"I hope he had more," said Teddy almost sadly.

"Teddy, what's wrong," asked Harry crouching down to Teddy's eye level.

"My godfather had this friend, and she's not doing too good. Nothing magical or Muggle can help her."

"And you're worried in how your godfather would take it," said Harry forcing himself to stay calm about it. Teddy nodded. "All I can tell you is to be there for him. When a person goes through tough times, he or she needs family."

"Like Grams with me," said Teddy and Harry nodded.

"Just like that," said Harry and gently patted Teddy one the shoulder. "Go and unpack. I'll see you at dinner."

"Okay!" said Teddy and ran off toward the dormitories. Harry smiled at him and walked down the hall.

When Teddy mentioned Mary Harry had to keep from blurting out that he knew about her illness. He hated being reminded about it. When he just learned that Mary had leukemia he tried everything
he could to make her well again, but nothing magical helped and Mary had no family so no possibility of a donor. All they could do was wait. Harry hated waiting.

Harry was a lot more worried about Jamie. With Mary gone he was more then likely put in a Muggle foster home. Harry knew foster care was tough, but he also knew it was worse with the Dursleys. And when his Hogwarts letter came, how do you explain a boarding school to your foster parents? Summer would be hard too. All the stuff he learned and no one to share it with. Harry knew what that was like.

Still in thought he turned a corner, and ran into a solid object. Book and papers flew everywhere. It took a moment for Harry to realize he had ran into a person.

"I'm so sorry," said the person.

"No, it's my fault," said Harry and looked up into stormy grey eyes. "Oh, hi Draco."

"Hello, Black," said Draco struggling to picked his books. "How was your Christmas?"

"For the thousandth time, Draco, call me James," said Harry. "Calling me by my last name make is sound like you don't like me. And my Christmas was fine, than you for asking. How was yours?"

"Eventful," said Draco. Harry picked up one of the books on the floor and read the cover.

"A Muggle physiology book? Why do you have this?"


"They certainly do," said Harry handing him the last book. "You have fun researching."

"And you watch where you're going," said Draco with a smile. Harry smiled back.

"I certainly will, unless I bump into you again."

"Hilarious," said Draco almost annoyed, but Harry could hear a bit of something else behind it. Draco walk past Harry and Harry walk down the hall. He had only walked a few steps when he stopped and turned back to Draco.

"Doyouwanttohaveadrinkwithme?"

A flash of Cho and the Yule Ball came to Harry's mind and Harry groaned. He was never good at asking people to talk to him alone. He'd be harder on himself if Draco didn't understood what he said.

"I'll have to think about it," he said and Harry looked at him in surprise. "You did ask me for a drink right?"

"Y-Yeah," said Harry, a bit relieved.

"Will it be like last time?"

That made Harry a bit nervous. "Actually, I was thinking this time would be a bit more…uh…"

"Intimate?" suggested Draco.

"I was going to go for "personal"," said Harry with a small smile. Draco smiled back.
"I still have to think about it," said Draco and walked down the hall. Harry continued to smile until Draco was out of sight.

He had just been politely blown off. Not that Harry blamed him. He had blurted out words so fast a person would have had to have subtitles to find out what he said. He really needed work on his dating skills. After ten years a person would have thought they would have improved.

Sighing Harry walked down the hall, and without knocking, walked into Hermione's chambers and went to her liquor cabinet.

"Either you just ran into an extremely annoying student or you did something extremely stupid," said Hermione from her chair, a book on her lap as usual.

"If I didn't say anything, would you refrain from asking the questions again," asked Harry grabbing the first bottle he saw and a glass.


"I asked Draco Malfoy on a date," said Harry taking a long sip. Whiskey, just what he needed. Hermione's eyes went wide at the mention of "asked", "Draco Malfoy" and "date". "Oh, no you didn't…"

"Yep. Blurted it out faster then I thought it. What's my problem with asking people out?"

"What did he say?"

"That he'd think about it," said Harry with a scuff. "He politely blew me off."

"You don't know that," sad Hermione. "He could say yes."

"Better if he didn't." Harry set the glass down and walked to the fireplace. "Too many secrets."

"That's never stopped you before…"

"Yeah, but they didn't know I was Harry Potter. It was easier to keep the lie intact. They didn't know me."

"And what's the difference with Malfoy?"

Harry paused before answering. "I can be myself around him. I'm not afraid to play Quidditch, tell bad jokes or talk about my personal life."

"Obscure as they are," said Hermione.

"The point is, around Draco I'm not afraid to be me."

"And that's bad how?"

"Draco knows me. Me as in Harry Potter. The slightest change of tone or gesture will set him off. And if it gets too intimate he'll figure out the truth."

"That's a problem," said Hermione. “And I know another one. You're already too close to him."

"What do you mean?" asked Harry.
"You stopped calling him Malfoy, and started calling him Draco."

Harry groaned.

A couple hours later a half drunken Harry walked out of Hermione's chambers. The realization he had gotten that close to Draco had hit him hard and he had half a mind on getting so drunk he spend half the next day with a hangover. But Hermione reminded him that he did have classes the next day so he settles for half drunk.

He stumbled up the stairs and just had time to grab something on the landing before he fell down the stair case. It took him a moment to realize what he grabbed had actually grabbed him.

"Careful there, James. You don't want any broken bones."

"Let go of my hand, Harding," said Harry groggily.

"Can I get you steady on your feet first?"

"I am steady. Let go of my hand please." And Harry shook Harding off and walked down the hall.

"Are you drunk?" asked Harding following him.

"Only half. Leave me alone."

"Why? I just wanted to ask you something." Harding gave him a slight smile. A shiver went down Harry's spine at the sight of it.

"All right, what do you want?" Harry turned to Harding and crossed his arms in annoyance. He really wanted to get back to his chambers and sleep.

"I was wondering if you'd have a drink with me," asked Harding still smiling.

"I don't think so," said Harry turning away. Harding went back to following him.

"It took longer for Malfoy to answer when you asked him."

Harry turned and looked at Harding with shocked surprise. "Have you been following me?"

"Well, it is a small castle," said Harding with a chuckle.

"Yeah, believable." Harry turned to continue down the hall. He wince he heard footsteps walk after him.

"So are you going to change your answer?" asked Harding.

"No."

"It didn't take you long to ask Malfoy out. Maybe if I ask him...."

"That won't be necessary," hissed Harry turned back to Harding, his green eyes flashing with anger. Harding just smiled.

"Oh, did I hit a nerve," he asked. "Have a drink with me. Who would it kill?"

Harry continued to glare at him. He wanted to say no, to believe that Draco didn't mean anything to him, but he couldn't.
"Very well," he said. "One drink."

Harding smiled, a bit too triumphantly for Harry's liking, turned around and walked down the hall. Harry watched him go and wished he was anywhere else but there.

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"He asked you out?" said Pansy in shock, her hands falling to her slim waist. Draco was again amazed at how she lost her weight in the seventh year and managed to keep it.

"Just for a drink," said Draco.

"He said it was "personal", but he didn't reject your suggestion of "intimate", therefore it's a date."

"How can you get all of that from one conversation," asked Draco in confusion. This was why he stopped dating girls after Pansy. He just didn't understand the way they thought.

"I'm a girl. We love the drama. And romance, and suspense and angst…"

"Okay. All right. I get it, you like the emotional mush stuff."

"You bet your knickers I do," said Pansy with a smile. "So what did you say after he asked you?"

"ThatIwouldthinkaboutit," said Draco quickly with his teacup up to his mouth.

"You what?" Pansy's shriek was so loud Draco winced when he heard it.

"I said that I…"

"Yeah, I heard what you said," said Pansy waving him off. Draco was amazed she had actually understood him.

'Maybe this was how Blaise felt when he fast-talked,' thought Draco.

"What I want to know is why you didn't answer?"

"You know why, Pansy." Draco gave her a stern look. Pansy waved him off again.

"Oh, that old talk. As Hagrid say, codswollap." She gave Draco a sterner look then the one he was giving her. "Just because you wish to be the last Malfoy doesn't mean you can't enjoy what life gives you. And as the Muggles say; if wishes were horses, beggars would ride."

"Where did you hear that?"

"Granger," said Pansy with a smile. "Blaise was right. She is a walking library of random information."

"That certainly sums her up," said Draco.

"You just want to stay miserable," said Pansy pointing at him. "You think that just because you're Draco Malfoy, son of Lucius Malfoy and almost committed the murder of Albus Dumbledore, you should not be allowed any happiness at all."

"It's better this way," said Draco. "If I don't get close to anyone then they won't get hurt. Better to lock my emotion then deal with them."
Draco's cheek stung from the force of Pansy's slap. He looked over to see her angry face and her eyes filling with tears.

"Draco Lucius Malfoy, you are such a bastard!" she yelled hitting Draco as she spoke. "How did you get this way? I thought you were a Malfoy, and that Malfoys weren't quitters! Whatever happened to that seventeen year old boy that had a plan for the future?"

"A war happened," said Draco. "I almost lost all that I get cared about. I can't afford to feel that way again."

"So you decided to lock your feelings away? Damn it Draco, you're not a robot!"

"A what?" asked Draco in confusion.

"Ask Granger!"

And she stomped out. Draco watched as she walked out of the room and slammed the door. He knew why Pansy was upset. She and Blaise were tired to Draco believing he was better off alone, only taking in lovers when it suits him. But Draco was a cautious man. He never liked going into anything without knowing even the smallest bit of information, which includes relationships.

Walking to the desk he took out a piece of paper and began writing the things he knew about James Black.

*Mother's a Muggle-born. Father's a pure-blood. Both died when he was baby.*

Draco paused as he wrote this. Almost fifty percent of the wizarding community was Muggle-born. Twenty were half-blood, and the rest were pure-blood. So the pure-bloods weren't exactly overpowering the Muggle-borns. Draco had to look it up, and was appalled that his father made a big deal out of it. Most of the Muggle-borns return to the world they left behind, but those that did stay tried to integrate themselves in the Wizarding world. Hermione Granger was an example, in a way. She like the magical community, but also taught students the facts on the Muggle world.

*Philosophical, oversleeps, flirtatious, kind but stern, shows no favoritism, grew up with relations for sixteen years, not married, and travels the world....*

This didn't help him much. A lot of wizards went around the world when they're on their own. But the fact that he grew up with relations and didn't call them family confused Draco. Family loyalty was everything to a wizard.

*Familiar with Theodore Lupin, loves Quidditch, played Seeker in school, owns a Firebolt, sings, visits friends on weekend, and likes to do things the Muggle way....*

Draco didn't see anything wrong with those. Quidditch was the most loved sport in the world, but the Firebolt he rode was too familiar. And the way he looked at young Lupin was like a father or an uncle would look at a boy.

*Goes by many aliases, works odd-jobs, had abusive past(?)....*

Draco wasn't really sure about the last one, but it was true it was a good reason for anyone to keep a low profile. When the Dark Lord was tormenting him, Draco never spoke to his friends about what had happened through they've asked many times.
Draco set the pen down and leaned back in his chair to think. Trying to figure out James Black was like playing chess. You never know what move your opponent will make next. It was interesting to say the least and Draco did like a challenge, but after a while it would give a person a mighty headache. Draco was sure if he was up for the challenge.

Draco remembered his reason for choosing men over women. Men could not get pregnant and continue the family line. After Lucius was committed for being a Death Eater he Malfoy name had been scorned and Lucius' wand hand been broken. Without magic, Lucius couldn't rid himself of the depression that fell upon him and killed himself, but the damage had already been done. Without the next Malfoy heir, the Malfoy's would disappear and the dishonor forgotten.

As he did Draco remembered the time he had spent with James Black. He actually had fun, far more then from previous engagements. Draco remembered how he felt when he flew with Black, the pure adrenaline and ecstasy that he got whenever he flew past to catch the Snitch. Draco had not felt that since his school days, racing Potter in an effort to win a Quidditch game. It was so similar that Draco thought he had seen Harry Potter in Black's eyes as he rode his Firebolt.

"Who is he?" he asked himself. "Who is James Black?"
Making Plans

In the end, Harding stood James Black up for the drink. James never asked why. Harding still flirted with Black and chatted with Granger and both said nothing. As January drew to a close the case of the flu came over the students and staff at Hogwarts. Hannah Abbot, the nurse of Hogwarts after Madam Pomprey retired, had a line outside the Hospital Wing for Pepper-up Potion and Anti-sickness potions, but even that didn't stop the students from missing several days of classes because of fever. It was proven that most used the sudden outbreak as an excuse to get out of class early and the staff quickly sorted out the liars.

Draco looked up when a student coughed in the Great Hall and saw a Ravenclaw fifth year cover her mouth with a handkerchief then rubbed her hands with Purifying Solution. The lotion had been hand been handed out to everyone in the school to keep the flu at bay, but a lot of idiot students forgot and it still spread.

"I feel like I'm in a horror movie," said Granger to Black next to her at lunch. "The hospital or something closed because of a life threatening disease."

"That sounds too much like Stephen King or Dean Koontz to me," said Black smiling.

"It's such a shame that Pansy came down with it. The headmaster was forced to take over the class for her."

"If I come down with the flu would you take over for me," asked Black smiling at her.

"Of course I would. Someone has to teach those students how to cast a curse properly."

"And I'll nurse you back to health," said Harding smiling at him. Black smiled sarcastically back before turning back to his meal.

"You can take that as a no," said Granger. Harding gave Granger an annoyed look before excusing himself and leaving, his half finished meal disappearing from the table. Draco turned back to his, his thought elsewhere then the meal.

'Harding's obviously interested,' he thought. 'Why does Black fight it?'

"Harding reminds me of a guy I'd rather forget."

Black had said those words what seemed to be a long time ago. James Black was an enigma wrapped in a person. Draco hardly scratched the surface of who the man was.

Draco finished lunch early and headed to Pansy's chambers. The Transfiguration Professor had come down with the flu three days earlier and was being cared for by her husband who had taken leave for his wife. Walking up to Pansy's door he politely knocked before letting himself in.

Pansy's quarters were much like Draco's, except with a woman's touch. A decorative vase placed in on the right table, some flowers in the vase. Much like any woman's room. The mantel had a few decorative objects of crystal or some other gem and pictures of varying landscapes hung on the walls. One had a wolf painted on it and another had a dragon.

Since Draco was familiar with Pansy's furnishings he wasn't too surprised by what he saw. He walked into the bedroom to see Blaise sitting next to a pale Pansy Parkinson-Zabini. Pansy's bed was covered by a curtain and the comforter was a soft magenta red. On the night stand were two pictures,
one of her and Blaise on their wedding day and the other was of the three of them Pansy's last birthday. Blaise and Draco stood on both sides of her as Pansy stood in front of the birthday cake.

"Hey, Draco," said Pansy softly. Her voice was harsh from the coughing. "How have you been?"

"Pansy, what did I say about talking," scolded Blaise wiping her brow with a wet cloth.

"Blaise, I have the flu, not laryngitis. I'm not going to lose my voice."

"Just try not to talk too much." He picked up a glass of water with a straw and had her take a drink.

"I'm doing all right," said Draco sitting on her bed since Blaise occupied the only chair. "I came to see how you were."

"Well, my dream came true," she said with a humorous smile. "I have my husband waiting on me hand and foot."

"I thought your dream was being pregnant while I waited on you hand and foot," said Blaise with a smile.

"I would like that as well, but unfortunately the flu caught me before you did."

All three laughed till Pansy went into a coughing fit and Blaise gave her a coughing solution with a drink of water.

"How are things in the school," asked Pansy. Draco shrugged in a bored fashion.

"Same as always. Students are being children, as well as Harding and Black, and McGonagall enjoys being a teacher again."

Pansy smiled. "So James is acting like a child?" she smiled. Blaise hid a smile next to her and Draco looked at her in surprise.

"When is he not?" asked Draco. Pansy giggled in her hand.

"Oh, when he's around you," she said. Blaise was still smiling next to her. Draco looked between his friends skeptically.

"No," he said. Pansy fiend a look of surprise.

"No what?"

"No, I am not going on a date with him."

"Did we say that?" asked Blaise in the same fake surprise.

"My father was a better manipulator then you two," said Draco, feeling the slight twinge in his chest that he always got at the mention of his father.

"Draco, it's ridiculous," said Pansy. "It's the same story every time. You don't date because you believe you don't deserve to fall in love. You've only had two long term relationships and they were with us!"

The force of Pansy's outburst made her start coughing forcefully. Draco and Blaise immediately went to action. Draco forced a cup full of Coughing Solution down her throat and Blaise held a handkerchief to her mouth as she coughed.
"I'm sorry," she said softly. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that."

"Don't apologize, Pansy," said Draco. "You have every right to be angry."

"Damn right she does," said Blaise. Both gave him a look and Blaise cleared his throat. "I'm going to get you some tea. How does that sound?"

"That soundly lovely, dear. Thank you," said Pansy smiling at Blaise. Blaise nodded and left the room.

"I know you guys want me to be happy…""

"Damn right we do," said Pansy. "Draco when are you going to learn being happy isn't a crime? There's a guy in this castle that actually wants to be around you, and I know you like him too. And you're pushing him away."

"He's obviously had a lot of hurt in his life," said Draco. "No need to add more."

"If he wasn't afraid of being hurt then why did he ask you out?"

"He wasn't serious." He looked to see the skeptical look in Pansy's eyes. "You think he was serious?"

"You won't know till you ask," said Pansy with a mischievous smile.

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Harry walked toward his class after lunch, again being a few minutes late. He knew it annoyed McGonagall to no end, but Harry wasn't planning on stopping his routine anytime soon.

As he walked down the hall he thought about Draco for he didn't know how many times that week. He didn't mind that Draco didn't accept his offer, Harry was used to rejection, but the fact that I was Draco Malfoy made Harry surprised. Draco's rejection didn't surprise him so much, he should have expected it, but every time he thought about it he felt hurt.

Harry stopped when he heard a sneeze around the corner and looked over to see Zabini wiping is nose with a handkerchief. There was a tray with a teapot and three cups with a pot of cream and a bowl of sugar, all carefully balanced. As he watched Zabini's breathe started hitching to sneeze again. Harry hurried and reached just in time to catch the teapot before the tray went flying. The tea cups, sugar and cream crashed to the floor and the glasses broke.

"At least I saved the tea," said Harry before crying out when the tea scolded his hand. He held the pot in both hands, set it on a window ledge, and blew on his burning hands to cool them down.

"Thanks," said Zabini wiping his nose with the handkerchief again. Harry waved his wand, Repaired the dishes and reassembled it all back on the tray.

"Thank you, Mr. Black," said Zabini. His voice sounded heavy like he was having trouble breathing.

"Sounds like you have that cold as well," said Harry as he set the tea pot back on the tray. "And call me James."

"I can't get sick now," said Zabini. "I have to take care of Pan-pan-pan-ACHOOO!"

Zabini had tried to cover his mouth in time from the unexpected sneeze but was unable to do so. Some spittle flew on the floor.
"Oh, Merlin, James, I'm so, so sorry," said Zabini behind his handkerchief. Harry just waved him off and took out his Purifying Solution, then frowned when he couldn't find it.

"I must have left it in my rooms," he said. "I'll just wash my face better. I'll help you take this to Pansy."

"Thank you, James, but I don't want to expose you more then I already did." He chuckled. "That's all I seem to be doing right now, thanking you."

"The best reward is a work well done."

"I'll have to remember that," said Zabini.

Harry followed Zabini up to Pansy's chambers and handed the tray to Blaise before the other man entered the room.

"Tell her I wish her well," said Harry. "I have things I need to do."

"Of course I will," said Blaise. "Thank you again."

Harry nodded and left, walking to Hermione's office where they spent their time talking like they did in school, debating the finer points of Quidditch or Muggle movies. It was the only time Harry was allowed to be himself.

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"ACH-OO"

Draco looked up to see Black covering his nose with a handkerchief. He was sitting next to Granger in the Professor's lounge grading papers. It had been a few days after Blaise told them he had ran into Black and thought the man to be a nice guy. And that he looked familiar to Blaise but couldn't place where.

"Bless you," said Granger. "Don't tell me you're getting sick as well."

"I hope not," said Black in a heavy voice. "I have a lot of work to do."

"Almost all of the magical knowledge in the world and we still can't cure the common cold."

"That puts us in the same lead as Muggles," said Black before he sneezed again in his handkerchief.

"Maybe you should lie down before it gets worse," said Granger and Black shook his head.

"I can't. Like I said I have work to do."

Granger put a hand to his forehead and Black flinched away, but not before Granger felt how hot his head was.

"James, you're burning up!" she said in a low voice. "You're going to bed."

"Hermione, I can't. I have to…." Black held his head like it was hurting and laid his head on the table with a groan.

"Black, are you sick," asked Draco walking over to Black side. "Why isn't he in bed?"

"Because he's so bloody stubborn," said Granger.
"Stubborn twat," growled Draco taking one of Black's arms and threw it over his shoulders as Granger to the other.

"Sod off, Malfoy," said Black. Draco looked at him curiously. There was something familiar on how he said Draco's last name. Draco decided to think about it later.

"I will, after Granger and I get you to bed."

He the half dragged and half carried Black to his chambers. Somewhere between the stairs and the door Black passed out.

"Only Black would get himself so sick he'd faint," said Draco walking in the room and looking around curiously. It was near bare except for a few books, a vase of flowers and a plain wooden box on the dresser.

"I'll get the medicine," said Granger after setting Black on his red and green covered bed. "Can you get him in his pajamas?"

"Of course," said Draco.

"Thanks, third drawer down." And she left. Draco went to the drawer and began dressing Black in his night clothes. Granger came in when he was halfway down, luckily when Draco had already put on Black's pajama pants.

"What are those," asked Draco nodding toward the bottles in Granger's hands.

"Muggle medicine," said Granger. "He refuses to use potions for anything more then a life or death situation."

"That's archaic." Draco watched as Granger carefully measured in a small cup.

"That's how he is," she said and shook Black. "Wakey-wakey."

"Hermione?" mumbled Black. "Where's Jamie?"

"With his mother. Here take this. Open and swallow."

"Who's Jamie?" asked Draco. Granger gave him a glare.

"Never you mind," she said. She gave Black his medicine and he grimaced. "I know it tastes bad but it'll make you better. Go on, swallow."

Black did, still grimacing and went back to a peaceful sleep not long after. Draco walked over to the book on a table by a chair and looked at the cover. It had a picture of a man with brown hair wearing a brown pinstripe suit and a trench coat. There was a blonde girl with him wearing a navy blue poncho.

"Doctor Who?" he said reading the cover. Granger grabbed the book from his hands and replaced it.

"How rude," she said putting the book away and started straightening the room.

"A Muggle book, I suppose." Draco started looking around again, not that there was a lot to look at. "So, who's Jamie?"

"Jamie is the son of a friend of the family and James' namesake," she said. "He's become special to James in a way, like a son."
"Oh, I guess that's admirable," said Draco. The bell rang and Granger groaned.

"Oh, class is starting and I have to tell McGonagall that James is sick, and that I have to take care of him."

"I'll do it," said Draco and Granger looked at him in surprise.

"Excuse me?"

"Yes, I've offered to care for your friend," said Draco with a sigh. "Don't get too surprised. I just want to listen to his delusions."

"All right," said Granger, still apprehensive. "I'll just go tell McGonagall."

And she left. Draco looked at sleeping Black for a moment before looking around again. He saw a plain wooden box on the dresser and went over to try to open it. It was locked. He itched to use every unlocking charm he knew but didn't want to pry into someone's personal things. He was taught better then that. Conjuring a chair, taking the book he found and began to read.

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"He did what?" said Ron when Hermione fire-called him.

"I had the same reaction," said Hermione. "I think Harry's right. I think Malfoy really has changed."

"It'll take more then him taking care of my sick best mate to change my mind," said Ron fuming. "I'm coming over."

"No, Ron, give him this one chance."

"But, Hermione…"

"Please, Ron. Remember what Harry's always saying. 'Put the past behind us.' Why can't you do that for Malfoy? Make him prove himself that he has changed. I'll keep an eye on him."

Ron scrunched his face like he always did when he didn't like the idea of something but couldn't argue further. "Fine, but if he steps one toe out of line…."

"I'll hold him back for you," said Hermione with a smile. "Thanks Ron. Love you."

"You too," said Ron and the kids peeked into view to talk to their mother.

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Harry groaned as he came back to consciousness and opened his heavy eyes to see Draco sitting on a chair next to the bed. It took him a few seconds to remember where he was.

"Draco?" he said heavily. "What are you doing here?"

"Looking after you," he said closing the book he was reading. "Of course. Why else would I be here?"

"Delving from my miserable state," he said and turned to find flowers, handmade cards and candy on the dresser, nightstand and every flat surface in the room. "What's this?"

"Gifts from your esteemed admirers. You were out for two days."
"That was nice of them," said Harry and picked up an especially nice one. Opening the card it read Get Well Soon, Lee Harding with soon much flourish, remind Harry of Gilderoy Lockhart. With an irritated frown he put the card back on the dresser face down. Something fell on him in a coil, making Harry jump. "Hello?"

"Ishara! How did she get here?"

"Tunnels I expect," said Harry.

"I had heard Snake-speaker was hot skinned," said Ishara. "I came to see if you were cooler."

Harry nodded his gratitude and Ishara moved to his pillow and curled around his neck.

"Where did you get her," he asked as he stroked her smooth scales.

"My father gave her to me when I was accepted into Slytherin. He was so proud of me." A sad look come to Draco's face when he mentioned his father.

"What happened to him? I heard he committed suicide."

"He did," said Draco. "It was not long after the Last Battle. He would jump at the smallest sound and continuously question everyone around him, even the house-elves. Once he attacked a house-elf that was cleaning a vase because she accidentally dropped a duster. It was then we went to a Mind-Healer. He said that Father had something called Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome."

"It's also known as survivor's guilt," said Harry. "I've heard of it."

"Then I won't have to tell you what I had to go through," said Draco. "He was given Anti-Depression Potions and had private confidential therapy sessions. I had to be sympathetic but after barged into my Advanced Potions class in Greece I had enough. I replied to his letters sporadically and a year later Mother sent a letter telling me he died. He killed himself with an atheme."

"What happened then?" asked Harry. He remembered how he felt when his two father figures, Sirius and Remus. He had been devastated and angry and was finally glad when their killers had been put to justices. But Lucius' killer wasn't some stranger. It had been Lucius himself.

"I mourned, finished the university, became a Potions Master, and took over the head of the Malfoy family, such as it is." He laughed. "You know, I've never told anyone this."

"Why not?" asked Harry curious. Draco shrugged.

"Just never trusted anyone."

"What happened to your mum?" asked Harry after a pause.

"She couldn't live with the thought of Father gone. At first she believed he was still alive, talking to him, acknowledging his presence, everything. Even insisted that I acknowledge him too. Then she had gone hysterical. Demanding where he was, throwing objects and casting curses. Finally I had to take her wand from her. A month after I did that she tried to commit suicide herself."

"Oh God, Draco, I'm sorry," said Harry placing a hand on Draco's arm.

"She's alive, but she's in St. Mungo's high security mentality ward. I still visit her, but she's still as insane as she was years ago."

"I'm glad that she's still alive," said Harry settling back in his bed. "Life isn't something you should
throw away. We're not robots."

Draco swallowed hard at what Harry said. Pansy had said the same thing just after James asked Draco out and he refused. Had he been talking to Pansy? No. James was a half-blood. He would know what robots were.

"I accept."

Harry looked at him curiously. "Excuse me?" he said.

"You asked me for a drink. I accept."

Harry laughed amazingly. "What brought this change? I thought you were against intimate relationships."

"Something you said on not throwing your life away," said Draco and smiled. "Pansy told me what kind of jerk I was, and even she told me I should find some happiness. So here I am."

Harry smiled. "I think I can think of something better then drinks."

Draco looked at him curiously. "Where?"

