Escaping the Monotony of Life

by Kirbywow

Summary

It has been five years since the war ended and peace has finally been restored. Now Ginny has to struggle with the monotonous reality of being a witch in her early 20s'. That is, until she is offered the opportunity of a lifetime from the least likely person.
A/N: Hi there. Just a warning for this story because I don't want to waste anyone's time - the characters do act very out of character sometimes. If not all the time? I don't know. If you're looking for a canon-compliant story where all the characters religiously act like they do in canon, I would not recommend this story. Anyways, just wanted to warn everyone because this story is fairly long and I'll feel guilty if people spend hours reading only to be disappointed haha. If you DO read it - I really hope you enjoy it!

A/N: Please read and review and let me know how you feel about the idea of this story :)

Disclaimer: I don't own Harry Potter.

"Oi, Ginny! Wake up!"

Ginny heard the distant voice calling her name but she clenched her eyes shut harder. She wasn't ready to bare the sunlight yet. Before even opening her eyes, it felt as though a hammer was repeatedly banging her head.

"Ginny, come on, I have to leave for work." The voice said again, but this time it was louder. She reluctantly opened her eyes a crack, being sure to not make any sudden movements with her vision because the room was currently spinning a hundred miles a minute. The second the sunlight reached her corneas she almost audibly hissed, as the room slowly came into focus.

Where am I? She thought to herself as she gazed around the unfamiliar room. She was in a large queen sized bed with navy silk sheets that felt soft and expensive. Wherever she was, she was disappointed she had to leave. That is, until the homeowner stepped into her bedroom. None other than her boyfriend from her teenaged years; Michael Corner.

"Michael, oh my god!" Ginny shrieked, covering her body with the expensive sheets, although thankfully she was still fully clothed, "What-What am I doing here!?

"Really? You don't remember?" Michael looked unimpressed as he crossed his arms leaning up against the doorframe. His black hair which was shaggy when she dated him many years ago was now properly cut and styled. He looked much more mature and handsome, Ginny thought to herself, but that was not important at that moment.

"W-we didn't sleep together, did we?" Ginny asked nervously. She swore to herself no more drunken hookups, especially with estranged ex-boyfriends.

"No, we did not sleep together. Although, I would be lying if I said I didn't have intentions to try…" Michael explained with a tone of annoyance, "But once we arrived back at my flat from the bar you proceeded to finish my bottle of wine which was gifted to me from my father, sing nearly the entire Weird Sister's discography, then passed out in the middle of the bed while I took the couch."

Ginny felt absolutely mortified, "Oh my gosh, Michael, I'm so sorry! I don't know what got into me,
"I swear I'm normally not like this!"

"It's fine, we've all been there, but if you don't mind I need to be leaving for work now…" He opened his door wider, making his hint even clearer to Ginny that she was overstaying her welcome. She immediately jumped out of bed, despite the world still spinning furiously, but took a moment to appreciate the beautiful bedroom Michael created for himself.

"Michael, your flat is gorgeous. I'm sure you told me a dozen times last night, but what exactly is it that you do for work?"

"I'm an aura commissioner," He explained, "Actually just got a promotion with a pretty hefty raise, hence why I was celebrating so hard on a work night. What is it that you do?"

Ginny instantly began stumbling over her words and her cheeks turned crimson red, matching her hair, "Oh, I'm just…working in the family business. It's too difficult to explain right now with such little time. I'd best let you leave for work now, thank you for being such a gentlemanly host! I'll owl you a new bottle of wine!" Before Ginny finished her farewell she was out the door. Her hair was disheveled, makeup was smeared all over her face, and her clothes smelled of stale wine.

It had been five years since the great war ended. After about three years of cleaning up the mess that was created from all of the havoc, imprisoning the guilty death eaters, and rebuilding a proper ministry the world actually felt fairly peaceful. For the longest time, Ginny's life was dictated by the war. She lost her dear brother, Fred, in the war, she constantly stressed over her brother and best friend's whereabouts for half of her entire education, and on top of that, she dated The Chosen One who saved the entire wizarding world from mass destruction. For years leading up to the war Ginny was stressed, exhausted, terrified – and after the war wasn't much better. She still had another year left of Hogwarts once the war ended, and that year was record awful. She may not have feared for her life, but the media followed her, hounding her like she was a piece of meat and they were hungry dogs.

"Miss Weasley! Miss Weasley!" The reporters would shout the second she stepped out of the common room, "What is your relationship status with Harry Potter!? You are aware he was spotted kissing another woman last weekend, right!?"

Ginny shuddered from the memory. She had gotten over Harry by that point, despite him never fully moving on from her, however, it still drove her absolutely mad having no sense of privacy. Anytime she did anything remotely scandalous it would be in the Daily Prophet, blown out of proportion and typically mostly false. This long and invasive year sort of turned Ginny into a hermit. Upon graduating, instead of going off to Auror training or Healer school like her family expected, she simply spent the next couple of years helping her best friend Luna rebuild houses and gardens that were destroyed by the war. Luna was the perfect friend for Ginny, because it was as though she was able to read Ginny's mind. When Ginny was in desperate need of solitude, Luna would pick up on it and give her space, and if Ginny needed some cheering up, Luna was right beside her with bottles of alcohol and chocolate.

Once Ginny and Luna contributed to their cause of restoring homes after the war as much as much as they could, Ginny felt lost. She no longer had the influence of the war to dictate any decisions in her life. Again, her parents pressured her to attend some Post-Hogwarts training, but the only thing Ginny felt truly passionate for she didn't have the proper requirements to pursue.

You see, Ginny Weasley absolutely adored potions. She admired every aspect of the trade. She was enamored with the endless combinations of ingredients all creating a unique product. The only problem with Ginny's passion is that she realized it far too late. All throughout Hogwarts Ginny despised the class because of Professor Snape's dull lectures, thus her grades were consistently below
average. It wasn't until she was a couple of years out of school that she fell in love with the trade, but unfortunately, by then all she could do was treat it as a hobby and research on her own time. As for Ginny's career? The 21-year-old helped her brother, George, run Weasleys' Wizarding Wheezes. Her mother disapproved of Ginny's decision, despite Ginny making it abundantly clear it was not a permanent position. But in the meantime, Ginny loved work working with her brother, George, and helping him invent new pranks. She always felt the presence of her late brother Fred while she was in the shop and that presence comforted her when she felt lost in the world. Fred never felt lost. He and George were the most determined people she had ever met, and she was incredibly proud of George keeping the business afloat even after the incident.

"Oh fuck, I'm late." Ginny just remembered that she was supposed to have tea with her mother at 10 am, and her watch read 9:45. Ginny looked at her reflection in a store window and frowned. There was nothing worse than looking hungover when visiting your mother, but sadly, she had no time to run home to her flat to shower and change her clothes. And with that, she apparated to her childhood home, The Burrow.

"Ginny!" Mrs. Weasley squealed rushing towards her as she appeared in the kitchen, "Oh, I'm so happy you're here!"

Ginny pulled her mom into a tight hug, "Hey, mum! How are you?"

Mrs. Weasley didn't reply to the question though and instead scrunched her nose, "Ginny! You smell like a brewery!"

Ginny blushed in embarrassment, "I know, I know. I stayed at a friend's house and didn't have time to shower."

"Ginny, you know you should not be drinking! And you better not be staying at any boy's house!" Her mother said sternly.

"Of course not, mum!" Ginny lied. She loved her mom's naivety and didn't want to corrupt it with the truth of how Ginny typically spends a night out with friends.

"You'd better freshen up! Harry is coming over!" Mrs. Weasley winked and shoved a fresh towel and pair of clothes in Ginny's arms. Harry was the only man Mrs. Weasley would ever approve of for Ginny, and it drove her nuts.

"Mum, I don't need to dress to impress Harry. We already dated once, remember?"

"Never mind that! It was poor timing. The poorest of timing, even! You just need to give him another chance." Mrs. Weasley tried convincing.

"I'll make myself pretty but I'm not doing it to impress Harry." Ginny compromised and headed up the stairs to the shower.

The shower instantly refreshed her, making her hangover feel infinitely more tolerable. She put on the pair of jeans and knitted sweater her mom gave her and looked in the mirror. She had grown into a beautiful woman. Her long crimson hair rippled down her back, perfectly framing her pale face which was sprinkled with freckles. Her large, brown, doe eyes gave her a look of innocence that was deceiving, considering her true mischievous nature.

"Ginny! Ron, Harry, and Hermione are here!" Her mother called from down the stairs. Ginny took one last look in the mirror and smiled at her reflection before making her way downstairs.

"Hey, guys!" She said enthusiastically, and it was instantly met with huge hugs from her brother and
two friends. She had remained close with them through everything, even Harry. Which is probably why her mother was so adamantly convinced they were soul mates.

The five of them spent the first hour sipping their tea and discussing the trio's magnificent adventures in stopping crime and evil. Even though Ginny could not be happier for their immediate success she was also envious. It was exhausting constantly feeling compared to them.

"Oh, you three are doing marvelously! I'm so proud!" Mrs. Weasley beamed at the trio before turning to Ginny, "I really wish you three would convince Ginny to pursue something!"

"Mum!" Ginny shouted in defiance, "I don't need convincing! I will "pursue something" when I'm ready, and for the record, I'm pursuing potions. I've recently perfected the draught of peace, and am planning on doing something even more advanced next."

"If you want to work with potions I don't understand why you don't go to Healer School!" Her mom argued. Ginny rolled her eyes. I'm sure Harry and Hermione love visiting for tea only to have to awkwardly watch a Ginny Intervention, she thought.

"I don't want to work with potions, I want to create potions!" Ginny argued back, "Besides, can we please talk about this later? It's incredibly uncomfortable…" Ginny turned to Harry, Ron, and Hermione who all gave her an awkward sympathetic smile.

They all finished their tea without much more excitement, besides Hermione needing to leave early for a work emergency. The two girls promised to meet up on the weekend for a much-needed girl's day then hugged each other goodbye.

As Mrs. Weasley retreated to the kitchen to begin prepping dinner Ginny looked at her watch. "Shoot! I need to get down to the store! George has a major sale starting at 3 and we are expecting to get hit hard!"

She began packing up her stuff frantically. She didn't notice Ron leave the room when Harry appeared right at her side.

"Hey, Ginny?" He asked quietly, "Can I ask you something?"

"Of course, Harry, what's up?"

"I was wondering if you'd like to get dinner sometime this week? I know of a great place…"

Ginny sighed. She hated rejecting him. "Harry, come on. I'm sorry but you know I'm not interested in dating you, or anyone, right now."

"I know…you just look so amazing these days. And I can't help but regret ever letting you go in the first place...You were the greatest girl I've ever been with." He said sincerely, but Ginny simply rolled her eyes.

"Harry, I love you. I always have and I always will. But please, never say that you regret breaking up with me while we were teenagers. Best case scenario, if you hadn't dumped me, is we would have dated for another year, broken up, and hated each other. At least this way we have remained friends!" Ginny explained her point of view, "Now, I'm really sorry, but I need to meet George at the store."

She quickly kissed his cheek and apparated to the shop. She felt so guilty for constantly rejecting Harry. It wasn't as though she didn't like him, she really did! And a big part of her believed they would end up together in the end and make beautiful raven haired children. But it all just seemed so
predictable and boring…Ginny needed to experience life more before making that kind of commitment. She knew that if she ever went on a single date with Harry it would essentially be a marriage engagement in her Mother's eyes. So she needed to make sure that she was 100% positive with her decision to date Harry before accepting his offer.

"Ginny! Thank god you're here! Where were you!?!" George hollered from behind a tower of prank filled boxes.

"I'm sorry! I woke up in a random house then had to meet Mum for tea! I'm here now though!" Ginny was frantically pulling on he orange apron with the initials W.W.W. sewn into it.

"Thank god. We've got about 20 minutes until the sale is live. We are going to get slammed." He began handing her various colorful objects which she expertly placed on the shelves. They made an excellent team. "How's mum doing?" he asked without pausing his work.

"Oh you know…the usual 'what are you doing with your life and why aren't you with Harry Potter?' lecture," Ginny sighed, "I don't see what the big deal is! I'm financially stable, I have my own flat, I'm not pregnant with an unknown baby-daddy… I'm not doing too bad for 21 years old!"

"Oh, you know how she gets. She's just worried about you." George explained sympathetically before adding, "But if she convinces my best worker to leave me I'm going to have some choice words with that mother of ours."

Ginny chuckled in response and the two began to pick up the pace and work in silence. Ginny had gotten so distracted in her work she hadn't even heard a customer walk into the store.

"Ahem" She heard a man cough behind her. As she turned around and saw who stood in front of her, her mouth dropped. There standing in all of his glory, with his platinum blonde hair, steel blue eyes, and a perfectly ironed expensive suit was none other than Draco Malfoy.

"M-Malfoy?" Ginny stuttered out. She hadn't seen him since the great war. He had barely even crossed her mind for a second and now he was standing directly in front of her.

"Really? I think we are over that teenaged 'Last-Name' nonsense, Ginevra." He replied showing off his trademark smirk.

"Ginny. Call me Ginny." She corrected him, loathing her full name.

"My apologies." He said formally, "So, this is where you work?"

"Umm, yes." Ginny began, feeling embarrassed. Draco Malfoy was the last person she would want to see at work. "It's just temporary, though. Can I help you find anything?"

"Yes, actually. I was told you could find those famous Skiving Snackboxes here? My friend and I plan on ditching work tomorrow." He replied, which caught Ginny off guard. It seemed like such an oddly humorous detail to share with Ginny, especially coming from Malfoy.

"Yeah, absolutely! Follow me!" She directed him down the long hallways stocked full of various products, "You came with excellent time. In about 10 minutes we are starting this huge annual sale and we are expecting half of Diagon Alley to apparate here any minute."

"Lucky me." He said, though lacking any real enthusiasm.

Draco chose a variety pack of the Skiving Snackboxes to ensure that his plans to skip work would be successful. Ginny was excited to get him out of the store. Despite his odd friendliness she still was
not fond of him.

"So, what do you plan on doing after this? Seeing as you said it was temporary." Draco asked, and Gin
Ginny winced at the question. Why do people feel it's their business to know other people's life plans? She asked herself.

"Umm... it's silly, really. I love potions but I didn't do well in the subject while in Hogwarts. So now I'm sort of training myself in hopes of getting skilled enough to make a name for myself without a formal education."

"Really? That's amazing. I would never have pegged you as an aspiring potions master." He flashed a genuine smile at her which sent butterflies through Ginny's stomach. She couldn't deny he was incredibly attractive. She thought that would be the end of the subject until he suggested something she would never have expected:

"I think I might be able to help you out with your goal. How would you like to meet me for drinks tomorrow night and we can catch up?"

Ginny gawked at him, "Are you joking me?"

"Why would I be joking?"

"Because I'm Ginny Weasley and you spent the majority of your time at Hogwarts trying to make my life, and my family's lives, horrible." She said bluntly.

"People can change. So, are you interested?"

Ginny thought about it for a minute. On one hand she wanted to reject his offer – she didn't need help from Draco Malfoy! But on the other hand, she was incredibly intrigued by his proposal, she was looking for more excitement in her life, and she could not ignore how damn attractive he was. Three reasons against one!

"Sure, why not?"
Chapter Two

Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes bustled with excitement. Wizards and witches of all ages scrambled through the store, seeking their favorite products. George had this annual sale every summer before the Hogwarts term starts, trying to encourage the youth to cause as much havoc around the school as possible. Based on the amount of business they had it appeared to be successful. Ginny and George expertly navigated through the crowds, ensuring all the shelves were stocked and all customers could pay and leave in an efficient manner. By the time they were done they were exhausted.

"Wow, Gin! We hit a record in sales today!" George exclaimed, admiring the pile of money that sat ahead of him.

"That's great, but after that chaos, I would prefer you saying we made enough to retire," She said sarcastically, but with a genuine smile, "Congratulations, George, you've really created some brilliant here."

"Well, I didn't do it alone..." George said pensively, and Ginny knew he was thinking about Fred. She walked towards her brother and gently squeezed his shoulder in comfort. George seldom discussed Fred as it brought on too much pain, so Ginny tried not to press the issue anymore.

And as predicted, George's comedic personality shined bright again, "Ah, enough with the dramatics! How about a drink to celebrate?" And Ginny nodded her head in approval. George walked to the refrigerator and pulled out two bottles of ale, handing one to Ginny. "Cheers to no longer living in poverty!"

"Cheers to that!" They slammed their drinks together enthusiastically.

"Oh hey, I saw you talking to that bloke, Malfoy." George said, and Ginny instantly gasped.

"Oh, dammit, dammit! Luna is waiting for me at home, I completely forgot!" Immediately after Draco had invited her out for drinks she sent an owl to Luna that read: MEET ME AT MY FLAT TONIGHT. EMERGENCY.

Ginny ran around flustered, collecting her possessions. She had been so busy at work she completely forgot about her encounter with Draco.

"Why is Luna waiting for you at your house this late?"

"Because your dear sister is having a bit of a crisis." She stated, causing George to raise an eyebrow clearly expecting more information. Ginny sighed, "Okay, if I tell you, you have to promise not to tell mum. Or Ron. Or anyone, really..."

"Cross my heart."

"Well, today when Malfoy came into the store he..." Ginny couldn't look her brother in the eyes as she said the next bit, so she anxiously began dusting the shelves around her, "He sort of asked me out for drinks..."

"He what!?" George half laughed and half shouted this response, “YOU are going on a date with Draco Malfoy?"

“Ugh. I don’t know what it is okay? But I need to leave! Lord knows how long Luna has been there,” She finished collecting all of her stuff and quickly hugged George, “I’ll catch you up on
everything as soon as I find out, I promise!"

Ginny apparated to the outside of her flat. She lived in a nice, affordable neighborhood in London, just a few blocks away from Diagon Alley. It was mostly a muggle neighborhood, but due to the close proximity to Diagon Alley there was certainly a wizard population as well. Her flat itself wasn’t anything special, but after putting countless hours into decorating it, it had become Ginny’s new home. It was filled with beautiful plants, some magical some not, she turned the spare bedroom into her potions lab, and she even caved and bought a muggle television. Her favorite part of the apartment was a considerably large balcony which gave her a beautiful view of the city.

“Luna!? Luna, are you here!?” Ginny called out the second she walked into the house.

“I’m outside!”

Ginny walked outside onto the balcony to find countless candles surrounding her friend who seemed to have made herself at home, as she was in the middle of a “yoga session”, as muggles call it.

“Am I interrupting?” Ginny asked, laughing at her dear friend who was in the middle of a downward dog pose.

“You won’t be if you join me!” She said breezily, as she expertly shifted into a new position in a blink of an eye.

“Fine,” Ginny said reluctantly, “but I’m only doing corpse pose and I’m doing it with wine.”

“Oh! Wine!” Luna paused her routine and her eyes lit up, “I can take a break for wine!”

Ginny poured the two a glass of wine and they sat at Ginny’s small dining table.

“You know what’s always confused me?” Luna asked airily, “How was everyone so thin in Hogwarts? I mean- the only form of exercise we would do was flying or Quidditch. Which can hardly be argued as a cardiovascular sport considering we are literally flying. You see muggles jogging everywhere constantly to try to stay fit! And yet Hogwarts students seemed immune to any weight fluctuations.”

“Wow, Luna…can’t say I have any idea,” Ginny chuckled at Luna’s speculative thinking, “but I guess we are just lucky?”

“Anyways, enough with my ramblings, why am I here?” Luna asked excitedly, clapping her hands together. Clearly, she had been eagerly anticipating Ginny’s news all night, it had been a long time since she used “EMERGENCY” in an owl.

“Umm…so this is going to be sort of hard to believe, but I think I’m going on a date with Draco Malfoy tomorrow night…” she took a large sip of her wine immediately after trailing off from her sentence.

“WHAT? With THE Draco Malfoy!?” Luna looked shocked, “That is an emergency!”

“God, I know! What the hell!” Ginny shrieked, feeling blessed that she was finally with her best friend so she could finally express her feelings on the topic. “I don’t really think it’s a date, though? You see, he seemed fairly confident he would be able to help me with my potions training. Which is so weird! I mean, why would he want to help me? I haven’t seen him in five years!”

“That is strange…did he seem, you know, pleasant?”
“Yes! Like, too pleasant, where I felt like I was being the jerk for once! He actually called me Ginevra, Luna. He called me Ginevra.” She emphasized her words to fully describe how strange it was.

“Wow. Yeah, I’m not sure what to make of that. How is he going to help you with your potions?” Luna asked while pouring another glass.

“I have no idea. I suppose I’ll find out tomorrow.”

“Are you excited?”

“That’s the strangest thing of all! I kind of am! I mean, don’t worry, you couldn’t pay me to sleep with the man. But I am kind of intrigued to hear what he’s been up to since the war…and it’ll be nice staring at some eye candy for an evening.”

“Oh, does he look even better than he did in high school?” She asked earnestly, probably getting tipsy from being on her second glass so quickly.

“Yes! Oh god, Luna. I hate how he has to be such a prat, because god, he looks amazing.” She put her head on the table and groaned, “Why are all the beautiful men always prats?”

“How do you know he’s a prat? Like you said, he was pleasant!” Luna argued, “And besides, like you said, you don’t even know if it’s a date. Treat it as a business meeting with an old friend. That way you won’t feel as nervous going into it and you won’t spend the entire evening imagining him naked.”

“Oh, wise, Luna. What would I do without you?” She lifted her head off the table, “Ugh, what am I going to wear? I think the place we are meeting is reasonably classy. I’ll need a cocktail dress.”

“After this bottle, we can dig through your closet, I’m sure we can find something you’ll look marvelous in.”

The two girls stayed up late gossiping as typical 21-year-old girls do, drinking their wine, and modeling the clothes in Ginny’s closet. Ginny was eternally grateful that she remained friends with Luna after Hogwarts. Ginny often felt like she was a balloon filled with anxieties ready to burst at any second, but Luna was always the calm and rational friend that would deflate Ginny’s worries and put her in perspective.

Luna was an interesting character. She was drop-dead gorgeous, with her crystal blue eyes and waist-length blonde hair, yet incredibly humble. Her intrinsic unique, quirky personality that so many people knew her for in Hogwarts was still present, however, over the years she had transitioned from spouting her Father’s bizarre ideologies and began forming her own individual beliefs and values regarding the world. She was fiercely independent, creating her own highly successful magazine where she attempted to merge muggle practices with wizarding practices. She had never dated anyone exclusively before, not because men weren’t interested, but because she claimed they were all boring. She would expertly predict that most men she would go on dates with would get irritated with her blunt honesty and her inability to conform to one’s ideals of how she ‘should’ act. Many times, the men she would date would attempt to reject her words of wisdom, tell her that her opinions were wrong, then proceed to get offended when Luna wouldn’t passively accept their ignorance. So, Luna learned that she did not have time for that sort of nonsense in her short life, and would simply stand up from the dinner table the moment she felt her date was being condescending, leave money for her portion of the meal, and walk away without ever looking back. It is a shame for those men, Ginny would often think, because if they simply took the time to learn to appreciate Luna and not try to change her they would be blessed for having the opportunity to date
the most peaceful, empathetic, and rational girl they had met.

After trying on several various outfits Ginny finally settled on a simple and elegant strapless black dress with a sweetheart neckline and sat just above her knees.

“Are you serious?” Luna asked dumbfounded, “That was literally the first thing you tried on. We just spent hours searching for an outfit when we could have been done in minutes.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah!” Ginny laughed, “I had to make sure it was perfect! At least you got free wine out of the deal!”

The two laughed together. Shortly after they hugged and said their goodbyes. Ginny promised to fill Luna in on all the details regarding her ‘date’ with Draco as soon as it was over before Luna left the flat. Ginny flopped onto her bed and was filled with anxious excitement. It wasn’t the typical nervousness she would feel before meeting a date because it wasn’t a date, nor was she particularly interested in Draco Malfoy. She was nervous because she was about to enter unknown territory. She had never had a civil conversation with Draco, aside from at the store earlier that day, and she was scared that he wasn’t as pleasant as he seemed.

The anxieties began running high as her brain fed her worst-case scenarios. What if we end up getting into a row after five minutes and we cause a huge scene and get kicked out of the lounge? What if it is incredibly awkward and we sit in silence for 2 hours until one of us is polite enough to go our separate ways? What if this is just an elaborate prank and Draco is going to stand me up then proceed to humiliate me in any way possible? What if his plan to help me with my potions is in exchange to be his personal servant and will magically place a binding contract in which I can never escape and I am doomed to be trapped in his service until I die!?

Oh, my god, Ginny, shut up. None of that is going to happen. She told herself attempting to calm her nerves. She decided to drink one of her homemade draughts of peace potions to help her sleep, seeing as it seemed her anxieties were ruling her mind that night.

Time was going by entirely too fast the next day. She was supposed to meet at the pub at 8:00 and before she knew it her watch read 7:50. She frantically put the finishing touches on her hair and makeup before apparating to the bar. Not before looking at herself in the mirror and repeating Luna’s words as her own personal mantra: This is not a date. This is a business meeting between two old peers. This is not a date. After taking three deep breaths she apparated outside of the pub.

She was still 5 minutes early. She awkwardly stood outside of the main doors, about to enter then stopping herself, then awkwardly paced to the side of the building so no one could see her through the windows. I can’t be early! I don’t want to seem too desperate. But I also don’t want him to see me standing outside in the corner alone…She thought to herself. She mentally kicked herself and promised herself that one day she wouldn’t be an awkward mess. At 7:59 she decided to walk inside of the pub.

She instantly saw him before he noticed her walk in. He was sitting at the bar, wearing a crisp, white dress shirt with a black tie loosely hanging around his neck, with a pristine looking suit jacket draped over the back of the chair. She also noticed that he was casually eating fish and chips while reading the newspaper. He’s eating before I’ve even arrived? Definitely not a date. This calmed Ginny’s nerves slightly and waltzed up to him.

“Hello!” She said cheerfully, though wincing at how high her voice went.

“Oh, hello! Nice to see you finally come in!” He said with a huge grin, pulling out the barstool beside him, motioning her to sit.
“Wh-what?” Ginny asked nervously.

“I saw you pacing back and forth through the windows,” He said laughing, “Was beginning to think you were going to stand me up!”

Ginny turned a bright shade of red, “Oh, you saw that? Umm, I was just...umm…” she racked her brain searching for a proper excuse to explain her weird behavior but failed, “I don’t know. I didn’t want to be too early.”

Draco laughed, “You’re here now, that’s what matters! Can I get you a drink?”

“Sure. Vodka and soda, please.”

As Draco ordered her drink from the bartender Ginny examined the pub they were in. It was far less classy than she anticipated. It was your typical muggle English pub; with dark walls, maroon chairs, dart boards, and a few dusty television sets that didn’t appear to be functioning. Ginny looked down at her little black cocktail dress and high heeled shoes and suddenly became very self-conscious of how overdressed she was. As if Draco could read her mind, he handed her the drink and gave her a sly smirk, “You look very nice tonight.”

“Oh, Thank you.” She blushed, “I don’t know why but I expected somewhere a little fancier which is why I’m so dressed up…” She instantly cringed realizing how rude that sounded, but thankfully Draco simply laughed. Ginny was so surprised by how genuine his laugh was because the last time she heard him laugh would have been in Hogwarts, where it was likely mockingly or caused by him bullying someone weaker than him.

“Say what you will about this place – It has the best food in London.” He said, finishing off the rest of his meal, “Are you hungry? Their fish and chips are brilliant.”

“Oh, no, I’m fine! I ate before I left.” This was a lie, but Ginny didn’t want Draco to know that she was kind of expecting the standard dinner “date” where they would eat together. She took a sip out of her drink and decided to try to put the small talk and get to the point of their meeting. “So, you said you would be able to help me with my potions? How?”

“Lets discuss that later.” He said brushing it off, “For now, how have you been lately? Have you done anything exciting since Hogwarts?

Ginny internally cringed. She hated when people asked her that because she hasn’t really done anything exciting compared to her peers. “Umm, not really. Luna and I helped restore neighborhoods that were destroyed after the war, that took a couple of years. And since then I’ve just been helping George out with the store.” She quickly wanted to direct the conversation onto Draco, “How about you?”

“Not a lot I guess,” He said and Ginny was momentarily relieved until he started speaking again, “I spent a few years travelling the world. I spent a fair amount of time in North America, that was pretty exciting. I worked at a wizarding bank there as a financial advisor for a couple of years, it was much different there. There were no goblins. And then I returned here a few months ago and am temporarily working at the ministry now, in the Department of International Magical Cooperation. I’ll only be working there for another month; I was summoned to takeover this position while the previous employee finishes her maternity leave. Once I am finished there I intend to pursue a different career path.”

Ginny gawked at him. “Wow, that is quite the résumé. You’ve experienced more than some people do in a lifetime during a 5-year period.”
He shrugged, “I won’t deny that I have been very privileged in having some of the opportunities that I have had. But a lot of those 5 years were spent just aimlessly trying to find my footing in life and typically drinking far more than I probably should.” This made Ginny giggle and feel more comfortable, it was nice knowing he struggled with being a young adult as well. He took a sip of his scotch before asking, “So, are you still with Potter, then?”

This caused Ginny to immediately choke on her drink. *HOW did I ever get the impression that there was a slight possibility that this was a date!? He thought I’ve been with Harry this entire time!* She thought, mentally kicking herself.

“No, no, no, I haven’t been with Harry since I was 16! I mean, there have been the odd nights where we’ve, you know, since then. But no, absolutely not with Harry.” She assured him, though wondering why she felt the need to imply to him that she had hooked up with Harry since graduating. “I’m very much single. How about yourself?”

“Yeah, I’m not seeing anyone special, at the moment, that is. I go on a few dates a month, usually, but no one really captures my attention.” *How could they?* Ginny thought to herself, *He’s the most interesting and attractive man in London*… She felt confused feeling so enamored by Draco Malfoy. But it was beginning to feel more like a little girl crush rather than him ever being a potential romantic prospect. He was so confident and surprisingly kind and funny. He appeared to be an entirely different person since the war has ended. Ginny’s curiosity regarding what exactly caused such an improvement in Draco was incredibly high, but she felt it would be too intrusive to ask for any details.

“You said you were going to pursue a different career path earlier? What career were you thinking?”

She saw a glimmer in his lit-up eyes and a sly smile emerge on his lips as she said the simple word, “Entrepreneurship.”

“What? Like, you want to start your own business? What do you want to create?”

Ginny instantly noticed his eyes focus behind her head and he stood up from his chair. “Ah, Perfect timing. I was just about to tell Ginny our plan without you.” Ginny gave a look of pure confusion as she turned around to see who Draco was talking to. When she saw the familiar man her jaw dropped. “Ginny, you remember Blaise Zabini from Hogwarts, right?”

“Y-Yes. Hello.” She extended her arm out for a handshake which Blaise accepted happily.

“Ginny Weasley. What pleasure to see you again. You look spectacular!” He sounded incredibly genuine. Ginny’s felt dizzy from all the surprises that have taken place in the past two days. She was currently out at a pub with two Slytherins whom she previously hated, and then they treat her as if she were a long-lost friend? And not to mention – both men were insanely handsome! Ginny couldn’t help but stare at Blaise’s perfect cheekbones and jawline, his perfectly strait white teeth, and flawless tanned skin which made his dark chocolatey eyes appear even more beautiful.

“Th-Thank you. You as well.” She replied politely, though unable to conceal her confusion completely, “What is going on…?”

“Ah, yes, I suppose I have been quite vague regarding the purpose of this meeting. Shall we move to a table?” Draco led the two to a three-person table from the bar. He pulled out Ginny’s seat for her like a gentleman and she couldn’t help but blush a bit. Blaise sat in front of her and Draco sat beside her.
“Would you like to begin, Draco?” Blaise asked, and Draco sighed and nodded in agreement.

“Ginny, you said you want to learn how to become more advanced at potions, correct?” Ginny nodded, “Well, Blaise and I are starting up our own business. I will be handling the business side of things while Blaise handles the production. We are starting a potions company, however, think of it more as a pharmacy rather than a typical apothecary. We want to produce the highest quality potions to cure a variety of ailments, from common colds to hangovers. And we want to sell them at an affordable price to the public.”

Ginny listened to his proposal and tried to comprehend it, “I don’t get it. There are plenty of shops where people can buy pre-made potions. What makes this idea any different?”

“I’m glad you asked that, Ginny!” Blaise piped up, “What makes our company different are two things: The consistency of our product and franchising our business. You see, all those little shops that sell pre-made potions are all family owned. The people who brew the potions use different recipes than other family owned shops, and each person who brews the potions have different skill levels. More frequently than not you get a low-quality potion because the brewer either isn’t as skilled as they should be, because they were running low on certain ingredients so improvised the recipe, or they were having a bad day, there are tons of reasons! Our potions will use the finest ingredients, we will never run low on stock, and each potion we create will be the exact same consistency as every other batch we made. Are you following?” He asked, and Ginny nodded.

Draco began talking again, “And second, we are going to franchise the fuck out of this business. Have you ever noticed that muggles always have tons of restaurants and grocery stores that are found everywhere throughout the world? You can’t walk five blocks without running into a McDonalds in North America, even in most areas of the world they’re everywhere! Now, have you ever noticed a single wizarding business be franchised? No. They are almost all family owned businesses that are not nearly as successful as they would be had they franchised. So, our 5-year-plan is to focus our business in the London area, then as soon as we gain momentum, we will start expanding to other continents.”

Ginny was slowly processing everything. She had so many questions. “So…what does any of this have to do with me? How is this information going to help me with my potions?”

“Because, Ginny, we want you to be part of our team.” Draco said and Ginny’s jaw dropped for what felt like the hundredth time that day.

“Wh-what?”

"Yes!” Blaise said enthusiastically, “You see, Ginny, I don’t mean to boast, but I am an excellent potions master. I have been practicing the act since I was a child, and I have yet to find a potion better than my own. Except for Snape’s or Slughorn’s, that is. Although I’m positive I would be better than them now. I would love to train you to be on my level of brewing. We will not start making any advances in the business for another month, that is when we will start meeting with potential investors. So, I was hoping to spend every other night with you, training you how to be a novice in the art of potions. Then you will join me in overseeing the production, until we gain enough momentum to hire and train other people to our level of expertise.”

Ginny stared at them, wide eyed and silent for a minute, as she tried to string together her thoughts. “I don’t understand. Neither of you hardly know me. I’m hardly an expert at potions. Why do you want to work with me of all people?”

This question caused Draco to shift uncomfortably, which caused Ginny to raise an eyebrow at him. Finally he explained, “See, the Malfoy name is still fairly tainted since the war. Several people,
especially future franchisers, view Malfoys as being evil despite us spending the years trying to
redeem ourselves. As someone who hated muggles more than anything his entire teenaged life, I
now admire and respect them for their methods in business and economy. I am so fascinated by their
ways of life, I have learned that incorporating certain muggle customs in my life has been the most
fulfilling thing I’ve done. But…people don’t see that about me on the surface.” He looked Ginny in
the eyes, “Ginny, we want you because you’re a Weasley. When people find out that a Malfoy is
business partners with a Weasley it is stone cold evidence that I have changed from my old self.”

Ginny narrowed her eyes in offense, “Oh, I see. You’re just using me for my last name!?”

“No!” Blaise started, “Well, I guess, sort of…”

“But, I also remember you, Ginny. I remember you in school. You’ve always been an incredibly
talented, intelligent, and fast witted witch. I know that you’re the kind of person we need on our
team, even without your last name.”

Ginny pondered everything. She didn’t fully believe that they wanted her for anything other than her
last name, but they were also offering her her dream career on a silver platter. “I’ll have to think
about it, I guess…”

“Ginny, listen,” Draco put his hand on top of her hand, “Take as much time as you need, but really
understand what we are offering you. We are offering you more wealth than you could ever even
imagine. We are offering you the chance to travel the world and experience the different cultures. We
are offering you a chance to escape the monotony of life, to live an adventure not many people get
the opportunity to pursue.”

Ginny bit her lip nervously. This really was a dream opportunity for her and she knew she would
never get another chance like this again.

“What do you say?” Blaise asked eagerly.

“Well…” She shifted her gaze between the two boys and eventually sighed, “I’ll do it. I’m going to
have a bugger of a time explaining this to my family, but I’m in.”

Blaise and Draco cheered in excitement. She had to say, she was quite pleased that these two men
were so ecstatic about being her future coworkers. “I’ll go get us a round of drinks!” Blaise shouted
and ran to the bar. Draco looked at Ginny smiling widely.

"What?" Ginny asked, unable to refrain from smiling back at him.

“You just made the best decision of your life, Ginny Weasley. Congratulations.” Once Blaise
returned they all shouted their cheers before clinking their glasses against one another and drank the
first of many drinks the three of them would have together.
"All right, so we will meet in two nights to start your training? Your house, right?" Blaise confirmed, as he paid the bartender for their drinks. The bill had ended up very expensive, and Ginny felt guilty for allowing Blaise to pay for the entire thing. She tried to shove her share of the bill into his hands but he refused to accept it despite her struggles. He told her, "Don't worry, you can get the next one." and winked at Ginny.

"Sounds great, I'm looking forward to it." She said to Blaise, a huge smile on her face. She felt sheepish when she turned to Draco and asked, "Will you be there as well?"

"Oh, yeah, absolutely." Draco said, appearing unaware of Ginny's sudden coyness, "So it's settled then? I'll see you both on Wednesday?"

The three nodded, said their friendly goodbyes, and apparated their separate ways. When Ginny arrived at her empty apartment she still felt in shock from the turn of events that had just taken place. She looked in her mirror and couldn't help but scoff at her reflection, as she was still wearing the black cocktail dress and high heels. 

Ha, five hours ago you honestly thought you were going on a date with Draco Malfoy. She thought to herself. Nope, he just wanted to offer you riches and prestige beyond your belief. And here you were worried? She smirked at her reflection as she vowed to remember that moment as evidence that she shouldn't spend so much time stressing about the "what ifs", because clearly there is no way to guess what life has in store. Although, she figured that sense of wisdom would surely leave her the next time she is in an unfamiliar situation.

She decided she would take a hot bath and reflect on her day before going to bed. She turned on the tap and performed a quick spell on the water, creating hundreds of wonderful smelling emerald green bubbles. She scrunched her nose at the colour of the bubbles; the bubbles' colours were charmed to symbolize the emotions of the one who performed the spell. Often Ginny's bubbles would be a light lavender, which Ginny inferred meant she was feeling peaceful, yellow, insinuating happiness or excitement, or a dark blue, which was almost always present when she was feeling anxious or depressed. For a couple of years after the war, Ginny often bathed in dark blue bubbles. But never had Ginny created green bubbles.

Why on earth are my bubbles green? I'm not feeling envious. She thought to herself, as envy was the only feeling she could associate with the emerald colour. She let a bubble float onto her hand and she smiled peacefully. She wasn't sure what she was feeling, but she admired the bubbles as she resolved they were the prettiest and most pleasant smelling bubbles she had conjured yet, and happily slid into the warm bath.

Argh, I have to tell George tomorrow, she thought to herself. She was thankful Draco and Blaise encouraged her to take her time leaving George's store before committing all her time to the business. They reckoned she would have at least a month, maybe more, which was a relief so she could help train a new employee for George. She was sad that she would be letting him down, but ultimately, she knew he would be happy for her. She could hardly wait to tell Luna, and in fact, if it wasn't so late she would have flooed to her flat the second she left the pub. Her mother and the rest of her family, on the other hand, she wasn't going to tell until she could no longer hide it. She knew her family believed the Malfoys weren't particularly evil; especially after Harry's testimonies regarding Draco covering for Harry, Ron, and Hermione after being held hostage by Belatrix in the Malfoy Manor. And Narcissa Malfoy essentially saving Harry's life, thus having a key role in his victory of the war. But they still detested the family all the same. There is no way any of them would approve; they believed that they were arrogant, selfish, pricks who were devoid of empathy.
An emerald bubbled landed on Ginny's nose, and she gave a light giggle as she blew it away without popping it. *Draco didn't seem that bad,* she thought to herself. It was true. Draco had seemed much more mature, gentle, and comical than she remembered. Save, for the obscene conversation him and Blaise had regarding three attractive girls who entered the pub, which caused Ginny to overemphasize her rolling eyes. But he seemed to have dropped many, if not all, of his past prejudices. She could tell by the way he passionately discussed Muggle economics that he had a sincere respect towards Muggles. And Blaise seemed positively charming, perhaps a little pompous as he always had been, but overall she felt no apprehension towards him. In fact, when Ginny looked back on her evening, she felt a little sad that it was over. She had had one of the most enjoyable nights she had had in ages as she laughed with the two boys for hours. The two had that impeccable chemistry that is only found between two friends who truly cared for each other. She couldn't help but be reminded by her friendship with Luna as she watched the two men's entertaining dialogue.

Ginny's eyes began to droop and she decided it was time to leave her thoughts in the bathtub. She wrapped her silk black robe around herself after drying and used a spell to dry her hair speedily. She made her way to her kitchen and served herself a bowl of chocolate ice-cream which she would happily eat in her bed as she watched a cheesy muggle sitcom before falling into a deep sleep.

Unfortunately, the morning arrived too fast. She was thankful that she had the day off from the joke-shop, but she still had to confront George with the "bad" news. She woke up early and drank her coffee and ate a couple homemade pumpkin pasties before heading towards Diagon Alley. She decided to walk instead of apparate so that she could rehearse her speech in her head a few times before seeing George.

Before she knew it, she was outside of the shop. It wasn't open yet so Ginny had to use her key to unlock the door. As she opened the door, George looked slightly spooked.

"Blimey, Ginny! You're not supposed to be here today!" He said, looking alarmed, "Thought someone was breaking in!"

Ginny laughed at her brother, "You're such a wuss." George was about to defend himself but Ginny interrupted, "I actually need to talk to you about something important. Do you have time?"

"Yeah absolutely! Meet me in my office. I'm just waiting for a delivery, should be any minute now."

Ginny headed into George's small office. It was an organized mess, with loose important documents shrouding his desk, and boxes of excess stock piling up in every corner. *The first thing I do once I start making some real money is expanding George's office,* she thought. Her thoughts were distracted when her eyes fell on a framed picture that made her heart ache. Fred and George were laughing merrily in the photo, with their arms around each other's shoulders. George still had both ears at that point so the photo must have been at least 6 or 7 years old. She smiled sadly at her late brother's memory. Even though it had been five years she still missed her brother and she couldn't imagine how George coped with it. She always felt Fred's presence when she was in this store, so she figured George felt that his memory lived on through the shop. It was probably how he managed to keep it in business even after the death.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Gin, what's up?" Ginny snapped out of her thoughts and spun towards George, "How was your date with the notorious Draco Malfoy?"

"Um, I think you should sit down…"

"Ginny, dear god, please no…" George's face whitened as a look of horror took over his face, "Malfoy didn't get you pregnant, did he?"
"WHAT? George, no, of course not!" Ginny felt personally offended by his remark, "Don't you think I'm smart enough to not let that happen? And besides, it wasn't even a date, so I sure as hell did not sleep with him."

"It wasn't a date? Then what was it?" George asked, looking intrigued.

"It was a business proposal."

"A business proposal?"

"Yes. And once again – do you promise to not tell a soul of this? I'm going to tell everyone eventually but I need to do it on my own time." George nodded and Ginny filled him in on everything Draco and Blaise offered her. Everything from the potions lessons, the potential for wealth, the future travelling, the fact that the Weasley last name inspired Draco to pursue her in the first place (Which George temporarily took great offence to on Ginny's behalf but eventually cooled down), and sadly, the part where Ginny informed George that she would only be working with him for another month.

"You're really leaving me?" George asked, dramatically exaggerating his sadness, "For Malfoy and Zabini? Well, god damn, Ginny. You just broke my heart."

"Oh come on, you would totally do the same if you were in my position!" Ginny argued, though she was smiling gently. "I mean, you must be getting awfully tired of me whimsically planning my imaginary future in the potions industry. Now I don't have to imagine it; I'll be doing it."

George sighed and looked at the picture of him and Fred, as if silently asking Fred for advice. Eventually he turned to Ginny and smiled, "I think this is the perfect opportunity for you, Gin, and you would be crazy not to take it." Ginny's mouth broke into a huge grin as she threw her arms around his shoulders.

"Thank you, George! That means a lot to me."

"If things go sour and either of them mistreat you, I'll personally kill them." He warned, "And if things don't work out you know you're always welcome to come back." Ginny thanked him again and George appeared in deep thought for a moment. "Man, Mum is going to lose her mind when she finds out. Can't blame you for keeping this from her."

Ginny groaned, "Oh god, EVERYONE is going to lose their minds. I can't even imagine what dad is going to say. Or Ron. Even Harry and Hermione are going to give me a stern lecture." She rolled her eyes.

Ginny stayed and chatted with George for a bit before leaving the store. She still had one more person to tell today. Luna! And this time she was filled with excitement rather than dread.

Luna had sent Ginny an Owl that morning saying she was going to stop that afternoon to hear about Ginny's night, but mostly because she needed Ginny's opinions regarding her magazine, Fusion. Fusion had become the #1 selling magical magazine in the past couple of years due to it's "fusion" of muggle practices and magical practices. Since the war ended the magical folk had become more intrigued than ever about muggle life, and Luna's magazine was an excellent form of education.

Ginny arrived at her flat before Luna showed up. She poured herself a cup of tea and flicked her wand to quickly tidy the place up. She paused for a moment and admired her flat. It was very bright, with eggshell white walls and huge windows which allowed the sunlight to beam in. She had a loft
upstairs which served as a second living room. Typically, if she had guests over they would either socialize in the loft or on the patio, as both areas had a great view of London. She strolled into her spare room which she had turned into her potions station, but frowned at the sight. All she had was a rusty hand-me-down cauldron, third-grade ingredients, and a few dated potion text books. Draco and Blaise are going to take one look at this room and laugh. She thought to herself. "I thought you said you were interested in potions? You could barely make soup in this cauldron!" She imagined Draco and Blaise maliciously laughing at her pathetic excuse for a cauldron and promptly leaving her in the dust. She viciously shook her head and told herself that that she was being irrational again and that everything would be fine.

Suddenly she heard a knock at the door followed by a familiar, "Helloooo?".

"Luna! Hi! Come in!" Ginny skipped towards the door to find her friend looking very dishevelled. Her hair was frizzy and in a very messy bun, her eyes had dark circles underneath, and her arms were overflowing with various notebooks and scrolls.

"I am running on exactly 72 minutes of sleep!" She said frantically. Ginny could sense that Luna was stressed and decided to put her good news on hold for the time being. "Ginny, my editors are screwing me. They are literally screwing me! Hannah called in sick all week, claiming she has a nasty case of Dragon Pox, but of course, one of my freelancers saw her skipping around the beach with no evidence of pox! And Ben's grandfather passed away so he's away for the funeral. I guess I can't be too bitter about that. BUT stupid, cocky, Seamus Finnigan has decided now is the time to be a rebellious idiot and has resolved to work as slowly as possible until I give him a raise. Why would I give him a raise if he's slowing down production!? If anything, he's looking to get fired!"

Luna made herself at home, dropping all her papers on the dining room table and instantly flicked her want to heat up the kettle for a cup of tea. She began searching through the fridge, "Do you have any snacks? I've barely eaten all day." Ginny handed her a plate of pastries her mom had made her earlier that week as well as a banana. Luna began shovelling back the food while simultaneously reading through her notes. Ginny couldn't help but smile at Luna in admiration as she watched her stress out. Luna was the most peaceful and rational girl Ginny knew…unless it came to her magazine. That magazine was her baby and she cared for it more than anything else in the world, apart from her father. And she would do anything to maintain the success of the magazine.

"Alright, how can I help?" Ginny asked after Luna finished eating. It appeared her anger was amplified by her hunger because once she was satisfied she seemed slightly more upbeat.

"Okay, look at these two pictures of lipstick. Which do you prefer?" She held up two photographs of a women's mouths wearing similar shades of lipstick.

"Umm…I don't know. The left one? The right one seems to make the lips look dry and cracked…"

"Cool. The left one is a muggle brand that claims to last 24 hours without smudging, but realistically you must reapply it every few hours. while the right one is the magical lipstick that actually lasts 24 hours. Does your answer still remain the same?" Luna asked in an interrogating manner that could potentially intimidate someone had they not known her so well.

"Yeah, I think so. It looks nicer. I think it would be worth reapplying throughout the night." Ginny replied and Luna scribbled her answer into her notes. Luna asked her several of these "this or that" questions regarding beauty products and Ginny answered to the best of her ability. Then it came time to the "Ask 'A' Anything!" section, where readers would ask complicated questions regarding their love lives, careers, or anything so long as there was a connection with the muggle world. Typically, Seamus did this part of the magazine because he had been trained in muggle psychology, but because he was apparently slacking so much, Luna suspended him from the project.
"Okay, Ginny, I need your wisdom here." Luna said which made Ginny raise her eyebrow. *What wisdom?* She thought to herself as Luna read out the anonymous letter, *"Dear A. Please help me! I have recently fallen in love with the most amazing woman...only she is a muggle. My parents are super strict about continuing the pure bloodline and I'm worried they will reject her and me for our love. How do I tell my parents about her without them hating us? From – Hopelessly In Love"* Luna finished reading and sighed exasperatedly, *"I DON'T KNOW! I'm not trained for this! Stupid Seamus...I hate him."*

Ginny patted her friend on the back comfortingly, "You've got this, Luna!" and Luna put her face in her hand and muttered what sounded like, "I'm just so tired...".

Ginny thought for a moment, "How about replying with something like: *Hi, Hopelessly In Love! Thanks for writing to us. I would suggest waiting a few weeks to confirm that this woman is the woman of your dreams. If she is, and you are certain she won't be going anywhere, sit your parents down in a comfortable setting and break the news to them. They will likely be disappointed for a while, but if they truly love you, they will learn to accept you and your lover. Good Luck!*"

Luna considered Ginny's response for a minute. Then she shrugged, "Better than what I could come up with! It'll do!" and began scribbling down Ginny's response. They did this for another hour until finally Luna reached the bottom of her stack of papers. "WE DID IT!" She cheered, "Thank you so much, Ginny. Oh, god, I could not do that alone. Today has been so draining."

"That's what I'm here for!" Ginny replied, "Want some wine?"

"No...wine will put me to sleep. And I still need to hear about your news! How was the date with Draco!?"

Ginny filled her in Draco and Blaise's proposal and Luna gasped in excitement by the end of it.

"Ginny, that's so exciting! And so wonderfully unexpected!" She shrieked, "Never in a million years would I have foreseen Ginny Weasley working alongside Draco Malfoy and Blaise Zabini."

"Trust me, you and me both." She said, unable to contain her smile, "I'm actually really excited. They seem really fun and professional. I really think this is going to be a success."

The two girls stayed up late watching a movie and gossiping about Ginny's new career, the two handsome Slytherin boys, and how much Luna temporarily detested her employees. Luna ended up falling asleep on her couch halfway through the movie. Ginny covered her up with a blanket and conjured an alarm clock to put near the couch so she wouldn't be late for work before retreating to her own bed.

When Ginny woke up the next morning she felt ecstatic. She had the day off work again, had already broken the news to everyone she intended to tell, and had no plans of socialization! Luna had already left by the time Ginny awoke so she leisurely cooked herself a nice breakfast and spent most her day watching television and lazily flipping through her potions books. She vowed to spend the day relaxing as much as she could because, starting tomorrow, she would be spending her days either working with George, training with Blaise, or both. When the sun started to set, Ginny decided to treat herself to some ice cream and a romantic movie. She grabbed the pint of ice cream and a spoon and began eating it out of the container when she heard a knock at the door. She looked at the door questionably; *Who on earth is that?*

When she opened the door, her heart fell into her stomach and she nearly dropped her ice cream. Dressed impeccably as usual and looking like they walked out of a men's fashion magazine stood Draco and Blaise.
"Wh-what are you doing here? We aren't supposed to meet until tomorrow!" She exclaimed, looking at her outfit which consisted of tiny yellow Holyhead Harpies pyjama shorts and a small black tank top and she hadn't even showered, let alone put on makeup. Figures. The first time we meet, I'm way overdressed. The second time we meet I'm not even wearing a bra and eating ice cream right out of the bucket.

"We aren't! But we had to drop off some gifts for you!" Blaise explained happily, walking past Ginny and letting himself into the house.

Draco smirked as he observed Ginny's outfit and said, "I like your shorts." And followed Blaise's lead, sliding past her.

Ginny blushed at Draco's comment but chose to ignore it. "So, you two just come over without any warning? What if I was busy? What if I had company over?"

"Do you?" Draco asked, smiling down at Ginny, who was quickly turning red from frustration.

"Ugh, that is not the point!" She huffed.

"Sorry, Ginny, but you are going to have to get used to us popping over at random times. Sometimes business can't wait for plans!" Blaise replied while observing Ginny's living room, "You've got a nice flat."

"Okay, no. We need ground rules. Now." Ginny sternly stood up to the two boys, suddenly not feeling so coy around them. "Unless it is an absolute, life or death, emergency you two will give me at least an hour warning. I'm sorry, but just because I'm doing business with you does not mean I'm going to spend my life hoping you two blokes don't come knocking on my door any time I'm having a shower or have a date over. Do you hear me?" Ginny thought that maybe she was being harsh but she was not prepared to have an open-door policy with these two.

The two boys stared at Ginny, wide-eyed and shocked that she yelled at them for such a seemingly minor thing. Draco spoke first, "I think we are able to accommodate that."

"Yeah, for sure." Blaise nodded in agreement, still looking scared.

"Excellent! So, what kind of presents did you bring me?" Ginny asked, her mood changing instantly, looking at their empty hands in confusion.

"Oh, right!" Draco reached deep into his pockets and pulled out three tiny different coloured cauldrons and a tiny black box. "I figured you might need some new equipment and I had these at my house, barely used." He set them down in the middle of the floor and flicked his wand, causing the objects to be enlarged to their normal size.

Ginny's heart melted as she inspected the beautiful cauldrons. The pewter cauldron was small in comparison to the brass and copper cauldrons but all of them were clearly very expensive and made with the finest metals. "Draco…I can't accept this. I really appreciate it, but I can't."

"You can and you will!" Draco insisted, "We can't have you training with any cauldron that isn't the best quality. It's incredible the difference a cheap cauldron can make when brewing potions. The differences are subtle but we need our products to be perfect."

"At least let me give you some money?" Ginny offered.

Draco shook his head no, "I'm not taking your money. Do you have anything to drink?"
Ginny opened her refrigerator, "I have wine, seven beers, and some orange juice."

"I'll have a beer!" Draco requested

"Me too!" Blaise said, and Ginny handed the boys the drinks.

"There we go, now we are even." Draco said to Ginny, winking. She rolled her eyes but couldn't help but feel incredibly touched by her new 'gifts'. Even if it was for the sake of the business it still meant a lot to her.

"What's in the box?"

"Ah! That was my contribution!" Blaise piped up and opened the box to reveal dozens of jars which presumably held potions ingredients. "Here are the finest ingredients; from Aconite to Wartizome. Don't worry about the price – I have tons more at home for myself."

"Wow, guys, I don't know what to say…" Ginny stared in awe at the ingredients. She mentally tried to do the math of how much the ingredients were worth, but based on the rarity of some ingredients, she knew it was more money than she had ever had in her possession at one time.

"No need to thank us!" Blaise said sincerely, "Should we start setting up the room, then?"

Ginny led the two boys into her potions room, and much to her relief, neither of them made too much fun of the sad potions lab. Although, Draco did scoff at her cauldron saying, "I've seen toilets in better condition than this." But he said it in jest, and simply cast it aside as he made room for the 3 new, pristine cauldrons.

"Oi, did you catch the Quidditch match last night, Draco?"

"Yeah. Father and I went to it. I thought I told you I was going?"

"No, you didn't."

"Yes, I did. Last weekend when you were shamelessly flirting with that waitress. You asked me if I could host a party so you would have an excuse to ask her on a date. And I said, 'No, Blaise. I'm going to a Quidditch game with my father and I wouldn't want to host a party just to get you laid, anyways.' To which you called me a 'pompous dick', and proceeded to scare off the waitress." Draco drewled as he recounted the story, which made Blaise glare at him. Ginny could have sworn she had seen his cheeks turn a little pink as well.

"You are literally the worst wingman in history, mate." He said in retaliation, "Pompous dick."

Ginny watched in amusement as the two grown men bickered. They were constantly ragging on each other, and the more Ginny got to know them, the more she realized she was going to hear a lot of arguing. She decided to end this current debate. "So, how was the game? I heard Montrose won by a landslide."

Draco smiled, "It was great! We had great seats, although a bludger nearly hit Father in the face, which turned him into a miserable old git for the rest of the game." Ginny quickly stifled her laughter at the thought of Lucius Malfoy getting struck with a bludger before Draco continued talking. "So, do you still watch a lot of Quidditch? Or do you just wear their pyjamas?" He said, motioning to her shorts and flashed his trademark smirk.

Ginny laughed and rolled her eyes. "Yes, I still like Quidditch. I haven't been to a game in forever. I would kill to see the Harpies play again."
"Once we make our first sale we should treat ourselves to go to a match in celebration!" Blaise suggested, and Ginny couldn't help but let out a squeal, clearly affirming her position on the topic.

"Hey, Ginny, What is this book? 'How to Handle a Heliopath'?" Blaise asked questionably, as he picked up a dusty book that was hidden underneath a pair of robes.

"Oh, lord. Luna got me that years ago." Ginny snatched the book from Blaise and looked at the book nostalgically, "I think she even believes this is total rubbish now!"

"Luna? As in – Loony Lovegood?" Blaise asked, trying to stifle his laughter.

"Hey! Don't call her that!" Ginny shouted in her friend's defence, "Luna is one of the most brilliant women I know. You could learn something from her, I'm sure."

"Yeah, maybe about imaginary moon frogs or something..." Blaise muttered and Ginny swatted his shoulder and grimaced at him, signally that he had better shut his mouth regarding Luna.

"I thought she was funny. Weird as hell, but funny." Draco said simply causing Ginny to smile in appreciation.

The three of them delicately unpacked the ingredients, placing them on the shelves. Ginny couldn't help but take sneak peaks at Draco, which made her feel silly and immature. He wasn't wearing his usual white dress shirt and tie today; he was wearing a casual grey t-shirt which showed off his toned arms perfectly. She sensed absolutely no interest from him towards herself, though. The way he looked at her seemed completely void of any lust. She tried not to let it bother her, though. They were business partners. There is no room for romance in business.

Ginny's eyes wandered down Draco's left arm, and for the first the first time she noticed a gruesome scar. It looked as though someone hacked away at his forearm for hours, leaving a deep and distorted wound that healed unevenly. Draco's eyes met Ginny's as he noticed where she was staring and he quickly shifted his body so she was unable have a view of the scar. She couldn't help but frown, as it was obvious what the scar had been. The dark mark. She suddenly felt a pang of sympathy towards Draco but quickly brushed it off.

They finished setting up the potions room. It was beautifully organized and ready to be used tomorrow for Ginny's training. It seemed that even once their task was finished none of them were eager to part ways. So, they sat on Ginny's balcony and admired the fireflies and the stars while sharing their funniest memories. Draco and Blaise were howling with laughter as Ginny told them a story of a young Ron, who had the misfortunes of sleepwalking and accidentally mistaking Percy's wardrobe for the washroom. And Blaise forced Draco to tell the embarrassing story of the time he was at a muggle nightclub in Ireland and thought a beautiful woman was flirting with him all night – only to find out at the worst opportune moment that, to his surprise, it was not actually a woman. Eventually the conversation was turned to business discussion. Draco apparently had a meeting already arranged in a month with a potential investor so they needed to have a variety of potions mastered by then. Ginny felt a little stressed about the expectations placed on her but she felt certain her and Blaise would make a good team.

Eventually, Ginny let out a loud yawn. "Guys, I hate to cut the party short, but I need to get some sleep. Tomorrow is going to be a long day."

Draco stood up and stretched, "Yeah, so should we. Besides, I should feed my cat."

Ginny's heart instantly melted, "Aww! You have a cat!? That is adorable!" Draco scowled at being called adorable by Ginny, clearly regretting mentioning the cat.
Blaise rolled his eyes, "Ugh, Draco and his damn cat. Why do girls always fawn over men with cats?"

"Shut up, Blaise." Draco retorted, glaring at his friend. "Yes, I have a cat. His name is Plato, I got him a year ago, he's still a kitten. You'll have to meet him sometime." He explained to Ginny while smiling. And she couldn't help but beam up at him for two reasons: the thought of him having a little kitten was too cute AND the fact that he invited her over to his house sometime was exciting.

Eventually she sent the two boys away, as they all bid their farewells until the next day. Ginny instantly crawled into bed and she quickly fell asleep. But not before excitedly imagining the future success of their company and her new friendships, and of course, the thought of Draco cuddled up with a little kitten named Plato.

A/N: I know this chapter may have seemed a little long and dragged out. I'm tried to establish their characters and group dynamics as much as possible before really diving into the plot next chapter! Thanks for reading!
Days turned into weeks as Ginny and Blaise brewed potions after potions. The shelves on her walls which were once bare were filled with dozens of various vials containing several different potions. Ginny was amazed by Blaise's expertise in the field, and couldn't help but feel inferior next to him, but she was thankful that he was nothing but encouraging. He was an excellent teacher. Ginny found herself feeling more competent everyday that she trained as she learned new methods taught by Blaise. Potions that she never thought she would ever be able to make she had nearly perfected. She was feeling an immense amount of pride in her work which was something she had previously thought she would never experience, believing she was doomed to work at the joke shop forever.

The three of them were completely exhausted. Ginny and Draco were both still working full-time at their other jobs, and when they weren't working they were focussed on their business. Draco rarely helped with the potions but he was constantly by their side, pouring over the financial aspect of the business. He had his first meeting with an important investor, Albert Kant, in only two weeks and Draco was incredibly stressed about it. Ginny felt bad for him, as he repeatedly toyed with their budget but continuously couldn't make things add up correctly. Ginny and Blaise were both fairly clueless about economics so they both felt useless in aiding Draco.

Ginny felt beads of sweat roll down her neck as she eagerly watched her nearly complete Wit-Sharpening Potion simmer. The room was always so humid from the steam that she completely gave up on attempting to wear makeup around the boys. She couldn't help but find it humorous how comfortable she had gotten around the boys, as her wardrobe gradually shifted from form-fitting flattering clothing to oversized sweatshirts and baggy jeans. Blaise had Draco had equally made themselves comfortable around her house as she had dedicated an entire closet to their belongings which they frequently left scattered around her house. They often joked about how they may as well move in considering the amount of time they were spending there.

Ginny sighed in relief as her potion turned a dark orange after ten minutes of simmering. "YES!" She shouted at her completed product. "Blaise! Look! I did it!"

Blaise examined her potion, pouring it into a vial. "Ginny, this is perfect! It's exactly like mine!"

She smiled brightly at her accomplishment. It felt so good to be progressing at such a fast pace. They had only been working together for two weeks and she had made more progress in those weeks than she had in the past two years.

"That's excellent, Ginny!" Draco called to her from the other side of the room as he took an inventory of their completed potions, "So with that potion complete we have 15 Wiggenweld potions, 13 Wideye Potions, 20 Strengthening solutions, 14 Blemish Blinters, two dozen Pepper-Up potions, and a dozen Invigoration Draughts..." He wrote a few notes in his notebook before concluding, "I'd say we only need another 7 potions to bring as samples to Mister Kant by the end of the month!"

"Easy! We can do that in no time!" Blaise replied while stretching, "On that note, I believe it is time for a well-deserved break!"

The three all happily agreed and they made their way out to Ginny's balcony to enjoy the night's refreshing, cool breeze. Ginny handed out bottles of ale as she took a seat comfortably beside Draco.
"God, I can't believe this is actually happening." Ginny stated in excitement, "In a few weeks we are going to have our first investor!"

"Don't get too ahead of yourself," Draco replied nervously, "For all we know he might end just laugh in my face and send me out the door."

"Oh, come off it, Draco. Who could hate that pretty face of yours?" Blaise said, reaching over to playfully pinch Draco's cheek leading to Draco swatting him away.

Ginny laughed with Blaise, "It's true, Draco, if anyone is going to woo Mr. Kant it's you!"

Draco turned to Ginny raising his eyebrow. "Really? I'm pretty sure a 60-year-old man would much prefer having a pretty red head give him a sales pitch over myself."

Ginny blushed at hearing Draco call her pretty and playfully shoved his shoulder, "Regardless, you'll do great. Try not to stress too much."

Draco and Blaise continued discussing their business while Ginny got lost in thought. She couldn't wait until Sunday. Two more days until a day off, she thought to herself. Suddenly, her heart sank as she remembered something important.

"Oh no!" She groaned in exasperation, putting her face in her hands. "I have to train Trevor tomorrow."

Trevor Birch was Ginny's replacement at the joke shop She happily volunteered to oversee his training but instantly regretted it once she got to know him personally. She considered him to be vile, arrogant, and misogynistic as he constantly flirted with Ginny by making crude comments regarding her body. Ginny thought it was a shame because he was genuinely attractive, but the second he opened his mouth she despised him. She recounted the first time they met at the shop.

"Ginny Weasley." Trevor said, shaking her hand yet directing his eyes to her chest. "You sure have developed into a beautiful young woman since our Hogwarts days." It made Ginny want to puke.

"Do you want us to hex him for you?" Draco offered to the glum looking Ginny.

"No…I could do that myself," Ginny sighed, "It's only a couple more weeks. I would convince George to fire him but he's a decent worker. Just a huge git."

"If you change your mind let us know," Blaise said, "I wouldn't even hex him. I would knock him out."

They continued chatting and drinking until Blaise let out a huge yawn. "Guys, I don't think I can brew any more potions tonight."

"Yeah, I'm exhausted." Draco agreed, "Gotta wake up early tomorrow."

They collected their possessions and put on their coat. Before walking out the door Blaise asked, "Oh, right! Do you two want to go out for drinks on Sunday? Sunday Funday!" He said with a huge excited grin on his face which caused Ginny's face to fall.

"How are you not tired of us yet!?" She asked. She was far too excited for her day off to spend it getting drunk with them.

"I'm a social butterfly and I need constant human contact." He said very matter-of-factly, "Come on, live a little!"
Ginny continued shaking her head no, "I'm sorry, I can't. I have tea at my mum's and then I'll probably spend the day with Luna."

"Good ol' Loony Lovegood." Blaise said mockingly, which caused Ginny to shoot daggers at him, "I'm only joking. What about you, Draco?"

"I think I'm with Ginny on this one." He replied before adding with a smirk, "I need a day off from you."

"You guys are so boring." He sighed. They said their goodbyes and parted ways.

Ginny's weekend flew by. Much to her relief, Trevor was slightly more pleasant than usual at work, only saying a few crude comments regarding Ginny's appearance. She bit her tongue and contemplated taking Blaise's advice and punching him in the face but resisted. Spending time with Trevor at work reminded her how little interest she had in dating since spending so much time with Draco and Blaise. Not that she would ever consider dating him, but she probably would have been a little flattered by his derogatory comments. Draco and Blaise had instilled so much confidence in Ginny even though it was unintentional. Not only had they helped her get a foot in the door with her future career, the fact that they genuinely enjoyed her company helped her realize how much worth she had. Sure, she knew that there was no romantic interest from them. Just the fact that these two Slytherin boys who once found immense pleasure from bullying her now wanted to spend their free time with her helped her realize that she was an interesting and fun girl to be around who didn't need to deal with slimy gits like Trevor.

Sunday came quickly. She overslept for her tea at The Burrow, as usual, and had to quickly throw on her clothes and apparate. Upon arriving, her mother rushed over and gave her the usual Molly Weasley bone-crushing hug.

"Ginny, dear! You look absolutely exhausted!" She shrieked, noticing the dark circles under her eyes, "You weren't out drinking last night again, were you?"

"No! Honestly!" Ginny felt relieved that she didn't have to lie this time, "I've just been so busy."

She walked into the living room to find Ron, Hermione, and Harry sitting on the couch already. It had become a bi-weekly ritual where they would have tea together. Ron had his arm around Hermione's shoulder, making Ginny smile. She was so happy that the two were still happily together after so many years.

"Hey, Ginny!" Hermione jumped up upon seeing Ginny and ran to hug her, "How are you!? You look tired!"

Ginny frowned. Being told you look tired twice in one day isn't a compliment. "I'm fine! I've just been busy with work. How are you?"

Hermione let out a huge smile but simply stated that she was doing fine. She took her seat beside Ron and Harry again and Ginny sat on the arm of the sofa beside Harry.

"So, Ginny, is it getting busier at George's shop?" Harry asked, and Ginny gave him a confused look. "That's why you're so tired?"

Ginny instantly snapped back to reality. Right, they don't know about my second job! Be cool, Ginny! She told herself. "Right, yeah! It has been crazy busy! I've been putting in way more hours. So tired."

"That's great for the business at least! What else is new?" Harry asked, looking at Ginny with his
huge green eyes.

"Oh, you know, nothing new. Just been spending a lot of time with George and Luna. The usual." She felt guilty for looking her friends in the eye and lying, but it wasn't the time to tell them the truth quite yet.

Her mother returned to the room with the tea and snacks. Ginny felt particularly quiet as the rest of them happily discussed all the news in their lives as usual. She resolved that the less she talked the less she would have to lie. It was particularly hard when her mother gave her the usual, "Ginny, you have no direction in your life! You must pursue some sort of career!" lecture. She had to refrain from rolling her eyes too much. Mother, I'm currently in a pioneer business with two wealthy Slytherins, and we expect to be super rich within the next couple of years. I have direction. She considered saying, as she was incredibly tired of feeling patronized by her mom, but instead she smiled sweetly and replied with, "You're absolutely right, Mum. I'll get right on that."

After they finished their tea Ron spoke up, "So, Mum, Ginny. Hermione and I have some news…"

"WE ARE GETTING MARRIED!" Hermione shrieked, jumping from her seat. Ginny gasped in excitement and Molly instantly burst out in tears of happiness, running over to the couple and giving them a giant hug.

"I've been waiting for this day since you two were 12 years old!" She sobbed into their shoulders, "I must owl your Father! Oh my gosh, I can't believe this!"

"Congratulations, you two, I'm so happy for you!" Ginny said sincerely, brushing a couple of tears from her own eyes, "I can't believe this! This is amazing! When did it happen!?"

They spent some more time discussing the proposal and admiring Hermione's beautiful ring. They announced that the wedding would be next summer at the Burrow. Molly could hardly stop crying the entire time as she gushed about the two young lovers. After some time, Ginny excused herself, saying she had to get home to meet Luna.

"Once again, congratulations!" She hugged them both again, "I love you both so much!"

"Love you, too, Gin." Ron replied, hugging his sister tightly.

As Ginny headed out the door Harry stopped her. "Ginny, wait!"

"What's up, Harry?"

"I know the wedding is still a year away, but I was hoping you would be my date." He said, grabbing her hand and smiling. Ginny accidentally frowned. How could she possibly commit to being a date for an event a year away? Her life was currently a rollercoaster and she had no idea where she would even be a year from then. And she couldn't deny to herself that the first person that came into her mind as a wedding date was a certain blonde haired man.

"Umm, Harry, listen…I'm not saying no! I just think it's too soon…who knows what is going to happen in a year. Can we discuss this later?" She felt so guilty for rejecting him.

"What do you mean 'who knows what is going to happen'? You've been doing the same thing for years now. I can't really see much changing." He said sourly.

Ginny glared at him, clearly taking offence from his observation. It took everything she had to not correct him by telling him bluntly that she expects to be filthy rich with her new friends Draco Malfoy and Blaise Zabini by her side, but she swallowed her pride. Instead she took a deep breath
and said coldly, "Harry, you have no idea what I'm going to be doing in a year. But it is going to be
great. I don't appreciate your doubt in my ability."

She could see Harry instantly put his foot in his mouth, "Ginny, I'm sorry, I didn't mean it like that.
Of course I have faith in your ability. You're amazing."

"Yeah, I know I am." She said frankly, her honesty forcing a surprised look appear on his face,
"Now, if you don't mind, I have to go. We can talk about this later."

She stormed out the door and apparated back to her flat, still feeling angry by her conversation with
Harry. She loved Harry, but for the first time she felt genuinely outraged by him. Sorry I didn't save
the world and instantly know what I wanted to do for the rest of my life, Harry. Guess I'm just that
useless. She thought bitterly to herself. She was thankful Luna would be arriving soon so she could
complain about her woes to her.

Monday evening came too fast. She had just finished her shift at George's and apparated to a muggle
restaurant in London to meet Blaise and Draco for dinner before. She insisted they only met at
obscure muggle bars to avoid running into anyone she knew. Draco and Blaise were happily chatting
about Quidditch while eating their food, however, Ginny was still feeling particularly bitter about her
conversation with Harry.

"Why are you so pouty today?" Blaise asked honestly and Ginny scowled at him.

"I'm not pouty." She said as she stabbed her pie angrily with her fork.

"You're a little pouty." Draco said in agreement, looking slightly scared of Ginny as she stabbed her
pie.

"No I'm not."

Blaise rolled his eyes, "Damn women. Always getting mad at us men for not expressing our
emotions, yet they're no better!"

Ginny sighed and set her fork down, running her hand through her red hair. "Ugh, if you must
know, Hermione and Ron are getting married next summer and Harry got mad at me because I didn't
instantly accept his invitation to be his date. When I told him it was too far away from now to make
that commitment, he proceeded to essentially tell me that that was stupid, because I'm clearly just
going to be working with George until I die alone, anyways." She said, exaggerating the harshness
of Harry's words, "Okay, it wasn't that bad. But that's the gist of it."

"What! What an ass! Should have told him you're going to be filthy rich with millionaires on your
arm next summer!" Blaise said comfortingly, "I'm sorry, Gin, he's a bloke anyways. Don't listen to
him."

"Thanks. Trust me, it took every ounce of restraint to not tell him that yesterday." She smiled at
Blaise, appreciating his kind words.

"I'm confused. Why would Potter be expecting you to be his date? I thought you two weren't still
seeing each other?" Draco asked, arguably a little too curiously, which made Ginny's heart sing a
little.

"We aren't! That's why it is so presumptuous for him to assume!" She replied and finished up her pie.
"Whatever. We should get going soon. Oh, by the way, Luna might be over at my place."

"Great, can't wait." Blaise said sarcastically.
A beautiful, tall, busty waitress with dark brown hair and stunning green eyes handed Draco the bill. Ginny couldn't help but feel annoyed when Draco made a suave comment about how he had never noticed her before, which was surprising to him, because he noticed all the pretty girls in the area. The waitress giggled at Draco's compliment and wrote her phone number on Draco's bill saying, "Call me" before walking away. Ginny rolled her eyes and mentally gagged. She wished Draco would flirt with Ginny the way he did with other women but she was also thankful she would never fall for a cheesy line like that. She caught Blaise giving her a knowing smirk which made her blush, realizing maybe she wasn't being as secretive about her crush as she had hoped. She brushed the event off; mentally convincing herself once again that romance and business do not belong together.

Just as suspected when they arrived at Ginny's flat Luna's bright yellow shoes were sitting at the door way. When she didn't see Luna in the living room she assumed she was out on the balcony.

"Come on, you have to say hello!" Ginny urged Blaise, "I've been talking about both of you to her constantly, it's about time you all spend some proper time together."

Draco appeared to have no issue with talking to Luna, but Blaise huffed before agreeing to follow Ginny to the balcony. As they saw Luna she heard Blaise audibly gasp behind Ginny. Luna was doing her usual yoga, posed in a very talented, flexible position which gave the boys a very pleasant view. She was wearing tight pink shorts and a small white tank top which perfectly exposed her midriff.

"Bloody hell," Blaise said, gaping, wide eyed at the beautiful blonde woman in front of him, "Ginny, why don't you ever do that when we are here?"

"Seriously." Draco muttered in agreement with a similar look of admiration as Blaise.

"Oh, hello!" Luna said once she noticed their presence, "I didn't hear you come in!"

"Hey, yeah, we just got here. You remember Blai-" Ginny began but was interrupted by Blaise who shoved passed Ginny.

"Blaise Zabini. You're Luna. It's a pleasure to see you again." He delicately shook her hand, "Really. Such a pleasure."

Ginny made eye contact with Draco and the two laughed under their breaths. The two essentially read each other's minds as Blaise instantly began singing a different tune upon seeing Luna for the first time in years.

"Of course I remember you! And you, too, Draco. Ginny has told me so many great things about you both." She said smiling, "I hope I'm not interrupting your work! My house is dreadfully hot right now; I've been at Ginny's all day to escape the heat!"

"No! You're not interrupting anything!" Blaise assured Luna. Draco scoffed at Blaise and Blaise sent a warning glare back at Draco. "Seriously, like I always say, the more the merrier. Can I get you a drink?"

"Blaise, you're in my house." Ginny said, narrowing her eyes at Blaise, although clearly amused by the situation.

"Ginny. It's called being a nice guest."

"You never offer us anything when you're here, though…” Draco said, clearly trying to a rise out of Blaise.
Luna giggled at the situation unfolding, "I would love a drink, thank you."

"We probably aren't going to be very productive today, are we?" Ginny muttered to Draco who chuckled.

"I kind of doubt it." He replied, gently putting his hand on her shoulder, leading her onto the balcony. Blaise handed them all a beer and took a seat beside Luna, staring at her eagerly.

"So, Luna! What have you been up to? Ginny hasn't told us much about you except that you're amazing company."

"Oh, not a lot. I've been doing a little bit of travelling here and there, but nothing major. Oh, and I am the owner and editor-in-chief of Fusion Magazines." She said humbly, causing Draco and Blaise's eyes to light up.

"You own that magazine?" Draco asked, full of curiosity, "That's incredible. That is the number one magazine in the wizarding world right now!"

"Is it? I had no idea." Luna said sarcastically while laughing, "Thank you, though. I love it."

"That is amazing, Luna. Ginny, why have you been hiding this gem from us?" Blaise asked.

"Jeez, Blaise. I have no idea why." She scowled, trying to mentally tell him that it was because he had been so rude any time she was brought up in the past.

They ended up spending most of the night catching up with Luna. She filled them in on all of the details about her magazine and her life after Hogwarts and Blaise earnestly hung onto every word she spoke. Ginny couldn't help but find their interactions cute. She had seen Blaise shamelessly flirt with tons of girls but she had never seen him so smitten. Luna seemed oblivious to his infatuation, or at least, she gave no hint that she was catching on. It wasn't like Luna to fall for men's flirting, so Ginny figured Blaise would have to put in a lot of work to get Luna interested.

Eventually Luna announced that she had to head home, much to Blaise's displeasure, but he politely walked her to the door leaving Ginny and Draco alone on the balcony watching the autumn sunset.

"Well, that was an interesting evening." Draco declared, "I haven't seen Blaise that smitten in a long time."

Ginny smiled, "Seriously! And after making a huge fuss over the past few weeks, saying she's a weirdo any time she is mentioned. I hope he's feeling like an idiot."

"Oh, I'm sure he is." He said, looking at Ginny peacefully. He stared at Ginny's hair, "Jesus, your hair is even more red in the sunlight."

Ginny frowned and blushed in embarrassment. "Oh, thanks." She said sarcastically.

"No! I meant it in a good way. I like red hair." He said sort of awkwardly. Ginny blushed even more, but this time from being flattered.

"So you don't just like brunette waitresses?" Ginny teased, referring to the waitress from earlier.

"Oh, I love brunette waitresses!" He said in defense, "She seemed very nice. Shame I don't have a phone to call her…"

"You're telling me that you, Draco Malfoy, would actually go out with a muggle?" Ginny asked in
Draco shrugged, "Hey, stranger things have happened. I mean, I am spending all of my free time with a Weasley, aren't I?"

"This is true." She nodded in agreement, "I kind of like it, which is even stranger."

Draco laughed and took a sip of his drink before saying, "You're telling me."

They sat in a comfortable silence before they heard Blaise shout loudly from the living room, "I AM IN LOVE!", causing Draco and Ginny to burst into a fit of laughter.

The last couple weeks in the month flew by as they rushed to complete their potions for Draco's meeting with Mr. Kant. Luna had quickly become an integral part of their group, bringing her dream-like optimism to the table. She even gave Draco tons of pointers as she was clearly experienced in the field of starting a new business, so her company was welcomed by all of them. Before they knew it Draco, Ginny, and Blaise were sitting in Ginny's living room preparing Draco for his meeting.

Blaise was lying on the couch reading Luna's magazine and said, "Blimey, this girl is amazing. Have you two read this?"

"No, Blaise, I have never read my best friend's magazine." Ginny said sarcastically as she carefully shrunk the vials of potions to fit in Draco's briefcase. "You know, you could help us if you wanted."

"I'm okay, thanks." He said smugly and continued reading the magazine.

Draco was nervously standing in front of the mirror trying to tie his tie but his fingers were trembling too much.

"Here, let me help you." Ginny said after noticing his struggles. She smoothed out the tie and fastened it. She was able to feel Draco's fast beating heart through his shirt and she gave him a sympathetic look, "Draco, you're going to be fine. You're Draco fucking Malfoy, use that classic charisma of yours and there's no way he will turn you down."

"I know…" He said, trying to believe her words, "It's just. Everything is riding on this. This man is one of the most important people in magical business. There isn't many people of his status, so if we can't convince him, we won't be able to convince anyone. It's a miracle he even agreed to this meeting in the first place."

"Are you sure you don't want one of us to go with you? You know, for social support?" Blaise offered, but Draco shook his head no.

"No, he made it abundantly clear he only wanted to meet with me. He knows my father which is the only reason why he thought I was worth meeting." He said, his voice shaking a bit as he gathered his financial charts. "This needs to go well otherwise all of this has been a waste."

"Draco, it will go well." Ginny reassured him, "And if it doesn't then we will figure something out. This won't be a waste." She comfortably put her arm on his shoulder until he eventually nodded in agreement.

He looked at his watch, "Alright, I better get going." Ginny gave him a quick, small hug and Blaise shouted, "You've got this, you sexy beast!" As he left Ginny's flat.

Ginny and Blaise awaited his return anxiously. Blaise pulled out a bottle of wine and poured Ginny and himself a glass.
"Cheers, to a future of success and wealth!" Blaise announced but Ginny frowned.

"Isn't that a little premature?"

"He'll be fine, it's Draco. He could talk his way into being the minister of magic if he wanted."

"I just feel bad for him…he looked so scared." She sipped her wine and pictured Draco's anxious expression.

"Of course you feel bad for him." Blaise said and Ginny narrowed her eyes.

"What is that supposed to mean?" She asked defensively.

"Oh, nothing." He said casually before changing the subject, "So, do you think Luna is into me?"

"Ahh...I dunno, Blaise." Ginny said honestly, "She's certainly intrigued by you and thinks you're handsome and charming."

"Well I am."

"But Luna doesn't really date people. I think you should give it more time before asking her out. Take it slow. Be her friend first. Let her learn to trust you."

He let out a huge sigh. "I guess you're right. I like getting to know her anyways. Draco was right, she is funny." He leaned back onto the couch and appeared to be daydreaming. "Have you noticed the way she always sits by me? I think I've got a shot."

"I hope you do." She said honestly. She never would have thought that prior to that month but they really did have an endearing chemistry. Although, she wanted Blaise to be cautious.

The two ended up playing a game of wizard's chess to pass the time. Much to Blaise's surprise, Ginny beat him by a landslide. She had played her entire life with Ron and Harry, and after many years she was even able to beat them. They stared anxiously at the clock as it slowly ticked by. Their wine was quickly disappearing and they were running out of things to do to pass the time.

"He's been gone a long time. That is a good sign, right?" Ginny asked eagerly.

"I think so…I mean, if he wasn't interested, he wouldn't keep him around." Blaise replied although not sounding entirely convinced himself. As if on cue the front door opened and Draco walked in. Ginny and Blaise jumped up excitedly.

"How was it!?" Ginny asked excitedly but there was no immediate response from Draco. His face looked pale and he avoided their eye contact.

"Mate?" Blaise asked sounding concerned. Ginny watched as Draco took a deep breath, looking incredibly dejected, and glumly shook his head no.

Ginny's heart sank. She didn't even care about not getting the investor, she just couldn't stand seeing Draco Malfoy look so depressed. "Come, sit down. We have liquor." She rushed over to him and forced him onto the sofa. He reminded her of a zombie, his brain appeared disconnected from his body. She handed him a glass of wine which he quickly gulped down.

"So…what happened?" Blaise asked, trying to not sound overly disappointed himself.

Draco was silent for a moment. He looked incredibly hurt. Ginny could have sworn she even saw the glisten of a tear in his eye. Finally, he got the courage to speak, "It's because I'm a Malfoy. He
said that while he respects our business idea and says that we clearly have talent, I'm a Malfoy. And there is a still a strong stigma against my name. And that because I used to be a death eater no one will invest in a business with me." He anxiously rubbed his eyes with his palms, "I'm essentially going to be paying for my mistakes as a teenager for the rest of my life."

"What! That's bullshit!" Ginny exclaimed, her heart breaking for the blonde in front of her. "Did you tell him you were working with me? That must mean something!"

"Yes. He basically said it says nothing about someone's character to hire someone when money is involved. He said that us working together is not evidence that we are actually friends or that I respect you."

"That's stupid!" Ginny shouted.

"That's business." He shrugged gloomily. There was a dead silence for a few moments until Blaise asked the dreaded question.

"So, what do we do now?"

"I don't think there's anything we can do." Draco sighed, "I'm sorry, guys, I really tried."

"There has to be something we can do!" Ginny said, "I mean, we have so much potential. We can't just give up. That's not business. We won't get anywhere with that mindset."

"Well, if you have any ideas I'm all ears."

It was silent again until Blaise piped up. "We need Luna."

Ginny and Draco both groaned in frustration. "Blaise, now isn't the time to flirt with Luna." Draco said coldly.

"No, we literally need her. Hear me out." Blaise jumped up, ready to pitch his idea, "We need to be in her magazine. We need to be on the front page of her magazine and then they'll write an amazing article about us. About how you've had such an enormous change of heart, Draco, that you've become best friends with Ginny Weasley of all people. How you've spent time with muggles and respect them just as much as wizards. How neither you nor I would ever hurt a fly despite being Slytherins. And, most importantly, that we are three young, attractive, intelligent, up-and-coming entrepreneurs who want to revolutionize the industry. When Mister-fucking-moralistic-Kant sees the article, he will be choking on his words, cursing himself for not investing in you right from the beginning."

Ginny and Draco digested Blaise's idea. "That…might actually work." Draco said nodding, showing that he was jumping on board.

"Wait, guys. Luna loves this magazine more than anything, and she typically has it organized months in advance. There's no way she will push someone who is actually famous behind to put us on the front cover. I just cannot imagine her getting on board with this."

"It's worth a try, isn't it?" Blaise asked.

"Come on, Ginny." Draco pleaded.

She stared at the two desperate boys. They had all worked so hard and developed such a great bond. Ginny couldn't turn them down. Worst case scenario Luna says no.
"Fine. I'll owl her tomorrow."

A/N: I just have to point something out! I know I kind of threw in that Hermione and Ron were dating, let alone getting engaged, in this chapter after not mentioning it previously. In the first chapter where you saw them last I wasn't sure if I wanted them to be together or not. Then after much thought I decided that yes, of course they should be!

Anyways, Thanks again for reading! I hope you enjoyed this chapter, I had fun with all of the dialogue. Once again, don't forget to review and follow! :) Have an excellent weekend!
Chapter Five

Ginny, Blaise, and Draco stood in Ginny's loft as they prepared their proposal for Luna. Ginny had owled her yesterday requesting to meet for a business-related inquiry and Luna happily accepted to meet at her office. Ginny dressed in her finest business attire, which she hadn't worn since she tried applying to various potions shops where she was politely rejected due to her lack of experience. She wondered if she would still get rejected now that she has experience, and that she might have to keep that option in the back of her mind now that she was currently unemployed. She looked in the mirror self consciously as she fidgeted in her blazer and pencil black skirt.

"I feel like a fraud wearing this." She complained, "You know, we are only meeting Luna. I don't think she expects us to be dressed to the nines."

"It's not about what Luna thinks of us – her colleagues will be there as well. They have to see us looking professional so they will take us, and Luna, seriously when she puts us in her magazine." Draco explained as he put on his dark blue blazer and fixing his blonde hair in the mirror.

"If she puts us in her magazine." Ginny corrected as she subtly admired how handsome Draco looked in a suit. He looked intimidatingly attractive. She was thankful she had gotten to know him on such a personal level otherwise she would act like a blubbering idiot around him.

"She will put us in her magazine. It's Luna! She would do anything for you, Ginny." Blaise assured, putting on his own black blazer, looking almost as handsome as Draco. "Besides, I am going to lay the Zabini charm on thick. She won't be able to say no."

"Love the enthusiasm, but all I'm saying is to prepare for the worst." Ginny replied, taking one final look in the mirror. "Alright, time to go."

They apparated to the main floor of Luna's office building. The walls were made of dark grey bricks and so high that Ginny had to stretch her neck to see the ceiling. The room had an ominous, cold feeling to it with minimal artwork on the walls and only held a large reception desk where a plump, middle aged woman, wearing bright red lipstick sat. In all the years she's been friends with Luna she had never visited her at work, so the cold and stiff atmosphere caught Ginny off guard.

As they walked towards the reception desk their footsteps echoed. The woman at the desk didn't look up from her papers as they reached her.

"Hello. We are here to see Miss Lovegood." Draco said professionally.

"Do you have an appointment?" She grunted, continuing to shuffle her papers and refraining from making eye contact.

"Yes. Draco Malfoy, Blaise Zabini and Ginny Weasley for two o'clock." Draco responded, and the mention of their names finally prompted a response from the lady.

"Well, well, well. This is quite the interesting trio." She said dryly, her eyes examining the three, "Her office is on the eighteenth floor. I will let her know you are heading up there."

"Thank you." Draco muttered and the three went inside the elevator.

"Luna works here? This place is more depressing than a cemetery." Blaise said as soon as they were away from ear shot.
They found Luna's office quickly and knocked on the door. Luna opened the door, instantly smiling joyfully and she wore a bright yellow sundress with red dragons embroidered among the seams. Her office had bright blue walls with tons of fascinating magical artifacts and portraits of great wizards and witches. It was in complete contrast to the rest of the gloomy building. This room was Luna.

"Hi, guys! Come in!" She said cheerfully before motioning to Ginny's outfit. "Why are you dressed so funny? You look like you're about to meet the minister."

Ginny rolled her eyes, "It was Draco's idea."

"Hey, you've got to look the part to be the part." He shrugged, "I personally think we look quite good."

"So, how was the meeting with Mister Kant?" She asked eagerly, taking a seat at her desk motioning to the three of them to take a seat across.

"Not so good…that's why we are here." Ginny started.

"Luna, we need your help." Blaise quickly interjected.

"Of course, anything! What can I do?" She said and the three all shifted in their seats exchanging uncomfortable looks.

Draco began, "Well you see, Mr. Kant refused our offer because society still views me as only an evil Malfoy who will forever be a death eater."

"Well, that's nonsense. Draco, you're as kind as a hippogriff."

Draco scrunched his nose at the memory of getting attacked by the only hippogriff he knew, Buckbeak, in his third year. "Erm, thanks. I think. But regardless of what you all think, it is impossible to deny the fact that the rest of the wizarding community isn't quite as forgiving."

"So we came up with an idea. Well, Blaise came up with it. Luna we want you to put us in your magazine, on the front cover, have a fancy photoshoot, and print a nice article saying how charming and kind Draco has become and how we are all the most talented group of friends." Ginny proposed, wincing in anticipation of Luna's reaction.

Luna's eyes widened before she scoffed, "You have got to be kidding me!"

"Come on Luna…" Blaise said sweetly, batting his eyelashes.

"No! Absolutely not! I'm sorry guys, I would love to help. But I have the Weird Sisters scheduled this month as the main article, I can't possibly reschedule them for people who aren't even famous yet. No offence." She said hurriedly, "It just can't happen. I'm sorry."

"Luna, come on. Please." Blaise said, leaning towards Luna over her desk. "It would be great publicity for you as well. Imagine – the untold truth of Draco Malfoy and how he overcame his past and teamed up with Blaise Zabini and Ginny Weasley. People love that shit. It is even relevant to your magazine's topic – we are blending muggle economics with magical practices. I know it is risky Luna, but trust me, this is a great story." He gently placed his large hands over her small hands. He gulped as his pleading dark eyes met her pale blue eyes. She bit her lip nervously while thinking deeply. Blaise muttered a quiet, desperate, "please" under his breath.

"God damnit, Blaise. Why do you have to be so pretty?" She said, sighing deeply, "Okay. Listen. I will make a compromise."
"I love compromises!" Blaise exclaimed, throwing his arms in the air happily.

"We will write a full-length article on the three of you. It won't be the front cover, but we will have your names in big, bold letters on the front as a special exclusive piece. We are close to the final deadline for this month's issue so if you want this done you'll have to be prepared for a photoshoot and the interview tomorrow afternoon."

Ginny squealed in excitement, "Luna! You are my hero! I love you!"

"Seriously, Luna! Thank you! You were our last hope!" Draco said, his voice dripping with relief.

"You are amazing, Luna." Blaise said genuinely, "Truly amazing."

"This plan of yours had better work and you all had better get rich and famous, otherwise I'll get my old reputation back and people will think Fusion is turning into The Quibbler." She said seriously, "But honestly, I think you will rock this. I hope it helps."

They all hugged Luna, Blaise hugging her longer than the rest, before deciding to meet at three o'clock tomorrow afternoon. Luna had suggested Ginny and her have a movie night that night to which Ginny happily agreed to! They left her office with nothing but smiles. Ginny mused about her life as she thought back to Draco's words as he tried to persuade her to join him and Blaise: "You have the opportunity to escape the monotony of life..." His voice echoed in her brain. He was not lying. Never in her wildest dreams would she believe that she would be doing a photoshoot in the top selling magazine with Draco and Blaise. Her life had become the farthest thing from monotonous and for the first time since before the war started Ginny felt free and liberated.

Blaise and Draco went over to Ginny's flat to enjoy a celebratory beverage. Their spirits were high, which was a nice change from their dampened spirits the previous days. Blaise was trying to convince Ginny to let him crash her and Luna's movie night.

"Come on, Ginny! This is the perfect opportunity to try to win Luna's heart: a nice romantic film, some blankets, eventually she will lean her head on my shoulder and I'll wrap my arm around her…"

Ginny continuously shook her head no, "Nope. Sorry mate. Luna and I are in desperate need of some girl time. Besides, how can we talk about how much she likes you if you're around, trying to weasel your arm around her?" She said with a wink.

"I suppose that is true. Does she talk about me lots?"

"I wouldn't know because you're always around." She said playfully.

"Blaise, I'm going to visit my mother and father tonight and give them an update on our situation. Do you want to join? Seeing as your worst nightmare is being alone for five minutes..." Draco offered, leaning back in his chair taking in the sunlight.

"Ah, my man, Lucius! I haven't seen your parents in a while. Sure, I'll go visit."

Ginny gulped at the thought of Lucius. She almost forgot her enormous distaste for his father after learning how humble Draco was deep down. He was so intimidating and Ginny doubted he had dropped his past prejudices as easily as Draco had. "Um. Does your dad know you're working with me?" She asked nervously.

"Oh, yeah! Of course! He was surprisingly thrilled about the idea. Don't get me wrong, he scowled a bit initially but after showing him a sample of your potion he agreed you have talent and believes it is time for our families to bury the hatchet."
Ginny frowned when she realized the Malfoys were ultimately more supportive and understanding that her own family surely would be. Then a daunting reality dawned on her and she let out a cry of anguish, "Oh no… once the magazine is printed I must confess to my family what I'm doing. They're going to be so disappointed in me…"

"How can they be that disappointed that their daughter is attempting to create a successful industry? That's practically a parent's dream, isn't it?" Draco asked, looking at Ginny in confusion.

"You would think! Once they find out I'm working with you two…oh god, I'll be amazed if I'm still invited for Christmas."

"I'm sure it will be alright. And if they put up too much of a fuss when you tell them just buy them a new house once the money starts rolling in. God knows they could use it…" Draco said, cringing at the thought of The Burrow.

"Hey!" Ginny said defensively, "That is my house and I love it more than any dumb manor" she referenced Draco's notorious Malfoy Manor.

"Yeah, okay. One day I'll show you their estate and you might take that back."

"Yeah, yeah, whatever, Malfoy." She said with sarcasm dripping from her tongue as she said his last name.

"Okay, Weasel." He said, grinning like a five-year-old at Ginny.

"Stop flirting, you two." Blaise interrupted, and Ginny and Draco instantly defended themselves saying they would never flirt.

Draco and Blaise left the flat and shortly after Luna arrived. Ginny was so excited to spend some quality time with her best friend, and even more excited to spend time with a girl! The amount of testosterone she was around lately was beginning to drive her insane. She craved a night full of pure, uninhibited stereotypical "girl activities". She had decided to create a new potion – it was similar to the "blemish blitzer" potion, except instead of blitzing blemishes it simply brightened the users skin. She was so proud of herself! She had never invented a new potion before. She was so excited she had to refrain from owling Blaise immediately; she figured she would save her accomplishment for another day.

"Ginny! I'm here! And I've got wine, chocolate frogs, and ice cream!" Luna called out as she let herself into Ginny's home.

"Luna! Come here! I made a potion!" Ginny called excitedly from her potion's room.

"Well, that's good, considering that is your job." Luna said, giggling.

"No! You don't understand, I invented it!" Ginny said proudly, "It is supposed to brighten your skin and make you look prettier. I was thinking we could try it out tonight so I'll look nice for the photoshoot."

Luna scrunched her nose a little, "Umm…Do you think it is a good idea to use a newly invented potion on your face right before a photoshoot?"

"Come on, Luna. You need to have faith in the people you are advertising. Trust me, it'll be fine." Ginny assured her friend, grabbing her hand and pushing her in front of the mirror, "Put it on."
"You first…" Luna said hesitantly, and Ginny sighed before confidently applying the mixture to her face. It felt smooth and refreshing, sort of like rubbing an ice cube along your skin. Ginny smiled brightly at her reflection, her face covered in the shimmering blue potion.

"It feels wonderful! Try it!" Ginny urged, and Luna cautiously accepted.

"Wow, it does feel nice." She said rubbing it into her skin, "Ginny, this is incredible! If it works, I'm totally going to put this in our beauty section of the magazine."

After a few minutes they scrubbed the potion off of their faces to reveal smooth, clear, and brightened faces. Luna looked in awe at her reflection, "Ginny! This is amazing! How did you get so good?"

"Well, I haven't spent the past month with Blaise for nothing." She said, smiling at her own brightened skin, "I can't believe how good I am…" She said in awe, aware of how cocky it sounded but Luna knew her friend was simply expressing a genuine, newfound pride.

"I can't believe it either. This is incredible. Mind if I take a sample?" Luna asked, and Ginny nodded. They sat in front of the television and Luna ate the chocolate frogs as Ginny ate her ice cream.

"Why am I eating? I should be starving myself like a proper model." Ginny said, pushing the ice cream away. "Luna, I'm so nervous. I've never had a photoshoot done. Sure, I've had paparazzi follow me to the washroom after dating Harry, but it's never been voluntary on my part. What if it is terrible?"

Luna gave a sympathetic smile, "Ginny, you're beautiful. You're going to be amazing. Besides, you will be with Draco and Blaise. Surely Blaise will be able to bring you out of your shell if you're feeling nervous." She said comfortingly. Her comment regarding Blaise prompted Ginny to attempt her wing-woman skills.

"Speaking of Blaise…" Ginny said, smirking, and Luna instantly knew where the conversation was heading, "What do you think of him?"

Luna rolled her blue eyes, "Why do you ask?"

"Well, you know, I've noticed you seem to be warming up to him lately. And he was the one to convince you to get on board with the outrageous plan, afterall."

Luna sighed as she mentally tried to organize her thoughts, "I'm not too sure. He's so kind and sweet. And he genuinely seems to enjoy listening to what I have to say! The other day when you and Draco were picking up dinner he listened to me talk about the Internet for over an hour!"

"What's the internet?" Ginny asked quizzically.

"It is basically the closest thing muggles will get to magic." Luna said matter-of-factly. "But regardless, it is so refreshing to talk to a man who actually takes the time to listen to me! Do you have any idea how many dates I've been on where the second I try to discuss muggle-life, or the magazine, or even my political views and the men just roll their eyes at me? I understand my voice is a little more airy than some people's, but that doesn't mean I'm an air-head!" She crossed her arms in frustration as she mentally recounted her several failed past dates.

"Luna, you're the last thing from an air-head. You're brilliant. And Blaise knows that, too." Ginny said supportively and Luna smiled, relaxing from her unfavorable memories.

"I know that. And it's nice. I guess I think I like him. But I'm not ready to jump into anything, you
know? And besides, it is so nice spending time with you three. I would hate for it to end sourly and suddenly things get awkward between everyone." She explained, "But I'm not putting it off the table completely or anything. I just need time."

"That is completely fair and very mature of you." Ginny said, "Ah, I wish I had your wisdom."

"You're very wise, Ginny, stop constantly being so hard on yourself. You literally invented a new potion in the span of 3 hours. You're amazing." Luna said encouragingly and Ginny rolled her eyes but ultimately smiled in appreciation and thanked her. Luna then took the opportunity to ask a question that had been on her mind, "So, on the topic of boys: What is going on with you and Draco?"

Ginny nearly choked on her wine from scoffing, "What do you mean what is going on with me and Draco? Literally nothing is going on."

"Oh come on. I mean, I know you two aren't hooking up or anything, but I see the way you look at him."

"How do you not look at him? He is gorgeous!" Ginny exclaimed before scowling, "But more importantly – have you seen the way he looks at me? He looks at me like I'm his little sister or something."

"Oh come off it, he's called you pretty several times." Luna argued.

"Yes, and so has George, Bill, Charlie…all of them! I'm telling you, I've seen the way he flirts with women. It is nothing like the way he interacts with me." Ginny said, feeling discouraged by the conversation.

"Based on your current expression, I'm assuming it is safe to say you do have a crush on him, then?" Luna questioned eagerly and Ginny rolled her eyes for the hundredth time that day.

"Yes. I have a crush on him. But it is nothing. It is comparable to the crush I had on Harry when I was 11. It fulfills my daydreaming throughout the day but I realistically know I shouldn't get my hopes up at all." Ginny frowned, "Besides, I really like him as a friend and I think that's more important than anything, anyways."

"That's true. I suppose you are planning on essentially spending the unforeseeable future working with him. See Ginny, you are wise! Most women wouldn't be able to refrain from jumping Draco Malfoy's bones." Luna said supportively.

"Trust me, I've noticed." Ginny said with a hint of jealousy, "Whatever! I don't care! The guy wants to make me rich, I think I can handle pushing a little crush aside in favor of that."

Luna and Ginny stayed up for a few more hours before deciding Ginny needed her "Beauty Sleep". Once Luna left Ginny lied in her bed anxiously as she reflected on her conversation with Luna. She had been feeling that way for a few weeks, but it was the first time she had vocalized it. Suddenly, with her feelings on the table everything felt more real. Yes, I have a crush on Draco, no, he is not attracted to me, and that is okay because he is my friend and above everything else he is my business partner. She tried convincing herself but didn't quite believe her own words. She decided to take a draught of peace to calm her nerves, as her anxieties over the photoshoot and her emotions began to boil over. As she felt the warming potion hit her stomach she felt her tensions ease and she fell into a peaceful sleep, where she dreamt about playing with Draco's kitten, Plato, as Draco peacefully ran his fingers through her crimson hair.
Before she knew it, she was standing at the photoshoot with Blaise and Draco. Dozens of bustling photographers swarmed the area, setting up large bright lights and a large white sheet, which Ginny presumed would be the set. She saw a very professional looking man and woman pointing their wands towards the white sheet as they argued intently.

"I think we should make the set red and gold. Gryffindor colours. It will highlight the Malfoy's alleged change of heart." The man said with a hint of doubt.

"We can't have the set red. You won't be able to see the Weasley girl's head." The woman replied. Ginny frowned at the comments and briefly wondered how Luna could handle such a hostile industry. She was about to mutter something to Draco regarding the conversation when a stranger's hand grabbed her shoulder, causing Ginny to jump.

"You three – get in hair and makeup. Now." A stern looking woman with a tight black bun and white horn-rimmed glasses ordered to the three. They all nodded nervously and followed her to the hair and makeup area. She was thrown into a chair in front of a vanity mirror and was instantly surrounded by three women who began aggressively tugging on her hair and wiping her face clean. Ginny's heart started pounding from the unfamiliar situation as the three women started openly talking about her appearance as though Ginny couldn't hear.

"She has a pretty face…but those freckles may be a little distracting." One commented.

"We could cover them up? I think it would make her more appealing."

"No, we can't cover them up. It is a Weasley trademark. She isn't a real model; she is only doing this for publicity.

"I can hear you, you know?" Ginny interjected, frowning.

"And I don't care." One of the women replied, and Ginny's heart sank. Wow, this is sure going to boost my ego before the shoot. She thought to herself. Draco must have heard the discussion because from the other side of the room at his own vanity station he called out, "Don't worry, Ginny, you're going to look great!" It warmed her dejected heart slightly and she vowed to tune out the rude comments.

After what felt like forever, they were finally done and a woman shoved an outfit in her arms and ordered her to quickly change clothes. She stood in the dressing room and had her back towards the mirror, deciding to not look at her finished self until her wardrobe was complete. She was told to a pair of short dark denim shorts, black and white sneakers, and a simple, tight, emerald green v-neck t-shirt which fit her like a glove. She thought the outfit seemed a little plain for a photoshoot, but when she turned towards the mirror she let out a surprised gasp. Holy fuck, I look beautiful. She smiled brightly in the mirror. Her makeup was flawless; her eyelashes long and dark, with the perfect shade of blush and a coral shade of lipstick. Her hair was big and bouncy, with wavy loose curls flowing down her backside. She didn't know what kind of potions they used to make it so full of volume, but she mentally made a note that that would be the next potion she would learn to make.

"Ginny? Are you almost ready?" She heard Luna's familiar voice call out from behind the door and she felt a wave of relief to be see her comforting friend before the pictures began. She opened the door to reveal her confident self and Luna's eyes widened upon seeing her appearance. "Ginny, you look incredible! You look like you just walked off of a runway!"

"Wow, Gin, you sure clean up nicely." Blaise walked up Luna, making it very apparent he was visibly checking Ginny out. She smiled and thanked him before noticing his outfit. He was wearing dark denim jeans, a dark blue blazer, and a white t-shirt underneath which looked perfect against his
tanned skin tone. He looked incredible. He looked at Luna and wiggled his eyebrows, "What do you think?"

"I think you look very handsome" She said in a flirty tone. "Is Draco nearly ready?"

"I'm right here." He walked around the corner, grimacing at his own outfit. He was wearing a similar pair of jeans as Blaise and a plain white t-shirt, but no blazer. "Why don't I get a blazer? I always wear blazers…"

"I think the idea is that they're trying to make you look fun." Luna suggested, "You look very handsome as well."

Draco smiled in thanks before his eyes landed on Ginny. He visibly stopped in his tracks as he stared at her, his mouth falling open a little and a light shade of pink creeping up in his cheeks. "Wow. Ginny. You look amazing."

Ginny turned bright red and looked down at her sneakers and muttered a quick thanks. Luna nudged Ginny's ribs and quietly whispered, "I don't think that is how men look at their sisters." Causing Ginny to blush even more. They followed Luna back to the set, which had been charmed to appear a light neutral grey.

Before they reached the set Draco quickly muttered to Ginny, "Seriously. I don't think I've ever seen you wear green. You look really nice in green."

"Thanks, Draco." Ginny said confidently, deciding to embrace the one and only time Draco appeared to be the blubbery idiot around her. They stood in the centre of the set awkwardly as the camera lights began flashing. They stood there confused and Ginny turned to them and whispered, "What do we do?"

"You all need to look more natural!" The camera man barked, and the three awkwardly shifted to look natural, but ended up just looking uncomfortable and disgruntled. The camera man groaned in frustration, "Luna, what did you give me to work with?"

"Shut up, Mark." Luna snapped at the man, "Guys, just chill out! Relax! Here, let me put on some music. Have some fun with this! You're going to be stars!" She flicked her wand and the room filled with upbeat music. It instantly helped make them less stoic. They began laughing, throwing their arms around each other's shoulders, and they began feeling more in sync with the bizarre scenario.

"Pretend you're all best friends!" The camera man shouted, and Blaise instantly responded confidently with, "We are best friends." Which warmed Ginny's heart more than she could ever describe to them. They ended up having a ton of fun with the rest of the shoot. At one point the camera man directed Draco to give Ginny a piggy-back, with Blaise smiling hugely beside them. And at another point they conjured a sofa and had Ginny sit in the middle with Blaise's arm around her, with Draco candidly laughing beside them. Ginny couldn't believe her life as she realized she was living a dream: A glamorous photoshoot with her stuck in between two of the most attractive men she had ever seen.

She was surprised when she was disappointed with the shoot ending. She would have been content with spending the next hour cuddling up with Draco and Blaise. The stern looking lady with the horn-rimmed glasses came marching up to them, "Are you ready for the interview?" She demanded.

"Already?" Ginny asked, feeling nervous again.

"We are on a strict schedule! Come on, now!" She urged, and Ginny made a mental note that this
woman reminded her of an even scarier McGonagall.

"You guys are going to be amazing!" She heard Luna holler from across the room, and saw Blaise wave enthusiastically at her.

They followed the woman into a different room with a love seat and two armchairs. Ginny took a seat beside Draco on the loveseat and Blaise sat in the armchair while the woman grabbed them each a glass of water. She pulled out what Ginny instantly recognized as a Quick-Quotes Quill which caused Ginny to grimace. The last time she saw someone use those was Rita Skeeter, and everything that came from them was garbage. _Luna won't let them write anything terrible, Ginny, calm down._ She told herself and took a deep breath.

"Are you ready?" The woman asked as the magical quill organized itself in the air and the three of them nodded.

"Good. Now, for starters. Mr. Zabini, it is to my understanding that you played no role in the war. Is that correct?"

"Yes." He said before clearing his throat nervously, "My mother was widowed and never had anything to do with the dark arts. I never had an influence to pursue a role in the war."

"Your mother was a famous model, correct? Gloria Zabini?" The interviewer asked and Blaise nodded.

"Yeah, she modelled for most of her life until we were financially stable and she retired."

"So, you are fairly wealthy, correct? You don't work currently?"

"Um, well. I'm constantly working on our business. I haven't needed to have a steady job but I have spent the past years perfecting my potions."

"Interesting. Now, if I recall, despite not having a part in the war, you always had quite the distaste for muggles and muggle-born people, correct?"

Blaise narrowed his eyes towards the woman and instantly got defensive, "When I was in Hogwarts I had some questionable beliefs, yes. But since graduating I have learned that I was simply trying to fit in with my house, Slytherin. It wasn't until I was older that I realized I wasn't placed in Slytherin for my prejudices, but rather for my wit, cunningness, and ambition. I regret not realizing that earlier, but I was only a teenager, and I've since spent my time trying to make up for my past mistakes." Ginny had never seen Blaise look so serious, as he was clearly offended by her presumptuous questions.

"Interesting. Were you by chance influenced by Mister Malfoy, here, to keep up with those prejudices?" She asked and Blaise gave a helpless look towards Draco who thankfully stepped in.

"Blaise was an amazing person all throughout school. Yes, he made a few rude comments now and then but it was never anything worse than what other students would do."

"Ah, Draco. I suppose I should ask you a few questions, no? I must know, after your role in the war was greatly apparent, how on earth did the famous Draco Malfoy develop such a change of heart?" She said with a sickly-sweet voice and Draco visibly gulped.

"During the war I wanted to change. I mean, I did change. But I was trapped. I was terrified for my family's life and if I made it known that my values had changed he would have killed my family. But once the war had ended and the Malfoy name was cleared, I decided I needed to learn about the
lifestyles of the muggles after spending my entire life being taught they were so terrible. So, I moved to North America. Before I got a job at the wizarding bank there, I decided I would spend 6 months with no magic at all." He began, and Ginny was shocked by this new information. A light smile trickled upon his face as he carried on.

"Honestly, I never knew how much respect I could have towards them until I lived like them. They are infinitely more talented than us. We are so spoiled, for being magical, you know? I mean, they have geniuses creating brand new technology every day and it is so fascinating. Besides the ability to apparate or other travel methods, muggles have their own magic through their own technology. They can communicate infinitely faster than us with their cell phones, I mean, why don't we use those? Why are we still using owls? What is this, the 1700's? Basically, to sum it up, and I can't believe I'm allowing this to be published in a magazine…but I worked in a fast food restaurant flipping burgers for 6 months, with no wand or magic, to try to make ends meet and gain a real respect for muggles." He finished his speech and the interviewer's face softened deeply, clearly in admiration. Ginny could hardly keep a smile off her face as she heard what caused Draco's change of heart.

"Wow, I must say, that is a very impressive story, Mr. Malfoy." She smiled then turned towards Ginny, "And you two. It is a well-known fact amongst the wizarding community that Weasleys and Malfoys never get along. How exactly did this blooming friendship happen, Miss Weasley?"

Ginny swallowed nervously before speaking, "Well, Draco and I of course never got along growing up. But we ran into each other a while ago, and I was actually the one to call him 'Malfoy'. Because, you know, god forbid you use first names towards the people you dislike when you're in Hogwarts. Then he commented on how that was silly, and that I should call him Draco because we are too old for that nonsense. I thought that was so weird, because I still had it in my head he was this huge prick." The interviewer couldn't help but giggle at that comment, "Anyways, um, I told him I was interested in potions, and he graciously offered me this amazing opportunity to join him and Blaise in this amazing project. And let me tell you, since spending time with these guys, I have never felt more support, admiration, and genuine kindness in my life than I have from these two. Like, if I'm ever having a bad day, these two will listen to me moan and complain about it, and be there to hug me after everything." She smiled, looking at the two boys, "They've become my best friends and my business partners."

"That is such a touching story. I never in a million years would have believed that this was real, but after seeing all of your impeccable chemistry, it is impossible to deny that this is the truth." The interviewer smirked a bit before saying her next comment, "Speaking of impeccable chemistry, I couldn't help but notice that there is a certain spark between you two, is there an romance between you?" She asked, motioning towards Ginny and Draco and both of them instantly paled.

"No! Absolutely not!" Ginny assured her while nervously laughing.

"No, definitely not! Strictly friends and business," Draco agreed.

"Fair enough, I had to ask." She winked, "So, one last question. What is the name of your up-and-coming company?"

The three anxiously exchanged looks. Shit, we don't even have a name for our company! She mentally cursed herself, How do we not have a name!?! She was thankful when Blaise smoothly piped up.

"We are simply named Z.W.M. Incorporated. Our initials from our last names." He said confidently, though probably regretting he couldn't come up with a more creative name.

"Excellent! Well, that is all the questions I have. It was a pleasure to meet you all, and I wish you the
very best." She gave them a genuine smile, looking visibly fonder of them than at the beginning. They shook her hands and said their thanks before exiting the room. An eager looking Luna was waiting at the door.

"How did it go?" She asked, jumping in her spot. Blaise swooped her up into a huge hug and spun her around, causing her to frantically giggle.

"It went amazingly!" Ginny exclaimed, and Draco nodded with enthusiasm in agreement.

"Come on! We need an ample amount of food and alcohol to celebrate!" Blaise announced and all of them nodded in agreement before flooing back to Ginny's flat.

A/N: I hope you enjoyed this chapter! Next chapter is going to be so exciting. Don't forget to review and follow! Have a great day :)

"SHOTS! SHOTS! SHOTS! SHOTS! SHOTS!"

Ginny, Draco, and Luna cheered animatedly as Blaise grabbed a bottle of scotch and let it expertly cascade into the four shot glasses. Feeling proud that he didn't spill a drop, he vigorously raised the bottle above his head to let out a loud cheer, only to result in him sloshing most of the bottle on Ginny's carpet.

"Blaiiiiiise! You're destroying my house!" Ginny cried out, flailing her arms in displeasure, causing herself to spill her own drink on the carpet. "Bloodyfuckinhell!" She slurred, attempting to clean up the spill with an already damp towel before deciding to use a spell on it tomorrow.

"We are going to be so fuckin' rich we won't even need floors!" Blaise exclaimed, and raised his shot glass, "Cheers! To bein' fuckin' famous! And cheers to Luna for makin' it happen!" The three raised their glasses towards Luna and they clinked their glasses together cheers-ing over the loud music.

The scotch burned as it ran down Ginny's throat and she immediately grabbed the nearest non-scotch beverage to chase it down. Once she was sure she wasn't going to throw it all up she flopped onto her sofa beside Draco. The four had been drinking consistently for hours and Ginny could safely say she was *very* inebriated as she skinned the room to see empty bottles of beer and hard alcohol sprawled along the floor. Even though the four of them always seemed to have a drink in hand when they were together, this was the first time they had gotten drunk together. Ginny's face felt warm and her vision blurred, but a huge smile remained on her face. They had done it! Their article was going to be published in *Fusion* and they were going to receive the publicity they needed to give their potions company momentum *and* prove to Mr. Kant that Draco was a good man. Celebration was a must.

She observed the state of her friends around her. Draco looked more relaxed than ever, as he slumped into the corner of the couch and his usually perfectly styled hair looked dishevelled. He was talking a few decibels louder than necessary as he debated intently with Blaise over whether beer was better than scotch. Luna appeared to be the most intoxicated. She was in an affectionate mood, frequently hugging anyone closest to her, and at a couple points during the evening she even tried to re-enact her dance recital from when she was nine years old. At that moment, she had her arm lazily around Blaise's shoulder before announcing to the group, "I love you guys sooo much, you're all such fuckin' good people!" She said with huge emotion, "Ginny, don't even worry about what your family is gonna think, they're going to love these guys!"

Ginny groaned as Luna reminded her that she would have to tell her family about working with Draco and Blaise in only a matter of days. "Lunaaa, I don't want to think about that right now!" She cried, but Luna kept going.

"Why! I'm just saying that these two blokes are a DE-light and you've got nothin' to worry about." She slurred before remembering an important detail, "OH! Right, I can get you a copy of the magazine before it is released to the public tomorrow. Maybe if they read the article they will see how lovely the three of you bein' buddies is."

"That would be soo amazing, thank you!" Ginny replied before turning to Blaise, "Blaaaise! Let's go make some potions, mannn! I made this cool one yesterday, it's so coooool." She leaned backwards, as if being blown away by how "cool" it was.

"You really think it's a good idea to make potions while drunk?" Draco asked Ginny quizzically,
"Sorry, but I don't really want my business partner to blow her face off before we even make a sale."

"Why aren't you everrr anyy fun?" Ginny asked, exaggerating her playful annoyance.

"Sorry, Gin, I'm with Draco. Besides, I'm pretty comfortable here." Blaise said wide-eyed as the drunken Luna had just sprawled her long legs across his lap.

Ginny and Draco exchanged a knowing smirk as they watched Blaise's dream slowly come true. Luna had been excessively hugging Blaise all night and he was in his glory. Earlier in the night, Ginny had jokingly made a bet with Draco that Luna and Blaise would hook up, and Draco happily took the bet stating, "There's no way that bloke is going to get with Luna." He was suddenly scowling at the situation as Ginny beamed, realizing his chances of winning were decreasing by the drink.

"Blaiseee, one of the pretty photographers wouldn't stop saying how cute you were today," Luna said innocently, although Ginny wondered if she had an ulterior motive.

"Oh? That's interesting." He said a little awkwardly, not knowing what to do with the information. Typically, Blaise would be thrilled, but hearing the information from Luna made him second guess showing enthusiasm.

Draco picked up on Blaise's awkwardness and decided to be a good wingman for once, "Blaise, you're not really looking to date anyone, right? You said most of the women you've been dating lately have been boring, right?"

Blaise cocked his eyebrow for a moment trying to figure out where Draco was going with the offhanded comment before a lightbulb could have visibly jumped out of his head, "Right! Yeah! I'm done with dating. I've had a few too many dull dates lately." He let out a sad sigh before turning to Luna, with his inhibitions lowered, and said "I wish every girl was as fascinating as you, Luna. You're hands down the most interesting person I've met."

"Oh shuddup, Blaise." Luna humbly slurred, playfully shoving his shoulder.

"I'm not kidding, I swear!" He said, raising his arms in defence, nearly spilling another drink. "I could talk to you for hours – about your magazine or your research. You've got such a fascinating life…"

Luna blushed at Blaise's comment and tried to bite her lip to contain her smile. After a moment of silence, she suggested, "I want to go for a walk…Blaaise? Would you like to come with me?"

Blaise's eyes widened, "Yeah, of course."

"Can we come?" Draco asked and received a jarring look from Blaise.

"I think that's a no." Ginny muttered into Draco's ear. Luna pulled Blaise by his hand down the stairs of the loft towards the main door. But within moments Blaise came storming up the stairs, panting.

"Guys!" He hissed quietly, "I need you two to leave or hide or something."

"What are you talking about?" Ginny questioned, narrowing her eyes.

"I'm going to ask Luna if she wants to watch a movie or something when we return. And I would love some privacy."

"You do know this is my house, right?" Ginny asked, cocking her eye brows.
"I know, I know, but pleeease. She's so into me tonight! Can't let you two blokes getting in the way!" He pleaded, although Ginny just scowled at him.

"Blaise, you really need to work on your persuasion. I'm not sure if insulting the people you're trying to convince is always effective." Draco drawled.

"Pleeeaase, guys. I'll owe you big time. Here, take all of this and hang out in Ginny's room." Blaise said, shoving several bottles of beer and wine in their arms.

Ginny sighed in defeat, "Fine. We'll go! Just take care of her and make sure she doesn't do anything she will regret tomorrow!" She pointed her finger warningly at Blaise who nodded in complete agreement.

"Thanks, you're the best!" And scattered down the stair case to meet Luna who was waiting outside.

Ginny led Draco into her bedroom and as soon they stepped inside Ginny felt a sobering reality flood through her: *Draco Malfoy is in my bedroom.* Sure, she had spent several hours alone with Draco, but he had never stepped foot in her room. It was a weird, intimate feeling made Ginny nervous. It didn't help that she quickly remembered it had been several months since she had any boy in her bedroom. She quickly scanned the room and found loose bras and t-shirts scattered along her floor and she frantically rushed to kick them under her bed before Draco noticed, but he saw her haste movements and smirked at her. She was thankful when instead of teasing her he instead turned to admire the walls in her room. They were a dusty rose pink and covered with Quidditch posters, music posters, and various photographs of her family and friends taken throughout the years. A particular moving photograph caught his attention; Ron, Hermione, Harry, and herself stood in front of Hogwarts in her fifth year, happily waving, with Harry's arm around her waist, pecking her on the cheek.

His lips curled into a small smile as he spoke, "Would you look at the happy couples." His voice wasn't filled with his usual sarcasm, instead, it sounded as though he was simply making an observation.

"Oh, shut up. That picture is a million years old." Ginny said, brushing him off. "I still like it. It was the last picture we had of us before they left to hunt down the Horcruxes." She frowned a little as she spoke and Draco gave a slight nod showing his understanding.

"I figured. You all look so happy." He said with a note of sadness in his voice.

Ginny shrugged simply, "Yeah, I guess you could say we were a lot more naïve back then. I kind of miss it sometimes."

"Yeah, me too." He said as he shoved his hands in his pockets and waltzed around the rest of the room, noticing the rest of her posters. "I like your room; it reminds me of you."

"Well, I should hope so. I have lived here for a few years now." She said in a snarky manner and he laughed.

"I just mean that it has a lot of character. If I were to ever imagine your bedroom this is how I would imagine it." He said before casually kicking off his shoes before slumping onto her bed, his back resting on the bed frame and his feet crossed at the ankles. His white dress shirt was wrinkled and the top buttons had come undone during the night's shenanigans.

Ginny gave a light scoff, "Well, I'm glad you approve of my decorating decisions." Despite her cool exterior her mind was going haywire. *Holy fuck, Holy fuck, Draco Malfoy is in your bed and he*
looks so damn good. Her brain was screaming and she mentally scolded herself, along with deciding she was officially cut off from alcohol in fear of her inhibitions lowering even more causing her to do something she would surely regret in the morning. She quickly scanned her bedroom evaluating what the least awkward sitting position would be. She could sit on the chair that sat in front of her vanity mirror across the room, but no, that was too far away…she doesn't want to look scared of him. She looked at the floor beside the bed which looked like a tempting option for a split second – No, Ginny, you don't want to look like a weirdo! She didn't realize how long she had been standing in silence until she made eye contact with Draco who was staring at her confused with a cocked eyebrow, "What are you doing?" He asked frankly.

"Nothing!" She answered hastily and made the impulse decision to sit beside him on the bed. Oh my god, You're in bed with Draco Malfoy. She felt her cheeks heat up and she mentally cursed her social awkwardness. You're twenty-one years old and you can't handle sitting on a bed - fully clothed – with a fellow peer? Smarten up, Ginny!

She shifted her gaze towards Draco again who was still wearing the same confused look, "You alright?" He asked.

"Yeah, absolutely! So how about Blaise and Luna, huh?" Ginny asked in a desperate attempt to have a conversation topic.

Draco chuckled, "Yeah, Blaise and Luna. I still don't think he will get with Luna tonight. He's a nervous mess."

"I dunno…I bet they'll kiss. I haven't seen Luna flirt with a guy in ages."

"I guess I just can't imagine why any girl would find Blaise attractive." He said, clasping his hands behind his head confidently, darting his eyes towards Ginny while smirking, as if nudging a response out of her.

She decided to take his bait, "Oh fuck off, even as a strait male you have to admit he's a charming and attractive guy."

"Nope. Can't see it. Maybe I've just seen him drunkenly make an ass of himself a few too many times."

"And you're always an elegant drunk?"

"Oh, always."

"Somehow I doubt that."

"And why is that?"

"Because you're spilling beer all over my bed as we speak."

Draco’s eyes shot to the bed to see his forgotten beer bottle, which was at one point resting against his arm, had tumbled over when he lifted his arms. He instantly shifted from his cocky-pose to clean up the mess cursing, "Shit! Sorry!"

Ginny broke into laughter and said, "You're right, you're sooo elegant, Draco." She began feeling more comfortable in his presence as she noticed a pink tinge creep into his cheeks as he tried to use his wand to clean up the mess, but his inebriation was making it impossible. As he struggled to clean up the mess she once again noticed the gruesome scar on his forearm she had seen for the first-time weeks ago, and due to her drunken confidence, she decided there was no better time to ask him
about it. "What happened there?" She asked, motioning towards the wound.

By reflex, his hand rushed to cover the wound, although he knew it was too late. His voice sounded slightly cold as he drawled, "As if you don't already know."

"I know it was the dark mark. But what happened to it? How did it get so scarred?"

He frowned as he looked down at his arm and shrugged, "I did it to myself."

"What do you mean? Like, with your wand?" She asked quizzically and he shook his head.

"No, with a knife."

Ginny audibly gasped as she imagined the self-inflicted pain that he must have experienced, "Why on earth would you do that! Surely there must have been some sort of spell you could have used?"

He looked glum as he shook his head again, "Nope. I tried everything. There is a lot of dark magic that goes into it. I even tried getting a muggle tattoo to cover it up. The poor bloke got burned the second he touched it – I had to obliviate his mind."

Ginny's eyes were filled with sympathy and before she knew it she instinctively reached out to gingerly trace the scar with her fingertips. She felt him tense up from her touch, but she continued anyways. Eventually, she spoke again, "Still…how did you do this to yourself? Without magic? It must have hurt so much…not to mention that is incredibly dangerous."

He shrugged simply, "If you had a token engraved on your forearm that served as a reminder of everything you regret and despise about yourself, wouldn't you do whatever it took to get rid of it?"

Ginny thought about his question before slowly nodding, signalling that she would have done the same. She traced the scar one last time before pulling her hand away and looked in his stormy grey eyes. They looked a little fuzzy – likely from the alcohol he was still drinking – but they also had a hint of sadness. Besides the interview and after his meeting with Mister Kant, Ginny had never heard him speak much about his experience in the war. She knew she was probably overstepping her boundaries as she spoke next but she couldn't refrain, "Was it really awful for you? Being on his side in the war?"

He let out a sad sigh and said, "Yeah, it was really hard. But I try not to complain about it too much. After all, I was on the bad side. I was partially to blame for people's suffering. I don't think I have the right to seek sympathy."

"I guess. I can still imagine it was very traumatic. And you weren't all bad. You never…erm… killed anyone, did you?"

Draco adamantly shook his head, "No. Never. And Voldemort made sure to make everyone aware of it. He shivered as he recounted his memories and bitterly quoted, "'Lucius, what kind of man have you raised who can't even murder a filthy mud-blood? I 'ought to murder you and your darling wife in front of him, to show him how it's done.' What an asshole."

"I'm so sorry…" Ginny said genuinely. Even though she despised him in the past for being on Voldemort's side, she felt an overwhelming amount of empathy towards him as she imagined how terrifying it would have been to serve him.

"Please, don't be." He immediately said, "I'm sorry for you and your loss. For Fred. I know my aunt did it to him. He didn't deserve it…no one who died fighting against him deserved their fate. Everyone was so brave while my family and I took the cowardly route. If I could change anything in
my life it would be who I fought for in the war, even if it meant I would have died doing it."

Ginny watched him as he spoke; his face looked grave and filled with guilt. She understood why he didn't want her sympathy but she couldn't stop herself from feeling it. She was so touched that he knew about Fred, that he apologized for his aunt's actions. Her heart ached as she remembered George crying over Fred's limp body but she tried to shove the thought out of her mind. She felt like if she thought about him too much in her intoxicated state she would surely break into tears in front of Draco. Instead she turned the conversation back to him, her curiosity getting the best of her. "When did you realize that you were fighting for the wrong side?"

He sighed again as he tried to recall the exact moment, "I think it was right before the night with Dumbledore. I wanted out so bad. I didn't want to hurt him. But I was scared for my family's lives and decided I had to do it." Ginny heard his voice crack a bit as he continued to speak, "Then I stood in front of him, pointing my wand at him. Trying to muster the courage to just do it. And he stood there calmly, smiling. He told me he could protect my family if I didn't do it. And I was standing there thinking to myself: I'm trying to kill this man and he is standing in front of me, forgiving me, and offering me the peace that I desire. This man is amazing. Why should I kill him? And I couldn't do it."

Ginny nodded as she comprehended his words before speaking, "Yeah. Harry told me you lowered your wand. He knew you wouldn't do it."

Draco shook his head sadly, "No. I wouldn't have." He shrugged before concluding his story, "Then once Harry won the war and my family and I were cleared of any charges the three of us sat down and really re-evaluated our beliefs and values. My mum and I were instantly ready to become more accepting. My father, however, was a little hesitant about foregoing his past prejudices, especially regarding muggleborns. My mum though, ha. She screamed at him: 'Lucius Malfoy! I am sick and tired of this hatred that has nearly gotten us killed! Muggle-borns and Half-bloods stood out there fighting for the sake of humanity while we hid behind a cold-blooded murderer! We are a disgrace and should be kissing their feet! If you don't let go of these crooked beliefs I'm leaving you!' He quoted his mother using a mock, high female voice and smiled, "She's brilliant. My father, yeah, it took him some time but he came around. They visited me when I was doing my muggle-stint and I forced them to forego magic for the week. He actually had a lot of fun…gained the much-needed respect for muggles. It's nice. For the first time in my entire life I feel like we can be a normal family. We value each other more than we value status."

Ginny's heart warmed as she smiled towards Draco. She loved seeing how human he truly was and how he became that way. "That's amazing, Draco." She said simply and he smiled at her in appreciation.

"Don't ever tell him this, but I even have crazy respect for Harry. If it weren't for him, I would be dead. I don't like him because I think he's a self-righteous prude, but I do owe him my life." He mused on his thoughts before chuckling, "Can you imagine how furious he'd be if he knew I was in your bed with you?"

Ginny laughed and swatted his shoulder, "Oh please, we are just talking."

"Oh, so he would be fine with this? Should I send him an owl and invite him over?" Draco said, jokingly standing up to write a letter. Ginny laughed and grabbed him by his wrist and pulled him back to the bed.

"Don't you dare, you git! Besides I'll be telling my family this weekend, surely he will be aware of our friendship soon. I'll keep you posted on his reactions."
"Well, the magazine will be released on Monday so soon the entire world will know about it." Draco said before adding, "Hey, thanks for asking me about the war and stuff. You're the first person I've ever told a lot of that to. It feels nice." He gently rubbed his thumb over the top of her hand, "And thank you for not hating me."

Her heart leaped at the touch of his hand as she looked in his eyes. Her eyes darted to his lips as she suddenly became aware of how close their faces were. She noticed his eyes fall on her lips. Butterflies fluttered in her stomach as her mind went wild. *Is this happening? Oh my god, this is happening. This is a moment. He's going to kiss me.* Suddenly her thoughts were rudely interrupted by Draco giving out a huge yawn.

"Bloody hell, I'm tired. Do you mind if I sleep in your bed tonight? Blaise needs his 'privacy' and I think I'm a little too drunk to attempt to apparate. I promise I won't try anything funny with you." He said sounding very friendly and Ginny had to conceal her frown as her mind screamed: *NO! Don't promise that! You can try something funny!*

"Yeah, no problem!" She replied trying to hide her disappointment, "I just need some water. I'll be right back."

She scurried into the kitchen, her face bright red and her heart racing. That was the first time she felt that much chemistry between her and Draco and now they were sharing a bed!? *Ginny, you are just friends. Friends share beds all the time. And sometimes it is normal to want to kiss your friends, but you don't, because that is not what friends do.* She scolded herself repeatedly as she chugged her water. The house was silent and she wondered if Blaise and Luna had made it home. She sneakily peered into her living room to find Blaise and Luna lying together, both fast asleep and fully clothed. Ginny couldn't help but smile as she admired the adorable couple cuddled on the couch. She couldn't wait to talk to Luna in private about her night with Blaise.

She finished her water and headed back to her bedroom, her heart pounding with excitement as the possibilities of the evening floated above her head. Much to her relief and disappointment, Draco was already sound asleep, snoring lightly, by the time she arrived. She frowned a little. *Well, he sure wasn't lying about not trying something funny.* She turned out the lights and changed into her pyjamas in the dark. She quietly slipped into the bed and covered Draco in the blankets, who had fallen asleep on top of them, before turning her back towards him and closed her eyes. She closed her eyes and listened to his steady breathing as it lullabied her to sleep. Even if they were sleeping together simply as friends, not even touching each other, she had to admit it was nice not sleeping alone for once.

Then suddenly she gasped as she felt Draco's warm arms wrap themselves around her abdomen. Her heart stopped and her eyes shot open – *what the hell is happening?* His breath was still steady and she quickly realized he was still sleeping. Her heart melted as she relaxed her back into his warm stomach and she breathed in the smell of his cologne. She knew that it might be awkward waking up in the morning if he was still cuddling her, but she decided that she didn't care, and she would embrace the once in a lifetime moment. All her anxieties drifted away, even the thoughts of telling her family about him and Blaise that weekend, and for a rare moment she felt like she was living in the present rather than stressing over the unknown future. Within minutes Ginny had dozed off into a peaceful sleep as Draco's arms tightened around her waist and remained there for the rest of the evening.
Chapter Seven

Ginny's eyes fluttered open to a blinding beam of sunlight crashing on her face. She groaned as her head pounded with agony and her body cried of dehydration. She was about to jump out of bed and fetch a glass of water until she remembered the warm arms around her waist. She froze – trying not to make any sudden movements that would awake Draco, who appeared to be sleeping soundly. She relaxed into his warm grip as she tried to take a mental photograph of this memory. She was disappointed when he quickly began stirring. She closed her eyes and pretended to be asleep. She pretended to slowly come out of her slumber as she faked groggily opening her eyes for the first time.

"S-Sorry!" He stuttered, "I-I didn't mean to – "

"What are you going on about?" She said, feigning ignorance, and let out a huge yawn.

"I, um, I was hugging you I think…” He said awkwardly jumping from the bed, his face looking as though he had just been caught in a serious crime. "I must have done it in my sleep."

"Oh, don't worry about it." She said, casually brushing him off, "I didn't even notice."

"Good." He nodded professionally, "Um, well, good morning then. How was your sleep?"