"I'll let you know," said Harry with a smile.
Games

When Draco told Pansy and Blaise about his date with James Black both were more then happy to give advice to their friend. Draco was gratefully if a little perturbed at his friend's reactions.

"What makes you think I need any advice," he asked as he brewed a batch of love potion antidote for Hannah Longbottom.

"Admit it, Draco, it was a long time since you went on a date," said Pansy passing him a bottle of crushed nettle thorn pedals. "And the first few one night stands don't count."

"Spoil sport," said Draco taking the crushed pedals, measuring the correct amount and added them to the potion. "And what makes you think I need advice from a woman?"

"Fine, I'll just give Blaise a fire-call," said Pansy getting up and headed toward Draco's fireplace. "I'm sure he knows all about the finer points of what homosexual activities are this year."

Draco gave her skeptical look. "Do you really want to do that, Pansy? Really?"

Pansy thought for a moment before smiling. "You're right. You've made your point. No more advice."

"Thank you," said Draco smiling back and returned to his potion. He added thorns of a black rose bush and a cloud of grass green smoke came from the cauldron.

"Do you know what you're going to wear? Because I thought of the perfect outfit!"

"Pansy!" said Draco laughing and Pansy laughed with him.

Harry walked across the aisle in the Library looking for a book on magical creatures in Asia for Hagrid. He had imported a two-tailed cat from Japan. Not his usual regime but McGonagall told him that if he brought in any animal considered dangerous without her permission she was going to call the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures and have it transported back so Hagrid made due with what he had. The animal arrived sick and Hagrid wouldn't leave it for two seconds, so he asked Harry to find a book on Asian animal care. Harry was more then happy to help, after much badgering from Hermione who was helping Hagrid tend to the animal.

Harry jumped when a hand was laid on his shoulder and he turned to see Lee Harding smiling at him.

"Can I help you, Harding?" asked Harry turning back to the shelf.

"I hear you have a date with the former Death Eater," said Harding leaning on the bookshelf. Harry didn't like the tone in Harding's voice but tried not to let it get to him.

"His name is Draco and yes, we have a date," said Harry taking down a book title How to Treat Magical Creatures and looked up to see if it included two-tailed cats.

"I had thought you'd ask me first before him," continued Harding with a flirtatious smile.

Harry chuckled as if what Harding said was a poor attempt at a joke. "Now why would I do that?" he asked pulling down another book and looked at its contents before adding it to the pile.
"Considering I know more about baseball then the Death Eater I would be the perfect choice as a date partner."

Harry looked at Harding in surprise. "How did you know that? I only told Hermione where I was taking Draco and that was in my chambers. Were you eavesdropping?"

"I have my ways of knowing things," said Harding. "So what'll it be? Are you going to leave the Potions pretty boy and go to the game with me?"

"I wouldn't have suggested the game to Draco if I had no intention of going to it with him," said Harry giving Harding a serious look. "Now if you'll excuse me….

And he pushed past Harding, checked the books out and heading to Hagrid's. Walking down the hall he didn't stop until he reached Hermione's office. She was sitting in a chair by the fireplace reading a book and looked up in surprise when he walked in and closed the door forcefully.

"Harry, what's wrong?" asked Hermione as she stood from her chair. "Did Malfoy get cold feet?"

"I wish. Did you tell Harding my plan for the date?" asked Harry throwing his anger at her without meaning to. Hermione looked at her stupefied.

"How can you think that? I have not told anyone since you told me. Why…How can you think that?"

"Oh, I don't know. Sorry." Harry sat down. Hermione poured him a cup from the pot on the table and sat down as she handed it to him. "I was freaking out. I ran in here and….

"Harding does push when he wants something," said Hermione. "What did he want?"

"Wondering why I invited Draco to the ball game instead of him," said Harry taking a sip of the tea and the taste of chamomile filled his mouth.

"How did he know you were taking Malfoy to a ball game?" said Hermione in surprise.

"I don't know. It's freaking me out. If he knows that there's no telling what else he knows."

"If he knows about the game what if he knows about you!" said Hermione in fear. "The press would be all over the grounds."

"If he knew about me and took it to the press he would have by now, or he could have blackmailed me into dating," said Harry. "No. He just wants to date me. But I have to keep telling him I don't what to."

"Good luck with that," said Hermione with a laugh. "He's so infatuated he doesn't know up from down."

"Yeah well, I'm not interested," said Harry. "He'll just have to see it my way."

Hermione laughed harder. "Good luck with that."

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Draco walked into his first year's class, closing the door behind him. He didn't know why but the upcoming date with James Black made Draco nervous. He almost felt like he was coming out of his skin.
But no matter what he felt he had a class to teach.

"Page 757," he ordered. "The potions will be on my desk by the end of class."

The class groaned but pulled out their books as Draco waved his wand to write on the black board as he graded papers. He was about done when a knock sounded on the door.

"Continue with your reading. I'll be back."

Walking to the door he opened it to find a house elf waiting for him with and envelope in hand.

"Pardon Twinky's intrusion, Professors Malfoy sir, but an owl came for Professor Malfoy sir." And she handed it to him.

"Thank you, Twinky. You may go," he said taking the letter and she Dissapparated. With a quick glance at his students he opened the letter and read it.

_Dear Mr. Malfoy,_

_We are pleased to inform you that your mother has improved since your last visit. She inquires more on your whereabouts and wishes to see you again. The longest lucid moment is approximately two minutes. It is highly suggested you increase your visits._

_Mind-Healer Chin_

Draco grinned. It had been years since his mother had a lucid moment but to actually know that she was possibly getting better was the best news Draco could get.

An explosion sounded behind him and Draco sighed. Folding the letter he put it in his pocket and returned to his class.

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"I still don't see why you didn't tell me," said Ron through the green fire in Harry's fireplace. Harry sighed as he sat in front of it and looked at his friend's floating head.

"Ron, you're my best friend, not my keeper," he said. "Who I date is my own business."

"But since I am your friend it is my business."

"Ron…"

"And it's Malfoy, for Gryffindor's sake!"

"I know who it is, Ron," said Harry "I was the one who asked him out."

"But does he know who you are?"

Harry paused. At first it had been a game to Harry, flirting with Draco, dodging questions and pulling Draco's strings. It was amusing to watch Draco get flustered by James Black's antics, but after a while...

Harry shook his head. "He doesn't know. Nor will he ever."

"Then why ask him out?" asked Ron. "Not a good way to start a relationship."
Harry looked at his friend in surprise. "Who said we were in a relationship?"

"Hermione is my wife, Harry. I've heard everything. Why Malfoy?"

Harry crossed his arms in thought. "He's changed. He's….different."

"And that's the reason you're asking him on a date?"

"Hey, did I object when you and Lavender Brown to be your girlfriend?"

"Yes!"

"Okay, disregard that statement," said Harry leaning forward and resting his arms on his legs. "My point is that I'm not going to get serious with Draco."

"That's what you said last time, and look where it got you."

"It's different this time, Ron. I'm different. I won't lead him on. I'll tell him straight out if it does get serious."

"If I actually cared a bit about Malfoy's feelings, I'd believe it," said Ron. "But since I don't…."

"Don't hold your breath," said Harry with a smile.

"I still don't see the thrill of a "baseball" game. There's only one ball."

"You just don't like it because it involves no magic."

"Well, what good is a game without magic?"

"There is magic in a baseball game," said Harry. "You just have to see it."

"If you say so," said Ron and the conversation turned to a different topic.

Draco waited for Black by the entrance hall wearing the Muggles sports shirt, jeans and sneakers Black gave him to wear to the Muggle game. It seemed to Draco he was always the one waiting. Black would set a time but would show up after Draco does.

Draco doesn't even know where they're going. Every time Draco asked Black simply replied "A game" but Draco didn't know of any Quidditch games that day.

"Draco, sorry I'm late," said Black running up to him. He wore the same sort of clothes as Draco only his shirt was red instead of green.

"I've been waiting for ten minutes," said Draco crossing his arms. Black gave him a grateful smile.

"Yeah, I know. Sorry about that but I only just got the Portkey. Portal services are whacked."

"Portkey? Where are we going?" Now Draco was really curious. Portkeys were only used by wizards underage or cross-countries. Whatever Black had planned Draco was sure was far away.

"I thought that since I know so much about you that you would like to learn a bit about me," said Black. "Come on or we'll be late."

With a polite gesture Black led Draco out the door, past the courtyard and past school grounds to the
edge of Hogsmeade. Putting a hand in his jacket Black took out an empty beer bottle and held it toward Draco.

"Grab hold," he said holding onto the neck of the bottle. Draco gave Black a look, as if Black was playing prank on him and if he should walk away.

Before Draco could make his decision the bottle started to glow blue. Draco grabbed the barrel of the bottle without a second thought and felt the pull behind his navel. Colors blurred around him and for a while all he saw the blur till the whirling stopped. Draco's feet stumbled as he landed but he quickly caught his balance and looked around. They had landed in an alley. It was dark so no one saw them arrive.

"Where are we?" he asked.

"New York," said Black taking the bottle and putting it in a dumpster. "New York City to be exact. Just a few blocks from the baseball stadium."

"You took me to a Muggle ball game?" said Draco in amusement.

"I thought it would be different from the restaurants and walk down the beach you're used to," Black gave him a sideways glance. "Unless you want to go to a restaurant and a walk down the beach?"

Draco paused before answering. It was different then the regular five star restaurant and currently featured play. There was the occasional Quidditch and Pegasus polo match but he could honestly say that none of his dates ever took him to a Muggle game. James Black was the most spontaneous original person he had met.

"You certainly seem to know you way around," said Draco walking out of the alley and waited for Black to join him.

"I did tell you I was an actor on Broadway," said Black. "I've had a lot of odd jobs on my travels."

"I know you have. Traveled, I mean. To escape from what? What are you running from?"

"Memories," said Black sadly before walking away. Draco followed him toward the stadium. "A lot of bad memories."

"How do I know what you're saying is true? You have secrets. You probably keeping them form me even now."

Black gave Draco a grin as he walked down the street. "But, Draco, everything I'm telling you is true."

"Even the lies?"

"Especially the lies."

At the end of the game Draco and Harry returned to Hogwarts both in high spirits. Draco enjoyed the game after Harry explained the play. He even had a ball he caught on a pop fly. It seemed his Seeker instincts weren’t so rusty.

What had surprised Harry was that Draco never tried a beer before that day. He's had wine, Scotch, whiskey, and other wizard alcoholic drinks but he never had a glass of beer before. Draco explained
that his father thought it too common for a Malfoy. Harry even got him to eat a hot dog, which Draco had suspicions about but after Harry explained what it really was he tried a bite, and liked it.

"I want to thank you, Black, for letting me experience this," he said as he turned the ball in his hands.

"Call me James, Draco," said Harry. "We're friends now."

"I thought you wanted me to be something else," said Draco curiously.

"I do, and it's up to you if you want to be something else." He smiled at Draco but Draco was looking at his eyes. Harry wanted to get closer to Draco, but habits made him push the man away. "Besides, I won't be here past the school year."

"Why?" asked Draco. "Why do you have to leave?"

Harry shrugged. "Travel. There's a huge world out there and I want to see it."

"I thought that's what you spent the last eight years doing. Seeing the world."

"I guess I'm a gypsy. Traveling is what I do."

Draco looked down at the ball in his hands. "I can't come with you. My place is here."

"I understand," said Harry as Hermione hurried toward them.

"Oh good, you're back," she said. "I've been waiting. I have something to tell you." She noticed Draco and gasped. "Oh, sorry. I was so busy I forgot!"

"It's all right, Hermione," said Harry. "Let me take Draco to his rooms and you can tell me." He gave an apologetic smile to Draco. "Sorry."

"It's all right," said Draco. "I'm used to Granger's sudden bouts of inspiration."

Harry laughed as he walked Draco back to his rooms. It surprised him to hear that Draco was used to Hermione's sporadic attitude. It still surprised Harry and Ron and times, but both were used to it.

"Here are your chambers," said Harry stopping at the door in the dudgeons. "I'm sorry to cut it short."

"I quite enjoyed it," said Draco. "You lead an exciting life."

"Despite the effort I make to be un-exciting," said Harry. "So does this end with a "See you tomorrow" or a good night kiss?"

"Kisses are for second dates," said Draco. "See you tomorrow should suffice."

Harry smiled at him. "See you tomorrow then."

"Good night," said Draco and watched as Harry left before closing the door. Harry walked down the hall and met Hermione in her study. She was pacing the room clutching something in her hand.

"What did you want to talk to me about?" he asked closing the door.

"This," she said holding up something in her hand and Harry took it. It was small, the size of Harry's thumb, with a microphone on one end.
"Isn't this one of George’s new spy equipment?" he asked. "Make a person hear a conversation in another room with a microphone and an earwig?"

"Yes. I was sitting thinking how Harding could have heard about the game when I remembered fourth year when you said that you may have been bugged."

"Harding bugged your study?"

"Something like that. The question is why does he want to spy on me?"

Harry didn't say anything as he turned the object in his hand in thought.

"Maybe he has a crush on you," he said with a smile. She glared at him.

"Ha-ha, Harry. But seriously, why me?"

Harry looked down at the bug in annoyance. "I don't know."
Bloodlines

Draco walked into the Great Hall and smiled at James who looked up to smile back. It had been a week since they went to the Muggle ball game and Draco became fascinated with Muggle ball games. He had been annoyed that Muggles didn't use magic to play, just physical skill. He pestered James on every game that Muggles play and their rules. James admitted he didn't know them all and gave Draco as much information as he could remember.

Draco smiled at James as he sat down for breakfast but before he could eat a book was placed in front of him. Draco looked up at James in surprise.

"I thought this would help you better then I can," he said. "If you don't like it I can always give it back to Hermione."

"You borrowed this from Granger?" asked Draco in surprise.

"Call it an extended loan," said Granger smiling over at him. "He bought me a whole new copy."

Draco looked down at the book in his hands. It was written by a Muggle-born wizard who had a fascination for sports of both Muggle and wizard. He had wanted to bridge the gap between both worlds and thought sports would help so he wrote a book on the similarity of each sport according to the wizard and Muggle view. The book was titled "The World of Sports from Both Worlds."

"Thank you, Black," he said. James arched an eyebrow and Draco's lip quirked into a smile. "James."

"Better," said James getting up. "Excuse me. I'm going to take a nap."

Draco shook his head as James got up and walked out of the Great Hall, stopping briefly to speak to Teddy before continuing out. Draco had stopped trying to find out who James Black really was, but the drive to learn more about the man was still there. He settled for patience like his father taught him.

"Now it's down to gift giving," said Pansy next to him. "It is getting serious."

"He's not staying," said Draco looking through the book. "He's only here for the year and it's half gone."

"He may change his mind," she said and smiled at him. Draco couldn't help but smile back.

The day after James had taken Draco to the baseball game Pansy demanded to know the details of the date. When Draco told her James had taken her to a Muggle ball game she looked surprised.

"Why would someone be interested in a sport where a man would show off his oversized muscles and beat each other senseless?" she asked when Draco explained about wrestling.

"Appropriately it's a show of strength and choreographed," said Draco.

"That's another thing. With the other sports you told me about it's like Quidditch, each are different, but to find out one is faked…."

"James said it was so nobody got seriously hurt or killed." Draco looked to see Pansy smiling at him amusingly. "What?"
"You called him James," she sang-songed with a laugh.

"I did?" he asked and she nodded. "I don't see why."

"You've gotten attached to him. You want him to stay."

"But he can't. He's not staying."

"Now that's not fair," said Pansy crossing her arms.

"He says he's a gypsy. Can't stay in one place too long," Draco turned a page to read and talk at the same time, a habit he learned in his school days. When you're supposed to socialize but need to do school work it helped to learn both.

"Then all we need to do is give him a reason to stay," said Pansy in an amused tone and Draco looked up at her in shock.

"Pansy, don't…"

"Come on. You're halfway there. It can't be that hard."

"Pansy, no." Draco closed the book ad gave her a stern stare. "I'm not forcing him to stay." He set the book down. "Let's go to you. How have you and Blaise been?"

"All right. We're still trying."

"Have you seen a mid-wife?" Pansy nodded. "What did she say?"

"We're both fine, it's just our schedules…"

"I could whip up some potions. They could help."

Pansy gave him a grateful smile. "Thanks, Draco. What would we do without you?"

"Have a boring life," said Draco. He raised his arm and Pansy crossed the room, sliding into his lap and hugged him. Draco wrapped his arms around her and kissed her dark head. "Don't worry about it. You will. You're still young."

"Thanks, Draco," she said laying her head on Draco's shoulders before kissing his cheek. "We'll make it up to you. I promise."

"I'm fine," laughed Draco patting Pansy's back. Pansy laughed as he tickled him and jumped off. "I don't want anything."

"Yes, you do," said Pansy smiling down at him. "You just don't know it yet."

Draco sighed and didn't replay. He couldn't change her mind once. Pansy had made up her mind. It had taken him six months to decide if she wanted to break up with Draco and another year to decide if she wanted to date Blaise. Pansy never made a decision lightly.

The bell rang and Draco walked to his class. He walked in as the bell for class starting rang and moved to the front of the class, waving his wand to the chalk for it to write the day’s lesson.

"Today we'll be making the Draught of Peace," he said. "This will be on your O.W.L.S exam.…."

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"The Patronus Charm is a very powerful, very advanced spell," said Harry to his seventh year class. "So you shouldn't get mad or frustrated if you can't produce it. Actually, getting frustrated is the last thing you should do." Harry and his students chuckled. "Now, when I open the chest and release the boggart I want you all to concentrate on the image of a Dementor. Boggarts are creature of fear and I want you to fear a Dementor."

Harry had indicated to the rattling chest behind him. He at first thought of just having the class do the spell on their own but after remembering the trouble Dumbledore's Army had and how too few had produced the Patronus he decided to recreate his own lesson with Remus in third year. He had plenty of cushions and chocolate handy.

"All right, everyone, stand," he ordered and they stood. With a wave of his want the chairs and desks moved to the back of the room. "Up front. Semi-circle." All moved to the front. "Now I want you to think of the happiest thing in your mind, happiest memory you can find. I don't care if it was your first Christmas or your first pet. It has to be happy."

A few students chuckled but some looked apprehensive.

"What if…What if it doesn't work?" asked a Hufflepuff girl. "What happens then?"

"I'm here, Chloe," said Harry. "I won't let it hurt you." That seemed to reassure a few more of the students but they were still nervous. "All right. Let's go over the spell. Repeat after me. Expecto Patronum."

"Expecto Patronum," repeated the class.

Harry nodded. "Good. Good. Now I'm going to open the chest, you picture the Dementor as the thing you fear, take your happy memory firmly in your mind, use it as a shield against the Dementor, and say the spell. Got it?" Several students nodded weakly. "Don't worry. You can do it. On the count of three. One….Two….Three!"

Harry waved his wand and the students moved back in surprise when a Dementor floated out of the chest. A few of the braver students recovered quickly, held up their wands and started chanting the spell. A few followed their example, lifted their wands and started the spell. Harry watched as one by one the all fell on the cushions he placed around them. With a funny image in his mind of the Dementor as a pile of bones he yelled "Riddikulus" and the he put the boggart back in the chest and woke up the fallen students.

"Congratulations," he said as they woke. "A successful first try."

"What do you mean successful?" yelled a Slytherin boy, Edward Dantes. "We didn't do the damn spell!"

"Of course not," said Harry handing out chocolate. "No one's ever gotten it their first time, not even me. That would have been extraordinary. Here you go, Chloe." He handed a chocolate to the recovering Hufflepuff girl. "Eat up. You'll feel better."

Shakily Chloe took the chocolate and began to nibble on it. She was sitting on the floor in a heap but she was still able to move after she ate the chocolate. Another Hufflepuff held her steady.

"What the hell was that for?" yelled the Edward. "You set a boggart on us and give us a superficial spell to subdue it…"

"The point of the lesson wasn't to subdue the boggart but to fight off a Dementor. A boggart will have same effect on you that a Dementor does, but without the damages." Harry handed chocolate to
a shaky girl and gave her a reassuring pat on the shoulder. "A great first attempt. We'll try it again next time."

"We're doing it again?" yelled Edward in shock.

"For a month. Then we'll move on to the next lesson. Keep practicing that charm. You may get it."

Edward continued to glare at him as he bit a large piece of the chocolate bar given to him. The bell took forever to ring in Harry's opinion with Edward glaring at him, reminding him of Draco in their school days. Harry left the classroom soon after the students, thankful it was the last class of the day, and walked down the hall vigorously scratching his wild hair.

"Coffee?" Harry looked up to see Draco leaning against the corner of the hall smiling at Harry with his arms crossed. "You look like you could use it."

"Yeah," said Harry with a nod. "Had a bad lesson."

"I know a place that's quiet."Makes good coffee too." -"In Hogsmeade?"

"No." Draco shook his head with a smile. "Cardiff." -Harry quirked an eyebrow. "When have you been in Cardiff?"

Draco smiled. "I don't just shop in Diagon Alley, and the Roald Dahl Plass is a sight to see."

Harry smiled. "Well, when you say it like that, I should see it. It would enjoy some company." He smiled over at Draco who smiled back.

"I think I can find some for you," he said.

Harry sent word to Hermione through a house-elf where he was going and followed Draco out of Hogwarts to the Apparate grounds to Cardiff. In a minute they were standing outside of a café house looking over the Plaza.

"My childhood was like any other spoiled rich kid," said Draco over their coffee cups. "My parents spent at least ten minutes a day with me but they were always busy. Father in the Ministry and Mother in fashion designs in Paris. Other then that the only company I had was the house elves and my tutors and the occasional play-mate. I was never very social so I gave that account for my behavior as a child."

"I heard you were a git," said Harry taking a drink from his coffee.

"I guess I was," said Draco with a frown. "What about you? What was your childhood like?"

"Hell," said Harry. He took a sip of coffee and looked out over the Plass. It was a beautiful sight, especially with the setting sun reflecting off the water town.

"How so?" asked Draco. Harry set his lips.

"I don't like talking about it."

"Come on, we've shared a lot," persisted Draco. "I told you my secrets. Well, almost all of them."

"I don't want pity."

"I don't pity you. My parents hardly paid attention to me till I was sixteen. What could be worse then that?"
Harry bit his tongue. He didn't want to tell Draco everything. It would give away his secrets. He knew the wizarding world didn't know the truth about his childhood, how the Dursleys abused him, and he wanted to keep it that way, but Draco was telling him his secrets, a bit of truth couldn't hurt, right?

"My relatives abused me and treated me worst then a house-elf." Draco looked at him wide eyes and Harry smiled. "That's why I didn't tell you."

"They beat you?" asked Draco in surprise.

"No physically, and they kept a lot of secrets from me. They made me think I was an unwanted freak and a nobody. I had thought my parents died in a car crash, my dad drunk and unemployed and my mum a whore. That was the story they told me since I could remember. I didn't know I was a wizard till my eleventh birthday and how they really died."

"How did they die?" asked Draco taking Harry's hand.

"During Voldemort's first uprising. They were members of the Order of the Phoenix. Voldemort was killing off members at the time and killed them."

Harry didn't mind Draco's slight cringe at the name. Even after eleven years Voldemort's name still brought fear to most of the wizarding world. Both were silent for a moment before Draco spoke.

"But the Dark Lord killed whole families," he said. "How did you survive?"

"I got lucky," said Harry and sipped his coffee. Draco could tell from the tone of Harry's voice and the look on his face that Harry didn't want to talk about his past anymore so Draco started talking about a hilarious incident that happened during a sixth year potions class and five minutes later Harry was laughing at the story.

"...and after he drank the potion instead of his whole body shrinking only his head shrunk," said Draco in laughter and Harry laughed as well, glad he used the Muffliato spell around them before they started talking.

"Only his head?" asked Harry in laughter.

"Yes, and not the one on his shoulders." Harry bellowed with laughter and Draco joined him. "It took twelve hours to grow it back and he wasn't happy the whole time."

"I wouldn't be too," said Harry controlling his laughter. He felt his spell ripple that said another wizard was waiting to speak to him. A slight flick of his wand and he dispelled the charm and allowed the wizard to talk.

"Mr. James Black?" asked the wizard.

"Yes, that me," said Harry. "This is my friend, Draco Malfoy." Draco smiled in greeting and the wizard gave a curt nod. "How can I help you?"

"I'm Edward Jones. I work in the Department of Underage Wizards," he said. "We monitor underage wizards growing up in Muggle households."

"I know what it means, but what do you want with me?" asked Harry.

"Do you know a woman named Mary Wallace? Her son is a young wizard we've been monitoring named James Wallace."
Draco watched in surprise as Harry's face turned from happy to serious.

"What happened?" he asked in fear.

"Her conditions took a turn for the worst. Your name came up as her contact list. I have to ask, how do you know Mary and James Wallace?"

"I knew Mary since before James was born. James is…." Harry stopped talking automatically; the instinct in him to not speak of his past hit him hard. "James is a great kid. I was teaching him how to control his magic. Where is he?"

"With his mother. He refuses to leave. Please come with me. You have guardianship of him."

"Of course I do," said Harry in an obvious tone. He turned to Draco apologetically. "I'm sorry to cut this short, Draco, but…"

"No need to apologize," said Draco standing up. "I'm coming too."

Harry looked at him in surprise. "It's a Muggle hospital, Draco. You won't be comfortable there…"

"I'll live," said Draco. He turned to Jones. "Lead the way."

Jones nodded and they followed him to the alley after Harry left some money on the table. Jones took them by the arm and Apparated them to the hospital.

"Mary Wallace," asked Harry to the desk clerk. Draco and Jones were behind them as Harry talked to the nurse.

"Relation?" she asked.

"I'm her ex-boyfriend, Jamie's father."

The nurse tapped on the computer. "Oh, yes, here you are," she said. "Room117. Doctor Olivia Turner."

Harry ran down the hall, Draco and Jones barely keeping up with him. When they reached the room a line of doctors and nurses walked out looking depressed.

"What happened?" asked Harry to a passing nurse.

"Her heart stopped," she said. "She was so far gone we couldn't do anything. I'm sorry."

"Where's Jamie?" he asked anxious. The nurse pointed down the hall to Jamie sitting on a chair by a cooler. "Jamie?"

Jamie looked up in surprise but at the sight of Harry tears fell from his eyes. "Daddy!" he yelled and ran to Harry. Harry picked him up in his arms and held Jamie close.

"It's all right, Jamie," he said. "It's all right. I'm here."

"I'll make the arrangements," said Jones and he left. Draco only half heard him. He was watching Harry comfort his grieving son, half confused and half angry. Harry knew why. He had never told anyone about Mary and Jamie except Ron and Hermione. He wouldn't be surprised if Draco was angry. After a while Jamie quieted down to a fitful sleep. Under his breath Harry sang.

"You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are grey. You'll never
know, dear, how much I love you. Please don't take my sunshine away.”

After the first few notes Jamie calmed down and fell to sleep. Harry carried him to a chair and sat down, gently rubbing Jamie's back to soothe tense muscles.

"I didn't know you had a son," said Draco walking up to Harry.

"There's a lot you don't know about me," said Harry.

"What happened?"

"I met Mary in Scotland seven years ago. I only knew she was sick. She said she didn't know how long she had and I did everything I could to keep her alive longer. She had a tumor that would kill her at any moment. She was living on borrowed time. I stayed till the end of the tourist season. She made it clear she didn't want anything permanent with anyone."

"When did you find out?"

"Mary told me when I visited her years ago," he said. "I wanted to marry her and be a proper family, but she said no."

"What was your name then?" asked Draco Harry looked up at him in surprise.

"You know that?"

Draco smiled. "You think I would date a stranger without looking him up? What if he was a serial killer? I could be dead by now!"

"I can understand that," said Harry with a slight smile. "I wish I had been more careful." He paused as he held Jamie close, as if reassuring himself that he was there. "Colin Prewitt."

"So Jamie's not named after you?" Harry shook his head. "Then who?"