"It was good." She said honestly, smiling as she could still imagine the warmth of his arms, "I have a pounding headache though. I need water."

They stepped out of the bedroom and their senses were instantly engulfed by the scent of freshly cooked bacon and could hear the sizzling of eggs. They exchanged confused looks before waltzing into the kitchen to find a very domestic looking Blaise, whistling away as he breezed through the kitchen cooking expertly. Draco cleared his throat to signify their presence and Blaise's eyes darted up and he was smiling brightly.

"Good-morning, sleepy heads!" He announced, and Draco scowled at his cheesiness.

"Why are you so chipper?" He asked and poured a glass of water for himself and Ginny.

"What can I say, I had an amazing night." He replied cheerfully before turning towards Ginny and Draco and crossed his arms, "I believe the more important question is: How was your night?" He raised his eyebrows suggestively.

"What do you mean?" Ginny asked hesitantly.

"Do I really need to spell it out?" He asked and was given two blank stares in return. "Ugh, did you two…you know…?"

As soon as it dawned on them both what he was insinuating they hopped on the defense, "NO! Not at all! We just slept!" Ginny exclaimed, feeling her face turn pink.

"And we wouldn't have even slept in the same bed had you not kicked us out of her living room." Draco said, taking a seat at the kitchen table.

"I was just checking, you never know!" He said, raising his arms in defense.
"What about you? I saw you and Luna were all snuggled up on the couch." Ginny said.

A dream like smile formed on Blaise's face before he spoke, "Well. Nothing happened. But she's definitely into me. I was being a gentleman and offered to let her sleep on the couch but she convinced me to sleep with her, saying I needed to keep her warm. I believe her last words before she fell asleep were: 'Why are you so nice, Blaise?' She loves me!" Blaise reminded Ginny of a gushing school girl as he recounted his night to them.

"So, what are you going to do about it? Are you going to ask her out?" Ginny asked as she took a bite of her bacon which Blaise had just dished out to them. She laughed as she realized he had made Draco's plate into the traditional breakfast happy-face with two Sunnyside-up eggs with a bacon mouth.

"Figured you could use a little cheering up, mate. You look a little peckish." Blaise said to Draco who grunted at his smiling breakfast. He turned to Ginny to answer her question, "I'm not sure. What should I do? I'm not used to courting girls I actually like."

Ginny shrugged, "I don't know, man. Whatever you're doing seems to be working in your favor, just trust your gut, I guess?"

"That's not the answer I was looking for, Ginevra." He said sternly, crossing his arms in a way that reminded Ginny of her own mother. "You're supposed to give me an exact step-by-step tutorial on what to do. Why do you think we hired you?"

Ginny rolled her eyes and laughed loudly before saying, "I thought you hired me because you believed I had an untapped talent in the field of potion-making?"

"No. That is why Draco hired you. I hired you because you're supposed to be my guide to the female heart."

"Since when was I even hired? I thought we were partners." Ginny said while smirking, trying to get under his skin with her round-about answers.

"That is a moot point." He said and drummed his fingers on the table, appearing to be in deep thought. "So… I should 'trust my gut', you say…"

Their conversation was interrupted by a small, beautiful gray owl tapping on the window holding a package. "That's Luna's owl!" Ginny exclaimed and opened the window to let the owl elegantly drop the package in her hands before flying away. She ripped the package open to find their pre-released issue of Fusion. Among the various headlines, their headline stood out the most. Large black bolded font read: "THE UNTOLD TRUTH OF DRACO MALFOY: How the Ex-Death Eater Joined Forces with Blaise Zabini and Ginny Weasley." Ginny gasped enthusiastically beckoned the boys to read the article with her. It was beautifully written, which was a relief to all of them. One paragraph, in particular, made Ginny's heart feel like it could explode for happiness:

"It wasn't their touching words that convinced me that this friendship was real, it was their intrinsic chemistry that showed through their body language. I watched from a distance as Zabini playfully poked Weasley, who had just stolen the last bite of his crumpet, and the pair laughed wholeheartedly at the event. And I watched as Malfoy pulled the nervous Ginny Weasley aside before the photoshoot to tell her she looked beautiful, sincerely trying to calm her nerves as a true friend would do. And most importantly, as I watched the three professionally discuss their company, "Z.W.M", it was evident that this is a group of young, intelligent entrepreneurs who have nothing but undying respect for one another and their passion for their project is sure to soar them to success. I have no
"doubt in my mind that these three will go far."

"This is amazing!" Ginny exclaimed, and Blaise and Draco nodded in agreement.

"This is perfect. There is no way this isn't going to work." Draco said, unable to contain his smile.

"Are you nervous to tell your family, Ginny?" Blaise asked once he finished reading the article.

"YES. I'm telling them tomorrow. I could puke just from thinking about it." She groaned.

"Are you sure that isn't the hangover talking?" Draco asked, as finished the rest of his breakfast.

"I wish."

Ginny sent Draco and Blaise home so she could relax before the dreaded next day arrived, but much to her dismay, it arrived before she knew it. She woke up early to get to the Burrow before Harry and Hermione arrived, as she felt like this was a private family matter, but unfortunately, she had no such luck. As she walked into the familiar kitchen Hermione and her mother were pouring over wedding plans.

"Ginny! Hi! Come, help us pick out flowers!" Molly Weasley happily beckoned and Ginny gulped. She didn't want to put a damper on the joyous mood but with the magazine being released the next day she knew she could not procrastinate.

"Hi, Ginny!" Harry called out from a game of Wizards Chess with Ron.

"Ginny! Come help me beat Harry!" Ron called. Why are they so damn friendly today of all days? Ginny thought to herself and nervously made small talk with everyone before her announcement. Harry seemed especially friendly, and she figured he was trying to suck up to her since their last encounter. Finally, everyone gathered in the living room to engage in their usual tea-time discussion. Ginny regretted not inviting George because she knew he supported her at the very least.

"How has the joke shop been, Ginny?" Molly asked Ginny as she handed her a plate of cookies. It's now or never, Ginny…

She gulped loudly before speaking, "Actually, mum, about that. I'm not working with George anymore. I have a new job."

"Really? Ginny, that is fantastic! Where at?" Hermione asked eagerly.

"Umm…I don't want any of you to freak out but…" She quickly examined their faces which were quickly becoming more confused before finishing, "I'm starting a potions business. WithDracoMalfoyandBlaiseZabini." She mumbled the last sentence so fast, half hoping she would be able to get through the conversation without them knowing who she was working with.

"With who, dear?" Molly asked for clarification and Ginny winced as she spoke slower.

"With Draco Malfoy and Blaise Zabini…" An eerie silence engulfed the room. The sound of a buzzing fly in the next room flooded her ears as she clenched her jaw together nervously. She looked at Ron's face who was slowly making sense of her words. His face slowly began getting comically red and his fists visibly clenched.

"What!" He spat angrily.
"Ginny, you can't be serious…" Harry said cautiously, clearly trying to comprehend the situation.

"He's right, Ginny, you can't be serious." Molly said, almost warningly. As if giving Ginny one last chance to admit that it is all one big, bad, joke.

"I'm serious." She started, trying to keep her breath steady but failing in the process, "Draco saw me at George's about 6 weeks ago. I told him I was interested in potions. He offered me a job with him and Blaise. We are starting a new potions industry. It's actually all very fascinating and professional! We just had a meeting with an investo-

Molly cut her off by shrieking, "GINEVRA WEASLEY. You are NOT allowed to work with those two evil men!"

"Mum, they're not evil, I swear! They're really ni-" She tried to argue only to be cut off my Harry this time.

"Ginny, can't you see it is obviously a trap?"

"It's not a trap! We all get alo-"

"They're trying to lure you in! They're trying to get you alone then they'll torture you!" This time it was Ron who interjected. At this point he was stomping around the living room, his head so red it looked like it was going to fly off like a bottle rocket.

"What are you talking about? We are always alone!" The shocked looks from Molly, Harry, and Ron made it blindly evident that she used the worst choice of words.

"You're alone with them!?" Harry shouted. Ginny had never seen Harry look so angry, it was surprisingly very frightening.

"Ginny, how can you possibly be so naïve? After all of this time!?" Molly screamed, tears sprouting in her eyes. Ginny's heart started racing frantically. This reaction was the exact reaction that she feared. Every time she tried to get a word in edge-wise they cut her off.

"I'm not being naïve! Honestly –" She tried pulling out the magazine to show them in an attempt to sway their opinions; but everyone besides Hermione, who gingerly swiped it from Ginny's hands, ignored it.

"After that prat's AUNT murdered our brother?" Ron spat angrily, "You're now having dates with him!?"

"What!? I'm not going on dates with them, they're my business partners!"

Harry's face twisted into a distorted, hateful look as something dawned on him. "Is this why you refused to be my wedding date? Because you're dating Draco Malfoy?"

"WHAT?" Ginny screamed, "What the hell is wrong with you? How did you even come up with that!?"

"No…it makes perfect sense! That is why you seemed off during our last visit. Because you were secretly dating Malfoy." Harry leaned back in his chair, taking in what he believed to be the most factual revelation of his life.

"IM NOT DATING MALFOY!" She cried out as tears began forming in her eyes, "Why can't you all just let me speak?"
"Because clearly, you are out of your mind!" Ron bellowed loudly, still stomping around.

"Oh no! Are you under the imperius curse?" Molly said, frantically rushing to Ginny's side to inspect her eyes but Ginny shoved her away.

"NO! I'm doing this consciously and willingly!" She shouted, tears freely falling from her eyes.

"How could you do this to us, Ginny?" Ron asked in disbelief as if Ginny had just committed the worst crime ever.

"I didn't do anything to anyone. I'm doing exactly what you've been telling me to do, mum. I have 'direction' in my life. If someone offered you your dream career and the chance to have all the money in the world, can you honestly tell me you would refuse?" Ginny asked, not directing the question to anyone.

"Not if it was offered by those two Slytherin gits." Harry said coldly, "How could you be so careless?"

"HARRY, No offense, but you're not really part of my family, so I don't think you have any right to speak to me like this." She shouted bitterly, resenting her ex-boyfriend more and more every minute.

"Don't speak to Harry that way!" Molly called out, "We are certainly more proud of him than we are of you right now."

"Are you seriously fucking telling me that right now?" Ginny said in sheer disbelief, "You're really telling your daughter that you are more proud of her ex-boyfriend? That is SO messed up!"

"Well, can you blame her? You're working with a death eater after all." Ron finally sat down again but grumpily folded his arms. Ginny's heart ached every time they called him a death eater. She felt the overwhelming desire to defend him, especially after their heartfelt discussion last night. She was quickly growing tired of fighting and tried to regain her composure. Suddenly she realized that there was one person who was incredibly silent throughout the debacle. She turned her head to Hermione who appeared to be intently reading the article.

"Hermione! You're wise and rational! What do you think of all of this?" Ginny asked Hermione who appeared wide-eyed and scared. She shifted uncomfortably in her seat as all eyes landed on her.

"Well…um…I don't know…" She swallowed loudly as she gave a forgiving glance to her fiancée, "I mean, this article is certainly impressive. I wouldn't say it's the worst idea…it sounds like the perfect opportunity for Ginny…"

Molly quickly snatched the magazine which she had previously ignored and gasped. Spread across the two pages of the article was the photo of Ginny on Draco's back, both smiling wildly, as Blaise stood next to them with an equally happy face. Molly's face paled before booming, "YOU GOT THIS TRAVESTY OF A STORY PUBLISHED? DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH THIS DISGRACES YOUR FAMILY? YOUR FATHER WILL BE FURIOUS."

Hermione gave Ginny a sympathetic look and Ginny made a mental note to remember to thank Hermione privately for her attempts at rationalizing. "Mom, do you have any idea how crazy you all are being? I mean, even the Malfoy family has overcome their prejudices! They're willing to get over this lifelong feud! Why can't you!?"

"Did you seriously just compare us to the Malfoys?" Molly asked, gaping at her daughter.

"Yes, but only to make a point." She sighed in exasperation, trying to argue more but Ron angrily
shoved the magazine in her face.

"Look at this picture! You are honestly trying to tell me you two aren't shagging!?" Ron shouted skeptically, "You're practically straddling him!"

"For the last time: I'M NOT DATING HIM." She screamed louder than she had ever screamed before.

"Why should we believe you? You've been lying all of this time!" Harry yelled back.

"Exactly!" Molly shouted in agreement. Ginny felt dizzy from all the never-ending shouting. The room was filled with a steady hum nonsensical furious verbiage, and Ginny clasped her hands to her ears in frustration trying to tune it out for even a second so she could think clearly.

"EVERYONE SHUT UP. NOW."

Silence flooded the room as all eyes directed to Hermione, who was now standing on top of the sofa with a furious gleam in her eye. "You're all acting so childish! What is wrong with you? Accusing her of shagging Malfoy? Even if she was, that is hardly any of your business! Especially you, Harry! She has NO obligation to be your wedding date, you dated half a decade ago! Just because she refused your offer DOES NOT mean that she is sleeping with Malfoy!" Her chest heaved angrily and her nostrils flared. Harry looked at his shoelaces in shame as Hermione's words sunk in. It took every fiber in Ginny's body to refrain from giving Hermione the world's largest hug. After panting for a moment Hermione continued, "Now, if this conversation is going to continue I highly suggest you hear Ginny out.

Molly looked absolutely offended, "Hermione, you can't possibly think you can lecture me on how I discipline my daughter."

"Your daughter is an adult, Molly, who is going to do whatever the hell she wants. I'm not lecturing you, I am merely making a suggestion on how to handle the situation." Hermione said coldly. Ron's eyes widened in fear as he watched his fiancé speak to his mother so brazenly.

"Fine." Molly spat, looking visibly displeased, "Ginny. What can you possibly say to make us feel okay with this?"

Ginny sighed, "All I'm asking is that you respect and trust my decision. I have gotten so good at making potions, guys, really! I'm so happy lately, happier than I've ever been. And Draco and Blaise, they're just my friends, they're my partners. There is no weird romance happening, everything is very platonic." She stared at her audience, feeling shocked that they were silent long enough to talk that much consecutively. She took a deep breath before continuing, "And please believe me when I say he's not evil. Take the time to read this article, it's very enlightening. And I mean, George supports this decision of mine. If anyone is going to have a grudge against them shouldn't it be him?"

"It doesn't make the situation any better, Ginny." Molly said, crossing her arms.

"Harry, Draco even said that he respects the hell out of you and that he owes you his life. Doesn't that mean anything?" She said, trying to calmly reason with him.

"Not really, because it's true," Harry said bitterly, not making eye contact with Ginny.

"Okay. Listen. I can't talk about this anymore." She slammed her hands down on the table, feeling defeated, "Clearly I'm not going to talk any sense into you today. I'm not going to quit this business, so if you all truly love and care for me, you will learn to be happy for me. Or at least not be so
"I'm sorry, Ginny..." Molly said sadly, wiping a couple of tears from her eyes, "I just can't see myself supporting this..."

Ginny stood up quickly and angrily, "Well, then send me an owl when you can. Until then, I'm done talking about this. This is ridiculous. I'm leaving."

"Ginny, wait!" She heard Hermione call out but she had already stormed out the door and apparated away.

As she apparated to her front door she noticed that the sun had already gone down and that they must have been arguing for hours. As she struggled to find her keys she couldn't hold back her tears any longer. She felt her chest tightening as she tried unlocking the door, but her hands were shaking too much. Frustrated, she grabbed her wand and shouted, "Alohomora!" And the door flew open. She ran into the house and collapsed on her couch in the fetal position and sobbed. They hate me... She repeatedly told herself and no amount of reasoning could convince her otherwise. She stayed in that position for what felt like hours. The couch cushion underneath her face was soaked with tears and her eyes were red and swollen. She had nearly drifted off into a restless, tear-filled sleep when suddenly she heard a loud CRACK from outside her front door. Immediately after the doorknob turned, and Ginny's heart began racing as she remembered she didn't lock the door. She grabbed her wand to defend herself and pointed it at the intruder.

Draco walked through the door casually but raised his hands in shock at the swollen-eyed Ginny waving her wand at him. "It's fine, it's me!"

"What the hell are you doing here!?" She shouted, and turned her back towards him so he wouldn't see her face.

"Sorry! I left my portfolio here, I didn't think you would be home so I was just seeing if your door was unlocked..." He explained hastily before softening his voice, "Are you okay?"

"Yes! I'm fine! I'll find your portfolio and send it to you, please, just leave." She urged him without looking at his face. She was hoping to hear the front door click behind him, signaling that he left, but she didn't. She eventually turned her face slightly to him before saying, "Seriously, please leave."

"You don't look okay..." He inched closer to her, "How did it go with your family?"

"Bloody brilliant, Malfoy! Thanks for asking!" She said harshly, and she could sense that he was taken aback.

"Malfoy? Back to that old game, huh?" He asked, getting closer to her, yet she kept her back towards him.

"Sorry, I don't mean that. It's just all I've heard all day." She attempted to wipe her tears away but more continued to come. She felt his hand gently cup her shoulder and he pulled her face to his chest tightly, embracing her in a tight hug without looking at her face as it was evident she was trying to hide it from him. As soon as he tightened his grip around her she felt her body relax and the tears began flooding even harder.

"They hate me so much..." She said, muffled through tears, and she felt his fingers comfortingly stoke her hair, causing her to cry harder.

"Shh... They don't hate you." He said gently, "Listen, if this is going to cause a strain between you and your family, I understand if you want out."
"No!" She snapped, briefly looking into his eyes before becoming self-conscious and shoving her face back into his chest, "I don't want out…I'm just so tired…" She wept, and he grabbed her hand and led her into her bedroom.

"Come on, you look like you need sleep." He led her into her bed, and she quickly grabbed the pillow and covered her face with it.

"Don't look at me, I'm hideous!"

"You're not hideous, Ginny." He said blankly before she heard his footsteps briefly leave the room. She felt her chest loosen a little as her bed comforted her. She heard his footsteps come back and suddenly he was beside her.

"Here, drink this." He said, shoving a Draught of Peace in front of her. She grabbed the bottle and awkwardly put it to her lips while still covering her face. Immediately she felt the effects of the warming potion and her heart rate slowed down. Draco remained at her side for a moment before asking, "Are you going to be okay?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure?"

"No."

"Do you want me to sleep on the couch or go home?"

"Couch." She mumbled into the pillow, feeling slightly embarrassed by her childish behavior but she quickly felt comforted by feeling his fingers stroke her hair again. The potion began taking its full effect quickly as she felt sleep quickly overtaking her. With her last ounce of strength, she managed to quietly mutter, "I don't think you're evil at all, Draco…"

"Thanks, Ginny." He said. He ran his fingers through her hair for another moment before he heard him leave her bed and move to the couch before she fell into a dreamless slumber.

"GINNY! WAKE UP!" Ginny's eyes snapped open from what felt like an eternal sleep. The sun was shining brightly and Draco was storming through her bedroom door. It took her a moment to remember why he was there, but once she felt her still-swollen eyes it all came flooding back to her.

"What's wrong?" She asked, sounding concerned, although Draco's face showed nothing but joy.

"I just got an owl from Mister Kant. He loved the article. He's in! He's investing in us!" Draco exclaimed, so happy he could hardly refrain from bouncing up and down, "Ginny, We did it!"
"I can't believe we did it." Blaise said yearningly as he, Ginny, and Draco stood in front of a tall, empty building on the edge of Diagon Alley. It had been three weeks since they had received the news that Mister Kant had agreed to invest in their company and since that day they had been busy trying to find the perfect building to buy as their first public shop. Draco had spent the first week in and out of business meetings with Mister Kant, negotiating their finances, until finally Draco had settled on offering Kant 14% equity in exchange for their start-up money. Draco was very discontent with the agreement initially, as he had no intentions of going higher than 10%, but as he stood in front of their building there was nothing but triumph written all over his face.

"I can't believe we did it." Draco echoed as he admired the building longingly. "Shall we go in?"

It wasn't the first time Ginny had viewed the building but as she stepped inside and gazed longingly at the empty space her heart filled with a newfound sense of pride. They owned this building. They owned this company. This space was like their new-born baby who they couldn't wait to raise and let flourish into something amazing. The main room at the entrance was large with light mahogany walls and several windows emitting plenty of light. There was a section with a long desk which held two cash registers, left behind from the previous owners, and the rest of the room was filled with shelves which were perfect for their various potions. Blaise led them to the back room which had been the main selling feature of the building. It was a large empty room, with nothing but a few shelves hanging from the walls and a couple of sinks in the corner and stone walls with a cement floor.

"This is where we will make the potions." Blaise mused out loud as he paced around the room, "We can easily have 10, maybe twelve, employees back here making potions at any time. I think that will be plenty until we get enough business where we can expand our locations."

Draco nodded slowly in agreement, "Yes. We can have two people running the tills, and maybe two people stocking the shelves. Three on busy days."

"This is actually happening," Ginny said in disbelief, and Blaise and Draco simply nodded silently, all of them nearly at a loss for words. "When do we start hiring?"

"I will put an advertisement in the paper for open interviews starting at the beginning of next week." Draco replied, "I was thinking we can spend this week cleaning and setting everything up. During the interviews, I will probably choose thirty candidates. However, over the next month of you two training them I suspect only about twenty will last. We can only have the best quality potions, so if you notice someone isn't performing up to our standards we must eliminate them. Sound good?"

Ginny and Blaise both nodded before Blaise asked, "When will we have our grand opening?"

"Beginning of November. No later than November 7th. We want to be open for the Holiday season."

"So, now that we have this far superior potions room, does that mean we don't have to use my house anymore?" Ginny asked hopefully. Her house was beginning to smell like a dungeon and the room where they brewed had endured several damages from potions going haywire.

"Sort of. All of the standard potions will be brewed here by our staff but we will still use your house for our own unique concoctions – such as your weird 'face illuminating' potion, or whatever you called it." Draco answered, clearly sounding clueless regarding the point of Ginny's beauty product.
"Skin-brightening potion." She corrected. "Why can't we make potions at one of your flats for a while?"

"Because your flat is the only flat with a spare room, it only makes sense." Blaise answered.

She rolled her eyes, "You two better pitch in for my damage deposit that I won't be getting back."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah." Blaise said, brushing her off. He opened a storage closet in the back of room and frowned. It was jammed packed with dusty, old boxes and a cloud of moths and flies swarmed the small area. "I guess we'd better get cleaning, huh?"

Draco peered his head in the closet, "You think we'd be better off just tossing all of this in the trash?"

"There might be something useful in there, might be worth sorting through." Blaise suggested and Draco scowled at the idea of sifting through someone else's garbage but begrudgingly accepted and the three got to work.

"So, I have some news…" Blaise said casually.

"What sort of news?" Ginny asked as she coughed on a cloud of dust emitting from the old boxes.

"I asked Luna out for dinner tomorrow and she said yes." He said and Ginny squealed in excitement.

"Blaise! That's amazing, congrats!" She exclaimed happily, clapping her hands together, and briefly reflected on how much Luna and Blaise's 'relationship' had progressed since they had gotten drunk together. She thought back to the night when Luna came marching through Ginny's front door days after it had happened:

"Ginny Molly Weasley!" Luna called out, frustrated, as she stomped through Ginny's front door. Ginny, who was sitting on her couch eating ice cream while researching potions ingredients, looked up at her friend skeptically.

"Yes?"

"Are you alone?" Luna demanded.

Ginny quickly peered around her shoulders with a paranoid expression, "I think so? Why? Did you notice someone outside?"

"No, I meant is Draco or Blaise here?" Luna said, crossing her arms at her friend.

"No, I meant is Draco or Blaise here?" Luna said, crossing her arms at her friend.

"Oh! No, they left a few hours ago. Are you okay? You seem a little…frantic."

"No, I'm not okay!" She flopped on the couch beside Ginny, grabbing the ice cream from Ginny's hand and sadly took a bite. "I can't stop thinking about Blaise since this weekend. It is so stupid and distracting! Everything I write about at work I ask myself, 'I wonder if Blaise would find this interesting…' or 'I hope I see Blaise tonight so I can tell him about this.' It's awful!" She places her face in her palms and groaned.

"Luna, that's great, isn't it? I mean, Blaise clearly adores you! Why are you stressing out?" Ginny asked, genuinely confused.

"Because he likes me! This might go somewhere; I've never experienced this before! I haven't dated anyone for more than a few weeks! Do you have any idea how terrifying this is?" She exclaimed manically, talking much faster than her usual dreamy speed.
"I guess so, but try not to stress yourself out too much over that. Who knows, maybe it won't even last more than a few weeks?" Ginny suggested, but Luna scowled darkly at her friend's attempt at being comforting.

"Don't say that! That's even more terrifying!"

"Sorry, I'm not used to being the one offering relationship advice." She said while cringing at her own attempt. "All I'm saying is to try not to stress too much what 'might' happen. You two get along amazingly and you're both attracted to each other. Just try and have fun, keep it casual, and enjoy it!"

Luna bit her lip and contemplated what Ginny said. "What if it doesn't work out? What if we have a terrible break up and we can't be in the same room together? What if I'm only allowed to visit you when he's not around? And he's always around."

"You are both the most relaxed, patient, and good-hearted people I've ever met. Even if it doesn't work out I know it won't be a bitter breakup because neither of you are bitter people. And if on the off chance it does get bitter, don't worry about our relationship. Trust me, we will always make it work." Ginny said supportively and Luna seemed to calm down a little.

"You're right. I'm freaking out over nothing, aren't I?"

"Little bit, yep."

She furrowed her brows as she thought out loud, "I think I'm going to continue playing it slow, anyways."

And for the next few weeks Ginny observed Luna and Blaise gradually grow closer. Any time anyone needed to run to a store for any shopping, Luna and Blaise would volunteer to go together. Any time Luna would leave Ginny's early Blaise would offer to walk her to her house (despite apparating being the more efficient option.) They even began owlimg each other silly little letters, filled with inside-jokes which would keep Luna beaming all day. Ginny was so happy that they would finally go on a real date; in her opinion they were practically already a couple.

"It's about time, I was worried we were going to have to watch you both stare longingly at each other forever." Draco said sarcastically causing Ginny to snap out of her daydream.

"I'm so bloody nervous." Blaise said honestly, "I'm worried it's going to go horribly and that all of this development over the past couple months will just go down the drain."

"Oh, Blaise, it's going to be great. She's smitten with you, believe me." Ginny reassured him and he nodded.

"You're right. Besides, what woman can resist this face?" He said arrogantly as he examined his reflection in the mirror over the sink.

Draco snorted and darted his eyes towards Ginny. They made eye contact and exchanged smirks while stifling their laughter. Ginny was relieved when Draco proved to be a perfect gentleman by never discussing her minor meltdown regarding her family. Sure, Ginny had spent the past three weeks openly grumbling about how her family and Harry were being prats and how they still hadn't spoken to her since their fight, but she appreciated Draco not sharing the part where she was a sobbing mess. Ginny had noticed their friendship was also subtly changing since their intimate weekend. He had begun religiously staying at Ginny's house after Blaise would go home for night, and the two would sit on her balcony, conversing over the silliest things. Those nights were quickly becoming her favourite nights and she smiled fondly as she remembered their late night conversation...
from a few nights ago:

"Who was your biggest crush on someone who wasn't in Slytherin?" Ginny sat cross-legged on her patio-chair, casually braiding her hair, with Draco sitting beside her sipping his beer and admiring the glistening stars. They had been asking each other embarrassing questions nearly every night that week, every night getting more embarrassing than the last.

"You seem to be mistaken, I don't crush on people." He drawled with a playful smile tugging at the corners of his mouth.

"I don't believe that for a second."

"Fine." He leaned his head back and clicked his tongue as he thought for an answer. "I always thought Mandy Brocklehurst from Ravenclaw was stunning. I tried talking to her once and she basically walked away from me, so, naturally I became enamoured with her. I always want what I can't have."

Ginny laughed at his honesty, "At least you don't try to sugar coat it."

"Who was your biggest crush outside of Gryffindor?"

"Well, I dated Michael Corner, but he wasn't my biggest. I guess Ernest Macmillan was my biggest, sadly, he never knew I existed."

"Well now that can't be true, Ginny Weasley was a legend amongst Hogwarts." He said charmingly, winking at her.

She chose to ignore his comment, feeling confident he was being sarcastic, and asked him a new question with a devilish smirk. "Who did you lose your virginity to?"

Draco rolled his eyes and groaned, "Do I have to tell you?"

"Yes. It's the rules." She replied confidently.

"This is a stupid game."

"Answer the question, Draco."

"If I answer will you answer?"

"Uh-huh."

"Fine." He sighed loudly and rested his chin in his hand as he mustered the courage to tell her, "Pansy Parkinson. We were fourteen, right after the Yule Ball. It was my first time getting drunk when it happened."

Ginny howled in laughter, "I always knew you two were shagging!"

"Well, yeah. After that night she clung to me for the next three years. I think she thought we were going to get married or something. I haven't talked to her since we graduated."

"I'm sure you're very sad about that."

"You have no idea." He said flatly, "So, what about you? Although I'm sure it's obvious who you lost yours to."
"Why would you say that?" Ginny huffed, taking offence.

"Oh come on, it's obvious you lost it to Potter."

"No I didn't!" She said in defence and Draco's eyes widened.

"Really? You and Potter never shagged in Hogwarts?"

"What? Of course, we did. We were hormonal teenagers."

"You lost it before? To who?" Draco asked eagerly, taking great interest in the topic.

"Dean Thomas and I used to go at it like crazy even before we began dating. I lost it right after I turned 15."

"Damn, I forgot you dated him. Does Harry know you lost it to Dean?"

"Jesus, of course not! Knowing Harry, he would have done something crazy, like tell my brother. Then Ron would have killed him." Ginny said, rolling her eyes. "As far as Harry is concerned I lost my virginity to him on a romantic spring night in the middle of the Quidditch pitch."

"Damn, Gin. I never would have taken you for such a rebel. Lying to Harry Potter and outdoor sex? Where are your morals?" He said jokingly, tutting his tongue in mock disappointment. He finished his drink and stood up, yawning. "I better go. Plato is going to get jealous of you for stealing me away from him."

"Aww, I want to see your cat." Ginny muttered sadly, feeling like she was in desperate need of seeing something cute and fluffy.

"You can come over if you want." Draco suggested, and Ginny could have sworn there was something sly about his tone of voice.

"You mean tonight? It's nearly midnight."

"So? I've slept at your house a few times now, one day we will have to even it out." He said, giving her a flirty smile, causing Ginny's heart to race. Why is he asking me to sleep over? Is he hitting on my right now? She asked herself, feeling temporarily panicked and confused. She quickly decided she would turn down his offer, resolving that she would likely be given another opportunity to see what the invitation was really for when she was in a calmer mindset.

"No, not tonight. I'd better get to bed; it's been a long week." She said while standing up to stretch.

"Yeah, it has been." He said as he looked down into her brown eyes, smiling gently. "G'night, Weasley."

"Goodnight, Malfoy."

Ginny quickly snapped out of her memories as Draco was screaming loudly as a ginormous spider crawled out of the box he was holding. He frantically tried pulling out his wand to kill it, only to continuously tremble and drop it. Blaise laughed like a hyena as he pulled out his wand to kill the spider for Draco, proceeding to tease him.

"Bloody hell, mate. I thought that was Ginny screaming for a second."

"Shut up, Blaise." He spat, trying to look breezy as he smoothed his tie. "We've been here all day. I'm starving. What do you say we head back to Ginny's and eat?"
Without any complaints, they all agreed to lock up their shop and apparate to Ginny's flat. Ginny frowned as she opened her empty fridge and cupboards. "I have no food!" She exclaimed, cursing herself for procrastinating on her grocery shopping.

"But I'm starving!" Blaise moaned dramatically.

"Me too…" Draco said pathetically, slumped over her kitchen table.

"Should we go out to eat?" Ginny suggested and the boys nodded their heads enthusiastically.

"Let's go to the Leaky Cauldron, I haven't been there since I was in Hogwarts!" Blaise suggested but Draco shook his head.

"The only time I've ever eaten there I got food poisoning so bad I was sent to St. Mungos." Draco explained with a look of disgust.

Ginny watched Draco and Blaise argue over where to eat until she quickly grew bored of the conversation. Her eyes slowly glazed over and she began to expertly tune them out. When she had almost fallen back into her day dreams, she was interrupted by a knock at her door.

"I'll be right back." She excused herself and went to the door, expecting a muggle salesperson trying to sell her an alarm system or some other bizarre contraption. As she opened the door her stomach leapt into her throat as a pair of dazzling green eyes met hers.

"Harry!" She exclaimed, "What on earth are you doing here?"

Harry stood in the doorway, with his hands shoved in his pockets and a glum look on his face. He cleared his throat nervously, "Hey, Gin. I, um…I was hoping we could maybe talk?"

Ginny crossed her arms and raised her eyebrow. She was still feeling hurt by his accusing words and wasn't feeling eager to talk to him. "What about?"

"Well, after several long discussions with Hermione…well…she's made it clear that I acted like a total ass." He said, looking apologetic. "I'm really sorry for freaking out, Ginny."

Ginny absorbed his words but only had one question on her mind, "What about my mum and Ron?"

"Well, Molly is still a little frantic about it. She gets sent into a frenzy anytime your name is brought up. But Ron is warming up to everything, or at least, he's pretending to to make Hermione happy."

Ginny nodded in understanding. "Well, I'm glad there's sort of some progress."

"I was hoping I could come in and we could talk about everything? I would love to hear about this business and see some of your potions." He said sincerely and Ginny believed he was being genuine by the sad look in his eyes. But she knew she couldn't let him inside with Draco and Blaise waiting for her in the kitchen.

"I would love to Harry, but right now is a really bad ti – " She began only to be cut off by Draco strolling into the living room.

"Ginny, hurry up, we are star – Oh, Hey, Potter." Draco stopped mid-step as his eyes landed on Harry. His mouth fell open awkwardly as his eyes darted towards Ginny, who was giving him a warning glare that screamed, "Don't be an asshole." Draco appeared to decide to ignore Ginny's mental warning and instead decided to smugly waltz up to them, cross his arms, and lazily lean against the doorway beside Ginny.
Harry's face twisted into a hybrid look of anger, shock, and jealousy. His eyes fell on Ginny as he managed to stumble out, "He actually hangs out here? All the time?"

"All of the time, mate." Draco answered for Ginny and he stuck out his hand, motioning for Harry to shake it as he said, "It's good to see you, Harry. How have you been?" In a tone that was far too friendly for Draco.

Harry ignored Draco's handshake and continued gaping at Ginny, who shoved Draco's hand away as she shot daggers at him. Harry's face screamed of jealously even from that small contact between her and Draco, which resulted in Draco smirking extensively. Ginny tried to regain Harry's focus, "Yes, they're here a lot. But we are usually only working."

"Or drinking." Draco said.

"Can you please just fuck off for a minute?" Ginny said sternly to Draco who raised his hands, signalling he had surrendered. But not before getting one last sarcastic jab in.

"Fine, fine. All I wanted was to say hello to my old peer, but clearly I'm not welcome here."

"No you're not." Harry spat, addressing him for the first time with a nasty glare. Draco simply rolled his eyes at Harry's lame response and strolled back into the kitchen. Ginny turned to Harry apologetically.

"I'm sorry about him, he's a prat." She huffed.

"That's what we've been trying to tell you." Harry said sounding relieved, as if he had a chance at convincing Ginny to cut off all ties with Draco.

"No, no. I've known all along he's a prat, my tolerance has simply increased." She said, brushing him off.

Harry nodded, trying to show some amount of understanding although it was evident the entire situation made him incredibly uncomfortable. Eventually he opened his mouth to speak again, "Listen, this obviously isn't a good time to talk. Would you want to do dinner tomorrow? 8'oclock?"

She frowned momentarily as she contemplated his offer. She had been rejecting his offers for dinner for months, but he seemed sincere when he said he wanted to hear about her business. "Sure, Harry. That would be great."

"Excellent, I'll pick you up at eight?"

"Sounds perfect."

As soon as Harry left and she shut the door she stormed into the kitchen and shouted at Draco, "Why do you have to be such a prat!?"

Draco and Blaise were both trying to stifle their laughter as Ginny pursed her lips angrily. Once Draco regained control of his laughter he said smoothly, "I personally think I was quite pleasant. He was the one who ignored me."

"Oh shut up, you were trying to aggravate him the moment you saw him."

Draco burst into laughter again as he turned to Blaise, "You should have seen his face when Ginny pushed my arm away. I thought he was going to strangle me!"
"Ginny, why do you put up with that guy? He sounds like a jealous git." Blaise asked.

"He's not a git. He's just concerned, that's all." Ginny said coolly, "Besides, he claims he wants to hear all about our business, so that's a good sign he's going to be supportive. If he's supportive there's a better chance that my family will be supportive."

"So is that why he was here? To say he supports you?" Draco asked.

"No, actually, we are going for dinner tomorrow at eight o'clock." Ginny said, and she felt her cheeks redden as she saw a grin grow on both of their faces.

"You're going on a date with Harry?" Draco asked in a teasing manner.

"It's not a date!" She yelled.

"Hang on – Ginny, you and I are both going on dates tomorrow night! Look at us go!" Blaise exclaimed happily but Ginny shook her head.

"It's not a date."

"Dammit. Both of you have dates tomorrow and I'm going to be all alone." Draco said in mock sadness.

"It's not a date!" She shouted once more, and Blaise and Draco exploded in laughter from their success at getting under her skin. She rolled her eyes and threw her hands in the air from frustration and marched out of the kitchen on to the patio. Once she had a moment alone to contemplate the weird interaction between her and Harry she found herself thinking about the way her heart seemed to relax around Harry's familiar presence and the way he was still so protective of her even after all the years. She began asking herself a very important question: Oh shit, is it a date?
Chapter 9

Ginny yawned loudly as she organized their potion ingredients on the shelves in their new potions lab. They had been there since sunrise, cleaning and organizing their new shop. She wasn't used to doing that much physical labour and her back was throbbing. She looked over her shoulder to ensure that she was alone in the room, and when she confirmed that she was, she performed one of the yoga moves that Luna taught her. As she transitioned to an upward-facing-dog position she moaned with pleasure as the tension in her lower back was released.

"What are you doing?"

Ginny nearly fell flat on her face as Blaise's dubious voice hit her ears. Her eyes shot up and she saw Blaise and Draco both holding large copper cauldrons with their eyebrows cocked, looking anther skeptically. She groaned and set her forehead on the cold cement floor before answering, "Yoga. Luna said it is good for back pain."

"And you're doing it here?" Draco drawled.

"I thought you guys were going to be gone a while, okay?"

Blaise chuckled and grabbed her hand, pulling her to her feet. A devilish smirk pulled at the corner of his lips as he said, "Trying to get limber for Harry, are we?", resulting in Ginny swiftly punching him in the shoulder.

"Shut up."

Draco set the cauldron down carefully with the others. The room was slowly coming together. They had conjured three long, beautiful, dark walnut tables that were placed parallel with each other, each table holding ten cauldrons. Each cauldron had its own comfortable seat for the future workers, as well as a set of tools that were majestically engraved with "Z.W.M.", compliments of Draco who insisted that the engraving was worth the extra money. They had conjured dozens of shelves that were now the homes of hundreds of expensive, high-quality, ingredients. Blaise and Ginny had spent weeks visiting various apothecaries attempting to find the correct quantity sufficient for their goal of mass-production, and they were relieved when they finally managed to collect enough.

Draco picked up a stack of envelopes sitting on the table and opened one. "Ah, another résumé! Harold Demeer: fifteen years of potions experience, has an impressive history of employment, and currently volunteers at St. Mungo's helping the ill. Sounds like a catch, I'll owl him asking if he's free for an interview this Monday."

Ginny frowned, "Fifteen years of experience? Why would anyone with that much experience want to work for a bunch of kids?"

"We aren't kids." Blaise corrected, "And they want to work for us because we have a remarkable plan for the future. They know that this company is going to be successful and it is always better to get into a company when it is still small than when it is huge."

"I guess." Said Ginny, "I just feel like a fraud 'training' these people when I've only recently been trained myself."

"You aren't a fraud. You are incredibly talented and it is only fair that you share you talent and
wisdom with the rest of the population." Blaise said sincerely and Ginny smiled.

"I suppose you're right." She looked down at her watch and gasped, "Bloody hell! It's 6:30! I need to go home and get ready to meet Harry, sorry guys." She began frantically picking up her belongings as she sped through the shop.

"Why are you sorry? We need to go with you." Draco said which caused Ginny to freeze.

"What!? No, you don't!"

"Yes, we do. Well, I do. I need to take inventory of the product we have at your house as well as grab any résumés that have been owled to your house." He said coolly, and Ginny could have sworn she saw him briefly smirk.

"Oh, that's right! I need to go as well, I left my clothes that I'm going to wear for Luna and I's date at your house." Blaise said with a smirk matching Draco's.

"You're joking me." She said flatly and they both shook their head no. "You only want to come over so you can pester Harry when he arrives."

"Ginny, Ginny, Ginny..." Draco said, tutting his tongue. "I am offended that you think I would let such an immature action get in the way of my business. I am merely trying to do my job."

"Seriously, Gin. Really disappointed in you." Blaise said sarcastically, as he smiled and crossed his arms disapprovingly.

"No! Draco, that can wait until tomorrow. And Blaise, you have clothes at your own house!"

"Sorry, Gin. Definitely can't wait until tomorrow." He said, at this point his face was shining with a mischievous smile. He strolled towards her and wrapped his arm around her shoulder. "Don't worry, we will be perfect gentlemen when Harry picks you up for your date."

"You are both such dicks."

"And yet, you love us." Blaise said proudly.

"First thing we are doing when we start making some money is finding a new office that isn't my house."

"I hate you both so much." She muttered, as she breezed past them, heading to the kitchen to retrieve any résumés that had been mailed to them.

"Love you, too, Ginny-kins." Blaise said, making Ginny roll her eyes.

"When is your date, Blaise?" Draco asked, "I'm surprised you aren't having a full-blown panic attack right now."

"Well, it was supposed to be at eight. But Luna had to work late so now it'll be at nine." He replied, and his face transformed into a look of panic. "I'm fuckin' freakin' out, mate. I've never felt so dehydrated in my life, my tongue feels like a sponge that keeps soaking up any saliva I have."

"That's gross, man." Ginny said as she re-entered the living room, taking a seat beside Draco
handed him a stack of mail. "This is for you; you can leave now."

"I still have to do inventory."

"That takes five minutes. You can do it now then leave."

"Why are you so stressed about your date, Gin? You're so tense." Draco said breezily.

"It's not a date and I'm not stressed." She said, frustrated. "I'm not the one sweating buckets like Blaise is over here."

"She's going to hate me, Gin."

"She fucking adores you, I don't understand why you're so scared. You've gone on a million dates with other women, just do what you usually do." She said, pausing her irritation to temporarily console her friend.

"I'm scared because I don't want this to be like my 'million other dates'. I actually like this girl and don't want to treat her like every other girl I've wined and dined." He said rubbing his face anxiously.

"Gin, this letter is for you." Draco interrupted, handing her a letter with a familiar loopy handwriting. Ginny gasped and snatched it from Draco, tore it open, and frowned. Draco looked at her, confused, and asked, "What is it?"

Ginny looked in his eyes before quickly crumpled the letter and shoved it in her pocket. "Um – it's nothing. I need to shower. I'll be back." She scurried to her bathroom and quickly locked the door before reading the letter that was sent from her mother:

Ginny,

I am deeply sorry for not reaching out to you earlier. Needless to say, I have been in a state of shock, disbelief, and anger since hearing about your business. I don't approve of you spending your time with those boys but last night I had the pleasure of talking to Harry and he informed me that you two are finally going on a date! Ginny, I cannot even begin to express how much more comfortable this makes me about everything. So long as you continue surrounding yourself with such a good influence like Harry, I have no doubt in my mind that you will continue making good choices. I miss you so much, Honey, and am so excited to hear all about your date with Harry. Please owl me soon so we can plan a meeting where I can apologize in person for my temper.

Love you forever and missing you deeply,

Your mummy xx

"It's not a date!" Ginny hissed to herself, feeling annoyed that she had muttered that phrase a hundred times since last night. She stripped off her clothes and stepped into the warm shower. She inhaled deeply, letting the steam engulf her senses, as she tried to collect her thoughts. My mum, and most likely Ron, has admitted that the only way they are willing to forgive and support me is if I date Harry. But I don't want to date Harry. At least I don't think I do. She thought to herself, sadly. She thought back to the time when she was dating Harry in Hogwarts. He was a great boyfriend…but we are leading totally different lives. She angrily scrubbed her skin with soap, each stroke getting harder the more she thought. How can they think it is fair to put such strict conditions on me!? What if I don't like Harry? What if I like someone else? She frowned as Draco's stormy eyes appeared in her brain and she let out a quiet, audible, cry of frustration. Why can't she just be happy that I'm pursuing something I'm passionate about? I'm not doing anything wrong. A single tear rolled down her face and got lost in the shower. But this is totally something she would do…you were crazy to think she
would react positively about any of this. And you're miserable without them in your life. Maybe you should give Harry a chance? She took a large deep breath as she tried to decide. Draco doesn't even like you, Ginny. He cares about you as a friend, yes. But he doesn't like you romantically. It's never going to happen, get over it. She turned off the water and stood nude, leaning against the shower's wall for a moment, allowing her brain to get one last shot in before she was forced to be social again: Or maybe you could be a normal fricken' person for once and decide what you're going to do after dinner. Maybe Harry just wants to be friends.

She stepped out of the shower and looked at her watch; Shit! It's 7:20, no more time for a mental dispute today! She thought to herself as she wrapped the towel around herself, rushing out of the bathroom towards her bedroom, passing Draco and Blaise along the way.

"Ooo, naked Ginny!" Blaise called out jokingly and Draco's head whipped around urgently, only to disappointed when he noticed she was wearing a towel.

"Shut up and pleeease leeeave!" She called out to them from her bedroom. She slammed the door behind her and desperately dug through a pile of clothes on the floor searching for an outfit. Her face fell when she realized most of her clothes had holes and stains on them caused by potions running amok. She cried in annoyance and cursed herself for not being more prepared as she began searching through her closet. Finally, she let out a squeal of excitement as she found an old, ivory, lace sundress she had forgotten about. Praying that it still fit, she eagerly put it on and let out a sigh of relief when it slipped on perfectly. As she looked in the mirror she felt satisfied with the dress, which rested just above her knees giving her a classic, vintage look. She quickly dried her hair with her wand and put on some basic makeup and revelled in the fact that she managed to get ready with ten minutes to spare. She put on a pair of white high heels before hurriedly walking into the living room, silently praying that Draco and Blaise had left.

Nope.

"Wow, Weasley!" Draco said amusedly as he admired her outfit, "If that's what you look like when you're not going on a date I would love to see how you look like when you are on a date!"

"Shut up."

"You've said that a lot today, you know?"

"Shut up."

"I can't believe we are both going on dates tonight, Ginny." Blaise said, clasping his hands behind his head, "So, when do you think you and Harry will get married?"

"Oh my god, you guys are seriously killing me, here!" She groaned and took a seat beside Draco, anxiously staring at the door. "Don't think for a second that I don't know what you're up to. I swear to god, if either of you make any rude comment I'm going to hex you into oblivion. I've done it before, after all." She glared at Draco, silently reminding him of the time she hexed him in his 5th year.

"Relax, Ginny. We are mature adults who are capable of having a civil conversation." Blaise said coolly, "But seriously, good luck tonight. Date or not, I hope he manages to gain some understanding about our company."

"Thank-you, Blaise. See? That is the type of things you should be telling me!"

Suddenly they heard a loud CRACK immediately followed by a gentle knock. "Okay, he's here. Be
cool, guys.” She whispered right before opening the door. As she opened it and saw Harry standing in front of her, she nearly fell over by how handsome he looked. He was wearing a gorgeous black suit that could rival Draco’s, his stunning emerald green eyes were shining brightly, and a genuine smile beamed on his face. For a split seconds butterflies fluttered in her stomach.

"Ginny, hi! You look amazing.” He said, pulling her in to a friendly hug.

"Thank you, you as well. Wow, you sure clean up nice." She said, unable to refrain from checking out the handsome man in front of her. He never wears suits…he should always wear suits.

"Shall we go? Our reservation is in ten minutes."

"Absolutely!” Ginny exclaimed, almost too excitedly when she thanked her lucky stars that she might be able to escape without Harry even noticing Draco and Blaise. But, of course, there was no way they would let that happen. Both Harry and Ginny's face fell when they heard Draco obnoxiously clear his throat.

"Are they here?” Harry whispered.

"Yep.” She huffed, and opened the door wider so Harry could see Blaise and Draco sitting on the couch, smiling like lunatics.

"Oh hey, Harry!” Blaise said, waving enthusiastically.

"Hey, buddy!” Draco said goofily, and Harry scowled but nodded politely in acknowledgement.

Blaise strolled to the door and crossed his arms and sternly shook his finger at Harry mockingly,

"Now you make sure you have our little Ginny home by midnight."

"Are you done yet?” Ginny asked, irritated.

"I think so."

"Good. We are going to go now; don't forget to lock up before you leave.” Ginny said before adding, "Oh, and good luck with Luna tonight. It's going to be great.” She quickly noticed Harry's mouth fall open when he realized Blaise was going on a date with Luna.

"Thanks, I'll give you all the details tomorrow."

"Please leave some details out."

"No promises. Okay, bye! Have an excellent time!” He said, waving goodbye happily.

"See you, Harry!” Draco yelled, obnoxiously again, and Harry just gave a small confused wave.

Ginny slammed the door shut behind them and grabbed Harry’s forearm waiting for him to apparate to their destination. When he remained silent and unmoving, she looked up to see him wide-eyed gawking down at her. "What?"

"They really just hang out in your house? Even when you're not there?” He asked skeptically.

"Apparently they do today! Trust me, it was not my decision. Come on, just ignore them.” And with that, they apparated to a fancy, upscale restaurant. Upon arriving, Ginny let her arm remain entwined with Harry's as he led her to a young, blonde, bored looking hostess who was doodling directly on the wooden desk. She didn't notice their presence until Harry let out a small cough. The moment her eyes fell on the couple she gasped.
"Harry Potter? AND Ginny Weasley?" She squealed, "This is the best day of my life!"

"Ohh?" Ginny said, unable to think of a different reaction.

"I absolutely ADORED you in Fusion. Oh my gosh, you are so inspiring! And you looked so beautiful next to Draco and Blaise." She exclaimed like a fan girl. Ginny's face was downright shocked.

"Oh my, thank you so much. That means so much to me." She said, blushing substantially. Harry looked cool and amused, and she figured it was because he was so used to receiving praise from strangers; it was probably entertaining to watch someone else receive it for once.

"Could I get an autograph? From both of you? My friends will never believe me."

"A-are you serious?" Ginny stuttered, "F-from me?" The young girl nodded profusely. "Umm, yeah of course." Harry and Ginny both signed a cocktail napkin for the excited girl and Ginny felt dizzy from the attention. She had never experienced anything like that before. Sure, people used to harass her about her relationship with Harry, but never had she been praised for her accomplishments.

"Oh, you made my whole night! Here, let me take you to your table." She said, beaming at the couple, and led them to a secluded round table with a white table cloth and a candle in the middle. As the hostess set the menus down she quickly turned to Ginny to get some last words in. "So, are Draco and Blaise actually that handsome in real life?"

Ginny sent an apologetic look to Harry before replying awkwardly, "Umm…yeah, I guess so? I've never really noticed."

"Wow, how could you not notice? They could be models!" She exclaimed, "Are they single?"

"Umm…sort of? Draco is for sure and Blaise is sort of taken." She said awkwardly, unsure if she should be sharing their relationship status.

"Oh my gosh, I cannot believe he's single! I have a chance!" She squealed loudly before regaining composure, "Okay, well, both of you enjoy your meal. It was so amazing meeting you. Harry, thank you so much for everything you've done for us and Ginny, good luck with your future endeavours."

Ginny nodded in thanks as the hostess waltzed away and she turned to Harry with her mouth hanging open. "What just happened?"

"It looks like you have your first fan. Congratulations." Harry said happily and Ginny was still stunned when the waiter appeared at the table.

"Can I get you started with some drinks?"

"Um – Pinot Grigio, please." She said, feeling like she was in desperate need of a drink after that overwhelming scenario.

"Just a water, thanks." Harry said and the waiter nodded politely and left. He awkwardly stared at his hands for a moment and Ginny could tell something was on his mind. Finally, he opened his mouth and said, "So, it appears the entire world besides your family and I have decided to forgive the Malfoys for what they did."

Ginny rolled her eyes and said, "Harry. For the last time: He's not evil."

Harry sighed but surrendered, "Fine. He's probably not evil…but he's definitely an arrogant asshole."
Ginny chuckled, "Harry, believe me, there isn't an ounce of me that would ever argue that fact." She gently placed her hands on his hands, and stared him deeply in the eyes trying to search for a glimmer of understanding before saying, "But I don't think it is fair for me to punished just because my tolerance for arrogant assholes is higher than yours or my family's."

Harry sighed in defeat, "You're right. It's wrong for me to expect you to turn down this opportunity just because your coworkers are assholes. Once again, I'm really sorry for how I acted."

"That means so much to me." She smiled at him fondly as the waiter returned to drop off their drinks and take a food order. As the waiter left she admired the restaurant. "Harry, this place is beautiful."

"Yeah, I really like it. I've only ever been here alone so it is nice to have some company for once."

Ginny frowned and said, "You're trying to tell me that Harry Potter can't get a date?"

"Oh, I can." He said quickly, "I just choose not to I suppose."

"That's fair. I've kind of taken an extended break from dating, myself."

"So…you and Malfoy have never…dated, right?"

"Noooo, god no. If we had, I would have told you. We are just friends. Trust me."

"So…if you haven't, then why is he single?"

She rolled her eyes exasperatedly before saying, "Harry, if you keep asking questions like that I'm going to start thinking you want to date Draco."

He instantly turned crimson and shook his head urgently, "No, god, no! Sorry, I'm just trying to make sense of everything. You have to understand this is a weird situation…"

"Absolutely. Please, ask me anything and I'll answer honestly." She said encouragingly.

"So…Blaise and Luna? They're a thing? How the hell did that happen?"

"Oh my gosh, Harry, they're so fricken adorable!" She squealed excitedly, "They're not dating yet, tonight is their first date. But they are so damn cute, it blows my mind. Even you wouldn't be able to deny that they're adorable together."

"That's so bizarre." He stated, clearly shocked by the information. "So what exactly is your plan with everything? What is the goal of this business?"

Ginny smiled in appreciation. She was so relieved Harry was actually taking a genuine interest in this. "Oh, Harry, it is so brilliant. We just got this crazy rich investor to invest in us and we just bought our first store! We've actually been there all day trying to clean the place up, I'm so bloody tired. But yeah, we have a ton of resumes coming in all day. Next week we are going to do interviews, get everyone trained, then in a month we will be opening. I guess you could say that our goal for the next few years is to be successful enough that we can expand and franchise our company so it is all over the world."

Harry gave her an impressed smile, "That is incredible, Ginny. I had no idea it was this big of a deal."

Ginny widened her eyes and nodded, "This damn business has honestly become my life. I spend any free minute thinking and reading about potions or how we can improve the company."
"I've known you for over a decade and I have never seen you so dedicated and passionate about something." He grabbed her hand delicately. "I'm so happy for you."

Ginny's heart melted as she looked in his eyes. This was exactly what she wanted to hear from him and she was so relieved that he was being so supportive. "Thank you, Harry. You have no idea how much that means to me."

"So, where is the shop?"

"It's in Diagon Alley. It's about a five-minute walk from George's joke shop. He doesn't know that yet, though. I plan on surprising him with the news sometime this week, he's going to be so excited." She said, beaming. She knew George was going to be so thrilled about how successful their plans have been so far.

"That's incredible. I can't wait to see it once it's open."

Ginny suddenly got a great idea. "Hey! Maybe after dinner I could give you a tour of the store? It's a little chaotic inside, but you'll be the first person to see it."

"I would love to."

They ate their delicious dinner while happily discussing topics that weren't related to potions or Draco, which was a refreshing change for Ginny. She couldn't believe how much fun she was having. When she looked in his eyes she felt as though she was transported back in time to when they first began dating. Everything felt new and exciting as simple brushes of their hands caused her stomach to flutter. She mentally kicked herself for not agreeing to this date months ago, although, she figured Harry's outstanding compassion towards her made her see him in a new light. Maybe we needed some conflict between us to show us how much we mean to each other? She thought to herself. She couldn't wait to tell her mother about how great the date had been.

Shortly after dinner she found herself outside of her precious shop, her arm still resting on Harry's after apparating. She grabbed his hand and led him inside. The air was still dusty, and he let out a small cough. "Sorry it's so messy. We haven't quite finished cleaning." She apologized.

"No, no. It's fine." He assured, "Ginny, this is amazing. You own this? How much did this cost?"

"Well, the three of us own it. I honestly have no idea how much it costs. Draco deals with all of the finances." She explained, "Here, let me show you what Blaise and I take care of." She continued holding his hand as she led him to their new potions lab. She used her wand to give light to the dark room and Harry audibly gasped when he saw the majestic room with the 30 cauldrons and hundreds of ingredients.

"Bloody hell, Ginny. This is incredible. I've never seen anything like this in any wizarding community." He said in awe as he admired the room.

"That's why our company is so great. We want to revolutionize the industry. No wizarding business focuses on mass production but that is our focus. It is brilliant."

"Wow…" He said, gaping at his surroundings. Ginny leaned against one of the tables and happily watched Harry enthusiastically observe the expensive cauldrons. She was so happy Harry was so excited for her. He turned to her again and walked towards her slowly. He took a deep breath, as though he was mentally hyping himself up to say something, and exhaled. Finally, he opened his mouth to say, "Ginny, you know how much I care about you, right?"

"Yeah."
"And you know how much I like you, right?"

"Uh-huh."

He got even closer to her. "Do you think…do you think we could give us another try? I just can't get over this feeling that we are meant to be together – or at least give it another chance."

Ginny bit her lip nervously. A huge part of her wanted to scream YES, but there was a nagging feeling in her mind that was trying to convince her that he wasn't the one for her. Her heart began racing as she looked into his eyes and saw his eager smile. Then her heart fell when the memory of Draco's warm arms wrapping around her body and his fingers stroking her hair comfortingly crept into her mind. She mentally shoved those feelings aside and buried them deeply in her unconscious. After what felt like eternity she finally opened her mouth, "Umm…Harry. I really like you and I would like to see this work. But can we take it really slow? I'm not sure if I'm ready to be – you know – boyfriend and girlfriend, quite yet. Is that okay?"

"Absolutely, Gin. We can take it as slow as you need." He said, his face breaking into the happiest smile she had seen on him in years. Her heart warmed at how patient and incredible this man was. He took a step closer and put his hand on her waist and asked "Can I kiss you?" She nodded slowly and she felt his warm, familiar lips press against her own. It felt like she was taking a stroll down nostalgia lane as they kissed. Her heart was beating fast as she lost herself in the moment. It had been months since she had kissed someone and she wanted to embrace the moment. She was having such a good time she almost managed to successfully push the thought of Draco out of her mind. But not completely.

After her and Harry kissed and cuddled on the floor in the middle of her store for hours Ginny decided to head home around midnight. Harry kissed her passionately one last time, causing Ginny to blush extensively before apparating to her flat. When she arrived home she felt like she was in such a daze from her romantic evening, she didn't notice the person slumped in the corner beside her door until she accidentally kicked them. She screamed loudly in fear as the figure stood up, urgently 'shushing' her.

"Ginny, calm down, it's me!"

"BLAISE?" Ginny shrieked, still panting from fear. "What the hell are you doing? You nearly gave me a heart attack!"

"Sorry! I'm sorry! I just needed to talk to you." He said. Ginny surveyed his face and noticed that he looked absolutely devastated.

"Blaise, are you okay? Why aren't you with Luna?"

"Can we go inside? I'm freezing." He asked and Ginny nodded. She unlocked the door and Blaise rushed towards the fridge immediately, grabbing a bottle of beer, and slumped on to the couch.

"Blaise, you're freaking me out. What happened?" Ginny asked, sounding concerned. She took a seat beside him and gently rubbed his back. He looked absolutely crushed as he tried to string together his thoughts to form a sentence.

"It went terribly."

"What did?"

"My date with Luna."
Ginny's heart sank as everything began making sense. "How was it terrible?"

"Everything was just…awful." He said glumly, taking a large swig out of his beer before resting his chin in his hand.

"Can you elaborate?"

He sighed, "I don't know what happened. It was like suddenly all our chemistry shut off. And we had nothing to talk about. Half of the night was spent in awkward silence. It was terrible."

"It couldn't have been that bad!" Ginny tried assuring him while still rubbing his back, "I'm sure if you guys went out again it would be much better!"

He shook his head, "No. It was…like…so bad. I had this romantic stroll by the river planned and everything but it was so awkward before we made it there I strait up asked her, 'Hey, is this super weird for you, too?' and she said, 'Yes, maybe we should just be friends.' And I said, 'Yeah, I think that would be a good idea.' And she apparated away so fast I didn't even have a chance to do anything differently."

Ginny's heart broke for Blaise as he spoke, his voice sounding more depressed than she could have ever imagined. "I'm so sorry, man. I never would have imagined it going so poorly. Who knows? Maybe it'll work out in the end?"

He shook his head again, "I don't think so. And even so, I don't think I can handle giving it another go only to be rejected again."

Ginny nodded in understanding, "I guess you're right. Are you going to be okay?"

"Yeah, absolutely. It'll take a little bit of time, but I'll be fine. It just sucks, I really liked her. More than I thought was possible for me."

"I know… think of it on the bright side. Now you know how it feels to genuinely fall for someone so you won't waste your time on girls you don't really care about?" She said, trying to put an optimistic twist on the situation.

"Pfff, screw that. If anything this just motivates me to never fall for someone again." He said before giving a weak smile, "You know, you might not know this about me, but I'm kind of an emotional dude."

"I kind of figured." She said smiling back at him, "And that is why I adore you."

"Thanks, Ginny." He said, "So what about you? How was your date?"

Ginny flushed at the memory of her and Harry. She was so distracted with Blaise she nearly forgot about her passionate night. "Well…let's just say that it was a date."

"Daaaaang, did Ginny get a little freaky with Harry?" Blaise said, appearing relieved that the conversation shifted from him and Luna.

"No, no! We just…kissed…"

"So are you two…together now?"

"No! Well, sort of, I guess. We are going to take things slow and see where things go, I guess." She explained.
"Are you going to tell Draco?" He asked and her eyes darted to him.

"Yeah? Why wouldn't I?"

"I dunno, no reason. Just wondering." He answered and Ginny looked at him quizzically but chose to ignore the comment. "I guess fifty percent of the dates went well. That isn't the worst odds."

The two stayed up late watching some of Ginny's favourite muggle comedy movies. She figured he needed some humour in his life and she was happy to be there for him. Once Blaise drifted off to a peaceful sleep on her couch Ginny covered him in a blanket and quickly mused over how much she appreciated his friendship before going to bed.

She woke up early the next morning, full of energy and eager to get some work done. Blaise was still sleeping soundly on the couch so she quietly made a pot of coffee, wrote a note to Blaise telling him to help himself to any food in the house, and headed to work. It was nice to work alone for once, she thought, as she dusted the shelves in the storefront. She became so engulfed in her work and daydreaming about her date with Harry, she didn't hear the door open.

"Woah – you're here early." A tired looking Draco said as he strolled through the shop.

"Oh, good morning! I'm feeling highly motivated today, figured I should take advantage of it."

"Wish I had your motivation. I'm so bloody tired, Plato wouldn't leave me alone all night. That damn cat is needier than Blaise." He said, while yawning, and grabbing a muffin out of a paper bag. "Want one? They're pumpkin."

"Yessss please, I'm starving. Blaise was on my couch so I couldn't cook breakfast." She said, eagerly taking the muffin and taking a seat at the desk beside Draco.

"Blaise was at your house? Why?"

"Oh right…" She mentally kicked herself for letting that slip. She figured it would be best to let Blaise decide when he would share his news about Luna. "Umm…things didn't go that great with Luna. I don't think it's my place to get into the details, but yeah…"

"Wow, poor guy…I know I rag on him all the time but I was really rooting for him." Draco said sadly, picking at his muffin. "What about you? How was you date?" He flashed her smile, expecting the comment would enrage her, but instead she simply blushed.

"Umm…it was good."

"Did you have a good time?" He asked vaguely, although it sounded as though there was a lot more being asked in the question than what appeared.

"Yeah, a really good time."

"Are you two dating again?"

She cleared her throat quietly before answering, "Sort of. We are taking it slow. See where it goes. You know how it is."
"For sure…" he said, his voice embedded with a hint of sadness. "I guess I can't say I'm too surprised…it's obvious that Harry Potter and Ginny Weasley are destined to be with each other." He looked deep into her eyes when he said it, and despite his joking tone, his eyes were begging her to deny it. To prove him wrong. To tell him that there was no way she would end up with Harry. She gulped and looked at her half eaten muffin. For a brief second she contemplated telling him she was thinking about him as she kissed Harry.

But instead, she said flatly, "Yeah, I guess we are."

After a brief moment of solemn sadness Draco cleared his throat, signalling he was done with that conversation. "Great. So um, I talked with my father yesterday and the weekend that we open he's going to have a celebratory ball in our honour. All the richest people in the country will be there. It's the perfect networking opportunity. Are you in?"

"Absolutely."

A/N: Poor Blaise. :( that was hard to write, feel so bad for the guy! Hope you all enjoyed it! Don't forget to review and follow! :)
"Urgh – no, Allen, you stir it counter-clockwise." Ginny groaned as her thirty-year-old employee blew up his second potion that day. She had never fired anyone before, but if he hit his third strike, he was out.

"Sorry, Miss Weasley. It won't happen again." The man muttered under his breath, avoiding Ginny's eyes. She observed the once empty room, which was now bustling with witches and wizards from all ages speedily brewing potions under Ginny and Blaise's supervision. The days were flying by and their grand opening drew closer. They had their staff hired, some competent and others not, and were quickly filling their shelves with new potions as they trained everyone. The closer they got to their opening date, the more nervous Ginny grew. She felt in over her head as the staff she attempted to train made more errors than Blaise's trainees. It didn't help that she only had half the charisma as Blaise. He would confidently give instructions, clearly and coherently, like a true leader. Ginny figured that it would be more difficult to screw up than to succeed under Blaise's confident orders. In contrast, Ginny felt insecure and nervous as she stuttered out her instructions. She imagined her employees' thoughts, everyone asking themselves, "Why are we taking orders from this 21-year-old bimbo?"

She spotted Draco in the corner, hunched over his desk pouring over his paperwork. She decided to take a break from training to express her concerns as she walked over to him, her head hanging low.

"Just a heads up – if you want to fire me I would understand." She said taking the seat across from him. He looked up from his paperwork and gave her a confused stare.

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm lousy at this. It's a miracle no one has died under my watch." She said, slumping over the desk feeling defeated.

"I know self-deprecation is typically the most attractive trait one can imagine – but it doesn't suit you." He drawled sarcastically as he placed his pen down. "You're doing great. We understand that you're new to this, we signed up for a few errors when we hired you. You've only been training for a couple weeks and every person in your group has progressed at nearly the same rate as Blaise. Believe me, you're doing fine. If I start to get concerned I'll talk to you before firing you."

She pursed her lips and tried to convince herself that Draco's 'pep-talk' was honest. She nodded and sighed, silently signalling that she believed him. He gave her a small smile and returned to his work while she remained at his desk. She felt a little sad. Ever since she started seeing Harry religiously she felt as though she was neglecting her friends. The evenings she wasn't working she would spend with Harry, relaxing at his beautiful flat, hanging out with Luna, who was too nervous to be around Blaise, or rekindling her relationship with her family. She was relieved that her mother and Ron were infinitely more understanding about her work when Harry was sitting beside her, supportively backing up every detail she excitedly shared. A small part of her resented the fact that she needed Harry beside her to win over her own family's support, but she figured beggars can't be choosers.
She looked at the calendar hanging on the wall and noticed the date, remembering an important detail which gave her an idea. "Hey! Harry's out of town tonight and Luna is busy at work. What do you say you, me, and Blaise get drunk at my place? It's been a while."

He lifted his eyes without lifting his head. Ginny could still see his smirk as he spoke, "Missing us already?"