"My father." Both were silent for a while as they collected their thoughts.

"How long have you been running?" asked Draco.

"A long time."

"When are you going to stop?"

"I was thinking when my past catches up with me." Harry looked down at Jamie sadly. "I guess it did."

"When are you going to stop lying?" Harry looked up at him seriously, clutching his right hand in a fist.

"I have never lied to you, Draco. I may not have told you everything, but I have never lied."

"But you never gave me your real name," said Draco. "Don't you trust me that much?"

Harry stood with Jamie in his arms. "I'm sorry, Draco, but I've never trusted anybody that much. Last time I did, it was the worst mistake of my life. I won't do it again."

And he walked out, leaving an angry and confused Draco behind. Harry was leaving angry as well, at himself. To trust someone as much as Draco was asking would take a lot out of him, since the last
time he did blew in his face. He couldn't trust some one with that much information ever again. The risk was too great now with Jamie.

'I'll never make that mistake again.'
"Hey, Draco."

Draco barely glances up as James who sat down next to him at lunch. James wore a black cotton cloak against the March chill, a dark violet shirt with what looked like neon green flames on it and an open hoodie. He wore a humorous smile as he greeted Draco. Draco just glances down at his plate.

It had been two weeks since the death of Mary Wallace and Draco learned that James Black, or whatever his name was at the time, had a son. Jamie had stayed at Hogwarts till the end of the week before James took him out of Hogwarts. Draco didn't know where Jamie had gone. He had not talked to James since he left the hospital. He had to think.

Draco hated the riddles James threw his way, the half-truths and the dodges to his past. James expected Draco to figure out the riddles and the half-truths and the dodges but Draco couldn't wrap his head around it. He was smart but he wasn't a genius. He didn't know of any half-bloods orphaned at a young age that liked Quidditch, Muggle sports and was a nice person to be around.

"You look like you're about to curse someone."

Draco looked to see Blaise standing over him, leaning on his desk in his office, one hand on the desk and a smile on his face.

"I feel like I want to curse someone," said Draco setting his quill down. "When did you get here?"

"You mean when did I arrive in Hogwarts or when did I enter your office?" asked Blaise. Draco glared at him.

"Very funny."

Draco heard giggling and looked to find Pansy sitting on the couch.

"We haven't been here long," she said. "I told Blaise that you had been acting strange and he wanted to find out why."

"Everything is fine!" said Draco looking over an essay and picking up his quill to fix a student's mistake.

"I hear it was something to do with James Black," said Blaise.

SNAP

Blaise and Pansy jumped when the quill in Draco's hand snapped. Draco growled, picked up his wand and repaired it.

"I'm guessing that it does involve Black," said Blaise.

"You've guessed right," said Pansy.

"You guessed wrong," said Draco looking at Pansy in warning. She didn't flinch.

"They went out for coffee," said Pansy to Blaise. "Had been for hours, in Cardiff. You're taking me there one day."
"Pansy, continue," said Blaise with interest.

"No, Pansy, don't continue," said Draco.

"Pansy," said Pansy putting her attention back to her husband. "Cardiff, coffee, gone four hours, and he comes back angrier then a chimera in a potion's shop."

She waved a hand to Draco in emphasis. Both laughed at the look Draco gave them.

"I'm not angry," he said.

"Then why else would you be projecting an aura of anger? Especially at a certain Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher."

"I thought it had something to do with Black," said Blaise with a smile. Draco glared at him. "What did he do?"

"Nothing!" said Draco as Pansy shrugged. Draco glared at her before looking over at Blaise. "None of your business."

"So it's either he did nothing or it's none of my business. Which is it?"

"Both," said Draco and Blaise gave him a confused look. 'It's complicated."

"That's usually what it is," said Blaise.

"Overly complicated," said Pansy with a smile.

"Just another bit of information that I have to wrap my head around," said Draco going to work on his papers.

"So tell us," said Pansy. "Maybe we can help."

"It's a secret," said Draco softly. "And it's not my secret to tell."

Blaise and Pansy looked between each other in interest.

"You know, when a person takes up and advice," said Blaise. "It's usually because it's important to the person."

"So what are you saying is…?" -"Maybe his alibi's mean more to him then just names," said Pansy.

Harry wrote the correction on the essay he was grading, groaned and threw the quill down, looking at the Rainbow Gem Teddy gave him for Christmas. He scratched the top of his head with both hands and leaned back in his chair, crossing his arms.

Jamie had stayed with Harry for a day before Harry took him to the Burrow and placed him in the care of Molly and Arthur. Both were too happy to watch after Jamie, happy to have a child in the home again. Jamie refused to have Harry out of his sight for the rest of the weekend and Harry had to leave early the next Monday morning to make it to breakfast on time.

Harry had prepared himself and Jamie for Mary's death, but it still hurt them both. At an early age Mary and Harry told Jamie about death and the boy knew his mother would die one day but that still didn't stop him from crying at night. Harry sighed. Now he knew what Oliver felt when Katie got
Ron kept regular reports on Katie's case. The rest of the Auror department was pessimistic about finding the magical music teacher. Only the group of friends held hope.

A knock sounded on his office door and before he could answer Hermione walked in, locked the door and placed a Muffliato on it to keep out eavesdropping. She sat in the chair and looked at him sympathetically.

"I'm sorry about Mary," she said. "It must have been hard to bury her. You being so close and all."

"Next to her parents, like she asked," said Harry not looking at her. "How's Jamie taking it?"

Harry scoffed. "He's a kid. How do you think he's taking it? Cries every night for his mother, and cries even more when he knows she's not coming back."

Both Harry and Hermione were silent for a moment. It had been a hard week for Harry, between teaching, grading and comforting Jamie Harry was so tired and high strung he looked like he was about to collapse.

"McGonagall gave you time off to grieve," said Hermione. "You should take it."

"I can't."

Hermione looked at him like he was a mad man. "Harry, you're grieving. You should take time off."

"If I stop and grieve I won't move on," he said. "I have classes to take, essays to grade and I need to get Jamie into the school in Ottery. I have too much to do."

"Harry, you're about to drop. How late is Jamie keeping you up?"

"Not that late." Harry went to the bookshelf to look up some references. "He sleeps like a log most of the night."

"And other times he doesn't. I'm just asking for a week off."

"Can't."

"Damn it, Harry!"

"Hermione," said Harry look at her and Hermione stopped. The guilt and the pain in Harry's eyes were too much to bear for her. "Please let me do this my way."

Hermione sighed and nodded. It was always hard to make Harry do something he didn't want. That was one of the few things that didn't change since they first met.

"Have you tried talking to Malfoy?" she asked.

"He doesn't want to talk."

"Why?" Harry didn't say anything as he looked over at the papers in front of him. "Not that I blame him. You have kept a lot from him."

"I did tell him a lot of things that were true," he said.
"And Jamie not one of them?"

Harry looked at her. "And when was the last time Draco asked about your family?"

"But you gave yourself the impression that you didn't have a son," said Hermione in an amused voice.

"Point?"

Hermione sighed and stood to leave but paused at the door and looked back at him.

"You love him, don't you?" she asked. Harry looked back with a blank expression.

"Does it really matter?" he asked. Hermione sighed.

"I guess not."

She left. Harry finished grading the essays in silence. Setting the quill down, he rubbed his eyes with a sigh and picked up his glasses. Maybe he should take Hermione's advice and sleep. With another sigh he stood, took a pinch of Floo powder and tossed it into the fireplace.

"The Burrow!"

Green fire surrounded him and he was pulled from fireplace to fireplace tilled he stopped in the Burrow's fireplace. No sooner did he step through then Jamie run up in his pajamas and wrap his arms around Harry's leg.

"Daddy!"

Harry smiled softly down at Jamie and picked him up. Jamie wrapped his arms around Harry's neck and yawned in Harry's shoulder. Harry chuckled.

"Stayed up to wait for me again?" he asked. Jamie shook his head.

"I'm not sleepy," he said sleepily and yawned again. Harry heard a chuckled and turned to see Molly standing in the doorway wearing a nightgown and bathrobe.

"Of course he's sleepy," she said. "He just refuses to admit it. Like someone else I know."

She smiled at Harry. He smiled back and ruffed Jamie's wild black hair.

"Come on, you. Let's get to bed."

Jamie didn't say anything since he was already asleep on Harry's shoulder. Harry walked up the stairs until he reached Percy's old room, now decorated to look like Jamie's room in Scotland. Harry laid Jamie down on the small wooden bed and moved to close the door.

"Mummy…"

Harry stopped and turned back to his son. That was something he hadn't called Jamie in a long time. He wanted to be a proper father to Jamie but couldn't, not with how his history is. Being the son of Harry Potter would throw a lot of expectations on the boy, like it did for Harry growing up. That's why it was so easy to say he was the son of a friend when Mary was still alive. He wanted Jamie away from all of that and now it seems Harry wasn't able to protect him any longer.

Sighing Harry closed the door, slipped off his robe and shoes and crawled in the bed with Jamie. The
boy curled around Harry and grabbed tight to Harry's shirt. Harry slipped an arm under Jamie and held him close.

"Good night, Jamie," he said before closing his eyes and surrounding himself in blissful sleep.

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Draco walked down the halls of Hogwarts with a purpose. James Black had not been to teach all day. McGonagall had told the students that he had to take a personal leave and had Ron Weasley come in as a substitute. He had to spend the whole day listening to Weasley talk in his irritating manner.

Without knocking Draco walked into Granger's office and stood in front of her desk with his arms crossed. Granger was at her desk grading and looked up in surprise as Draco walked in.

"Malfoy," she said setting down her quill. "Is there something I can help you with?"

"Black," said Draco. "Where is he?"

"Personal leave," said Granger in a matter of fact voice.

"Don't give me that excuse," he said. "It may be personal but I know it's something else."

"Why do you care?" she asked with a glare."Last two weeks you've ignored him and now here you are looking for him like a lost child."

Draco paused as he took in what Granger said. Ever since he learned James had a son he left both as soon as they reached Hogwarts. Jamie had cried himself to sleep and didn't twitch a finger when James Apparated them to Hogsmeade. Draco saw that James was taking the death of his friend well and the news of Jamie was a lot to take in.

"I had some things to think about," he said. Granger nodded.

"Understandable," she said. "But the fact is that James is on personal leave. He won't be back for at least a week."

"Let him know I'm asking for him," said Draco and turned to leave.

"That's it?" asked Granger. "Leave a message at the beep and he'll call you later?"

Draco turned to her confused. "What?"

"I mean I'm not a bloody owl." Granger stood and glared at him. "If you want to talk to him, you show some bollocks and talk to him! I'm not an owl or a secretary. He's at the Burrow."

She sat back down to grade papers. Draco looked at her for a moment before walking out of the office.

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"Come on, Jamie," said Harry shaking Jamie awake. "Time to get up."

"No!" groaned Jamie trying to burrow back in his quilt. "I sleepy."

"So is Daddy, but we have to go." Harry threw the covers off Jamie and grabbed his son in his arms. Jamie laughed as he wiggled and tried to loosen Harry's hold.
"Daddy! Let me go! Put me down!"

"Come on," laughed Harry setting Jamie down. "Grandma Molly got pancakes."

"Chocolate?"

Harry shrugged. "Go down and find out."

Jamie ran to his wardrobe flinging shirts and pants to find something to wear. Harry chuckled as he watched his son for a moment and left the room, knowing Jamie would clean up his mess when Grandma Weasley made him. Walking down to the kitchen he met Molly as she was finishing a stack of chocolate ship pancakes. She smiled at Harry as he sat down and gratefully took the cup of coffee she set in front of him.

"So, he excited?" she asked.

"More for your pancakes then anything else," said Harry and Molly laughed. "Really, thank you, Molly. We're not family…"

"Now stop that right now," said Molly looking at Harry sternly. "We are as much family as any one of the boys and Ginny. Jamie is as much my grandson as Dominique and Fredrick and don't you forget it."

Harry smiled gratefully at her as Jamie hurried down wearing a white shirt and dark pants.

"Pancakes!" he said and quickly sat down.

"Don't get any syrup on your clothes," said Molly.

"Yes, Grandma Molly," said Jamie and he began to eat. Molly set a cup of orange juice in front of Jamie and continued to make pancakes till she was out of batter. Harry smiled at Jamie and checked the clock. It had been changed since Harry's school days. It still had the names of each of the Weasley children, and two additions, Harry and Jamie. Almost each pointed to the newly added "Their Homes" or "Work". Only Molly, Harry and Jamie pointed at "Home".

"Okay, big guy, time to go," said Harry checking his watch.

"But I don't want to go," complained Jamie. Harry smiled at him.

"You want to go to Hogwarts, don't you?"

"Yeah!" Jamie smiled at the thought.

"Well, you have to go here first." And Harry stood and picked up Jamie's coat.

"But I don't want to go to this one. They're boring! Why can't I go to a magical one?"

"Because you're part Muggle. Be proud of who you are." Harry held out Jamie's coat and the boy reluctantly took it. "Say good-bye to Grandma Molly. She'll be picking you up later."

"Bye, Grandma," said Jamie.

"Have fun, dear, and be good," said Molly handing Jamie a paper bag. Jamie took the bag and followed Harry out of the Burrow.

"Can't you teleport us there?" asked Jamie and Harry laughed.
"Who do you think I am? Kurt Wagner? You've been watching too much telly."

"Well, can't we?" Jamie looked up at Harry hopefully. Harry smiled at him.

"No," he said. "There are something you can do with magic and others without."

"Like what?" asked Jamie and Harry looked down at him. "What can you do the Muggle way?"

"Learn. Magic is no substitute for knowledge. Friends, memories, love. Magic can't replace those. Especially love."

"Like you love Mummy?"

Harry smiled down at him. "Yes. Like I love your mum."

They continued walking until they came to Ottery Primary school.

"Daddy, I'm scared," said Jamie. "What if they don't like me? What if I...make bad things happen?"

"You'll be fine," said Harry kneeling down and placing his hands on Jamie's shoulders. "Just remember what we talked about."

Jamie nodded. "Breathe and ignore," he said. "If I lose control, send it someplace safe."

Harry nodded. "And you just moved here from Scotland and you live with your grandmother."

"And you work at a university," said Jamie and Harry nodded.

"Ready?" Jamie nodded nervously. "All right, let's go."

Harry stood and held his hand out to Jamie. Jamie took Harry's hand and they both walked into the school.
Harry sighed as he stacked the finished essays and rubbed the tension out of his back. It had been a long day. March had came bright and warm and every student was itching to get out of the stuffy dark classroom and go out in the fresh air. Harry was half tempted to join them.

The first week at Jamie's new school went without a problem and Jamie was a little happier with same normality. Harry could still see the sadness in his son's eyes at dinner. Jamie had visited the Burrow once a year with Mary, but that had been visits. Mary was gone and the visit was permanent. Jamie was slowly recovering, silently.

Harry didn't want to be the pacing parent but he was worried that Jamie's pent up emotions would find an outlet in his magic. Jamie remained quiet, afraid to say anything that might remind him of Mary. He even stopped crawling into Harry's bed at night. Harry had control of his emotions even at a young age but he knew to let out feelings every once in a while.

Harry put the essay in a briefcase and walked out. He was determined to be a good friend to Jamie as well as a father. Harry didn't know how to tell his son everything would be all right, that he would get over the death of his mother. Harry lost his parents when he was a year old. He never met them so how could he miss them? Jamie had been close to his mother. His grief would last longer.

"James, so good to see you!"

"I'm sorry, Harding," said Harry as he walked away from the Magical Music teacher. "I'm busy."

"Come one, James. You've missed me as much as I've missed you. Tell me you do."

"I have not."

"You're lying."

"I am not."

"Yes, you are." -"If I do miss you, even for a second, I will let you know." He walked into Hermione's office, closing the door behind him. Hermione looked at him as he sat down and sighed.

"Harding again?" she asked flicking her wand at the kettle and steam floated from the spout.

"Yeah, he's such an annoying flirt," said Harry.

"He is a bit overzealous," said Hermione levitating the tea tray to them. "But I don't see any harm in it."

"The guy's a perv, Hermione, and don't forget a stalker. Don't forget that bug in your office."

"You're right," said Hermione Levitating the tea tray to him. "But he could be after me not you."

"No, I know his type."

"What, you used to date one or something?" Hermione had only said it as a joke but the look on Harry's face said otherwise. His face went blank and he looked away.
"Or something," he said. Both became silent to calm down. After several minutes Harry turned to Hermione. "Has Ron found Katie yet?"

Hermione shook her head. "No. They tried every Tracking Charm they can think of and Oliver tried scrying with her hair brush but they got nothing."

"I've asked Dudley to keep a Missing Person's out for her. We're lucky she's Muggle-born. If she had been a pure-blood it would have been harder."

"Yeah," said Hermione.

Oliver hadn't been the same since Katie's disappearance. He put Quidditch on hold to take care of Olivia Caitlin, but he was more demanding on the Aurors about the case. A few weeks ago he had gone to the Daily Prophet and told his side of the story. He also offered a thousand Galleon reward to anyone with information on Katie. Thousands had turned up with bogus leads.

"You know her parents are blaming him," said Hermione. Harry looked at her in shock.

"What?"

Hermione nodded. "They said that if she was so into our world, then she would still be around."

"Well, that's crazy," said Harry setting the cup on the table. "They same can happen in the Muggle world."

"Which is crazy. But that's not the worst of it. They want guardianship of Liv."

"WHAT?"

"They said that Oliver is unfit to care for her and wants to take sole custody of her but since she was born in the wizarding world they'll have to go through our legal system, which they know nothing about, and Oliver's going to fight back tooth and nail."

"It's crazy. Oliver's got enough to deal with already."

"And they won't know how to raise her," said Hermione. "I remember my parents going to hysterics every time I let my magic loose. They didn't know what to do."

Harry nodded in understanding. He remembered when he was sent home every time he had a blast of accidental magic. The Dursleys would lock him in the cupboard for days without food or water but Harry had learned how to survive it. He hid bottled water and crackers under his bed and under the floorboard after he moved into the spare room. It was because of their punishments he had better control of his emotions, except when he got angry. Anger was the hardest emotion to control.

"How's Jamie?" asked Hermione after another few minutes of silence. "I haven't seen him since…"

"He's doing better," said Harry. "More or less. He's missing her but he keeps it to himself. I can't connect with him."

"Have you tried asking Teddy to talk to him," asked Hermione. "Teddy's lost his parents too."

"I have asked Teddy to talk to him but Jamie doesn't want to talk about Mary to him. He shook his head. "I'm out of ideas."

"What about Malfoy?" asked Hermione and Harry looked at her in surprise.
"Why would I ask Draco?"

"Well, because he's lost a parent and he's older. He remembers the pain. He'll be able to help Jamie grieve properly."

"And how am I supposed to ask him? 'Oh, I'm sorry to bother you, Draco, but I need you to talk to my son who I had in Scotland under an assumed name?' Yeah, that'll go well."

"You two still not talking?"

"Not since Mary died."

"It was a lot to take in. Knowing you kept in touch with a former lover and had a son with her."

"It was none of his business," said Harry. "I never planned for him to meet Jamie. I never planned for it to past casual dating."

"Some things don't go as planned. We should know."

Harry nodded. "I should ask. I just don't really don't know what to say?"

"Say it like it is, Harry." Harry nodded and the next few minutes passed with Hermione retelling Rose's first victorious chess game against Ron.

Afterward Harry walked toward the entrance hall near supper as the students filed into the Great Hall. Turning a corner he bumped into someone and looked up to see Draco.

"Oh, uh, hi," he said.

Hello," said Draco.

"So, how have you been?"

"Very well," said Draco. "And how are you and Jamie?"

"I'm getting by but Jamie not so much. He spends most of his time silent. I don't know what to do."

"You may not remember but it's not easy to lose a parent," said Draco crossing his arms. Harry nodded.

"I was hoping you could talk to him. I've tried and he won't talk to me. If you come over this weekend I'd greatly appreciate it."

"I have a previous engagement this weekend," said Draco and Harry looked crestfallen.

"Oh, uh, all right," he said. He walked around Draco and continued down the hall.

"James, wait." Harry turned to see Draco turned to him with a small smile. "I'll come by Saturday around four."

Harry smiled, happier then he'd been that Draco agreed. "Thanks, Draco."

Draco smiled back and nodded. Turning around he walked toward the Great Hall. Harry walked out of the castle.

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Draco straightened his robe before walking out of his chambers. It was early afternoon, a couple of hours before he would meet James at the "Burrow". He hadn't been trying to avoid James when he found out about Jamie. He just thought James would want to be alone.

And he was angry. He didn't know why. It wasn't for lying or that he had a son. How can you lie about something that is as awkward as a son? And the topic of having a son wasn't exactly an easy.

Draco Apparated to London outside of the rundown shop, said his name and walked into St. Mungo's.

"Draco, good to see you," said Chang shaking Draco's hand.

"How's my mother been?" asked Draco.

"Better, better. Her lucid moments last longer. It seems her dementia is fading."

"Is she aware enough for a visit?"

"I believe so," said Chang. "She had taken her potion and she caused no trouble so far. She's been so good we've allowed her a visit in the garden."

Draco nodded. They had better have allowed her more special visits in that garden, with as much money he donated to it. He walked the familiar halls to the garden. It was beautiful with lush green plants and vibrant flowers. Narcissa was sitting on a bench with her doll on her lap looking up at the sky. She looked over at him as he walked up.

"Hello, Draco," she said happily. "This is a surprise. It's rare for you to leave school."

She seemed to be having a more recent episode. Draco guessed his school years.

"I missed you, Mother," he said sitting next to her. "I asked permission to visit you."

"Oh, that's so sweet," she said taking Draco's hand and kissed his cheek. "You're lucky your father's out. He would have had a dragon if he knew you were skipping your studies for a silly visit."

"How is Father," asked Draco trying to keep it normal. Narcissa smiled.

"He is very well," she said. "He's taken to the Minister right now. He misses you but refuses to say it, as always."

"I miss him as well," said Draco unable to keep the sadness in his voice.

"How goes your studies? You're not falling behind are you?"

"No. I remain second in my year. My Ancient Runes is challenging but I believe I can make it."

"And how's Mr. Potter?" she asked. "You haven't been terrorizing him again, have you?"

"I haven't seen Potter for a while," said Draco curiously. Narcissa had never inquired about Potter before. "When I do I'll tell him you asked about him."

"Thank you, dear," said Narcissa with a smile. "That boy has had enough misery. We don't need to add to it."

Draco wondered what his mother meant but didn't press the issue. The rest of the visit consisted of Draco's past school projects and experiences. When it was time for Draco to leave Narcissa became
upset that Draco didn't stay long enough to speak with his deceased father.

"I'll send him an owl, Mother," he said with a smile. Narcissa smiled back, told him to study hard and to stay out of trouble before telling him good-bye.

Draco made sure he was away from prying eyes before he Disapparated and appeared in front of the Burrow gate. No one stood out to greet him at first but when he walked through the gate Molly Weasley walked out of the house with a smile and opened her arms to greet him.

"Draco, so nice to see you," she said kissing him on the cheek. "Thank you for visiting today."

"I couldn't say no to a child," he said. "Not even when James asked me."

Molly looked surprised at James name but quickly smiled. "James, yes. He has decided to stay out of your way as you talk to Jamie. He said you were angry at him about something."

"I was, but I don't think I am anymore."

"Good." Molly sounded relieved and it made Draco feel a bit better. "He has had a hard life. I don't want anything else adding to it."

Draco gave a start at her words and smiled. "My mother said the same thing about someone else."

"Mothers are smart people. He's in the garden."

Draco nodded and followed Molly through the house and to the back. James was kneeling in the dirt raking around a plant. Jamie knelt not far away with a small rake, solemn and stoic faced. Even from where he was he could hear the song softly sung by both father and son.

"…. It'll do magic, believe it or not. Bippiti-boppiti-bo."

"Jamie," called Molly. Draco got the feeling she was addressing both instead of just the son. Both looked up. "You have a visitor."

Both stood as Draco walked toward them. James smiled at him in gratitude and followed Molly inside. Jamie stood and went to greet Draco, wiping his hands on his already dirty pants.

"Mr. Malfoy," he said. "Daddy said you were coming over to talk to me."

"Did he," asked Draco not really expecting an answer. "You look well. How have you been?"

Jamie shrugged. "Okay. Going to school. It's okay there I guess."

"A Muggle school?"

Jamie nodded. "Mummy wanted me to go to one and Daddy agreed. It was hard at first, but it's okay."

"Why was it hard?" asked Draco.

"Because of my accidents. I get teased a lot and something would happen when I got angry, but not anymore."

"Because you learned to control them?"

"With Daddy's help." Jamie paused and looked up at Draco. "Daddy told you to talk to me. About
"You're very smart," said Draco smiling. Jamie shook his head.

"No, but Daddy says I'm very observant, whatever that is."

"It means you see things most people miss."

"I miss Mummy. I really do. Daddy doesn't have to have all his friends talk to me."

"You're father's just worried about you not talking about it."

"What's there to talk about? She's dead. Nothing can change that."

"That's true," said Draco softly. "Nothing can change that."

"Did you lose your parents as a baby too?" asked Jamie looking up at Draco.

"No," said Draco looking down at the ground. "No, I lost my father...eight years ago."

"Was he nice, like my mummy?"

"In a way. My mother found him and she hadn't been the same after that," said Draco. "In a way, I lost both my parents, so I know how you feel. But I think we're the lucky ones. We knew our parents. Your father and cousin Teddy," Draco glanced over at James sitting on a chair with a glass of lemonade, "wish more then anything that they did." -"How do you know?" asked Jamie.

"I see it in your father's eyes. He loves you very much and he asked me to come over and talk to you. You're a very lucky man."

Jamie looked over at his father still sitting at the chair and drinking lemonade. James was trying to pretend to be interested in his book but his gaze kept wondering to Jamie and Draco.

"Thank you, Mr. Malfoy," said Jamie turning back to Draco.

"For what?" asked Draco, "For being a good friend to my daddy."

And with a grateful smile he went back to James and threw his arms around him. James nearly spilled his drink in surprise before smiling and hugged him back.

"What brought this on?" he asked. Draco could just hardly hear the conversation but it was still audible.

"For being a good daddy," said Jamie. James smiled as he wrapped his arms around Jamie and turned to Draco with a grateful smile.

"Thank you," he mouth. Draco mouth, "You're welcome," back.

"Draco, honey," called Molly and Draco turned to her. "Will you be staying for dinner? I've got barbequed ribs and my mother's peach cobbler."

"I really wasn't planning on it," said Draco. He turned to James and smiled. "But I'd love to."

James smiled back and for a moment Draco was lost in it. He had never seen someone smile that brightly, not since Potter had given him back his wand and asked for a truce. Draco was nervous when he took back the wand and agreed to the truce. That was the last he saw of Potter, and James
smiling now reminded Draco of him.

All through dinner Jamie talked about his day at school and the adults listened. Draco had found it
interested how a Muggle education program wasn't so different from a wizard's, just minus the
magic.

"Thanks for talking to Jamie," said James as Jamie played with a toy Snitch. "It means a lot."

"To you, or him?" asked Draco smiling at James.

"Both." Draco looked over at Jamie playing with the toy ball. "Draco, I am sorry for not telling you
about Jamie."

"Don't be," said Draco. "I understand. It's a hard topic to get into, or to bring up. I'm still uneasy
talking about my mother."

"I'm happy to have become your friend this year. I never thought we would be."

Draco looked at him curiously. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, you knew I wasn't staying after this year..."

"So, we're not friends?" asked Draco.

"We are, it's just after I leave I don't know if we can stay friends," said James. From the look on his
face he was depressed at the thought of them not remaining friends.

"Why?" Draco had a sinking feeling he was the reason and James couldn't remain friends.

"It's not you. It's me. I've got a complicated life and I don't want to drag anyone into it."

"What about Jamie?" asked Draco looking back over at the boy.