"Maybe a little." She said coyly, flashing him a smile.

He said his pen down and shrugged his shoulders, "Sorry, Gin. Would love to but I'm busy tonight. Got a date."

Ginny's face accidentally fell at the information, despite knowing she had no right to be upset. "You have a date?"

"I know it's shocking that you're not the only one leading a romantic life – but yes. We've gone out a couple of times this week." He drawled, with a hint of coldness. Ginny had to try harder to conceal her frown. She wasn't sure what stung more; the fact that Draco hadn't told her until that moment that he was dating someone or the fact that he was dating someone at all.

"That's great, who is it?" Ginny asked after swallowing hard, trying to think of a normal, platonic response.

"Fiona Herd"

"Who's that?"

Instead of answering he opened the drawer of his desk and pulled out the Fusion magazine they had previously starred in and flipped to a page in the middle. Without speaking a word he pointed to the drop-dead-gorgeous model on the page. Fiona Herd. Ginny knew the name sounded familiar. She was Luna's number one model for her magazine and fawned over by men all over the country. Ginny's eyes widened as she examined the model's beautifully bronzed skin, plump red lips, luscious wavy chestnut hair and smouldering blue eyes. She was scantily clad, wearing lacy lingerie which left little to the imagination, selling what appeared to be perfume although the advertisement wasn't very clear.

"How did you even meet her?" Ginny asked, still gaping at the magazine.

"I met her the day we had our photoshoot, actually. You and Blaise had your hair finished before me and when I went to track you done afterwards I bumped into her in the hallway. Naturally, I saw a beautiful woman so I used my charms on her and she told me to owl her sometime. I only got around to mailing her last week, though." He explained, resuming to his paperwork once again.

Ginny tutted her tongue and shook her head in disbelief. "Only you, Draco Malfoy, would get the most beautiful woman in the country's information and wait a month to contact her."

He shrugged and looked her in the eyes and smirked, "I guess I was a little distracted." His gaze sent shivers down her spine and she silently wondered why everything he said seemed to have a double-meaning. They broke their gaze when a female's voice disturbed their staring contest.

"I HAVE PRESENTS!"

Their eyes snapped towards the voice to see Luna carrying two large gift-bags, smiling enthusiastically at them. "Hi, Luna!" Both Ginny and Draco said excitedly as she warmly hugged them both. "What kind of presents?" Draco asked, peeking into the bags eagerly.
"I hope you don't mind I let myself in, but I had to bring these over as a 'store-warming' type gift? You know, not a house-warming, but a store-warming?" She said, sounding slightly distracted as she glanced around the room. "Where's Blaise? I would feel guilty if you opened them without him."

"He just ran out for a quick lunch, he should be back any minute." Ginny explained as Draco pulled up a chair for Luna, motioning to her to sit.

"Is it weird that I'm here?" She hissed to Draco and Ginny, "I mean, I know I said we would still be friends, but I've been kind of a lousy friend lately. I haven't seen him since – you know. Is he mad at me?" She kept staring at the door, expecting Blaise to come sauntering around the corner at any moment.

"No, why would he be mad at you?" Draco asked honestly.

"Because…you know…things didn't work out. At all." She was biting her nails, which was apparently a new habit she had developed.

"He's definitely not mad at you." Ginny assured before adding, "But I can't promise he won't be weird around you…because, I mean…you're acting like a bit of a lunatic yourself right now."

"Urrgh, I know. I just wish it had worked out then we wouldn't be in this situation." She moaned.

"You are both being complete idiots." Draco said flatly, causing Luna to stare at him blankly. "What? You are! You go on one date which is a little awkward, as every first date in the history of the world is, and instead of giving it another go, you resolve to never see each other again and sit around moping for weeks, unable to look at each other when you're both clearly infatuated."

Ginny let out an audible laugh as Draco said everything that had been on her mind perfectly. Luna however gaped at him, trying to form an argument. "I-it's more complicated than that!" she huffed.

"No it isn't." He drawled. Ginny laughed once again as couldn't refrain from Draco's blunt honesty as he continued, "If it is complicated it is only because you are both making it complicated. There is nothing standing in the way of you two dating. You're both young, single, and have no roadblocks standing in your way. I haven't heard of a less complicating romantic situation, to be honest." Luna scowled at him and Ginny continued laughing. She directed her glare to Ginny who tried to stifle her giggles.

"What? I mean, he is right."

"Whatever." Luna said, rolling her eyes. She admired the bustling room around her as she watched the staff happily making their potions. "You are all doing fantastically. I can't wait until it opens."

"Me too. It'll be nice to know exactly how successful we really are." Draco said stressfully, "It's so difficult trying to budget when I'm only estimating profits."

"Is that why you're so tense? You seem a little grumpy." Luna said, taking advantage to poke fun at him after he called her and Blaise stupid.

"You do seem a little grumpy." Ginny agreed, "I don't know why you'd be grumpy. You're dating Fiona-fuckin-Herd." She said, trying to hide any hint of bitterness from her voice.

"Oh, right! She told me about that last week!" Luna exclaimed, "Isn't she sweet?"

Ginny gasped and swatted Luna's shoulder lightly, "You knew!? Why didn't you tell me?" She hissed, knowing full well she didn't conceal her emotions very well. Her eyes darted to Draco who
was trying to act aloof, though unable to conceal the wicked grin plastered on her face. Luna's gaze shifted uncomfortably between Draco and Ginny.

"I-I don't know? Because it's…private I guess? Also…Did not think it was important?"

"Well, it's not important!" Ginny said in defence, "I just don't like feeling left out. Does Blaise know?"

"Oh, yeah." Draco said coolly and Ginny threw her hands in the air.

"Why does everyone know besides me?"

"Maybe if you weren't spending all your time with Harry you would have been there when I told Blaise." He said playfully.

"Shit! There's Blaise." Luna hissed, almost trying to hide her head behind Ginny's, but Blaise noticed her instantly.

"Hi, Luna!" He said almost too cheerfully.

"Heeeey, Blaise! How are you?" She said as she leapt from her chair and shook his hand professionally. Ginny and Draco were both cringing at the visible awkwardness.

"I'm fine. What brings you here?" He said, his tanned skin turning red.

"I brought you a present!" She shouted quickly, much louder than she intended, causing Blaise to be taken aback. Draco groaned for Luna.

"Present?" Blaise asked questionably and Luna quickly rushed to her gift bags, practically throwing them in his arms.

"Yep, present! It's there. Don't light it on fire. I need to go, though. Work is busy. Bye now!" She rambled speedily, her usual pale complexion scarlet red. She scurried away quickly and she reached the door Ginny heard her quickly say, "Oh, hello Harry! Would love to chat, gotta run!"

Ginny's head snapped back so hard she felt dizzy as she saw Harry waltz through the storefront. She quickly turned to Blaise, who had a friendly smile planted on his face, and Draco, who's cool expression promptly turned into a scowl. Harry awkwardly stepped towards the desk and he ran his hands through his hair as he hesitantly spoke, "Sorry, I hope it's okay that I came here. I just wanted to say goodbye to Ginny before I left on my trip."

"Absolutely, mate." Blaise said honestly, "Make yourself at home." Draco quietly scoffed and rolled his eyes, which Harry noticed, causing his eyes to narrow. Ginny shot Draco a glare and he transformed his sneer into a pleasant smile and he nodded politely to him.

"That's so sweet, Harry. Come on, let's go into the back." She said, grabbing his hand to lead him towards a more private area. As she passed Draco she heard him quietly mutter under his breath, "God forbid they spend a night away from each other." To which she heard Blaise whisper, "Be nice, Draco."

When she pulled Harry into a private room he was scowling and said sarcastically, "It looks like you're all working hard."

"We were taking a quick break." She said, although wondering why she felt the need to defend her work ethic to Harry. The way he spoke was as though he had just caught them doing something
inappropriate.

"Malfoy sure seemed happy to see me." He drawled, sounding annoyed.

"He just needs to get used to you, that's all. It is a little weird, after all." She said calmly, placing her palm on her chest and kissed him gently. "It's so good to see you."

She could feel him relax as he warmed up to her touch, "I wish I didn't have to go."

"It's only a couple nights. You'll be so busy doing whatever it is that Aurors do, it'll be over before you know it!" She said optimistically.

"You're not…um…going to be hanging out with them the entire time, are you?" He asked uncomfortably and Ginny frowned.

"Well, we will be working together, so sort of?" She said, narrowing her eyes, aware of what he was asking. "I might hang out with Blaise tonight but Draco has a date."

Harry seemed to ease up at that comment, and she made a mental note stating that Harry appeared to be alright with Blaise but not Draco. "That's good, I'm sure that'll be fun."

"Yeeehh…" She said, feeling unsettled with the discussion. She hesitantly decided to add, "Harry, I really want this to work out. But they're my friends…Sometimes I'm going to hang out with them when you're not around."

"I know." He said sadly, "It's just hard, you know? Especially the way Malfoy looks whenever I enter the room, it's like he's mad at me for dating you."

"Are you sure he's not just mad because you guys have hated each other for a decade?"

"No, it's different. He's jealous, I know it." He started and Ginny tried to cut him off so he quickly added, "I think he likes you."

"Pffft, no he doesn't, Harry. Do you know who that bloke is dating? Fiona Herd! Why in god's name would he be interested in me?" She argued, and Harry shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know…I just have a bad feeling."

"Well you're wrong. And getting jealous over nothing. Believe me, if he liked me, he would have made it known in the past months that we've been spending time together." She said, and hoped that she didn't let her tone of voice make it known that she had secretly been eagerly hoping for him to make it known in the past months.

"I guess so…"

Suddenly Ginny got an incredible idea! "I know! Guaranteed if you all spent some time with each other you would all get along. We've all matured so much since Hogwarts, they're actually great guys. And you're a great guy. Who knows, maybe you'll all become best friends?" She suggested and Harry's face promptly fell.

"There is no way I'm going to spend time with them."

"Harry, come on! If this is ever going to work you're to have to accept that they're in my life. Wouldn't be easier if you all got along? It would be so nice if I didn't have to choose between spending time with you or them." She grabbed his hand and looked at him with pleading eyes.
Harry's stone face gradually softened and he sighed loudly.

"Fine. I guess." He said, sounding displeased, but Ginny was relieved he was willing to do it. She threw her arms around his neck and hugged him deeply. "You're the best, Harry!" She squealed and kissed him. They spent their last few minutes enjoying each other's company and sharing cute compliments about one another. She was thankful they had managed to resolve their minor spat before he left for his work trip. After she kissed him goodbye she nervously waltzed up to Draco's desk to meet up with Draco and Blaise.

"Look what Luna got us!" Blaise exclaimed brightly as he held three purple small plants. "They're shrivelfigs! They last all year and their roots and leaves are excellent for potions! Perfect for shrinking potions and potions to induce euphoria." He stared longingly at the small plant in his hand and mused out loud, "Fuck, she's cool."

"These are amazing!" Ginny exclaimed as she admired hers fondly.

"So, how is Harry?" Draco asked breezily, not looking at Ginny. She frowned as she remembered Harry's words, unable to tell if he was absolutely crazy or maybe on to something. But she quickly told herself it was irrelevant and took a deep breath as she prepared her proposal.

"Hey guys…I was wondering if…" She trailed off slightly as she mustered the strength to ask the question, "How would you feel about going out for drinks with Harry and I on Friday? I think it would be good if we cleared some of the tension."

Draco and Blaise both scoffed loudly and looked at her incredulously. "You have got to be kidding me." Draco stated.

"Come on! It'll be fun! We can bring Luna?" She said, directing that to Blaise who simply shook his head.

"Ginny, that sounds like a nightmare. Worst idea you've ever had." He said flatly.

"Why?"

"Oh, let's see. Let's put Draco Malfoy and Harry Potter at a table and pretend we are all good friends. Oh, and while we are at it, let's invite Luna! The girl of my dreams who can hardly look at me! Oh hey, I know, why not invite a couple of dementors while we are at it, to really lighten up the mood."

Ginny clasped her hands together in a praying motion and begged, "Pleeease, guys. It would mean so much to me. I can't stand all this hatred between everyone. I care about you all so much."

Draco continued shaking his head in disbelief. Blaise, on the other hand, softened a little. He groaned loudly and said, "Fine. If Draco will do it then I will."

She turned her neck to Draco who looked appalled. "Blaise? What the hell?"

"Come on, man. This has got to be hard for Ginny. The least we can do is try." Blaise said and Ginny's heart melted at Blaise's unwavering empathy.

Draco sighed loudly, "Fine. But I'm doing this because I care about you, not because I want to be chummy with Potter." He took a pause and contemplated his decision before adding, "And I'm bringing Fiona."

"Great! That's great! Thank you so much!" She cheered.
"Yeah, yeah, yeah." Draco muttered, "Anyways, we should probably get back to work. We don't want any more explosions."

Friday came alarmingly fast and before she knew it her and Harry were standing in her flat getting ready to meet them at the bar. Ginny was nervously looking in the mirror as she admired her navy blue dress. She glanced over at Harry, marvelling at how handsome he looked when he dressed up, and smiled. "I know I've said it a dozen times but I can't thank you enough for doing this."

"I know I've said it a dozen times but I can't believe I'm doing this." He muttered before smiling, "But I know it makes you happy. Are you ready to go?" Ginny nodded and they apparated to the dingy english pub where Ginny had met Blaise and Draco the very first time. Luna was standing outside, wearing a light lavender lace dress and had her hair in a long, loose side-braid. Her arms were crossed when she spotted Ginny and Harry.

"Why am I here!?" She exclaimed throwing her hands in the air, "This is going to be so awkward!"

"I've been asking her that all week." Harry said jokingly, "I'm glad you're here, though. It'll be nice having another friendly face."

"Ohh, Harry. If it weren't for the fact that I love Ginny and that I haven't seen you in well over a year, I would have bailed."

"Cheer up, you guys! Everything is going to be fine!" Ginny said encouragingly, although not believing her own words completely. She dragged the pair inside the bar and spotted them almost instantly. Her heart started racing as she witnessed the beauty of Fiona Herd in person. She was breathtaking. She wore a deep plum floor-length dress with a plunging neckline, a diamond necklace and pearl earrings. She insecurely observed her own outfit one last time, suddenly feeling very plain with her lack of cleavage and inexpensive jewellery. Ginny, *this was a terrible fucking idea, everyone was right.*

"Hiii, guys." Ginny said awkwardly, making their presence known. Draco, Blaise, and Fiona stood up from their seats politely, holding out their hands for Harry to shake.

"Hello!" Blaise said happily before turning to Luna. His voice cracked a bit as he spoke to her, "Hello Luna, you look n-nice!"

"Thank you, you as well."

"Hi Harry, Good to see you again." Draco said stiffly, but politely.

"You as well." Harry said, returning the same formal tone.

"Oh, and this is Fiona. Fiona, I'm sure you know all about Harry Potter." Draco introduced and Harry shook her hand, "And this is Ginny Weasley, my business partner."

"Hello, nice to meet you." Ginny said pleasantly, shaking her hand.

"You as well. Luna, it's so good to see you again." Fiona said warmly, embracing Luna in a quick hug and pecking her on the cheek.

"You as well. You look absolutely stunning." Luna said, admiring Fiona's gown.

"Oh, yes, well…Draco forgot to mention how casual this establishment was."

Ginny snorted, "Heh, yeah, he did the same to me, too."
Fiona cocked her eyebrow, "You two have been here before?"

"Oh, yeah, well this is where I met with Blaise and Draco for the first time."

"Ohh…so this is where it all began." Harry thought out loud, admiring the dusty television sets and rattled dart boards.

"How was your trip, Harry?" Draco asked cordially, and sent Ginny a glance which said, 'See, I'm trying.' She smirked back at him.

"It was good. Boring, but good."

"Good."

There was an awkward silence. Ginny could have kissed the waiter when he took a drink order.

"I'll get a pint of whatever you have on draught" Ginny said quickly, eager to have some alcohol to dull her nerves.

"A large glass of merlot, please." Luna said hurriedly, "Like, as large as you've got."

"I'll have a water, thanks." Harry said, causing Blaise to shoot him a shocked glance.

"You don't drink, Harry?"

"No, I've never liked it. I prefer being in control of my body."

"Ahh, bad experience one night?" Blaise said suggestively, raising his eyebrows.

"No, not really. Just not a fan."

Ginny had to stifle a giggle as she saw Draco roll his eyes. The waiter returned promptly and delivered the drinks, to which Ginny and Luna exhaled in relief.

"I swear we aren't alcoholics." Ginny giggled to Harry, who cocked his brow at her.

"I sometimes think I am…” Blaise contemplated, "I rarely go a day without a drink."

"We are 21, what else would we do?" Luna asked.

"Well, we could use the money to put towards our business." Draco suggested, "But then how would we celebrate?"

Ginny, Luna, Blaise, and Draco all laughed, leaving Harry and Fiona feeling as though they've been left out on a joke. Luna thankfully sensed their discomfort.

"So, Fiona. You're from Beauxbatons, right?" She asked.

"Really!? Do you know Fleur Delacour, then?" Ginny asked, feeling relieved she finally had something in common with the beautiful woman.

"Oh, Fleur…Yes, we used to be good friends until she married that th – "

Draco swiftly interrupted, "Ginny Weasley's brother, Bill."

Ginny saw Harry's face smile in appreciation at Draco's quick save, and for a split-second Ginny thought that everything might go well.
"Yes, Bill Weasley. I heard their wedding was stunning." Fiona said amiably and Ginny nodded.

"Yes, it was beautiful."

There was another awkward silence as everyone besides Harry took a large drink.

Finally Draco piped up, "So, as some of you know, my father will be hosting a ball at the beginning of November to celebrate our first store opening up. You're all invited, of course."

"Oh, that's excellent! I'm not sure if I'll make it, though…" Luna said awkwardly, shifting her glance at Blaise who frowned.

"You don't even know what day it is." Ginny said flatly, poking her friend's ribs.

"Ohh…well… November is the busiest month at the magazine…" She lied lamely and Fiona shook her head.

"I thought December and the summer months were?"

Luna rolled her eyes, "Fine. I'll try to make it." She smirked at Blaise who was looking at her amusedly.

"You'll have to save me a dance." He said warmly.

"For sure." She said, relaxing a little.

"Anyways…" Draco started as he observed Luna and Blaise acting like awkward teenagers, "Yeah, there's going to all sorts of potential investors there. Great for networking. If we are lucky I'll be able to charm this interested French investor who will be attending; we might get to spend some time in France."

"France!?!" Ginny gasped excitedly, "Oh, I've always dreamt of going to France."

Harry nudged her side and tried to whisper as quietly as possible, "You never said anything about France."

"Well, I only heard about France just now, Harry." Ginny said, feeling annoyed that he wasn't happy for her.

"Shouldn't we talk about this stuff before?"

"Yes, but we shouldn't talk about it here." She whipped. Her eyes fell on Draco, expecting him to be smirking in amusement at their lover's quarrel, but instead he was narrowing his eyes protectively, looking just as annoyed as Ginny felt.

"It'll be a great opportunity if we can go to France. It would be a necessary stepping stone in our franchising." Draco said, and Ginny was surprised by how civil he sounded. As though he didn't want to start an argument, but rather to help Ginny out.

"Does Ginny have to go?"

"Believe me, I will be going." She snapped.

Suddenly a ridiculously handsome man appeared at the table and interrupted the potential heated argument. All their eyes shot to him as he turned to Luna. "I'm sorry for interrupting, but I couldn't help but notice - you are absolutely stunning. Can I buy you a drink?"
"YES." She practically shouted as she happily took the excuse to escape from the tense table. She happily stood up and linked arms with the stranger before quickly saying, "Sorry, guys, I'll talk to you later." As she waltzed over to the bar.

"Are you bloody kidding me?" Blaise exclaimed, looking absolutely crushed. "With THAT bloke? He's hideous!"

"Sorry, mate." Draco said sincerely, "Maybe he's dull."

They all glanced at Luna, who was happily laughing away at some joke the stranger had just told her. "He doesn't look very dull to me." Blaise pouted.

"So, how about that Quidditch game, huh?" Ginny said, in a desperate attempt to change the topic from her potential France plans. They all lightened up a little as Draco and Harry managed to find some common ground. She was thankful that they were both at least attempting to be friendly, despite the weird circumstances. Ginny and Fiona even managed to bond a little over her photoshoot at Fusion. Blaise was sitting at the table, seething, as he watched Luna and the stranger flirt. Ginny felt so bad for him, and she made a mental note to remember to tell Blaise that she likely wasn't interested in the man. That she was simply using him as a means to escape this dreadful intervention. Just as Ginny once again believed that the night may end on a high note the waiter strolled back to the table.

"Any more drinks?"

"Yes, please!" Ginny said eagerly.

Harry turned to her with a judging look, "Haven't you drank enough?"

Without even a second to think, Draco scoffed loudly. "Are you serious? It's her third drink."

Harry shot daggers at Draco, "I wasn't talking to you."

"Don't judge Ginny for having three drinks. Live a little." He said coolly. Fiona looked uncomfortable.

"Sorry, but I don't think it's required to be constantly drunk in order to 'live a little'. Although, clearly after spending time with you she's getting an influence."

"She's not constantly drunk!" Draco snapped. Ginny's face turned bright red as she put her head in her hands.

"Please don't argue over this. This is so stupid."

"No. Why does he think he should have a say in what you do with your life?" Harry asked, slamming his his glass of water on the table.

"Are you fucking joking me? Why do you have a say?"

"That guy isn't even hot. I'm way more attractive than him." Blaise muttered to no one.

"I have a say because I've been her friend for ten years."

"Well, it sure doesn't seem like you know her very well if you're judging her for how much she drinks."

"So you're saying that after spending – what – two months with her you know her better than I do?"
"Maybe I do."

"Draco!" Fiona hissed, looking embarrassed. Ginny felt so bad for her. Even if she was slightly jealous of Fiona, the poor girl didn't ask to be placed in this horrible situation.

"That's bullshit. Maybe if you hadn't spent half of your life being a death eater and actually gotten to know her, there would be an argument. BUT OH! Guess what! You did!" Harry shot.

"HARRY!" Ginny screamed at him but they both ignored her.

"She's obviously not even into him. Look, she keeps yawning." Everyone continued to ignore Blaise.

"Shut up, Potter. You don't know what you're talking about." Draco spat.

"Really? Enlighten me, then!"

"No."

"Yeah, because you know I'm right."

"No, it's because I'm not going to waste my breath explaining anything to that thick head of yours."

"Don't forget I saved your damn life, before!" Harry roared.

"And I saved your life!" Draco sneered in return.

"Please, just sit down and stop fighting." Ginny begged, her heart rate skyrocketing.

"No, Ginny. I'm sorry, this guy is an asshole and I don't see what you see in him."

"He's not that bad..." Fiona muttered sadly to herself.

"How am I the asshole?" Draco shouted, clenching his fists. "I'm the one who wants the best for Ginny in every regard. I'm the one who wants to see her succeed in life. All of you who all supposedly 'care' for her only support her if she's complying to your stupid conditions. I'M the one who sees that she is a talented witch and should pursue her passions, but all of you fucks would be happier if she was miserable, working in a damn joke shop!"

"All we want is what is best for her!" Harry shouted, gripping his water tightly.

"So do we!"

"SHUT THE FUCK UP. RIGHT NOW." Blaise slammed his hands on the table, his voice boomed in their ears, as he stood up to face them. "You're both being fucking embarrassing assholes right now. How old are you? Grow up!"

The table went silent and everyone stared at their drinks looking ashamed. He continued, "Listen, we all fucking love Ginny. We all want what is best for her. But for fuck sakes, Ginny has her own brain! Harry, she's going to travel for work whether you like it or not because that is her job. I do remember you travelling today and she didn't give a damn. She supported you instead."

You could see the look of regret on his face as Harry realized how big of a jerk he had been. Blaise then turned to Draco.

"And Draco, what the fuck are you doing? You've got this stunning woman beside you and you
spend the night screaming over Ginny? I know you hate Harry, but get your shit together." He spat and Draco looked at Fiona, apologetically, with a similar regretful face as Harry.

"And you, ladies!" Blaise directed to Ginny and Fiona, "You've both been a delight and I apologize on behalf of these morons for ruining your nights. Fiona, I hope you forgive Draco after tonight because he's usually half-decent. Ginny, I'm sorry this night didn't go as you hoped."

Ginny and Fiona nodded in appreciation. Blaise slammed his fists on the table, "OKAY. Now that that fucking stupid argument is over, we need to focus on the bigger issue at hand." They all stared at him blankly before he pointed at Luna. "That girl is the girl of my dreams and I adore her. She's wasting her time on that bloke because no bloke will treat her as good as this bloke." He pointed to himself, his chest heaving heavily as he spoke. "Now, I fucked up a couple weeks ago and almost let her get away from me, but after watching you twats scream at each other, it has made me realize that I'm so over this petty dramatic bullshit. Luna would be disgusted with both of you."

They all continued to stare at him, gawking. Ginny had never seen Blaise look so furious in her life and tears swelled in her eyes as she refrained from giving him the largest hug. He took a huge breath before he continued one last time, "Would it be crazy of me to just go over there and fucking steal her away from that chump and kiss her or something?"

"No, Do it!" Ginny cheered happily.

"Absolutely kiss her!" Harry even said, and Ginny smiled brightly at him.

"I don't know your relationship but you seem really into her so why not?" Fiona said awkwardly.

"If you don't do something I am going to kill you." Draco said warningly, shaking his finger at him as he was clearly frustrated by Blaise's recent depression.

"Thanks guys."

And the four watched from afar as Blaise determinedly marched towards Luna. They watched him as he gently tapped on her shoulder and they heard him say, "Luna, I'm bloody crazy about you." Luna's mouth dropped and the stranger crossed his arms looking irritated that Blaise was ruining his chances. Before Luna even had a chance to respond Blaise delicately brushed a strand of hair off her face and cupped her cheeks in his hand. Ginny saw Luna give a light nod, indicating that Blaise could continue. And he grabbed her by the waist and pulled her in passionately as pressed his lips on hers. Everyone who witnessed the grand romantic gesture cheered, and the stranger stomped away angrily. Ginny almost cried from how adorable the scene was as she saw Luna pull away quick enough to say, "It's about damn time, you idiot!" And resumed kissing Blaise.

"That. Is. So. Romantic." Fiona said, brushing a tear away. "I hardly even know these people and I'm crying."

"I didn't even think I liked Blaise but that was the greatest thing I've ever seen." Harry said in disbelief.

Ginny and Draco exchanged looks and couldn't stop themselves from laughing. "FINALLY." They both shouted and clinked their drinks together as they cheered. It seemed that all the previous tensions from earlier had evaporated, as they all admired Blaise, who really proved to be hero of the night. The four of them chatted merrily, as Harry, Luna, and Blaise bonded over their Hogwarts memories and Ginny, Draco, and Fiona discussed Fiona's life as a model. All previous jealousy seemed to evaporate from Harry as he laughed with Draco over an embarrassing story about Ginny he heard from Ron once.
Slowly the night dwindled down as Luna and Blaise happily left the bar, hand in hand. Harry paid for their bill and he and Ginny were about to part ways when Ginny said, "I need to talk to Draco for a minute alone. I'll be right back." He nodded and she tracked Draco down, who was heading down the street with his hand resting on Fiona's back.

"Hey! Draco! Can we…talk for a minute?"

Fiona nodded signalling she was fine with it and she led him down a dark alley away from any noise. She didn't really know what she wanted to say to him, but she knew she had to say something. Draco leaned beside Ginny with his hands in his pockets, looking down into her eyes.

Finally she began speaking, "Listen, about tonight – "

"I'm sorry about how I acted." He interrupted, looking embarrassed.

"And I'm sorry for how Harry acted."

"Well, I don't think it is your place to apologize for him, but thanks anyways." He said smiling, as he began to walk back towards Fiona.

"Wait, stop." Ginny sighed as she had one question nagging in her brain, "Why did you do it?"

"Do what?"

"I don't know…stand up for me I guess?"

His eyes fell for his shoes as he swayed back and forth on the balls of his feet. He then looked at the stars in the sky, and Ginny's heart began to race as it was evident he was desperately trying to organize his thought.

Finally, he sighed loudly, "I don't know. I guess I just don't like seeing you get treated that way. You're my friend."

"Just... friends… right?"

She looked in his eyes, searching for something. Any indication to answer the question that had been racking her brain all night. She wasn't sure what she was hoping to find. Blaise's comment to him regarding that he needs to 'get his shit together' and stop fighting with Harry over Ginny almost confirmed the question she had. He slowly took a step closer to her, causing Ginny to freeze in her spot, scared and excited of what might happen. But instead he simply shrugged his shoulders and pursed his lips.

"We should get back to our significant others. We don't want to keep them waiting."
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

A/N: Thank you so much for the feedback everyone <3. Love it or hate it, I appreciate everything! Also, I just posted a warning on the first chapter regarding characters being out of character. This is another one of those chapters that will likely aggravate people for the OOC-ness, which I apologize for, buuuuuut I've already written nearly the whole story and don't want to change anything. ;) Because I don't want to waste anyone's time, if you're going to absolutely hate the OOC-ness, wouldn't recommend reading. I absolutely appreciate the feedback though - I'm working on an original work and nearly fell into the same plot hole of people being too unrealistically forgiving. The feedback on this story helped me become aware of that glaring plot hole, so, many thanks!
Have an excellent Monday. <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The seventh of November would never be forgotten for Ginny Weasley. The store had finally opened that morning and within minutes the room flooded with rambunctious customers, eager to be among the first to see their unique emporium. None of them had expected the enormous crowd; They figured that the magazine brought more attention than they had originally anticipated. A large group of young girls swarmed around the cashier desk where Blaise and Draco stood, giggling and blushing as they whispered about the men. It appeared the magazine invented two new heartthrobs for teen girls to lust over.

Their potions were flying off the shelves at an alarmingly fast rate and the three of them struggled to keep things stocked while also socializing with the customers and journalists. Ginny's adrenaline was through the roof all day as journalists ran amok with their flashing cameras following behind…and she loved every second of it. Not even in her wildest dreams did she expect to be treated like a celebrity. And the best part was that she wasn't being praised for being a model, or even being Harry Potter's girlfriend, but she was being praised for her raw determination and accomplishments. For the first time in her life, people were taking her seriously. Not that she had doubted it before, but after that day Ginny would never ask herself if she had made the wrong decision in joining Draco and Blaise again.

"Miss Weasley," A tall, slender journalist with long blonde hair shoved her recorder in Ginny's face, "How does it feel to be part of a revolutionary industry? We understand that very few wizards or witches attempt to tackle such an ambitious economical task."

"Oh, it's incredible." She answered her lips in a permanent smile. "It's a little overwhelming, but my gosh, the most unbelievable and wonderful adventure of my life."

She politely excused herself from the journalist, who was reluctant to let her go without asking a few more questions and made her way through the busy crowd to speak with Draco.

"This is insane!" she exclaimed, "Were you expecting this many people?"

He shook his head looking dumbfounded, "Not even half."
"Are we going to run out of potions before the day is over?" Ginny asked, suddenly concerned.

He widened his eyes, puffed out his cheeks, and exhaled loudly. Cleary, he wasn't too confident as he responded, "Well, we currently have all 30 of our cauldrons brewing. It's going to be tight, but we only have a couple more hours until we close."

"Thank god we are fully staffed," She thought out loud and crossed her arms, leaning against the wall beside Draco, enjoying the sixty seconds of solitude. She looked at his face and noticed a quirky grin which she had never seen on his face before. "What's up with you?"

He let out a funny chuckle and shook his head, "This…this is better than any of my dreams. Everything is so surreal."

"You did it, man," she said smiling, "Proud of you."

His eyes snapped towards her, "I'm proud of us."

"Don't be a sap, Malfoy."

"Ginny!" Ginny turned her head to the familiar voice; her heart exploding with excitement as George waltzed towards her with open arms and bright, ecstatic eyes. She rushed towards him, throwing her arms around his neck, and he lifted her into a tight hug.

"I'm so glad you could make it!" She cried out happily.

"There's no way I would miss this," he said. "Wow…I mean, wow. This is incredible. I never realized what you were doing was this big."

"Believe me, neither did I," she giggled.

"Mum and Dad are here, too. They're just checking something out over there."

Ginny beamed, "Oh my gosh, I can't even describe how much it means to me that they're here. Is Ron and Hermione coming as well?"

"Ah, they couldn't get it off work but they said they'll try to make it this weekend."

"Cool," She said, and she felt Draco brush up beside her.

He stuck out his hand for George to shake and with a genuine smile he said, "Hi, it's George, right? It's good to see you again."

George's smile fell off his face and it was replaced with a cold glare. Ginny's heart sank and her mind instantly groaned, *Oh god, not this again. Not from George.* Her eyes darted to Draco and she saw his smile fade into a nervous expression. The tension grew and she wearily looked up at George. The moment she made eye contact his ice glare cracked, and he let out a jubilant laugh.

"I'm just messing with you, mate," he said. "It's good to see you, too."

Relief visibly swept over both Ginny and Draco and he exhaled loudly, "Oh, thank god."

"George, you're such a git," She laughed.

"Both of your faces were gold," he snorted before returning his friendly gaze to Draco. "Seriously, congratulations. To all three of you. No hard feelings from my end, anyone who helped my sister get out of my damn joke shop is good in my books."
"Thanks, that means a lot," Draco said honestly.

Ginny looked over George's shoulder and saw her mother and father hesitantly approaching them. Her mom seemed unable to look at Draco but her dad was admiring the store with an intrigued smile. She walked past George and Draco, who had begun discussing the business aspects of George's shop together, and greeted her parents.

"Mum, Dad! I'm so glad you're here," She exclaimed, pulling them into a deep hug.

"Of course we are here! This place is absolutely fascinating," Arthur said, as he craned his neck to get a view of everything. "This is really your business?"

"Yep!" She said happily, "Well, mine, Blaise's and Draco's. I'm not too sure where Blaise is, but here's Draco."

Ginny was about to pull her parents to say hello to Draco, but Molly stayed in her position and whispered, "No, Ginny. That's not necessary."

"Molly, be nice," Arthur said and Ginny was relieved by her dad's good heart. George and Draco stepped into the conversation; they both had huge grins on their face as if they just shared a particularly funny joke.

"Mum, dad, you remember Draco Malfoy?" George said, before noticing Molly's hesitation. "Don't worry, he doesn't bite."

He shook both of their hands, "It's great to see you again. Ginny has told me wonderful things about you." Ginny stared at Draco fondly, thanking him for being such a gentleman to her family.

"It's good to see you, too. Now, this place is astonishing. I heard it is largely inspired by muggle economics, correct? I'm very impressed," Arthur said honestly and Draco smiled in appreciation.

"Thank you, sir. It's been quite the journey getting here but it has been well worth it."

"Now, I don't know if Ginny told you, but I'm quite interested in Muggle lifestyles as well. I've got quite the muggle artifact collection at home…"

"That's fascinating, I would love to hear about it," Draco said with genuine enthusiasm and he, George, and Arthur slowly walked away from Molly and Ginny.

"Come on, Mum, let me show you the potion I invented," She said, pulling her mother to the stand that held her creation. The shelf that held it was nearly sold out, but she handed one to her mum anyways, "Here, it's on the house. Just put it on your face and it'll make you even more beautiful!"

Molly observed the bottle and her face held an unreadable expression as she traced the engraved logo with her fingers. She pursed her lips before finally looking at her daughter in the eyes and nodded, "I'm really proud of you, Ginny."

"Thanks, mum." Ginny said, feeling more thankful for those words than her mother probably knew. Molly looked at her feet, clearly struggling to find the words to explain her thoughts, "Listen. I'm never going to forgive that Malfoy boy, nor will I respect him…" She paused her words to admire the bustling store, "But this is really incredible. I can't believe I tried to stop you from letting this happen."

Ginny wrapped her arms around her mom, pulling in for another hug. It was the first time she felt
truly supported by her mother, and Harry wasn't even around to influence her decision. She pulled away and saw Blaise strolling before them, his arms overflowing with Ginny's potion to restock.

"Blimey, Ginny. This potion of yours is flying off the shelf – our goal for this month is trying to create a few more unique potions." He said, not noticing Molly as he breezed past her.

"Mum, this is Blaise Zabini. My other business partner," She explained, grabbing the potions from Blaise so he could shake Moly's hands.

"Oh, this is your mum? So good to finally meet you!" He said enthusiastically, flashing one of his classic Blaise smiles.

"It's a pleasure to meet you as well," she said politely, shaking his hand. "Congratulations on the success."

"Thank you! Yeah, it's been chaotic today. I'm glad you could make it in through the busy lineups."

"Hey, have you heard from Luna? She was supposed to be here with some Fusion journalists but I haven't seen her," Ginny asked.

"Nope, but I'm sure she'll show up soon. Are you two still going dress-shopping for the ball this weekend after work?"

Ginny nodded and said, "Right! That reminds me, are you and dad able to make it to the ball? I know it's at the Malfoy Manor, but trust me. It won't be weird."

Molly looked uncomfortable, "I'm sorry, honey. I would love to but we are both so busy that weekend..."

Ginny figured she was lying but shrugged her shoulders, "Ah, that's too bad. I'll let you know how it is?"

"For sure. Will you be bringing Harry?" Molly asked eagerly.

"Uh-huh."

"Oh, that makes me so happy to hear," She said, squeezing Ginny's shoulder. Blaise had to refrain from laughing at Ginny's embarrassed face.

"Anyways, Gin, I gotta go fill some stuff over there! Tell Luna to come find me when you see her, okay?"

"Sure thing!"

Molly gave Ginny a strange, suspicious look once Blaise disappeared, "Blaise sure seems eager to know about Luna's whereabouts..."

"Oh, yeah, Blaise is Luna's boyfriend." Molly's mouth dropped.

"Your Luna?"

"Yep."

She shook her head and chuckled in disbelief, "What a world we live in."

"Yep."
Relief flooded over them as the store finally cleared out and they felt satisfied as they twisted the "open" sign to read "closed". The shop was almost eerily silent in comparison the constant hum of excited chatter they heard throughout the day. They exchanged looks with each other, all of them sharing the same shocked stare.

"What a fucking rush!" Blaise cheered, "That was the best day of my life!"

"Oh my god, we are the fucking best!" Ginny shouted, feeling relieved to finally express the exhilaration they had been feeling all day, yet forced to remain composed in front of the cameras.

"Holy fuck, we crushed that," Draco said, as he conjured a bottle of champagne and three flutes. "Cheers, to actually doing it. There were times where I didn't think we would pull everything together but we nailed it."

"How much money did we make?" Blaise asked eagerly.

"Well, based on my calculations..." He glanced over his clipboard with their totals and looked ecstatic, "We hit a 47% profit margin, that's 17% more than what I hoped!"

"Are you joking me!?" Ginny exclaimed, jumping in her spot enthusiastically.

"No. I mean, of course, it'll lower a bit over time because the days won't always be that busy...but wow...not an ounce of me expected this."

"WE ARE THE BEST!" Blaise cheered happily as he poured himself another glass of champagne.

"This is perfect. It'll really impress all of the investors at the ball now that we have something to boast about. I can't wait." Draco said.

"God, we are going to be so frickin' rich," Ginny said, unable to believe the amount of wealth she is going to have. As someone who had lived in poverty her entire life, the concept of having riches rattled her mind.

"You're bringing Fiona to the ball, right?" Blaise asked Draco who nodded.

"Yeah, she's quite excited. Apparently, she's getting some sort of dress made specifically to the event. I don't quite get that myself, but hey, at least she's excited."

"Good! And Ginny's bringing Harry and I'm bringing Luna; looks like we are the most successful couples in London."

"Oh – speaking of Luna, I need to go! She had to rush back to her office after she stopped by here, I'm supposed to meet her there to find our dresses."

"Alright, see you Sunday," Draco said, and she gave him a quick hug and congratulated him again for all his hard work.

"Tell Luna I miss her!" Blaise called out as she left the store.

Ginny was thankful that they had been so busy at work preparing for their opening that she hardly had time to think about their heated gathering weeks ago or her and Draco's awkward moment in the alley. Although, as she stepped outside of the door, her work pressure finally relieved, it crept back into her mind. Anytime she thought about it she would mentally shove it to the back of her brain and simply tell herself, 'We are both dating other people. That was not a weird moment. You don't have time to deal with this today.' But now that she did have time, she was no longer able to convince
herself it was nothing. She was relieved that she was able to finally spend some one-on-one time with Luna, who was typically spending all of her free time with Blaise these days, to finally hash out her feelings.

The two girls walked down Diagon Alley, carrying ice-cream from Florean's ice cream parlor in before searching for their dresses. Ginny had just finished filling Luna in on her moment with Draco in the alley after the dramatics of the evening.

"Ginny, he's obviously into you."

"I don't know...

"Ginny, don't be stupid. Blaise told me all the things he said when he was fighting with Harry, how he 'defended your honor'. People don't just do that for anyone."

"Well, he didn't do it for just anyone…he said that he did it because he cares about me and that we are friends," Ginny said, trying to convince Luna that she was wrong as she took a bit out of her ice cream.

"Uhh…yeah. And then when you proceeded to ask him if you were 'just friends' he gave you some stupid, vague, Draco Malfoy response," Luna argued, "If he didn't like you he would have been horrified that you asked such a question."

"Well, I don't know. I mean, it's Draco. Sometimes he says stupid things for the sake of being mysterious. He thinks it's cute or something…no idea why," Ginny said, "And besides. I'm kind of with Harry now so it doesn't matter anyways."

"Yeah, what's going on with that?" Luna asked, "You said you were going to take it slow, yet he gets mad at you for wanting to travel for work? Since when did you become boyfriend and girlfriend?"

"Technically we aren't!" Ginny groaned in frustration, "We haven't actually had the 'are we official or not' talk yet. He just acts like we are…"

"Do you want to be?" Luna asked and Ginny's face fell.

"I don't know," Ginny cried, "I mean, he's great. It's Harry. He's wonderful and I really like him. It's just…” She trailed off, trying to search for the proper words.

"He pretends he's supportive and acts all civil around Draco now but it's blindly obvious to everyone that he still hates the idea of you and Draco being so close?" Luna said, improvising the end of Ginny's sentence.

"Yep, that pretty much sums it all up in a nutshell."

"Draco still hates Harry, too, you know?" Luna brought up causing Ginny to dart her eyes towards her.

"Really?"

"Yeah, apparently, any time you aren't around he's constantly bringing up how much of a git he is and how you could do better," She explained, "He thinks Draco likes you, too."

"Does he?" She asked, her neck snapping towards Luna.
"Yeah, he says he's noticed it for a while. Especially since you and Harry started dating – apparently he's been all 'sullen' and what not," Luna said before wistfully musing, "You know, Blaise is actually quite the sensitive and intuitive man."

"Well, aren't you blessed for choosing the more emotionally available of the two," Ginny drawled sarcastically, causing Luna to playfully shove her.

"All I'm saying is that I agree with Blaise."

Ginny contemplated Luna's argument and suddenly things started making sense, "You know, maybe you're right. I didn't tell you this…but we sort of had a moment. A couple moments actually…"

Luna swatted Ginny's shoulder, "Ginny!? Are you keeping little Ginny and Draco milestones from me?"

Ginny shrugged her shoulders, "I guess so. I just felt like if I kept it to myself then it would be easier to pretend it never happened, then I wouldn't have to spend my days dissecting what it meant."

"Fair enough. So what happened?"

Ginny sighed loudly, "Okay, so you know that night we all got drunk and you fell asleep with Blaise?" Luna nodded. "Well, the same thing sort of happened with Draco and I…we had this super long heart to heart about how much he hated being a death eater and how he regrets what he did in the war…then he fell asleep in my bed…and when he was asleep he wrapped his arms around me and essentially spooned me all night."

"Ginny! That's adorable, how did you keep this from me?"

"Well, I mean, he was asleep. He seemed super embarrassed by it in the morning so I figured it wasn't worth mentioning," She said and took a deep breath, "And then there was another moment…"

"What? Did he propose to you and you denied it saying, 'No, Draco, you clearly only like me as a friend,'" Luna mocked and Ginny rolled her eyes.

"Shut up, no. That did not happen," She huffed, "But umm…after I told my mum, Harry, Ron, and Hermione about the business and they spent a few hours screaming at me I came home and couldn't stop crying. Then Draco came over to grab something and he was so sweet…like, let me cry on his shoulder, and like, he was rubbing his hands through my hair. It was so nice. Then he put me to bed and slept on the couch because I asked him to…"

Luna gapped at Ginny, speechless, so Ginny continued, "Then, I dunno, things sort of changed after that. We started getting closer and spending more time alone. He started sort of flirting with me," She sighed and shrugged, "Then I started dating Harry and it seemed like he lost any interest he may have had."

"Are you joking me? He seems more into you than ever!"

"How? He's dating Fiona now."

"Uhh…yeah, in an attempt to heal his wounded heart."

"Oh, shut up, a wounded heart? That would be incredibly out of character for Draco."

"I don't know…finding the most famous model in the country to date in order to fix his broken heart
sounds like the most Draco-esque thing imaginable, if you ask me," Luna argued, "Not to mention he still seems to despise Harry, screams at him to defend you, then oh – there are the vague little comments in the alley that he said while staring longingly in your eyes under the moonlight."

Ginny absorbed Luna's argument and clicked her tongue, "Maybe you're right…"

"I am," she said proudly, "And listen, I think it would be a good idea to figure all of this out before you officially commit with Harry. In my humble opinion, you and Draco are much more suited for one another. I think you should go for it."

"…I'll think about it."

Ginny and Luna finished their dress shopping and headed separate ways. Ginny was exhausted after the busy day at work and promptly fell asleep. She thanked the gods that they decided to be closed on weekends and woke up feeling refreshed. Excited to have no plans that day, as Harry offered to help Ron and Hermione move into their new flat, she decided to use her free time to mull out her current romantic predicament. She was stuck between two wonderful men, one who has admitted to loving her for years, and one who can't seem to admit to even having a crush on her for the life of him.

She tried to imagine her future with Harry; she could picture it perfectly. The two would live happily, having Sunday night dinners at The Burrow, spend their free time playing chess with Ron and Hermione, probably pop out a few kids…ultimately be gradually torn away from her life with Draco and Blaise because Harry would eventually get frustrated with her traveling and spending time with them. She would probably eventually sell her shares in the company and be a stay-at-home mother as Harry would remain an auror. She frowned at this reality. She knew that nothing was certain – maybe Harry would come around and be truly supportive of her business? But was it worth the risk? Would she be able to forgive him if he ultimately decided that he couldn't? She didn't think she could…and she decided to shelve those questions as she was not ready to dive that deeply into her emotions.

Then she tried to imagine her future with Draco. She couldn't picture anything but the uncertainty gave her a rush of excitement. All she could imagine were the feelings of adventure, fun and new experiences, and an unconditional support for her passion. The feelings gave her butterflies and she couldn't help but smile at the uncertainty. Since befriending Draco her life has a never-ending rollercoaster of different opportunities and she soaked up every minute. She stared blankly at the white ceiling, hoping she would find some sort of answer in the blank image. But her thoughts were interrupted by a gentle knock on the door. She opened the door and couldn't help but smirk at Draco, who stood in front of her.

"Hey, I know you hate it when we show up unannounced – but I've got to find a suit for the ball tomorrow. Was wondering if you'd want to join me?"

*He fuckin' loves you, Ginny.* She told herself, nodding smugly as if she just stumbled upon the world's greatest revelation.

"Sure."

They strolled down Diagon Alley, heading towards Madam Malkin's clothing shop. Ginny made sure to note how comfortable he appeared to be around her, how many times he would 'accidentally' brush up against her, or gently touch her back to guide her in a direction. Every touch he made caused Ginny to shake her head in disbelief, as she told herself, *Of COURSE, he likes you. How have you been so blind all this time?*
"So, no plans with Harry tonight?" He asked innocently as they walked into the clothing shop; Madam Malkin promptly began taking his measurements.

"Nope, just me all day," She answered, "What about you? Are you seeing Fiona?"

"Nah, I figured we could use a couple days apart."

"And you chose to spend your free time with me? I'm honored." She said with a flirty voice and he smiled.

"What can I say? I prefer surrounding myself with the best company," He said and winked. Ginny felt a chill crawl down her spine and her brain told her, *He wants you sooo bad, Ginny.*

"Oh, your father is a wonderful man, by the way," He started, and Ginny smiled warmly, "He thinks very highly of you. When you were with your mum he wouldn't stop raving about how proud he was of you. It was nice to hear…"

"Ugh, you have no idea how much of a relief it is to hear that!" She stated, "My mum is slowly warming up to it, and she *did* say she was incredibly proud of me, but you can tell she's still rattled by us all hanging out."

"Ah, baby steps, I guess."

"George seemed very fond of you," She added and he laughed.

"That guy is brilliant. I feel like an ass for spending so much of my life judging your family when I could have been befriending them."

"Yeah, all you've got to do is become buddy-buddy with Ron and you'll be good to go," She said, laughing.

"Ha, yeah, I feel like that's sort of a situation like Harry… no matter how much we've all changed, seems like the damage has been done."

He finished getting his measurements and picked out a very costly suit and paid. They strolled around Diagon Alley aimlessly, playing their usual 'questions' game.

"If you had the opportunity to travel anywhere for work, where would you want to go?" He asked, and Ginny bit her lip as she contemplated it.

"Oh, god…well, I've always wanted to explore Ireland. Or maybe Germany. But America would be great too…then there's France…" She laughed at her exceedingly long list, "Oh, god. I don't know, I'd go anywhere at this point! What about you?"

"At this point, France is all I can think about, although maybe I'm biased because it seems to be the most likely at this point," He said, "Can you imagine how fun it'll be – me, you, Blaise, probably Luna, exploring France?" Ginny made a quick note to herself – *Hmm, no mention of Fiona.*

"I genuinely cannot even fathom how amazing it'll be because the idea just seems too incredible. I can't believe it's probably going to happen." She said as she noticed he quickly brushed her hair with his hand.

"Sorry, you had a leaf in there," He said before clicking his tongue, "I've got to ask – you wouldn't ever let Harry talk you out of this, would you?"
"What? No!" She exclaimed, "If we get the France deal, I'm going. Without a doubt."

"Would you bring him?"

"Pfft, no," She said, "He's not even my boyfriend technically, you know?"

Draco's eyes widened in surprise, "Oh really? Since when?"

"Since forever," She shrugged. "I mean, we are dating, but nothing is official."

"Interesting…"

"What about you and Fiona? Are you getting serious?" She asked, trying to hide any hopefulness in her voice.

"Ahh, I don't know. We get along really well, she's very kind, and not to mention stunning," Ginny rolled her eyes at that comment. "But I don't know if I see it going anywhere."

"How come?" She asked eagerly.

He shrugged, "Can't really be myself around her, I guess. She's sort of serious. I've been spending too much time with you and Blaise, I'm developing a complex."

Ginny laughed, "Yeah, you and me both."

"So what do you want to do now?"

Ginny pursed her lips as she thought. She knew Harry would be furious if he knew what she was about to ask, but Luna's voice rang in her ears: 'Figure all of this out before committing to Harry.'

"Do you want to come over for some drinks?" She asked slyly and he looked down into her eyes and smirked.

"Sure."

Upon arriving at their flat, Draco made himself at home as he took a seat on Ginny's patio. The moon and stars were shining brightly and a crisp autumn breeze fluttered through their hair. Ginny handed Draco a beer and took a seat next to him on the patio sofa, arguably closer than usual. They began discussing what kind of potions they want to invent next, what kind of music they preferred, whether Luna and Blaise would stay together forever. Ginny mused over how fluid their conversation always was. There were hardly any silences, and when there were, they were peaceful. She often felt like she had to struggle to make conversation with Harry, especially because she felt she had to censor any conversations that were too focussed on Draco, despite her spending the larger portion of her days with him.

Draco lifted his eyes to the stars; the moonlight illuminated his face and Ginny subtly admired him as they basked in the comforting silence. She loved spending time with just him on the patio – she felt it had been far too long since they had a day like this. Draco took a large breath before speaking again, "It's really beautiful out here, isn't it?"

"Yeah, it is. I find I spend most of my nights at home just sitting out here, watching the constellations go by," she replied, running a hand through her hair and admired the night sky.

"Do you ever just look at the stars and think about how insignificant we all are?" He asked, and Ginny snapped her head towards him.
"What do you mean?"

"I mean all of this," he said, motioning his hands wider, "All of us. We all have our own lives with our own problems and goals, but in the grand scheme of things, in the entire galaxy, we are just tiny insignificant specks. Nothing matters."

"Well, that's very apathetic of you," She said with a light giggle.

"I find it very liberating."

"You find it liberating to feel insignificant?" She asked, raising her eyebrows.

"Absolutely. I know I probably sound like a nut job, but I mean it," He said with a slight smile, "It kind of helps me let go of everything. If I ever find myself too far in my own head I just remind myself that I'm just one of 7 billion specks on earth, trying to figure out how to live, and that none of us really know what we are doing. We all just kind of wing it and sometimes it works out, and if it doesn't, we can just move to another location with a billion different specks and start new."

Ginny nodded in understanding but remained silent, figuring he had more to say. Sure enough, he opened his mouth again, "If things didn't work out with this business, if people weren't able to get over the fact that I'm a Malfoy, it was comforting to know I could have just gone back to North America, or anywhere else in the world. And I could have started fresh; no one would know of my existence or my history. Because outside of this area I'm insignificant. No one cares," He sighed and a peaceful smile crept on his face, "It was a liberating and humbling realization."

Ginny smiled at Draco's unexpected philosophy; for such a seemingly arrogant man it was surprising to hear him talk about how much he appreciated feeling insignificant. She decided to make light of the situation and joked, "While that is all very profound; I'm offended that you would abandon Blaise and me if this hadn't worked out."

He smirked playfully at her, "Well, I would have dragged you both along, of course," He said as he clasped his hands behind his head. He took a deep breath and sighed, "See? These are the kind of conversations I wish I could have with Fiona."

Ginny's heart began racing as she stared at his handsome features; he looked calm, as though he was in a state of tranquility. She felt special knowing that he was able to be so relaxed in her presence. This is how it should be, she told herself. His eyes shifted towards her and she noted that their lips were only a few inches away. They sat for a moment, looking deeply into each other's eyes. This is it, Ginny, this is your moment. Just do what Blaise did and kiss him! He's practically asking for it!

Her heart raced even faster as she let her eyelids flutter shut, as she inched her lips towards his, placing them gingerly upon his. She expected him to eagerly welcome the kiss; to grab her hair and pull her closer. But no, the second her lips made contact with his, she felt his face jolt away from hers. Her eyes shot open to see Draco looking shocked, inching as far away from her as possible.

"Ginny, what the hell!?" He shouted as he jumped up from the sofa, looking bewildered at her actions.

"I-I'm so sorry!" She stuttered out, gaping at her own drastic error, trying to desperately justify her actions, "I'm so drunk!"

"You are? You've had two drinks?"

"Yes! I'm so wasted right now..." she lied, as she tried steady her breath.
"Listen, Gin, I'm sorry if I mislead you in any way…but we can't – this can't – happen." He said, stumbling over his words. He ran a hand through his hair nervously.

"No, I know. I was just…messing around?" She winced as she knew nothing she could say would make this better.

"Are you okay?" He asked, genuinely concerned, as her face turned redder by the second.

"I'm great, honestly!"

"Should I go home?"

"Maybe? Yes?" She desperately wanted him to leave as soon as possible but she tried not to sound too eager.

"Okay…umm, I'll see you tomorrow? For the ball?"

"Uh-huh! Can't wait!" She said with a huge fake smile plastered on her face. He stared at her sadly for a moment, before nodding and letting himself out.

Ginny sat in that spot, slumped into the cushions with a blank stare on her face, for what felt like hours. She kept replaying the incident in her head, every time feeling more and more embarrassed, but she couldn't stop thinking about it. She looked at the stars and wished she could feel like an 'insignificant speck' because at that moment she felt like the world's largest idiot.

Her feet finally dragged her inside to her bathroom. The entire way she was mentally cursing Luna for convincing her that Draco like her, she cursed Blaise for convincing Luna that Draco liked her, and most of all she cursed Draco for being so unnecessarily flirty if he never had feelings for her. She turned on the tap of her bathtub, and slowly slid in it like a zombie, hoping the warm water would soothe her worries. She grabbed her wand and charmed the water to emit her colorful bubbles and she watched as dark blue and emerald green bubbles flooded the bath. And it was that moment that she realized that the emerald green bubbles she had conjured before symbolized her feelings for Draco, but this time they were shrouded with the dark blue depressing bubbles. Even the water was feeling her confusing heartbreak.

She sat in the water, trying to force herself to cry, but no tears would come. She silently resolved that her future with Harry was infinitely better than her lack of future with Draco as she closed her eyes and tried to let the water wash away her agonizing embarrassment and heartache.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Oooohhhhhhh yeah.... One of the hardest chapters I've written. So much cringe. Yikes. Stay tuned to see how this mess gets resolved!
Chapter Twelve

Chapter Notes

A/N: Thank you sooooooo much for the reviews, guys!
Just a little disclaimer - I have this story posted on FF.net, but for this chapter, I originally had song lyrics in it. I edited them out because I don't think you can have lyrics on this site (I could be wrong, but better safe than sorry.) as well as I did a little editing. So basically, if you've by chance seen this on FF.net and it's a little different it is still my work and I didn't steal it ahhaha.

There is a scene in this chapter that involves a dance, and I would ABSOLUTELY 10/10 recommend listening to the song "Carin at the Liquor Store - The national" during it because it is absolutely beautiful and inspired this entire scene, even before I started writing.
Anyways, I hope you enjoy it! Not my favorite chapter but an important chapter.

"RIIIIINGGGG."

Ginny’s alarm clock sounded at ten in the morning. She groggily peeled her eyes open and winced at the burning sunlight. For a few dazed moments, she had no recollection of the previous night and she wondered why she was dreading this day so much. Then it came back to her.

"Ginny, what the hell!?“ Draco’s voice echoed in her mind as her brain over exaggerated his disgust towards her.

“Nope,” she muttered out loud, “Not ready to deal with this today.” And promptly snapped her eyes shut and fell back into a restless sleep.

An hour later the alarm clock shouted at her again. Her eyes fluttered open and she took a deep breath.

"Listen, Gin, I'm sorry if I mislead you in any way…but we can't – this can't – happen."

She moaned loudly and pulled the blankets over her head and forced herself to fall asleep; the only thing stopping her malicious brain from mocking her with the painful memory. This happened four more times. Finally, at 2 pm, Ginny let out another agonizing groan as she flipped the blankets off from her. It would have been easy to stay in bed all day, or even for the rest of her life, but unfortunately, she had to attend the Malfoy’s ball that was held in their honor in a mere five hours. She begrudgingly pulled herself out of bed and stumbled to her mirror. Her reflection was daunting; her skin was pale, dark circles traced her tired looking eyes, and her hair was in a hundred knots. She scowled at herself and quickly wondered if she could fake sick to get out of this dreadful party. She sighed loudly and resolved that despite her crushing embarrassment, she would regret it for the rest of her life if she missed the ball.

Dragging herself into the kitchen to pour herself a cup of coffee and stared at the foreboding balcony. She could practically see herself sitting on the sofa, leaning over to kiss Draco as he revolted away.
She narrowed her eyes at the imaginary figures and told herself she needed a new balcony.

She had a long shower, used her skin-brightening potion to fix her ghoulish appearance, and began working on her makeup. As she brushed her eyelashes with mascara, making them appear much longer than usual, she felt determined to make herself look as beautiful as physically possible. For the simple reason to subtly remind Draco what he is missing out on; even though it appears he doesn’t care regardless. She pulled out the dress she bought that week with Luna and traced her fingers along the soft material. It was an emerald green satin dress that shined when the light hit it just right. As she put it on she felt satisfied. It was long, even touching the ground as she walked, her back was nearly completely exposed, and the plunging neckline gave the illusion that she had more cleavage than she actually had. She smiled at her reflection as she traced her hip bone. The dress fit her so perfectly that if you looked close enough you could almost them. It was by far the most elegant and expensive article of clothing she had ever owned.

She looked at the clock which read 6:30. She put the final touches on her hair, which she had styled in loose curls traveling down her back, and anxiously awaited Harry’s arrival. She couldn’t believe that she had to spend the entire evening socializing with both Draco and Harry, and she cursed herself for choosing the worst possible timing to try to kiss Draco. She had gotten so lost in thought she didn’t even hear Harry walk through her front door and into her bedroom, where she was sitting on her bed, fidgeting with her cheap fake diamond necklace.

“Hey, I let myself in, I – “ Harry stopped mid-sentence as he spotted Ginny, with a trance-like expression, sitting on her bed. He quickly stammered out, “G-Ginny, you look…wow. I’ve never seen you like this. You look unbelievable.”

Ginny slowly raised her eyes to Harry with a blank expression. She observed how handsome he was, how happy he was to see her, how fucking available he was. If she told him that moment she wanted to marry him he would bend down on one knee and propose. She gaped at this almost-perfect man in front of her and it was unbeknownst to her how she ever contemplated throwing him away for Draco Malfoy. She stepped slowly towards him and Harry’s face grew concerned.

“You alright, Ginny?”

She reached him and gently ran her hands through his hair for a second before passionately pressing her lips to his. Much to her delight, he did not jolt away. She pulled him in deeper, appreciating every inch of his body, as she hungrily bit his lower lip. Finally, Harry pulled away.

“Gin, what’s gotten into you?” He asked, laughing and looking flushed.

“Nothing, come on, let’s have some fun,” she muttered seductively and began unbuttoning the buttons of his white dress shirt as she pulled him back into another desirous kiss. He hesitated to push her away again for a minute, but eventually, found the motivation to pull away.

“Hey, come on, we’ve got to go. The party starts in ten minutes.”

“I don’t care,” Ginny said hurriedly and tried to pull Harry back towards her but he managed to withstand her petite force.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” Harry asked again, concerned.

“Yeah…I’m great actually,” She said as she gulped, “Things just make more sense suddenly…”

“I don’t understand?”

Ginny suddenly snapped out of her weird behavior and lightly brushed him on, “Don’t worry it,” she
said, laughing. “You’re right, though. We should be going.” She grabbed his hand and they apparated outside of the majestic Malfoy Manor.

The manor was grand in every way imaginable. Extravagant fountains were strewn throughout the elegant courtyard. Majestic shrubs were carved into dignified magical creatures; from dragons to phoenixes. Floating candles illuminated the walkway leading up to the handsome mahogany doors. Ginny and Harry both observed their surroundings in bewilderment. Even Harry appeared to be impressed. A butler stood at the front doors and nodded politely as they opened the door for them.

Harry’s eyes widened as he took in the view of the exquisite ballroom and muttered into Ginny’s ear, “Wow, it’s a lot brighter than I remember.” It was true; it appeared the Malfoys had done some renovating since Harry was there during the war. What was once described as a dark, dreary, foreboding dungeon had been turned into a luxurious pearly white area with golden highlights added wherever possible. The ‘dance floor’ was plated with gold, and shimmered in the light as happy, beautifully dressed couples danced upon it. Ginny observed all of the people; there must have been over two hundred! And there were so many familiar faces. She saw Professor Slughorn eagerly talking to a bored looking woman she didn’t recognize, Dedalus Diggle, who was once part of the Order of the Phoenix, was happily talking to Professor Flitwick in a secluded corner. Harry appeared very relieved at the site of all the friendly faces, clearly symbolizing that the Malfoys were not evil.

Ginny quickly spotted her Luna, Blaise, Draco, and Fiona, happily chatting over glasses of champagne. Ginny gulped as she watched Fiona drape her arm around a smiling Draco. She looked stunning, wearing a black and silver ball gown, but Ginny was relieved that her dress could potentially rival Fiona’s this time.

Luna was the first to notice Ginny and Harry, and she happily called out, “There they are, hey guys!”.

Ginny noticed Draco’s happy smile falter as he made eye contact with Ginny. She time temporarily froze as she watched his eyes widen and quickly scan her dress, his mouth falling open a little bit. Finally, his eyes fell back on her eyes, and time resumed. His joyful smile resumed and he continued his conversation with Fiona. Ginny mustered up her own fake, friendly smile as she linked arms with Harry, and they strode towards the group.


She really did. She was wearing a floor-length Ravenclaw-blue dress and her hair was sleek and straight. She reminded Ginny a little bit of Fleur on her wedding day.

“Look at you. Good call on the dress,” Luna said, pulling Ginny in for a hug.

“I think it is safe to say that all these women look stunning tonight,” Blaise said smoothly, gently kissing Luna on the top of her head. He looked so happy to be with her.

“How’ve you been, Harry?” Draco asked, and Ginny noticed that he seemed a little awkward in his presence. Ha, good, she thought, smirking to herself. Even though she knew she was the one who messed up last night.

“Really good, and you?”

“Can’t complain, attending this unbelievable ball in our honor, after all,” he said, regaining a little more smugness.

“Yeah, it looks great,” Harry said tightly.
Draco nodded and turned to Ginny, “So, um, I know you’ve just arrived but my parents are waiting with Pierre Descartes, the French investor. He’s unable to stay late so he would love to speak with us as soon as possible,” he spoke almost too formally, and Ginny had to stop herself from rolling her eyes.

“Sure, whenever is fine,” she nodded.

“Come on, Fiona, Harry, shall we try some of the hors-d’oeuvres while we let these three charm some old men?” Luna suggested and Fiona and Harry both snickered and followed her.

“Alright, you ready?” Blaise asked Draco and Ginny. Draco looked confident however Ginny’s face fell a little.

“I’m a little nervous…what do I even say?”

“Just be yourself,” Draco said, “I’ll cover most of the discussion, I assume, but if he asks you any questions just answer honestly.”

Ginny nodded, “Let’s give ‘er a whirl, I suppose.”

They waltzed up the long majestic ivory staircase with golden handrails which lead to a private seating area. They walked in silence and Ginny tried to avoid Draco’s eyes without seeming too obvious. Repeatedly, she told herself to remain professional and that the sooner this night is over the sooner she can move on from this awkwardness. She almost lost herself in her pep-talk until she felt Draco’s hand press against the middle of her back, almost instinctively, as he would often do it as they walked together. This time, instead of smiling happily to herself, her neck quickly snapped towards him and she shot him an icy glare warning him not to touch her.

“Sorry,” he muttered, as he quickly pulled his hand away from her. Ginny noticed Blaise had witnessed the event as he shot them both a puzzled look, to which Ginny and Draco simply shrugged.

As they reached the top of the staircase Ginny’s heart leaped as she saw Lucius Malfoy and Narcissa Malfoy. They both looked very posh, both with their silver blonde hair which matched Draco’s. Narcissa was still glamorous despite her age, she radiated elegance as she spoke calmly to the two unfamiliar men in front of her. Lucius, who once terrified Ginny, had a sense of humbleness about him, and she briefly noted that he was no longer carrying around that silly serpent staff. One of the other men noticed their presence and nodded curtly in their direction.

“Ah, Mister Malfoy, it is good to see you again,”

“Hello, Mister Kant, a pleasure to see you as well,” Draco said formally and shook his hand. Ahh, so this is Mister Kant. The man who made all of this possible. Ginny thought to herself. She scanned his appearance. He was short and stout with a balding head and a thick handlebar mustache. He reminded Ginny of a very wealthy walrus.

“Draco, darling,” Narcissa sang and she waltzed towards their group, pulling Draco in a motherly embrace. “And Blaise, so nice to see you. How is your mother doing?”

“Very well,” he stated, as he welcomed her hug, “she insists you two must get together for tea, sometime.”

“Miss Weasley,” Lucius nodded towards her with a gentle smile pulling at his lips, “It’s great to finally see you again, under more favorable conditions.”
Despite the obvious change of hearts everyone had experienced, Lucius Malfoy being kind would forever leave her taken aback. Despite her shock, she managed to stammer out, “Y-you as well, sir.”

Narcissa examined Ginny up close and smiled brightly, “My, my son was not lying when he said you grew up to be a beautiful young woman. I remember when you were just a child, my, where has the time gone?”

Ginny noticed Draco roll his eyes, but she blushed at Narcissa’s warm words, “Why, thank you. You look astonishing as well.”

Narcissa clasped her hands over Ginny’s and beamed, “Welcome to our home. You are welcome here anytime.”

“Shall we get to business?” Draco asked, rubbing his hands together.