"Molly would be happy to take care of Jamie. She already thinks of him as a grandson. And my
friends will too."

"Does that include me?"

"Of course," said James in shock. "You are one of my friends."

"But what if I wanted to be more then friends?" asked Draco and James looked away.

"Draco, I can't..."

"You mean you won't. You and your stupid reasons! I didn't say you had to. I want you to, but you
don't have to."

James smiled at him. "We'll see how it goes," he said. Draco smiled back when Jamie shrieked in
glee and ran over to them.

"Daddy! Daddy, I caught it!"

"Great job, Jamie!" said James picking up his son. Jamie smiled at Draco and held out the Snitch.

"I caught it, Mr. Malfoy!"

"That's great, Jamie. And call me Draco. You'll make a fine Seeker one day, just like your daddy."
James smiled at Draco and he smiled back. Jamie smiled at both of them before letting go of the Snitch and ran after it again. Both men watched as they talked about the last Irish game.
Conversations

"Daddy, when's Mr. Draco coming to visit?" asked Jamie. He was handed a plate by his father and dried it.

"Why do you want Draco to visit?" asked Harry as he washed the next dish. "He may teach children but I don't see him hanging around with one."

"You said you wanted me to know the things you didn't," said Jamie. "Mr. Draco can teach me."

"I think he would appreciate it if you called him "Draco" and Aunt Hermione can help you with that."

Jamie didn't say anything as he dried another plate and set it on the stack on the counter.

"You don't like Mr. Draco, do you?" he asked. Harry looked at him in surprise.

"Of course I do," he said. "I like Draco a lot. It's just complicated, Jamie."

"Why is it complicated?"

Harry paused as he looked down at his son. The boy was more mature then a regular six year old, thanks to Mary and Harry not holding anything back because of child innocence. Jamie was still a child though and acted like one, when he wanted to.

"Because life is complicated, Jamie," he said. Jamie looked up at his father before taking a bowl and drying it.

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Draco watched as James walked into the Great Hall for lunch. He still didn't know why James was avoiding him. Even after talking to his son James still kept his distance. They still talked, but James kept it to schoolwork.

Draco was currently talking to Longbottom about the care of magical herbs. The knowledge James had on herbs wasn't extensive but enough for a decent conversation.

"Talk to him, Draco," said Pansy. "Just stop sulking! It's making me grim."

"I'm sorry, Pansy. I tried. After I helped with his kid he stopped talking to me. He said he wanted to remain friends but…."

"Distancing himself again? Stubborn man."

"I don't blame him for having a kid and keeping it secret. I understand that, but to exclude me…."

"Calm down, Draco. I understand." Draco nodded and turned back to James talking to Longbottom. "Speaking of kids…"

"Pansy, I told you…."

"No! Not you, me!" Draco looked at her in surprise. Pansy smiled.

"You're not? Pansy nodded. "Does Blaise know?" Another nod. "Oh Merlin, congratulations!"
He wrapped his arms around her and she hugged hard. By then everyone was looking at them in curiosity but both didn't care. They were too wrapped up in their happiness.

"Draco, Pansy," said McGonagall. "Care to share this unusual outburst in front of the students."

"It's Pansy's news to tell," said Draco returning to his usual calm self. A quick glance at James showed him blank faced before he smiled and nodded his glee to Pansy.

"I will discuss it with you later, headmistress," said Pansy. "I am sorry for the outburst."

McGonagall nodded and lunch resumes, but with more curiosity. Pansy leaned back to Draco a few minutes later.

"It still isn't too late for you," she said. "When I done with this you'll have to wait but…"

"Pansy, I can wait," he said smiling over at her. She smiled back.

After lunch hour later Draco was putting paper in a bag to grade later and walked to his chambers when he saw James walked not far ahead.

"James!" he called. James looked back for a moment before he started hurrying down the hall. Draco pulled out his wand angrily. "Oh no, you don't."

A quick spell and James' feet were stuck to the floor. James tugged at his feet for a few moments before taking out his wand, which Draco quickly Disarmed.

"All right, I get the message," said James and turned to Draco, or at least his waist did halfway. His feet were still stuck. "Really, Draco. A Sticking Charm?"

"I need to keep you from running away," he said waving his wand. James' feet unstuck and he handed back his wand. James smiled.

"I'm James now, am I?" he asked taking back his wand.

"You have for a while." Both were silent as Draco tried to find a start to the conversation. "So, uh, how's Jamie?"

"He's fine. He asked for you."

Draco was taken by surprise. "He did? That's nice of him."

The awkward silence returned until James spoke again. "Listen, Draco, maybe being more then friends is not a good idea. I don't know when I'll have to leave."

"I never asked to be more then friends," said Draco. "I want to, but you don't."

James smiled. "Different then the Draco Malfoy I met."

Draco shrugged. "Times teach people. I've had a decade to learn. What about you?"

"There are more things in Heaven and Earth then to your philosophy," said James in monotone. Draco looked at his curiously. The saying sounded old but Draco never heard of it. "Charles Dickens. A famous Muggle writer. One of his most famous works is The Christmas Carol."

"I might have read it, but that still doesn't answer my questions."
"It means I have changed," said James. "But into what I don't know."

"I think I do," said Draco. "I don't care if you don't want us to be close friends but I know who you are, and it's not a cruel person."

For a moment Draco saw a flash of fear go through James' eyes. Draco was curious why he would be scared on what Draco said.

"And what am I, Draco?" asked James, his voice almost strained.

"The closest thing to a best friend I have," said Draco.

"What about Zabini and Pansy?"

"They're my friends, my best friends, but they don't really understand me," he said. "Not like you. Somehow, you do."

James smiled and shrugged. "I don't know. All I do is talk," he said and walked down the hall. "Another Muggle saying; to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven."

And James walked away. Draco was about to enter his office when James called him.

"Hey, Draco." Draco turned around to find James looking back at him from down the hall. "Madam Paddifoots on Saturday?"

Draco smiled. "All right. I'll be there."

James nodded and walked away.

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"You're putting too much flourish into it, Rita," said Harry going to the girl's side who stood in front of her partner trying to learn the Disarming Charm. "Don't hold it so tight and just sort of wave."

Rita nodded and turned to her partner.

"Expelliarmus!"

The other girl's wand flew out of her hand and Harry caught it before it hit Rita in the face.

"Yes! Yes! I did it! I did it!"

"Very good, Rita," said Harry handing the wand back. "With a bit of practice you'll be as good as me."

Rita smiled as she blushed. "I don't know about that. I never was good."

"Never put yourself down. It makes your magic go awry, and it's not very good for your self-esteem." He smiled at her and Rita blushed again.

"Yes, sir."

The bell rang and the students began getting ready to leave.

"Right," called Harry over the noise. "Practice your defensive spells and I want an essay on the difference of the Shield Charms, including Protego, Impedimenta, and Reversis."
The students walked out like they didn't hear him, but Harry knew they did. Waving his wand he put the desks in the right order and cleaned up the mess the students made while learning their spells. Picking up his bag he walked out of the classroom, and nearly stepped on Ishara curled up in front of the door.

"Hello, my friend," he said leaning down and held his arm out for her to climb on. "I have not seen you in a while."

"Air was cold, so I slept. I awake now," said Ishara as she climbed up Harry's arm and curled around his neck.

"Does your master know you're prowling about?"

"I go where I please."

Harry laughed as he walked down the hall. Ishara curled up under his robes out of sight to not scare the students wandering the halls. The snake's cold scales soon warmed from Harry's body hear and Ishara was content to stay where she was.

Harry was nearing Draco's office when a voice called out.

"Hey, James, wait up!"

Harry turned to find Harding, walking over to him with a wide smile. Harry felt a stab of annoyance at the persistence of the Magical Music teacher. Harry didn't want anything to do with Harding, especially since he figured he was the one who bugged Hermione's office. But without proof Harry couldn't do anything and now tolerated him.

"Can I help you, Harding?" he asked, feeling Ishara move against his neck. Harding walked up to Harry with a smile.

"I'm sorry to hear about you and Malfoy," said Harding.

"What do you mean," asked Harry slightly confused.

"You and the row you had," said Harding. "I'm sorry to hear about it."

"Thanks," said Harry a bit worried. "But we're fine now. We're working it out. Fixing it up."

Harding nodded. "That's good. No good friendship should end in a fight." Harry saw something flash in Harding's eyes but couldn't tell what it was. "Listen, did you want to go out and get a bite or something? Try to get to know each other."

Harry looked at Harding in surprise. After Harry just said that he was trying to patch things up with Draco he asks Harry out? Was he that persistent?

"Sorry, Harding, but I can't. I'm patching things up with Draco. I just said that."

"Oh don't worry, I'm asking till then we get to know each other," said Harding walking up to Harry. Harry saw the flash in Harding's eyes again. "I would really appreciate it."

"Yeah, well, I don't," said Harry backing up. "I have to go. I need to see Draco."

"You don't have to now," said Harding. "You can spend time with me."

Harding reached over to take Harry by the shoulder, but a low hiss from Ishara made Harding's hand
stop short and he stared in surprise as Ishara raised her head from the inside of Harry's robes.

"What the hell…?"

"This is Ishara," said Harry. "Our resident South American boa constrictor, so I'd watch my step."

"He's loud," she said. "Can I eat him?"

Harry reached up and softly petted her triangular head, letting her know she couldn't and to stay where she was.

"Who does she belong to?"

"Draco," said Harry with a smirk and continues down the hall. "Stay close to your master," he said in a low voice to Ishara.

"Yes, my friend," she said tucking herself back under Harry's robes. Harry walked down the hall to the chilly dudgeons. Ishara wrapped herself around Harry tighter to stay close to his body heat. Harry walked up to Draco's chambers and sharply knocked. Draco opened the doors and looked at Harry in surprise.

"James, is there a reason for you being on my front step?"

"Just taking someone home," said Harry. Draco looked at curiously before Ishara raised her head from Harry's robes.

"Ishara?"

"I found her curled up next to my door," said Harry gently petting the serpent's head. "I guess she missed me during her sleep."

"I haven't seen her for a while," said Draco placing his hand on Harry's shoulder so Ishara could move to his shoulders instead. "Neither have I, but that's winter for snakes. Have you tried a Warming Charm on her pillow?"

"She has a sort of den," said Draco standing aside to let Harry in. "Its soft and she seems to like it."

"Hermione's cat is like that," said Harry. He took a quick look around and he didn't see anything out of place. "She can hardly keep Crookshanks out of it."

"I expect you didn't come here just to return my snake," said Draco closing the door behind him and offering Harry a seat.

"I wanted to apologize, for the way I acted," said Harry. "I had no right to treat you the way I did."

"You're right, you had no right. So apology accepted."

"Thank you," said Harry. "The way I push more people away is second nature to me. I acted on it without thinking."

"Why do you push people away," asked Draco.

"A lot of bad experiences," said Harry. Ishara had curled off Draco and to the covered den in a corner near the desk. "Crappy childhood, stressful teenage years, and heart-breaking adult life. I guess I push people away before I get hurt."
"So forewarned is forearmed, message received," said Draco. Harry shook his head.

"That's just it, Draco. I don't want to push people away. Something about you makes me want to tell you everything. The secrets, the lies…"

"I thought you said the truth was in the lies?"

"Good memory," said Harry. "I hate lies, which may be way I hate myself so much. I want to tell you everything, but I don't know where to start."

"You could start with you name," said Draco.

Harry chuckled. "That may take a bit longer," he said. "I can start with my childhood, if that's all right?"

Draco thought for a moment.

"How about how you met Mary?" he said. Harry sighed. He had no problem talking about Mary. He started talking about when he was in Scotland.

"It was where I met Mary," he said over a cup of coffee in the teacher's lounge. "She was the waitress at a cafe and I was the guide to the Loch. We kept running into each other till I finally asked her out."

"When did you two hit it off?" asked Draco sipping his tea.

"Not for another month. She was actually very open to people differences, so when I told her I was a wizard she asked for proof and I Levitated her couch."

"What did she do," asked Draco after he laughed.

"She asked me if I could repair anything and when I said I could she asked me to repair her mother's tea pot."

Draco and Harry laughed again, glad for the ease they now had.

"So what about you," asked Harry when they had their laughter under control. "Was your love life interesting?"

"My love life is basically a loop," said Draco. "I've had a lot of lovers that lasted a couple of weeks or a night…"

Harry chuckled and Draco smiled. "And I also dated Pansy and Blaise. First Pansy, then Blaise, then Pansy again…"

"And they got married," said Harry with a smiled and Draco laughed softly.

"And all three of you friends," said Harry.

"Better to be friends and happy then enemies holding a grudge."

Harry nodded in agreement. He knew how hard it was to keep friendships after the war. He, Ron and Hermione almost lost theirs. The only things that kept them together were talking to Andromeda, who had training as a Mind-Healer. She helped them get through their post-war stress and keep their friendship together.
"Yeah, friends are important," said Harry. From the corner of his eyes he saw Draco smiling, hidden behind his teacup.
"I want essays for the ingredients for these three Potions by Monday," said Draco to the seventh year as the packed up to leave. All were in a hurry to leave. Hogsmeade weekend had come and every student allowed was eager to get out of the stuffy castle and visit the village.

Draco gathered up papers, put away the stray ingredients and locked up the cupboards as he walked out of the classroom. Walking out of the dungeon he went to the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom. Since James confession of being a liar, Draco was determined to be his confidante - Draco walked into the open door as James cleaned the blackboard by hand. His back was turned to Draco so James didn't hear Draco walk in.

"That's what magic's for," he said. James turned to look at him in surprise and smiled when he saw Draco.

"Sorry. Can't teach old dog new tricks," he said setting the eraser down.


"So you're saying I'm a dog?"

"Well, you do have me going in circles," said Draco and both laughed. "Got anything planned this weekend?"

"I was thinking of taking Jamie to Diagon Alley."

"Care for a guest?" asked Draco. James looked at him in thought.

"I guess Jamie won't mind. I was planning taking him to Quidditch Supplies and the ice cream shop. And he likes you. He'll enjoy your company." James smiled up at Draco. "I know I will."

Draco smiled and walked in the room toward James. He knew James was teasing but he couldn't help feeling giddy about it.

"So you enjoyed my company before," he asked. He stood in front of James and couldn't help but smile when James' wavered with a look that said it was hopeful.

"I've always enjoyed your company."

"So I'll meet you in the Entrance Hall tomorrow?" James nodded. Draco turned toward the door but stopped and turned back to James. "I've enjoyed your company as well. Very much."

James' smile was the he saw before he walked out of the room. He walked down to his chambers hoping to get some relaxation before supper. Walking in his chambers he tried to come up with a solution to his newest potions invention, but his thoughts wondered to James.

The man was a mystery wrapped in an enigma wrapped in a taco, to quote Granger. Draco had never met anyone he wanted to know more then he wanted to know James. Not since Potter, and he was still trying to figure his old rival out.

Draco hadn't lied when he said he enjoyed James' company. Draco hadn't had as much fun in the last few months since he attended Hogwarts as a student. The man was intriguing, was easy to talk to and they had a lot of the same interests; Quidditch, books, both liked kids and enjoyed each other's
company. Draco found that these were some things in the Muggle world he enjoyed, such as movies, baseball games and hamburgers. Draco could see them as good friends.

Draco jumped out of his thoughts when a knock sounded and Pansy walked in before Draco could open the door.

"Weekend plans?" she asked sitting on the second chair.

"Spending the day with James and his son," said Draco. "We haven't spent much time together because of school."

Pansy smiled at him. "You like him," she said.

"Of course I do," said Draco. "He's interesting, good with Kids, and he doesn't discriminate over past mistakes, and he's smart…"

"No, I mean you like him." Draco's mouth opened in realization at what Pansy said.

"But I can't be…"

"But you are. Against all odds you, Draco Malfoy, has fallen in love."

"But I can't…I couldn't have…" Draco was in shock. Even when dating Pansy and Blaise and through he loved them both, he had never been in love. Not during school or after at taverns or social meetings. "But I can't be."

"Answer me this, do you like him," asked Pansy

"Of course."

"You find him handsome?"

"Yes."

"His jokes are funny?"

"Yes."

"And you smile when he's in the room?"

Draco smiled softly. "Yeah." He looked up at her seriously. "But that doesn't mean I'm in love with him."

"Do you dream about him?" Draco's face went blank, and then a slight red came to his cheeks. "I knew it! You are in love with him."

"Oh Merlin," breathed Draco in realization. "Wha-What do I do?"

"The only thing you can do. Tell him."

Draco sighed heavily and looked to the fire in thought, trying to figure out how to tell James.

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"Harry, calm down," said Hermione as Harry paced across the floor of her office. "What's going on?"
Harry had been in an agitated state since he barged into Hermione's office and started talking wildly. Hermione caught words like "Malfoy", "company", and "Diagon Alley."

"Draco wants to accompany me and Jamie to Diagon Alley," he said. Hermione didn't look surprised but she was confused at his reaction.

"It won't be the first time you and him gone out together," she said. "So what's the problem?"

"You don't get it, Hermione. You got married and had kids. It's different for single parents. Meeting new people is difficult, it's an obstacle. And meeting the kids is an even bigger one."

"So you're freaking out because he wants to go out on the town with you and Jamie? He likes Jamie and Jamie likes him."

"I know, but it's different now."

"How is it different?" Harry mumbled something. "What? What did you say?"

"I think I'm in love with him," said Harry. Hermione stared at him in shock and Harry didn't blame her. While attending Hogwarts as students Harry and Draco were at each other's throats, but now with Harry's new persona Draco and he have become good friends.

"Harry, you can't fall in love with him! What if he finds out?"

"I know! I know! And it gets worse."

"How?"

"I think Draco's in love with James."

If Hermione hadn't been sitting she would have fallen in her seat. "How do you know?"

"Trust me, I know."

"What are you going to do?"

"I don't know! I thought I would be his friend, not fall in love with him."

"Well, that backfired."

Harry sat down, his head spinning as blood rushed to his brain. "What do I do? I've never felt like this before. Ginny was close, Mary was damn close…"

Hermione stared at him in shock. "Oh, Harry, you got it bad."

Harry groaned. "What am I going to do?"

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Draco knew something was on James' mind as soon as he saw the other teacher. James' shoulders were tense and he fidgeted. James was a lot of things, but he never was tense or fidgety. His hands were jammed in his pockets so hard it looked painful and he was kicking pebbles around him.

"James, is something wrong?" he asked. James jumped and turned to Draco with an expression Draco couldn't read. "Are you okay?"
"Yeah," said James a little hastily. "Yeah. I'm fine. Are you ready?"

"Yes. Are we picking Jamie up at the Weasley's?"

"Yeah, he's waiting for us at Molly's. Let's go get him."

And they went to the end of the grounds. Draco watched James as they would our of the school wards. James walked stiff legged and nervously. He stumbled over a rock before he righted himself.

"James, are you sure you're okay?" asked Draco.

"Yeah, yeah. I'm just nervous."

"Why?"

The question made James even more nervous. "It's a big step, in any relationship, to have an outing with a single parent and the kid. And there's a lot of stuff you don't know about me…"

"You're real name for one," said Draco and James nodded.

"For one."

"I want to know everything about you."

James seemed to cringe but he kept walking. "Maybe not everything."

Draco put a hand on James arm and smiled at him reassuringly. "I'll be the judge of that."

"Trust me, Draco, there are a lot of things about me you don't want to know."

"Name one."

James gave him a serious look. "My real name." Draco opened his mouth to protest but James interrupted him. "Look, can we not talk about it? Let's just get Jamie and have a nice day?"

Draco nodded and followed at a slow pace, still curious about his companion's past. Obviously whatever happened had shook James so hard that he kept even his name secret.

They arrived at the Burrow and Jamie was ecstatic to see Draco, running up to the Potions Master and hugging him. Draco was happy to see Jamie as well. He had grown fond of the boy in his short visit.

"Draco, I didn't know you were coming," said Jamie.

"You didn't?" asked Draco looking at James, who shrugged with a smirk.

"I thought I could surprise Jamie," he said.

"Daddy!" said Jamie with a laugh.

"I'll say he's surprised," said Draco also smiling. James put a Tracer bracelet on Jamie's wrist.

"Maybe we'll go to the park later," he said. "Play some catch or just walk around."

"Yeah!" said Jamie and turned to Draco. "Do you want to, Draco?"

"Sounds like a good idea," said Draco with a smile at James. James smiled back before taking
Jamie's hand.

"We're for on a little trip, so hold on tight," he said. Jamie nodded and they disappeared with a crack. Draco followed them and they stood at the entrance of the Leaky Cauldron. Jamie looked at it in excitement as he held onto his father's hand.

"That was wicked, Daddy! So cool!"

"Was that your first time Side-Apparation?" asked Draco.

"Yeah!" said Jamie turning to Draco. "It was so cool! At first I thought I was being squeezed, like my head would pop off, and then we popped out!"

"Trust me, the first time's always the scariest. Even after he Splinched the first time, Uncle Ron wouldn't quit."

"Splinched?" asked Jamie but James just smiled at him and lead him into the pub. "Is that the only way to travel?"

"How did you get to Hogwarts when you visited?" asked Draco.

"He was asleep when I brought him to Hogwarts," said Jamie. Draco noticed he looked around nervously, as if afraid someone was going to jump out and attack him. "I brought him by Floo."

"What's Floo?" asked Jamie and James laughed.

"Curious little bugger isn't he?" said James ruffling Jamie’s hair. "Always wants to know everything magic."

"He should," said Draco. "It's his heritage."

James smiled at Draco as they walked to the back of the pub and he tapped the entrance. Draco watched Jamie's the whole time. At first it was in curiosity as the small magic trick of the pub, but turned to amazement at the sight of the Alley.

"Whoa!"

James laughed. "Yeah, that was my reaction when I saw Diagon Alley," he said leading Jamie in, keeping the boy close with an arm around his shoulders.

"When was that?" asked Draco.

"About two decades ago," said James. "I was only a child then and new to magic. I guess you're a lot like me, eager to learn everything."

And they did go see everything. Jamie wanted to see every store and experience everything. He was interested in Florish and Blotts and even especially excited by Quidditch Supplies. He kept asking James questions on the rules, positions, players and teams before James bought him a *Quidditch for Beginners* book. Upon receiving it Jamie immediately began reading it.

"You may have a future Seeker on your hands," said Draco as they walked toward Florene Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlour. Jamie was sitting at the table eating a Bertie Botts Every Flavor Ice cream as Draco and James talked not far off.

"He won't be the first in the family," said James.
"Who else but you have been a Seeker in your family?" asked Draco.

"My dad. He was quite a Seeker in his time."

"So Quidditch runs in your family," said Draco and James nodded with a small smile. Pansy's conversation came to him and he knew he had to admit to himself he had known for a long time. "James, there's something I have to tell you."

James looked at him curiously. "What's wrong, Draco?"

"I…I love you." Draco stared at James in the eyes when he said those words and saw something flash across James' face. Fear, but Draco couldn't stop his speech yet. "I don't even know who you are, or what you're running from, and I don't care. I still love you. I love you for who you are."

James stared at him in a mix of shock, confusion, anxiousness and fear. Draco also saw something that gave him a bit of hope. Love. James did love him, and in a second it was gone as soon as it came.

"You can't say that, Draco," he said.

"I do, James. I mean it more than anything."

"Draco, please…"

"I mean it, James. I've only known one other person like you, and you're both so much alike that it's hard to tell you apart. I've loved him once, but it was impossible."

That seemed to have caught Jamie's attention. "Who?"

Draco opened his mouth to answer but a sudden crowd of people pushed through him and surrounded James and Jamie. James pulled Jamie against him protectively as cameras flashed and quills scratched on paper.

"Mr. Potter, where have you been all this time?"

"Mr. Potter, can we have a word with you?"

"Mr. Potter…"

"Daddy, what's going on?" asked Jamie clutching tight to his father's shirt.

"Stay with me, Jamie," said James, no, Potter. Draco could see it now. His eyes, his face, the way he walked and talked. It was all Harry Potter. The only thing missing was his glasses and scars. He stared in shock as Harry looked back at him, apologetically. "I'm sorry."

And he Disapparated.
Hogwarts had become chaotic after the reporters stampeded in Diagon Alley. Teachers had a hard time keeping the journalists and cameramen out of the grounds and McGonagall stressed on keeping the students on schedule. Hagrid now took up his job as groundskeeper to the extreme, walking around the grounds to catch anyone that wasn't staff or student. Fang and Buckbeak kept watch as well, and the owls and thestrals flew patrols.

Two days after the papers advertising Harry Potter's return McGonagall called Harry to the office. He had gotten through the halls between classes by wearing his Invisibility Cloak. It turned out to have been a good idea. A reporter and cameraman had managed to sneak into the grounds. Harry cast a Caterwauling Charm and Flitwick looked out his classroom to see what the noise was about.

"You are not allowed here," yelled Flitwick. "Leave now!"

"But…But….Harry Potter," stuttered the journalist as they were lead out.

"He wants nothing to do with you," said Flitwick.

Harry smiled at his former teacher. He didn't know if the teachers had been mad at him or not, but they supported in keeping the reporters out of the school. Harry continued to McGonagall's office. After speaking the password and walking up the stairs he took off his cloak, folded it and knocked.

"Come in, Mr. Potter." Harry walked into the office. It was very different from when Dumbledore was headmaster. Books still covered the shelves and pictures of past Headmasters and -mistresses still hung on the walls. A few odd items were placed decoratively around the room. McGonagall looked up when he entered, taking note of the Cloak on his arm.

"I suppose you're the one behind the Caterwauling Charm I just heard," she said setting the paper she been reading aside.

"Spotted a pair walking the halls trying to be discreet," said Harry sitting down in a chair. "Busted, uh?" "

"This is no laughing matter, Harry. This is serious."

Harry sighed quietly. "Right. Sorry. As if I didn't know my life just went down the toilet and my son's along for the ride." "I'm sorry, Harry, I really am, but I need to know what you're going to do. Hide again? Leave your students mid-term and see your friends once a year?"

Harry paused in thought. After he was bombarded he Apparated to the Burrow and hurried Jamie inside, in case any of the reporters were smart enough to track him back there. He was half through packing a travel bag when he stopped, finally registering what had happened not long ago and what he should be doing now, what he wanted to do.

He had been found out. Someone found out who he was and told every reporter in England and they found him, in front of Draco. He only told one person his plans to take Jamie and Draco out and that was Hermione. It was a stupid idea. Hermione was his friend and supported his need to stay out of the limelight. If it wasn't Hermione then someone overheard them. But whom?

He remembered Draco asking him if James Black would run again, after Mary died and he had been given custody of Jamie. He couldn't run now, not when he had someone depending on him. What kind of life was that for a kid? It was hard enough on him and he was a full grown adult.
"No," he said. "I'm not going to hop around the world anymore. I've got a son now. I have to think of him first."

"Are you sure it's not more then that?" asked McGonagall.

Harry wanted to say it was, but remembered the look on Draco's face when the reporters swarmed him. He'd never forgive Harry for that lie.

"No, there's not."

"Then Draco's a…"

"Colleague. Nothing more."

McGonagall nodded. Harry could see she didn't believe him. "We'll hold an announcement for the students to let them know. Right now, we need a way to keep your adoring fans away from the school."

Harry smiled at her. "Don't worry. I've got a few ideas."

Draco entered the Great Hall and saw the other teachers standing or sitting and waiting for McGonagall to arrive. He sat with Pansy near Trelawney, luckily talking to Vigo. The students were already whispering among themselves, wondering what the morning announcement was.

"I knew he was nearby, I just couldn't figure out where," said Trelawney. "His spirit is very strong…"

"Can you believe it?" said Pansy. "Harry Potter had been here the entire time, as James Black! What gave him the right to lie to us?"

"Pansy, you're blowing it out of proportion," he said.

"Am I? He played your friend for the last seven months. And he's supposed to be a hero! A hero never lies, right?"

"Back off, Parkinson," said Granger walking up to them, obviously hearing Pansy's rant. "You're not Harry. He has his reasons."

"What reasons is there to run, hide, and lie to the whole world?" asked Pansy.

"I don't know. Go ask him and find out."

"Oh, that's a surprise. The Golden Trio doesn't know everything about each other. One would think you were joined at the hip."

"Back off, Parkinson! Harry has his own reasons and has every right to them. I thought a Slytherin would understand the reasons for keeping secrets."

"Overbearing Gryffindor pride," said Pansy and turned away. Granger left to sit with Longbottom and Hagrid. McGonagall and Potter walked in a minute later, Potter now wearing his usual glasses. His hair was black now and still in the pony tail. His scar was somewhat visible under his thick bangs. Other then that, nothing much had changed about him, from his clothes right down to his silver hoop earring.
"Thank you for coming," said McGonagall. "As we know, we all got a shock when we found out our own Professor Black is actually Harry Potter. Now, I would just like to say, yes I knew who he really was, but not the reasons why. I respected his right to privacy, which I hope you all so as well."

She nodded at Potter and he walked up to the front. He looked over at the teachers and took a deep breathe.

"I am very sorry for lying to you all year," he said. "It was uneasy, and necessary. The reasons for my hiding are because I had to find myself. I had concentrated on the war all my life. I didn't know what I would do once it was over. I hid so no one would find me. I had to take that journey alone, and in my lie I met a lot of people. People I didn't want to hurt." Potter paused as if hesitant that no would forgive him and Draco wouldn't blame anyone if they didn't. "I'm not up here to tell you I'm leaving. I came here to teach and that's what I'm going to do. I'm not a hero here. I'm a teacher, and that's what I'll continue to do."

And he stepped down and walked to his seat between Draco and Granger. He didn't look on either side of him, just stared ahead of the students. Every bit the confident Gryffindor Draco knew he was.

"Thank you, Mr. Potter," said McGonagall. "And I agree with Professor Potter's wishes. There will be no frivolity during classes at all, and no waiting reports inside. The day will continue as scheduled. Anyone who goes against these rules will be given detention. That is all. You may go to your dorms."

The students stood and followed their prefects back to their Houses. The teachers stood and began to file out, the younger staff members stayed to talk to Potter, including Hagrid. Potter spoke politely to them and only once looked in Draco's direction. The look of hurt in Potter's eyes reminded Draco of James Black and made his chest hurt. He would have walked over to him but Pansy held his arm.

"Come on, Draco," she said and lead Draco out. Draco left the Great Hall, the look in Potter's eyes following him.

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"Is he here?" asked Harry as they walked out of the Great Hall. Some students still lingered and quickly got out of the way as Harry and Hermione walked down the corridor.

"Yes," she said. "He got here five minutes ago. He's waiting for you in your chambers."

"Thanks, Hermione. I owe you one."

"I don't get why you want to talk to just him. Some of them aren't half bad."

"Because out of all the gossip-grabbers, he's the only one I trust," said Harry. "The others would most likely twist what I say."

"How did they find you?" asked Hermione in thought. "How did they know who you were?"

"That's what I'm wondering," said Harry. "I only told a few people who know who I was and where I was going."

"You think we have a rat?"

"What else could it be? He or she put my son in danger. There's no getting away from that."

"I'll tell McGonagall."
She left, turning a corner that would take her to the shortest route to the Headmistress's office. Harry continued to his chambers. Opening the door he greeted the man sitting in a chair in front of his fireplace.

"Hey, Dennis," he said walking up to him and hugged Dennis as the reporter stood. "How have you been?"

Dennis shrugged. "All right. Go where the work is. That's my life."

"I would have pegged a Creevey as a reporter," said Harry sitting down. Through, Hermione, Ron and Andromeda he kept tabs on his old Housemates to see how they handled life after the war. To commemorate Collin's memory, Dennis became a reporter.

"Collin loved getting to the truth of things and that's all I try to do."

"That's great, Dennis," said Harry. "Collin would be proud of you. Are you thirsty? I can have a house-elf get you some butterbeer from the kitchen."

"Yes, thank you."

Harry ordered a house-elf to bring two bottles and as they drank Harry asked about Dennis's life. Dennis had gotten married to a half-blood girl he met while on the run from the Death Eaters and they got married soon after graduating. They had two girls named Mary and Colleen. Dennis's wife wrote Muggle fantasy books and was becoming very popular.

"What about you, Harry," asked Dennis. "Did you get married during your travels?"

Harry laughed. "The interview starting already?"

Dennis laughed too. "Sorry. I forgot I was here for an interview. Did you want to get started?"

Harry sighed. "Yes, let's get it over with. I hate interviews."

"I know," said Dennis with a laugh. He took out a notepad and a quill that was vomit green. Harry recognized a Quick Quotes Quill immediately, but also knew this one wasn't enchanted to scandalize a person's life. Dennis was too trustworthy. When he said he wrote the truth he meant it. "All right, first question…."

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HARRY POTTER RETURNS!

On April 19th, through an anonymous tip, Harry Potter was spotted at Diagon Alley in the company of a young boy and Draco Malfoy, Potions Master of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, outside of Florean Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlour. It is revealed that Harry Potter works at Hogwarts as the newest Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher.

As we all know Harry Potter defeated the Dark Lord Voldemort a decade ago and has gone missing for eight years. Where he had gone had remained a mystery. -

Well, the mystery has been solved. This reporter had one time and one time only interview with the Savior of the Wizarding world himself to find out here he had gone: -

Dennis Creevey: So, Mr. Potter, where have you been for the last eight years? Rumor has it you've been writing you memoirs. Is that true?
Harry Potter: (laughs) No. I left for more personal reasons. A walk-about so to speak.

Creevey: That's where you go someplace to find yourself, is it? How did that go?

Potter: Yes, it is, and it went very well. I came back, didn't I?

Creevey: Tell us the places you've been?

Potter: I've seen all of Europe, some of America, Australia, Italy and I was even in Japan for a while.

Creevey: How did you remain undetected for so long?

Potter: A skill I acquired at an early age. I'm very good at blending into any environment.

Creevey: Reports say you were with Draco Malfoy and a boy. Care to explain that?

Potter: I was simply spending the day with a colleague. Nothing more.

Creevey: And the boy?

Potter: My son, Jamie.

Creevey: You have a son? Care to tell that story?

Potter: It's short, I'm afraid. His mother recently died and I have custody of him.

Creevey: I take it young Jamie is off limits to future interviews?

Potter: He's not used to the fame and I'd like to keep it that way.

Creevey: So now that you're out, what do you want to do?

Potter: I'm teaching Defense Against the Dark Arts at Hogwarts. I plan to continue.

Creevey: Sounds peaceful.

Potter: And I wouldn't want to do anything else.

Harry set the Quibbler down and sighed as he settled in his seat. It had taken one interview and a day later, Harry's story came out. As far as he knew hundreds of people were reading his story right now, and if they weren't they would be running to the nearest news stand to grab a copy.

"Think they'll get the message?" asked Hermione as she ate a muffin. The ceiling of the Great Hall was crowded with owls delivering the magazine.

"Doubt it," said Harry. "I gave Jamie a Portkey just in case. I taught him a password and it will take him to a place only we know about."

"What place?"

"Godric Hollow."

"But it's a dump!"

Harry smirked. "That's what they think."
Hermione looked at him in surprise. "You fixed it up?"

"It's my house. Why wouldn't I?"

Harry glanced over at Draco's empty seat. Pansy didn't even glance at him in the seat next to it.

"He's still eating in his room," said Hermione. "I think he's taking the coming out a little too hard."

"It was right in his face," said Harry softly. "We were beginning to be good friends."

"I thought you said it was just to throw him off," said Hermione. "The flirtation, the jokes…"

"It was."

Hermione gave him a curious look. "And now?"

Harry didn't answer as he looked at his picture in the *Quibbler*. It was of himself smiling in front of Hogwarts. Dennis had taken the picture after the interview. He didn't know which was the lie now, his former life or the one he had just entered.
"I'm glad you're taking the day away from the sight of him," said Pansy. "I can't believe he completely fooled us. I mean, it's one thing to lie about his past, but to completely rearrange it...."

"Pansy!" hissed Blaise at his wife. Pansy looked at him in surprise. "Stop."

Blaise looked over at Draco sitting in a high backed chair in front of their fireplace. He had a glass of Firewhiskey in hand. Blaise didn't know all that had happened but whatever it was shook Draco. The man hardly spoke outside of a classroom, and that worried Blaise.

"But he lied to us..."

"No, he didn't," said Draco softly startling his friends. "He didn't tell everything but he didn't lie. There's a difference."

"You're defending him?"

Draco didn't look up at her and continued to stare in the fire. Blaise sighed.

"Listen, mate. I don't know how you feel about the guy...."

"You're right, you don't," said Draco looking up at Blaise.

"Draco...."

"I mean, I thought he was my friend. I liked him, maybe even loved him, and the whole time he had been hiding this huge secret...."

"That's what I mean," said Pansy.

"I knew he had secrets for months, and I was trying to get him to open up to me, and this pops out!"

"Are we on the same page?" asked Pansy to Blaise. Blaise shook his head.

"I think he's finally letting lose.

Draco stood and paced. "I mean, the signs were there the whole time. He's a half-blood. His parents died when he was young. He was raised by Muggles. He said he was Gryffindorish in nature, Seeker, Quidditch, and oh Merlin, his righteous attitude....!"

"And it's out of the Pitch," said Blaise.

"He's venting," said Pansy.

"But he's an all around nice guy," said Draco. "Sure he's made some mistakes, but who hasn't. And he sure isn't perfect. He's got a son he's hardly saw in six years. Jamie's mother just died...."

Pansy and Blaise didn't say anything as Draco stopped in his pacing and fell silent. Pansy grew up with both parents and an older brother five years older. Blaise spent very little time with his mother and step-fathers, while they were alive. Both didn't know how Draco felt but they understood. Draco had lost one parent to death and the second in her own mind.

"You all right now?" asked Blaise. Draco shook his head.
"No, I'm still very confused." Draco looked at the clock. "I have to go. I have an appointment to keep."

"Of course," said Pansy standing. "Tell her hello for us."

Draco smiled at them. "I will," he said. Pansy and Blaise bid him farewell and Draco left to visit Narcissa at St. Mungo's.

"Hello, again, Mr. Malfoy," said Cheri when Draco walked in. "We haven't seen you in a while."

"I've been busy," said Draco.

"We heard. The return of Harry Potter. The whole hospital's talking about it."

Draco struggled to keep his face blank. "I'm sure it is."

"It did have some good effect," said Cheri. "You're mother has been more lucid since the news of his return."

Draco looked at her in surprise. "She has?"

"She's been very responsive but still has her moments, and she recognized some things."

Draco nodded. "Do you think it's a good idea for me to….see her?"

"I don't see why not. But I warn you, no matter how well she may seem, her schizophrenia will never go away."

"Thank you, Healer," said Draco and he walked into his mother's room. It looked the same as Draco last visit except for Narcissa sitting at the window. "Mother?"

"Draco," she said. "The men here are imbeciles. They won't let me have Morgana's Dark Cherry wine."

Draco had to smile in amusement. Morgana's dark cherry was his mother's favorite wine. This small sense of normalcy from her comforted Draco.

"I'll talk to them," he said sitting in the chair next to her. "How have you been, Mother?"

"I've been very well," said Narcissa. "The flowers are very nice. Are they from you?"

"Yes, they are." Draco glanced at the narcissi on the table. "Fresh every day. I thought you would like them."

"They're lovely. Thank you." Narcissa looked at him sadly. "Where's your father? He doesn't visit anymore."

Draco gulped. The Mind-Healers said there was a possibility she would reject the reality of Lucius' suicide when they first evaluated her.

"He couldn't make it today. I'm very sorry, Mother."

Narcissa nodded. "I understand. He's a very busy man." She turned and smiled at him. "How's your potion making? Still have the highest score in class?"

Draco nervously bit his lip. "Mum, I'm a professor now. I got my Potions Master degree already."
"Oh, is that so? I knew you could." She patted his arm affectionately. "I've missed you so much."

Draco put a hand on hers and squeezed it gently. "I've missed you, Mum."

They spent the rest of his visit talking about past events, even though Narcissa sometimes slipped in her delusions. When the subject of Harry Potter came up she was alert and current.

"Why are you interested in him?" he asked.

"Oh, didn't I tell you? I saved his life once."

Draco's eyes widen in surprise. "You did? When was this?"

"During the Last Battle. Your father and I had been so worried about you, but the Dark Lord wouldn't let us leave. When Potter came into the Dark Forest the Dark Lord cast the Killing Curse at Potter. I saw it hit him."

Draco's eyes widen in surprise. Potter had died and came back to life? How was that possible?

"How is he still alive?" he said.

"I have asked myself that for months," said Narcissa. "The Dark Lord sent me to check if he was still alive, and he was! I was so anxious to find you that I lied to the Dark Lord and told him Potter was dead. And in return he vouched for us during the trials."

Draco nodded. He remembered Potter stating that his parents didn't fight with or against The Dark Lord as far as he knew. The result of the trial was that Narcissa got off and Lucius was under house arrest. Draco's charges were dropped since the only witnesses were Death Eaters and most died during the battle, all except Fenrir Greyback who the Aurors tracked down and killed five years ago. Narcissa took both of Draco's hands and squeezed them. "He saved my baby, so I saved him. Doesn't that mean he gets a second chance?"

Draco didn't know how to answer her. When he returned to the manor he was surprised to see a house-elf waiting for him anxiously.

"Forgive Libby's suddenness, Master Malfoy, but a guest has come to see the master. Libby has him waiting in the conservatory."

"Thank you, Libby," he said and went to the conservatory. He wondered about Libby's odd behavior. Visitors to the manor weren't common, and Libby had been in the manor for thirty years. She knew how to handle herself when a visitor came.

Draco got his answer when he walked into the conservatory. Sitting at a table, a bit frightened at being in the large room, was Jamie Potter-Williams.

"Jamie, what are you doing here?" he asked in surprise. "How did you get here? Does your father know?"

"I went through the fireplace. Daddy showed me how," said Jamie quietly. "He doesn't know."

"You mean your father doesn't know you're here," said Draco. Jamie nodded. "Jamie, you have to go home."

"Why?"

"Because Harry will not be happy that you're gone."
"Why don't you come over anymore?" asked Jamie. "Are you mad at Daddy? At me? Do you hate me?"

"No, of course I don't hate you," said Draco walking up to the boy and placed his hands on Jamie's shoulders. "I'm not angry at you."

"But you are at Daddy," said Jamie fighting back tears. Draco had to wet lips that had suddenly gone dry.

"Jamie, the reason I'm not talking to your father, it's complicated. I don't even know where to begin."

"Is it because he lied?"

Draco looked at the boy in surprise. "I don't...how did you know?"

"I heard Daddy and Grandma Weasley talking. I didn't understand all he was saying but he's very sorry. He didn't want to lie, but he had to."

"Why did he have to lie?" asked Draco. "Why is he hiding?"

"Because they won't leave him alone!" yelled Jamie. "He just wanted to be left alone."

"Jamie," Draco knelt in front of him. "Who won't leave him alone?"

"The people! The people that follow him and make him remember but he doesn't want to remember!"

"The reporters?"

"Yes, them. They won't leave him alone so he left."

"Tixy." The house-elf speared. "Make some hot chocolate for Jamie." Tixy nodded and disappeared. "Jamie, how do you know why your father left?"

"Daddy told me. He told me everything. He said he had to leave so the mean people wouldn't find me and hurt me. Tixy reappeared and placed the cup on the table in front of Jamie. Thank you."

Tixy nodded and disappeared. Jamie picked up the cup and took a sip. Jamie sighed as the taste of chocolate calmed him down.

"Your father told you everything?" he asked.

"I told you. Daddy hates liars. Maybe that's why he hates himself."

Draco looked at Jamie in confusion. He had seen Harry in the last week and the man showed now signs of anger or resentment.

"Daddy doesn't show it so we don't worry about him," said Jamie almost reading Draco's mind. "He hates it when people worry about him."

Draco nodded. It sounded like something like James Black. He didn't want anyone worrying about him. How much more was James Black similar to Harry Potter?

"Speaking of worried, your father will be," said Draco. "I'll go fire-call him. You finish your chocolate."
"Will he be mad that I left?" asked Jamie. Draco smiled at him and smoothed Jamie's wild hair.

"Well, he won't be happy," he said.

With one last smile at Jamie he walked to the large fire-place in the family room and threw a bit of Floo powder in.

"The Burrow," he called. The fire flared green before Weasley's head appeared.

"What do you want, Malfoy?" he said impatiently. "We're kind of busy here."

"Let me guess, Jamie's missing?" Draco really wanted to wipe the disgusted look off Weasley's face.

"How the hell do you know that?" yelled Weasley.

"Because he's here. Let me speak to Potter."

"Bring him here!"

"I want to talk to Potter first." Draco kept his voice calm, despite him wanting to hit the imbecile. He really did not see what Potter saw in him.

"Listen, you pompous son of a…..." Weasley was pulled away before he could finish and a few seconds later Harry's face appeared in the fire. He was anxious but Draco could see a small bit of relief in his face.

"Draco?" he said in both surprise and worry. Surprise that Draco fire called and worried for Jamie.

"Potter," said Draco, hopefully in reassurance.

"Why did he come to you?"

"He wanted to talk," said Draco. "He was upset and we talked."

"What was he upset about?"

"Are you going to pick him up or talk over the fireplace?" Draco knew he sounded anxious now, and he was.

"Oh, right, uh, stand back."

Draco stood back as the fire flared and Harry stepped through. Draco suddenly remembered James Black would move in quick motions when he was anxious and that James would have a relieved smile when whatever he was anxious about was over. Harry had the same stance and the same smile.

"Where is he? Is he all right?" asked Harry.

"He's fine. He's in the conservatory having hot chocolate," said Draco and lead Harry to the conservatory.

"Thanks for watching him, Draco," he said as they walked. "You didn't have to."

"He's a frightened boy," said Draco not looking at him. "I can understand."

"Still, thank you." There was a pause before Harry spoke. "Why did he come to you, anyway?"
"I told you. He wanted to talk."

"About what?" asked Harry.

"Why don't you ask him?" Draco opened the door to the conservatory. Jamie looked up nervously when they walked in, his hands clutched in his lap and his green eyes wide in fright. They widened more when Harry entered.

"Daddy…"

"Oh, thank God," said Harry running to Jamie and picked him up in a hug. "I was so worried about you."

"I'm sorry, Daddy," said Jamie hugging Harry back. Harry pulled away and started scolding his son.

"Don't you ever leave without telling someone again! Do you have any idea how worried I was? Not to mention Grandma and Grandpa Weasley, and her aunts and uncles! Uncle Ron was about to call a search party!"

"I'm sorry, Daddy," said Jamie tearing up, suddenly frightened of his father's wrath.

"Why did you come here, anyway?" asked Harry more calmly, smoothing his son's hair.

"I wanted to talk to Draco."

"Talk about what?"

"Why you're mad at yourself, Daddy," said Jamie. "Why are you mad at Draco?"

"Jamie, that's complicated…"

"But you like him. Why is it complicated if you like him?"

Draco looked at Harry in surprise. "You like me?" he asked.

Harry ducked his head. "Kind of."

"He talks about you a lot," said Jamie with a smile.

"Really?" asked Draco hopefully.

"Look, Draco, thank you for taking care of my son. I appreciate it, if there's anything I could do…"

"Ask me to dinner," said Draco. Harry looked surprised.

"What?" -"Ask me to dinner. It's not that hard."

"But I thought…"

Draco smirked. "Someone told me that if a person had a reason to lie, it must be a good one."

"So this is like a second chance?" asked Harry with a small smile.

"Hey, if you rather we keep ignoring each other…"

"No. No. I would like a second chance." He gave Draco a full smile. "So, dinner?"
"Gladly," said Draco.
Harry was so nervous of the upcoming date with Draco that he actually arrived in his class on time. The students had taken to calling him Professor Harry, but a "Professor James" slipped up easily. The students found it amazing that a living legend was teaching them. There wasn't a dull ear in class, each student listening to Harry in hero worship. Harry played no favorites, not even with Teddy.

The tension between his godson and Harry grew in the time that Harry got revealed. Harry tried to talk to Teddy, but between grading papers, dodging young student fans and restoring his friendship with Draco, Harry didn't have time to talk to Teddy.

Another problem was the owls Harry had been receiving since he had the interview with Dennis. Reporters asking for interviews, companies wanting him to review products, diplomats inviting him to parties, and plain fan letters. Harry never replied back.

Ron and Hermione had been glad that Harry had been ousted. Harry knew they hated the secrecy and the cover ups and he was grateful to them. Since the newspaper Harry could almost feel the weight taken off his shoulders.

He was even happier that Ginny came down from Bulgaria to support her family, and show off her new baby.

"Meet Felicia Krum," she said holding up a baby girl with a shock of red hair and brown eyes. "Vic was grateful she taken after me."

"So are we," said Ron closely looking at his new niece, trying to find any similarities to his brother-in-law. "Through I think she has Krum's ears."

Ginny laughed. "I think she's beautiful."

"You're her mum. You're supposed to think that."

Ginny's eyes flashed dangerously. "Don't make me hex you," she said. Ron scurried away. Harry laughed next to her. The time spent away hadn't stopped Ginny from casting a hex when she was particularly angry. Harry was glad time hadn't changed some things.

"How's Krum," asked Harry as Felicia was passed around the adults. Jamie, Rose and Hugo played outside as Julian took a nap up in the nursery.

"Bored that Quidditch season is over," she said. "He's not even mad that I couldn't learn Bulgarian, even after five years of learning. He even asked me if I wanted to move back here."

All gasped in surprise.


"Vic got a coaching offer here for the Kestrals. His parents are against it, but he and I want to. He likes it here and I miss home."

"Well, you have been missed," said Hermione. "There were times when I needed another woman to talk to."
Ginny laughed. "That doesn't surprise me. Not many people understand Hermione talk."

The friends laughed. Of all the people the four friends know only two kept up with Hermione when she talked out of text book, and they were Ginny and Luna. Ginny would listen and understand, Luna would argue what was fact and what she believed.

"He's actually looking for a big house," said Ginny. "We're looking at one in Cardiff."

"Why a big house?" asked Ron. "There are only three of you."

"Because we want a big family," she said.

"Well, Krum's going to have to wait awhile," said Harry. "Taking care of a baby isn't easy. I should know."

"I thought Mary took care of Jamie," said Hermione.

Harry shifted in his chair uneasily.

"Mary knew she was ill when she met me," he said. "But she still wanted a baby. She loved me dearly at the time and I loved her. She told me what she wanted and it took me a month to say yes. When I did, I told her what I was. Who I was. She didn't care. She loved me and would love our baby more. And she did. She asked me to name him and I chose James, and shorted it to Jamie. I helped take care of him the first year till it was like being in love just for love and I couldn't stay."

They were all silent, finally hearing the story behind Jamie. All the adults loved the boy like their own, but had never figured out why Harry, who never wanted to have children, should have one, to be harassed by reporters as he had. And now he has one with the same fears as before.

"But you still visit," said Hermione. "Birthdays, holidays. Any chance you get."

"Would you have stayed away from Rose or the boys if you had a choice?" asked Harry.

"Of course I would," said Hermione. "How could I have even asked you that?"

"It's all right," said Harry smiling at her. "I'm not angry."

Hermione smiled at him as a scream went through the back door and all the adults looked to see the three children run through, Jamie holding up the toy Snitch.

"I caught it!" yelled Jamie hold it up and waving it. "I caught the Snitch, Daddy! I caught the Snitch!"

"He cheated, Uncle Harry!" yelled Hugo pointing at Jamie accusingly. "He cheated!"

"Did not!"

"Did too!"

"Hugo," snapped Hermione.

"Jamie," said Harry in a stern voice. Both fell silent. "Now, what happened?"

Both boys started talking at once while Rose yelled over them, "It didn't happen like that!"

"Quiet!" said Ron over the three and they stopped. "One at a time. Hugo?"
"We were running around playing Catch the Snitch and I almost caught it when Jamie tripped me!"

"I did not!"

"Jamie," said Harry in warning to his son. Jamie looked reluctant but kept quiet. "Hugo, finish."

"Jamie tripped me and grabbed the Snitch," said Hugo. "He cheated!"

Jamie opened his mouth to protest but a look from Harry kept his quiet.

"Jamie, you're turn," said Harry after a minute.

"He fell," said Jamie. "I didn't trip him. He tripped me!"

"Liar!"

"Hugo, Jamie's talking," said Hermione.

"He tripped himself and tripped me just as I caught the Snitch. I didn't cheat." The look Jamie gave Hugo dared the other boy to say anything against it.

"Rose," said Hermione turning to her daughter.

"They tripped each other and Jamie fell on the Snitch," said Rose. Both boys looked at her like they had been betrayed. All four adults gave the boys a look.

"Sorry," said Hugo and Jamie.

"Good," said Harry. "Go on now. And play fair!"

Rose and Hugo ran out of the room. Jamie started to follow but turned back to his father.

"Daddy, when are we going to see Draco again?" he asked.

"Soon, bud," said Harry gently ruffling Jamie's hair. "Very soon. We've got a get together planned, remember?"

Jamie nodded thoughtfully. "If you marry, then what does that make him?" he asked.

Harry looked over at Ron and saw his friend trying to not laugh and Hermione glared at her husband.

"I think that's a long way off," said Harry. "Let's give it a little while first. Okay, bud?"

"Okay," said Jamie a little reluctantly, but understanding. Harry smiled at him and pulled Jamie into a hug.

"Love you, bud."

"Love you, Daddy."

Harry pulled away from him with a smile and patted him on the back. "Go play," he said.

Jamie smiled and ran out to continue the game with his friends. Harry turned to his friends and saw their curious looks.

"What?" he asked.
"Are you going to marry him," said Ron.

"Ron!" said Hermione. Harry couldn't help but laugh.

Draco's head was full of confusion as he walked toward the Professor's Lounge. He had no idea what made Draco's invite Harry to dinner. Maybe it was because he looked like James. Too much like James. Both looked and acted much alike it was easy to believe both personas were the same person.

Not for the first time Draco wondered why Harry had picked an appearance and personality so close to his own. Perhaps it was because Harry really was tired of running and was letting himself out slowly. Or he slipped up in his disguise and someone noticed.

Why did he ask Harry to take him out on a date? He should be mad at the man. He should hate his guts. So why was he so eager to see Harry again? He knew the man only as James Black, but were they so different? Answers to questions he may never get.

When Draco walked into the Teacher's Lounge there were a few of the professors around either grading papers or simply relaxing. Draco walked over to the tea pot and made himself some tea. As he did he caught a bit of the conversation between Harding and Professor Sinistra.

"That's what I heard," said Harding. "Harry didn't want to get away from a lot of people. He wanted to get away from one person."

Draco nearly dropped the tea kettle. Luckily he caught it in time and set it down, glancing over at Harding. This man didn't know Harry and yet he was talking about Harry like he knew him. Everyone knew that Harding was an admirer of the Golden Trio, especially Harry, but to talk about him like they were friends was another thing.

"What could have made Mr. Potter so frightened?" asked Sinistra.

Harding shrugged. "Who knows, it could be an old enemy coming back to kill him, or somehow someone has a grudge against him. A friend, a lover. The possibilities are endless. What do you say, Draco?"

Draco looked up at Harding as he was about to sit down and saw Harding staring at him with a calculating look. It almost seemed like Harding knew something Draco didn't and wanted to catch Draco in the act. Draco shrugged instead.

"Whatever his reasons are he never told me and I didn't ask," he said.

Setting his untouched tea down Draco quickly left the Lounge. Since Harry had been ousted in Draco's company, Draco had numerous attempts to question him and owls come to deliver letters full of questions or hate mail. He avoided them whenever he could. Being asked why Harry disappeared made Draco remember all the conversations they had together on his past. Draco felt he shouldn't divulge that information to anyone, no matter how much they pestered him.