“Yes, excellent idea,” Mister Kant said turning to the last man Ginny didn’t recognize. “Draco, Ginevra, Blaise - this is Pierre Descartes. He is the founder of several successful businesses throughout France and is interested in yours, especially after hearing the great success you three had this previous week.”

Mister Descartes was a tall, slender, pale man with a head full of thick black hair and dark eyes. He appeared intimidating and serious, and Draco gulped slightly before breezing towards the man confidentially.

“It’s great to finally meet you, sir,” he said as he shook his hand, “I’ve been following your work since I was a boy. You’ve always been an inspiration to me,”

The man opened his mouth and with a French accent he spoke, “It’s always nice to be an inspiration.”

Draco nodded, unsure of what to respond with, and turned to Ginny and Blaise, “These are my partners, Ginny Weasley and Blaise Zabini.”

They both shook the man’s hand and took a seat in a circle on the comfortable sofas. Ginny’s hands felt clammy as she realized this was the first meeting she’s ever attended, as Draco typically dealt with this, and she felt terribly unprepared. Despite being angry at Draco, she was relieved she had such a competent business partner. She sat beside Blaise who appeared cool and confident, probably having no fear at all.

“So? What are propositioning me with?” asked Mister Descartes. He sounded bored as if they were wasting his time.

Draco trembled a little as he conjured a briefcase with his wand, pulling out a stack of papers Ginny had never seen before. He cleared his throat as he handed them over, “As you can see here; our presumed cash-flow budget is very profitable considering the average profits off of each potion we create. It takes into consideration our operating budget, which is typically very low, as well as our Static…”

Draco continued giving Mister Descartes the financial details of their business. Ginny and Blaise exchanged blank stares, as neither of them had much experience in finances. Mister Kant, Mister Descartes, Lucius, and Draco continued talking in what seemed like a different language as Ginny and Blaise tried to keep their eyes from glazing over.

Finally, Mister Descartes paused as he set down the papers. Clasping his hands together and resting his chin on his fists, he narrowed his eyes at Draco. “Well, these are very impressive numbers and I
can tell you’ve done your research. What exactly is your goal in France?”

Draco nodded and took a deep breath before speaking confidently, “Well, first we would like to open a store in Paris. After six months, if the profits are good, we would like to expand to Lyon and Marseille,” he proposed. “And from there on we would like to begin expanding to other countries.”

Mister Descartes nodded, “That is quite the ambition for such a young group of people,” his cold gaze turned towards Ginny and Blaise and they instantly fixed their slumping posture. “Tell me, girl, do you ever feel that perhaps you or these young men are too immature for such a conquest?”

Lucius interjected, “Pierre, I have full confidence in my so – “

“I wasn’t asking you,” Mister Descartes cut him off and turned his gaze back to Ginny, “So?”

Ginny frowned over the fact that she was getting singled out over the boys but confidently shook her head. “No, that has never been a concern. We might be young but we are determined and passionate about this; we will stop at nothing to make it happen.”

Draco smiled at Ginny’s response before Blaise piped up, sounding more mature than his usual goofiness, “I can assure you, sir, our age will never be an issue.”

Mister Descartes clenched his jaw together in thought before speaking, “Alright, I’ll tell you what,” he paused, and Draco leaned forward excitedly. “After a month I want you to send me an updated file of your finances. Assuming you have continued to turn a high profit; I will be happy to meet you at my office in Paris and we can discuss further expansion.”

Smiles broke over their faces and Draco happily shook his hand, “Thank you, sir, you won’t regret it.”

“I hope I don’t,” he nodded, “I must be off, though. I hope you enjoy the rest of your evening. Lucius, Narcissa, thank you as always for being such gracious hosts.” And with that, he turned on his heel and swept down the stairs without another word.

“Congratulations, all three of you,” Narcissa beamed.

“Yes, congratulations.” Mister Kant began, “I must say, I had similar concerns as him when I first signed with you. But I can tell you are quite the unique trio. I expect I will continue seeing great things from you.”

The next few hours were spent socializing with the rest of the guests. Things with Draco began to get less weird throughout the night. It was hard to be too angry at him when he just totally nailed the most important business meeting of their lives so far. She was thankful that most of their time spent together was having small talk with strangers so she wasn’t forced to think about unrequited crush too much. Finally, she felt they had socialized more than enough, and returned to their respective dates.

Harry and Ginny were dancing to a slow song on the dance floor. She was happily filling him in on her good news. She noted that he seemed pleasant enough about it and that politely bit his tongue at the mention of a Paris trip. She looked over Harry’s shoulder and saw Luna and Blaise happily dancing as he dramatically twirled her. She smiled warmly at the happy couple. Once the song ended Harry politely excused himself from Ginny so he could talk to Slughorn. He gave her a quick peck on the lips and strolled away.
She continued watching Blaise and Luna dance, and she admired how easy things were with them. She couldn’t help but feel a little jealous over their unconditional support for each other’s careers. They seemed to be a match made in heaven – both being so unique and quirky, it’s no wonder they couldn’t find anyone compatible enough to date until they met each other. They fit like two pieces of a puzzle. Her gaze shifted towards the beautiful Fiona and handsome Draco as he expertly dipped her sensually. Peeling the stunning model back towards him, she ran her hands through his hair and gently kissed him on the lips. Ginny looks at her feet, sadly, as she tried to refrain from feeling jealous.

She smiled as she saw Blaise head in her direction as Luna had excused herself from the dance.

“How’s my favorite redhead doing?”

“How many other redheads do you know?”

“Well, there’s your entire family…let’s just say you’re my favorite out of them.”

“Thanks,” she giggled.

“So, how are you? You seem a little…off tonight?”

“Oh? No, no, I’m fine,” She said, silently praying she hid her emotions well.

He looked down at her skeptically and traced her gaze to Draco and Fiona dancing. “Are you sure?”

She shrugged, “I don’t know.”

His face was full of concern and he wrapped an arm around her shoulder, “Hey, what’s going on?”

She looked in his eyes for a second before turning them to her feet. For some reason, she felt like she couldn’t lie to Blaise in that moment. Muttering to her feet she said, “Last night…I...tried to kiss Draco and he shut me down.”

Blaise’s face fell dramatically and he pulled her into a comforting hug, “Fuck, Gin, you’re kidding me.”

“I wish,” she replied coldly.

“I really, really thought he would have gone for it.”

She inhaled deeply and said, “Yeah, I heard. You and me both.”

Blaise looked towards Draco and scowled before giving a protective glance towards Ginny, “Are you going to be okay?”

“Yeah – I mean. It was probably a blessing in disguise. I’m with Harry, after all,” she said as if she was trying to convince herself.

He stared at her frowning for a minute until he suddenly grew a mischievous grin. He reached in his pocket and pulled out a long velvet box.

“These,” he started as he opened the box to reveal two large cigars, “Are Draco’s favorite cigars. I got him and I one to celebrate if the meeting went well. Do you want to smoke his?”

Ginny couldn’t help but laugh at Blaise’s funny revenge. She didn’t smoke, but she couldn’t deny that it would be a satisfying subtle jab at Draco. She looked up Blaise and flashed him what felt like
“Totally.”

“Great, let’s track down Luna then go outside.”

They quickly found Luna, grabbed a bottle of champagne, and Ginny tried to steal Harry away from Slughorn, but the old potions teacher wouldn’t allow it. Standing in the fresh air, Blaise lit Ginny’s cigar and she took a large puff, resulting in her instantly coughing hysterically.

“God, how do you smoke these?” She coughed.

“Here, you just do little puffs. See, Luna’s got the idea,” They looked at Luna who looked entirely out of character as she puffed on the oversized cigar.

“Do I look classy or what?” She asked, as she expertly smoked.

“You look ridiculous,” Ginny laughed, leaning against the edge of the beautiful balcony. She wasn’t sure if it was the refreshing air or the slight high off the cigar, but she felt better for the first time all day.

“Draco is an idiot,” Luna muttered as she poured the three of them a bottle of champagne.

“Seriously. I can’t believe him,” Blaise said bitterly, “I could have sworn he’s been infatuated with you for ages.”

“Did he ever actually tell either of you he liked me?” Ginny asked doubtfully, and the two hesitantly shook their heads no. “I thought so. I guess we all just interpreted what he was doing wrong…”

“There’s no way,” Blaise said confidently, “I’ve seen the way Draco is with women…you were different.”

“Well, clearly I wasn’t,” Ginny said coldly. “You should have seen his face, he looked disgusted…oh, god I’m so mortified.” She put her face in her hands and groaned.

“Don’t worry, Gin,” Luna said comfortingly. “We all make an ass of ourselves at some points…”

“It’s true. When I made an ass of myself on Luna and I’s first date she couldn’t even look at me for weeks.”

“It’s true, Gin. It was really, really bad.” Luna said. Ginny giggled.

“You’re hotter than Fiona,” Blaise said bluntly, which prompted Luna to swat him on the shoulder.

“You’re lucky you’re talking about Ginny and she’s sad right now otherwise I would slap you,” she said warningly, although couldn’t refrain from smiling.

“Yeah, but you’re the most beautiful woman in the world,” he said coyly, and Luna blushed.

“Oh my god,” Ginny rolled her eyes, “You are both so cute I could vomit.”

She took a puff off her cigar, finally getting the hang of it, and looked at the stars. “Do you think it’ll be weird at work?”
Blaise shrugged, “Honestly if I know Draco at all, he’ll be able to pretend it never happened. I guess it depends on whether you can.”

Ginny frowned before stating, “I think I’ll need a couple days before I’m back to normal.”

Their conversation was interrupted to see Draco waltzing outside narrowing his eyes at their cigars. “Hey? Where’s mine?”

Ginny couldn’t help but chuckle at Draco’s appalled face and Blaise replied, “Well, I like Ginny more so she’s my new cigar buddy.”

Draco rolled his eyes and grabbed Blaise’s out of his hand, inhaling deeply. He turned to Ginny and casually said, “How’s your night, Ginny? I’ve barely talked to you.” Blaise and Luna both visibly cringed at the oh-so-casual-awkward question.

“It’s good.”

“Where’s Harry?”

She clicked her tongue and shrugged, “Dunno, inside somewhere.”

He seemed to pick up on her short answers and looked at his feet. He looked at Blaise and Luna’s uncomfortable faces and it dawned on him that he was likely the topic of conversation before he arrived. He turned back to Ginny and asked, “Would you like to dance with me?”

She furrowed her brow towards him and answered icily, “I’m okay, thanks.”

“Come on, it’ll be fun.”

She looked down at her feet and shook her head, “No, no. I should find Harry, I’ve barely seen him all nig – “

“Ginny,” he interrupted and grabbed her hand looked at her with pleading eyes, “Please.”

She swallowed hard and looked at Blaise and Luna who both shrugged, showing they were both clueless as to what she should do. She looked back in Draco’s eyes and frowned as she remembered being rejected last night. She really didn’t want to be offered a pity dance – but she also knew it would be weirder at work if she turned him down. She rolled her eyes and nodded. He grabbed her by the hand and led her to the glamorous dance floor.

A slow, sad, piano ballad filled her ears as she positioned herself stiffly with Draco. She made sure you could fit at least a ruler in between their bodies as avoided his stare. He gripped his hand around her waist and his touch made her shiver. She didn’t want to be this close to him.

“I know I’ve said it before…but you look absolutely beautiful when you wear green,” He muttered quietly.

“Hmm, thanks,”

She avoided his gaze and clenched her jaw. He tried to meet her eyes with his sad stare.

“Are you mad at me?”

“No, why would I be mad at you, Draco?” She drawled coldly.

“Because I was a royal ass last night. I should have explained, I-“
“Draco,” She snapped, darting her eyes towards his. “Sorry, but the last thing I want to hear is you explaining why you don’t like me.”

“No, Ginny, you don’t understand – “

“I get it. Don’t worry about it.” She shot, clenching her jaw.

The sound of the piano traveled through her ears as she tried to focus on the tune rather than his words.

“Ginny, I like you so fucking much.”

Her eyes shot towards his and her mouth dropped. “Wh-what?”

“That was the hardest thing I think I’ve ever done…not kissing you back. If I had it my way I would have done it. A million times over.”

“I don’t understand…”

“But I can’t - we can’t.”

“Why?”

“Ginny, you heard Mister Descartes earlier tonight. He’s hesitant about working with us because of our age. We are already a risky investment…it would look awful if we were dating.”

Ginny frowned as she made sense of his words. He was absolutely right. If news broke out that she and Draco were dating no one would take them seriously. He continued talking.

“When I first propositioned you to work with us, I-I never thought I would fall for you…”

“Yeah, you and me both,” she said, giving a weak smile.

“But I did. But it’s too risky to do anything about it. I’m so sorry. I want to…but I can’t. I should have told you before. I didn’t think you felt the same…” He said honestly. She could see the pain in his eyes as he spoke, and for the first time, she realized that Draco could experience heartache.

She nodded and she felt tears bubble in her eyes but she refrained from letting them shed. Instead, she removed the distance between them and rested her head on his shoulder as he tightened his grip around her waist. They slowly swayed to the music.

“You’re my best friend, Ginny. I’m able to tell you things that I can’t tell anyone else. You’re so funny and talented, and down to earth…not to mention so damn pretty. You’re everything I’ve ever wanted in a girl…and I can’t do anything about it.”

She clenched her eyes shut as she tried to keep the tears in. The sliding guitar echoed in her ears and she felt like they were the only people in the room. She gently ran her hand through his hair, trying to tell him she understood without speaking, in fear of crying if she spoke.

“And it hurts, Ginny,” He said as his voice cracked, “I hate how much it hurts seeing you with Harry. It would hurt seeing you with anyone. But…I need you to be happy. I have no right to feel hurt if you’re with someone else. I’ve tried distracting myself with Fiona but it’s not working.”

She finally mustered the strength to whisper, “It hurts me, too…seeing you with her…”

“I know…I’m sorry.”
“Don’t be, I get it,” she said sincerely.

“I wish more than anything that we could be together…at least try it out, you know? But we can’t…you understand, right?” He felt her nod in his shoulder, “Good. I needed you to know why last night happened the way it did. If we were under any different circumstances…well, it wouldn’t have been you making the first move. I would have done it ages ago.”

Ginny couldn’t help but give a light giggle, “If we were under different circumstances I don’t think we would like each other this much.”

He chuckled back, “I guess you’re right.”

The beautiful song ended and she reluctantly let go of his shoulders. Her eyes were watery but she was proud she managed to keep it together during that bittersweet reveal. She gave him a weak smile.

“What are you going to be okay?” He asked and she nodded.

“Y-yeah, I think I’m going to get some air.”

“Do you want me to go with you?”

“No, I’ll be fine,” she gingerly placed her hand on his shoulder, “Thanks, Malfoy.”

“Anytime, Weasley.”

She walked away, glancing back at Draco one last time and saw him transform from the sad, sensitive man he just was to the charismatic business man he worked so hard to be. He gave her one last smirk before resuming to his guests, cordially thanking them for attending. Her feet took her to the balcony and she was thankful no one was there.

The cool November air refreshed her and condensation left her mouth with every heavy breath she took as she basked in her emotions. This, she thought, this is the feeling I’ve been searching for. She closed her eyes as she embraced Draco’s voice replaying in her head. It dawned on her that she would never feel this way about Harry. The realization of what was missing from their relationship wasn’t clear until she felt it from Draco. Even if she couldn’t be with Draco it wasn’t fair for her or Harry to stay together…to settle for each other. It was better to be alone than have anything short of the way she felt towards Draco. She needed passionate, unequivocal, infatuation…not just someone who was merely available.

“Hey.”

Ginny whipped her head around and saw a very irritable Harry.

“Haven’t seen you much tonight,” he said, scowling. “Nothing I love more than being left alone in the Malfoy Manor.”

Ginny nodded her head slowly and mumbled, “I know, I’m sorry.”

He stood in front of her and crossed his arms disapprovingly, “So? What’s the deal? Is everything alright?”

She couldn’t look him in the eyes. She knew what she had to do but she couldn’t bare seeing his condemning glance. She shook her head as she stared at a pebble she was absentmindedly kicking with her feet. “I don’t think this is going to work, Harry.”
He clenched his jaw and nodded as if he had been expecting this all night. “It’s Malfoy, isn’t it? I saw you two dancing.”

“No! I mean, well, maybe a tiny bit,” She couldn’t lie right to his face, “but nothing happened and nothing is going to happen.”

“I should have known not to let slimy git around you-“

“HARRY,” she snapped, looking into his eyes for the first time, “This isn’t about Draco. This is about you and me.”

“What do you mean?” He asked, dumbfounded.

“Harry…we aren’t compatible together.”

“How can you say that?” He spat.

“We haven’t been since Hogwarts. We are two completely different people. We want different things in life.”

“No, we don’t!”

“Yes, we do,” she shot boldly, “the fact that you can’t see it is simply evidence that it’s true.”

“What do you want out of life, huh? To go get wasted with Malfoy and Zabini for the rest of your life?”

“Are you joking me? That’s really how you view all of this?” She asked incredulously, “I want to be a success. I want to be my own person. I want to make a name for myself – not just be Harry Potter’s girlfriend or be another Weasley.”

“I never asked you to ‘just’ be my girlfriend!”

“I know, but honestly…picture our lives in five years. How will you feel when I’m off travelling for work for months at a time? Because I’m not going to give that up.”

He looked at his shoes, it seemed that argument struck a chord. “But Ginny…I love you.”

“No you don’t. You love a memory of me,” she said sadly, “And I don’t…”

She trailed off, hoping he wouldn’t make her finish her sentence.

“You don’t what? Say it,” he egged her on.

“I don’t love you.”

She could hear him inhale deeply and see him clench his fists. “So what was that this morning? You were all over me…”

Ginny winced and guilt stabbed her in the heart, “I’m so sorry…I was stupid.” She gulped, “I guess I was trying to force something that wasn’t there.”

“I can’t believe this.”

“I’m sorry,” she said quietly as her voice began to tremble; tears forming in the back of her throat.
He crossed his arms and tapped his foot impatiently before he spoke, “This is your last chance, Ginny. If you don’t take it, I’m gone. Forever. I won’t wait around this time. Are you sure about this?”

She hesitated, but not because she wasn’t sure. This was the most certain she had been about something in a long time. She just couldn’t stand looking at his angry expression. But she had to do it. She slowly raised her gaze to meet his and said with the utmost certainty, “Yes.”

He nodded, “Fine. I hope you get everything you’ve always wanted,” he turned on his heel and strutted towards the door.

She clenched her eyes shut and put them in her hands. She didn’t want it to end on that note, “Harry, wait!”

He pivoted on his feet and shot coldly, “What?”

She took a deep breath, attempting to collect her thoughts. “You’re a wonderful man. Somewhere out there, there’s the right girl for you. I’m sorry that it’s not me, but she’s out there.”

He pursed his lips and nodded, leaving without another word.

After a few minutes of sitting there, analyzing the crazy turn of events that happened, she headed back inside to find her friends sitting at a table. Fiona was brushing Draco’s hands with her fingertips, and surprisingly, she didn’t care in the least.

“There you are, we were going to come find you,” Blaise said, with his arm lazily draped around Luna’s chair.

“Yeah, um, I think I’m going to go home. I’m really tired.”

“Are you sure? We were just about to get this party started!” Luna cheered happily, clearly, she had drunk too much champagne.

“Yeah, sorry, not tonight,” she forced a fake smile on her face.

“Where’s Harry?” Draco asked looking concerned.

“Um…he went home,” she said vaguely, although they all nodded in a sad understanding.

“Are you sure you’re alright?” Draco asked, sending sympathy her way with his eyes. She nodded.

“I really am.”
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

A/N: Thank you so much, everyone. I am genuinely overwhelmed by the amount of support I’ve received this past week. You’re all amazing :’D.

This is a little short guy, but pretty fun anyways.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"NO, GOD NO. NO, NO, NO. PLEASE STOP," Blaise cried in agony as he crumpled to the floor of Ginny’s kitchen. Whimpering, he dragged himself towards her balcony's door. Misery weighed him down as he pressed his nose upon the cold glass as he let out a snivel, "I'm not ready for this…"

"What the hell is your problem?" Ginny asked, looking up from her cutting board where she was delicately chopping vegetables, to observe Blaise’s distraught state.

"It's snowing…" he said sadly as he traced his finger along the frosty window. Sure enough, the first snowflakes of the year were gently falling to the ground, signaling the comforting autumn weather was officially coming to a halt.

"My god, you're melodramatic," Ginny said, rolling her eyes, returning to the task at hand.

"Do you know what this means?" Blaise demanded, gathering his composure as he peeled himself off the ground.

"Umm, yeah. It's winter."

"No. This means no more ice cream, no more late night drinks on the patio, no more of those pretty little dresses that Luna wears!" Blaise exclaimed as he slumped into a chair at Ginny's kitchen table.

"It's the end of an era…"

"Blaise, we can do all of those things in the winter," Ginny said before adding, "Besides, Luna wears dresses all year. Calm down."

"You're not nearly upset enough over this."

Ginny sighed, "I guess after 21 years of living I've come to expect that the seasons change. Shocking, I know," she turned to face him, placing her hands on her hips, "Also, I thought you were going to help me with dinner."

He flashed her a sly grin, "But you're so much better at it."

Ginny muttered foul words under her breath as she stomped towards him with a few potatoes in hand, "Here, peel these."

Blaise and Ginny had spent their entire Saturday afternoon pouring over their cauldrons trying to create a brand-new potion. Unfortunately, both were lacking in inspiration that day, so all that resulted from their attempts was several explosions and wasted ingredients. With Luna working late and Draco on a date with Fiona, the duo decided to stay in, cook a nice supper and drink away their
It had been a week since the Malfoy’s ball. A week since Ginny broke up with Harry. A week since Draco confessed his feelings for Ginny. Needless to say…things had been a little weird. Their shop had been so busy that they were plenty distracted and their conversations were naturally limited, however, she couldn't shake the feeling that Draco was avoiding her. Much to her displeasure, he was spending most of his evenings with Fiona. She wasn't sure what she was expected of him. It was irrational to assume that just because she had broken up with Harry that he would have done the same with Fiona, but she would be lying to herself if a small part of her didn't hope for it. Even so, what bothered her the most was his obvious avoidance. Understandably, it was an awkward situation that was unpleasant to discuss, but ignoring the giant elephant in the room only made it worse. Anytime she would try to speak to him about non-work related topics he would simply make a lame excuse to leave the room. Even if a romantic relationship wasn't possible that didn't mean they had to forego their entire friendship.

"So, what should I get Luna for Christmas?" Blaise asked as he peeled the potatoes.

"I dunno. An engagement ring because you're clearly obsessed," Ginny replied sarcastically. She tried to refrain from being a little jealous of their relationship, but due to her losing Harry and apparently her friendship with Draco, it was a little difficult to be entirely optimistic about their seemingly perfect relationship.

"Oh, ha-ha. You're hilarious," Blaise fake laughed, throwing a piece of potato skin at Ginny. "I'm serious, though. I've never dated a girl during Christmas. What's the standard protocol?"

"I don't think there's a 'standard protocol'. Just get her something you think she'd like," she said as she poured him a glass of wine.

"I'm so bad with buying presents," he moaned, "Could I just give her some money?"

"Blaise!" She hissed, "You don't give your girlfriend money for Christmas!"

"See? I'm clueless!"

"Urgh – okay. The best part about receiving a gift is seeing the thought that goes into it. It's not about getting a new possession, it's about looking at the present and thinking, 'Wow, this guy must clearly know me if he was able to pick out this perfect gift, how romantic!'" She explained and Blaise was about to pipe up with an obvious question before Ginny cut him off, "Which is exactly why you need to come up with the idea yourself. Without me telling you what to get her."

He pondered her words for a moment before quietly muttering, "I always like getting money…"

"You're so dense."

After eating their delicious meal consisting of roast beef, mashed potatoes, and vegetables she found herself distracted, staring out the window. The snow was gracefully falling, hypnotizing Ginny, giving her the feeling that she was stuck in a snow-globe. A small smile tugged at the corners of her lips as she took a sip of merlot, feeling flushed from the intoxicating beverage.

"What's on your mind?" Blaise asked as he cast a spell to clean up the kitchen.

"Just thinking about how I kind of like the snow," she replied simply.

"That's nonsense."
"I don't know…it's peaceful. Everything is so cozy in the winter."

"Yeah, when your socks aren't permanently soaked from the snow, maybe."

She shrugged, "It's nice cuddling up with someone on the couch on a cold winter night," she frowned as she felt the pang of loneliness which she had been attempting to avoid all week. Blaise seemed to pick up on her emotional cue.

"I've been meaning to ask you…how are you doing with everything that happened on the weekend?" He asked, pouring her another glass of wine.

She sighed deeply. She had briefly informed Luna about Draco's confession, which meant Blaise definitely knew, but she had avoided going in depth about the details. Becoming more interested in the grooves of her kitchen table than his eye contact, she absentmindedly traced a curvy indent with her finger. After feeling his anticipatory gaze for a minute, she finally answered nonchalantly, "Could be worse, I guess. Thankful that we have the business to keep me distracted."

"Have you talked to Harry at all since?"

"Pfft, no!" She scoffed, "Guaranteed he hates me. I doubt I'll see him until Christmas."

"Oooo, rough," Blaise winced, "You have to spend Christmas with him? Jeez, Gin, maybe you should have waited until after the Holidays to dump him."

She scowled and said flatly, "Thanks, Blaise. Really comforting."

"Have you talked to Draco?" He asked nervously and she frowned as she looked in his eyes.

"Hardly. He can barely look at me; it was less weird when I thought he was just rejecting me."

"What a dolt," he said, tutting his tongue. "It's too bad that – you know – you two can't be together."

"It is what it is, I guess," She said sadly. "Honestly, every day he ignores me my attraction towards him seems to be faltering, so I guess it works out."

"I should set you up with one of my friends!" Blaise suggested happily.

"You have other friends?" Ginny asked skeptically, letting out a giggle. "I've spent nearly every day with you for months and not once have I heard you mention any other friends."

"I didn't say I was a good friend. But yes, I do ha – " Blaise was interrupted by a loud CRACK outside of Ginny's front door. They both exchanged worried glances and gripped their wands. Blaise stepped in front of Ginny as a human shield. Neither of them was expecting any company.

Suddenly, the door slammed open and a gust of cold winter air overtook Ginny's warm flat. Emerging from the icy darkness stumbled in a very disheveled looking Draco, clasping onto a large bottle of Firewhiskey. He stood in front of the open door and stared at Ginny and Blaise, sharing the same confused look as them, as though he was trying to remember why he was there. Finally, his confusion cracked into a large smile and he lifted the bottle of Firewhiskey above his head.

"I'MFUCKINSINGLE!" He cheered, staggering towards their table, taking a large shot of Firewhiskey straight from the bottle. He didn't even notice spilling on his wrinkled white dress shirt. Ginny and Blaise remained standing, still sharing the same confused look as they observed their sloppy friend.
"What are you talking about?" Ginny finally asked, her eyes wide at the level of intoxication in front of her.

"Youu heard me, Mizz Weasley," he slurred, slamming his elbow on the table and pointing at her, "I'm fuckin' single!"

Blaise looked concerned, "Is that why you're hammered?"

"Maybe, maybe not!" He shrugged animatedly, "It don't even matter, yeah?"

Ginny shook her head at Draco's poor English. She took a seat next to him to sip her own wine before clearing her throat to eagerly ask, "So, you ended things with Fiona?"

Before Ginny could even finish her sentence, Draco began howling with laughter. In between gasps of laughter, he managed to spit out, "No, she dumped me!" He wiped a tear from his eye and Blaise quickly snagged his Firewhiskey, figuring he had drunk enough. He began laughing again, "She says I'm 'emotionally unavailable'. HA! Mee? Emotionally unavailable? Can youu believe that garbage?"

He covered his eyes with his hands and continued howling. Blaise and Ginny shifted uncomfortably, both worried for Draco's manic state, until Blaise stepped in, "Erm – mate, you are sort of emotionally stunted…"

Draco's face fell and he shot back, "What? No, I'm not!" Blaise only blinked in response. He directed his fuzzy eyes to Ginny, "Ginnyyy, my girl, tell this damn bloke I'm not emotionally stunted!"

"Umm…" she began, thinking back to the past week where Draco constantly avoided her in fear of discussing his emotions more than he already had, "Maybe we should try dissecting your psychology when you're sober…"

"I am sober," he muttered, trying to steal Blaise's wine before it was snatched away.

Ginny pursed her lips and twiddled her thumbs before deciding to ask a question she knew could potentially hurt her, "Umm…I thought you didn't really like Fiona all that much? You seem pretty messed up for someone who didn't like her very much…"

"I didn't!" He shot, snapping his eyes to Ginny's to convey he was being honest, "It's just…I don't know what's going on in my head. I've got all these damn feelings that I don't know what to do with." he muttered sadly as he looked down at his hands.

Blaise sent a sympathetic glance to Ginny, able to tell that this was a difficult situation for her, then sent the same sympathy to Draco. He clasped his hands on his shoulder, "Getting plastered isn't the right way to deal with them, mate."

He rested his forehead on the table and groaned. Ginny set a glass of water in front of him as he slurred, "Thank-you Ginny, you're sooo kind all the time." She blushed.

Blaise finally took a seat and clasped his hands behind the nape of his neck as he made an observation, "So you're single. And Ginny's single. Looks like we are back to square one."

"Except you're with Luna," Ginny corrected.

"Well, that was destined from the moment we met."
"Blah blah blah," Draco mocked, "I'm fuckin' Blaise Zabini and I'm allowed to date girl I want. I'm so fuckin' lucky and cool."

Ginny blushed and cringed at his outspoken honesty, "Oh my god, Draco, you're going to feel so stupid tomorrow."

"I already feel stupid, thank you very much," he said seriously but Ginny giggled. "You talkin' to Harry again or what?"

Ginny narrowed her eyes, "Why have you both asked that now? Of course not."

"You know, I'm kind of going to miss Harry..." Blaise mused and Draco and Ginny shot their eyes towards him in shock. "What? It was kind of fun having all that drama. He was so easy to provoke; life is going to be so dull now..."

"You're sick," Draco said bluntly.

"Oh, fuck off, Draco. You loved it more than anyone," Blaise argued and Draco could only nod, signaling that Blaise was right.

"I think I made him angry..." Ginny thought out loud the boys looked at her quizzically.

"What do you mean?" Blaise asked.

"I mean that Harry isn't naturally an angry person. I swear he's usually a very sweet guy...but the past month I was with him he was just so damn pissed off all the time," she said sadly as she reflected on their failed relationship. "I feel really guilty..."

"I don't think that was your fault Ginny; I think Draco and I had a little something to do with it," Blaise assured her.

"Izz true, Gin, you're a fuckin' delight and if he doesn't appreciate it then he can go fuck himself," Draco said protectively, as he slurred over every cuss word, "I'm glad that damn prude is gone."

"Of course you are," Blaise laughed. He looked at his watch and yelped, "Ah! I've gotta go to Luna's twenty minutes ago!" He jumped from his seat and observed Draco who was slumped over the table. "Hey, Gin, can I talk to you for a second?"

He pulled Ginny outside to the frozen balcony and shut the door behind him. He looked at Draco with a face of concern, "Are you going to be able to deal with him if I leave? I know this is probably pretty weird for you. Luna would understand if I stayed..."

Ginny shook her head, "No, Blaise, it'll be perfectly fine. Looks like he's going to fall asleep pretty quick, anyways..."

Blaise frowned as Draco's eyes rolled around in his head, "Alright...if you need anything give me a shout," he said hesitantly.

She nodded and watched as a bit of drool formed at the corner of Draco's mouth, "On the plus side there's not a bone in my body that wants to shag him in this state."

"There's always that. Alright, take care, Gin."

Immediately after Blaise left Ginny began setting up a pillow and blanket on the couch for Draco. She looked at him pitifully; she didn't think it was possible for Draco to be that belligerent, yet here
he was. She wondered about the sorrows that were buried deep in his mind that spurred such a mental break down.

"Whatchoo doin’ over there?” Draco called from the kitchen.

"Making your bed," she answered, "You need to get some sleep."

"What I thought we were going to party!" He cried and she laughed.

"You've done enough partying for the two of us," she giggled, putting a hand on his shoulder gently. He instinctively reached out to brush his hand over it.

"I've got a bone to pick with you, Mizz Weasley," he said sternly yet his face was cracking into a smile.

"Oh? What's that?" She asked, resuming her seat, deciding he could wait to go to sleep a little longer.

"I don't like this nonsense," he said, motioning his fingers to the both of them.

"What do you mean?"

"I don't like not talking to youuu," He stumbled over his words, "It's nonsense."

Ginny threw her hands in the air in exasperation, "You're the one avoiding me!"

"I am aware of this, Ginevraaaa," he said, "All I'm saying is that I don't like it and we need to work on it."

"Well, I'm trying!" She argued.

"I know, I know, I know," he said raising his hands defensively before rubbing his eyes with his palms "I like you soo much, Gin…"

She frowned as her heart broke for him, knowing full well what his pain felt like as she was experiencing the same. She grabbed his hand and rubbed it comfortingly as she spoke gently, "I really like you, too, Draco," her calming expression turned into a devilish smirk, "But I really, really like money."

"That's probably why I like you," he laughed as he playfully shoved her shoulder. "Really, though, we gotta stay friends. I know I've been a dick but I'll be better."

"All you need to do is talk to me," she said honestly, "We don't need to talk about what happened… we can go back to the way things used to be."

"That would be nice," he smiled and they stared into each other's eyes, enjoying their silent company for a moment. Eventually, the silence was broken, "Fiona asked if we were shagging."

Ginny couldn't help but burst out laughing, feeling slightly flattered that one of the most beautiful models felt intimidated by her. "Are you serious?"

He smirked as he nodded, "Yep. Said she could cut the sexual tension with a knife."

"Jeez, we really did a number on our exes…” Ginny said pensively, "I feel bad."

"Technically, we didn't do anything wrong…but I feel bad, too" He said gloomily as he stared at his hands. Finally, he let out a huge yawn, "Kay, I'm ready for bed."
"Yeah, for sure – there's some spare blankets in the closet if you need," she stood up to show him the storage closet.

"Or I could sleep with you?" He was looking at her mischievously.

Ginny stopped in her step and pivoted to face him, "What?"

"Come onnn – we did it before! It would technically be going back to the way things used to be!" Shaking her head incredulously she stated, "You've got to be kidding me."

"All we'll do is sleep, I swear."

Ginny couldn't help but contemplate the offer. So many nights she would fall asleep imagining Draco's arms around her. But surely both of them would regret making the situation, even more, complicated the next morning. She shook her head assuredly, "You're drunk."

"I'm not thaaaat drunk."

"Drunk enough to not realize that's a stupid idea."

"You and Blaise are too sensible tonight," he huffed, dragging his sluggish body to the couch,"G'night, Weasley."

"Goodnight, Malfoy."

"Hey, Gin?"

"Yeah?"

"Do you like snow?"

"Yeah, why?"

"I love it."

She smiled at him peacefully as he was quickly lulled to sleep, refraining the urge to join him on the couch, as she turned off the lights and went to bed.

Chapter End Notes

I clearly love writing drunk people. Have an amazing week! Once again - thank you for the support. <3
"Dracoooo?"

"Hmph."

"Wake up, Dracoooo…"

Draco’s bloodshot eyes opened to find Ginny standing above him, head cocked and a large coffee in hand. A smug smile pulled at her lips as she cheerfully spoke, "How ya feeling, buddy?"

He slowly closed his eyes as if silently deciding he was still dreaming. Sighing loudly, she nudged his shoulder, "Draco, it's two in the afternoon, wake up!"

His eyes opened abruptly as he realized his dreams were actually reality. A look of horror replaced his groggy expression as he shot his head up from the pillow, observing his surroundings. Ginny giggled as she saw him instantly regret the fast movements, throwing his eyes into his hands.

"Wh-what happened?" He stumbled, "Why am I here?"

"You honestly don't remember?" She asked doubtfully.

"The last thing I remember is…" She saw his eyes peer from between his fingertips, "Oh god… no…"

"What?"

"Fiona throwing her drink in my face and me promptly doing every shot in the world…” He groaned as he collapsed back into the couch, pulling the blanket over his head.

Ginny laughed from the kitchen as she grabbed him a glass of water, "That's the last thing you remember? You don't remember staggering on over here?"

"Oh god…what did I do? I don't even remember how I got here!" He cried, his voice muffled through the blankets.

"Oh…not too much," she said cooly as she took a seat at his feet, "Just cried over how Fiona called you emotionally unavailable, moaned over how much you like me, and tried to convince me to let you sleep with me."

"Oh my gooddd," he moaned, "What the fuck is wrong with me?"

"Apparently, a lot," she said bluntly, "You weren't too bad, though. Don't fret over it."

He tore the blanket off his face to look her in the eyes, "Malfoys don't get drunk and cry over their
feelings!"

"Well, apparently this one does…"

"No, I don't," he pouted, reminding Ginny of a toddler. "If I don't remember it; it didn't happen."

"Well, Blaise and I sure remember it…"

"Fuck! Blaise was here too?" He asked as his brows furrowed, desperately trying to recall his evening.

"Uh-huh." She laughed, finding far too much humor in her friend's agony. She decided to mock him a little, "Remember when you said you were always an elegant drunk?"

"Shut up, Ginny."

"You weren't that elegant last night."

"Please, shut up, Ginny," he pleaded, shoving his face in his pillow. "I feel like garbage. About everything. I'm pathetic."

She reached out and rubbed her hand along his thigh comfortingly, "Relax. You're just hungover; Luna once wrote an article about a muggle researcher's discovery. Apparently, alcohol can make you feel super anxious the next day…something about alcohol lowering serotonin levels…"

"I literally have no idea what you're talking about."

"All I'm saying is that you'll feel less 'pathetic' tomorrow. Really, you weren't that bad."

He rolled onto his side in the fetal position as he spoke, "You said I tried to sleep with you? I wasn't…erm…a dick about it, right?" His face was filled with guilt as he avoided her eye contact. Ginny frowned.

"Not at all! Really, it was the most innocent proposition I think I've ever received," she assured him, "If it wasn't, believe me, you wouldn't be on my couch."

"Are you sure?"

"I swear," she said as she noticed her hand was still on his thigh, absentmindedly tracing circles. It seemed to relax him. "On the bright side – we are now back to being friends. If you hadn't gotten belligerent, we would still be avoiding each other."

"I guess," he mumbled as he rubbed his temples. "Regardless, this is hands down the worst hangover I've had in my life. My brain is going to explode."

"Drink some coffee?" She suggested, handing him the cold cup in front of him but he shook his head.

"I'll just throw that up," he stated before moaning, "God, how has no one created a cure for this yet? This is the worst…"

"DRACO!" she shouted and he winced, covering his ears with his hands.

"Bloody hell, Ginny. Keep your voice down."

"You're brilliant!" She exclaimed, jumping to her feet.
"I know."

"No, you don't," she ran from the couch and into her potions room as she began digging through her pile of books. After finding a tattered old ingredient book she stormed back into the living room, urgently flipping through the pages.

"The hell are you freaking out about?" he asked as he remained motionless on the sofa, his eyes slowly closing.

"Why hasn't anyone created a hangover cure, yet?" She asked eagerly, her nose pressed into her book, "Why don't we create one?"

Draco slowly raised his head as he clued into her sudden motivation, "Are you saying –"

"This is our new potion!" She shouted enthusiastically, "If we combine the elements of a simple nausea potion, a pain reliever potion for a headache, a draught of peace for the anxiety, and a wide-eye potion…BAM! We've got our new potion!"

He gently propped himself up, "Do you really think that'll work?"

"Absolutely! It's so simple…how has no one thought of this before?" She muttered to herself with a gleeful smile, "I need Blaise!"

"Right now?" He asked skeptically, "Can't this wait until tomorrow?"

"No! You need to test it out for us today!"

"No way," he shook his head fervently, "I'm not testing out any experiments today."

"Yes, you are." She ordered and he was taken aback by her sudden authority, "There's no point in us waiting to test it out until one of us is hung over again. Besides, it's Sunday. Unless you want to get hammered on a weekday this is the best timing."

He groaned loudly, "This is karma."

"Yep. Sure is," she said quickly as she began collecting her possessions. "Alright, I'm going to Luna's quick. Stay here. Don't move."

"I don't think that's possible anyways…" he grumbled, wrapping the blankets around him tighter.

"Alright, I'll be right back," she said as she closed her eyes and apparated outside of Luna's house. She rushed up the steps and knocked on the door aggressively. No answer. She knocked louder, this time calling Luna's name. Still no answer. Growing impatient, she pulled out her wand and unlocked the door magically. She let herself into the house and was instantly engulfed by the smell of calming lavender. Luna's walls were filled with beautiful oil paintings and her shelves filled with unique trinkets. Candles sat on nearly every surface, emitting a relaxing glow that suited Luna perfectly. The house appeared empty and just when Ginny was about to retreat to her own flat she heard muffled noises from the kitchen.

"Luna? Are you oka – OH GOD." As she turned the corner she saw the most disturbing sight of her
life. Luna and Blaise – both bare naked. Blaise's back turned to her with Luna sitting on the kitchen counter, her nude legs wrapped around his waist.

"GINNY GET OUT OF HERE!" Blaise roared, trying to untangle himself from Luna's legs to face Ginny.

"NO, DON'T TURN AROUND!" She screamed as she covered her eyes with her hands, her entire body turning scarlet.

"WHAT THE HELL, GINNY?" Luna yelped, "WHY DIDN'T YOU KNOCK!"

"I did!" She objected, reflexively removing her hands from her eyes for a split second just in time to see Blaise full frontal. "OH MY GOD, PUT SOME CLOTHES ON."

"JUST GET OUT!" They both yelled as Blaise quickly grabbed a tea-towel to cover himself.

"OH GOD, MY EYES!" She cried as she rushed into the living room. She observed the floor around her to find their clothes strewn all over the ground. "Your clothes are in here! Don't come in here!"

"Then close your eyes!" Luna yelled as she poked her head around the corner.

"Oh, right." She replied dumbly as she covered her eyes and placed her forehead on the corner of the wall in the living room. She heard Blaise and Luna shuffling to get dressed. "I am officially traumatized right now."

"Well, now who's fault is that?" Blaise drawled, "Who just barges into people's houses?"

"OH, JEEZ, I DON'T KNOW." She replied hotly, "Maybe you? All the time? At my house?"

"That's different!" He argued, and she heard his pants zipper zip up. "Okay, you can turn around now."

She faced him, "How is that any different?"

"Because I wouldn't do it if there was a chance you were shagging someone in the kitchen!"

"Stop arguing!" Luna cried. Her face was a deep shade of red as she ran her hands through her messy hair, "It was a mistake! A mistake that would be best forgotten!"

"Okay, okay, okay" Ginny said, calming herself down. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have barged in. Clearly, I have learned my lesson."

Blaise flopped onto the sofa and he threw his face in his hands, "I can't believe that just happened…"

Luna sat down next to him, her face expressionless as she shook her head, "I'm mortified…"

"It's fine! It's done!" Ginny stated, "Let's just move on from this…"

"Okay," Luna said as she breathed deeply, trying to find an inkling of inner peace before resuming conversation again, "Why are you here, anyway?"

"I need Blaise."

"Yeah, I bet you do after that…" Blaise winked and Luna elbowed him in the ribs.
"Don't joke about this, Blaise!" Luna cried, "It's too soon!"


"Okay, okay, I'm sorry. That was too far." He said apologetically, "Why do you need me?"

Ginny inhaled heavily before her proposal, "So, Draco is currently at my place. Practically dying from a terrible hangover – "

"Oh right, I heard Draco was a trainwreck last night," Luna interjected, "How did everything go?"

"It was – urgh – that's not important right now," she said, trying to stay focused. "The point is, is that I figured out our next potion. We even have all the ingredients."

"Oh? What is it?" Blaise asked eagerly, finally distracted from the horrifyingly awkward scene.

"It's so obvious; a hangover cure!" Ginny exclaimed happily, unable to refrain from jumping in her spot.

A wide grin appeared on Blaise and Luna's faces. Luna spoke first, "That's brilliant! How haven't you thought of that, yet?"

"I have no idea…" Blaise muttered to himself, "Are you sure it'll work? It seems too simple."

"I'm about 90 percent sure – I'll need your help, though! I don't want to screw it up," she explained as a mischievous smirk crept up her face, "Draco has graciously volunteered to be our lab-rat."

Luna raised an eyebrow, "He volunteered? Really?"

"Maybe volunteered isn't the right word…" She said slyly, "But even so, he's agreed to do it."

"Ginny, you've made my day," Blaise said happily.

"Really? It wasn't Luna?" Ginny winked and Luna blushed.

"Oh my god, I told you, it's too soon for jokes!" She moaned and Ginny laughed.

"Come onnn, let's go, guys!" Ginny beckoned and they apparated back to Ginny's flat. The loud crack from the apparating jolted Draco, who was in a peaceful slumber, awake. "Bloody hell, keep it down!"

"Stop whining, Draco. You don't have it that bad." Ginny said coldly as she darted her eyes towards Blaise and Luna.

"What are you talking about?" Draco asked and Blaise burst out laughing.

"Ginny saw my ass."

"BLAISE!" Luna shrieked and Draco looked confused.

"What the hell did I miss?"

"Nothing! Drop it right now or I'll hex you both." Luna said warningly to Ginny and Blaise.

"Fine, my darling," Blaise drawled.

Ginny whispered into Draco's ear, "I'll explain later." He smiled and nodded.
"So, according to Ginny, we are going to cure you and every other 20-something-year-old of your current agony?" Blaise asked as he examined Draco's motionless body from afar. Luna took a seat near Draco's feet as she looked at him sympathetically.

"Apparently," Draco replied, although he did not sound convinced.

"Trust me; it'll work," Ginny said confidently.

"Shall we get started?" Blaise asked and Ginny nodded. They stepped into her dungy 'potions-lab'. What was once clean and bright was now full of burnt marks and smelled of rust and ash. She showed Blaise the ingredients and method for her idea and they silently got to work. Unable to refrain, she found herself eavesdropping on Luna and Draco's conversation.

"How are you feeling, tiger?" She heard Luna's calm voice ask, followed by a grunt from Draco.

"Like a million bucks."

"You look like it."

"Thanks."

"I heard Fiona broke up with you."

Another grunt was made from Draco.

"I'm sorry; break ups are never fun."

"I'm not too concerned," he drawled, "Wasn't going to work out anyways."

"Why's that?" Ginny couldn't help but smirk at Luna's prying tone.

"As if you don't know why."

"Ginny, it's rude to eavesdrop," Blaise hissed as he grinned at her.

"I wasn't!" She lied and felt her ears warm.

"Sure you weren't."

After nearly an hour of stirring their potion clockwise, then counter-clockwise, then clockwise again they were satisfied with the finished product. She scooped some of the sunflower yellow liquid into a vial and smiled.

"Quite the happy looking potion, isn't it?" Blaise asked.

"I think the color is quite fitting!" Ginny smiled as she examined it, "I wonder what it tastes like."

"Lemonade?"

"I suppose we can ask Draco, soon."

"Oh, Dracoooooo?" Blaise sang happily as he waltzed back to the living room, "Are you ready to feel amazing?"

"Depends on what you mean by amazing…" Draco frowned at Blaise's ambiguous comment.

"I mean healthy," Blaise corrected abruptly as he handed the potion to him, "Drink this."
"Can't you test it on someone else first? A stranger?" He tried to compromise but Blaise and Ginny continued shaking their head.

Luna spoke up, "Hey, Ginny forced me to try her first original potion despite my objections. It's your turn."

"Yeah, but –" Draco tried to argue but was met with three scowling faces. He knew there was no way he would get out of it. "Fine. Give me it."

He examined the liquid skeptically. He observed the consistency of it, smelled it, and even put a small amount on his finger to ensure it wasn't corrosive. Finally, he slugged it back. He remained in his motionless fetal position.

"How do you feel?" Ginny asked eagerly after a few minutes.

"The same."

The three of them frowned. Luna looked at them optimistically, "Maybe you just need to tweak the ingredients?"

Blaise shrugged sadly, "Maybe. But I really thought it would work…"

"Wait!" Draco slowly propped himself up. "Maybe it's working."

"Are you sure it isn't a placebo effect?" Ginny asked excitedly, her face beaming as Draco's face regained color for the first time all day.

"No, I…I think it's worked," He slowly sat upright, "I – I feel fantastic! I feel like I've just slept for eight hours!"

"Are you serious?" Blaise asked wide-eyed.

"Yes – I could run a marathon!"

"But you can't do that normally…" Blaise replied.

"It's a figure of speech, Blaise," Draco said rolling his eyes. He stood up and gave a huge stretch, "You did it, guys. Congratulations. We have our second potion."

As the weeks carried on the three nervously prepared for their trip to Paris the following day. The business had been busy; consistently breaking every goal that they made. It appeared that the public adored the ability to easily purchase nearly any potion at an affordable price. Ginny and Blaise's new hangover potion was a great hit. Especially among the younger crowd. It was so popular the Daily Prophet wrote an article titled: NEW POTION PROMOTES ALCOHOL ABUSE AMONGST YOUNG ADULTS. Ginny was concerned about the negative article but Draco and Blaise merely shrugged, stating that any publicity is good publicity. This proved to be true; immediately after the article was published young, haggard adults staggered into their store, relieved that the potion was still in stock.

Regardless of the success of the business, they were still nervous. Draco, who was busy pouring over the finances, was convinced something would go wrong, confirming Mister Descartes' theory that they were too 'immature'. While Ginny and Blaise were convinced the meeting would go swimmingly; they had different concerns. They had to ensure that their staff was competent enough to handle the store while they were out of the country. Every day the store was open they worked alongside the staff. The thought of leaving it in their hands was daunting. To Ginny, she compared
the feeling to how it would feel for a mother to leave their infant in the hands of a babysitter for the first time.

Frustrated with the staff's errors, Ginny huffed as she stomped towards Draco's desk, "God damn Allen can't make a potion to save his life."

"Then why is he still working here?" Draco asked without looking up from his paperwork.

"Because we can't afford to lose someone right now; we don't have time to train anyone new," Ginny explained, as she sent a subtle glare towards the older man sadly cleaning up his potion spill.

"What's the point of paying someone who can barely make a potion?" Draco asked with a hint of frustration. It was evident that the stress was getting to him as well.

Ginny bit her lip as she tried to form an argument, "He's a nice man. And if we lose him right now the rest of the staff must work overtime to make ends meet, which will make them angry. It's all about team morale."

"Really? I would argue that it's about making quality products…" Draco muttered sarcastically and Ginny frowned.

"Fine! I'm too scared to fire someone…" She crossed her arms, displeased with her admission.

Draco rubbed his temples, his eyes still directed at the paperwork. "Do you think he will manage without us here the next couple of days?" Ginny shook her head nervously; worried Draco was going to force her to fire him. "Fine. Just…give him the days off. We can't risk any mistakes while we are away. We will figure it out when we get back."

"Are you sure?" She asked hesitantly.

"Unless you want to sack him right now, what else would we do?"

"Oh, thank-you!" She exclaimed with relief, "I'm not in the mood to fire anyone today…"

"There will come a day where it'll have to happen," he drawled quietly.

"Easy for you to say; you don't have to deal with these guys. You just have to deal with the cashiers…that job is easy enough."

Much to Ginny's surprise, that comment caused Draco to finally dart his eyes from his papers and slam his pen on the desk as he hissed quietly, "Are you fucking kidding me?"

Ginny narrowed her eyes, offended by Draco's abrupt temper. "What's your problem?"

"Fucking Sharon couldn't count a god damn coin to save her life. And I have to trust her with the money while we are gone? Trust me – It's just as hard for me as it is for you." He clamped his jaw shut and clenched his fists. Ginny couldn't refrain from giggling lightly at his tense appearance.

"Fuckin' Sharon," she laughed.

"Fuckin' Sharon," he repeated; shaking his head as Blaise strolled in.

"What are you two fretting about?" He asked, pulling a seat next to Ginny.

"Our incompetent staff," Ginny said bitterly, crossing her arms. Blaise frowned.
"Don't be jerks, guys," he started, looking disappointed towards them both. "They're all trying their hardest. Besides, there's nothing worse than a boss who doesn't show respect for their staff. If any of them heard you talking shit about them, they'd all quit and we'd be out of business."

"I suppose we need them just as much as they need us," Draco grumbled under his breath.

Ginny giggled, "Luna's good morals are wearing off on you."

Throughout the previous weeks, relief spread throughout their group as all previous tensions had slowly dissolved. There was an understanding amongst them all that Draco and Ginny still had feelings for each other, but it appeared they had both become experts at not letting them show, it was easy to forget. It felt like they had traveled back in time to when they first began hanging out. With one special exception; Ginny's confidence had bloomed since learning she had caught the attention of Draco so much that he drunkenly embarrassed himself in front of her. It was humorous for her to look back and remember the times where she felt Draco only viewed her as a 'little sister'; it was certainly an ego boost to realize that wasn't true. Regardless, she was relieved to fall back into their regular friendship. Everything ran smoother that way.

"You guys want to do dinner with Luna tonight so we can finish preparing for the trip tonight?" Blaise suggested, snapping Ginny out of her thoughts.

Ginny nodded and Draco said, "Sure, but we have to have an early night. Gotta floo to Paris early."

The day dragged on as they stressed over the final details. Ginny broke the news to Allen that he would be taking the days off who took offense initially but thankfully understood their reasoning. Draco finished his final version of their portfolio, still unsure if it was perfected, but begrudgingly accepted that there was nothing more he could add. Blaise happily gushed over the excitement of going on his first trip with Luna, who thankfully could take time off from the magazine. All of them were relieved to finally meet at a quiet, dark pub and discuss their trip.

"I can't believe I'm going to Paris tomorrow!" Ginny squealed excitedly. She had not gone on a vacation in years. After their hard work, it felt well deserved.

"I wish we had more time…" Draco mused out loud, "At least you three don't have to meet with Mister Descartes. You get to spend the trip site-seeing."

"Oh, Draco, your meeting will be over before you know it," Luna said warmly, "Then you can join us on our adventures!"

"Adventures in Paris," Ginny said happily, clasping her hands together in endearment.

"I've been to Paris a dozen times," Blaise said nonchalantly, "The novelty has worn off a little."

"Don't be a buzzkill," Luna laughed, "Besides, you've never gone with us before. I promise I'll make it a novel experience."

"Yeah, you will," Blaise said mischievously before lovingly kissing her cheek.

"Thank god we get our own rooms..." Draco said, rolling his eyes at the affectionate couple. "Do you think I'm ready? For the meeting?"

"Draco, you've done all the preparations possible. Relax and enjoy it," Ginny said, placing her hand on his forearm.

"With our sales, he would be stupid not to invest in us," Blaise started, "Stop stressing out for once."
"If we didn't have stress we would get nothing done," Draco argued.

"Yeah, but there's a line between healthy stress and debilitating stress," Blaise retorted. "We've gotten this far, we are on a roll. Have some confidence."

"I am confident!" Draco shot, crossing his arms.

"You're arrogant, maybe," Blaise smirked and Draco rolled his eyes.

"Sorry to interrupt this lovely conversation," Luna began nervously, "But is that Harry?"

Ginny's face paled and her eyes bugged out as he snapped her head from her dinner, "WHAT?"

"Over there," she motioned behind Ginny's shoulder. Ginny slowly turned her neck to scan the room. Sure enough, Harry Potter was standing several meters away from them, looking as handsome as ever.

"Holy fuck, holy fuck, holy fuck," Ginny panicked as she reflexively began sliding down her chair to hide under the table, "I need to get out of here. NOW."

Draco rolled his eyes and grabbed her by her arm, pulling her up the seat to resume normal posture. "Calm down. You're going to make more of a scene. Then he will notice us for sure."

"No, no, no, no," she hyperventilated, as she searched for the most discreet exit. "We need to go. I can't see him yet!"

"Gin, you're going to have to see him eventually," Blaise argued, trying to talk some sense into her.

"Yeah, Ginny," Luna continued, "I mean, he's practically your family."

"Well, now, don't say that!" Ginny hissed, "That's just creepy!"

The waiter returned to their table, "Can I get anyone anything else to drink?"

"Just the bills, please!" Ginny ordered, but Draco reached over to cover her mouth with his hands.

"No, no bills. We haven't even finished dinner," He said before turning to the waiter, "Just get this lady your largest glass of wine. Maybe put a sedative in it while you're at it."

The waiter looked confused but nodded and strolled away. Ginny turned to her group with pleading eyes, "Guys, he's going to lose his mind if he sees me with you!"

"Who cares?" Blaise drawled, "What's he going to say? 'Ginny, how dare you practice your free will and break up with me?'"

"Hang on…" Luna began as her mouth slowly dropped, "I think he's with a girl…"

"WHAT?" Ginny's head snapped back quickly to confirm what Luna said. Once again, Luna's observations were correct. Harry's arms were linked with a petite, busty, red-headed girl as they waltzed to their table for two. "How is he with a girl!?"

"Are you jealous?" Draco asked suspiciously, a large grin growing on his face.

"No!" She huffed as her cheeks grew red.

"I think you are!" Blaise agreed with Draco, "You're fuckin' jealous!"
"No, I'm not! It's just a little weird…I mean…she has RED HAIR. She looks just like me!"

"No she doesn't, she has much larger br –" Blaise began but Draco snapped at him.

"Blaise, shut the hell up. Not the right time." He said protectively before resuming his goofy smile, "You are jealous, though."

"Ginny, it's perfectly normal to be jealous…" Luna said comfortingly, "You've both had a long, complicated history that recently ended. It's only natural to feel a little weird."

"Thank-you, Luna, for being understanding and supportive," Ginny said smugly, "Maybe you should teach a lesson to these two prats."

"Wouldn't do anything anyways," Blaise laughed, "Come on. Let's just finish our meal and leave before Ginny has a brain aneurysm."

"Thank you, Blaise."

They quickly strolled out of the restaurant after paying for their bills; Ginny hiding behind between Luna and Blaise. She knew she looked foolish and that her disguise was faulty but she didn't care. Finally, they reached outside and were hit by the icy snowy air, and Ginny exhaled in relief. She felt so warm in the pub that she welcomed the chilly air generously as it cooled her flustered skin. The rest of her group didn't seem as happy. They all stood there shivering, glaring at Ginny.

"Are you happy now?" Blaise asked glaring at Ginny, who was all too aware of his disdain towards snow.

"Very; thanks." She inhaled deeply, satisfied that she could finally breathe.

Draco managed to mutter through his shivers, "So should we meet at Ginny's at say, eight tomorrow morning?"

"Yeah, that wor – " Luna began before being interrupted.

"Ginny?" Her face paled again as she began frozen in her spot. All eyes were on her as she remained silent, pursing her lips and widening her eyes. Harry hesitantly walked towards them with an unreadable expression on his face. "What are you doing here?"

"Uhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh…" Ginny said for far too long as she tried to think of a response.

"I saw you hiding behind these guys," He said, looking confused by her weird behavior and her audible noises.

"Uhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh…." She continued and Blaise nudged her ribs.

"Gin, this is usually when you speak."

"I-I wasn't hiding," She managed to sputter out and Draco, Blaise, and Luna groaned at her awkwardness.

"Yes, you were," Harry said, narrowing his eyes at her. "I'm not stupid."

"I know!" She exclaimed nervously, "I wasn't implying that you were."

"I didn't think you were," he said coolly as he shoved his hands in his pockets, "Do you mind if I quickly speak with you?"
"Uhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh..."

"Come on, Gin. I have a date I need to get back to," Harry said impatiently.

"Right! A date!" She said, finally being brought back to reality. "Sure, let's get this over with."

He led her a few meters away from her group. They were still in sight but just out of earshot. Harry whispered gently, "Listen, Gin, Christmas is coming up. We are going to be in the same room together."

Ginny's face showed pure surprise by his calm tone. It was completely different than what she anticipated. She nodded in understanding, "Yeah, it is."

"It's going to be weird but we need to be civil."

"You're absolutely right," She nodded happily, "We can be civil."

"I understand that you're in love with someone else."

"Wait – what?"

"You're in love with Malfoy."

"No, I'm not."

Harry sighed in exasperation, "Ginny, just stop lying, I'm not stu – "

"Harry," her voice grew louder, "I'm not lying. I'm not 'in love' with anyone."

Harry's voice grew louder as well, "This is so immature of you. The least you could do is admit it."

"I have nothing to admit!" She said much louder than intended. Draco, Luna, and Blaise all turned their heads nervously towards her. She could see both her and Harry's breaths in the cold; both began heaving heavily. Footsteps crunched in the snow and her head darted behind her to see Draco walking closer.

"Everything okay?" He asked nonchalantly.

"Get the hell out of here, Malfoy." Harry shot menacingly.

"Seriously, get the hell out of here!" Ginny snapped before cringing at her own rudeness. "I'll meet you later."

"I'm not leaving until I know everything is okay," He said darting his eyes towards Harry, looking defensive over Ginny.

"Really? And you say you two aren't in love?" Harry scowled, "Go have fun with your boyfriend, Ginny."

"He's not my boyfriend!" Ginny face-palmed, "Ask any of them. Draco Malfoy will never be my boyfriend."

"Listen, it was shitty enough feeling like a fool being lied to while we were dating. I'd really rather avoid it now that you're out of my life." Harry said coldly, glaring at Draco.

"Would it kill you to listen to her for once?" Draco snapped, getting closer to Harry.
"I don't believe I asked for your opinion," Harry shot, grinding his teeth.

"You didn't. I'm offering it."

"Okay, fuck this." Harry snapped, "Have fun with your death eater boyfriend, Gin. See you at Christmas."

He began walking back into the restaurant, fuming, but Draco called one last time, "Harry, if you fucking hate me so much; Hit me. I know you want to. Get it over with." Draco opened his arms wide, motioning that he was welcoming a punch.

"Draco!" Ginny hissed angrily at him, resenting him for tempting Harry.

Harry paused in his step and faced Draco eagerly as if he was really contemplating it. Eventually, he scoffed, "You're not worth it." And turned on his heel to head back to his date.

Draco laughed out loud before muttering under his breath, "Coward."

It was a speed that was faster than any human motion Ginny had ever witnessed. Faster than a blink of an eye; faster than the flick of a wand; Harry went bulldozing into Draco's ribs, hammering him into the snowbank. Ginny screamed.

"OH MY GOD!" Luna yelped as she and Blaise sprinted towards Ginny, who's mouth was practically reaching the ground. Harry raised his fist, ready to smash Draco in the face, but Draco swiftly rolled and dodged it.

Draco laughed manically, "That all you got, Potter!?"

"Not even close."

"Blaise!" Ginny cried, "Stop them!"

Harry swung his fist towards Draco's face, just missing, and hitting Draco's shoulder roughly instead.

"Hmm…Nah." Blaise said, amused, and simply leaned against the restaurant casually.

"Blaise, what the hell!?" Luna shrieked, shooting daggers at him.

Draco reached for Harry's collar, ready to hit him back, but the swift motion caused him to slip on a patch of ice. Both he and Harry came toppling down.

"I say we just let them get it out of their system."

"But they're going to kill each other!" Ginny pleaded.

Draco and Harry rolled on the ground; Harry grabbed a handful of snow and rubbed it in Draco's face.

"Hmm…I dunno," Blaise said tutting tongue, "Looks like they're both pretty god awful fighters."

"Huh." Ginny and Luna both nodded as the realization dawned on them. It was true, Draco and Harry were merely awkwardly rolling around on the ice together. Despite the passionate actions no real damage had been done yet.

Harry regathered his stance as he pulled himself from the ice; an evil glint shined in his green eyes. Draco paused for a moment on the ground to gingerly touch his lip, which had been slightly cut from
an ice-shard. Harry took the opportunity to kick him in the ribs but Draco grabbed his ankle causing Harry to fall on top of him.

"Who do you think is winning?" Ginny asked, finding a sick amusement in the show.

"Harry, definitely," Blaise confirmed, "All Draco's managed to do is pull Harry onto the ground."

"You know, I always would have thought Draco would be strong," Luna said, surprised.

"Why? He's a rich little white boy." Blaise laughed as Draco straddled Harry, trying again to smash Harry in the cheek. Harry dodged his fist causing Draco to punch the ice instead. He cried in pain.

"Poor Draco," Luna said sadly and Ginny cringed at his embarrassing attempt at hurting Harry.

"Well, he should have known better than to call Harry fucking Potter a coward," Blaise said bluntly, "I don't necessarily like him but...he's the last person on earth I would call a coward."

"GET YOUR BOYFRIEND OFF HARRY!"

They all darted their heads towards the restaurant door to see Harry's redheaded date watching the scene; she looked horrified. Ginny, who was desensitized to the violence yet still furious by the accusations replied with, "HE'S NOT MY BOYFRIEND!"

The girl gaped at Ginny, "I don't care what the hell he is, GET HIM OFF."

Draco and Harry paused temporarily to see where the screams were coming from. As Draco hesitated for a split second longer than Harry, Harry managed to swing Draco off his body. He used his knees to trap Draco's arms at his side and finally, with a furious speed, contact was made between Draco's nose and Harry's fist. Blood spouted onto the snow.

"Okay, okay, okay," Blaise drawled as he calmly stepped towards the fight, "That's enough. Break it up. Harry, you won."

"Damn rights I did!" Harry cheered as he remained on Draco's torso. Draco began choking on the blood due to lying down. Blaise gently grabbed Harry by the arm to pull him up.

"Yeah, yeah, hope you feel proud of yourself," Blaise said flatly as he clapped Harry on the shoulder, "Is it all out of your system?"

Harry narrowed his eyes, confused by Blaise's strange chivalry considering Harry just fought his best friend. Eventually, he nodded, "Yeah, I think so."

"Good." He put his arm around Harry's shoulder and pulled his ear towards his mouth and whispered threateningly, "Now I'm going to say this once and only once: I'm not nearly as weak as Draco. If I hear that you've accused them both of dating, because they are not and these rumors could jeopardize our company, you will not be winning the next fight. Now, I don't want it to come to that, so you'd better stop spouting that garbage. You hear me?"

Harry gulped and nodded.

"Great. Have a good night. Buy your date some flowers; she seems a little shaken up." And he shoved Harry's back, motioning him towards his date.

Before he reached her he stopped at Ginny and ran his hands through his hair, staring at the ground. He mumbled under his breath, "I'm sorry, Ginny. I'll see you at Christmas?"
Ginny gaped and raised her brow quizzically before sputtering out a slight, "Sure," before Harry retreated to the restaurant with his date. They all rushed towards Draco who remained slumped on the ground, clenching his broken nose as blood seeped over his clothes. Ginny crossed her arms and shook her head.

"I bet you're feeling really macho right now."

"Shut up, Ginny," he avoided her eye contact.

"Here, let me fix your nose for you!" Luna knelt on the ground beside him and pulled out her wand, "Episky!" His nose instantly readjusted into place and stopped pouring blood.

"Thanks," he nodded, feeling his fixed nose.

"Come on," Blaise grabbed Draco's hand and pulled him up, "We'd better get going home. Long day tomorrow."

They all nodded and Luna said, "Yeah, umm...I hope you feel better tomorrow, Draco."

"Thanks."

"Shall we go?" Blaise held out his arm for Luna, who happily grabbed it, and they apparated away. Ginny and Draco stood alone in the peaceful snow as they stared at the blood on the ground in silence.

Eventually Ginny gently rubbed his arm, "Listen, that was the most idiotic thing I've seen in my life. But thank you. For standing up for me. Again."

Draco shrugged, "Had it went better I would be saying I did it for myself because I always wanted to knock the bloke out...but sure. Let's just say it was a complete act of chivalry that went wrong."

Ginny giggled, "I must say, I'm a little disappointed you didn't get a single shot in."

Draco heaved and rolled his eyes, "Don't rub it in."

"We'd better get going, though. I'll see you in the morning?"

They apparated to their respective homes. Caught up in the heat of the moment watching the fight no one seemed to notice the camera flash from the bushes. Once the area was clear a sneaky paparazzi stealthily slid out from the bushes and scurried into the darkness.

Chapter End Notes

Hehehehehehe. That fight is one of the funnest things i've written.
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

Thanks so much, guys! Hope you enjoy this :). Might start a little slow, but it's worth it to keep truckin' on through.