"Draco, hold up." Draco turned around to Harding catching up to him. "I'm sorry if I put you off in there. I didn't mean to."

"You didn't," he said. He turned to continue down the hall and Harding followed.

"I wondered if you wanted to talk about it," asked Harding. "He did lie to you. He lied to all of us,
but you were closer to him then most. I wouldn't blame you if you never forgave him."

"Well, I'm glad I'm not you," said Draco without stopping. Harding continued to follow. "Why are
you following me?"

"I only wanted to talk." Harding looked surprised and slightly offended.

"Well, I have things I need to do. No time to talk." He hoped that would get Harding off his tail but
Harding continued to follow.

"I wonder what he's like. Harry, I mean."

Draco wanted to scream. The man wouldn't leave him alone.

"Why don't you ask him," said Draco through clenched teeth.

"I tried, but he said he had no time to talk. So what's Harry like? Apart from what people say?"

Draco rounded on him again. "Why do you do that?"

Harding looked surprised again. "Do what?"

"Call him Harry. Why do you do that?"

"I thought everyone called him Harry."

"Only his friends call him Harry."

"Like you," said Harding with a smirk. Draco gulped.

"I have to go," he said quickly and hurried down the hall.

"Oh, come on, Draco! It was just a question."

"Good-bye!" And Draco turned a corner, luckily leaving Harding behind. Draco didn't stop walking
till he reached his chambers and closed the door with a sigh of relief.

"You look like you were chased by an Acromantula," said Pansy sitting in one of Draco's chairs.
Draco jumped again when she spoke and sighed in relief when he saw it was her.

"Pansy, what are you doing here," he asked walking away from the door and joined her at the
fireplace. "I thought you weren't talking to me anymore."

"I thought about what you said," said Pansy. "And I'm sorry. I shouldn't have blamed Potter like I
did. You should have been angrier then I was."

"I was for a while," said Draco sitting down. "But then I remembered what he said. 'The truth is
hidden in the lies.' He may have hid a lot about who he was but he didn't keep anything from us."

"But he said his schooling….."

"Was a lot like Hogwarts. And he said if he could pick a House it would be Gryffindor. And since
there's no other school like Hogwarts we can only assume he did school here and he said he was
British. He had to have schooled here."

"His parents….."
"Muggle-born mother and pure-blood father. Just like Harry Potter. Another half-truth."

"Now the question is, why would Potter run? Is it from the reporters or something else?"

"Harding had the same assumption," said Draco in thought. "Some sounds possible like a Death Eater still on the loose after ten years. Another was of a scorned lover."

Pansy laughed. "Harry Potter and scorned lover? I wonder how that happened?"

"Pansy, he has problems like everyone else," said Draco. "Just because he's Harry Potter doesn't mean he's perfect."

Pansy smiled. "That's nice, coming from you," she said. "But you're right and I'm sorry."

Draco nodded and studied Pansy. There was something different about her. "You're not just here to apologize, are you?"

Pansy smiled and blanked a little in amusement. "No, not just that." Her smile widened. "We did it!"

Draco looked at her in shock before his brain clicked back on. "Oh my Lord! When? How? Well, of course I know how, but when did you find out?"

"Yesterday. A Healer confirmed."

"Does Blaise know?"

"Last night." Pansy blushed slightly, as if embarrassed.

"Oh, Lord, Pansy. This is fantastic!" Draco went to her and hugged her. "When?"

"Oh, not for a while," said Pansy with a laugh. "Don't pressure yourself, Uncle Draco."

Draco laughed. "I think I could get used to that," he said.

Pansy looked sheepish. "Blaise wanted me to ask you if you wanted to be the godfather."

Draco was shocked. "Really? I don't know what to say."

"Please say yes."

"Yes." Draco couldn't help but smile. Pansy hugged him again.

"Oh, I've got to go tell Blaise. He's still shocked at becoming a father," she said. "I'm shocked at becoming a mother."

"I'm shocked too," said Draco and gently kissed her head. "Congratulations. Now go, beautiful."

Pansy laughed. "You're such a girl. We're celebrating tonight in my chambers. Be there!"

"I wouldn't miss it," said Draco with a smile. Pansy beamed back and hurried to the door. She turned back to him before leaving.

"Draco, I hope you're happy with him," she said with a serious look. Draco smiled at her.

"I think I am," he said. Pansy smiled at him before she left. She hadn't been gone ten minutes when a knock sounded as he as looking over Potions essays. "Come in."
Harry poked her head in and had a hesitant look. "Am I intruding?" he asked. Draco looked up in surprise.

"No," he said setting the paper aside. "No, of course not." He motioned to Harry to come in. "Please, come in. Do you want something to drink?"

Harry moved through the doorway but didn't walk any farther into the room, a nervous look on his face. "Actually, there's something I wanted to show you," he said.

"You do?" He stood from his desk. "All right. What is it?"

"Outside at the pens. Hagrid just told me and I wanted to see it with you."

This got Draco's interest. "See what?"

Harry smiled. "Come and see."

Draco walked over to Harry and smiled at him. "Lead the way."

Harry smiled and walked down the hall, Draco walking beside him. Draco slid his hand into Harry's. Harry looked over at Draco in surprise but Draco was looking straight ahead with a calm face, almost like it was a normal action. Harry smiled and curled his hand around Draco's.

"So, I saw Pansy walking down the hall before I came," he said. "She seemed very happy."

"She should be," said Draco. Harry had an interested look.

"Something I should know."

Draco smiled. "You'll find out in a few months."

Harry had a look of surprise. "Oh." He smiled. "I could give her some advice…"

"I think they'll be all right," said Draco smiling up at Harry. Harry smiled back and continued down the hall. The rest of the way was a comfortable silent.

"So, what this thing you wanted to show me?" asked Draco.

"I didn't tell you I had a hippogriff did I?" asked Harry looking forward.

"No, you didn't," said Draco in surprise.

"His name is Buckbeak."

"After the one that…."

"I was fond of him." Harry's face was expressionless but Draco could see the regret in his eyes and that made Draco feel guilty.

At the time his father ordered the animal's execution he had been agreeable with his father's decision, but after a time he thought about it. He was thirteen and had to start growing up, and that meant taking responsibility. It was only a small scratch at the time, and he did insult the animal after being warned not to. He pleaded with his father to stop the execution but Lucius wouldn't have it, saying it was all about family honor.

"What good is family honor if an innocent gets hurt," he had asked. Lucius just glared at him.
"Everyone around you are not innocent, they are tools. You are a Malfoy, Draco. Act like one!"

And that was the end of that. He did act like a Malfoy on the outside that year, but on the inside he felt guilty. When he started his job as a professor he tried to compensate Hagrid for the loss of the hippogriff but Hagrid wouldn't have it, with a lot of surprise. He said that through it was a kind gesture, the life of a person or animal didn't have a price. In an effort to appease his guilt Draco would visit in some of the Care of Magical Creatures class with a snake from his father's collection. He would explain the uses of a snake's skin, fangs or venom in various potions and how to care for them. Hagrid was glad for the help. He seemed to have a small phobia of snakes, despite his liking of dangerous creatures. Draco actually liked doing it and helped out around the pens often.

And now here Harry was, talking about the hippogriff and it made Draco's guilt return.

"I'm sorry," he said looking away.

"I don't blame you," said Harry.

"But I'm still responsible."

"There's a difference between being responsible and realizing your failures. You're not responsible."

Draco looked over at Harry and saw the truth on his face. Harry knew about family loyalty to not blame Draco on what he did because of Lucius's orders.

"So are you going to take me on a hippogriff ride?" he asked suggestively. Harry laughed.

"That's a grand idea. But maybe later."

"Why?"

Harry just smiled and stopped at the paddock. Draco looked in. There stood a grey hippogriff proudly standing over a gold female. The gold was covering something with her wing. When she stretched her wings Draco could see an egg.

"How long?" he asked.

"A few weeks," said Harry. "Month, give or take."

Draco smiled at him. "I'll bet it'll be beautiful."

Harry smiled and reached up as if to touch Draco's face, but stopped and lowered his hand. Before it came to Harry's side Draco grabbed it, brought Harry's hand up to his face and kissed the palm before placing it on his cheek. There was so much Draco wanted to tell him but couldn't find the worlds.

"Thank you," was all he could say. Harry smiled.

"I want to kiss you, but I don't know what you'll say," said Harry.

"I'd say about time."

Harry laughed. That bit of normalcy from Draco obviously made him feel better. He carefully placed both hands on the sides of Draco's face and kissed him. Draco's breathe hitched and his toes curled. Harry kissed him with such wanton passion like nothing he felt before. No one had kissed him the way Harry did, and he wanted more. It was electric. He gasped in frustration when Harry pulled away. The look on Harry's face said he felt the same as Draco did.
"Wow," said Harry.

"I'll say."

Harry smiled and Draco smiled back. There was a squawk next to them and they turned to see Buckbeak standing next to them curiously. He butted his head on Draco's shoulder and both men laughed. Draco reached up and scratched the creature's chin, his guilt no longer with him.
"Hey, Harry, over here!"

Harry looked over at Ron saving a seat for him at the bar and smiled at his friend. Both agreed that meeting at a Muggle place was safer then at the Leaky Cauldron or the Three Broomsticks. Reporters from all over came to try and catch him off guard.

"Hey, Ron," he said and sat next to Ron. The bar tender turned to him. "Two beers."

The girl nodded and went to grab two beer bottles from the fridge.

"So how's Jamie?" asked Ron.

"He's all right. Wishes he could spend more time with his dad."

"Name me a son that didn't want to spend more time with his father," said Ron with a laugh as the bartender placed two beer bottles in front of them. "George is planning a Quidditch game to start the summer."

"What? No party to celebrate the Last Battle? No Harry Potter Day? I figured it would be a national holiday by now."

Ron laughed. "Yes, but he figured you'd want to avoid parties."

Harry laughed. "He figured right. I didn't defeat Voldemort for the fame and parties. I did it because it was the right then to do."

"I know, mate. I was there. The look on your face scared the hell out of me." Ron took a drink. Harry looked at him curiously.

"What do you mean, Ron? What look?"

"I heard what you said to him, how you managed to fool him all those months, how you dodged all his attempts to kill you, and how you were the master of the Elder Wand. And when you threw the Killing Curse back at him and stood over him, the look on his face was like…." Ron paused, not knowing what to say.

"Like what, Ron? asked Harry. What was it like?"

"Nothing," said Ron. The look on his best friend's face showed he was sure of what he was talking about. "It was like nothing."

Harry looked down at the beer in front of him. What Ron said felt true to him. That day when he defeated Voldemort he walked up to face the man who killed his parents, his friends, and his mentor. He had tormented the man, explained how he was going to kill him, how Voldemort's master plan
had failed, and killed him. Harry had felt nothing about his enemy's death. No relief, remorse, or
guilt. Harry looked down at Voldemort's body and felt nothing.

"Yeah, I know," he said. "So how are the kids? Rose still wanting to hear Cinderella every other
night?"

"I still don't get why a witch would help a Muggle girl get the prince," said Ron. Harry laughed.

"In the real story it was a tree. She said a poem and a bird gave her the dresses."

"See, that's even less believable!" Harry laughed and Ron joined him.

"Maybe that's why it was changed," said Harry with a chuckle. Ron smiled at him for a moment
before clearing his throat and looked at his beer seriously. "Are you happy? With Malfoy?"

Harry looked at him in surprise. "Ron, why are you asking me this? You don't like Draco….

"That's right, I don't like Malfoy." Ron looked at him. "But you do. And I just want to know if
you're happy with him." -Harry smiled. "If I said I was, would you try to get along with him?"

"I make no promises."

"Ron…." 

"I'm joking, Harry. Lighten up. I said I'd try, if he does the same."

"I'll talk to him. And I am, Ron. I am happy with him."

"You said the same about Ginny," said Ron looking at his friend.

"Ron, I was happy with Ginny, very happy, but with Draco it's a different happy. I can't wait to see
him again, smile when he's around, I'm sad when he leaves, and I can't wait to see him again. You
understand, right?"

"Yeah, I do. You're in love, mate."

"I know! And it scares me."

"Love is scary, mate, but if you're happy, then I'm happy."

Harry smiled at his friend. "Thanks, Ron."

"Hey, anytime." Ron lifted his glass. "To happiness."

Harry clinked his glass to Ron's. "To happiness."

They took a large gulp and set their glasses down.

"I just feel sorry for Jamie," said Ron. Harry looked shocked at his friend.

"Ron!"

"I mean it. His dad's dating Malfoy. The kid's going to have nightmares."

Harry laughed and playfully shoved Ron in his seat. Ron laughed and the rest of the time was spent
talking about each other's work.
Draco walked out of his classroom and down the hall. His class of sixth years continuously asked questions on his relationship with Harry. It finally got to where he threatened the next person who spoke a month's worth of detention of washing cauldrons. That made the whole class quiet and they finished their potions.

Over the past few weeks Draco had gotten used to the people asking about him and Harry and those that had managed to wanted to interview.

McGonagall expressed how the subject wasn't to be brought up by the students to the teachers, or the teachers to the recipients of the subject, and the students are to keep the subject to themselves. It didn't stop the students from talking or from sending letters to Teen Witch Magazine on the couple's early days.

Draco didn't want to bring them out to the public just yet because he was getting used to it himself. Harry agreed with him but Draco wanted it for different reasons. One was because Draco knew Harry didn't want the media being there. Since Harry's disappearance and the single interview with Creevey, reporters have tried to catch Harry as he left Hogwarts grounds. The second was for Harry's family to get used to the idea of Draco being with Harry. The Weasleys had taken it by surprise and Harry's friends refused to acknowledge it for a long time. Harry had gone with Weasley the night before to talk and Draco had yet to hear what happened.

"Draco!" Draco turned to see Harding walk toward him. The man looked so much like Draco he almost thought he was looking at a mirror version of himself. "Hey, are you going to the recital for the memorial? I worked really hard on the selection and I hoped you would come."

"I'll see what I can do," he said walking down the hall.

"Will Harry be there?" Draco turned back to him. "Some of the selections I made are his favorites. I put some Muggle musicals in the mix. He should like them."

"How do you know which songs are his favorites?" asked Draco in suspicion.

"I ask around. He told Hermione a lot. Do you think he'll come?"

"You'll have to ask him," said Draco still in suspicion and turned to walk back down the hall. Harding followed him.

"See, I've tried talking to him, but he keeps closing me off."

"Ever thought he may not be interested?"

"Oh, I know he's interested. I just need a way in."

Draco rounded on him, furious. "You are so full of yourself!" he said. "Do you really think Harry would go out with you because you play some of his favorite songs? Harry has better tastes then that!"

Harding smiled at him and Draco shuttered. He didn't like the look of on Harding's face. "Jealous? Harry's may have given you his attention, but it's only infatuation, not love. All celebrities go through it."

That made Draco hesitate. It could be true that Harry didn't love him, but Harry was his now and that's all that mattered. "Harry likes me, and I'll be laughing when he throws a Reducto on your ass."
"We'll see," said Harding in a voice made Draco shutter again. It wasn't the dramatic voice Harding always used but more like a voice he still heard in his nightmares. Harding walked toward him and Draco backed away until he was against the wall. "And if you ever threaten me again, I'll make you wish you hadn't."

"Are you threatening me now?" asked Draco trying to sound calm but his palms were sweating. Harding smiled coldly. -"Oh no, not a threat. Just a friendly suggestion."

And he walked away. Draco fought to keep from shaking until Harding was out of sight. He hadn't been this scared since the Dark Lord had taken over his home. There he lived in fear until he came back to Hogwarts for the school year. He had feared going home and of making any small mistake that could end his life.

He stopped shaking when he realized what Harding had said once. He had Harry's favorite songs, but Harry never told him, or Draco what his favorite musicals were, just that he was a fan of them. Did he tell Hermione and Hermione told Harding? She had taken a small liking to him. Maybe she did tell him.

He somehow made it to his chambers and sat on a chair, trying to control his breathing. His face was flushed the whole time he walked through the dudgeons and to his chambers. He couldn't seem to shake his nerves.

"Malföy!"

Draco jumped and looked over to see Weasley's face in his fireplace. His shaking was quickly replaced with irritation. He stood and walked to the green flames.

"Well, this is a surprise. To what do I owe the pleasure, Weasley?"

"I don't want to fight. I want to talk," said Weasley. "In person."

"What's wrong with right where you are?" -"We need to talk. About Harry."

That put Draco's irritation of Weasley aside and he relented to Weasley's request. "Come in."

A few seconds later Weasley was stepping out of the fireplace and vanishing the soot with a Cleaning Charm. Draco stood across from him in a pose he emulated from Lucius when talking to someone inferior to him, a pose Draco always stood when facing the Weasleys. It became a habit that was hard to break.

"I take it Harry doesn't know about this visit," he said.

"No, he doesn't," said Weasley putting his wand away, but in easy reach. "And he won't, if you don't say anything."

"So you want to keep this off the record?" asked Draco not needing the answer. Weasley didn't give him one. "I trust I don't need to offer to you a drink."

"Yeah, you don't. I'm not staying long."

"Good. What do you want to talk about?"

"I spoke with Harry the other night," said Weasley. "He seemed….different."

Draco became worried but didn't let it show. "Different how?"
"Happier." Draco sighed in relief. "He looked freer then I've seen him in a long time. Since we were kids."

"You're angry because he's happy?"

"No," said Weasley. "I'm happy that he's happy. I'm angry because you're the one making him happy."

Draco could understand his reasons. Weasley had been Harry's friend since the day they met. They had become brothers and brothers protected each other.

"But I want you to understand something about Harry," continued Weasley. "Throughout the war he had the world on his shoulders, literally. I was there to see it, so you don't know how he is when he's stressed, and for ten years he's had to run from the world, and somehow you've managed to dig him out of whatever hole he hid himself in."

Weasley took a breath. For a moment Draco thought he was going to pass out. "And it's because of that I hate you. I want to kill you and try to get Harry with on of our old friends and have him live happily the way I want him to." Weasley took another breath. "But he won't be happy. Not the way he wants. And he is happy, with you." Weasley looked up at Draco with a serious look. "You make him happy, and I'm glad for that, but if you hurt him then I swear by all the wizards and saints that I will kill you without a second thought, I'll point my wand at you and speak the Killing Curse myself."

"Not if I beat you to it," said Draco with the same seriousness.

Weasley nodded. "Hermione invited you over for Sunday dinner. She hopes you'll come."

"I will."

Weasley nodded and left. Draco sat at his desk and started to grade papers. After and hour of that there was a knock at his door. He got up to answer.

And opened it to find Harry smiling at him nervously. He held the wooden box that was on his dresser tight to his chest.

"Well, I seem to be popular tonight," said Draco.

Harry looked at him curiously. "What do you mean?"

Draco shook his head. "Nothing. Come here. What's in the box?"

"Some thing's I want to show you, but first."

He pulled Harry in and kissed him. Harry moaned and held Draco by the waist, almost afraid of falling or flying if he didn't hold onto something solid. Draco grabbed him on the shoulders and seemed to feel the same Harry did.

Both groaned when they pull away and Harry placed his forehead on Draco's, catching his breath. Both were smiling breathlessly.

"I feel like a teenager." said Harry. "Falling in love for the first time."

"Wasn't that with Chang?" asked Draco smiling. Harry laughed.

"Yeah, but somehow it's always been you." Draco looked at him confused. "In all my seven years in
school, you were the one constant thing in my life. When I graduated I thought 'Who's going to challenge me? Make me stronger? Tell me my flaws and get me frustrated enough to fix them.' That's you."

Draco smiled. "So I'm your rock?"

"Exactly." Harry had on a serious face. "Draco, I need to tell you something. But first I need to show you this." He held up the box.

"Oh, serious," said Draco with a laugh. "Should I get out a glass of Firewhiskey?"

"I am being serious, Draco," said Harry stepping back and looked around nervously. "I'm trying to be serious, and I want you to be too."

"All right," said Draco. "All right. Calm down, Harry. I'm listening." Draco held Harry until Harry did calm down and led Harry to a seat and they both sat. "Calm?" Harry nodded. "All right. What did you want to tell me?"

"What's in the box?" asked Draco.

"My mementos. Everything I've collected over the past eight years."

Harry put a hand on the lid and whispered a word. There was a click and the box opened. Inside were mostly pictures, a few pieces of paper, a newspaper article. Harry pulled out the pictures and handed them to Draco.

"These are from my travels. I basically went everywhere. I only stopped long enough to get some money before moving on."

Draco shifted through the Muggle photographs. They showed Harry, in different disguises, in front of the pyramids of Giza, the Eiffel tower, and other international landmarks. Same were of Harry with Granger, Weasley and their brood during Harry's secret visits, and some were of Teddy during birthday parties.

"You went to Antarctica?"

Harry laughed. "I wanted to see the penguins and polar bears. It bloody cold there, but worth it. You know they only have a sun rise once a year there."

"Really?" said Draco interested. Harry nodded

"I'll take you sometime." Harry pulled out the papers. "These are letters from Mary after Jamie was born. The first one is her telling me I have a son. We kept in contact then on."

Draco quickly skimmed the letters, an ability he learned from his father who forced him to read at least ten books a day during summer break. The letters were very personal, and for Harry to let him read them meant that Harry trusted Draco a lot.

Harry pulled out the single article and Draco saw it was a clipping of the fifth anniversary of the Last Battle. Granger and Weasley were standing on the front steps of Hogwarts smiling at the camera with Weasley's arm around Granger's shoulder. Every so often Weasley would whisper something in Grangers ear and Granger nodded sadly. Draco remembered that day. He had been part of the celebrations.

"What's the rock for?" asked Draco noticing a triangular rock on the bottom of the box. Harry picked
"I took Jamie on a trip with me to the Grand Canyon in America, and he found this. A genuine Native American arrow head. He gave it to me."

Harry picked up the locket and opened it. A bubble appeared and grew to the size of a Quaffle. In the bubble was shown four people, two men with black hair, a man with sandy hair and a woman with red hair in a wedding dress. All the men were wearing wedding robes and one of the men with black hair was dancing with the redhead girl. There were other people in the background but the picture focused on those four.

"Mum and Dad dancing. And that's Sirius and Remus there. This was my mum's. Some witch who looted Godric's Hollow was trying to sell it for twenty Galleons. I gave her four Sickles and took it."

Draco looked at Harry as the other man watched his parents dance. Draco knew how much Harry wanted to know his parents, and anything he came across that belonged to them must have been treated like a treasure.

"Harry, you showing me these means a lot to me, but why?"

Harry didn't speak as he put the contents of the box back inside.

"Draco," Harry held his head down. "I hate to sound sappy but I have to tell you this."

"What is it?"

"I love you." Draco was shocked. "I've only felt like this one other time, and that was with Mary. And I still love her, but I can't hold onto the past and I can't love a ghost. I love you, I have for a while, and I'm afraid I'd die if I stop." Harry looked up at Draco scared. "Please, say something."

Draco didn't know what to say. The only people that said they loved him were his parents. Pansy had said it all the time, but it was sisterly and Blaise had said it when they were dating. At the time he believed that they did love him, and he them. But did he love Harry? He was expecting an answer. Draco had to give him one, so he let his body tell him and he spoke.

"I love you too," he said, surprising not only Harry but himself with the answer.

Harry smiled and kissed him. It wasn't like before when Harry came to his chambers. That had been as a greeting. This one was full of want, need, lust, and love. The want to feel Draco's body close to his, the need to feel loved, lust for the man in front of him, and the love for him. Draco could feel it all and he didn't hold back. He was feeling the same.

They didn't pause in the kiss as they took off their robes, Draco leading the way to the bedroom. Draco reached down and untucked Harry's dark shirt from his pants and pulled it over his head. Harry quickly unbuttoned Draco's black shirt and slide it off Draco's shoulders. Both moaned when their hot skin touched.

Harry kissed Draco's neck and felt Draco shiver. With a smile he gently sucked the skin between Draco's neck and shoulder blade, nibbling a bit as he did. Draco shivered again. His hand was placed between Draco's legs and he palmed Draco's erection. Draco groaned loudly and pushed into his touch.

"Oh, Lord, Harry please," he moaned.

Harry shivered, kissed down Draco's chest and gently licked a nipple. Draco gasped, reached down
and undid Harry's belt. He pulled the belt and the jeans off Harry and they landed on the floor. Draco shivered, but not with pleasure but with amusement, when he saw Harry wore no underwear. His kind of man. He shivered again when he saw Harry was as hard as he was.

"Sorry, I don't wear underwear," said Harry giving Draco an amused smile.

"I don't mind," said Draco reached down and taking Harry's shaft in his hand. Harry moaned and moved in his touch. "I like it."

"Now your turn," said Harry. He unbuckled Draco's belt and pants and both joined Harry's on the floor. Harry leaned back to admire Draco's body. Draco let him, obviously doing the same to Harry.

Harry was built for fighting, but slimmer. His arms bulged with muscles and so did his legs. It reminded Draco of a soldier. Besides the scar on his forehead were the scars on his chest, elbow and leg. He wanted to ask where Harry had gotten those.

Draco's body was built like an athlete. He was slim and it was obvious he kept it in shape. His arm and leg muscles were firm, and his chest and stomach compact. The only thing that marred the pale skin was the scar that ran down his chest. Harry reached up to touch the scar but pulled back. He wanted to but wasn't sure if he should. He was the one that made it.

Draco took Harry's hand and placed it against the scar. Harry looked up at Draco and saw the trust in his eyes. Harry bent down and kissed the scar. Draco gasped. He lifted Harry and kissed him, walking to the edge of the bed and laid Harry down on top of him. Both moaned when their erections rubbed against each other.

"Do you have any," asked Harry.

"Nightstand. Back of the drawer."

Harry reached over the bed, pulled open the drawer and rumbled in it till his hand closed around a jar. He pulled it out to find a potion jar. Harry smiled at Draco who had a proud smile.

"You made your own," he asked.

"I am a Potions Master," said Draco. "Wait till you feel it."

Harry smiled and uncorked the topper of the bottle. And gasped when Draco took his erection in hand again.

"Draco…"

"Yes, Harry? Something wrong?"

"No. Feels so good."

"It's about to get even better."

Harry smiled, dipped his fingers in the jar and kissed down Draco's chest and stomach. He spent a moment kissing Draco's nipples and nipped down Draco's stomach, making the blonde chuckle and moan. Harry paused to look up at Draco's pleasure filled face before taking Draco's throbbing erection in his mouth.

"Oh!" gasped Draco. Harry hummed around Draco, making the other gasp. Harry slowly scrapped a nail under the base of Draco's erection, making Draco moan and carefully pushed a finger in Draco's
entrance. There was resistance, telling Harry Draco hadn't been taken in quite sometime. Draco groaned at the pain, but didn't tell Harry to stop. Harry continued to please Draco erection as he worked his partner's entrance, keeping Draco distracted from his pain. Harry added a second finger and a third. By then Draco was panting in huffs.

"Please, Harry," gasped Draco.

"Please what?" asked Harry looking up at Draco with a teasing smile.

"Please I need it….

"All you had to do was ask."

Harry put some of the lube in his hands and rubbed it warm before putting it onto his erection. He moved his cock to Draco's entrance and gently pushed in. Draco groaned and gasped in pain so Harry took Draco's erection in his hand again and stroked it. Draco moaned, this time in pleasure.

Finally Harry was in Draco and sighed in amazement, then gasped when he was engulfed in a heat unlike anything he had before. Harry hadn't felt like this with any of his other partners. It had to be the lube Draco made. From the look on Draco's face he felt it too.

"God, Draco, you feel like a volcano!" he gasped. Draco smirked and shifted his weight. Harry gasped.

"So do you. Now move!"

Harry did. He pushed into Draco and moved. Draco gasped under him. The lube made Harry feel that he wouldn't last long, but he tried. He shifted and pushed in again. Draco groaned and rocked under him. Harry smiled. He found Draco's prostrate. He pushed again and again as Draco bucked.

"Harry…"

Harry groaned. With the rhythm they set it wasn't long till both climaxed, screaming each other's names. Harry fell on the bed beside Draco and Draco turned to face him.

"Harding talked to me," he said with his head on Harry's shoulder. Harry's arm was around his and Draco could feel Harry tense under him. "He threatened me. It was about you. Why?"

"Because he's crazy," said Harry in a tight voice.

"He was talking like you and he were together. Why was that? Is his psychotic?" Harry's hand tightened under Draco. "Ow! You're hurting me."

The grip loosened and Harry kissed Draco's head apologetically. "I'm sorry, Draco," he said and kissed him again. "I'm sorry."

Draco turned to look at him. "Harry, are you okay?"

Harry smiled and touched Draco's face. "I'm fine, Draco. Everything's fine. Harding's just crazy. I'm not dating him, nor will I ever. I'm yours."

Draco smiled and kissed him.
"Are you sure that's a good idea?" asked Hermione. She, Harry and Ron were sitting around the fire at Grimmauld Place as the children played upstairs with Winky as watcher. Luckily since the house-elf had prior experience with children she could easily watch the Weasley kids and Jamie without a fuss. "Do you want to tell Draco everything?"

"Hermione, for the first time in ten years, I feel free," said Harry. "Not only does this feel like a good idea but the right thing to do."

"I still say you're mad," said Ron. "Why would you tell him everything when you're leaving anyway?"

"Well, that's the thing. I don't think I want to leave."

Ron and Hermione looked at him in shock. They remembered when Harry first left the public. He did it because the media wouldn't leave him alone. He stayed gone because he liked his freedom.

"Harry, not to sound like a Disney movie," said Hermione, "but you're like the wind. You go where it blows. Why would you want to stay?"

"Remember when I was teaching Dumbledore's Army, Hermione? Remember how much fun it was? I want that again." Harry smiled at his friends. "I love teaching."

"Harry, I can't tell you how happy I am that you want to stay," said Ron. "But teaching can't be the only reason. Why not teach when you're less at risk of being recognized?"

"Jamie," said Harry. "What kind of father drags his son around the world, or leaves him behind."

"He's got a point, Ron," said Hermione.

"All right, you're staying for Jamie, and Malfoy."

Harry looked out the enchanted window to see the children playing while Winky watched.

"I'm tired of running, Ron" he said. "For eight years I ran away from a life I could have had, afraid to get close to anyone because of who I am." He looked back and scratched his hair. "I don't know about Draco."

"The guy's a git," said Ron. "Remember how he treated us in school? What he called Hermione?"

"Ron, get over it," said Hermione. "I have."

"I can't let it go. That jerk doesn't have a compassionate bone in his body!"

"Have you seen him?" asked Harry. "I talk to him, every day, and I can tell you he's changed too."

"I'll believe it when I see it."

"Good," said Hermione standing up. "Because I invited him to dinner next weekend."

Ron gapped in surprise and turned to see Harry's smirk.

"You knew about this?"
"It was my idea," he said. "I thought that we'd invite Andromeda and Teddy too."

"Are you sure that's a good idea?" asked Ron. "Wouldn't Teddy be mad?"

"He didn't seem mad, but I haven't been spending much time with him."

"I don't know," said Hermione. "Teddy's smart."

"He gets that from Remus," said Harry.

"Tonks was smart," said Hermione.

"Tonks was a klutz," said Ron.

"He got that from her too," said Harry.

"Don't you think he'll be mad," asked Ron. "Teddy's still a kid. Kid's can hold a grudge."

"Not Teddy," said Harry. "He remembers."

Ron and Hermione had no comment on that. Harry and Teddy remembers Harry last straw with publicity stunts. Harry and Teddy had gone to see a Quidditch match in Bulgaria to support Krum when a mass of news reporters from different countries and twenty different papers bombarded Harry with questions about the match and his supposed rivalry with Krum. Somewhere during the hounding questions and flashing cameras, Harry had lost sight of Teddy. After two hours and half the Auror department searching they found Teddy sitting in a cubby by the merchandise, frightened but happily playing with the toys the merchant gave him. That had been the last straw for Harry and he left a week later.

Harry had never been as scared as when he lost sight of Teddy. Andromeda didn't blame Harry but the journalists that wouldn't leave Harry alone. That didn't stop Harry from blaming himself.

"He won't be mad," said Harry. "He's too mature to be mad."

"Harry's right," said Hermione. "He'll be disappointed but not mad."

Ron laughed and both looked at him curiously.

"Man, we are one dysfunctional family," he said. Harry and Hermione looked at him in surprise for a moment before laughing along with him.

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Draco carefully measured the beetle juice and poured it in the cauldron with the dried salamander tail and snake skin and other ingredients. The potion bubbled from bright red to bright pink. He was spooning it in vials when a knock sounded and he looked up to see Harry smiling at him in the doorway.

"Hello, Harry," he said. "Pomprey said she was low on Anti-Sickness potion so I volunteered to make some."

"That was nice of you," said Harry. "Have you responded to Hermione's invite to dinner this weekend?"

"I have thought about it." Draco put a stopper on a vial.
"And what's your answer?" Harry picked up a vial and looked at the pink potion inside. "This looks like Pepto-Bismol."

"Looks like what?" asked Draco putting a stopper on another vial.

"A Muggle medicine that helps with a lot of stomach problems." Harry set the vial back and looked at Draco. "So, you're answer?"

"Will Weasley be there?" asked Draco.

"It's his house. I expect he will." Harry smelled the potion. "Looks like Pepto-Bismol but smells like cherry. How does that happen?"

"I added cherry juice," said Draco.

"I want you to be there," said Harry picking up a vial of crushed beetle shells. Draco could see him study it carefully before putting it back.

"Are you trying to placate me?" asked Draco slightly amused.

"No, I'm trying to convince you to come to dinner." Harry picked up a vial of sap and sniffed it. "This isn't fresh."

"Give me another reason to go."

"All right." Harry turned to Draco with his arms crossed. "Another reason, aside from Hermione's spaghetti pasta?"

"Aside from that," said Draco turning to Harry.

"I'll be there," said Harry, moving his hands to his pocket and leaned against the desk.

"Still think that'll convince me?"

"I hoped." Harry gave Draco a half smile and Draco's heart fluttered.

"I'll come," he said. "If Weasley behaves himself."

"He will but you will have to behave as well, I believe," said Harry smiling and turned to leave.

"I will be as polite as a gentleman," said Draco, a bit of humor behind his voice. Harry laughed and smiled at him. Draco heart fluttered again.

"Thanks, for doing this, Draco," he said giving Draco a kiss. "I just want you guys to have some sense of cooperation."

"I understand, Harry," said Draco. "Don't worry. I'll be there."

"You better."

And with one last kiss Harry left. Draco stared at the door for a minute before turning back to his cauldron.

Harry sighed as he walked toward Gryffindor Tower. Draco was persistent when asking about
James Black's past and Harry was glad he didn't have to hold back the truth anymore. Even as a kid Harry had never been good at lying. He'd have to fabricate a story and make himself believe it was true but even that didn't always work. -He hoped the next person he was going to met was easy to forgive.

"Password?" asked the Fat Lady.

"The good of the many outweighs the good of the one," said Harry giving the teacher's password. It changes every year and that year had been Hermione's turn to choose. She thought she was clever using a Vulcan proverb.

The door swung open to reveal a barely full Common Room. Teddy was sitting at a table near the fireplace cheering two friends in a game of wizard chess. All looked up when Harry walked in.

"Teddy, can I speak with you, please," he said. With anxious looks from his friends Teddy followed Harry to Harry's office. Harry sighed as he leaned against his desk.

"Why did you want to see me?" asked Teddy.

"Teddy, there's something I want to tell you," he said uneasily. "I've lied to you, and you were the hardest person for me to lie to...."

"Stop apologizing," said Teddy with a smile. "I knew."

Harry looked at him in surprise. "You did? How?"

"The way you walk, speak and how you're not prejudice against Muggles, half-bloods, and pure-bloods. How can I not know you were my godfather? Plus, you were hanging out with Aunt Hermione too much."

Harry exhaled. He had been afraid Teddy would hate him for lying to him.

"And you're not mad?" he asked and Teddy shook his head.

"I was, at first. I was so angry that you couldn't trust me. The wolf almost came out of me." Harry and Teddy chuckled. Both Andromeda and Harry never hide Remus' condition from Teddy and the boy found it amazing that his father was a were-wolf. He even owned a wolfhound named Wolf and both were inseparable when Teddy was home. "But then I remembered what Grandma told me about what happened in Bulgaria and I knew it was because of me."

"No, no, Teddy. I wasn't your fault," said Harry and placed his hand on Teddy shoulder comfortingly.

"It felt it was, for a long time," said Teddy. "But I knew you also wanted to lead your own life. You can't help who you are or what you did. I don't blame you and I don't blame me. I blame the one's who took you from me."

Harry smiled at Teddy and knelt in front of his godson.

"How did you get so smart?" he asked.


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"Hey, Draco, wait up!" -Draco turned to see Harding hurry over to him.
"Harding, what do you want?" he asked.

"Oh, you know, talk," said Harding with a shrug. "We hardly ever talk."

"Maybe there's a reason for that," said Draco turning to leave again. Harding grabbed his arm.

"Hey, come on. I just wanted to ask something."

"About what?"

"Harry, of course," said Harding. "I just want to know if the two of you really are going out."

"So you can ask him out?" asked Draco. Harding gave him a grateful smile.

"I knew you'd understand. So I have your permission to date him?" -Draco smirked at him. "Since when did you ask my permission?"

That seemed to have taken aback Harding. "Well, no. I didn't actually but… I thought I should ask."

"Oh, I'm not the one you should ask permission from," said Draco and he turned to leave Harding again, and again Harding stopped him.

"So, you hope to still go out with him," asked Harding.

"I don't think that's any of your business."

"Well, can you give this to him? It came from the Owlery. I thought he should have it."

And he handed Draco an envelope. Draco took it curiously. Why did it go to the Owlery instead of to the office of the recipient? That's what owls were trained to do when given a letter. He looked down at the address.

HARRY POTTER, DEFENSE AGAINST THE DARK ARTS PROFESSOR AT HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY.

That was all it read. No return address and the handwriting was so plain Draco couldn't tell if it was written by a man or woman.

"Who's it from," asked Draco looking back up at Harding but the man was already gone.

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Harry walked into the kitchen as Hermione was separating eggs whites from yoke and added sugar, flour and vanilla.

"Need any help?" he asked and she looked up at him with a smile.

"Hey, thanks," she said. "I need to finish setting up the table. Can you make the cream for me?"

"Sure," said Harry taking the bowl and whisk. "How do I know when it's done?"

"When it sticks to the bowl." Hermione went over to the good china and began taking down plates. "It's great that Teddy knew about you. That's a weight off your shoulders. Sorry he and Andromeda couldn't make it through." She went to the dining room. "Jamie with Molly?"

"Yes. He loves being with her. When will Ron be back from the Burrow?"
"Should be soon. Speaking of weight on shoulders, when are you going to tell Malfoy everything about yourself?"

"Soon, I hope," said Harry whisking the cream. "I'm leaning up to it. Draco seems really intent on finding out about me on his own."

"And that's good?" asked Hermione walking back in to get glasses.

"It'll be easier in case he really accepted the whole Harry Potter thing. Or reject me."

"He's not going to reject you," said Hermione walking out with the glasses.

"Mione, this is Draco Malfoy we're talking about. If there's a reason for it, he'll reject me. And keeping my true identity a secret is a huge reason."

"Well, he knows who you are and is willing to give you a chance."

"It's still early."

"Well, I hope you're wrong."

"Hope who's wrong about what?" asked Ron as he walked in.

"I said that I hope Harry's wrong about Malfoy rejecting him when Harry tells him everything," said Hermione.

"Are you crazy?" asked Ron looking at Harry. "He's better off not knowing."

"But if he knew what really happened, he'd most likely hate me with a passion," said Harry giving Ron a humorous smile.

"True, and ten years ago I would be ecstatic about that, but right now I would feel mildly happy."

"Mildly happy?" asked Harry setting the finished whisk on the counter and turned to his friend. Ron shrugged.

"All right, more then happy."

Both men laughed as the door bell rang. Hermione passed by the doorway.

"That'll be Malfoy," she said. "Behave."

She directed the statement at Ron but Harry got the feeling that he was part of it. Harry heard Hermione open the door to let Draco in as he put the cream on the desert.

"As I live and breath, Harry Potter can cook," said Draco and Harry looked up to smile at him.

"What are you talking about?" he asked with a laugh. "I can cook. You should try my pizzas."

"Pizza?"

"I'll make it for you one day." He smiled over at Draco and Draco smiled back.

"So, uh, how can I help?" asked Draco.

"Of course not," said Hermione. "You're the guest. The only thing you have to do is enjoy yourself."
"Well, I feel I have to do something." He reached inside his robes and pulled out a wine bottle. "So I got you this."

"White wine! Oh, Malfoy, thank you," said Hermione taking the bottle. "This will be served after dinner."

She smiled in gratitude and left to put the wine in ice. Draco turned to smile at Harry.

"She's really not so bad, once you get to know her," he said.

"See, I told you."

"Don't push it," said Draco with a smile. Harry laughed.

"Ready to eat?"

Draco nodded and it wasn't long until all four were sitting around the dining table.

"So, there we were, Seamus and I, trying to apprehend this guy when he lets loose the biggest Crup we've ever seen. It was as big as a bear," said Ron. "It must have been given Skele-Gro. How else could it have gotten that big? It was looking at us like we were Christmas dinner. We were sure this thing would tear us to pieces when it attacked. We didn't know what to do. We didn't want to hurt the innocent animal when it pounced on me."

"Well, what happened? ' asked Draco in interest after a short dramatic pause.

"It licked me. Landed on my chest, knocked me down and started licking me. It was a few minutes before Seamus managed to get a rope around its neck, tie it up and we went after the guy."

"Did you get him?" asked Harry chuckling as the other's laughed.

"Yeah, and now the Crup's living with Seamus and Dean and follow me around every time I go to the office. It's an official law enforcement dog."

"Seems you're not the only one who advices him, Hermione," said Harry and everyone laughed.

"Just as long as I'm the only one he comes home to," said Hermione.

"Speaking of advice," said Draco reaching into his pocket and pulling out an envelope. "This came for you, Harry."

He handed Harry the envelope and Harry took it curiously. Using his wand he Transfigured his knife into a letter opener. Tearing open the envelope he took out a picture. Harry's heart stopped when he saw him and his son at the park. He remembered that day. It wasn't long ago and it was the last time he took Jamie to the park. Jamie had tackled him who had a football in his hands, both had laughing face.

"Harry, what's wrong?" asked Hermione but Harry didn't answer her.

"What's wrong, mate?" asked Ron.

"There's something on the back," said Draco.

Harry turned the photograph and his face paled when he saw the message.

You thought you could hide him? You can't.
He flew out of his seat and ran to the fireplace grabbing a fistful of Floo and threw it into the fire.

"The Burrow!" he yelled and ran through.

"JAMIE!" Harry as he ran through running through the fireplace of the Burrow. Molly looked up in surprise as Harry ran out of the house into the garden where she and Ron and Hermione's kids were trying to catch fireflies. "Molly, where's Jamie?"

"But…he's with you," she said in confusion.

"I brought him here to have dinner with Ron, Hermione and Draco. Why would he be with us?"

"But your friend said you were finished and wanted to take Jamie back home."

"What friend?"

"Lee Harding."
"That fucking bastard!" yelled Harry pacing the floor of Grimmauld Place.

"Harry, calm down," said Hermione trying to calm her friend down as he paced in anger.

"I'm going to rip his lungs out!"

"Okay." She sat down next to her husband. Draco sat in a chair across from them as they watched Harry pace in the reception room.

It had been an hour since they got Harding's letter and Jamie was taken. The three managed to get Harry back to Grimmauld Place and confiscate his wand before Harry started destroying everything in the house.

"Do you know what's going on?" asked Draco under his breath to Ron. Ron shook his head.

"No. I've never seen Harry like this before."

"I don't get it," said Hermione. "Lee sounded like a nice guy. A little too nice now that I think about it. The students seemed to love him."

"A few days ago he was talking to me, saying he was going on a date with Harry and when I told him I told Harry about it he gave me a look that scared me."

"Like he would beat you to a bloody pulp if he didn't get his way?" They looked over at Harry who had stopped pacing and was standing over them. "It scared you more then looking into the eyes of a basilisk?"

"Yes, it was like that," said Draco. Harry sat down next to him, still stiff with anger.

"I've been on the opposite side of that stare more then once," said Harry. "Not the proudest moment of my life."

"You already knew Harding?" asked Ron. Harry remained silent. "Come on, Harry. We won't get anything if you don't tell us what's happening."

Draco reached over and took Harry's hand. "Weasley's right for once."

"Hey!"

"But we have to know." Draco gently squeezed his boyfriend's hand. "Please."

Harry gulped. "You know that when Ginny left I disappeared?" They nodded. "Well, I went to New York. That's when I met Lee Harding. They had an audition on Broadway and I tried out. I didn't get a major part but I didn't care. Harding was there with his charming smile and confident attitude. I thought I could trust him. I thought I could tell him anything."

"That's how I felt!" said Hermione. "When I first met him."

"Me too," said Draco.

"That's how he gets to you. When I first met him he taught me how to act and how to sing, promising I would get major hits if I tried enough. I didn't want it but he kept pushing me and I let..."
him. I never really thought about dating a guy at first but after meeting him and then he's asking me to dinner, and everything left my head and I agreed.

"Dinner was amazing. He didn't ask about what I did during the war or of any of my past. He wanted to know about me, my interests, both Muggle and wizard. We liked the same things, or so he said, and dinner lasted for hours. It wasn't long after that when we were just friends."

"Did you sleep with him?" asked Hermione. Ron gave her a shocked look. "What? I'm just asking."

"Not for a few months," said Harry. "I was still hesitant."

Draco nodded. "I was too when I dated Blaise."

Ron looked at Draco in surprise. "You dated Zabini?"

"Long time ago. Continue, Harry."

"Six months after I first started dating him I moved in with Lee. It seemed like the next step to me. It wasn't long after that I noticed the… change."

"Change?" asked Hermione.

"At first it was little things, telling him where I was going and when I would come home, what he liked in his food, and other things around the apartment. Then he bought me new clothes, saying mine were too torn up, and then where I should go and who I should hang out with. I couldn't go anywhere without his permission."

"Demanding," said Hermione. "Over-bearing."

"Why didn't you leave?"

"I would have but he caught me in the middle of packing. He took my bags, my wand, Silenced me and used the Cruciatus on me."

Hermione gasped, covering her mouth with her hands. Ron's face paled and Draco clutched his fists in anger.

"I rolled on the floor screaming silently for five minutes but it felt like forever. I could have thrown it off, I should have thrown it off, but the shock that it came from him stopped me from doing it.

"When he was finished he kept the Silencing spell on me and threw me in a closet, saying I needed time to think about what I was going to do. I'm not scared of closets or the dark, but the fact I couldn't move sure could. He put me in a Full Body Bind. Even when it dissipated I couldn't move. I screamed for help but nobody heard me. I did try to open the door but it was locked form the outside. I couldn't get out.

"After what felt like forever I was getting hungry. I couldn't hear him move around and I was really hungry. Finally after what seemed like days he came back. I banged on the door, yelling for him, telling him to free me, to apologize and that I wanted to talk, but of course he couldn't hear me. I had to listen to him walk around the apartment, cook his own dinner that made me hungrier, watch the TV and go to bed. I was falling asleep when I realized I spent the whole day in the closet, something that hadn't happened to me in a long time."

"After a while he finally let me out but it had only been three days. He set a bowl of soup in front of me and watched me as I ate. He gave me a set of rules I had to obey or I would be put back in the
"Did you try to escape again?" asked Ron. "You can't have just kept quiet. That doesn't sound like you."

"Hiding doesn't sound like me either but that's what I did for eight years. Harding had taken my wand. I couldn't leave without it. I looked all over the apartment till I figured he wouldn't hide it in the apartment. I'd find it too easily and I couldn't leave the apartment. Harding locked the door behind him when he leaves. The only time I was allowed out was when he's with me. I couldn't do anything unsupervised.

"I felt like I was in a fog. My days revolved around cleaning the apartment, making Harding's meals and going to the theater with him. He praised me when said a line correctly, and cursed me with the Cruciatorus if I got it wrong, or did a lot better than him, and he would punish me again if I argued with him. I learned to keep my mouth shut and at times I even felt sorry for him."

"Stockholm Syndrome," said Hermione. The Ron and Draco looked at her in question. "It's when a person forms a bond with their capture. They would even take orders from them or rearrange their lives to fit their captures demands. From what Harry's describe it sounds like the beginning of it."

"How long have you been like that?" asked Draco his hand covering Harry's.

"A year, maybe more. I lost count of the days."

"What snapped you out of it?" asked Ron.

"You guys," said Harry looking up to Ron and Hermione with a smile. They looked confused. Harry reached in his pocket, took out his wallet and from it he took out an old newspaper clipping. He handed it to Ron and Hermione. It featured the fourth anniversary of the Last Battle with a picture of Ron and Hermione on the front.

"I remember that day," said Hermione. "Ron didn't want to go because you weren't there."

"You didn't want to go for the same reason but we had to," said Ron looking at his wife.

"I got it in the Fifth Avenue Seer after Harding left. Otherwise I wouldn't have seen it. When I saw it, I froze. I just sat at the table and looked at it, for hours. I knew it was an early morning when I got it and when I finally snapped out of it, it was afternoon. I then knew I had to get out of there, away from Harding. But I needed my wand. I already checked the apartment, every nook and cranny I knew. It wasn't there. I went through every place I knew Harding frequented and came up with one thing, the theater.

"I packed and ran out the door as fast as I could. Harding had stopped locking it a while ago. I ran to the theater during lunch break and searched for my wand. The only person I saw there was Ray, the prop maker. I took a chance and described my wand to him, asking if he'd seen it. He said he saw it while Harding was putting it with the extra props. I could trust Ray. He was a good man. He showed me where and I got my wand back."

"And came to me," said Hermione. "I remember how shaken up you where when you arrived but you didn't want to talk about it."

"Till now," said Harry. "I stayed for six months till I left again. It took me a long time to trust anyone again, but when I did it was Mary."

"So what do we do now?" asked Ron. "Where do we go from here?"
"Harry, do you know where he could be hiding?" asked Hermione.

"I've been running from him for six years. He could have thought of a hundred of different places."

"He's almost as sly as a Slytherin," said Draco. "More then likely he would send a letter telling where Harry should be."

"What do you want us to do?" asked Ron.

"What's he really like?" asked Hermione. Harry shrugged.

"I don't know. I've been running remember?"

"I know," said Draco. They looked at him. "I had Blaise look him up a few weeks ago. I had a feeling about him when he started harassing Harry. It wasn't easy, and required some favors, but Blaise found him."

"Well, tell us," said Ron. Draco took out a small notebook and opened it. He read.

"Multiple cross travel to England, Wales, France, South America, Africa and Australia."

"Everywhere I've been," said Harry. "Or supposedly was."

Draco nodded. "He's also wanted for multiple accounts of assault and battery and property damage in Africa."

"Where in Africa," asked Hermione.

"A hotel room. Occupant had already left the day before. A Dean Forester."

"That would be me," said Harry. "After Dean and Hagrid."

"Obviously," said Draco. "He was also charged with beating a man into the pavement outside of a bar that same night. The bar then caught fire for mysterious reasons."

"I'm guessing a mean drunk," said Hermione. Harry nodded.

"He was a suspect for murder but couldn't be held on account of evidence. The witness suddenly forgot what the killer looked like."

"What did you see in him, Harry," asked Ron.

"I'm wondering that myself," said Draco putting the notebook away and looked at Harry.

"I saw a Mind-Healer while I was with Ron and Hermione when I first ran away. Spencer Morgan. He said I was vulnerable when I first met Harding, and confused. Wanting to talk to a stranger because I was me and Harding took advantage of that. I wasn't me when I was around him. But I am now."

"I'm glad you are," said Hermione reaching over and putting hand on Harry's knee. Harry put a hand over hers and smiled.

"Thanks, Hermione," he said.

"But how did he know you were James Black?" asked Draco.
"He's the one who taught me how to act," said Harry. "He knows me, how I move, my nuances, everything. I wouldn't be surprised if he was the one who tipped the reporters off just to get me on edge."

"That does sound like the type of thing a person like him would do," said Hermione.

"So when he does call, what do we do?" asked Ron.

"More then likely he'll want me to come alone, so I will. In a way."

"What do you mean?" asked Draco.

"Ron, you'll go to the Ministry and round up any Aurors as you can. Get Shacklebolt into this if you have to. Tell him I sent you and why. Just not all the details."

"But Harry…"

"I want to get this over with. Hermione, I want you to talk to McGonagall. She has a right to know. Then go to the Burrow and console Molly. She's worried out of her mind."

"But Harry…"

"Please, I want to get this done. This isn't a major operation like with Voldermort. I don't need a lot of help. Harding is my problem, has been for years. I need to do this alone."

"What about me?" asked Draco. Harry turned to Hermione.

"Still have my cloak?" Hermione nodded.

"Upstairs in your trunk in your old room. It's been there since you left and you've never noticed?"

Harry chuckled and scratched his head. "Guess not." He turned to Draco. "Draco, you're going to be under my Invisibility Cloak to find Jamie while I distract Harding."

"You have an Invisibility Cloak?" asked Draco in surprise.

"Yes, I'll tell you later."

"It explains your sneaking around."

"It was my dad's. I'll explain later."

"I mean, I suspected you but…"

"Draco," said Harry with a laugh putting a hand on Draco's shoulder to stop him. "Tell you later."

"Better." There was a pause before Hermione cleared her throat.

"I better tell George and Angelina that the kids are staying with Molly tonight. They have more on their plate with their kids that we don't need to add ours to it."

"Right, and I, uh, I have reports to finish," said Ron.

Ron and Hermione left the room. Draco and Harry waited till they left before Draco turned to Harry.

"You knew."
"Draco, please…"

"You knew this whole time and you never said anything. Why?"

"Because he had been there for four months, it was too soon to run again and I was sure he didn't recognize me and was being his old deceitful self. Because I'm tired of running from him. And because I was just starting to know you." Harry looked over at Draco. "I didn't want to leave on the wrong foot with you again."

"You gave me back my wand. That's hardly on the wrong foot."

Harry chuckled. "I seem to remember you throwing some words at me when I did. Something along the lines of 'If I wanted my wand back I would have come over and gotten it myself'."

"I was….what did you call me again?"

Harry snickered. "A git. After fourth year it was Ferret-Boy."

Draco groaned. "I'm never going to live that down." He laughed for a bit before he sighed. "But I still don't get why you didn't run away, or tell anyone."

"I saw him as an invasion in my home, and he was my problem. I thought I could make it go away."

"You still could have told…"

"I think he has Katie."

Draco stopped and looked at him in surprise. "Are you sure?"

"Very. Think about it. No trace of magical signature. The door wasn't forced open, no fingerprints, and no sign of a struggle. And it was done close to when Oliver would get home, so the baby wouldn't be left alone long."

Draco paused to think. "No magical signature means the kidnapping was done by Muggle means. No forced entry, she knew him. No fingerprints because he was careful on what he touched, or he wore gloves. It was winter. No sign of a struggle means he drugged her. And he knew Oliver's schedule so the baby would be looked after."

Harry smiled at him. "I knew there was a reason why I loved you." Draco smiled and playfully punched him. Both laughed a bit before Harry's face went serious again. "I'm sorry I lied to you. I shouldn't have."