AND a quick disclaimer: Any french landmarks mentioned in this chapter are REAL and can photos of what I've tried to describe can be easily found on google images. I've never been to Paris so I unfortunately had to make due with google for research. Would reccomend checking images of the hotel I used; it's beautiful.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ginny groggily sat in her kitchen before the sunrise, drinking her coffee, anticipating the arrival of her friends. Beside her sat a small duffel bag with a few changes of clothes and her toiletries. She couldn't believe that after today their business would expand to Paris. It was better that her dreams. She chuckled to herself when she realized that her dream prior to their business wouldn't have gone further than to work as an employee for their store; but now she was the co-owner and boss. What a bizarre life she was living.

She glanced at the clock; it was 7:45. Growing restless, she began pacing throughout her kitchen. Her body was filled with anxious excitement and she couldn't remain still. To distract herself from the time sluggishly ticking by she thought back to the previous night. Draco and Harry participated in the most embarrassing fight of the century. It was foolish of Draco to egg Harry on, yes, but she couldn't help but feel that the fight created some closure between her and Harry. The way he apologized at the end seemed to signify a resolution to their conflict. It felt liberating.

CRACK!

"Good-morning," a sleepy looking Blaise appeared in Ginny's living room with Luna trailing behind him.

"Happy Paris Day!" Luna said excitedly as she skipped towards Ginny, "How excited are you?"

"Let's just say it's a good thing you guys arrived when you did; I was on the verge of exploding!" Ginny cried of joy, hopping up and down. "I've had three cups of coffee!"

"I've only had two!" Luna moaned, "Come on, pour me one. I need to be on your level."

"My god, I'm going to be stuck in Paris with two caffeinated women..." Blaise rolled his eyes towards Luna's fresh cup of coffee. "Draco is lucky to escape to the meeting..."

"Be quiet, Blaise! We are going to have so much fun," Ginny said, "Speaking of Draco; he only has five minutes to get here before I lose my mind."

"Hopefully he's not concussed from his rough-housing last night," Blaise chuckled, "If he ever gets married I'm telling that story in my toast."
"Oh, thank fuck, you're here," Ginny said, relieved, as she observed Draco. She couldn't help but look at him hungrily as he wore his most perfectly fitted suit. My god, why can't I shag him, she thought to herself as she bit her lip, stupid damn business cock blocking me…

"What are you staring at?" Draco smirked at her as if he could read her mind.

"Your suit is a little wrinkled," she said smugly, feeling proud of her quick response.

"No it isn't," he said as he observed his clothes, "I look pretty damn perfect."

"Wow, the sun isn't even up and Draco is already being pompous," Luna giggled, "It's going to be one of those days, I see."

"Every day is one of those days," Blaise rolled his eyes, "What is the name of our hotel, by the way?"

"Le Meurice," Draco replied, "It's largely a muggle hotel – so no obvious magic. There is a very hidden magical part to it though, which is where we will be flooing. Just don't draw attention to yourselves."

They all nodded in understanding as Draco began, "If anyone you don't recognize asks what you do for a living; say you're a waiter or waitress or something that won't require many details. Don't say anything fancy, such as that you're starting a business, because then you'll be stuck explaining a muggle business model which you don't understand."

"Excellent thinking, Draco," Luna said, "The last thing we want is Ginny or Blaise trying to explain that they're working on a new computer software when they've never even used one."

"Can I say I'm an up and coming actor?" Blaise requested, "I know the gist of that."

"Yeah, then what will you do when they ask what your favourite film is?" Draco asked and Blaise frowned.

"Fine. You're right." He huffed.

"We need to get going, guys! We still need to check into our hotel; Draco can't be late!" Ginny said impatiently hopping in her spot. They all agreed and headed to Ginny's fireplace and flooed to their destination.

Ginny was expecting to enter an exquisite hotel lobby and frowned when she found herself in a dusty, damp, cellar. She observed her area; spider webs covered every surface and the smell of mold filled her nostrils. Antique items littered the room. The metals were rusted and wooden pieces were rotten or eaten away by termites. Turning around to observe the reactions of the rest, she was relieved when they shared her own skeptical expression. All but Draco; he began tapping his wand on every antique object in sight.

"Draco, what is all this?" Ginny asked as she shivered. The cellar appeared to not be insulated. One could freeze to death if left down there for too long.

"He's got to be here somewhere…"

"He?" Blaise asked quizzically, staring at Draco who looked mad, tapping all the objects.
"You heard me…" he drawled. His eyes finally rested on an old grandfather clock. He stared into the face of the clock and furrowed his brows. "Here we are." He tapped the clock with his wand three times and the clock instantly transfigured into a tall, thin, bald, friendly looking man with a handlebar mustache. Ginny, Blaise, and Luna all gasped in surprise.

"Mister Malfoy!" The man said with a slight French accent, although his English dialect was very clear. "I was growing impatient. I wasn't sure if you'd ever find me here."

"Hello, Immanuel," Draco said courteously, "Sorry about the delay, I was beginning to worry we had entered the wrong fireplace."

"Not a worry, not a worry," he muttered, as he waved his arms flamboyantly. "Allow me to introduce myself: I am Immanuel Binet. I will be your magical guidance throughout your stay. If you require anything that may not be satisfied through muggles simply dial B*I*N*E*T* on the telephone in your suite. I will be at your aide at any time."

"Wow, thank-you, sir," Luna said in amazement of the man's excellent customer service, "Do you work with the hotel?"

"Follow me, I will explain along the way." He tapped his wand on a dusty portrait on the wall. It moved to reveal a dimly lit tunnel. Beckoning them to follow; he led the way. "The owner of this hotel is a muggle who is married to a beautiful witch. Combined, the two have developed the best method to capitalize on the industry – allowing it to be open to both sides of the public. Muggles and wizards. Me, along with a few others, oversee that magical folk are able to enjoy their stay as inconspicuously as possible. The other muggle employees in the hotel are unaware of this, of course."

"That's fascinating!" Ginny exclaimed, "Are there many hotels like this?"

"There are a few, however, this is the most popular." He replied, "Watch your step, here."

He led them to the end of the tunnel in silence. Ginny's heart was beating in excitement. Finally, they reached a brick wall which he tapped delicately with his wand. It opened to reveal a small simple, but elegant, conference room. Immanuel turned to them as he spoke, "Once we leave this room there is a strict no magic policy. This means no apparating, no lumos, no nothing. While we are unable to control your actions outside of the hotel it is strongly recommended to refrain from the use of magic on the streets. Is this understood?"

They all nodded.

"Excellent. I have done the pleasure of already checking you into your suites," He handed them each a large key, "I will escort you to your rooms. Afterwards, Mister Malfoy, I was instructed to lead you to your meeting with Mister Descartes."

They followed him out of the conference room to the lobby. They all gasped at the view. It was the most exquisite thing Ginny had ever seen. It looked like a palace with golden pillars and arches and an incredibly high ceiling. Crystal chandeliers hung from the wall, emitting a warm glow on the black and white marble floors.

"This is astonishing…" Luna thought out loud.

"You haven't seen your suites, yet." Immanuel chuckled and led them to an elevator. He turned to Luna and Blaise, "Your suite is on the 26th floor, while Mister Malfoy's and Miss Weasley's is on the 36th." As the elevator stopped on the 26th floor Luna and Blaise stepped out, telling Ginny to
meet them immediately after she settled in. They resumed the elevator ride and Ginny's ears popped from the high altitude. Subsequently, they reached their floor, and Immanuel led them to their rooms. They were side by side.

"Looks like we are neighbours, Weasley." Draco smirked and she stuck her tongue out at him. She unlocked the door and gasped even harder at the sight of the room.

"THIS IS WHERE I'M STAYING?" She shrieked as she scanned the suite. It was more beautiful than any room she had witnessed before, even more beautiful than the lobby. A king sized four-post bed draped with golden curtains sat in the corner, a stunning crimson sofa was placed in front of a large television, and best of all – a balcony with an excellent view of the Eiffel Tower extended off of her suite. She thought the room looked like a glamorous version of the Gryffindor common room, with the crimson and gold highlights. She swooned, stepping onto the balcony, taking in the view of the beautiful tower. Never in her life would she think she would see it in person; let alone off of her own private balcony. She never wanted to leave.

"How do you like it?" She didn't hear Draco waltz into her room, casually leaning against the balcony doors.

"Oh, Draco!" She cried and she threw her arms around his neck. He welcomed her, wrapping his arms tenderly around her waist, embracing the hug. "This is the happiest I've ever been! Thank-you!"

"Why are you thanking me?" He asked, chuckling.

"If it weren't for you none of this would be possible," she felt like she could cry of happiness, "This is so surreal."

"I'm glad you like it," He smiled into her hair before pulling away, "I'd better get going, though. Immanuel is waiting. Do you three want to meet in my room at noon? The meeting should be over by then."

"Sure," She smiled at him brightly and couldn't contain herself from hugging him again. Throwing herself over him, she squeezed him tightly. "Good luck, Draco. You're going to do great."

"Thanks, I hope so."

Ginny, Blaise, and Luna were all enjoying their breakfast at a quaint little café. They were buzzing over their elegant hotel and happily drinking wine, excited that it was socially acceptable to have a glass with breakfast at the café. Ginny sighed happily as she stared out of the windows; the snow was peacefully falling and cute small Christmas lights hung from the rooftops.

"This is the most stunning place I've ever seen," she mused, "I could literally cry."

"Just imagine what it'll be like once we get the deal --" Blaise began, "We could live here if we wanted."

Ginny swooned but Luna looked sad, "Are you all going to leave me? I can't leave my magazine…"

Ginny and Blaise both frowned, unsure of how to respond. This thought had never crossed either of their minds. Finally Blaise spoke, "We'll make it work," he clapped his hand on top of her hand. "Don't worry about that now, just enjoy the trip."

Ginny smiled at Luna, "Don't worry, Luna. Even if I do move here I'll be sure to get a spare bedroom just for you. You can visit every weekend!"
"I suppose that's the good thing about apparating and flooing," She smirked, "So, what shall we do after breakfast?"

"I want to see the Eiffel tower!" Ginny exclaimed.

"Can't you see it from the hotel?" Blaise asked.

"Urgh – that's not the same."

"I'm fine with seeing it up close," Luna said, "You can't go to Paris without getting a picture in front of the tower."

Ginny frowned when she realized they would be missing an integral part of their group, "Well, we can't go without Draco…"

Blaise scoffed, "I really don't think Draco cares about the Eiffel Tower."

Ginny crossed her arms and huffed, "Well…I want him there. I say we wait."

"You're adorable." Luna laughed and Ginny rolled her eyes.

"Well, I'm sorry if I don't want to play third wheel at the most romantic place in the world," She smirked, "We have all day tomorrow as well."

Blaise looked at his watch, "Actually, you know…Draco will be done in nearly an hour and a half. What do you say we have another drink and slowly make our way back to the hotel?"

"That sounds great!" Ginny replied, "I can't wait to hear about how well it went."

"Me neither," Blaise said excitedly as he rubbed his hands together, "Everything is coming together…"

They finished their breakfast and wine and slowly walked towards the hotel. Ginny and Luna were both enamoured with the atmosphere; linking arms as they pranced down the streets saying, "Bonjour" to every person they passed. Blaise rolled his eyes but couldn't hide his smile at the ecstatic girls. At noon, they finally found themselves outside of Draco's suit. The door was unlocked so they let themselves in. Initially, the apartment appeared empty, but they quickly found Draco standing on the balcony. His elbows were on the ledge as he took in the view of the tower, a cloud of smoke was bellowing from his mouth.

"Are you smoking?" Ginny laughed. Draco didn't hear them enter so her voice startled him. He made eye contact with her briefly before resuming to the view.

"Everyone smokes in Paris," he grunted.

"Do they, now?" She asked and waltzed over to his position, smiling at his cigarette. "Can I have some?"

"You're too pretty to smoke," he chuckled. He seemed to be avoiding her eyes.

"So are you," she retorted before snatching the cigarette from his hands and inhaled, coughing. "Maybe you're right."

"Draco, come inside and tell us how it went," Blaise urged excitedly.

Ginny saw Draco frown and her heart immediately sunk, "Draco? Are you alright?"
He exhaled heavily and walked away from Ginny without responding. She furrowed her brows and followed him inside his suite, which was nearly the same as Ginny's.

"How'd it go?" Blaise asked again. He didn't respond, instead he slumped on the crimson sofa and placed his face in his hands and groaned loudly. Blaise began to cringe, "Oh no…"

"What happened?" Ginny demanded, trying to keep her voice calm but her patience was quickly wearing thin.

Draco reached into his pocket and pulled out a newspaper, tossing it on the coffee table. Ginny, Blaise, and Luna all hesitantly walked closer and gasped. Clear as day, on the front page of the Daily Prophet, was a photograph of Draco and Harry's fight from the previous night with the headline: MALFOY AND POTTER UNABLE TO BURY THE HATCHET: VICIOUS ATTACK ENSUES.

Ginny's head snapped to Draco, "Are you fucking kidding me? Someone saw that?"

He nodded gravely.

"So…what happened? Did Mister Descartes see it?" Blaise asked, despite already knowing the answer.

"Yep."

"And?" Ginny began tapping her foot impatiently.

He sighed sadly, "He backed out of the deal."

"Are you serious?" Blaise asked, his face turning red. "Because of some stupid fight? He doesn't even know the context!"

Draco shrugged, "He said that he warned me that he will not work with immature people…and apparently this, along with our little hangover potion, proves that we are immature."

Ginny and Blaise stared Draco down in silence. Ginny's heart was racing, no, no, no, no, no. We can't lose the Paris deal. She thought to herself. Blaise finally spoke up, "So, what now? There must be other investors here we can maybe meet with while we are here? You've been doing more networking, right?"

Draco winced as he spoke, "Not really, no…"

This made Ginny snap, "Well, why the hell not!? Isn't that your job?"

Draco's eyes shot towards her, they were full of offence. "I don't know! I guess I got cocky and just figured this would pan out..."

"Well that's pretty stupid of you," Ginny shot. Blaise and Luna both looked surprised by her sudden flare of anger.

"What do you expect?" Draco shot hotly, "I'm still new to this, okay? I would like to see you do any better."

"Well I wouldn't attack Harry Potter the day before the most important meeting of our lives!"

"Oh, well that's funny," Draco sneered, "You didn't seem too mad at me last night. I do remember you thanking me for 'standing up for you'. But turns out the second it doesn't benefit you, you lose
"Oh, stop it!" She shouted, "Don't try to turn this around on me. I didn't ask you to stand up for me. You were just trying to boost your ego a little bit!"

"No, I wasn't," he spat, "Besides, your stupid little potion didn't help the matter either. Now we all look like alcoholics."

Blaise and Luna attempted to interject. Both were uncomfortable from the hostilities. Anytime they would open their mouths Draco or Ginny would begin shouting again.

Ginny gasped and narrowed her eyes, "Don't call my potion stupid! It's brilliant and you know it."

"Well, apparently, it doesn't matter what I think, because everyone else thinks it's stupid and immature." He said coldly.

"Don't be an asshole," She shot.

"You're the one screaming at me!"

"Yeah, because you're an idiot who can't seem to get a handle on his emotions and instead resorts to violence!"

"I'M the one who can't get a handle on my emotions? Look at you right now!"

Luna marched towards the middle of the debate, holding her hands out, signalling it was time to stop arguing, "STOP with this nastiness!" She shouted, "You're both friends who care about each other deeply; you're both acting like children."

"But – "

"No buts!" She yelled, "Okay, yes, it was stupid of Draco to get into the fight," Draco frowned, about to argue until Luna cut him off, "But it was also stupid of the three of us to not stop it. Instead we all stood there watching like it was fucking pornography or something."

"It's true…" Blaise started, "I feel like I deserve a bit of this heat…I should have stopped it earlier."

Ginny shuffled her feet and stared sadly at the ground, feeling pathetic. "They're right…I'm sorry. I could have helped stop it as well."

"Also," Luna started, "Ginny, the hangover potion is incredible. If Mister Descartes isn't interested in that type of products…maybe it's not that you're all too immature. Maybe he's just too old."

Blaise laughed and put his arm around Luna's shoulder, "See? I like that kind of logic."

Draco sighed, "I guess maybe you're right…I'm sorry I called it stupid, Ginny."

"Great! Look at how mature we are all being!" Blaise cheered, "Listen, this is really rotten news. But how about we take it as a learning experience? Now we know that firstly, we should be constantly networking and never depend on one investor. Secondly, maybe we need to focus our attention towards more youthful investors who aren't terrified of working with young people."

"I guess we could do that…" Draco shrugged, "On the plus side he said that everything else was super impressive and that if we didn't have these hiccups we would have been a shoe-in."

"See? There you go," Luna said, "You're still successful enough to make everything happen. We are
just a little bit behind schedule, that's all. Believe me, when I began my magazine it took a dozen meetings like this until I landed an interested person."

Ginny and Draco smiled warmly at Luna. She seemed to make everything better. Draco looked at her fondly, "Thanks Luna, that means a lot."

"Let's not let this ruin our trip," Blaise suggested, "Everything is paid for, we still have another day here. We can worry about all of this once we are back in London. Let's just try to have fun, alright?"

"I'm fine with that," Ginny replied. She turned to Draco and spoke sadly, "I'm really, really sorry for getting mad at you."

Draco shrugged, "I'm sure it won't be the last time it'll happen; I am kind of an idiot."

She laughed, "Yes, you are. But so am I."

"So, what shall we do while we are here?" Blaise asked, "Paris is our oyster."

Despite the dramatics the day continued to be one of Ginny's best days of her life. They dined at exquisite restaurants, sampling different French foods and wine. They explored the Louvre, a muggle museum, all of them astonished by the fantastic exhibits. Even walking down the ancient snowy Paris streets was breath taking. Her and Draco easily resolved their fight, instantly resuming their friendship. Ginny had never had a friend like that before...where they could scream at each other and immediately forgive and forget. Harry would have been bitter all night. Draco simply seemed relieved that they regained normalcy, as he spent most of the day with his arm around her shoulder, happy to be in her presence. It felt a little weird, spending the entire day with Luna and Blaise in a romantic city. Almost as though it was a double date but not quite. Eventually, they found themselves being their 'immature' selves, drinking at a busy night club.

The four sat at a table in the corner, shouting their dialogue towards each other over the loud, heavy, beats that ran throughout the dance club. Florescent lights flashed over the dark dance floor, giving the area a euphoric atmosphere. Luna was glancing over at the sweaty bodies on the night floor, longingly. She took a large swig of her vodka and soda before turning to Blaise.

"We should go dancing!" She shouted over the music.

"No way," he said shaking his head, "That place looks like cesspool."

"Oh come on! It looks fun!" She chimed, "How often do we get a chance to go dancing?"

"We can dance wherever we want, baby," he said slyly but Luna wasn't having it.

"I didn't' get all dressed up to sit at a table all night. We could do that in London."

"You should go dancing! If I had someone to dance with I totally would," Ginny argued for Luna who smiled at her in appreciation.

"You two can dance," Blaise said motioning to her and Draco. Ginny turned red at the thought of grinding on Draco and shook her head. She was relieved when Draco seemed to have the same mindset.

"Not happening," he said flatly.

"Blaise, don't be a dweeb," Luna said hotly, "If you don't dance with me I'm going to find someone who will."
Blaise sighed exasperatedly, "Fine, let's do this." Luna squealed happily and dragged him upon the floor. Blaise on the floor, awkwardly bobbing his head as Luna immediately transformed into the beat and lost herself in the music.

Ginny laughed, "They're so funny."

"He must really like Luna. I've never seen him dance with anyone in my life," Draco chuckled.

"Do you dance?" Ginny asked, running a hand through her hair.

"I have danced," he replied. "Not very well, though."

"Yeah, I'm pretty terrible at it. I've got no rhythm, I look like a fool."

"Oh, please," he scoffed, "I'm sure you look just fine."

She rolled her eyes, "I wouldn't be so sure."

He looked into her eyes and smiled, "I'm really happy we were able to put our little scrap behind us."

"Me too," she smiled, "I don't like it when we don't get along."

"I just don't like it when you're angry!" He exclaimed jokingly, "You're bloody terrifying."

She playfully shoved his shoulder, "So are you! Your voice gets all weird and high pitched, it's not pleasant."

"Yeah, well at least my head doesn't look like it's going to explode!" He argued as he laughed. Ginny rolled her eyes and ignored his comment. She noticed his eyes were pointing towards a handsome man sitting at the bar. He took a sip of his scotch before whispering in her ear. His voice sent chills down her spine as he drawled, "That guy over there has been checking you out all night."

Ginny burst out in laughter and shook her head fervently, "No he isn't!"

"Yes, he is! Look at him!"

She looked at the man who turned his head the moment she was about to make eye contact. "No, he isn't. He isn't even looking at me."

"Believe me, he is. Wink at him or something next time he looks over."

She sighed and rested her eyes on the brunette man. He subtly turned his glance over to their table, and sure enough, when she gave a sly wink, he returned it with his own wink. Ginny snapped her head towards Draco, cackling at the attention. "Oh my god, he's totally checking me out!"

"I told you, so!"

"Damn…I must look hoootttt," She said cockily, bopping her head.

"Don't let it get to your head," Draco laughed at her newfound confidence.

"Those girls over there are checking you out!" She said excitedly, pointing obviously at a table of three attractive women. Draco rolled his eyes and shoved her arm down, to avoid bringing attention to them.

"I know they are, they've been staring at me all night."
Ginny scoffed, "And you told me not to let it get to my head."

"It's already in my head, Ginny. There's no going back for me."

"Do you think I could get more numbers than you?" Ginny asked coyly, suddenly getting a fun idea in her head.

"What do you mean?" He raised an eyebrow.

"I mean…phone numbers. Like, do you think I could get more guys to hit on me than girls hit on you?"

Draco laughed loudly and shook his head, "Not a chance."

"What is that supposed to mean!?" She threw her arms up in offence, "Are you saying you're hotter than me?"

"Absolutely not," he said abruptly, making it known that wasn't what he meant. "You're definitely hotter."

"Then why are you so confident?"

He shifted uncomfortably in his seat, "I dunno…I've spent the majority of my adult life flirting with women. I'm pretty good at it. And you're…” he trailed off and she narrowed her eyes towards him.

"I'm what?" She demanded.

"You're…a little awkward."

"Whaaaaaat?" She said, mocking offense, "ME? Awkward? I'm like, the least awkward person everrr."

"I'm not saying it's a bad thing!" He insisted, "I find it quite endearing. But in a club…I dunno, these guys aren't really looking for awkward."

"Draco, I've got some fuckin' game. You don't even know," She crossed her arms, "Let's make a bet."

"What kind of bet?"

"I don't know…If you get more numbers, I'll do something. If I get more numbers, you have to do something."

Draco pondered the proposition for a moment as he sipped his scotch. "Fine, if I win…” he trailed off creating suspense, "You have to kiss Luna."

Ginny gasped and slapped his shoulder, "Draco, don't be gross!"

"Hey," he raised his hands defensively, "There's nothing gross about it, believe me!"

She crossed her arms, "Fine. If I win you have to kiss Blaise."

"Well now that's just disgusting."

"No, I don't see any difference between the two." She said bluntly, "Do we have a deal?"
He narrowed his eyes and smirked, "Only because I'm so confident I'll win…sure. We have a deal."

"Great. I'll see you later when you're kissing Blaise," She winked as she stood from the table, grabbing her beer. "Good luck, you'll need it."

"You too."

She arrogantly strutted away, putting an extra swagger in her step. She turned her head one last time towards Draco to give him a sly smile, but accidentally tripped over her high heels. Fucking Christ, I am awkward. She heard Draco laugh behind her and she replied by giving him the middle finger. She spotted the cute brunette man who was staring at her earlier and waltzed towards him, oozing with mock confidence.

"Hey," she said seductively, bat her eyelashes.

"Hey, I was hoping you were going to come over," He smiled down at her. He had large brown eyes and ridiculously white teeth. "How's your night going?"

Fuck, she thought, I had nothing prepared for after 'Hey'. She nodded her head and yelled over the loud music, "It's good, and yours?"

"It's good… you with your boyfriend over there?" He asked, motioning to Draco who was watching the scene unfold in amusement. Ginny shot daggers towards him.

"Nope, I'm completely single!" She exclaimed, "And you?"

The man laughed, "Nope, I'm not with a boyfriend."

Ginny blushed and cursed her choice of words, "Oh, that's not what I meant, I – "

"You're cute when you blush. Has anyone told you that?" He flirted. Ginny had to refrain from rolling her eyes at the cheesy comment.

"Nope, not one person," she said sarcastically, but he didn't seem to pick up on it.

"Well you are," he said, flashing a smile. "Can I get you a drink?"

Ginny looked down at her full drink. She turned to their table and noticed Draco was currently flirting with the group of three girls she had pointed out before. Ginny, no time to actually get to know these people!

"Actually, you know, I have to find my friends…do you think I could get your number? Maybe I could call you later, we could meet up for dance?"

He shrugged, "Sure," and wrote his number on a piece of paper. She quickly snatched the paper and pen as he spoke, "I'm Derek, by the way. And you are…?"

"Uhh…Ginny! See ya!" She quickly skipped away. Her eyes darted towards Draco who was now flirting with another woman, his arm was around her shoulder. She scowled at him, Fucking pompous good looking prick, she thought to herself as she scurried towards another man with dirty blonde hair standing at an ATM machine.

"HEY!" She shouted, cringing at her volume. The song had stopped abruptly the moment she spoke. The dirty blonde man turned towards her uncomfortably.

"Umm…hi?" Ginny noticed him cover up the machine's pin pad and she winced, realizing it
probably looked like she was trying to rob him.

"It's pretty hopping in here, isn't it?" She said breezily, casually leaning on the ATM.

"Umm, yeah, it is,"

"So, are you single?" She asked and his face abruptly became confused by her forwardness.

"Yeah, why?"

"So am I..." she said, attempting to be flirty.

"That's nice." She frowned at how standoff he was being.

Growing desperate she sputtered out, "Can I buy you a drink?"

"Yeah, I guess..." he shrugged and collected his cash, following her to the bar. She ordered him a drink. She turned her head to see Draco standing alone watching her, shaking his head and smirking.

"So, what's your name?" She asked, directing her attention back to the man.

"Mark. You?"

"Nice to meet you Mark, I'm Ginny." She said coyly, shaking his hand. She noticed Draco moving towards another girl. "So, listen, you're really cute. I need to find a friend, though. Think I could get your number?"

"Um...I guess."

"Great, here's a pen." She threw the pen in his face, trying to refrain from tapping her foot impatiently. He wrote his number down and she snatched the paper, "Great, thanks!"

"Okay?" She heard him say as she bolted away. She did this with six more guys, each getting more hurried than the last. She knew this wasn't a reflective picture of her alleged 'moves'. Most of the men looked at her skeptically as she shoved her pen in their faces; it was obvious she was on a mission. With every drink she drank she gained more ridiculous confidence. Eventually, she found herself bopping onto the dance floor; her left hand holding her drink to her mouth and her right hand in the air, waving her pen around. She spotted Blaise and Luna dancing in the corner of the dancefloor and grooved on over to them, whipping her hair to her own beat.

"HI GUYS!" She shouted, as she slinked herself between Blaise and Luna, jumping up and down to the song.

"You look like you're having fun," Luna chuckled, "Someone's gained some liquid courage."

"Hell yeah, I did!" She called out as she shook her hips. Blaise laughed at her dance.

"What's with the pen?" He yelled in her ear, looking quizzically at the odd dancing prop.

"Gettin' numbers, bitches!" She hollered without pausing her movements, "If Draco gets more numbers than me I have to kiss Luna!"

"NICE!" Blaise cheered and Luna's eyes widened.

"WHAAAT?" Luna shrieked.
"But if I get more numbers Draco has to kiss Blaise!"

"WHAT?" He yelped and Luna burst into a fit of laughter.

"Okay, I'm fine with this deal," she said happily, "Quick, find more numbers!"

"Don't encourage this, Luna!" Blaise shrieked in horror.

As if on cue a black haired man put his hand on Ginny's hip and whispered in her ear, "I must say – I love your energy. Would you like to dance?"

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, just write your number on this paper first." She said without even thinking. He looked at her, puzzled, before shrugging and writing his number.

"That's cheating!" Blaise shouted as Ginny grabbed the stranger's hand and led them away from her friends.

She looked at the boy's face; he was very cute. Bright blue eyes that contrasted brilliantly against his black hair and a dusting of freckles were sprinkled over his nose. Of all the guys Ginny had talked to that night, he was definitely the most attractive. She smirked seductively as he pulled her waist closer towards him. She welcomed it warmly, slinking her arms around his neck, grinding her waist closer to him. She closed her eyes and let the music take over her; feeling intoxicated by the stranger's scent. Ginny, she thought to herself, You haven't had a one night stand in a while. You're on vacation. Draco's probably going to do the same, anyways. You deserve this. She opened her eyes to find the stranger staring at her hungrily with his blue eyes and she bit her lip. She felt his hand tighten around her waist and his breath quicken. Her eyes trailed down to his lips. She tilted her head slowly as her eyes fluttered closed. She was just about to make contact when she felt a foreign hand grab her shoulder. Pulled out of her aroused state; she snapped her head backwards. Draco was standing with a mischievous smirk on his face. She knew she should have been mad at him for interrupting her fun, but instead a genuine smile pulled at her lips. It was perfect timing.

"You wanna get out of here?" He asked, staring at the stranger's hands on her waist. She turned to the stranger, then back to Draco, and pondered for a moment.

"Yeah, I do."

He grabbed her hand, stealing her away from the disgruntled man, and laced his fingers around hers. The way he stumbled over his step and his affectionate grip on her hand signalled that he was as equally intoxicated as her.

"Where's Blaise and Luna?" She asked.

"They went back to the hotel," he replied as they stepped into the cold winter air. Their hotel was thankfully only a couple minutes away, as Ginny hadn't brought a coat. She shivered as the air hit her exposed shoulders. Draco pulled off his suit jacket and wrapped it around her arms. She snuggled into the warmth, happy that Draco was such a gentleman.

"So, how did you do?" He asked, shoving his hands in his pocket. Apparently he was done with the hands holding, much to Ginny's displeasure. Although, she still smiled brightly.

"I got nine fuckin' numbers!" She cheered, throwing the papers in the air like confetti.

"WHAT?" Draco snapped bewilderedly, "No way."

"Oh my gosh…did I win?" She asked excitedly as they reached the hotel lobby's doors.
"NO!" He said abruptly, "I mean…maybe by a couple…"

"I WON! YOU HAVE TO KISS BLAISE!" She cheered loudly in the quiet lobby, receiving glares from the hotel staff.

"Shh…inside voice," he hushed as he pressed the button to the elevator.

"I can't believe I won!" She hissed, "How many did you get?"

"Seven," he grumbled.

"Woah-ho-ho, looks like lucky number seven ain't so lucky!" She teased, shoving her finger into his chest.

"Whatever, we will discuss the arrangement of the bet tomorrow…” He muttered before speaking sarcastically, "So, did you and that guy you were dancing with have some unbelievable chemistry?"

Ginny snorted, "Yeah, the chemistry was so good I didn't even need to know his name."

"Ahh, the best kind of chemistry to develop while at a muggle club," he mused out loud, "Sorry for interrupting you. Figured I would ask if you wanted to leave before ditching you."

"Oh, how kind, of you." She said sarcastically as she stepped into the elevator, "But honestly, no. I probably dodged a bullet. Would hate to spend my next day in Paris regretting my drunk choices."

"How very wise of you," He smirked. The elevator beeped every floor it hit.

"So, how did you get so many numbers?" He asked, looking down at her quizzically.

"Do you really want to see my classic Ginny Weasley move?"

"Oh, for sure."

"Alright, so here's what I do," she turned her shoulders to face him. She gingerly ran her fingertips along his forearm. "So, first I run my finger up their arms like this. Are you following? This is important." He chuckled and nodded. "Alright, then once I have their attention I slowly lean my head towards them ever so slightly, then place my hands on their chest." She slowly stepped towards him, lightly placing her hand over his heart. She could feel it racing under his shirt. She looked deeply into his eyes. "Then, with the most seductive glance I can give…I abruptly shout in their face, 'GIVE ME YOUR NUMBER.'"

They both burst out laughing, Draco shaking his head in disbelief. Ginny rested against the cool metal elevator wall, trying to contain her giggles.

"Wow, Ginny, that's quite the unique pick up line," He laughed. His arm remained touching hers in their close proximity. "I don't know how I ever doubted you."

"You made a grave error, Draco Malfoy, let me tell you that." She inhaled deeply, smiling fondly on
her night. She could feel his eyes on her and tilted her head towards him. "What are you looking at?"

"Nothing," he said quickly. He shook his head unable to contain his smile. "You're just funny."

"I know," she smiled smugly.


She continued to feel his glance on her. She began feeling self-conscious. "No, seriously. What is wrong with you? Is there something on my face?"

He chuckled and rolled his eyes, ignoring her question. She looked at the flashing floor number of the elevator, it only read floor 16.


"Seriously, Draco, stop fuckin' looking at me!" She demanded, turning her shoulders to face him again.

His grin slowly fell off his face as he stared into her eyes. She saw his gaze trickle down to her lips. She sighed exasperatedly, "What is your problem?"

He inhaled deeply and raised his eyes to his ceiling before retreating them back to her face.

"Oh, fuck it."

Before she knew it, he grabbed the back of her neck and crashed his lips upon hers. Her eyes shot open, trying to take a moment to register what was happening. The taste of his scotch filled her mouth, a flavour she normally didn't like, but at that moment she couldn't get enough of. She relaxed into the kiss and wrapped her arms around his neck, tangling her fingers in his hair. His suit jacket fell off her shoulders on to the ground. The beeping of the elevator disappeared into nothing.

Suddenly, reality came crashing down on her as she jolted away.

"Draco!" She hissed as she panted heatedly, "What about the business."

His chest heaved as he contemplated her words for a moment. His hungry eyes met her and he shook his head before saying urgently, "Fuck the business." And grabbed her waist, passionately pressing his lips upon hers. He yanked her as close as possible towards him. He didn't skip a beat with his movements, as though he had this choreographed in his head. She let out a small moan as his lips trailed down her neck. Her mind was completely lost. This was exactly what she wanted all along. And she finally had it.

The elevator doors opened and but their lips remained intact. Smashing into the hotel's walls they made their way to Draco's door. He pulled away from her to frantically search for his key, cursing when he couldn't find it immediately.

"I have my key!" She said urgently, "We can use my suite."

She unlocked the door and he swooped her into his arms; her legs wrapped around his waist as she locked herself with his now chapped lips. He pulled away quick enough to mutter, "You're so fucking beautiful, Gin." Her heart began racing in ecstasy.

They reached the ginormous bed and he gently lied her down upon it, his body looming over top of hers. His face was serious as he swallowed hard before saying, "Do you want to…?"
She nodded her head eagerly, "Yes."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

Thanks so much everyone!! You're all wonderful!
In my opinion, my writing here takes a pretty decent shift from being annoyingly bad to actually semi-decent. Hopefully, it's noticeable haha.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ginny had strange dreams that night.

She dreamt of vivid colors. Her mother chasing her with a frying pan, shouting obscenities in French as Ginny ran away. She dreamt of being trapped in an elevator with a disapproving Harry, shaking his head repeatedly saying, "I told you so." Luna and Blaise running off to join the circus after getting eloped. Draco gently placing her on the bed with a seductive stare in his eyes…

Her eyes shot open.

Wait.

That wasn't a dream.

She inhaled deeply as her body stiffened, lowering her eyes while ensuring she made no sudden movements. Draco's arm was lazily draped around her naked torso. His light, steady breathing signaled he was still asleep. She was completely exposed; the blankets were strewn across the room. Eyes bugging out and mouth hanging open, she slowly turned her neck towards the sleeping Draco, who was only a few inches away from her face. Finally, she released the breath she didn't realize she was holding.

What the fuck happened last night?

She tried to slowly prop herself up to scan the room for any article of clothing within reach. Nope. Huffing, she surrendered and fell back to the pillow. Draco shifted. Her body froze. He let out a loud sleepy sigh but his eyes remained closed, apparently still asleep. Ginny pinched the bridge of her nose and scrunched her face, trying to make sense of what happened. They had finally done it. They hooked up. How did it happen? One minute she was dancing with a random stranger and the next she was making out with Draco in the elevator. And it was amazing. But so, so, so, inappropriate. She let out an audible, frustrated groan before she could stop herself and clamped her hand over her mouth.

Too late.

Draco's arm tightened around her waist, pulling her closer, as he nuzzled his face into her shoulders. His eyes remained closed but pleasant smile was creeping on his lips. Ginny watched him smugly, practically counting down the seconds until reality dawned on him. Any minute now…

His eyes slowly fluttered open. The pleasant smile remained. He inhaled deeply before noticing that his face was on top of a naked body. His eyes widened, his smile faded, and his eyes lifted to meet Ginny's. Then they examined his own naked body. Then returned to Ginny's breasts. Then her eyes.
A look of fear replaced his peaceful expression as he jolted away, nearly tossing Ginny off the bed.

"WHAT THE HELL?"

"Bloody hell, Draco. You almost threw me off the bed!" She snapped as she pulled her knees to chest to cover herself up.

"WHAT HAPPENED?" He roared, ignoring her comment, jumping from the bed.

"Oh, you don't remember?" She drawled, "We got married."

His face paled and his lips trembled. His throat made a strange stuttering noise as he struggled to get a word out. Ginny began snickering.

"Calm down, you idiot," she giggled, "I'm only joking."

The largest sigh of relief imaginable escaped his lips as he fell to the bed. He found his boxers behind the mattress and put them on as he lied back down. He stayed silent for a moment, simply blinking and staring at the ceiling.

"So…we had sex, right?" He asked slowly as he processed his surroundings.

"Nope," she replied, rolling her eyes. "We simply decided it would fun to get completely naked and sleep in the same bed together."

"Ginnyyy," he groaned, rubbing his face with his hands. "It's too early for your sarcasm."

"Well, that's what you get for not remembering our passionate night of love-making."

He darted his eyes towards her, raising his brow, looking appalled. "Love-making?"

She giggled even harder, having far too much fun with the awkward situation. "You're too easy, Draco Malfoy." She lied back down, feeling more comfortable being nude around him. Smirking, she continued, "Yes, we fucking. Shagged. Screwed. Boned. Does that sound better?"

"Yes," He muttered as he put his hands behind his head. "I do remember it, by the way. Was just…sort of in shock."

"Well, I'm glad I'm not that forgettable."

"Definitely not forgettable," he smiled, slowly getting a grasp on reality. "I remember it being pretty damn spectacular actually."

"Yeah, you were alright," She shrugged, smirking. He playfully shoved her.

"You're impossible in the morning, you know?" He said, laughing. "I don't know why Harry was so obsessed with you…"

She gasped in offense and threw a pillow at him, "Well that's just rude!"

He grabbed her wrist and pulled her down to his chest, "Calm down you idiot," he said, mocking her earlier words. "I'm only joking."

"That's not fair..." she pouted, resting his head on his shoulder. "You can't call a girl an idiot."

He laughed but didn't respond. They lied in silence, with nothing but their breathing filling her ears.
She frowned as her head began filling with confusion. It felt really nice lying with Draco…his thumb lightly tracing her hip. But she knew it likely wouldn't happen again. Deciding she better savor the moment while it lasted she examined his body. Surprisingly, she had never even seen Draco shirtless before the previous night. Smirking, she admired his stomach… for no apparent reason, she always imagined he would have some unrealistic super defined 6-pack, probably just to complete his arrogant 'I'm Draco Malfoy and I like to pretend I'm a god' image. But turns out even Draco Malfoy wasn't even immune to science; if you barely go an hour without drinking a beer, you're not going to have movie star abs. She liked it, though. More than she would have thought. He was still toned… just imperfect. Delightfully imperfect.

"Stop staring at my stomach."

"Why?" She poked it.

"Because I'm too fucking ripped. You can't handle it."

"Ohh, yeah. You should consider modeling."

"Tell me something I don't know," he said sarcastically.

"It's no wonder you pummelled Harry with those muscles," she joked and he glared at her.

"Shut up, Ginny."

"No."

"So…" he said, changing the subject. "Should we, umm, talk about it?"

"Probably," she pulled away from his chest, lying flat on her back. "Where do we go from here?"

He tutted his tongue, appearing deep in thought. "Well, first, I think I should apologize…"

"For what?" She asked, raising her eyebrow.

"Well, you know…kissing you. Starting this. That was…stupid and irresponsible. I don't know what's wrong with me lately. I need some fuckin' therapy or something." He sounded sad as he spoke, it was evident it hurt to speak the words.

Ginny chuckled, "Yeah, I believe your exact words were 'Fuck the Business.'"

He shook his head, "Yeah. No. Sober Draco doesn't think we should 'Fuck the business'."

"That's good. I quite enjoy the business," Ginny said as she propped herself up, "But based on that apology…I take it this was a one-time thing?"

He nodded sadly, "Yeah. Sorry. I don't mean to mess around with your head, honestly." He pinched the bridge his nose and winced, "I'm such a moron."

Ginny just shrugged and chuckled, "It's fine, it was bound to happen eventually, right? Now we got it out of our system and we can continue being mature adults who aren't attracted to each other."

"I'm not sure if I'd go that far, but sure. We can pretend," he laughed. He stared at Ginny's chest and smirked. "Can you please put on some clothes? Otherwise, it's going to turn into a two-time thing."

She burst out laughing, "I was wondering if you were ever going to comment on that."
"I was trying to be a gentleman."

"We woke up naked in bed together – I think the need for formalities is out the window," she walked towards the bathroom to collect one of the hotel's fluffy white bathrobes before retreating to the bed.

He cleared his throat, "I…I think it would be best if we kept this to ourselves as well."

This made Ginny frown and narrow her eyes, "So, I can't tell Luna? I can't lie to her about this!"

He groaned, "I mean, if you really feel like you must, you can…" he sighed. "It's just…You saw how easily the fight with Harry got out. All it would take is one person overhearing you talking about it at the bar before it's all over the Daily Prophet."

Ginny contemplated it. He had a point. "I guess you're right," she pulled her knees to her chest, resting her chin on them. "I suppose it didn't even mean anything, not much to talk about."

"Hey!" He snapped and put his hand over hers, "You know that's not true."

"Isn't it?" She asked flatly, although trying not to sound accusatory. "It was just a drunk hookup. It happens all the time."

He shook his head, "It meant something, Gin. At least, it did for me, I don't know about you."

"It meant a little more than nothing for me, I suppose…" she smirked. "But fine. We'll keep it between the two of us."

"Thank-you."

"GINNY!"

Their eyes widened at the sound of Blaise's voice from behind the locked door.

"Ginny? Are you in there?" They heard Luna's voice.

"Have you seen Draco? I think he hooked up with that blonde chick at the bar; we haven't seen him!"

Draco and Ginny exchanged horrified glances.

"What do we do!?!" Draco hissed, hopping off the bed to collect his clothes.

"I don't know!" She whispered in response, "Quick! Jump of the balcony!"

"Are you trying to fucking murder me!? We are on the 36th floor!"

"Ginny? Are you there?" Luna called, knocking on the door.

"Umm, just a minute!" She looked around the room frantically for an escape.

"Have you seen Draco?" Blaise asked again, "We want to go for breakfast!"

"Ummm…" She looked at Draco, panicked. He was running his hands nervously through his hair. Suddenly, she got an idea and began pushing him towards the bathroom. "Yeah! He's here. His shower wasn't working. He's using mine."

"You're brilliant," Draco muttered quickly as Ginny shoved him towards the shower.
"Let us in, then!" Luna said impatiently.

"I'm naked, just a minute!" Draco scowled at her darkly.

"Why are you naked if Draco is there?" Blaise asked skeptically.

She began throwing her clothes on as Draco jumped in the shower. Once she was dressed she opened the door. "Sorry, was just quickly changing."

"God, I was beginning to think you and Draco hooked up," Luna and Blaise laughed. Ginny chuckled nervously avoiding eye contact.

"Well, now that would be ridiculous!" She said, her voice a few octaves too high. She tried to change the subject as she heard the shower quickly shut off. "How was your night?"

"It was excellent!" Luna cheered before proudly stating, "I stole two plants!"

"You stole two plants?" Ginny asked incredulously. Draco emerged from the washroom with wet hair and clothed, looking confused from the conversation.

"You what?"

"Luna decided we needed souvenirs to take home," Blaise said in admiration, "And what's better than souvenirs right from the hotel lobby!"

"You can't steal their plants!" Draco cried, "They have video cameras!"

"Don't be a pansy, Draco." Luna laughed, brushing him off. "Live a little."

"I know how to live, thank you very much," he huffed, "But you can't just steal decorations from the nicest hotel in Paris!"

"Why not?" Blaise asked.

"I-I don't know…" he stammered, "There are rules!"

"We are paying an insane amount to stay here…I think plants should be included in the price." Luna argued, crossing her arms.

"The trip was paid for by Mister Descartes! We haven't paid a dime!"

"Stop being a nark, Malfoy," Blaise drawled, "Come on, let's get breakfast."

Draco huffed but grudgingly followed them down to the quaint restaurant in the hotel. He anxiously rushed through the lobby, avoiding eye contact with the employees, worried they will accuse them of stealing the plants. Blaise mocked him the entire way. They hungrily ate their breakfast. Draco and Ginny awkwardly sat beside one another, avoiding each other's eyes as they picked at their bacon.

"So, you guys got lucky last night?" Blaise asked, causing their face to pale.

"What?" They asked in unison. Ginny dropped the bacon from her hand. Draco's eyes were wide.

"Erm…well, we saw you with those people at the club…" Blaise explained, although looking confused by their reaction. "Did you take them home?"

Ginny and Draco laughed nervously, trying to brush off the situation. "Noo, nooo, just went to bed."
"Really? Draco, I could have sworn you were goi –"

"Nope, just went to bed." He answered bluntly, directing his eyes to his plate.

"So, who won your bet?" Luna asked excitedly and Ginny burst out laughing. She had completely forgotten about their silly game.

"I did!" She cheered excitedly and Luna bounced in her seat. Blaise looked appalled.

"You two have to kiss!" Luna exclaimed.

"What the hell, Draco?" He snapped, "Why the hell would you make a bet like that without my consent?"

"I guess I just thought I would win…" he said sadly, "I'm not doing it."

"Yes, you are." Ginny demanded, "It was a bet and I won."

"Ooohh, you should do it at the Eiffel Tower," Luna said, clasping her hands together. "Soo romantic."

"That would be adorable, Luna. Oh, and we can take a cute little picture of them as well!" Ginny gushed.

"The perfect couple!"

"It's not happening," Blaise pouted.

"Yes, it is."

The day flew by as the group ticked off their last activities on their list. They compromised with Draco's bet by him only having to peck Blaise on the cheek, rather than the lips if they let Luna take a picture. She swore she would frame it and put it on her bedside. Luna probably got the most sentimental souvenirs of the group between the stolen plants and hilarious photograph.

Draco and Ginny continued to awkwardly bump into each other and avoid eye contact. She didn't know why it had to be so awkward. It was so cliché, she thought to herself. They could have a mature conversation about it as they lay naked together, yet the moment they were clothed and in public, they were nervously stumbling over their words and bumping into each other. At one point, after they repeatedly apologized to one another after brushing hands, Blaise shouted, "What the hell is wrong with you two?" to which they hurriedly replied, "Nothing, nothing."

Finally, Luna and Ginny decided to separate from the boys to do some Christmas shopping before leaving the city in the morning. Ginny was excited to have extra money for the first time in her life; she could properly spoil her friends and family. They wandered down the snowy Paris streets and drank hot chocolate. Carollers joyfully sang Christmas music down the street giving the street a particularly festive mood. Luna was happily talking about Blaise.

"He's so funny, Ginny!" She cried, "I can't believe I've found someone who makes me laugh as much as he does."

"He really is quite the guy," Ginny chuckled, "He's quite theatrical."

"And he's so kind, too. The other day I was freaking out over work and came over with a bottle of wine and cookies, how did I get so lucky?"
Ginny smiled, "Because you're wonderful and didn't settle for a knob who doesn't treat you properly."

"I'm sorry if I'm talking about Blaise too much," Luna apologized sincerely, "If I start getting annoying, please tell me. I just haven't ever had a boyfriend before and everything is so new and exciting!"

"Trust me, you're not being annoying," she said honestly as they walked into a small boutique. "If I was dating someone I'd be right beside you gushing away…" She frowned as she thought about her previous spectacular night Draco. She briefly contemplated telling Luna but decided against it. Not only because Draco asked her not to, but also because it made her sort of sad. After the previous night, she was positive Draco could make her happy the way Blaise made Luna happy. They had perfect chemistry. She loved bantering with him. But it wasn't going to happen and there was no point to dwell on it.

"What are you getting Blaise for Christmas?" She asked Luna, hoping to distract herself from the sad area of her brain.

"Oh!" She exclaimed, "I'm thinking about getting him some of those cigars he and Draco like so much. Then probably a nice pair of gloves as well, maybe a cool potions book or some fancy scotch…"

"That sounds perfect, Luna." Ginny said, "You know, Blaise was freaking out about what to get you for Christmas a couple weeks ago."

"Was he?"

"Yep. He was asking if he could give you money; I told him he was an idiot." Luna laughed, "Thank god he has you to talk to for guidance."

"That's what I'm here for."

"Are you getting Draco anything?"

Her eyes shot towards Luna nervously. "Why would I get him anything?"

"Well, you know…you two are friends. And you have sort of a complicated relationship…"

"What's complicated about it?" Ginny asked rolling her eyes, "We are two people who are destined to not be with together. End of story."

"Do you really believe that?"

"Yes," she lied.

"Well, I don't."

Their conversation was interrupted when Ginny spotted a beautiful dark green scarf. She ran her fingers along the soft material and smiled.

"You know who would love that?" Luna asked, winking.

"Santa Clause," Ginny said sarcastically and Luna nudged her shoulder.

"Come on, you should totally get him something. I bet you anything he's going to get you a present."
Luna said convincingly and Ginny pondered it for a minute. She was right; what if Draco did buy her something and she had nothing to give to him? She would feel awful. And after all, even though they spent the entire night shagging and avoiding each other, they were friends.

"Fiiiiine."

When Ginny returned to her hotel room that night stopped in front of Draco's door. She hovered her hand in front of the wooden doors and contemplated knocking, asking if she could stay the night. She knew he said it had to be a one-time thing. But really, how much did he really want that? What are the chances that if she suggested they do it again he would reject her? One more time wouldn't hurt...they were on vacation after all.

She bit her lip and shook her head. She didn't want to risk the rejection. She lowered her hand and retreated into her large, luxurious bed. It still smelled like him. Cuddling inside the blanket, trying to remember how Draco's lips felt against her own and, she drifted off into a restless sleep as she dreaded returning to London and reality the following day.

Once returning to London the days began flying by. The holiday season kept them busy as the store was constantly bustling with eager Christmas shoppers. Draco continued being annoyingly uncomfortable around Ginny, which she despised, but thankfully he was typically off in business meetings with potential investors while Ginny and Blaise remained at the store. His avoidance bothered her, though. She sat at home drinking a cup of tea, reading a new issue of Luna's magazine. The article was based on the hotel they stayed at in Paris and its unique model of incorporating both magical people and muggles. She smiled fondly when she looked at the pictures of the elegant hotel lobby.

She tried distracting herself from that night with Draco. She had several hookups in the past. None of them shook her this much. She pulled a blanket around her shoulders as she snuggled into the corner of the couch, staring at the snow gently falling. Why would he put himself in that situation if he's just going to ignore me later? She asked herself bitterly. She told him she wasn't upset that he had kissed her initially. That wasn't a lie. But she couldn't help but resent his actions afterward. She understood the guy was a bit of a fucked-up mess when it came to handling emotions, but that didn't mean he had to alienate her.

Then, she started getting more toxic thoughts in her head. She remembered the night that they sat on her balcony, discussing their Hogwarts crushes.

"Who was your biggest crush on someone who wasn't in Slytherin?"

"I always thought Mandy Brocklehurst from Ravenclaw was stunning. I tried talking to her once and she basically walked away from me, so, naturally, I became enamored with her. I always want what I can't have."

'I always want what I can't have.'

Always wants what he can't have.

That's it.

She nodded in understanding to herself. Of course. He adored her when she was an unattainable conquest. Forbidden. Off-limits. Then he fucks her and he stops talking to her. It was a classic move in the books. She didn't know why she would expect anything different from him. He was Draco Malfoy, after all. She turned towards the delicately wrapped scarf that sat under her miniature Christmas tree and scowled. Stupid Luna.
Christmas came quickly and she found herself in the Burrow surrounded by her family, Harry, Ron, and Hermione. It was nice spending time with them. For the first time in a long time, she felt completely distracted from her business and Draco. Her mom was happily shoving baked goods and eggnog in everyone's hands as they sat around the Christmas tree, opening gifts. Charlie and Bill were unable to make it that year, but George was. He was excitedly showing Ron and Hermione his latest product: a pair of glasses that simulates whatever you are thinking. Hermione punched Ron in the arm when he thought about seeing his favorite actress naked. She was surprised by how warm Ron and Harry were being towards her. Of course, Hermione had lectured Ron enough that he was pretending to be supportive, but that night he seemed genuinely happy for her. She excitedly told them all about Paris and how Immanuel, their magical helper, was an excellent guide throughout the trip and how they went to the Eiffel Tower to get a picture of Draco kissing Blaise on the cheek. Ron and Harry both cracked up over that.

Even Harry was being incredibly kind. It wasn't a fake kindness, either. It was as though they had both fought so much over the past months they were equally exhausted from it. Neither of them even needed to do an awkward apology when they saw each other. They just jumped back into being friends, as if that brief month where they dated again didn't even happen. It was Christmas, after all. There was no time for silly dramatics. It was a time for love and peace.

Once her parents went to bed for the evening Ginny, Ron, Hermione, Harry, and George sat around the fireplace. They were all laughing hysterically at a story George was telling about a male customer trying to steal a potion that he thought would make women attracted to him.

"And then the damn idiot..." George spat out in between fits of laughter, "He drank the potion and he grew an elephant trunk! But we ran out of the antidote so he had to go on his date looking like that!"

They all burst out laughing at George's ridiculous story. Hermione wiped a tear from her eye.

"Why didn't you send him to Ginny's store!? I'm sure they could have whipped up an antidote," Hermione asked between giggles.

"I honestly thought about it...but the guy was such an asshole I figured he deserved it," he laughed.

"Ginny, speaking of your store - you're going to have to get me some of those hangover cures you guys created," Ron began, "A mate at work told me he tried it and it was miraculous."

Ginny smiled warmly at Ron's support. It was hard to believe a mere few months ago he was trying to "forbid" her from pursuing her passion.

"I'm sorry to interrupt the conversation," Hermione began, "But Ron and I have a very special announcement..."

"Pregnant," George said disguised by a cough.

"No," Ron said sternly, "We aren't pregnant."

"Well, I know you're not," George retorted, "Although... I wouldn't be too surprised..."

"Anyways, moving along..." Hermione interjected, "Harry, Ginny...we would love it if you could be our Maid of Honour and Best Man at our wedding."

Ginny gasped in excitement. It was blatantly obvious Harry would be the best man, but Ginny had
not expected she would be maid of honor.

"Of course!" Harry said, beaming.

"Are you serious? Me?" Ginny asked.

"Well, of course," Hermione said, "You're one of my oldest friends and Ron's sister. It only makes sense."

Ginny pulled Hermione into a huge hug. She knew she hadn't spent much time with her lately but she was so relieved Hermione clearly understood. "I would be honored to!"

They spent the next hour discussing their wedding plans before Hermione, Ron, and George decided to go to bed. Resolving that they drank too much eggnog, the three would sleep at the Burrow. Harry and Ginny sat in front of the fireplace alone.

"So…" Harry started as he cleared his throat, "I'm really sorry you didn't get the Paris deal. I can't help but feel it was partially my fault…that was never my intention."

"Oh, it's fine. Just crushed my dreams of living in the most beautiful city in the world, that's all," She said nonchalantly before flashing him a wicked grin. "I'm kidding. It wasn't your fault. Well, it was all of our faults."

Harry laughed, "I guess so. I've got to say; it was weird being in the Daily Prophet again. I thought those days were behind me."

"Well, that's what happens when you go around punching arrogant prats…"

"Maybe he isn't that much of a prat…" Harry said quietly and Ginny nearly fell out of her chair.

"What was that?" She asked, bewildered. "Did Harry Potter just say that Draco Malfoy isn't a prat?"

"That much of one," he corrected, "I still don't like him, but whatever. He seems like a good friend of yours and that's all that matters."

Her stomach twisted in guilt as she remembered their passionate night in Paris but ignored it.

He continued, "I actually quite enjoy Blaise…he's different than I remember."

"I don't know how anyone could ever dislike Blaise. Draco, yes, I completely get it. But Blaise has a heart of gold."

"I can tell…he's very protective of you…"

"Harry Potter, I swear to god if you're going to start saying Blaise is infatuated with me I'm going to lose my mind."

He laughed, "No, no, no. I know he's with Luna. They make a good couple. I'm just saying that it's nice how fond he is of you. You know, even if Draco did ever hurt you and I wasn't around…I know Blaise would have your back."

"Harry, based on your fight with Draco, if Draco ever hurt me I'm positive I could beat the hell out of him," she smirked as she drank her eggnog. "So fuckin' weak."

"That's true."
"Thanks, Harry…" she fumbled with her fingers as she spoke, "I know shit has been weird with us but I'm glad we are able to be, you know, civil."

"Me too, Gin."

Ginny decided to go home shortly after. She said a quick final 'Merry Christmas' to Harry and hugged him before apparating to her house. She was silently praying there would be a parcel from Draco waiting for her at her house. Of course, she wasn't expecting anything major. Just a small gift to show her that he was thinking about her. Alas, when she entered her lonely house, there were parcels from Luna and Blaise, but nothing from Draco. She turned on the lights of her small Christmas tree and played some carols on the radio as she sadly sat on the ground to open her gifts, finding herself yet again trying to distract herself from Draco.

She peeled the wrapping paper off Luna's gift first. Underneath was a beautiful crystal snow globe, inside being a miniature version of their potions shop. It warmed her heart. It was such a perfect gift. She gently sat it in the middle of her coffee table, resting her chin upon the wooden surface, becoming transfixed by the snow falling on the tiny store. After some time, she pulled herself out of her trance to open Blaise's gift.

She couldn't help but let out a loud snort when she opened the gift. Inside was simply a bag of galleons with a note attached saying: "Buy your own damn present. – Blaise xx." She rolled her eyes. She should have known he would give her money for Christmas after she made such a fuss about. She smiled fondly at the gifts from her friends, appreciating them more than ever at that moment.

She glanced out her window into the night sky. She was trying to will Draco's owl to come flying towards her window in the night's sky, even holding a simple letter saying: "Merry Christmas." But nothing came. She frowned as she picked up his wrapped scarf from her. She ran her hands along the bow she delicately tied around it. No one would ever know, but Ginny hated wrapping presents. But this particular present she took the time out of her day to learn how to properly tie a bow so it would look as elegant as possible for Draco.

Stupid Ginny…she thought to herself, thank god you didn't already send it. You would look like a fool.

She tossed the present under the tree roughly and dragged her feet to her freezer to grab a pint of her favorite ice cream and turned on a muggle Christmas movie. She loathed herself for feeling so lonely. She had just spent an amazing Christmas with friends and family. She was surrounded by love and affection. Yet, she was spending her night moping because one stupid boy didn't wish her a Merry Christmas. But she wanted to spend Christmas with that special someone. To drink eggnog with by a fire. Exchange heartfelt gifts with. In a way, she was relieved. If this wasn't evidence that she had to move on from Draco, she didn't know what was. It wasn't that hard to send the girl you like a simple Christmas greeting. Clearly, he didn't really like her. End of story.


Ginny snapped out of her self-deprecation and turned her head towards the door. Who would be knocking at nearly midnight on Christmas day? She hesitantly opened the door. Her heart stopped and a smile broke onto her face.

"What are you doing here?" Her voice cracked.

"I meant to owl this earlier but I got stuck at my parent's house," Draco explained as he held out a wrapped present. He was smiling at her warmly as if he could tell that she had been anticipating any
form of acknowledgment from him all day. "I figured since Christmas was nearly over it would be better if I hand delivered it."

She gawked at the present. She couldn't believe he showed up. She pursed her lips, feeling speechless, and tried to refrain from crying as her heart was overwhelmed with joy.

"Can I come in?" He asked and she nodded, opening the door wider to let him inside. She quickly turned her back towards him to wipe a couple tears she couldn't contain. She faced him again. He was admiring her decorations. "I like your tree. It's very festive."

"Thanks," she nodded and crossed her arms.

"Merry Christmas," he said and she smiled, looking at her feet.

"Merry Christmas."

He noticed the present that was tossed under the tree. "Who's that for?"

She blushed and mumbled, "Umm…you."

"I see," he chuckled and picked it up, taking a seat on the couch. She sat beside him.

"It's just a small little thing…"

He handed her the present he brought. "So is mine."

She tore off the wrappings to reveal a small, long velvet box. She looked at him, confused, before opening it. She gasped when she opened it. Inside she found a long silver chain with a glamorous, small emerald green pendant in the middle. Tears welled in her eyes.

"Draco, what the hell?" She asked, bewildered. "I can't accept this."

"Yes, you can."

"No, I can't. This is ridiculous."

He turned to her, taking a moment to gather his thoughts. "Ginny…I like you. A lot. I can't stop thinking about you." That did it. Ginny let out an audible sob as tears began pouring down her face. She covered her eyes and turned away from him. "Why are you crying!?"

"Nothing! No reason. Just…keep talking!" She urged.

"Are you sure? You're not…mad at me or something?"

"No! No, no, no," She assured him, waving her hands at him. "Please, just ignore me. Keep talking."

"Umm, alright," He stared at her, raising an eyebrow. "You don't have to hide your face from me, you know?"

"Yes, I do. Just please, continue." She said as she laughed, continuing to stare at the wall.

"Okay," he chuckled, "Listen…we still can't, you know…be together publically. But it's not because I don't want to be public or anything. You understand that, right?"

She nodded.
He grabbed one of the hands covering her eyes and rubbed it gently with his thumb. "But...I want to be with you. I know I'm kind of reaching here, and I understand if you don't want to do this. Because not many girls would go for it. But I'm crazy about you. Could we...like...maybe...date in secret?"

She sniffled loudly and finally looked at him with her red eyes, gaping at him.

"Are you sure you're alright?"

"Yeah, I've just..." She wiped away her tears and took a deep breath. "I've just – all day. All month. I've been convincing myself that you don't like me. And now you're here. I'm just a little overwhelmed."

He laughed and shook his head, "I suppose it wouldn't be the first time I acted like a distant prick. Sorry about that."

"It's okay," she said, trying to gain her composure. "So, secretly date, huh?"

"Yeah. Like I said – if you don't want to, I underst – "

"Yes. I want to. Let's at least give it a try," she nodded her head smiling. She knew it was a weird proposition but she couldn't refuse it. She was so happy.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

He brushed a strand of hair out of her eyes and swallowed hard before pressing his lips upon hers.

It was the best Christmas of Ginny's life.

Chapter End Notes

Woooooo for once I didn't make something happy happen just to rip it away. Have a great night!!!
Sup guys! So sorry it's taken me a million years to update - school has been craaazy busy and I kind of just forgot all about the story. OOPS!
But here's a few more chapters for ya ;) Thank you SO MUCH for all the reviews <3 means the world to me.

"Ginny, wake up. It's your turn to go to the shop early," Draco said as he shoved Ginny's shoulder.
"Mmph – no," she grumbled into her pillow. "Too sleepy."

Turns out hiding your secret relationship from your best friend, business partner, and about thirty employees was more difficult than they had anticipated.
"Yes. I went in early yesterday."

She opened her eyes and huffed at her clandestine boyfriend. She was nuzzled into his shoulder, his arms wrapped tenderly around her as he smiled at her tired expression. Glaring at his pleasant face she groaned, "Why are you the worst!?" before throwing her face back into the pillow.

They had been dating in secret for over a month now. They had almost perfected a system to avoid any suspicions from their employees. Every morning they would alternate between who arrived at the shop a half an hour early. During the first week, they made the mistake of apparating only a few minutes after one another. Blaise started to slowly grow suspicious.

"Why are you both showing up at the same time?" He asked after the fifth day in a row, narrowing his eyes.

Draco shrugged, "Fluke, I guess?"

"You two never showed up right after each other the entire time we've been working together," he argued, looking apprehensive.

"Like he said, Blaise, it's just a coincidence," Ginny would say casually while her insides were squirming. After that, they decided they needed to try something new.

Draco sat up from the pillow, yawning loudly, before energetically hopping out of the bed. "Do you want a coffee?"

Ginny slowly sat up, rubbing her eyes groggily, with only her white sheet covering her torso. She sent him a glare, "If you're so damn peppy in the morning why don't you always go in early?"

"Because we had a deal," he sang as he strolled out of her bedroom, practically humming. "I'll assume you do want a coffee?"

"Seven cups would be nice, thanks," She said sarcastically but couldn't help but smile. This was the happiest Ginny had ever been. Waking up next to Draco nearly every morning was the best start to any day. It felt easy. Relaxing. Borderline domestic. After all the emotions and tensions that filled
their relationship the months leading up to this, Ginny never would have thought that they would be the type to fall into a comfortable, loving, routine. But they were both so happy. She even noticed that Draco was significantly less stressed over their business. He had a much more optimistic attitude uttering phrases like, "It'll all work out!" rather than his previous, "What if we aren't good enough?". Some of her favorite moments were when she would glance at his desk across the room to find him staring at her fondly, only to give her a quick wink before returning to his work.

It was difficult keeping it a secret. Not only was it a little depressing having to hide their happiness from Blaise and Luna, who flaunted their lust for each other, but the stronger their relationship became the more automatic their body language became.

Last week at their shop Ginny stood in front of Draco and Blaise, arms crossed, stressing over the employees working too slowly. As she stood their ranting, Blaise sent them the most perplexed stare when Draco instinctively brushed a strand of hair from Ginny's face comfortingly. Her eyes widened as she mentally shot him a warning, telling him to stop whatever he was doing. He jerked his hand away as if he got burnt.

"Sorry, um, you had something in your hair," he stammered.

Blaise furrowed his brow. "Why are you acting so weird?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

Overall…they were happy. It was hard at times. But they were happy.

Draco came waltzing back into the room, wearing only his boxers, carrying two cups of coffee and the Daily Prophet. He resumed his place beside Ginny, who graciously accepted the coffee, and kissed her hair. She smiled at him warmly.

"You seem more chipper," he said, smirking.

"I have my coffee," she said, inhaling the fragrance. "What's on the agenda today?"

Draco massaged the back of his neck as thought, "Uhhh…I think it's a pretty standard day. I've got no meetings. I know we are running low on Veritaserum antidotes. We'll have to make a few batches."

Ginny finally stood from the bed and stretched, saying a simple, "Cool," before running a brush through her messy hair.

"Wanna hang out tonight?" he asked as he flipped open the newspaper.

"Hmm, maybe," she said slyly, pulling on her clothes. "I might have plans with my other boyfriend, sorry."

He rolled his eyes, "Oh, right. Scratch that then. I completely forgot I've got a date with every attractive woman in London."

"Good! I'm glad we've both got plans," she stuck her tongue out at him and crawled into his lap, wrapping her legs around his waist. Running her hands through his hair she pressed her lips upon his quickly. He played with the ends of her hair with his fingertips.

"I need to get going," she groaned loudly, flopping backward so her head was on his knees.

"You can stay for a few more minutes," he said persuasively as he traced his fingers over her hip.
"Noooo," she sighed loudly, peeling herself from him. "I should get going. Don't want Blaise asking any more questions." She quickly brushed her lips on his before heading to the door.

"See ya soon."

The hours trickled by at the store. Her and Blaise paced around the boiling cauldrons, supervising people's work, as Blaise explained "muggle potions".

"I'm telling you, Gin," he started, "Those muggles have some pretty crazy concoctions."

"What do mean?" she asked, raising her eyebrow. "Like, alcohol? Because I'm aware of that…"

"No!" He said, "I'm telling you…they have these weird brownies. They're so delicious. But you eat them and you're just…fucked right up."

"Brownies? Brownies fuck you up?" She asked skeptically.

"Yes!" He insisted, "I went to Amsterdam once and this really pretty girl insisted I eat one and…my god, Ginny. I could not stop eating food, then laughing, then eating some more food, and then I slept for about eighteen hours. I had no idea where I was or what happened."

"That sounds terrible!" She exclaimed with a look of horror.

"No, bloody hell Ginny, pay attention. The point of that story is that I want more of them," he said, "Whatever the hell was in those brownies…we've got to get our hands on that. It was incredible."

She giggled and shook her head, "You're ridiculous."

"Maybe I'll ask Luna if she knows what was in them…she's good with muggle stuff."

"Speaking of Luna!" She remembered, "I have Hermione and Ron's wedding invitation in my purse. I keep forgetting to give it to her. Can I give it to you?"

"Sure. Does she get a plus one?"

"I imagine so…" she replied, frowning slightly. "I think I'll have to confirm with Hermione that you'll be allowed to come. I'm sure it'll be fine."

"Who are you bringing?"

Ginny shifted uncomfortably, "Umm, well. I'll be the Maid of Honor. I don't exactly need a date."

"Oh, come on. You've got to bring someone."

"Hey, guys!" Ginny let out a breath of relief when Draco interrupted the conversation. "Come here for a minute."

They walked towards his desk. His hand was trembling as he read a letter, his mouth falling open.

"What's up with you?" Blaise asked, trying to peer over his shoulder to read the parchment.

"Th-this is the best news…"

Ginny followed Blaise's suit, trying to read over his shoulder but was too short to get a good look.
"What does it say!?!"

"It's from Mister Kant…" Blaise said, his expression matching Draco's amazed look.

"That's not very descriptive," she huffed, standing on her toes.

"H-he talked to an investor," Draco stammered as he rushed to his desk to pull out a pen to reply to the letter, "He wants to set up a meeting next week."

"So? You've been meeting with them all month."

"H-he wants us to open a factory in London to mass-produce even more potions that we can distribute to stores all over the world…not only ours."

Ginny's mouth fell. She looked at Blaise. He was speechless.

"He wants us to be a household name all over the magical communities in the world," Draco said, "He's been following our work since we were in Luna's magazine. He thinks we are brilliant."

Blaise ran his hands through his hair and inhaled deeply, "Is this for real?"

"I think so," Draco muttered.

"This is huge," Ginny said in awe, slowly taking a seat at his desk. Her legs were trembling.

"How did this happen?" Blaise asked in wonder. "We've had terrible luck since Paris. I was beginning to lose hope…"

"Me too," Ginny said honestly. Their little shop was still super successful. She was beginning to accept that they may not get much further than that…a reality she was slowly becoming content with.

"I'm not sure," Draco nodded his head in disbelief. "I guess it was just a matter of time."

"SWEEPING DECLARATION TIME," Blaise suddenly shouted, grabbing their attention. "Absolutely no fist-fights," he stared warningly at Draco for a split second, "No getting belligerently drunk in public. No controversial activities. Nothing. We all must be on our absolute best behavior until we secure this deal. Nothing is certain yet."

Draco and Ginny nodded in agreement. He sent a quick glance in her direction as she bit her lip. Never had she been so relieved that they were keeping their relationship a secret.

"Great. Now, what do you say we go for a lovely mature dinner to celebrate tonight?"

They arrived at the restaurant after each of them vowed to restrict their drinks to two per person. Ginny volunteered to grab the beverages from the bar as Draco and Blaise found a table. It was a very busy night and only a small table in the back corner was available. When Ginny arrived, she scowled at the size. Her knees brushed against Blaise's, who was sitting across from her, due to the small size. Draco and Blaise were in deep discussion.

"If we get this factory deal we are going to need to employ hundreds of people," Draco was saying, "You and Ginny are going to need to begin teaching people how to train people."

"We are going to need months to do that, Draco. We are only two people," Blaise said nervously.

"What are the chances that a factory will be already built and ready for us to move in?" Ginny jumped into the conversation. "Chances are it won't be ready for months, anyway."
"Exactly. She gets it," he smiled at Ginny affectionately before turning to Blaise. "I'm just saying: as soon as we figure out if this a for sure thing, we need to start selecting our best employees to prepare them. They'll need a substantial raise for the promotion."

"Erm – mate?" Blaise asked with a look of horror.

"Yeah?" Draco looked confused.

"Why…why are you rubbing my knee?"

Draco's hand shot out from under the table, his face looking disturbed. Ginny's mouth dropped as she tried to hold back laughter, realizing that Draco meant to have his hand on her knee. Underneath the small table, it must have appeared that Blaise's knee was Ginny's. Draco's face was quickly turning pink as he stuttered, trying to think of an excuse.

"What the hell is wrong with you lately, man?" Blaise asked.

"I-I…don't…know…"

"First you're stroking Ginny's hair," Ginny had to pretend to be transfixed with the floor to avoid bursting into laughter, "Now you're rubbing my knee under the table? Are you that desperate for love or something?"

She looked at Draco, eagerly awaiting his response. This moment could potentially reveal their secret. And after their excellent business news – there could not be a worse moment to come clean about it.

"I'm…sorry. It was an accident," he said, "I didn't realize it was your knee. I thought it was part of the table."

"How the hell did you think that?" Blaise asked and Ginny cringed at his weak excuse.

"I don't know! You know how some tables have those weird legs that extend out towards the middle? I thought it was one of those."

"I've never seen a table like that in my life," he shook his head and turned to Ginny, "Do you know what's up with this guy?"

She shook her head furiously, "Not a clue."

"You're hiding something from me, Draco Malfoy…" Blaise leaned over the table, staring Draco right in the eyes. Draco was backing into his seat. Ginny's eyes nervously shifted between the two boys. "You're lying about somethi– Oh hey! There's Luna!"

Draco visibly lets out a huge breath of air as he relaxed into his chair. Ginny silently thanked the gods for Luna's perfect timing. The blonde girl threw her arms around Draco and Ginny. "I heard the news!" She cried, "Congratulations! I knew the right opportunity would come up!"

Luna was holding a stack of notebooks as she sat at the small table, looking disgruntled by the size. Her hair was in a messy bun and dark were circles under her eyes. She put her face in her hands as she cried, "Work is so busy! One of my main editors just quit without any notice. Said he was moving to Spain to be with the love of his life. Idiot. I'm stuck with all of his work until we find a replacement."

Blaise put a comforting arm around her shoulder, "Aww, I'm sorry, Luna," she put her head on his
shoulder and sighed sadly. "If you need to get back to work, we understand if you need to miss dinner. Or, if I can help you with anything, I'd love to."

She shook her head, "No, no. I needed some supper anyways. I haven't eaten all day." She picked up the menu and quickly began scanning the food before resuming the conversation, "Although, Valentine's Day is coming up and we need to do a few stupid articles on it. If you have any ideas, I'm all ears." She sounded bitter.

"Not a big fan of Valentine's Day?" Draco asked.

"Luna hates Valentine's Day," Ginny giggled at Luna's bitter expression, knowing exactly what her opinion was on it.

"You hate Valentine's Day?" Blaise asked, sounding almost hurt.

"I don't hate Valentine's Day. It's just my least favorite holiday and I prefer to disassociate myself from it as much as possible," She said flatly before rolling her eyes, "I can't stand writing about it every damn year. It's always the same thing, 'Fourteen Things to Buy Your Significant Other For Valentine's Day!' or 'Twelve of the Most Romantic Restaurants in London!' I don't know. It's all just such a money grab and I hate being responsible for shoving it down people's throats. Not to mention, the people who have no one to spend it with, just feel lonely as hell. It makes me feel guilty."

Blaise chuckled and kissed the top of her head, "Don't feel guilty, Luna. No one cares about Valentine's Day anyway."

"Yes, they do," she said, frowning as she stared at her lap. Speaking a little softer she said, "I know I did before we started dating…"

The realization that Luna had never spent Valentine's Day with anyone dawned on Blaise and his face fell. He pulled her tightly towards his shoulder and spoke tenderly, "Don't worry, Luna. I promise I'll give you the best, most romantic, Valentine's Date ever."

Ginny snorted as Luna's face shot towards Blaise, furrowing her brows. Ginny knew exactly where this was heading.

"What?! Did you not listen to anything I just said?" She snapped, although a mischievous grin appeared. "I just said I want to disassociate myself from it as much as possible!"

"B-but you sounded so sad…” Blaise muttered. Draco and Ginny were now both giggling.

"Oh, I'm just hungry. Everything makes me a little sad when I'm hungry," she laughed and brushed him off. "Trust me. Perfect Valentine's Day for me would be watching Halloween movies at home while eating the discounted chocolate that goes on sale after 6 pm. You can join me if you want, though."

Blaise shook his head in disbelief, "You're so weird."

She shrugged, "Yet, you seem to be quite fond of me…"

"Are you two done?" Draco drawled, rolling his eyes at the couple.

"ACTUALLY," Luna started, slamming her hands on the table excitedly. "I just remembered something I've been meaning to ask all week. Ginny, you absolutely must go out with my new photographer. He's so charming and handsome. He saw a picture of you in my office and has been asking about you since! He thinks your work is very inspiring."
"Ummm…" Ginny bit her lip nervously. She felt Draco's gaze on her as he stared at her drink. "I'm okay, thanks."

"What!?!" She exclaimed, "Come on, Ginny. You haven't been with anyone since Harry. It's been months!"

"She's right, Gin. You've got to get back out there," Blaise nodded in agreement. "A girl's gotta get laid."

Ginny glared at him as she turned bright red. Draco's face twisted into a scowl.

"No, I'm honestly okay. I just want to focus on work right now, not looking to date anyone..." she lied.

"Oh come on, Ginny. You need to have a little fun! All you've been doing lately is work, work, and more work!" Luna argued. Ginny swallowed hard as she refrained from correcting her, stating that she had been having a lot of fun lately.

"There's nothing wrong with having a good work ethic," Draco stated, clearly uncomfortable with the situation as well.

"Well, there is if you are potentially missing out on the man of your dreams," Luna said confidently.

"Besides being handsome and charming what exactly makes him the 'man of her dreams'?" Draco drawled, rolling his eyes. Blaise's gaze narrowed on him and Ginny watched nervously as the wheels began turning in his head.

"Well..." Luna pondered, "He's got the same taste in music, he comes from a large family as well, he's very funny and smart, also a Gryffindor..."

Draco scoffed. Blaise crossed his arms suspiciously and darted his eyes between him and Draco. Ginny's heart began racing as Blaise nodded his head slowly as if egging her on. "Luna's right, Gin. Sounds like a match made in heaven. You should give him a shot."

Draco tried to act casual as he breezily asked, "What does being a Gryffindor have to do with anything?"

"I'll do it!" Ginny exclaimed, feeling the pressure from Blaise. She could tell he was beginning to clue into their relationship. After all the stupid hints that they kept accidentally dropping, this was not the time to risk anything. "I'd love to meet him, Luna. Set up a date."

Blaise smirked knowingly at Ginny but seemed to be satisfied with the resolution. Draco stayed quiet for the rest of the dinner.

Once Luna and Blaise left the restaurant, Draco and Ginny apparated to her flat. Upon arriving, Draco leaned against the kitchen counter, smirking. Ginny rolled her eyes.

"What was I supposed to do!?!" She cried, "Blaise is about one more mishap away from figuring out exactly what's going on."

"I know..." he sighed, "It's still stupid. I don't know why they're so persistent. Who cares if you don't want to date?"

She opened her fridge and handed him a beer. "Because in their eyes I'm only a few months away from becoming an old maid."
"But you're not an old maid," he walked behind her and wrapped his arms around her waist.

"But they don't know that," she rested her head on his chest, "This would be a lot easier if I could just tell Luna."

He pulled his arms away from her as he gently spoke, "Gin, come on, especially with this new deal...it's not a good time."

"I know!" She said, with a hint of frustration. "I get it. I don't want to tell them right now anyway. Blaise will lose his mind if we put anything in jeopardy. But if we are going to go around saying we are single we have to act single."

"I know, you're right. You're completely right. I was being careless tonight,"

"You sure were..." She giggled, "you were stroking Blaise's knee after all."

"God, that was so stupid," he groaned, "I can't believe I did that. I really thought that was you."

"I think it's safe to say we should probably hold off on any form of affection outside of the house," she said, "I was positive Blaise was going to put it all together tonight."

"Yeah..." He mumbled, but he appeared distracted. "What if he tries to kiss you?"

"Who!? Blaise!?"

"Ugh – no. That bloke you're going out with."

"Oh..."

She stared at Draco. He looked so sad as he leaned against the counter, avoiding her eyes. She reached out her hand to his chest.

"Hey, I'm not going to kiss him or anything. I'm with you, you know that." She said honestly. He tried to smile but the frown remained. "Are you going to be okay with this?"

He sighed loudly and stared at the ceiling. "I don't know. I hate being jealous like this. I trust you completely, I really do, and I'll do anything for the company but..."

"But?"

"It just sucks. I know I sound even whinier than Harry, but it's hard enough keeping this all a secret without knowing you're going on a date with the alleged 'man of your dreams'."

She snickered, "You're not whinier than Harry. And I promise he won't be the man of my dreams."

"Well, I know that," he drawled putting his arm around your shoulder, "I'm the man of your dreams."

She rolled her eyes, "And you're always so humble."

"The humblest."

She sighed and pondered their situation. She really didn't want to go on the date in the first place. "I can cancel it."

His eyes shot towards her and a grin grew on his face. "Could you?"
She shrugged, "Sure. I'll just reiterate to Luna how badly I don't want to do it. Ideally, when Blaise isn't around."

He pulled her into a tight embrace and kissed the top of her head, "You're the best, Gin."

She nodded but remained silent as she stayed in his warm embrace.

"I hate lying to them," she finally said after some time.

"I know. I do, too."
Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

Aaaaaaannnndddd another chapter!!! :)

Ginny sat at her kitchen table with Blaise and Draco while Luna sat cross legged on the floor, spreading her pages of the magazine around, trying to put in the finishing touches before the deadline. Draco had just finished his final preparations for his meeting tomorrow, and for the first time, he felt confident about it. The kitchen table had a sense of thrill and celebration while only a few feet over, Luna's aura was filled with doubt and panic. Her eyes looked lifeless from sleep deprivation.

"Tomorrow is the big day, Draco." Blaise said, rubbing his hands together. "I really think we've got this in the bag."

"Me too," Ginny said, "it helps, too, that he scouted us out. Draco's seemed pretty desperate lately; practically banging on people's doors begging for investments."

"I have not been banging on people's doors," he said scowling. "Nor have I seemed desperate."

"Come on, mate, you've been one step away from selling your body for money," Blaise said and Draco threw a bottle cap at his head. "Hey!"

Ginny giggled and grabbed a few beers from the fridge. "Luna, do you want one?"

"Huh?" She glanced up from her magazine the first time in forever. "Oh, no thanks. I've got to stay focussed."

"Oh, come on, Luna," Blaise asked as he moved his chair behind her, massaging her shoulders. "One drink won't kill you. Besides, you deserve a break."

Luna's body tensed and under her breath she spoke, "I don't have time for a break."

Blaise laughed and pulled his hands away from her, "Fine, but that attitude is going to drive you mad."

"I don't have a choice. Since that damn editor left my workload has doubled. I'll be lucky to get a few hours of sleep; that will be my break."

"Don't worry, Luna. You always pull through on time," Ginny said comfortably.

"Thanks," she said, although sounded distracted.

An hour went by and Blaise, Draco, and Ginny were laughing merrily. After a few drinks, their faces began to flush and their volume increased. Blaise and Ginny were making fun of Draco for his attitude in Hogwarts.

"You were such a cocky little git," Blaise laughed, "You should have seen him our first night in Slytherin. He actually held out his hand and, I believe his exact words were, 'I'm offering you the
opportunity of a life time – to form an alliance with me."

Ginny choked on her beer. "Was that your sick and twisted way of asking to be friends?"

Draco rolled his eyes, "It was an opportunity of a life time."

"Yeah, alright. Then I look at your other 'alliances'. Crabbe and Goyle," Blaise said as he snickered, "I just shook my head and thought: 'Hellll Noooo.' And you actually referred to them by their last names. I don't think I talked to you much for the first couple years."

"Did you actually call your friends by their last names?" Ginny asked, "I thought that was reserved for enemies."

He rolled his eyes again, "I learned it from my father. I thought everything he did was the golden rule." Blaise scoffed.

"Yeah, the golden rule for being an elitist prick."

Ginny and Blaise laughed louder. Luna shot them a glare, hinting at them to be quiet. Ginny quickly mumbled, "Oops, sorry."

She turned back to Draco, "How did you two become friends anyways? I always sort of assumed you had been friends the entire time…Slytherin mentality and all."

Blaise tutted his tongue, "You have such little faith in me, Ginevra."

"Is it that much of an insult to think that we were friends the entire time?" Draco asked and Blaise nodded smugly. "Fine. We became friends in our fourth year during the Yule Ball. Remember how I told you that was the first time I got drunk? Well, Blaise supplied the booze."

"And we were buddies ever since," Blaise patted Draco's back, "I believe we were bonding over all the beautiful girls in their dress robes. If I do remember correctly, he commented on how you, Ginny, were way out of Longbottom's league in your pretty dress."

Draco turned pink as he sighed exasperatedly. Ginny, however, beamed as she gushed, "Awww! You thought I was pretty?"

"For a Weasley, I guess," he tried to sound dry, but he flashed her a quick knowing smirk and a wink.

"Well, I thought you were annoyingly handsome, if it makes you feel better," she said with a sly tone. Her comment made Blaise give her a peculiar look. She backtracked, "I mean, it's true. I loathed you. But you were objectively attractive, and of course you knew it. It was just annoying how someone so awful was also attractive."

"I'll take that as a compliment," Draco said smugly.

"Luuuuunaaaaa," Blaise whined, "Are you almost done?"

She looked up from her work, "Erm – sort of? A couple more hours at least…"

Blaise sighed in frustration, "Come on, you've been working all day."

She sent him a glare, "I told you I was busy. You were the one who convinced me to work here."

"Well, I didn't think it would take all night."
"But *told* you it would."

"I guess I just assumed you were exaggerating."

"Why would you assume that?"

"Well…I don't know. Every time you say you need to work all night, you never actually do…"

Luna's mouth dropped. Ginny shot a deadly glare at Blaise. Draco visibly cringed.

"Well, excuse me! The only reason why I don't work all night is because I've got you distracting me all the time," she shot as she finally stood up from the floor. "If I didn't have you badgering me constantly I wouldn't be so behind."

"Oh, so now it's my fault?" Blaise's voice rose.

"That's not what I'm saying…" she trailed off, "But it does make it a little more difficult…"

"Well, I'm sorry I'm such a burden to you!"

"Guys, calm down…" Ginny said in fear of being forced to watch the couple's first fight. She glanced at Draco who was wincing but couldn't look away.

"You're not a burden. It's just…I sometimes feel like you don't respect my job as much as yours or something," she said. She sounded unsure, as if second-guessing every word she spoke.

"Of course I respect your job. It just seems like sometimes you…overreact about it a little bit," she said with the same similar tone as Luna's.

"Overreact!? I'm running the number one selling magazine in the area and managing over a hundred people!" Blaise's words struck a chord. She was yelling now. "I'm sorry that I can't just get drunk with my friends every day and call it work!" She quickly looked at Ginny and Draco, "No offence."

Draco raised his hands, "None taken."

"Is that honestly what you think we do?" Blaise asked, offended.

"Well, it's what you're doing now," She shot, "You have this major business meeting tomorrow and yet, you're sitting here getting drunk getting all nostalgic over the Hogwarts days!" She looked back at Ginny, "Once again – No offence."

"Well, I don't see the big deal in having a few drinks. We've finished all of our work."

"It *isn't* a big deal. I'm not judging you or anything," She said, sounding frustrated by their miscommunications. "You just can't expect me to constantly have the same schedule as you. Sometimes I'm going to be busy when you're not, and sometimes you'll be busy when I'm not, and we just need to respect that."

"I do respect that. You're such a hard worker and I respect you so much for that. I don't intend to appear any other way," he huffed as he rolled his eyes, "I just enjoy spending time with the girl I love, is that so much to ask?"

Luna's eyes widened. Draco and Ginny's mouth shot open.

"Wait, what?" Luna asked in shock.
"I like spending time with you?"

"Y-you said that…you love me?"

"Oh…"

Blaise's face paled. He didn't even realize what he had said. He looked down at his feet, twisting his toe on the ground. He reminded Ginny of a shy little boy.

"Well, I mean…" he started, "of course I do…I just assumed you knew that."

"I didn't know that!" Luna exclaimed, a huge grin breaking on her face. The tension in room was quickly resolving.

Blaise shrugged, "Well, now you do, I guess?"

"I – I love you, too!" She ran towards him, throwing her arms around his neck, planting her lips on his.

"Awwwww," Ginny squealed, clasping her hands together admiring the scene in front of her.

Draco shook his head, but a small smile tugged at his lips. "You guys are revolting."

"Come on, let's go to my place," Luna said when she broke apart, "I think I can take a quick break."

"Don't expect it to be too quick," Blaise said slyly.

"Well, I know it won't be too long."

"Eww…" Ginny and Draco both cringed together.

Blaise and Luna immediately left Ginny's flat, hand in hand. They couldn't leave soon enough. Draco and Ginny resumed at the kitchen table, both in shock from what had happened.

"Well, that was interesting…" Draco said after a few moments.

"What just happened?" Ginny asked looking perplexed.

"I'm so rattled right now," Draco said, "I was sure Luna was going to strangle him."

"Yeah…he definitely got lucky."

"So, what do you want to do?" Draco flashed her a sly smile. She didn't even realize that this meant that they finally had the house to themselves.

"I have a few ideas…" She sent him a wink.

"Actually, so do I."

"Oh?"

"I was thinking we switched things up a little bit…"

Ginny narrowed her eyes, looking slightly frightened. "What the hell are you talking about?"

Draco laughed and shook his head. "Nothing weird, I swear," he assured her. "Actually, I was thinking maybe we went to my house for once?"
Ginny's eyes widened in excitement and said, "Yes, absolutely! I've never been to your house yet."
"Yeah, I know. It's a little weird," he said, "I wanna hang out with my cat."
"I get to see your cat finally?" She asked in awe, "I'm so happy."

Before she knew it, they were standing inside of Draco's flat. Her mouth dropped when she took in the luxurious room. She didn't know why she expected anything less than amazing. Every piece of furniture practically shimmered with money; dark modern stainless steel kitchen appliances, black leather couches, mahogany tables, real crystal glassware… it looked like the sort of flat that would only be found in a magazine.

"What the hell, Draco?" She asked as her gaze took in every inch of the apartment. "Why do we spend all of our time at my place when you're living in a god damn millionaire's furniture catalogue?"
He shrugged, "I dunno. I like your flat."

"Yeah, so do I. But this…” she picked up a crystal ashtray and held it to her eyes, "this is incredible."
"It's alright."
"Oh, so this is when you decide to be humble?" She sent him a smirk.

"It's not that great," he began shaking a bag of cat food. "Platooo? Where are you?"

Ginny walked over to a desk in the corner. On it sat a couple of framed photographs. One was a majestic portrait of him with his mother and father standing behind him. Both had a hand on his shoulder, all three with similar intimidating smirks. Typical Malfoys, she thought as she rolled her eyes. Beside it was a more lighthearted picture. An adorable young boy with platinum hair and striking blue eyes was giggling happily as Lucius chased him around a yard, Narcissa was in the background laughing. Ginny's heart swelled.

"Is this you?" She asked, pointing to the young boy in the picture.

"Of course it is," he said, "Who else would it be?"
"You were so cute…” She reached out to stroke the picture, admiring the laughing boy.

"And I'm not anymore?"

"Nope," she said, sticking her tongue out. "I never would have taken you as the kind of person to have family pictures around your house."

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"I don't know. It's so sentimental."

He grabbed the picture from her, staring at it fondly. "You know, just because I'm a Malfoy doesn't mean I don't have a heart."

"You have to cut me some slack. I'm still getting used to this concept."

"For the longest time my family was everything to me," he said, still smiling at the picture. Ginny cocked an eyebrow.
"And they aren't anymore?"

"Well, they're still my number one, of course," he sent her a smirk, "But now I've got other things that mean a lot to me."

Ginny blushed, "Oh? Like what?"

"The business," he said bluntly, although grinned like he was trying to get a rise out of her.

"Is that all?" She asked, taking his bait.

"No, of course not," he said, "My cat means a lot to me…wherever the damn thing is. Platoo?"

She scowled and sighed. "There's nothing else?"

He laughed and put his hands on her waist, staring into her eyes. "There's a couple other things I've grown quite fond of."

Ginny resolved that that was all she would get out of him and laughed at his roundabout ways of showing affection. She glanced back at the serious portrait of the Malfoy Family.

"You look so much like your parents," She stared at Lucius's eyes, identical to Draco's.

"Really? I've never heard that one before," he said sarcastically and she swatted his shoulder.

"Your sarcasm is on point today, Malfoy."

"I've been spending too much time with Weasleys," he chuckled. "But yes, I know I look like them. Especially my father. I'm glad; he's my idol."

Before she could stop herself, she said, "Lucius is really your idol?" She cringed at her rudeness.

He sighed. "I know, I know…he wasn't always the nicest man. But yes, he is. And he's changed a lot for the better. You saw my parents at the ball. They were pleasant."

She nodded, trying to backtrack on her words. "They were incredibly kind. Sorry, I didn't mean to sound so harsh…"

"No, no. I understand. I know that you don't have the best track record with him, I can't expect you to blindly accept him…I know what he, erm, did to you…with the Chamber of Secrets and all…"

She nodded, feeling appreciative that Draco acknowledged it. She didn't want to talk about it though. She had moved on from that era of her life and preferred ignoring it. Instead she said, "Thanks. Yeah, I get it…everything has changed since then, after all."

"It really has…"

"Meow."

"CAT!" Ginny shouted as a small grey kitten came purring around the corner, rubbing his head all over Draco's shins.

"There you are," Draco scooped him up into his arms. Ginny's heart melted. "I was wondering where you went."

"You're so fucking cute," she said, unsure of whether she was directing the comment to Draco or the
Draco smiled at her as he cradled the cat. "Plato, do you want to meet Ginny? She's a pretty cool girl; I think you'll like her." He gently placed Plato in the blushing Ginny's arms and the kitten purred immediately.

"He's so cute I could cry," she said honestly as the cat nuzzled into her shoulder. "I need a kitten."

"Why don't you get one?"

"Well, for one, my apartment is basically the equivalent of a meth lab...with all of our potions I don't think it would be safe."

"Fair enough," he chuckled as he pet Plato's head. "I guess you'll just have to come here more often. Do you want to see my room?"

Ginny gulped. They had spent the past month and a half sleeping together but for some reason seeing his room made her nervous. Being in his house made her feel like she was seeing a softer, more intimate side of him that not many people got to see.

"Sure."

His room was as elegant as the rest of his flat. His bed was huge, with grey silk sheets and feathered pillows. She immediately flopped onto it, running her hands along the soft material. Draco followed suit, setting Plato in between them.

"I never want to leave this bed," she said in awe. "Seriously. How do you sleep in my bed nearly every night when you know you have this at home?"

"I have noticed my back has been hurting more..."

"We are never staying at my house again," she rested her head on his chest. She could feel his heart beat under his shirt. His cologne was invigorating to her senses. She knew she was falling for him...harder than she had ever fallen for anyone else. His fingers linked through hers as ran his other hand through her hair.

He had all these...layers. On the surface, he was merely an arrogant business man. But the deeper she ventured the more she was surprised. Despite his cool exterior he often let his emotions get the best of him; whether it was his anxieties over his work or even his infatuation for Ginny. It wasn't uncommon for him to make errors fuelled by his emotions, though it even caught him off guard anytime it happened. He was sarcastic and sometimes cold; but at the end of the day he was just this sentimental guy who loved his cat.

"I wish we didn't have to hide us," she let the words slip out. She tried not to bring it up much because it was an uncomfortable conversation. He sighed sadly.

"I know. Me too," he said, his eyes still transfixed on the kitten. "I must say, I've become quite smitten with you."

"Me too," she pursed her lips as she contemplated asking him a question she feared asking. "D-do you think we will ever be able to... be public?"

He inhaled deeply as he rested his wrist on his forehead, staring at the ceiling. "Maybe...I mean. I don't know. We'll figure it out."
She frowned at his vague response but decided she didn't want to delve into the topic anymore that evening. Instead, she nodded.

"Okay," she said before changing the subject. "Are you nervous for tomorrow?"

He shrugged. "Thankfully with all the rejections I've been getting lately I'm becoming quite accustomed to it...helps the nerves a bit."

"Look at you go, Draco Malfoy," she said wryly, "Finding a silver lining even in the worst of times."

"I would hardly call this the worst of times," he said before pulling her towards his lips. Neither would she.

The next morning Blaise and Ginny were sitting at Draco's desk in a manic state of panic. They had temporarily given up on doing any supervising until Draco returned from the meeting, entrusting their staff to not make any major errors. Ginny was drumming her fingers on the desk as her foot wouldn't stop tapping, gazing at the clock every minute. Blaise, on the other hand, was lying on the floor beside Ginny's feet, inhaling and exhaling into a paper bag.

"You gonna make it, tiger?" Ginny asked, looking down at him.

"He's gonna fuck it up," he said in between breaths.

"He's *not* going to fuck it up," she said. "What happened to your confidence from last night?"

"Reality dawned on me and I realized I can't live if this opportunity gets ripped from me."

"Well, that's a little bleak, don't you think?"

"I really don't care."

She chuckled, shaking her head. "You know...this was never really one of our goals. Our goals were to franchise our stores all over the world. So really, if we don't get the factory, we aren't really losing anything."

Blaise looked at her dumbfounded. "Do you have *any* idea what this factory could mean for us? For our name? For our income?"

Ginny paused and thought about the question. She bit her lip before shaking her head uncertainly, "Honestly, no. I don't really understand the business, I just understand the potions." She looked at Blaise skeptically. "Do you even understand any of it?"

He gave a small smile, "Not really, no."

"You're ridiculous."

"All I know is that if we can start shipping off our potions to stores all over the world are going to get rich and more famous. And I really, really want that to happen."

"Fair enough," she said, "You know, with all the time I spend with Draco I should really ask him to teach me about the economics someday."

"How much time are you spending with him?" he asked, and Ginny was thankful he was still lying on the ground so he couldn't see her visibly curse herself for the slip up.

"Well, you know...same as usual," she said quickly, "When you and Luna go off and shag, Draco
and I sit around and drink a few more beers before he goes home."

"You guys do seem pretty close these days," Ginny winced and inhaled, "I take it you're over your little crushes?" She let out the breath as relief took over.

"Yeah, no. Totally," she lied, "I think we both just got to the point where we realized it wasn't going to work, so why waste our time worrying about it, you know?"

"I guess," he said, "so why won't you date anyone else?"

"Because I don't want to?"

"How come?"

"Urgh – Blaise," she shot, "why are you so interested in my love life?"

He shrugged, "Well, since I've been friends with you you've had quite the turbulent romances."

"Well, I can assure you it is very boring now."

CRACK.

"DRACO?" Blaise called from the floor, beginning to hyperventilate in the paper bag again.

Draco sauntered over to him, his hands in his pockets and his expression unreadable. He first looked at Ginny, frowned, then looked at Blaise and scowled. "The hell are you two doing? Shouldn't you be working?"

"He's fucking frowning Ginny," Blaise panicked, "I knew he would fuck up."

She kicked Blaise in the shoulder, although couldn't say she had much confidence herself. "H-how was it?"

Draco ran a hand through his hair, "Umm…"

"DRACO," Blaise shouted warningly, "What are you trying to tell me? Spit it out!"

"Well, I guess what I'm trying to say is that…" he looked in Ginny's eyes, his expression unreadable. "We are going to need to get used to working a lot harder if we are going to be prepared on time."

"Wh-what do you mean?" Blaise peeled himself off the ground. Ginny's eyes shot open.

"We got it," Draco said, finally letting a grin take over his face, "We got the deal."

Cheers emitted from the trio as Ginny threw her arms around his neck. Blaise threw Draco in a headlock for being so vague about the results, but ultimately the headlock turned into a bone crushing hug. They did it. They had finally moved forward.

Later that night, Ginny was lying on top of Draco in his bed, absently drawing hearts on his chest. Their naked bodies pressed together with only the silk sheets covering them. She watched as his eyes slowly started drooping; sleep was taking over him. She must have lost track staring at his face because eventually he smirked without opening his eyes.

"What are you looking at?"

"Nothing," she blushed and lowered her eyes.
"You're a bad liar."

"Fine," she sighed. "I was just thinking about how incredible you are... with landing the deal, and all. You really pulled through for us."

His eyes lazily opened, "It was only a matter of time. Better be careful with the compliments, soon you'll be complaining about them getting to my head."

"I'll give you a free pass on being cocky about this," she said as she rolled off him, "Everything is finally working out."

"It really is," he kissed the top of her head, "At the risk of sounding sappy, I don't think I've ever been happier."

"Really?"

"Really," he nodded, smiling down at her. "And it's not just because of the business."

Suddenly a loud crash was heard from the kitchen. Ginny shot up. "What was that?"

"Relax, it was probably just Plato. I'll clean up whatever mess he made tomorrow," he rolled onto his side and closed his eyes sleepily.

"Draco? Are you home?" Blaise's voice sounded through the flat and Draco bolted out of bed.

"YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME," Draco shouted much louder than intended.

"Why is he here?" Ginny hissed, "Does he barge into your house, too?"

"Not only my house..." Draco winced as he searched for his wand to lock the bedroom door, but it was too late. The doorknob was turning. Ginny pulled the sheets around her chest for coverage and cringed, waiting for the grand finale...

The door shot open.

"WHAT THE FUCK?"

Blaise took one glance at Draco's naked body and one glance at Ginny in the bed before promptly pivoting on his heel, slamming the door behind him. Though, he didn't leave. Instead he stood outside of the door, shouting at the top of his lungs.

"I FUCKING KNEW IT," he yelled, "YOU THINK YOU'RE SO SNEAKY; I KNEW SOMETHING WAS GOING ON."

Draco threw on a pair of pants and tossed a shirt to Ginny to quickly put on. He opened the door to find Blaise slumped on the floor, his hands covering his eyes as he rocked back and forth.

"I saw your fucking nob, mate," he said, quivering, "I've never seen your nob and I've taken pride in that."

"That's a really weird thing to take pride in..." Ginny thought out loud from the bed which immediately received a deadly glare from Blaise.


"Just calm down, Blaise," Draco said, "It's not a big deal, we are just... hanging out."
"NO," Blaise finally stood up from the ground, "Ginny and I hang out. This is NOT hanging out."

He slumped over towards the bed and took a seat beside Ginny, still looking dumbfounded.

"Blaise…you don't have to sit beside me," Ginny said uncomfortably, pulling more sheets towards her, "I'm not wearing any pants…"

He shot out of the bed in disgust, "GOD, what is wrong with you two? Whatever happened to 'Ohhh, we can't be together because it'll ruin the business'?"

"Umm," Draco shifted uncomfortably in his spot, "We got drunk and shit just sort of happened…"

"How long has this been going on?" Blaise demanded.

"Like…six…maybe eight weeks?" Draco answered.

"Since Christmas," Ginny corrected and Blaise's eyes widened.

"Since CHRISTMAS? You hid this from me since CHRISTMAS?"

Draco shrugged nervously, "It seemed like it would be easiest…you know, to keep it hidden from the world if we kept it hidden from everyone."

Blaise ran a hand through his hair, "I knew something was going on…GOD. This is why you refuse to date, isn't it Ginny? Because you're dating Draco!" Another question came to his mind, "WAIT. Are you two actually like, monogamous?" Followed immediately by a more important question, "THIS IS WHY YOU WERE STROKING MY KNEE AT THE BAR."

Draco rubbed his eyes with his palms as he struggled to answer the questions, "Yes, this is why Ginny isn't dating. Yes, we are monogamous. And yes…that's why I was stroking your knee…"

"I can't believe this. Any of this. I mean, I saw you naked, man."

Ginny rolled her eyes, "Hey – I had to see you and Luna going at it. Now we are even."

"That's completely different…Luna and I were already dating. I have two major events I now have to process," a new thought popped in to his mind. "Oh my god, I can't wait to tell Luna about this."

"NO!" Draco shouted, "No, please, no… we can't risk anyone else knowing. Not for a while anyways…"

"B-but I can't hide this from Luna!" Blaise cried.

"Then you should learn to knock."

"I can't keep secrets from Luna; I love her!"

"Yes, Blaise, we know you do," Ginny said, rolling her eyes. "I feel bad about it, too…but it's just not the right time."

Blaise looked at Ginny skeptically, as if he was trying to read her mind. "So, you're honestly fine with all this? Sneaking around and stuff?"

Ginny gulped. Draco's eyes darted towards her, observing her reaction. She wasn't perfectly fine with everything…of course, she wished they could date in public. But she was having fun with it and knew that with their new business deal, it wasn't the right moment to come clean.
"Yes, I'm fine with it."

"I really don't understand why you feel like you need to hide it from us," Blaise said, shaking his head in frustration. "We are your best friends, not to mention if this gets out I'm just as fucked as you. WHY would we tell anyone?"

Ginny shifted in her spot, "It's not that we don't trust you…it's more so that if we start getting used to being comfortable being a couple around you, next thing you know we'll accidentally kiss each other in the bar or something."

"Yeah, or fondle my god damn knee!"

"It was an accident, Blaise," Draco said, rolling his eyes. "Listen. I'm sorry you had to find out this way. We will come clean to Luna about it once things get settled with this deal more. Do we have your word that you'll keep this between us?"

Blaise's nostrils flared but he reluctantly nodded, "Fine. Whatever."

"Thank you," both Ginny and Draco said in unison.

"But I swear to god, Draco," Blaise said warnedly, "I love you like a brother, but I also love Ginny like a sister. If you ever hurt her I will castrate you."

Draco gulped, "I would never hurt her."

"You'd better be sure about that," he waved his finger in his face and Draco swatted it away. Ginny smiled in appreciation towards Blaise's protectiveness. "Alright, well, I guess I'll leave you sick lovers alone. I'm going to sterilize my eyeballs, now. Goodnight."

And with that he turned on his feet and left without another word. Draco turned towards Ginny as his feet pulled him towards her like a zombie, and he flopped facedown on the bed groaning.

"Why did any of that just happen?"

She couldn't help but let out a small giggle, "I don't know…but it's sort of funny."

His eyes peered towards Ginny as he lightly laughed, "Yeah, I guess it sort of was."

He pulled himself towards the pillows and pinched his eyes as he struggled to form the sentence, "Are you sure you're okay with all this? If it ever gets to be too much…just... I don't know. Let me know, I guess. We can sort it out."

"I'm fine with it..." she said, though unable to contain the sadness in her voice, "it's obviously not ideal but I like being with you."

"I like being with you, too," he quickly brushed his lips over hers. "Listen, I'm absolutely exhausted...can we talk about this more tomorrow?"

Despite a small part of her wanting to discuss the issue more, sleep was quickly overtaking her body. With a loud yawn and no words, she rested her head on his shoulder and the two quickly fell into a peaceful sleep.
April had arrived abruptly. The snow was nearly melted, the birds were beginning to sing, and the flowers were blooming. Blaise was thrilled by the spring weather. Saying farewell to the winter, he happily waltzed down the streets of Diagon Alley beside Ginny. They had just purchased a dozen new cauldrons for the specially picked staff members they decided to promote. The cauldrons were partially as a gift, to reward them for their hard work, but mostly they hoped it would motivate them to practice their potions at home. Their factory was set to open in June, a date that was coming much too fast.

"How the hell are we going to choose over a hundred people to hire and train in time for June?" Blaise asked. Ginny shrugged casually, although she had the same concerns.

"Well, that's why we are promoting people to help us."

"It just seems unrealistic," he said, "we are barely getting enough résumés in... what are the chances every single person who applies will be capable of handling the job?"

"I don't know...it'll all work out. It always does."

"I guess," he grumbled. "Draco is lucky. He doesn't have to worry about training people."

"Hey," Ginny said, shooting her eyes towards him. "At least you don't have to help plan a wedding along with this."

It was true. The wedding was in July and Ginny was becoming quickly overwhelmed. Along with their seemingly unrealistic work task, Ginny was also Hermione's maid of honor. Hermione, being the perfectionist that she was, she was not settling for anything less than flawless. It wasn't that she wanted anything outrageously over-the-top, but everything had to be perfect. From the positioning of the table's centerpieces to the loopy handwriting on the invitations. It would be the most elegant wedding ever...if they managed to survive getting there.

"I guess that's true," Blaise said, "I assume Hermione is quite the stress case?"

"I love her...but my god, she's difficult to work with at times."

"It's a shame. All that hard work and you won't even be able to show it off to your boyfriend," Blaise said, resulting in a hard punch in the shoulder from Ginny. It had been four months since Draco and Ginny began secretly dating and Blaise was right. There was no end to the secrecy in sight.

"Blaise," she hissed, "Don't say that so loud!"

"What?" He asked, looking offended. "No one is around. I didn't even say his name!"
"All it takes is one person to overhear us for the whole world to know."

"Oh please," he rolled his eyes, "you're both being paranoid."

"It literally took less than 24 hours for Draco and Harry's fight to be in the Daily Prophet. I don't think there's anything wrong with being cautious."

"Oh come on," he said, "I've been good. I haven't even told Luna. Do you have any idea how hard it is keeping this from her?"

"Yeah, I have a pretty good idea," she said flatly, "considering I've been hiding it from her even longer."

"Yeah, but it's different," he argued, "she talks to me about you two. 'Oh, wouldn't Draco and Ginny be so cute together? I see the way they look at each other, they clearly still have feelings!'" Ginny chuckled at his terrible impression of Luna.

He continued, "So I'm stuck being all, 'No, honey. They don't like each other. It's over. Never going to happen.' All while in my head I'm exploding not saying, 'THEY'VE BEEN SHAGGING SINCE CHRISTMAS.'"

"For what it's worth, we appreciate it."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," he said and scowled. "I just feel like there's a more effective method. I mean, how bad would it really be if people found out?"

She shrugged, her face full of uncertainty. "I don't know. Is it worth the risk?"

"Depends," he said, "How long can you handle staying like this?"

She sighed. She really didn't know the answer to that question. He had a point…every day that went by the harder it was getting. All she wanted was to hold her boyfriend's hand in public or gush to her best friend about him. She didn't think she was asking for much. Just a normal relationship.

"It's complicated."

"How so?"

"Because…" she trailed off as she tried to organize her feelings, "Because when we are together it doesn't feel complicated. We get along so well, I feel completely comfortable around him, I don't know. It feels so easy and it just fits. But in reality, it is complicated because you're right. How long can we stay like this? I mean, I like him a lot. But what am I expected to do? Just…pretend I'm single for the rest of my life while we secretly screw every night?"

He frowned at her rant. She hadn't spoken her thoughts out loud, but hearing herself verbalize them made the fatal flaw of their relationship more evident. Blaise put his arm around her shoulders comfortingly.

"Don't get me wrong; I'm shipping Ginny and Draco all the way," he said, causing Ginny to crack up at his silly phrase, "but you shouldn't be hidden. I know he adores the hell out of you…but you deserve something more."

"I know. You're right," she said sadly, "Can we just go back to talking about work, please?"

"Fine, fine..." he said, understanding that the conversation was over. "So, Matilda is pretty good at
communicating instructions. I think we should place her with the most inexperienced staff…"

Much to Ginny's relief; they only discussed work for the remainder of the trip. The sunshine was beating down on them by the time they arrived back at the shop. It was a beautiful day, the kind that should be spent outside. Instead, they sauntered on inside the hot, stuffy building to continue their long hours. Luna was sitting at Draco's desk, eating a sandwich, talking to the blonde man. They looked up once Ginny and Blaise walked in, placing their shrunken cauldrons on the ground.

"Oh, hey guys!" She waved happily. "I had some free time during lunch, figured I would pop over to say hi."

Blaise kissed her on the cheek, "What do you say the two of us plays hooky? It's too beautiful to stay indoors."

"We don't have time to play hooky," Draco drawled as he crossed his arms.

"I wasn't asking you, mate."

Luna giggled, "As much as I would love to, I don't have time either. I've got to supervise a photo shoot in an hour."

Ginny sat cross-legged on the ground, beginning to unshrink the cauldrons. Draco glanced over, "You found all the cauldrons alright?"

"Yeah. A little more expensive than we hoped, but what can you do?" Ginny replied, wiping a smudge off the copper cauldron.

"Draco was just telling me how you've chosen a few people to promote? That's excellent," Luna exclaimed. Blaise sighed as he glanced over at his staff, pouring over their potions.

"I just hope it'll help. I'd hate to give all these blokes a raise and a free cauldron if they can't perform adequately," he scowled. Luna gently stroked his forearm with her hand.

"You've got this. You're all brilliant."

"We've got plenty of time to train them as well. Calm down, Blaise," Draco said, making Blaise roll his eyes. Ginny laughed to herself, knowing that Blaise was probably resenting Draco for not being responsible to train people. Luna packed up the remaining of her lunch and stood up.

"Anyways, I've got to head back to work. Thank you for the wonderful lunch, Draco."

Draco nodded cordially, smiling as he said, "It was a pleasure as always."

Just as Luna was almost out the door she stopped in her spot. "Oh, I keep forgetting to mention – "

And then Luna said the last sentence Ginny was prepared to hear on that beautiful afternoon. There wasn't anything that could have prepared her for it.

"I ran into Fiona the other day, Draco. She told me you two were getting back together."

Ginny dropped the cauldron on the ground. The crash echoed throughout the room. Her eyes darted towards Draco. Her nostrils were flaring. Her chest was heaving. Her mind went blank with rage. Blaise's face gained a menacing, twisted expression none of them had never seen before as his gaze pierced through Draco.

Draco remained frozen. All color drained from his face as he stared blankly at his desk. his body
tense, his lips pursed. After what felt like forever he finally lifted his eyes to meet Luna, who was standing there looking puzzled.

"No. We aren't," he said slowly. Luna brushed him off.

"Oh, come on. She told me you two went for coffee last week. She says she thinks you two will work it out," she said breezily and clasped her hands together enthusiastically, "I think it's great. She's a sweetheart."

This time his eyes were directed to Ginny, pleadingly. She was shaking her head in disbelief at him. A look of disgust flashed across her face as she watched his jaw shake, stammering to get his words out.

"We are not getting back together," he said slowly, but deliberately. His hands were tensing up as he tried to resolve the situation as delicately and discreetly as possible. "We went for coffee, but that is it. I promise."

Ginny's mind was spinning. Why would he keep this from her? Why would Fiona have gotten the impression that they would get back together if it was just coffee? And most importantly – why wasn't she allowed to go out on dates if he could secretly go out with ex-girlfriends? And in public! Why was she confined to spending time with him hidden away in bedrooms, yet he's publicly gallivanting with another woman? Clearly, he was giving off enough vibes to make the woman think he was interested. She felt humiliated. Foolish. Confused. But she kept a calm, cool exterior.

With the most venom she could muster, in the coldest tone, she drawled simply, "Why would I care?"

"Gin, come on…” he said. Swallowing hard, he tried to stare deeply into her soul, as if trying to have some sort of telepathic conversation. But she merely lowered her eyes back to the cauldron at her feet, looking aloof as she continued to polish it. Blaise's fists were clenched as he glowered at Draco.

Luna was observing the tense scene in front of her. She stood uncomfortably as her eyes shifted back and forth between Ginny and Draco. Narrowing her eyes, she said, "What's…going on?"

With gritted teeth and vicious eyes, Blaise finally spoke, "Draco? Can I speak to you outside for a minute?"

Draco sunk into his seat. He shook his head, "No…"

"Too bad," he grabbed Draco by the arm, pulling him outside. Luna was baffled as they breezed past her.

"What did I say?" She asked Blaise. He pursed his lips.

"Nothing, honey."

"No, seriously. What the hell is going on?" She demanded, staring in bewilderment at Draco. His eyes darted towards Ginny who remained on the floor, back turned to them, pretending they weren't there. Luna's eyes widened as she began putting the puzzle together.

"Exactly what you think," Blaise said sharply as he pushed Draco out the door.

Luna gaped at Ginny, who remained emotionless on the ground. Slowly, she stepped closer, bending at the knees so she was eye-level with her.
"Ginny?"

"Yeah?" she responded breezily.

"What was that?"

"Nothing."

Luna stared deeply into her eyes. She was slowly inching closer to Ginny, trying to read her mind. Ginny remained aloof, holding a dead-panned gaze.

"Ginny?"

"Yeah?"

"Are you...are you with – "

Ginny cut her off abruptly, "Luna, please don't finish that sentence." She glanced over her shoulder to ensure no one was eavesdropping.

"Ginny?"

"What?" She snapped a little louder than she intended.

"When did this happen?"

Ginny rubbed her temples, feeling a massive headache coming on. There wasn't an ounce in her body that was expecting any of this today. "I'll tell you everything later...I can't talk about it here."

Luna inhaled and nodded. She took the same cross-legged position as her friend and stared with concern. "Are you okay?"

The distinct throat tightening sensation always signaled that she was moments away from sobbing if she wasn't careful. She stared at the ground, unable to respond. Luna put a hand on her shoulder. It was obvious that her silence meant she couldn't discuss it at that moment, but that no, she was not okay.

The door slammed open again and in came a solemn Draco and a determined Blaise. Luna fired daggers at Draco with her gaze, to which he gave a weak glance in response. He looked at Ginny who continued to avoid him. Finally, he breezed past them all and waltzed into the washroom, trying to look casual. Blaise marched towards Ginny.

"Listen, Gin, if you need to go home I can probably cover it from here..."

"I don't need to go home," she said coldly.

"Honestly, I would understand – "

"I'm fine," she shot. Blaise and Luna shared the same concerned expression. She sighed loudly, "I just want to get through this day without bringing any more attention to us," she looked over at their employees. Most of them seemed oblivious to the happenings, but a few eyes were peering over their cauldrons to examine the situation.

"Are you sure?" Luna asked.

"Yes."
Blaise stared at her sadly, "Do you want to know what we talked about outside?"

"Is it anything that I haven't heard him say already?"

"Not really…I punched him in the gut, though."

She smirked, "Thanks."

"I'm really sorry for starting this," Luna said sadly, "If I would have known…well, I wouldn't have announced it so casually. I would have told you first…"

"I know that. This isn't your fault at all," Ginny said before lowering her voice, "What exactly did she say to you?"

Luna shifted uncomfortably, "Umm…well, I ran into her a couple days ago. We had the usual small talk, 'Oh, how are you?' 'I'm good, and you?" And then she remembered to tell me that they ran into each other, decided to get coffee, and…"

Ginny waited anxiously for the nervous Luna to finish her sentence, "And?"

"And…I don't know. I mean, I'm only hearing one side of the story…"

"And?"

"I guess they had a nice long discussion about their relationship and…she interpreted it as that they would likely get back together."

_Ouch._ Ginny winced in emotional pain. A long discussion about their relationship? What was there even to discuss? They dated for a couple months then Fiona dumped him because he was emotionally unavailable and infatuated with Ginny. Why the hell would Draco even want to discuss that with her? And in what context was that appropriate behavior when you're committed to someone else? She pressed her palms to her forehead, trying to ease the increasingly painful headache.

"Maybe she was lying?" Luna suggested hopefully.

"Yeah, maybe," Ginny said, although she didn't believe it.

Luna left for work shortly after. Blaise took on most of the socializing with the staff while Ginny stationed herself at a cauldron, helping the employees catch up on their inventory. It was unusual for her to restrict herself to brewing potions while at the store but the mindless motions were second nature to her; she didn't have to expend too much mental energy. As she stirred the potion, lost in thought, Draco sauntered over to her.

"Hey," he said quietly, looking sad with his head lowered and hands in his pockets.

"I'm not talking to you right now."

He nodded, looking over his shoulders to notice the proximity of the staff members, "Probably a good idea."

She scoffed, "If you think I'm ignoring you because of our surroundings you're denser than I thought."

He sighed in annoyance, "I know why you're ignoring me. Can I come over tonight?"

"Nope."
"Seriously?"

"Seriously."

"You're being ridiculous."

"I really don't care."

"Mister Malfoy?"

A young, meek-looking man who oversaw the Wiggenweld potions interrupted their conversation. Draco glowered but Ginny smiled, happy the discussion ended.

"What?" Draco snapped, sounding harsher than he should have.

"I-I noticed I discrepancy on my pay period this last cheque…I was hoping you could look at it…" The poor man looked terrified of Draco's poor attitude. Ginny nudge him in the ribs, mentally warning him to remain professional.

Draco faked a warm smile, "Sure, follow me."

The rest of the afternoon was relatively uneventful. Draco left Ginny alone unless it was work related. But she knew it wasn't over. When she apparated to her flat at the end of the day she sat expectantly on the couch, staring at her door, practically counting down the minutes until Draco would appear uninvited. She felt cold and irritated, no longer feeling the need to cry. As if on cue, Draco waltzed through her front door shortly after her. He ran a hand through his hair, looking timid.

"Hey…" he said, looking at the floor.

"Hey buddy," she said flatly. He smirked at her greeting.

"I was hoping we could have a proper conversation about this," he said, stepping hesitantly towards her. "I can assure you I have a perfectly good explanation."

"That's nice," she said, standing up, walking to her bathroom. He followed.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm having a shower," she said as she grabbed a towel from her closet.

"Right now?" He looked agitated, struggling to keep his tone patient.

"Yep," she said. "If I remember correctly you weren't invited. So, if you don't mind, I'm going to continue about my day."

"Can I wait here?"

"You can do whaaaaatevverrr you want, Draco."

Slamming the door on his face, she smirked to herself for her cavalier attitude. She knew it was petty and immature, but she was upset. It was either she acted this way or she cried. And she didn't feel like showing weakness in front of him that day. The warm water of the shower felt refreshing and cleansing. She felt almost relaxed; wishing Draco wasn't waiting for her in the living room. It seemed like it would be a pleasant night to dive into a good book, not get into an unavoidable fight with your secret boyfriend.
She turned the water off, wrapping herself in a fluffy white robe which reached her knees. Not bothering to fret over her appearances to impress Draco, she sauntered to the kitchen, hair soaking wet, wearing only her robe. Draco immediately followed her to the kitchen.

"Are you ready to talk about it?" He asked. She ignored him. Instead, she poured herself a cup of tea, grabbed a plate of crumpets, and a newspaper. Taking a seat at the table, she pressed her nose to the newspaper.

"Well, now that's a shame," she said, tutting her tongue, "Emmeline Vance passed away from a heart attack."

"Ginny, I'm serious – "

"So am I. She was a lovely woman."

He groaned, rubbing his eyes. His impatience was becoming increasingly evident. "Could you be any more passive aggressive?"

She nodded slowly with her nose still pressed in the newspaper. "Probably, yep."

He leaned back in his chair, staring at the ceiling. "Can you try not to be?"

"Sure. Crumpet?" She sent him a fake, sweet smile as she passed him the plate of crumpets. He scowled at the pastries but grabbed one anyways.

"Gin, I really, really want to talk about this with you. Can we please have a mature discussion about it?"

She finally set down the newspaper. Making eye contact with him the first time since he arrived at her flat, she folded her hands politely on the table. With a small smirk and a malicious gleam in her eye, she said, "Isn't that nice. Of course, you only want to discuss it after you got caught."

He rolled his eyes and said firmly, "The only reason why I didn't tell you is that it didn't mean anything. Nothing happened. And I…" he trailed off, looking uncomfortable.

"And you…what?"

"I didn't want you to react…exactly like how you're reacting right now."

"Well, for the record, I would probably be much more forgiving had you told me from the beginning," she said, taking a sip of tea.

"I'm sorry, okay? I swear, my intentions weren't to be deceptive. I just didn't think it was a big deal," he pursed his lips. He looked sincere, but Ginny hadn't even gotten started.

"Fiona told Luna you had a nice, pleasant discussion about your relationship," she said, "And somehow that discussion made her believe you two were getting back together. Please, do tell what that conversation entailed if it wasn't a big deal."

He shifted uncomfortably in his seat as he spoke, "Okay. We ran into each other at Flourish and Blotts. She asked if I wanted to get coffee, I tried to get out of it, but she was very…demanding. Then I don't know, we talked about what went wrong. She apologized for dumping me, she said it was impulsive and that she sort of regretted it."

"And what did you say?"
"I told her that she shouldn't regret it; that it was the right decision."

"What else happened?"

He avoided her gaze and gulped, "She…told me she would like to help me out with my, erm, 'emotional unavailability'." Ginny scoffed and rolled her eyes, but he continued. "I told her that I didn't need her help. That I was perfectly fine and…happier. Then she asked me about you."

"Oh?"

"She asked if we were dating yet."

"And what did you say?"

He groaned, "I obviously said no."

"Of course, you did," she said coldly. She didn't know what she expected from him, but hearing those words stung.

"What else would I do? I mean, fuck, Gin. You hadn't even told Luna. I'm not going to go tell Fiona, a model who is constantly surrounded by the media, that we are dating."

"Did you tell her you were single?"

"…Yes."

"Okay," she inhaled deeply, feeling more irritated. "What else happened?"

He ran his hand through his hair, "She umm…she asked if I would want to give us another try. I swear to god, I said no. Repeatedly. I used every excuse in the book: I told her I needed to focus on work, I wasn't interested in a relationship, that I didn't feel a connection with her…"

"So, how the hell did she get the impression that you two would get back together?"

"I don't know. I mean, I guess after pestering me for a while, I finally said I would go for coffee again in while…" He looked terrified as Ginny sent him a menacing look, "But I swear to god, I wasn't ever going to do it. I was going to avoid her forever. But the woman wouldn't let me leave until I agreed to something. I guess she interpreted that as a glimmer of hope."

She narrowed her eyes at him. She knew he was being honest but the jealousy was eating away at her. She couldn't get the image of the stunning model sitting across from Draco, her hand likely placed on top of his, as she cornered him into another date. And then she was going around telling people that they were getting back together! She felt so embarrassed. Then there was another detail that was eating away at her…

"So, what day did this happen, exactly?"

"Saturday afternoon."

"I see," she nodded as her brain spiraled with anger. "And tell me, my dear Draco, what exactly did you do right after your lovely date?"

He frowned, "Come on, Gin…"

"No, say it. Last Saturday afternoon. What did you do right after the date?"
"I…came over here and we…" his eyes were full of sadness as he stared at the table, "we had sex in the shower."

"Well, now isn't that romantic," she gave him a sickly-sweet smile, "If I do remember you were particularly passionate that day. Figures, you get all riled up from your beautiful, model girlfriend, then you take it all out on your plain, oblivious side-bitch."

Draco's face turned into a distraught mess. It looked like he was on the brink of tears as he cracked out, "Ginny…you can't possibly believe that's what happened. You can't believe that's how I view you. You know how much I care about you…"

She crossed her arms. He was only a few feet away from her but he felt miles away. "Instead of promptly fucking me you could have informed me of this, instead."

"I told you I was sorry for not telling you, okay?" He was practically begging at this point, "And listen, if I seemed more passionate it was only because seeing Fiona again reminded me of how much I like you. Of how perfect we are."

She scoffed. She knew she was being irrational but she was on a roll and couldn't stop, "Let's turn the tables here. Imagine if I met up with Harry, had an intense heart-to-heart about our relationship, he believed we were going to date again, started telling everyone that we would date again, all the while I hid everything from you. How would you feel?"

He looked glum as he sighed, "I'd be...pretty fucking angry, yeah."

"Yeah…I bet you would be."

He moved his chair closer to her and placed his hands over hers. It was the first time they made contact all day. She felt a stinging sensation in her heart and winced from his touch. He looked distressed as he tightened his grip on hers. "Ginny…you're not thinking about ending us over this, are you? I promise you, I'll never speak to her again. If I run into her, I'll walk the other way. This is just a minor complication; we can get through this."

She stared at her lap as tears welled in her eyes for the first time that day. A part of her wanted to continue ignoring her feelings, to tell him everything was fine, and go lie with him in her bed. She wanted to rest her head on his chest and listen to his calming heartbeat as she peacefully fell asleep. But instead, she looked him in his grey, pleading eyes, and shook her head. She saw his heart sink.

"It's not just about Fiona…"

"What do you mean?" he asked quickly, fear was present in his voice.

"It's everything…" she swallowed hard, "I- I don't want to be a secret anymore. I want a normal relationship. It's been four months of hiding. I understand why we are doing it, but at the same time…it's wearing me down."

"Gin, come on…"

"I want what Luna and Blaise have. What Hermione and Ron have. I want to hold hands down the street, or go on dates, and not…have people thinking that my boyfriend is single."

"One day we can be public, I promise," he argued, looking hopeful. She sent him a cold look.

"I want you to be completely honest…when do you realistically think that will happen?"
He pulled his hands from hers and fidgeted his thumbs. "I don't know…two years, maybe one and a half? As soon as we get more established and we won't be a risky investment…"

She gaped at him, "Two years? Are you really that self-absorbed that you think I'll put my entire love-life on hold for TWO years just so I can be with you? That I'll continue sneaking around for two years, telling everyone I'm single and rejecting other potential boyfriends?"

"I'm not expecting you to do it for me, I'm expecting you to do it for us. I think we are perfect, Ginny. I think it's worth it."

She shook her head, "I like you so much, Draco. But this is slowly killing me. And I mean…I'm young. We are just wasting time. For all we know, maybe we only work as a good couple in secret. What happens if we go public, and suddenly, we realize we both just got off from the forbidden-ness of it all? BAM, two years wasted. Countless of other opportunities to meet the right person gone."

"Trust me, we will work in public. It won't be a waste of time. Believe me."

"How can you be so sure?"

"Because I…I…" his eyes were watering a bit as he struggled to get his words out, "Because I just know. I've never been more sure about anything."

She pursed her lips as she stared at her lap. Her throat was tightening and she let out a weak sob. She wanted so badly to believe him. And she did, actually. She had no doubt that they would be an excellent couple. But the road getting there would kill her. It would kill them. She knew that being constantly unfulfilled would make her resent him. It wasn't going to work…

"I'm sorry, Draco," her voice cracked as tears were free-flowing down her face. "Unless…unless we stop hiding us, I think we should go back to just being business partners."

"No, please don't say that…"

"We work well as business partners. As friends. We can get back to that."

"I don't want to, though."

"Me neither," she nodded. She stared at his pleading eyes. She didn't want to do this. She wanted to throw her arms around his neck and tell him she was only joking. But instead, she gently said, "…But I don't want to do this anymore, either."

Before she knew it, he pulled her from her chair, his lips were passionately on hers. As a last-ditch attempt, he poured his heart into that kiss. He pulled her in close. Her first impulse was to push him away, but her brain got lost. All the feelings she had ever felt for him erupted in her mind as his lips hungrily engulfed hers. Every quick wink he sent that gave her butterflies, every kiss along her collarbone that gave her shivers, every time he made her laugh flashed before her mind.

But she pushed him away.

And he had tears in his eyes.

But she knew what she had to do.

"I'm sorry, Draco…"
He was speechless. He was kept shaking his head, trying to tell her no without words. But he knew it was useless.

She quickly changed from her bathrobe into some clothes and met him in the living room. He was still standing there. He looked devastated. His jaw was quivering, still shaking his head at her. Looking in his stormy, watery eyes, she swallowed a quiet sob as she spoke.

"I'm going to go to Luna's for a bit. Please don't be here when I get back."

He nodded sadly as she walked out the doorway, still feeling his gaze on her.

Chapter End Notes

This was definitely the hardest chapter I wrote! Sorry for the emotional roller coaster. Hope you enjoyed!
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

This chapter is a little different. Erm...Experimental. It takes you through the entire story through Draco's POV. Pretty fun! Don't forget to review!

It was a stifling hot August day when Draco sauntered down the streets of Diagon Alley. With a Weasleys Wizard Wheezes bag in hand, whistling a triumphant tune, he walked to the pub where he would meet Blaise. He quickly spotted his friend sitting at a patio table sipping his beer while subtly watching pretty girls walk past. Draco tossed the shopping bag on the table snapping Blaise out of his gaze.

“Bloody hell, Draco,” Blaise said, “Give a man a little warning. I was in the middle of something.”

“What? Ogling women so you have something to think about later tonight?” he motioned to the server for a beer.

“More like trying to figure out which one I want to spend the night with…”

“Yeah, good luck with that,” he said before motioning to the bag. “I got the skiving snack boxes.”

“Oh, good,” Blaise said, pulling the toxic sweets from the bag. “So, it’s settled. Tomorrow we ditch out of work and figure out a plan to get out of our little ‘Draco Malfoy is an untrustworthy Death Eater’ predicament,” he shot him a wicked grin. “I hope you know that with your track record you’re a real pain in the ass to get into business with.”

Draco chuckled as he casually leaned back into his chair. “I might have some good news for you then.”

“Oh?”

“I think I figured out the solution to our problem.”

“Can you elaborate a little bit?”

He traced the lip of his glass with his finger. “Guess who I ran into at the store.”

“I don’t know,” Blaise said growing frustrated with Draco’s vagueness, “George Weasley?”

“Close. Ginny Weasley.”

“Okay…So what?”

Draco leaned closer to Blaise. “It just so happens Ginny Weasley loves potions. She wants a career involved with them.”

Blaise looked confused. “Alright? Do you want to hire her once we get started up or
“No. I want her to be our business partner.”

Blaise obnoxiously choked on his drink. “You’ve got to be kidding me.”

“No at all. We are going for drinks tomorrow. You’ll be coming as well,” he said. Blaise’s baffled face insinuated that he needed to clarify more. “Listen, once people see I’ve teamed up with a Weasley there’s no way they’ll think I’m evil. It’s so simple.”

Blaise put his hands up. “Whatever, mate. You’re the one who hated her in school. It’s your call.” The corners of his lips rose in amusement. “How’s the little Weasley looking these days, anyways?”

Draco shrugged. “She’s alright. Sort of cute, but still a Weasley.” When Blaise looked distracted he followed his gaze to a beautiful blonde woman.

“Now that’s my kind of woman,” Blaise muttered under his breath.

“You have no class. You do know that, right?”

“Oh come on, you can’t deny that lady was a dime.”

“I dunno,” Draco said, motioning his head to a tall red-headed girl. “I think that girl over there is nicer.”

Blaise raised his brow. “You’re fucking with me, right?”

“What?”

“You say you can’t find Ginny Weasley attractive because she looks like a Weasley, yet you choose the only red-headed girl on the street?”

Draco rolled his eyes. He would never think Ginny was attractive. “That girl looks nothing like a Weasley.”

“Whatever, mate,” he smirked, “Didn’t realize you even liked red-heads.”

Draco scoffed, “I like all women.”

“Oh, I do as well,” Blaise said, “but I think I like blondes the most.”

“Getting back on topic here,” Draco said, interrupting Blaise’s train of thought, “Tomorrow night. Drinks with Ginny tomorrow and we’ll give her our business proposal?”

“Sure, why not?”

It had been almost a month since Ginny had joined their team. Draco was surprised by how well she meshed with himself and Blaise. He had expected her to be ghastly, just like her brother. He had expected her to be difficult to work with, constantly snapping on them for being Slytherins. He expected her to be uptight and prudish, afraid to have a sip of alcohol. But she wasn’t anything like
he expected. She was professional, calm, kind-hearted, and surprisingly quite…fun. It was a nice change for Draco; being friends with a girl without the intentions of sleeping with them. Despite him growing fond of her company he still vowed he would never sleep with a Weasley.

He walked into his living room on a lazy Sunday afternoon to be engulfed with the smell of cigar smoke. Blaise was lounging on Draco’s leather couch, cigar in one hand, and petting Draco’s cat with the other. Draco scowled at him.

“Bloody fuckin’ hell, Blaise,” he said as he stomped to a window, “If you’re going to smoke in here at least do the decent thing and open a window.”

“Oh, right. Sorry.”

“And what the fuck? Don’t smoke in front of my cat,” he snapped, grabbing Plato from him protectively. He took a seat on the armchair across from Blaise as the kitten curled up in his lap.

“Again, sorry,” Blaise said as he passed a beer to Draco. “Hey, what’s Ginny up to? We should drink on her balcony. Don’t have to smoke up your house.”

“I think she’s hanging out with Luna tonight,” Draco said. Blaise scrunched his nose.

“Fuckin’ Loony Lovegood,” he tutted his tongue, “I don’t know why Ginny would spend time with that mad-woman.”