"No, you shouldn't have," said Draco. "But I understand why. You were scared, but not of yourself. You were scare for me. It's a bit selfish but it's the way you are, has since you were a kid. It's a flaw but we'll work with it."

"I can't sit here and wait. My son's in trouble. I have to do something!"

"You are, by making Weasley and Granger do something except worry. They worry about you, and now they're scared of what happened to you."

"I don't want them to be scared."

"Too late. It's there, because I feel it too. I don't want to be with you when you face Harding. I hate the idea of you facing him alone."
"I have to do it alone," said Harry looking up at Draco and gently touched his lover's face. "I have to stop running."

"Just be careful."

Harry nodded and leaned over to kiss Draco. Draco kissed him back and rested his chin on Harry's head. Both content to stay in each other's comfort until word came.

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Jamie couldn't tell where he was, or the man claiming to be his father's friend taking him. The bag over his head kept him from seeing anything except the floor under him. The hand wrapped around his arm hurt and he was losing the feeling in his fingers. He wanted to cry but was too afraid to.

Jamie remembered when he had met this man that was so angry at him. He came to the Burrow and politely talked to Grandma Weasley. The man said that his Daddy wanted him to spend the night at home and that the man had to take Jamie himself. Grandma Weasley sent Jamie with him and they left by Floo, but they didn't go to Grimmauld Place. They came to a street in Diagon Alley. Before Jamie could say anything the man put a bag over his head and Disapparated. Daddy had Apparated with Jamie a few times so he knew what it was like. They landed and he was forced to follow the man. Jamie couldn't tell what was happening after that.

Jamie cried out when the man's hand tightened on his arm. A fist hit him over the head and he cried harder.

"Shut your trap, you bastard," he said. "Bad enough you look like him, now he's trying to throw it in my face, isn't he? Isn't he?"

He shook Jamie again and Jamie cried.

"Please stop. You're hurting me!"

"Good. You deserve to be hurt, and your so-called father deserves to be hurt more."

Jamie whimpered but kept quiet. They walked for a bit more until they stopped and Jamie jumped when the man hammered a door.

"Stay back, filch! Or I'll break your other arm!"

Jamie didn't hear anything but the man open the door and shoved Jamie in before the door closed again. Jamie stood frightened in the room, too scared to take the bag off. The man hit him once, he may hit him again.

He screamed when a hand touched his shoulder.

"Hush, hush, it's okay. I'm not going to hurt you."

Jamie stopped screaming when he realized the voice wasn't the man's. It was a woman. His body still shook.

"I'm going to take the bag off, okay? I'm not going to hurt you."

Jamie didn't say yes or no. He just let the woman take the bag off his head. He stared at her in fright while she smiled with kind eyes, and then in surprise.

"Good Lord, you look like Harry," she said.
That jumped Jamie out of his shock.

"You know my daddy?" he asked and she looked even more surprised.

"Yes, we went to school together. I'm Katie Wood."

"Daddy and Uncle Ron and Aunt 'Mione worried about you. You dis-dis-disappeared."

Katie laughed. "That's right. What's your name?"

"I'm Jamie Williams-Potter. Williams is also my last name." He reached for his neck and found his necklace gone. He cried harder. "He took my necklace! The one Daddy gave me! I can't leave. I won't see my Daddy!"

Katie smiled at him. "Stick with me, Jamie, and you'll see your daddy again."

"Okay," said Jamie and Katie pulled him to her with one arm. The other hung at her side limp. In Katie's arms Jamie felt safer and softly cried.
Confrontation

Draco laid on Harry's lap hours later. Ron and Hermione were up in their room, presumable napping. The only person awake in the house was Harry. He was too angry, anxious and worried to sleep. His son was out there with a psychotic wizard and it was his fault. If he had been honest with his friends from the beginning then Jamie would still be with him.

Harry had felt horrible about a lot of things in his life. The deaths of Sirius, Cedric, Dumbledore and the others that had died during the war. Not trying to understand Draco's home situation during Voldemort's return, and for lying to friends for eight years. His mind and heart was so heavy he had almost exploded.

"Your ramblings are giving me a headache."

Harry looked down to see Draco's eyes still down but the blonde was obviously still awake. - I thought you were asleep," said Harry.

"I couldn't with all the rattling in your head keeping me awake. We'll get him back."

"Doesn't stop me from worrying," said Harry running a hand in Draco's hair. It was somehow relaxing feeling the silken strands in his fingers.

"I never said to stop worrying. Just don't do it so loudly." Draco looked up at Harry. "What's on your mind?"

"I told you that I hated liars but I'm the biggest liar of all," said Harry and laughed. "I'm a hypocrite."

"You're right, you are a hypocrite." Draco sat up and looked at him. "You're a hypocrite who cares about his friends."

And he punched Harry in the arm, hard.

"Ow!"

"And you're a hypocrite for keeping it from me!" he said.

"Okay, I think we've established that I'm a hypocrite," said Harry rubbing his arm.

"And an idiot."

"You finished?" asked Harry with a smile.

"I haven't even started," said Draco lying back on Harry's lap.

"Make a list," said Harry running his hand back in Draco's hair.

"Believe me, I will."

Harry laughed and laid his head on the back of the couch.

"I'll be waiting for it."

He wrapped his other arm around Draco's waist and Draco took Harry's hand in his.
"I want to come with you," he said.

"No."

"I want to fight with you. I know you want to do it on your own, and I respect that. But I want to be there, as your second."

"No."

Draco sat up and looked up at him. "Harry…"

"Draco…"

"I want to help. I want to know you'll make it out of there alive."

"I will," said Harry smoothing back Draco's hair.

"It doesn't hurt anyone to ask for help," said Draco moving away from Harry's hand and glared at him serious. Harry sighed and put a hand on Draco's shoulder.

"I know. I'm sorry. I'm just used to doing thing myself. So if I need any help, I promise I'll ask."

"I'll curse you with a Stinging Jinx if you don't," said Draco.

"I wouldn't expect anything less from you," said Harry.

An owl flew in and landed in front of them, dropping a letter on the table and flew off. Harry reached over and picked it up. Breaking the seal he opened the envelope and read the letter.

"Draco, get Ron and Hermione," he said. Draco sighed and stood.

"If I get blinded by Weasley's bare arse I'm blaming you," he said and walked upstairs. When he reached the master bedroom he knocked loudly. "You better be awake and dressed because Harry wants us downstairs. Harding's sent word."

"Hold you knickers, Malfoy," said Weasley. "We're awake." There was a scuffle and a loud "Ow!" before the door opened by Hermione. Ron was on the floor under bundles of blankets. Both were dressed.

"Harding sent a location," asked Granger. "Where?"

"Don't know. Harry opened it and told me to get you."

Granger nodded. "All right, come on, Ron."

"Coming," said Weasley untangling himself from the blankets. All three hurried downstairs and into the living room. An empty living room. "What the hell…"

"I should have known," said Granger. "Where could he have gone?"

Draco walked over to the table and picked up the letter Harry left on the table. He read it aloud.

“Meet me at the place where people laugh and people cry. Where people live and people die. Go to the place where fantasy becomes reality. That's where you'll find me."

"That's not even hard," said Weasley. "It a theater."
"But which theater," said Granger. "There's at over twenty in London alone."

"Harding is a drama queen," said Draco. "When he wants attention he'll do it with a flare. So we'll have to think like him. Where is the one theater that he would keep Jamie and Katie that Harry would figure out."

"The Globe Theater," said Granger in realization. "Harding's a huge Shakespeare fan. He's quoting his plays all the time. That's where he'd be."

"That would sound like him," said Draco.

"We have to go there," said Weasley walking toward the door.

"No," said Draco. Weasley and Granger looked at him. "We'll do what Harry told us to do. It may have been for a distraction but it is sound. Granger, where's Harry's Cloak?"

"Now listen, you ponce…"

"Does that make Harry?" asked Draco turning to Weasley.

"We're trying to help Harry. Something you wouldn't understand…"

"I do understand," said Draco turning to Weasley. The look on Draco's face stopped them both. "In case you forgotten, my father killed himself ten years ago, and my mother went insane. I lost my parents, Jamie lost one and I'm going to make damn sure he doesn't lose the other. Losing a parent is something I do understand. You may not understand my feelings for Harry, but I love him, and I am not going to let him fight this guy on his own. I've lost too much, and so has Harry. I'm going to make damn sure he doesn't lose his son, and himself." Weasley was silent. "Granger, the Cloak."

"I'll show you," she said. Weasley gave her a look of surprise.

"Hermione…"

"I'm sorry, Ron, but Malfoy's right. This is something Harry has to do himself, but he does need someone there with him and it is not us. We love him, but not the way he needs. He gave us jobs, now let's do them."

And she led Draco upstairs, leaving Weasley alone to think.

xxxxxxxxxxxxx

Harry stood outside the Globe Theater for a while, hiding in an alley so he wouldn't be disturbed. He didn't know where he was debating on going in and confront Harding or taking Jamie and Katie out without Harding noticing. He had to get them out somehow.

"Screw it," he said and walked in. He looked around the two hundred year theater. "All right. I'm here, you bastard! Where's my son?"

"Such language, Harry." Harry turned to see Harding on one of the balconies. "I'm sure you don't use that sort of language in front of your bastard son."

"You have no right to insult my son!" yelled Harry taking out his wand threateningly. "The only bastard here is you! Now where is he?"

Harding shrugged. "Oh, he's here, somewhere. But don't worry. He's not alone."
"You have Katie."

Harding smiled. "Of course. Don't worry, they're both alive. For now.

"Why?"

Harding laughed. "For you, of course! It was always for you!"

Harry looked at him in shock. "What? I've never asked you for this! I never asked you to kidnap my friends, my son…"

"Shut up!" yelled Harding whipping out his wand and blasting a curse at Harry's feet. Harry jumped back from instinct and the floor boards where he had stood exploded. Harry looked up to see Harding's face contract in anger and he was breathing heavily, like he was trying to calm down.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I'm sorry, Harry. I never wanted to hurt you. Never you."

"You did hurt me, Lee. You hurt me. You locked me up…"

Harding leaned on the rail. "I was trying to protect you!"

"From who?"

"From them!" Harding waved a hand at the door. "Those fakes that pretend to be your friends; Weasley, Granger, they're not your friends. They don't know you!"

"Lee…"

"And Malfoy doesn't love you. He hates you. Why sleep with someone you hate?"

"Harding, what we had is over. I left you."

"Why?" yelled Harding. "Why did you leave me? We were good together, Harry. Great! We were happy."

"I hated you!" yelled Harry. "And now I'm leaving again, with my son and my friend."

"They are not your friends!" yelled Harding. "I am! I was the one who held you when you cried at night. I was there for you when you had your panic attacks. I was! Your friends don't care about you! They didn't come to your rescue. Where are they now? Where are your so-called friends now?"

"Right here, Mudblood!" Harry turned to see Ron and Hermione standing at the theater door. Hermione stepped forward and crossed her arms. "And I believe I have every right to say that," she said.

"Thanks for coming, guys," said Harry with a smile.

"What kind of friends would we be if we just let you off and got yourself killed," said Ron.

"Impossible," said Harding. "I said for you to come alone! I said no one else!"

"Oh, I didn't invite them," said Harry. "But I may have left the letter on the table."

"Why? Why? Why now when you didn't care about him before?"

"You kept him from us," said Hermione. She and Ron walked up to stand beside Harry. "You
locked him away, away from his friends!"

"No! I'm the only one who cares about him! The only one who loves him! I am!"

Harding froze and a voice behind him said, "You are insane." Draco walked into view behind Harding, his wand at Harding's neck. Harry had never been so happy to see Draco then he was then. "I have never said this before but I will now. Back off of my boyfriend."

"Draco, where's Jamie?" asked Harry. "Was Katie with him?"

"Don't worry, they're fine," said Draco. "I told them to go to Hogwarts."

"Impossible!" said Harding. "How did you find them? I hid them myself!"

"Apparently not very well if I could find them," said Draco. "Now, leave Harry alone or I will kill you."

"No, Harry's mine!"

"Not anymore."

Harding screamed a fierce battle cry and threw Draco aside. He aimed his wand at Draco and all Harry could see was an explosion.

"Draco!" he yelled and ran toward the balcony stairs. Before he reached the stairs Harding was thrown off the balcony and Ron and Hermione moved away from his landing. Hermione cast a Cushion Charm to soften his fall.

"Expelliarmus," yelled Harry and Harding's wand flew into his hand.

"Incarcerous!" yelled Ron and ropes bound Harding.

Harry threw Harding's wand aside and walked over to Harding and grabbing his shirt.

"What did you do with Draco? Tell me!"

"I killed him," said Harding with a smirk. Harry aimed to punch him but Hermione grabbed his arm.

"Harry, wait. Look."

Harry turned to see Draco walking down the stairs rubbing the back of his head.

"Bloody hell, that hurt," he said. Harry let go of Harding went over to Draco and hugged him tight. Draco seemed surprised before hugging him back.

"What happened?" asked Harry pulling away.

"He threw a blasting curse at me and I dodged it and threw a curse at him, but I was too close. Blew me away too." He rubbed the back of his head. "I must have blacked out."

"Here, let me see," said Harry and gently prodded the side of Draco's head. Draco winced when he hit a tender spot. "Yep, you hit it good. We'll have Hannah to a look at that."

"I was hoping he'd break his neck," said Draco looking at Harding. Harry turned to see Ron struggling to make Harding stand but Harding was struggling as much as Ron. He turned back to Draco.
"Don't worry about him," he said. "He's not important anymore."

"OW! He bit me!" yelled Ron and Harding laughed. His laughter was cut short as Ron punched him and put on a gag. Five Aurors walked in lead be Madam Bones. She took one looked around before turning back to Harry.

"Everywhere you go you leave a mess, Potter," she said.

"Not nearly as big as my last one," said Harry. "How's Jamie? Have you seen him? And Katie?"

"I have Aurors Thomas and Finnegan at Hogwarts with them now. Mr. Wood will be there shortly. Do you want to make a statement, Potter?"

"Later," said Harry. "I'll do it later. I want to see my son."

"So, are you charging him?" She waved a hand at Harding.

"Absolutely." And Harry walked out. Draco, Ron and Hermione followed him.

"All right," said Madam Bone. "Get this man to a cell. Let the Cleaners know they're needed. Collins, go with them. Hurry before you lose them."

Harry and his friends Disapparated out of the Globe Theater, Harding screaming through the gag as the Aurors took custody of him. One Auror followed them to the border of Hogwarts and Harry ran toward McGonagall's office.

"Jamie!" he yelled as soon as he opened the door.

"Daddy!" Jamie ran toward him from his seat and a cup on the table. Harry took his son in his arms and held him close. "I was so scared, Daddy."

"I know," said Harry. "I'm sorry, Jamie. I'm so sorry."

"Why are you sorry, Daddy?" Jamie pulled away to look at his father.

"Because I couldn't stop him from hurting you." Harry smoothed Jamie's hair from his forehead. "I tried but I couldn't." He looked over at Katie sitting with Oliver and their daughter. "You too, Katie. I'm so sorry."

"Harry, it's not your fault," she said. "That guy was narcissistic. You're just lucky he didn't drive your friends away."

"I should have protected you guys more. I'm responsible for this…"

"Stop your pathetic whining right now, Potter!" Harry turned to Draco standing behind him. "You did not know he would do this. You did not know he would follow you for seven years." -

"I still feel responsible…"

"Don't! Don't feel responsible. Don't feel sorry. Only feel glad that your son is safe and that creep that threatened him is going to Azkaban."

Harry took a deep breathe and hugged Jamie.

"How did you find him? He could have hidden them anywhere."
"I took a sample of your hair from your comb and used it for a Blood to Blood Tracker Spell," said Draco. Harry smiled at him.

"Thank you," he said.

"No, thank you, Harry," said Katie. "If not for you, who knows how long that mad-man would have kept us there."

"Not to interrupt but Madam Bones would like statement," said Collins.

"Can it wait till morning," said Ron. "We're all knackered. Been up all night, you know."

"I'm sorry, Weasley, but you know how it is," said Collins. "We have to get a statement now or he's on the street in a couple of hours." He looked at the tired group and sighed. "But I'm sure Madam Bones can pull some strings."

"Thanks, Sam," said Ron. "Let's all head for beds."

"I had the house-elves place a Calming Draught in each of your rooms," said McGonagall. "And even a bed for Jamie."

"Thanks, Minerva," said Hermione and Ron nodded in thanks. Harry could only smile at his former teacher. He picked sleeping Jamie up and started toward the door.

"Harry," called Oliver and Harry turned to see his friend standing behind him. He held out his hand to Harry. "Thank you. I can't tell how much I appreciate this. If you need anything, just tell me."

"Just take care of your family," said Harry shaking Oliver's hand. "I know I'll take care of mine."

Oliver smiled at him and went to join his wife and daughter. Harry turned to look at Draco standing apprehensively across the room.

"Draco?"

"I think it would be better if I slept in the dudgeons," said Draco looking over at Ron uncertainly.

"Go on with Harry, mate," said Ron. Harry and Draco looked at him in surprise. He was looking at Draco with a somewhat friendlier face. "He'll sleep better knowing you're with him."

"You sure, Ron?" asked Harry.

"Go before I realize what I just said." -Ron walked out of the room. Hermione following him with a proud smile.

"Night, everyone," she said before going down the stairs.

Harry shifted Jamie to one side and held out his hand to Draco.

"Care to join me?"

"Of course," said Draco taking Harry's hand. Both slept peacefully for the rest of the night and half the next morning, only waking when Jamie crawled into bed with them and curled up at his father's side.
The next day the group went to the Ministry and gave their statements. The American Aurors were already there to take Harding back to the American wizard prison under Alcatraz. Harding's magic was being suppressed by a suppression potion so he wouldn't try to escape. Harry gave his statement to the Auror in charge with Jamie on his lap and Draco beside him at Jamie's persistence.

"You're one lucky guy, Mr. Potter," said Davis. "We've been after Harding for thirty years since he made his appearance at nineteen. He's one hell of a con artist."

"Con artist?" asked Harry.

"Thirty years?" said Draco. "He looks younger."

"Potions, spells, he used everything he could to make himself younger and change the way he originally looked."

"How did he…"

"He would take out wealthy witches and wizards and sweet talk them out of their money," said Davis. "Somehow they sign everything over to him at the moment of their death after a year of dating and an extravagant wedding party. Then they would die or disappear."

"But I had no money when I met him," said Harry. "I gave it all to Ron, Hermione, and the Weasley's."

"He probably thought your fame would have given him all he needed. Somehow down the road he thought you should only have one person and that was him."

"But I didn't. And because he thought I was he…"

"Some people just aren't wired right, Mr. Potter. It's not anyone's fault on how they act."

"Thank you," said Draco looking over at Harry encouragingly.

"Yes, thank you, Auror Davis," said Harry shaking the Auror's hand.

"No, Mr. Potter, thank you," said Davis.

Draco, Harry and Jamie left together while Hermione went to Weasley's Wizard Wheezes to pick up her children. Jamie insisted on being carried by Harry and holding onto Draco's hand. It didn't hinder both men as they walked out of the Ministry.

"What do you plan on doing now?" asked Draco. "Are you leaving again?"

"Why would I leave?" asked Harry amusingly. "I have you."

"You had Mary and you still left."

"I didn't have a choice with Mary. She wanted me to leave. I do with you, and I'm choosing to stay with you."

Draco shook his head. "No, if you are going to stay I want it to be because of something other then me. Jamie, your job, the Weasleys, anything other then me. It's not fair if it was just for me."
"Okay, I'm staying for things other then you."

"Good," said Draco and smiled at him. Harry smiled back. "Harry, I have somewhere I need to be. Do you want to come with me?"

"But Jamie…"

"I wanna come," said Jamie. "Please, Daddy."

"He can come," said Draco. "I wouldn't think about leaving this little wizard behind." He ruffled Jamie's Hair and Jamie smiled. "I'm going to St. Mungo's. Meet me there?"

"Sure," said Harry, not seeing the reason to go to the hospital because he already knew. Draco smiled and Disapparated Harry turned to Jamie. "Ready for a ride, little wizard?"

"Yeah," said Jamie with an excited smile. Harry smiled back and Disapparated and appeared in front of the hospital entrance. Draco was waiting for them almost nervously.

"I usually visit here once a month," said Draco. "But I just wanted to introduce you and Jamie to her. I feel I need to."

"Who are going to meet, Daddy?" asked Jamie.

"We're going to met Draco's mummy," said Harry looking at Draco in understanding.

"She lives here?" He pointed to the hospital. Harry looked at Draco for permission and Draco nodded. Harry set Jamie down and knelt to look at his son.

"Jamie, remember when we talked about how Mummy was sick in the body? And how the hospital was going to try and make her better?"

"Yes," said Jamie with a small nod.

"Well, Draco's mummy is sick in the head. She's stuck in her head and sometimes will talk funny. Sometimes she'll get angry and if she does you come to me. She's getting better, so we're visiting her now. Yeah?"

-Jamie nodded. "Yeah."

Harry nodded, took Jamie's hand and all three walked into St. Mungo's. Healer Chang met them at the Malady Ward.

"Harry Potter, my goodness! To what do we owe this pleasure?" he asked.

"I'm visiting Narcissa Malfoy with Draco," said Harry. "It that all right?"

"Of course. I'm sure she'll be more then happy to have you to visit. But may I ask why?"

"Draco's my boyfriend." Harry glanced at Draco and smiled at him. Draco smiled back. "I should meet his mother."

"Of course, of course you should," said Chang. "Mrs. Malfoy has been cooperative today, so we allowed her to visit the garden."

"We'll see her there," said Draco.
Chang nodded and they went to the Floo Room to travel to the St. Mungo's Garden. The garden looked like something out of a biblical picture Eden. Flowers were arranged in a brilliant display and each color was made to compliment the other. Weeping willow, Japanese sakura trees and peach trees provided beautiful shade for the patients and visitors, and lilac bushes grew around the border of the garden.

Narcissa sat on a bench under a peach tree with a leather bound book. Her gown was the same as the other patients and she also wore a soft blue satin bathrobe. Her sun blonde hair had been neatly braided with a blue ribbon and her wedding ring, which had been taken away when she was admitted, was on her left hand and she was absently rubbing it with the pad of her thumb.

"Mother," said Draco and Narcissa looked up at him in amazingly familiarity. She carefully marked her place, gracefully stood and with the same grace, walked over to Draco and hugged him, startling Draco.

"Draco, it's so good to see you," she said holding out her arms to her son. She walked up and hugged him, startling Draco more.

"Mother, you're talking," said Draco in surprise.

"Of course I am. I'm not an invalid." She turned to Harry. "Mr. Potter, I never got to thank you for what you did during the Last Battle."

"Nor I you, and please call me Harry."

Narcissa smiled. "Very well, if you call me Narcissa."

Harry back at her. "I'd be glad to."

She turned to Jamie. "And who might this be?"

"James Sirius Williams-Potter," said Jamie nervously next to his father. "Williams is part of my last name. Everyone calls me Jamie."

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Jamie," said Narcissa taking Jamie's hand in hers. She turned back to the tree she had been sitting and another bench appeared. "Shall we sit and talk?"

They did. Draco spoke of his classes and Harry spoke of his travels, more open then he had in years. He spoke of his racing career.

"I did street racing," he said. "It was dangerous but the money was good. I kept at if for a year till my ride totaled in San Francisco."

"It sounds very exciting," said Narcissa. "You must put your stories in a book."

"That's what Hermione said," said Harry with a smile.

They talked for over an hour until Narcissa started becoming unresponsive. A sub-Healer told them it was time for them to leave. They Apparated at Hogwarts where they were greeted by Hagrid. When Harry had been found out Hagrid had been upset at being left out of the loop, but he had been quick to forgive and invited Harry to his hut for tea several times.

"Oh, Harry, good, good, I was about to find you. It's starting!"

"What's starting?" asked Harry.
"The hatching, Harry! The hatching!" And before Harry could say anything Hagrid grabbed his arm and pulled him toward the paddocks. "You don't wanna miss it!"

"Hagrid, you're pulling my arm off," said Harry as Hagrid pulled him along. Draco and Jamie followed them.

Hagrid lead them to the paddock where Buckbeak and Goldwing were watching the egg laying on the nest the parents had made for it. It was softly rocking and cracked on the hard shell, evidence that it had been hatching for a while and Hagrid just now noticed.

"How long," asked Harry leaning against the rail.

"Not long," Hagrid said. "I was just checking on the animals and saw it rocking. I was about to find you."

"What is it, Daddy?" asked Jamie climbing up the rail to look at the hippogriffs.

"They're hippogriffs, Jamie," said Harry. Draco leaned on the rail next to Harry. "And they're about to become parents."

"That's your hippogriff, ain't it, Daddy." Jamie pointed at Buckbeak. The grey hippogriff squawked at the visitors, as if warning them off but didn't charge. He was content at letting them watch at a distance.

"Yes it is, son, and he's about to become a daddy."

"Can I keep the baby?"

Harry laughed. "When you're old enough. Till then, how does a dog sound?"

"Yay!"

Draco laughed beside him. "Birth of a creature brings out the strangest things in people."

Harry smiled at him. "And good memories," he said looking down at Jamie, still watching the egg rock. Draco looked to Jamie's excited green eyes up to Harry's identical peaceful ones.

"Do you regret it?" he asked softly. Harry looked at him. "Having Jamie? Did you regret it?"

"I didn't really have a choice," he said. "Mary wanted him, and while I did want a family, I wasn't ready to be a dad. I was worried my fame would put pressure on him and terrify him that's why I kept him secret. I still fear it. He looked down at Jamie. "But I've never regretted it." He looked back up at Draco. "Why do you ask?"

"Pansy's been asking me for a year if I wanted to be a father, but I keep saying no. My family's history was too tainted for me to continue the line."

"Don't say that," said Harry. "Your family history has nothing to do with parenting. Pansy's right. You should be a father."

"But what if I'm no good. What if he hates me?"

"That's what I worry about with Jamie. What every parent worries about with their kids. Just ask Molly and Arthur, or Ron and Hermione."

"If I say yes you'll help me right? Help me raise it?"
"I think you're asking me to move into that large manor of yours."

"I was actually thinking of Godric's Hollow," said Draco and Harry looked at him in surprise. "The manor's big but it's full of dust and bad memories. And Jamie's a growing boy. He'll want friends to play with. Godric's Hollow has that."

"Right, so we move for the kids," said Harry looking over at the egg. "And if you do have a kid, what are you going to name it?"

"If it's a boy, Scorpius."

"A good traditional name. And if it's a girl?"

"Mary."

Harry looked at him in shock. "That's not a Latin name, or French."

"I like the name. If it's a girl, it's Mary."

"You would do that? You didn't know her."

"But you cared about her. That's enough for me." Draco smiled at Harry. "I could name her Lily."

Harry laughed. "No, Mary will do."

"Daddy, Draco, Look!"

Harry and Draco stopped their conversation and turned to Jamie pointing at the egg. The cracks were bigger now and a yellowish beak poked through. It squawked. It was another minute before the egg was cracked enough for the chick to tumble free onto the ground. The eagle half was featherless like any aviary animal, but when the sticky membrane slide off the horse half showed a coat so grey it looked silver.

"It's a male," said Hagrid. He had been watching the egg as Harry and Draco talked. "I expect he'll be like his sire."

"What are you going to name him, Jamie," asked Harry looking down at him. Jamie looked up at Harry in surprise.

"I get to name him?"

"I don't see why not," said Draco.

Jamie thought for a moment. "Dasher!" he said. "I want him to be called Dasher!"

"I don't see why not," said Harry smiling at Draco. Draco shrugged.

"Dasher it is then," he said.

Draco looked at Harry and Harry wrapped his arm around Draco's shoulder. They watched as Goldwing gently rubbed the membrane off with straw and leaves as Buckbeak brought the newly named Dasher dead rodents just for the hatching. Somehow, Harry felt the birth was the perfect start to his new life, a life without running or lies.

THE END
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