“She’s not that bad,” Draco said, recalling Luna’s friendliness from Hogwarts. She was a weirdo but she never bothered Draco the way she did Blaise.

“So, what do you think of her overall?”

“Who?”

“Ginny.”

Blaise raised an eyebrow, “What do you mean?”

“I mean, how do you like working with her?”

“Oh, it’s great,” Blaise said confidently once realizing what Draco meant. “She’s cool, I love that girl.”

Draco nodded slowly as he took a drink. He didn’t know what made him ask his next question but it came out before he could stop.

“Do you…like her? I mean, ‘like, like’ her?”

“What? God no,” Blaise looked appalled. “And what the hell are you? Twelve years old, asking if I have a crush on our friend?”

“I was just wondering,” he said, raising his hands in defense. “Why don’t you, though? Do you think she’s ugly or something?”

Blaise shot him a peculiar look but shook his head quickly. “What is wrong with you? No. Ginny’s hot. But I don’t know…she’s like my bro. No sexual attraction whatsoever.”

Draco nodded his head in understanding. Feeling awkward by his impulsive discussion, he stayed silent. Blaise, however, wasn’t going to let the conversation pass that easily.
“Why? Do you like her?” Blaise asked narrowing his eyes. Draco scoffed.

“God no.”

“Why not?”

Draco shrugged, “Same reason as you, I guess?”

“That’s not true,” Blaise said adamantly, “Ginny is not your bro.”

“What the hell is that supposed to mean? We’re friends.”

“Yeah, you’re definitely friends,” Blaise chuckled, “but she’s not your bro.”

“And why is that?”

“Because you both want to fuck each other.”

Draco roared in laughter. In between gasps he spat out, “The only reason why I would want to fuck Ginny would be to piss off Potter. Why in god’s name would you even think that?”

“Umm…because I see you two checking each other out constantly,” he said as if it was the most obvious thing in the world. “Not to mention this very uncomfortable conversation that we are having right now.”

He paused to think about what Blaise was saying. Sure, he was guilty of taking quick glances when she was prancing around her house in her pyjamas, but he would do that to any girl. It was only natural. Ultimately, when he tried to imagine Ginny as a sexual human being, it gave him an unsettling feeling in his stomach.

“She’s not my type,” Draco finally said.

“And pray tell, Draco, what is your type?”

“I dunno,” he said, drumming his fingers on the arm chair before smirking, “Sexy?”

Blaise rolled his eyes. “And here I thought there was an inkling of depth to you.”

“I’m joking,” Draco said dryly, “I don’t know. I guess I just want someone who I can be myself with.”

“Yeah, and that’ll never happen with Ginny,” sarcasm was dripping from Blaise’s tongue.

“Precisely.”

Draco strolled out of the men’s dressing room at the photoshoot Luna had graciously set up for them. Admiring his appearance in the mirror, he smirked. Despite the minor setback of Mister Kant refusing to invest in their company, he felt on top of the world. There was no doubt in his mind that being in this magazine would prove to him that he, Draco Malfoy, had changed. He wasn’t a ruthless death eater anymore. All he needed was a chance to prove it to the world. This was his big break. It had to work.
He knocked on the dressing room next door to his. “Blaise? Are you almost done?” No answer. He knocked again. “Come on, man. We’ve got to hurry.” Still no answer.

Sighing, he observed his environment. He had no idea where he was. He had been shoved into the changing room so fast by the stylists he couldn’t see where Ginny and Blaise went. Shrugging his shoulders, he walked down the long empty hallway aimlessly.

Just as he was beginning to stress over being late for the photoshoot a drop-dead gorgeous brunette with sparkling blue eyes turned the corner. Draco stopped in his step. *Holy fuck,* he thought to himself, *who is that?*

“Excuse me, sorry to bother you,” he casually leaned against the wall in front of the beautiful woman, “I was wondering if you could direct me to where they hold the photoshoots?”

She looked a little caught off guard by his nonchalant approach. He saw her eyes flicker down his body, as if mentally ensuring that he belonged in the magazine. Eventually, a delicate smile appeared on her lips.

“Yes. It’s your second right then your first left,” she said as she continued to breeze past him. Deciding the photoshoot could wait a few more minutes, he trailed behind her.

“So, do you work here?” he asked curiously. She gave him a puzzled look.

“Are you serious?”

“Yeah,” he decided to take the opportunity to brag, “See, I’m going to be in this month’s issue. My good friend Luna Lovegood runs the magazine. Do you know her?”

She chuckled. “Yes, I’m quite familiar with Luna.”

“She’s brilliant. I imagine working for her would be a blast,” he said, struggling to keep up with the girl’s fast pace. “Maybe we could all go out for drinks some time?”

This caused her to stop in her tracks. She folded her arms and narrowed her eyes. “You have no idea who I am, do you?”

Draco was taken aback. He had no idea how to respond. Running a hand through his hair he nervously mumbled, “Umm…no. Sorry.”

“Well, that’s a refreshing change,” she held out her hand for him to shake. “I’m Fiona Herd.”

Fiona Herd…Fiona Herd…that name sounded so familiar. He stared at her hand trying to delay the time in between shaking it and figuring out where he had heard the name. Had he drunkenly met her at the bar before? Did she go to Hogwarts? Then a memory of Blaise shot into his head.

“If I could go out with any celebrity it would definitely be Fiona Herd.”

His eyes widened by the revelation. One of the most famous models was standing in front of him. And here he was, chasing her around like she was just an average girl that he had a chance with. He felt his cheeks redden as she smiled, clearly aware of his thought processes.

“S-sorry, I had no idea,” he stammered, “I’m really bad at keeping up with – erm – celebrities...”
“Like I said, it’s kind of refreshing,” she smirked. Her eyes flickered down him again, “You’re actually pretty cute. What’s your name?”

“Draco Malfoy.”

“Well, Draco Malfoy,” she grabbed a pen and a paper from her purse, “Here’s my address. Send me a letter sometime and we’ll talk about that drink.”

He beamed as she waltzed away without taking a second glance at him. Excited to brag to Blaise about his successful conquest with his celebrity crush he rushed to the photoshoot. He was going to be in a magazine AND was going to go out with Fiona Herd. Nothing could make that day better.

Then he saw her.

For the first time, he really saw her.

With her crimson hair flowing elegantly down her back, plump pink lips, and emerald green shirt clinging to her perfectly…Ginny Weasley made Fiona Herd evaporate from his mind. Her big brown eyes pierced into him as if she was eagerly awaiting his reaction. Not realizing how long he had been gazing at her, he finally managed to stammer out, “Wow, Ginny. You look amazing.”

She smiled and blushed in thanks before following Luna to the camera crew. Her hips swayed as she strutted in front of him, appearing more confident than she ever had before. He sped up behind her, unsure of where these impulses were coming from, and quietly whispered in her ear, “Seriously, I don’t think I’ve ever seen you wear green. You look really nice in green.”

She paused in her step to flash him a smile that sent a shiver down his spine. “Thanks, Draco,” she said before waltzing away again. He stood behind, shaking his head in disbelief.

And that was the moment Draco Malfoy realized he wanted to sleep with Ginny Weasley.

Draco didn’t really know how he got there, but later that night he was inebriated in Ginny’s bed, spilling his guts to her about his past. She listened intently and without judgement. He kept telling himself to stop sharing his intimate details, but there was something about her comforting gaze that made him spill everything. The hours of heavy drinking probably didn’t help much either.

He felt so attracted to her, though. He didn’t know how it happened so quickly. Within the span of a day he wanted her. Nothing emotional, of course. No, she still wasn’t his type. She was just… one of his best friends who he sort of wanted to fuck. That was all. He found that his hands were absentmindedly finding ways to brush against her. Just silly little touches… brushing up against her arm, gently rubbing her hand…and he loved the way every small touch made her shiver. What the hell was happening?

His hand did it again. It managed to find hers in the blankets, his thumb gently rubbing her palm. Why was he doing that? He was never much of the type to like physical contact. Every girl he had ever been with moaned about his lack of intimacy outside of the bedroom. He noticed her face slowly inching towards his, her eyes darting to his lips. It wouldn’t be so bad if they hooked up, just
once, would it?

His loud yawn interrupted his train of thought. It would be a bad idea.

“Do you mind if I sleep in your bed tonight? Blaise needs his ‘privacy’ and I think I'm a little too drunk to try to apparate. I promise I won't try anything funny with you.”

It would be nice sleeping with someone for a change.

“Draco, darling. Please, tell us more about the company.”

The autumn sun beamed down on Narcissa Malfoy as she poured Draco and Lucius a cup of tea on the exquisite balcony of the Malfoy Manor. He felt bad for neglecting his family the past month but he had been so busy with Ginny and Blaise, it was difficult to make time to visit. He gave a slight shrug to his mother’s question.

“It’s alright,” he said, “The magazine will be coming out tomorrow. I really think Mister Kant will have a change of heart regarding investing in us.”

“If he doesn’t, you know what you have to do,” Lucius started, “continue sending out your proposals to different financers. Malfoys don’t give up.”

“You’re right, Father,” Draco nodded. “Really hoping he gets on board with us, though. I admire his work very much.”

“Oh, Draco,” Narcissa said motherly, “I have no doubt that you will succeed. You and Blaise are so talented.”

“And how is the Weasley girl performing?” Lucius asked. Draco reflexively smiled. He opened his briefcase to proudly present the potions Ginny and Blaise had created to Lucius.

“She’s really good,” he said, “A really fast learner. Blaise and I are both very impressed.”

“That’s very interesting,” said Lucius. He picked up a vial from the briefcase to examine the quality. Nodding in approval, he set the potion down. “I must say I was a little doubtful when you told me she would be joining you.”

“We were as well,” Draco said, “but no, we are both very impressed.”

“And how does her family feel about this?” asked Narcissa curiously, “They must be in a fritz over it.”

“She’s only telling them today, actually,” Draco said. He subtly crossed his fingers under the table, silently wishing her good luck. He knew how nervous she was about the confession.
“Hmm,” Lucius nodded. “I’m sure that will be an uncomfortable affair.”

“How does she look these days?” Narcissa asked nosily. Lucius rolled his eyes. “I’m just curious if she looks as unsightly as the rest of the lot.”

“No,” Draco said before he could stop himself, “she’s beautiful.”

Narcissa and Lucius both narrowed their eyes at Draco. He cursed himself for letting that slip out. He had clearly spent too much time with the girl lately, and not enough time with other women. He had to fix that. It appeared Narcissa wanted to continue the conversation about Ginny’s appearance, and likely Draco’s opinion on it, but Lucius interrupted her.

“Draco, show me your portfolio,” he said. “I’ll point out any errors you may have glossed over.”

Thankful that his Father discontinued the awkward conversation, he hastily reached in his brief case. His stomach dropped when it wasn’t there.

He let a quick “Fuck,” slip out. Narcissa shot him a warning glance.

“Draco,” she hissed. “You know it’s rude to cuss. I swear, your language gets more foul every time I see you.”

“Sorry, mum,” he said, although he wasn’t listening. “I forgot my portfolio at Ginny’s. I’d better go get it before it’s too late. I need it tomorrow.”

“Oh, honey,” Narcissa frowned, “you can’t be leaving us already.”


Narcissa scowled at her husband, folding her arms. “The business does not come before family, Lucius. Don’t go putting that foul verbiage into our son’s mind.”

“Well, it comes before tea-time,” Lucius smirked at Narcissa. She huffed and rolled her eyes. Draco chuckled at his parent’s banter. He walked to his mother to give her a hug and quick peck on the cheek.

“Don’t worry, mum. You and Dad are always number one,” he said genuinely to his mother. “I’ll come visit again, soon. I promise.”

“We are very proud of you, son,” Lucius nodded formally to his son. “Although do ensure that you do not lose track of your documents. There is nothing more unappealing to a successful business man than someone who is unorganized.”

“Will do,” he said, feeling a little embarrassed. “Alright, love you both. See you soon.”

He apparated to Ginny’s flat. The windows were dark and he frowned when he realized she was likely still at the Burrow. Much to his delight, her front door was unlocked. He would just quickly sneak in, grab the portfolio, and leave…no one would know…

He cracked the door open slowly.

“What the hell are you doing here?” Ginny shouted at him as she stood in the middle of the room. Her wand was pointed at him. Her face was soaked with tears.
Fucking run away, Draco, he told himself. He never liked seeing girls cry. Rarely would he ever make the situation any better. Typically, he would simply hand them a tissue and waltz away. But he couldn’t run away. Something kept his body stationed.

“Sorry, I…I left my portfolio here,” he said.

“I’ll find your portfolio and owl it to you tomorrow. Please, just leave.”

She turned her back to him, hiding her tears. He had to give a slight praise to her. He was thankful that she clearly didn’t want him there as much as he didn’t want to be there. So, why the hell was he still talking?

“Are you okay?”

“Yes. I’m fine. Just go home,” she demanded in between tears. He tried to turn on his heels to head out the door but he felt magnetized.

“You don’t look okay,” He slowly started inching towards her. What the fuck are you doing Draco? This isn’t your responsibility. Just let her cry in peace. His feet pulled him closer to her. “How did it go with your family?” No, Draco. Don’t ask questions. You don’t care. It’s just some stupid Weasley drama…Ginny is a big girl. She can handle this on her own.

And then somehow he found his arms around her shoulders. Pulling her into his chest, he let her cry. Tears soaked his shirt but he didn’t care. All he cared about was making her pain go away. He ran his fingers through her hair. He whispered comforting words. Where did this nurturing instinct come from? It shook him up.

He pulled her to her bed and covered her with blankets. He even brought her a draught of peace. She hid her face in the pillow, claiming she was too hideous to show her face. But she wasn’t hideous at all. She was still so pretty…he couldn’t stop playing with her soft hair…

“Do you want me to sleep on the couch or go home?” he asked. Why was he offering to sleep on her small couch instead of his own comfortable bed?

“Couch,” she mumbled in the pillow. He watched as the potion slowly took effect as she drifted off to sleep. After running his hands through her hair one last time he walked to the couch.

He lied in the dark with his eyes closed. He was worried for her…he was genuinely concerned for her pain. He wanted nothing more than for her family to forgive her. He wanted to see her smile again. He wanted to see her laugh…he wanted to see how her lips felt against his…

His eyes shot open.

No. No. No. No, no, no, no, no. He repeated to himself as his heart began racing. No, no, Draco. Stop this. You don’t care. This is stupid. You don’t want to kiss her. You don’t want to see her smile. Stop being a fucking wanker.

But it was too late.

And that was the moment Draco Malfoy realized he had feelings for Ginny Weasley.
He was sitting across from Ginny on her balcony. He sipped his beer as he watched her intently. He couldn’t help but admire the way she scrunched her nose when she laughed, the way she would turn red when she was frustrated with him and Blaise, the way her hair fell into her eyes... he admired everything she did. It was fucking weird.

“What was your most embarrassing moment?” He asked her and she rolled her eyes. She looked so cute when she did that.

“Are you really asking me that right now?” She asked and he nodded. “Obviously, it was when I was twelve and you read out my Valentine to Harry.”

He burst out laughing. God, he used to be a prick to her. How on earth did she ever forgive him for everything? He felt lucky. He had been wrestling with the idea to ask her out on a real date... Normally the idea of having a real girlfriend didn’t appeal to Draco. But there was something that excited him over taking Ginny out to dinner, cooking suppers with her, falling asleep with her... when the hell did he become such an emotional little girl? It made him queasy.

She spoke again. It was her turn to ask him a question. “What gives you butterflies?”

He raised his eyebrow. “What the hell kind of question is that?”

“You do. He thought to himself.

*Don’t be a fucking sap, Draco.*

“Heights give me butterflies.”

“Wuss.”

He was shaking hands with Mister Kant in his office. The old mustached man smiled cordially at Draco.

“It was a pleasure seeing you again, Mister Malfoy,” he said. “It’s great to hear that the store will be ready to open in a month. Your finances appear completely in order. I am very excited for you and your team.”

“Thank you, sir,” he said in appreciation. He couldn’t believe everything was working out. Finally, his dreams were coming true. Everything they had worked towards was happening. He was about to walk through the door when Mister Kant stopped him.

“Just one quick thing before you leave,” said Mister Kant, “I assume you and Mister Zabini are aware that it is a very poor idea to be romantically involved with fellow business partners.”
Draco paused, confused by what Mister Kant was saying. “What do you mean?”

“I mean, it is imperative that neither you nor Mister Zabini develop a romantic relationship with Miss Weasley.”

He froze. Well, that screws that up, he thought to himself. He slowly watched all his development with Ginny wash away. He knew he could probably argue with Mister Kant, tell him that he would never allow his romantic relationship influence his business decisions. But then he thought about all the hard work the three of them had done…it wasn’t worth it to throw away. Besides, Ginny was just a regular girl. She wasn’t even that special. Completely replaceable. He didn’t like feeling all sappy, anyways…

“Mister Malfoy?”

“Huh?” Draco snapped out of his thoughts. He didn’t know how long he had been silent for.

“Do you understand what I’m saying?”

“Yes. It won’t be a problem, sir. Don’t worry.”

Draco yawned as he walked into the shop early in the morning. He hadn’t slept well the previous night. His cat had been keeping awake all week. Due to the early hours, he was surprised to see Ginny sitting on the floor, polishing a cauldron with her wand. He smirked. He had been excited to see her all night. She had gone out with Harry the previous night before and he and Blaise were having way too much fun teasing her about it. He couldn’t wait to hear how pathetic Harry was. How furiously jealous Harry got over Ginny spending all his free time with him. He knew Ginny wasn’t interested in Harry anymore. There was no way.

After some small talk, he finally asked with a wicked grin, “So, how was your date?”

“Umm…it was good.”

His stomach fell. Why wasn’t she shouting at him for calling it a date?

“I don’t hear you denying it was a date.”

“Nope. No more denying it from me.”

What? No. It wasn’t supposed to be an actual date. This wasn’t supposed to happen. He thought to himself. He knew he couldn’t be with her…but no. He didn’t want Harry to be with her either. He didn’t deserve her. He made her cry, afterall…just for pursuing her passions…he wasn’t the man for Ginny…

“Did you have a good time?” Stop asking questions you don’t want to know the answers to, Draco.

“Yeah. A really good time.” She looked uncomfortable. She couldn’t look him in the eye. Why are you going to waste your time with Harry, Ginny? He mentally shouted to her. It’s obvious you like me. Then he remembered why…it was because Draco would forever only flirt with her, not ever actually making a move. He couldn’t. He wasn’t allowed. He envisioned punching Mister Kant in the face for a brief second.
“Cool,” he said as he shifted uncomfortably. “I guess I can’t be too surprised. It’s obvious Harry Potter and Ginny Weasley are destined to be together.” *Why the hell did you just say that, you fucking asshole?*

“Yeah. I guess we are.”

And that was the first moment Draco Malfoy ever felt jealous over any girl…ever.

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Blaise was lying on Draco’s couch with a beer in hand.

“I’m bored,” he said flatly.

“Me too,” Draco said, pulling a shoelace around for Plato to chase.

“I miss Luna.”

“I know, buddy.”

“Do you think it’ll ever work out?”

“Yeah, probably.”

“I doubt it.”

Draco rolled his eyes. He wanted to kick Blaise in the face for not taking advantage of his seemingly simple romantic situation.

“What’s Ginny up to?” asked Draco.

“I think she’s with Harry.”

Draco nodded sadly. “She’s always with Harry…”

He opened his wallet to find Fiona’s contact information. He knew what he had to do to get out of his depressing slump.

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“What the hell is your problem, mate?” Blaise asked Draco skeptically. They were standing in his kitchen the day after Ginny convinced them to go for drinks with Harry.

“Nothing is my problem,” he replied dryly. He didn’t want to talk about it. He made a fool of himself.

“Well, something must be your problem,” Blaise said. His face was full of concern. “It’s not like you to lose your temper like that. What is going on with you and Ginny?”
“Nothing is going on.”

“Then why do you care so much about her and Harry?”

Draco pinched the bridge of his nose. He mentally cursed Blaise for trying to reach inside of his inner turmoil. Sighing he replied, “I just don’t know what she sees in him…I mean, he’s borderline abusive.”

Blaise scoffed, “Harry is not abusive.”

“Are you joking me?” Draco laughed. “He’s controlling, jealous, constantly angry…you’re the one who’s supposedly best friends with Ginny. I don’t see why you’re not more concerned.”

“I guess I can empathize with Harry a little,” Blaise explained. Draco shot him a cold look. “What? I mean what do you expect? He hates us. He wouldn’t be controlling, angry, and jealous if it weren’t for us. If you really care about Ginny, you’ll try to be supportive of their relationship. Eventually Harry will ease up.”

“He treats her like garbage!” Draco cried. “Why can’t anyone else see this?”

“Are you serious?” asked Blaise. He narrowed his eyes. “You’re the one treating Fiona like garbage. You humiliated her.”

Draco rolled his eyes. “She understands why I did it…”

“Does she?” Blaise laughed sarcastically. “If that’s the case, you had better marry that woman right now if she understands the inner workings of your screwed-up mind.”

Draco poured a glass of scotch and remained silent. He contemplated confessing to Blaise what was going on his mind. He wanted to explain why he was being such a lunatic lately. To admit that Ginny Weasley had been taking over his mind.

Instead, he came up with an excuse. “I just don’t want Harry influencing her. We can’t let him talk her out of being in the company with us.”

“That’s not going to happen,” Blaise said. “Ginny won’t put up with that shit. That’s why I’m not getting involved. Because I trust that she will make the right decision.”

Draco sighed. Blaise was right. Ginny was smart. That’s why he liked her. He knew that if Harry ever crossed a line she wouldn’t put up with it…

“I don’t get why he has to be so jealous,” he said as he slumped into his arm chair. “I can tell it drives her insane.”

“Okay, think of it this way: How would you feel if Fiona was spending all her free time with two handsome men who you hated?”

“I honestly would not care.”

“Fine,” Blaise said hotly, “What if you were dating Ginny and she was spending all her free time with Harry?”

“I…” he trailed off as he imagined the scenario. Despite it being far from reality, even the thought of it infuriated him. “I wouldn’t care.”

“You’re such a liar.”
“So, what?” Draco shot. “You’re with Luna for one day and suddenly you’re an expert on relationships?”

“Yes.”

You’re such a fucking moron, Draco Malfoy, is what he was repeatedly telling himself when he apparated to his living room. Ginny had just tried to kiss him. And he jumped away like a repulsed child. She looked so hurt…so humiliated. Why would he do that to her? Why didn’t he just explain himself to her?

He was furious with himself. Why didn’t he realize that what he was doing was probably hurting her? All the stupid flirting, getting mad at Harry, subtly touching her at any opportunity…the mixed signals he was giving would confuse anyone. It was so selfish of him. Leading her on without any hope of a future. Even if he couldn’t be with her, she was still one of his best friends. She meant so much to him. And he just punched her in the heart.

He had to go back to her house. He had to explain himself.

He pulled on his coat, moments away from apparating.

Wait, he stopped himself, if you go to Ginny’s house and explain to her how infatuated you are, you’re going to end up shagging her. You know this.

He groaned in frustration. How can he get out of this situation without anyone getting anymore hurt? All while protecting their business? How the hell did he get into this stupid situation, anyways? Why did he have to fall for her? Why couldn’t he care about Fiona, or anyone else, the way he cared about her? Why couldn’t she be replaced?

All his thoughts became too much. Cursing loudly, with all his pent of frustrations, he kicked his wall. The sound echoed throughout his lonely apartment.

“Draco?” a woman’s voice called from his bedroom. Who the hell is here?

He hesitantly walked to his bedroom. When he opened the door, he found Fiona lying in his bed. Wearing only transparent lingerie, she lied there seductively, trying to enchant him with her dazzling stare. Instead, he frowned.

“I thought I told you I don’t like unexpected visitors,” he snapped, sounding harsher than he intended. His emotions were all over the place.

“I know,” she slowly walked towards him, “but I missed you.”

He rolled his eyes when she placed her hands on his chest, practically shoving her breasts in his face. He had the most confusing hard-on.

“I thought I told you I don’t like unexpected visitors,” he snapped, sounding harsher than he intended. His emotions were all over the place.

“I know,” she slowly walked towards him, “but I missed you.”

He rolled his eyes when she placed her hands on his chest, practically shoving her breasts in his face.

He had the most confusing hard-on.

“Where were you all day?” She asked kissing his neck gently.

“I was with Ginny.”

“I figured you were,” she ran her hands around the waistband of his pants.

“Listen, Fiona,” he began, trying to keep his mind focussed, “I’m really not in the mood to do
anything tonight.”

“I bet I can change that,” she whispered in his ear. *Yeah, I bet you could.*

He stared into her eyes. She was stunning and very much into Draco. She made that abundantly clear. But he couldn’t feel anything towards her… she pressed herself against him and gently nibbled on his earlobe. Closing his eyes, he shoved her against the wall and crushed his lips upon hers. He made sure to keep his eyes closed the entire time as he imagined his lips were against his favorite red head’s lips…

Draco and Fiona sat at a bar a week after his parents threw the ball. A week after Draco confessed his feelings for Ginny. Needless to say, he was distant.

“Draco,” Fiona started, setting her martini down, “I think we need to have a serious discussion.”

Draco wasn’t listening. His eyes were glazed over as he watched the bartender pour drinks.

“Are you even listening to me?”

“Huh?”

“What the hell is wrong with you?” She snapped. She was clearly at the end of her wits.

“Nothing,” he lied. In reality, he had spent all week daydreaming about his heartfelt dance with Ginny.

“That’s it,” she shot, “I’m so tired of playing these games with you.”

He rolled his eyes.

She continued, “How can anyone be so emotionally unavailable? The only time I’ve ever seen you show a glimmer of feelings was when you were standing up for that Weasley girl.”

Draco shrugged.

“You’re seriously not even going to say anything right now?”

He shook his head.

“You’re such a fucking prick,” she hissed. “Why do you even like her? She’s not even pretty. Is she wild in bed or something?”

“Wouldn’t know,” he finally spoke.

She threw her martini his face. “I’m so fucking done with you.”

He didn’t even react to the burning sensation of the alcohol. Instead he nodded.

“Alright,” he nodded, “Take care, then.”

She gave him one last horrified look before storming out. Draco turned to the bartender.
He was in the busy muggle nightclub watching Ginny flirt with some brunette man. She glanced over to Draco shyly as he raised his glass to her, winking. He was having way too much fun with her that night. Even if he couldn’t be romantic with her it was still a relief having her back in his life. She made everything much more tolerable. Although, the more he drank, the more he wondered why he couldn’t be with her… he had already screwed up his chances with Mister Descartes. Why not indulge in what his heart had wanted nearly half a year?

He drunkenly walked towards a group of muggle girls. He was supposed to ask for their numbers.

“Hello, ladies,” he said charmingly. They all batted their eyelashes at him but he wasn’t interested. “I was wondering if I could ask you a question.”

“Sure,” one of the blonde girls replied, stepping closer to him.

“See that red-headed girl over there?” he pointed to Ginny and the group of girls nodded. “I’m absolutely head over heels for her but we work together. There’s a strict no dating policy at my company. How ridiculous would it be if I said ‘fuck it’ and went for it anyways?” It felt nice drunkenly confiding in a bunch of strangers.

The girls looked a little disappointed but one responded, “I think you should do it. You only live once.” The others nodded in agreement.

“Great, thanks,” Draco smiled. “Hey, could I get one of your numbers? Her and I are having a little competition and I don’t want to seem like a total chump…”

“Sure,” one of the blondes said before winking, “But if things don’t work out with her give me a call.”

“Will do.”

And he did that with six more girls.

It was Christmas and he drinking wine at his parent’s house around a warm fire. He gently thumbed the jewelry box in his pocket as he cursed himself. Why did he always do this? He felt like he was constantly hurting her. He slept with her then proceeded to spend the rest of the month ignoring her. She was worth so much more than that, she deserved respect. He couldn’t even decide if he should give her this damn necklace…he was so scared of getting too close to her. Their company wasn’t doing as well as they had hoped and it wasn’t smart to do anything risky. After their amazing night in Paris, he knew that if he had too many intimate encounters with her he wouldn’t be able to hold back. It was hard enough not to grab her by the waist and kiss her at work every day.

“Draco, you seem so glum,” Narcissa said sadly as she filled his glass of wine. “What’s the matter?”
“Nothing,” he said quickly, trying to give a fake smile. It failed.

“You know you can’t lie to your mother,” she said, “Is it girl problems? Is it Fiona?”

“Narcissa,” Lucius hissed. “Surely he doesn’t want to discuss that with us.”

“I think our son should feel comfortable discussing anything with us,” she replied. Draco rolled his eyes.

“It’s not girl problems, mom.”

“Alright, alright,” she said, raising her hands in defense. “Although, I don’t understand how someone as charming as you can be alone on Christmas.”

“Cissy,” Lucius growled under his breath. “I’m sure if that is the problem rubbing it in won’t help.”

Draco sighed loudly. The wine was making his inhibitions lower. He didn’t know why he decided to do it, but he said, “I am lonely. And I do have girl problems.” How pathetic, Draco. Talking to your mommy about your little non-girlfriend. He scowled at himself.

“Oh, Draco,” Narcissa said gleefully, “I’m so happy you’re sharing this with us.”

“I haven’t really said anything yet,” Draco drawled. Lucius chuckled.

Narcissa disregarded his sarcastic comment. “What’s going on?”

“I dunno,” he ran a hand through his hair. “I like a girl a lot but it’s a bad idea to be together. That’s about it.”

“Is it Fiona?” Lucius asked. Draco pursed his lips.

“…Sure,” said Draco. Narcissa looked at him doubtfully but didn’t question him.

“Do you really like her?” Narcissa asked, “I can’t recall you ever falling for her a girl…”

He stared into the fire, slowly nodding. “Yeah, I like her a lot.”

“Well, you know, Draco…” Lucius started, “Your mother and I have been together nearly forty years. She’s the love of my life and I never regret a day being with her. Although, when we first met, the world was against us.”

Draco raised his eyes to meet his father’s. He felt a little selfish not knowing how his parents even met. “Really?”

“Absolutely,” Narcissa spoke, “His mother despised me. Said I was using him for his money. Ridiculous.”

“But I pursued her anyways,” Lucius continued. “I felt she was special and was worth the risk. I’ve never looked back. Whatever is going on with Fiona, if it has you this depressed, it’s probably worth a try.”

Draco nodded as he pondered his father’s thoughts. Maybe he was right…maybe it was worth the risk. Or maybe he didn’t have to ‘risk’ anything? Maybe they could merely secretly date until they figured out what they really wanted…if it would even work out. He stood up from his chair.
“I’ve got to go,” he said in a hurry, “Sorry, I hope you don’t mind.”

Lucius gave him a knowing smirk. “Good luck, son.”

“Merry Christmas,” he hugged his mother, “Love you both.”

“Wait, Draco,” Narcissa stopped him. She put her hands on his shoulders and looked him in the eye. A small smile appeared on her face. “Draco, if you’re with Ginny, we won’t judge you.” Lucius nodded in agreement.

“Thanks, mum,” he couldn’t keep the smile off his face as he embraced her tightly. “Just don’t tell anyone! I don’t want this getting out.”

He apparated to Ginny’s.

Ginny was sleeping soundly next to him on an early Sunday morning. He gazed at her peaceful face, framed by her long red hair. He had never seen anyone more beautiful, inside and out, in his life. They had been together for about three months and he couldn’t be happier.

He had a strange dream that night. He dreamt he was much older, cooking breakfast for four people. A young red-headed girl came running around the corner, followed by an older blonde boy. They kept calling him Dad. The young boy asked if he could get a potions set for his birthday and the young girl begged him to let her go to work with him. Then Ginny walked around the corner, kissed his cheek, and thanked him for cooking breakfast.

When he opened his eyes, he felt strange. Not because the dream was disturbing or freaked him out, but because he wished he didn’t wake up. He wanted to stay in that content dream-life. He gazed at Ginny, mentally praying she was satisfied enough to stay in their weird, secret relationship. He hoped she would stick around long enough for that dream life to become an option.

And that was the first time Draco Malfoy ever imagined his future with a girl.

“Trust me, we will work in public. It won’t be a waste of time,” Draco grabbed her small hands. His throat was tightening. “Believe me…”

“How can you be so sure?” she asked. Tears were freely streaming down her face now. How did this happen? When he awoke that morning, everything was perfect. How did everything go to shit? Fucking Fiona…

“Because I…” he trailed off as he tried to conceptualize what he was feeling. Why couldn’t he find the words to convince her? It felt as though something was blocking his heart as she stared at him doubtfully. “Because I just know. I’ve never been more sure of anything.”

He could tell she didn’t believe him. The way she bit her lip nervously made it obvious. He pleaded
with her but nothing was changing her mind. How long had she been feeling this way? Why didn’t she tell him before? He would have done something proactive to ensure that she knew it would be worth it. He certainly wouldn’t have gone out with Fiona. God, he wished he could take that back…

“We work well as business partners. As friends,” she choked out between sobs. Why was she doing this? Why couldn’t they try to find a compromise? “We can get back to that.”

After a few more failed attempts he crashed his lips upon hers. He needed her. She made him happy. She made him feel like a better person. Before Ginny Weasley waltzed into his life he was a cold, heartless, chauvinist man who only viewed women as conquests. Now he was warm and caring…in his free time he thought up small little surprises for her. He didn’t do that for anyone else. He didn’t want to do that for anyone else. He didn’t know how he could come back from this. How would he handle working beside her every day knowing he lost her? How could things ever go back to normal, when in Draco’s mind, being with Ginny was the most normal thing in his life.

She pushed herself away from him.

“I’m sorry, Draco…”

His heart ached. He had no more words to speak. All he could do was shake his head in disbelief.

“I’m going to Luna’s for a bit,” *No, please don’t go.* “Please don’t be here when I get back.”

And as he watched her walk out the door he realized that it had been almost a year since he began spending nearly every day with her.

It took him nearly a year for him to finally put into words how he felt. For the first time, he knew it was true.

And that was the moment he realized he was in love with Ginny Weasley.

And he let her walk away from him.
Ginny shouldn't have been surprised when Draco proceeded to ignore her after their breakup, but sure enough, when she was met by his icy aloofness over the next month she was taken aback. How could someone who allegedly cared for her so much pretend she didn't exist? After all that they had been through she believed she deserved more than that, but apparently, Draco Malfoy saw things differently. It infuriated and confused her.

Between her stupid breakup, getting ready to open their factory, and helping Hermione and Ron with the wedding, Ginny felt overwhelmingly drained. She was emotionally and physically exhausted but unfortunately, life doesn't stop just because she was heartbroken. It was imperative that she kept busy, focussing as much energy on the task at hand, otherwise, she would crash. And there was no time to crash.

Sitting cross-legged on Luna's living room floor, she delicately tied a lilac ribbon around the glass vase for the wedding's centerpieces. Yawning as she completed another, she turned to Luna.

"I'm so bloody tired," she said. "How much more do we have to do?"

Luna did some mental math. "I think only twenty. We are over half way!"

"Thank god," Ginny muttered before sending an appreciative glance to her friend. "I'm so thankful for you, Luna. Between all this stupid wedding stuff and me constantly crashing yours and Blaise's dates, I feel like the neediest friend ever."

"Hey, don't worry about it," Luna said sincerely. "I would expect the same from you if I were ever in your situation. That's what friends are for."

"I guess so," Ginny said as she frowned. "I feel a little pathetic, though. I mean, we only dated for four months and I can hardly sleep in my bed without thinking of him."

"You're not pathetic," Luna assured her, "you're just adjusting to life without him. It's going to take a little time."

"It would be easier if the damn prat would talk to me," she said. "If it isn't work-related, he ignores me. On top of getting over a breakup, I feel like I'm mourning over a lost friendship. He was one of my best friends..."

"I know, Gin," Luna wrapped her arms around her shoulder consolingly, "It'll get easier. I promise."

Blaise interrupted the conversation by walking through the front door. Smiling, he walked towards Luna to peck her on the cheek. "How are my two favorite women doing?"

"We are making centerpieces for Hermione's wedding," Luna said, smiling enthusiastically. "Want to help?"

Blaise scowled at the bunches of ribbons and flowers on the floor. "Not even in the slightest."

"You're no fun," Ginny said. "Where have you been all night?"
"I was at Draco's," Blaise said casually. "Tomorrow's going to be busy at work, Gin. Draco's got a load of new staff hired who need to be trained as well as we need to start packing some stuff up to move to the factory."

Ginny groaned and flopped her back onto the floor. "But I'm sooo lazy."

"I know, me too," Blaise agreed, grabbing a beer from the fridge. "But it'll be worth it. Our income is going to triple."

"God, I love money," Ginny said to herself. "At least I'm slowly getting rich from all this mess."

"Yeah, it's definitely a motivating factor," Blaise chuckled.

Ginny shifted uncomfortably as she contemplated asking Blaise about Draco. She knew he hated being caught in the middle of the two. But, her heart won over her brain. "So…how is he doing?"

"Who?"

Ginny rolled her eyes. "Draco."

"Oh," he ran a hand through his hair. "He's alright. A little drunk."

"Sounds pretty normal for Draco," Luna muttered under her breath.

Ginny chuckled at Luna's comment before turning back to Blaise. "Did he umm…Did he mention me at all?"

"Unless it was work-related, not really no…" Blaise replied uncomfortably. Ginny's face fell.

Luna sent a sympathetic glance her way, "Don't worry, Gin. I'm sure deep down he's an emotional wreck without you."

Ginny scoffed bitterly, "I don't think that man has a single emotion in his body."

"He's sad," Blaise said. "He'll never admit it, but he's sad. It's obvious by the way he avoids talking about you at all costs. He thinks it's making him seem like he doesn't care, but I know him well enough to know that it's just an act."

"Good," Ginny said sourly. Initially, after the breakup she didn't want him to feel any pain, but after him avoiding her like she was a disease, it was a little satisfying. She bit her lip nervously as she asked the next question that plagued her mind. "Is he…seeing anyone?"

"Fuck, Gin," Blaise snapped, "I'm not going to tell you that."

"Why not?" she demanded.

"Because it's none of your business," he said. Luna shot him a glare for his curt tone. "It's not my job to share Draco's personal life with you. I'm sorry, but he's still my friend and I need to respect his privacy."

"So, what? He is seeing someone?" she frowned, making her own interpretations of Blaise's vagueness. He sighed in annoyance.

"Christ, no, that's not what I'm saying," he put his face in his hands. "He's perfectly single, lonely, and miserable if that's what you want to hear."
"Blaise," Luna hissed, "don't be rude."

"Well, fuck, I'm sorry," he shot, "but I'm sick and tired of being the middleman here. I feel like I'm a child stuck between two divorced parents. If you have these questions, maybe you should try talking to him yourself."

"I would!" she cried, "But talking to him right now is like talking to a brick wall. Unless it's work related all he does is grunts or says some stupid sarcastic comment."

"Not my problem," he said stood up and raised his hands. "Sweeping declaration; I'm officially demoting myself from being the official converser between you two. If you want to know something about him, ask him yourself."

"You're a twat," Ginny grumbled, although she knew this was hard for Blaise. He wasn't the type of person to gossip about his friends or anyone, but Ginny was repeatedly feeding off him for any details about Draco.

"I know," Blaise said smugly before walking to the kitchen, "You guys want a drink?"

"Yes, please," Luna hollered before looking at Ginny. "So, speaking of Draco seeing anyone…it's been a month, Gin. Please, please, please let me set you up with Matt, the photographer, from work. He's so kind and charming. You'll love him."

"Not interested."

"Come on, Gin. You need a date for the wedding after all."

"I don't need a date for the wedding."

"Fine, you don't need one. But you'll have a better time with one."

"It's true, Gin," Blaise piped in, passing out drinks. "The best way to get over someone is to get under someone, after all."

"Guys," she started, "I've battled in the war at Hogwarts, I've seen my brother get murdered, I've struggled with poverty my entire life…believe me. There are worse travesties in life than going to a stupid wedding alone."

"Your call," Luna shrugged, "You're missing out, though. Matt is brilliant."

"I'm sure he's lovely but I'm not in the right mindset for any dates right now anyways," she said. "Besides, my current state of cynicism will surely scare him off anyways."

"At least she's honest," Blaise said and received a nudge in the ribs from Luna.

"On a happier note on the topic of weddings," Ginny reached in her pocket for an envelope that she had been saving for Blaise, "here is your invitation to the wedding. Ron and Hermione would be happy if you attended."

Luna and Blaise's eyes shot open in excitement. Luna squealed, "Are you serious? They're letting him come?"

"Yep," Ginny nodded. "Ron was a little bitter over it but Hermione insisted it would be fine. Ron says you'd better get him a good wedding gift, though."

"Will he take money?" Blaise asked as he happily admired the invitation.
"I think in this case, that would be ideal."

A few days later Ginny found herself working late, side by side with Draco in an uncomfortable silence. With all the other employees already done for the day and Blaise doing preparations for the factory, Ginny and Draco were alone, delicately packing up the potions ingredients. She swallowed hard as the tension in the room was quickly growing. She watched him as he avoided her eyes, keeping his head down, gingerly wrapping the ingredients in protective paper. For the sake of her sanity, she had to break the silence.

"Are you excited for the factory to open?" she asked. If she kept it work related, he couldn't ignore her.

"Uh-huh." Okay, so he didn't ignore her, but that wasn't much better.

"How long do you think it'll take until our potions are distributed to other stores?" She was really grasping for straws to make conversation.

"I don't know," he said with his back turned to her. "A week, maybe?"

"Cooooool."

"Can you pass me that box?" he asked. When she handed it to him her hand grazed against his, causing him to flinch, but he continued to go about his work.

"All the new employees are performing really well," she said, "Tim is excellent. He's going to need a promotion soon."

"That's nice," he said coldly. Finally, Ginny had enough.

"We don't need to do this, you know," she snapped. He hardly reacted.

"Do what?"

"Avoid the elephant in room...we can talk about what happened," she bit her lip nervously when he stopped in front of her, making eye contact with her for the first time all week.

"And why would we do that?"

She felt more aware of his height as he loomed over her, his cold eyes piercing into her. Determined not to feel intimidated, she continued, "Because it would be healthy?"

"Why would it be healthy?" he stepped closer and she shrunk into the table she was leaning against. This was the closest they had been all month.

"Because it's unhealthy to keep this stuff inside," she said, "especially if we are working together. We can't continue living like this."

"I'm perfectly fine," he shrugged. Ginny sighed in exasperation.

"You're not fine," she rolled her eyes. "I think it'll be good if we can have an adult conversation about us."

He nodded as he continued packing the boxes. She thought he was going to ignore her again, but then he spoke up. "So, tell me, have you changed your mind on anything?"

She narrowed her eyes. "What do you mean?"
"I mean, about us," he was avoiding her eyes again, "Have you changed your mind about not dating in secret?"

"No," she shot harshly. "Have you changed your mind about waiting two years until we can be public?"

"Nope," he said. He became very interested in a rusted cauldron and Ginny wanted to punch him for acting so detached from the conversation.

"Why do you ask?" she said, pulling the cauldron away so he would focus on her. Her temper was rising.

"Because if you haven't changed your mind and I haven't changed my mind," he pulled the cauldron back, "then I don't see the point in discussing it any further."

"We need to discuss it because if we don't we are going to spend eternity working in silence. It'll be good for us."

"Really?" he scoffed. "Because when I imagine you and I discussing it any further, all I can foresee is it ending with you crying, maybe even me crying, and both of us retreating to our homes feeling shittier than we did before."

Her stomach fell at his honesty. For the first time that month she saw the distinct look of pain in his eyes. Blaise was right, it was merely an act that he wasn't hurt. When she couldn't think of an argument against him he continued.

"If you ask me it's best if we just move on," he was staring at his hands now. "All I want is to move on from this as efficiently as possible with as few feelings hurt as possible. It's called self-preservation."

She furrowed her brow, feeling particularly offended by his words. "But you're hurting my feelings by ignoring me."

"Then move on. Get over it," he said bluntly. She could barely look at him. The rude delivery of his words was stinging her. This was the first time she felt true contempt towards him.

"Not all of us are heartless robots, Draco," she said, "not all of us are capable of turning off our feelings like a switch."

"And neither am I," he started, "but it's easier to pretend that I am. Eventually, it'll be a reality."

"So, what?" Ginny folded her arms. "You never think about me?"

"Of course I think about you," he smirked, "You're my business partner."

"You know what I mean."

"I don't know, Gin," he pinched the bridge of his nose. "When I start to think about 'us' I just ignore it. Every day I ignore 'us' is one day closer to getting over it. Maybe you should try it."

"Fine, maybe I will."

"Good," he closed one of the boxes. "Hey, it's late. I need to visit my parents for a bit. Do you mind if we stop here for the night?"

"Sure," she said coldly. She wanted nothing more than to get away from him anyways.
"Alright," he nodded. She saw him swallow as he uncomfortably ran a hand through his hair. "We just...we just need to move on from this, Ginny. The sooner it happens the sooner we can try to establish a friendship again."

"Sure," she said again, this time even icier. She stared at the potion ingredients on the table, trying to avoid his gaze. She was feeling particularly sensitive, with this being the first real conversation she had with him since the breakup. Maybe he was right, maybe they shouldn't discuss it.

"Are you going to be okay?" he stepped closer and she shot him a venomous stare.

"It's not really your problem if I'm not, is it?"

"I guess not," he shook his head. "Listen, I'm sorry that you're hurting --"

"Don't be."

"But really, just try moving on. Try ignoring it. It'll get better."

"Whatever, Draco," she rubbed her temples in annoyance. Draco was the last person she wanted therapeutic advice from. "Just...go. I'll clean up here."

He nodded and apparated away. She was glaring at the spot he was previously standing as she thought maliciously to herself, *I'll fucking show you 'moving on', Draco Malfoy...*  

She quickly apparated to Luna's house. She banged on the door loudly, in fear of ever barging into her house again after the last time. Tapping her foot impatiently, she was relieved when a sleepy looking Luna answered the door.

"Hey Gin, sorry I was having a nap," she yawned. "What's up?"

"I need you to set up a date with that photographer bloke."

Luna's eyes widened. "Umm, okay. That's great. Are you alright?"

"Yep, I'm fantastic," she marched past Luna to see Blaise lying on the couch. She shot daggers at him. "Why aren't you at the factory? I thought you were working!"

"I was," he said. "Then I needed a nap."

"So, you're playing hooky?"

"If that's what you want to call it, sure," he smirked, "but I call it nap time."

"You're ridiculous," she rolled her eyes.

"Anywaaaaays," Luna interrupted, "So, you want to go out with Matt?"

"Yes. The sooner the better."

"Why the change of heart?" Luna asked as she resumed her spot on the couch next to Blaise.

"I took Blaise's advice and decided to try to break through Draco's cold, stupid, steel, selfish soul -" she ranted.

"Ten points for alliteration," Blaise snickered quickly.
"– And now, I'm taking Draco's delightful advice of simply 'moving on'."

"Oooh, ouch," Luna winced for Ginny.

"He's right. You were both right," she said borderline manically, "I just need to start dating again then I'll forget all about stupid Draco fuckin' Malfoy."

"How does next Wednesday sound?" Luna asked.

"Sounds excellent."

Next Wednesday arrived quickly and Ginny was busy at work, looking over performance reviews with Draco. Papers flooded the desk as he frantically searched for a specific review. She couldn't refrain from smiling when his disheveled hair fell into his eyes. She always thought it was cute when it did that, but of course, that was the last thing she wanted to think about.

"Where the hell is Allen's file?" he asked as he anxiously sifted through the papers. "I know I did his review last week, where did I put it?"

"You'd probably have a lot more luck if you had a little more organization," she drawled, searching through the papers as well.

"Thanks, tips," he paused to flash her a quick smile. It was the first time he smiled at her in a long time.

"Don't even worry about the file," she said, "Allen is an idiot, anyways. I can tell you whatever you need to know about him."

He snickered but tried to remain serious, "I believe there's some sort of law against creating a fake performance review."

She shrugged. "Live a little."

"Here it is," he sighed in relief as he clutched the paper to his chest. "Thank god. I was minutes away from having a damn panic attack."

"Congratulations," she said. "So, what does it say?"

He read the review over and nodded. "Yep. You were right. He's an idiot...definitely will not be getting a raise."

"Poor guy," she looked towards the poor performing older man. "He tries so hard, yet can't manage to do anything right."

"I Still don't know why you won't fire him," Draco said as he resumed his seat across from her.

"I'm just too kind-hearted, of course," she said sarcastically, displaying a fake smile. He laughed.

"Yes, that must be it," he said, "It has nothing to do with your fear of instilling authority."

"Absolutely not," she stuck her tongue out at him and he shook his head, chuckling to himself. She didn't know where this friendly, flirty behavior was coming from, but it was the most 'normal' conversation they had all month. She felt her heart skip when she noticed his smile wasn't fading.

"Ahh, my two best mates," Blaise came strolling towards the desk, "I was just looking for you two."
"Oh?" Draco asked, still smiling fondly from their conversation. Blaise proudly handed Draco a letter.

"The hospital wing at Hogwarts wants to purchase their potions from us next fall," said Blaise as he took a seat beside Ginny. "They are easily going to be our biggest client. Their monthly invoice is going to be as much as what we make here a month, total."

"Oh my gosh, that's brilliant, Blaise," Ginny asked, rushing around the desk to read the letter over Draco's shoulder. His arm brushed against hers and she shivered.

"This is perfect..." Draco was in awe as he repeatedly re-read the letter. "This is a serious game changer. Do you have any idea how much credibility we will get once we start supplying Hogwarts?"

"A lot," Blaise said, "Fuck this is amazing. I would say we should celebrate tonight but Ginny has her date."

Ginny face-palmed. "I completely forgot about Matt, oh my god, I'm the worst. Thank you for reminding me."

When she returned to her original seat across from Draco she saw how his face had fallen. The previous smile that was plastered on his face evaporated. Blaise picked up on his error of announcing the date right in front of Draco.

"Shit, sorry," he cringed.

"Why are you sorry?" Draco asked coldly as his eyes returned to the papers in front of him. "There's nothing wrong with my dear platonic co-worker going out with someone."

"Umm...I guess," Blaise looked over his shoulders uncomfortably, searching for an escape from the increasingly tense situation. "I'm gonna go make sure Allen isn't screwing anything up."

"Me too," Ginny stood up quickly, about to follow Blaise's lead, but Draco stopped her.

"Who are you going out with?"

"Umm," she ran a hand through her hair, "that photographer Luna wanted to set me up with when we were seeing each other..."

"I see," he nodded, "Well, good luck. I hope he's 'the one'."

She rolled her eyes at his icy smirk before walking away.

Later that afternoon she was working in the storage room alone, organizing the shelves. She was lost in thought, thinking about her upcoming date. Despite the nerves setting in, she was quite excited. It would be nice talking to someone new. Someone who had no connection to her professional life. Someone who she could potentially hold hands with in public for once. The way Luna described him made him sound like a perfect fit for Ginny, too. The thought of having an uncomplicated relationship excited her to no end after her past year of dramatic nonsense.

Her thoughts were interrupted by Draco walking into the storage room. He quickly peered around the room to ensure they were in solitude before he put a silencing charm on the door. Ginny raised her eyebrows at him when she noticed he was more fidgety than usual.

"Planning on murdering me, Malfoy?" she asked sarcastically. He rolled his eyes.
"No, I'm not planning on murdering you…"

"So, what's with the silencing charm?"

He stayed silent as he stared at the ground, rubbing his shoulder nervously. She looked at him expectantly.

"Seriously, what's going on?"

"Don't go out with that guy," he blurted out quickly, wincing at his own abruptness. Ginny's face fell as the anger swirled in her stomach.

"You have got to be kidding me," she said. How could he possibly be requesting such a thing?

"No, I'm not," he muttered as he walked closer, "don't do it."

She felt her nostrils flare as she refrained from storming out of the room. She inhaled deeply as she tried to regain her composure and she spoke through gritted teeth, "The only reason why I'm going out with him is because you told me to move on last week. This is me moving on."

"I know…" he trailed off as he stepped closer to her. She took a step back. "But don't do it. Don't move on. I'm not moving on. I'm trying, but I'm not."

Never had she felt such a distaste for him. It took everything she had not to storm out of the room, but she had to make sure that her feelings were evident for him. That she was officially done with him. Slamming her hands on the table, she spoke with contempt, "How. Fucking. Bipolar. Can. You. Be?"

"I'm not bipolar."

"Are you fucking sure about that?" she snapped. Her voice was getting louder and she understood why he put a silencing charm on the door. "Because either you're bipolar or your entire plan has been to screw around with my head for the past year."

"I'm sorry. I don't know what the hell I'm doing. I'm not trying to screw around with your head, I just don't know how to…deal with this stuff."

"Well, when you're figuring it out, don't drag me down with you," she said coldly as she began stomping away from him.

"Gin," he breezed in front of her, stopping her in her tracks. "I…I just know that whoever this guy is, he's not going to make you happy the way I can."

"You're a fucking psychopath," she spat at him. She was livid. "Are you trying to manipulate me right now? Manipulate me into thinking that unless I'm with you I'm going to be miserable?"

"No, that's not what I'm trying to do. I just – "

"Because I've got news for you Draco Malfoy, I don't need you. I have never needed you, and I never will need you. I…" she stared into his eyes as she tried to muster up enough anger to say her next words. "I hate you."

Hurt washed over Draco's face as he froze in his step. For a split second, she felt regret for saying those words. She didn't mean them. Sure, she was beyond furious at him, but she didn't hate him. The guilt faded quickly when she saw the hurt transform into an amused, smug smirk as he shook his
"You don't fuckin' hate me."

"Y-yes, I do..." she stammered out, turning her back on him. She didn't want him to completely catch on to her bluff. "I hate you."

"Gin, don't say that..." she felt his hand grab her shoulder and her body tensed up. With all the fury inside of her, she spun around and roughly shoved him away. He looked taken aback by her harsh actions. She was breathing heavily and she pulled her wand out on him, nearing closer. With venom dripping from her tongue she spoke slowly.

"Don't ever touch me again," she pressed her wand to his throat. "I am not yours to touch anymore, I am not yours to dictate who I choose to date anymore, and most importantly I am not yours to fuck around with anymore. Stay away from me."

He made sure not to touch her when he said, "Can't we talk about this? Surely we can make a compromise..." She laughed coldly.

"What kind of compromise are you hoping for? I withhold from every dating anyone else in hopes that maybe one day you'll get the balls to at least try to figure out a solution to dating me in public?" He shook his head and she continued. "Oh, wait, I've got it. You want me to finally get worn down enough to agree to screw you in secret for an undetermined amount of time?"

"No, that's not - "

"Well, too bad," she said, "Because guess what? I don't want to ever sleep with you, kiss you, or anything because I fucking HATE you."

And with that, she turned on her heel, officially tired of the conversation, and stormed towards the door. Before she reached it, she heard Draco shout, "Yeah, well I hate you, too!"

As she opened the door, knowing full well that the silencing charm would be reversed, she screamed, "GOOD," before slamming the door on his face. Her voice echoed throughout the shop. All the employees and Blaise gave her a quizzical stare. She ignored them and stomped towards the front door.

"What the hell is going on?" Blaise asked, trying to keep up with her brisk steps.

"Nothing," she grunted. "I need some air. I'll be back in thirty minutes." And she stormed out the door.

Ginny wished she wasn't going on a date that night. Not to please Draco, of course. But simply because Draco had put her in the foulest mood after their heated fight. Anytime he would pop in her mind she had the urge to kick something. To make matters worse, she was sure to think about him a lot during the date. Of all the places her date could have picked to have dinner, he chose the pub where Ginny met Draco for the very first time to give her their business proposal. The same bar where he and Harry got into a fight. The same bar that repeatedly turned her monotonous life upside-down.

She stood outside the bar wearing tattered jeans and a loose sweater. Already she felt bad for her date, knowing full well she was going to be terrible company. Tapping her foot impatiently, she heard the man's voice behind her.

"Ginny Weasley?"
She spun around to see a handsome tall brunette with dark brown eyes and a short, scruffy beard. He reminded her a little of a lumberjack. Perfect, she thought, the exact opposite of stupid pretty-boy-Draco-Malfoy.

They introduced each other and took a seat at a table. She glared at the bar, the same spot where she met Draco the first time. She could envision their ghostly figures; he sitting there eating his fish and chips while she sat awkwardly overdressed, trying to decipher whether they were on a date or not. She narrowed her eyes and mentally cursed the naïve imaginary Ginny, mentally telling her past self to run away from the blonde scum bag.

"You look very nice tonight," Matt said and she frowned at her tattered clothes. Great, he's a liar.

"Thank you," she said politely as she glanced at his fancy suit. "You as well."

"So, I've heard a lot about your business through Luna," he said, "it must be great working alongside Blaise Zabini and Draco Malfoy. They sound brilliant."

"Mhm," she muttered, "Blaise is brilliant, yes."

"Just Blaise?" he furrowed his brow, looking confused.

"Yup," she took a sip of wine.

Their conversation was full of small-talk. Ginny despised it. Why was she doing this? What was she trying to prove? All it was doing was reminding her of how much she despised dating. And sitting in that stupid bar full of memories was just reminding her of how much she missed her stupid, friend and ex-lover. She was relieved when the food arrived, signaling that the date was half over and that there would be a temporary end to the small talk. She took a bite of her lasagna. It was delicious; definitely made the date slightly worth it. Smiling, she ate it happily.

"How is it?" asked Matt.

"Oh, it's terrible," she said sarcastically with an amused smirk. Disappointment flooded through her when his face instantly fell.

"Is it? Oh, I'm so sorry. If you'd like we can go somewhere else?" he said hurriedly. She tried to refrain from rolling her eyes.

"No, no, it's delicious," she said awkwardly. "I was just joking."

"Ahh," he nodded his head. "I'm really bad at picking up on sarcasm."

"Oh, lovely," she took a sip of her wine as she silently wondered how on earth Luna thought this man was perfect for her.

The rest of the date was uneventful as she tried her hardest to find an ounce of chemistry. She couldn't tell if it was because this man was actually ill-suited for her or because Draco was plaguing her mind, but there was nothing there. Not a single spark. Not a single genuine laugh. Zero banter. As they left the bar she nodded at the imaginary Draco smirking at the bar, mentally telling him that he won that one. That he was right about this man not making her happy, although it was a complete fluke. For all he knew, he could have been her soulmate. Draco sure as hell wasn't.

As she stood outside of the restaurant, eager to go home as soon as possible, Matt stepped closer to her.
"I had an excellent time tonight," he said, and Ginny's eyes widened by his sincere voice. How the hell did he have a good time?

"Me too," she lied.

"Would you want to come back to my place for coffee?" he asked and her face fell.

"Umm…no. I have an early morning tomorrow, I should probably get to sleep."

"Alright, maybe next time," he said. Next time? She cringed to herself.

"Sure."

And then Matt stepped even closer, gently cupped her face with his hands, and pressed his lips to hers. It felt invasive, as his scruffy beard scratched her face. How did he interpret her disinterested signals to mean that she wanted to kiss him? She wanted to push him away, but she decided to try her hardest to feel anything towards this man. Maybe there would be a spark in their physical chemistry? She wrapped her arms around his neck and leaned into the kiss, trying to ignore his annoying beard. She tried to ignore the garlic on his breath. She tried to ignore Draco's face which kept popping into her mind.

She pulled away and smiled politely. "It was great meeting you, Matt."

"Are you sure you don't want to come over?" He put his hands on her waist and she narrowed her eyes.

"Yep," she turned on her heel, "Have a great night!"

When she apparated to her flat she slumped into her bed. And she cried. Harder than she cried all month. She hugged her pillow tightly as she imagined Draco in her bed. All the countless memories they shared together were all gone. They were nothing. She would never get them back. If there was ever a chance of them getting back together, it was surely over after their fight earlier that day.

She touched her lips and remembered how Matt's lips felt. She knew it was only the first of many first dates she would have with men, but it made her ache when she realized how hard it would be to find someone with the same chemistry as her and Draco. And what really made her mad was that the reason why they weren't together wasn't that he mistreated her. Besides his 'date' with Fiona, and his annoying wishy-washy behavior when they weren't together, he treated her the utmost respect. He would constantly boost her ego, he would try his hardest to communicate his feelings even though it was hard for him, he would shower her with affection, he would act like her best friend…there wasn't a moment where she ever doubted his feelings for her. Life just got in their way. Their business got in their way. And even though she loved their business more than anything…it was hard knowing that she would never get real closure. She would always be left wondering 'what if?'

What if they didn't have their business to get in their way…would they get married? Would they live happily ever after?

And it was that moment, as she sobbed into the pillows, that she realized she didn't hate Draco. That she would never hate Draco. Because she actually loved him. And that she had never been in love with anyone before him, not even Harry. But she loved Draco…and it was too late.

The next morning Ginny was sitting at work with Blaise, training some of the new staff. Despite her unsuccessful date, she vowed that if anyone asked, she would gush over how perfect it was. Besides, it was easier to lie than to admit that the only reason why it was terrible was that Draco was haunting her brain.
She looked at the clock. It read 9:30 am.

"Where's Draco?" she asked Blaise. "He's usually here by now."

Blaise looked concerned. "He's not here?"

"I haven't seen him."

"That's strange..." he muttered before shrugging. "He probably got drunk last night because you went out with Matt; I bet you he overslept."

"Yeah, that must be it," she said to herself. But she couldn't get the nagging feeling out of her mind that something was wrong. She had seen Draco get belligerently drunk but he never overslept for work.

When lunchtime arrived and Draco was still nowhere to be seen, Blaise and Ginny were worried. Where the hell did he go? Ginny was tapping her fingers nervously on Draco's desk as she began imagining worst case scenarios.

"I hope he's okay..." she muttered sadly. Blaise wrapped his arm around her shoulders.

"I'm sure he's fine, Gin," he said. "He's probably just sick."

"I said some nasty things to him yesterday," she said and she felt her heart race and throat tighten. "What if he's dead in a ditch and my last words to him were 'I hate you'?"

Blaise frowned, "he's not dead in a ditch, Ginny. Everything will be fine."

When another hour went by without any word from Draco, Ginny was an anxious mess. She was sitting in the washroom virtually hyperventilating as she imagined what could be wrong. What if he ran away? What if he decided he couldn't stand looking at Ginny anymore and he ran back to America? She preferred that outcome over him lying dead in a ditch...

Her thoughts were interrupted by Blaise banging on the bathroom door.

"GINNY," he called, "I got a letter from Draco."

She opened the door so fast she nearly slammed Blaise in the face. "What's wrong? Where is he? Is he okay?"

"Umm...he's okay," Blaise said uncomfortably, "But...his dad...he's in the hospital. At St. Mungo's. He had a heart attack last night and they're not sure if he's going to make it."

Chapter End Notes

OooooOOOOoooOOoo what's happening!?
This story is coming to a close! :) Don't forget to review, would love to hear your thoughts! :)
Hey guys! Just a heads up, after this chapter there are only two chapters left!! Craaaazy stuff! I thank every single one of you who have read this story. It's been a blast writing.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

"…His dad…he's in the hospital. At St. Mungo's. He had a heart attack last night and they're not sure if he's going to make it."

Ginny stood frozen in the bathroom doorway as she absorbed the information. Draco's father might die? No…that man had to be invincible. If he managed to survive the war how could a heart attack kill him?

"Are you serious?"

"Why would I joke about this?"

She nodded slowly. Adrenaline filled her body as she imagined a distraught Draco pacing the hospital floors alone. As her eyes slowly met Blaise's she said, "We need to go there – "

" – Like, right now," Blaise finished her sentence.

"Yep."

Guided by the same adrenaline, the duo sprinted down the hallway. They needed to be there for their friend. All previous conflicts with Draco seemed to dissolve; the only thing that was important was supporting him. As they turned the corner and scanned the potions room they both froze with the same thought in mind. The only staff that was working were all new trainees.

"Fuck," she said, "who's going to be in charge?"

"I don't know"

"They're all new. No one is trained."

"Well," Blaise said, "not everyone…"

Ginny's face paled.

"No, not him," she shook her head. "Anyone but Allen."

"He has seniority," Blaise said. "There's no one else…"

"He's going to blow the place up."

"Either he supervises or one of us stays."

Ginny groaned and pressed her forehead into her palm. "Fine."
"Allen!" Blaise called out. The elderly man nervously peered over his shoulder. "We've got an emergency and need to leave. How would you like to be the temporary supervisor?"

His eyes lit up and his mouth dropped.

Blaise continued, "If you manage to go the rest of the day without an explosion you'll get a raise. Does that sound good?"

"Y-yes sir," he stammered as his beaming smile overtook his face. "I won't let you down."

"Great. That's settled," Ginny clapped her hands together, anxious to get going. "Shall we go?"

"Not yet," he rushed over to Draco's desk and began searching.

"What are you looking for?" asked Ginny as she tilted her head.

"If I know Draco at all..." he said rifling through the drawers, "he'll have a flask here somewhere."

Ginny rolled her eyes. "Are you really concerned about drinking right now?"

"I'm not," his eyes lit up when he pulled out a large silver flask, "but after a day like today Draco sure will be."

"Fair enough."

They apparated to St. Mungo's. The distinct sterilized hospital smell made Ginny cringe. No good memories were ever associated with that smell. As she witnessed all the injured or ill men and women carried by magical stretchers, her stomach twisted when she imagined Draco and Narcissa trailing after Lucius's magical stretcher; Narcissa sobbing and Draco looking grim. Thankfully, Blaise's guiding hand pushed her towards the administration desk, snapping her out of her depressing thoughts.

"We are here to see Lucius Malfoy," Blaise rushed out to the irritable looking woman sitting at the desk. She barely looked up.

"Are you immediate family?" the woman asked.

"Really?" he asked. "I'm black and she's a ginger. Do you really think we are a Malfoy?"

"Sorry," she shrugged, "unless you're a family member, absolutely no visitors."

"You're joking me," Blaise rubbed his temples in annoyance. Ginny rubbed his back trying to keep him level-headed. "Can you at least tell us if he's okay?"

"That is confidential information, sir."

Blaise slammed his hand on the desk before stomping away from the unhelpful woman. Ginny decided to give it a try, politely folding her hands on the desk.

"Would it be possible for you to inform the Malfoys that Ginny and Blaise are here?"

The woman pursed her lips as she appeared to contemplate Ginny's request. Just as Ginny became hopeful she answered, "Sorry, no. That would be prohibited. You're welcome to sit in the waiting room."

Following Blaise's fashion, she slammed her hands on the desk and marched away. Slumping onto
the uncomfortable small sofa, they finally had time to reflect on the tragic event.

"I can't believe this is happening," said Ginny.

"Me neither."

"Lucius Malfoy is hardly my favorite person in the world," she began, "but poor Draco and Narcissa."

"Yeah, he definitely idolizes his father," Blaise put his face in his hands. "He must be a mess right now. Oh, god, I can't even imagine the state of Narcissa."

"Do you think Lucius is okay?"

Blaise shrugged. "I mean, he must be alive otherwise they wouldn't still be here, right?"

Ginny nodded. She recounted the memory of Draco smiling fondly at the photograph of his father and her stomach twisted. She imagined losing one of her own parents. God, that would be a nightmare. Even if her and Draco's relationship was tense she wished nothing more than for everything to be okay. Their problems seemed insignificant now. She just wanted her friend to be okay. This could destroy him.

Blaise must have noticed her inner conflictions because he nudged her shoulder and gave a small smile. "Hey, everything will be okay. Lucius is a tough bastard; there's no way a heart attack will kill him."

The hours dragged on without any update. The sun was beginning to set and both Blaise and Ginny were becoming restless. Ginny felt bad for anyone else in the waiting room because Blaise had become quite irritating the more impatient he grew. He was rearranging the chairs when Ginny sent him a peculiar glance.

"What on earth are you doing?"

"I'm making a bed," he answered. "Lord knows how long we will be here and I need a nap."

"What if other people need the chairs?"

He shrugged. "They can sit on the floor."

"You're a prick," she said. "How can you even think about napping at a time like this?"

"Because we've been here for five hours without even the slightest update," he said. "Maybe if I nap I'll wake up to some good news."

Ginny rolled her eyes before staring longingly at the hospital wing where Draco would be found. She silently prayed that he would stroll out of the doors any minute. All she wanted to do was hug him, tell him everything would be okay, and that she wasn't mad at him anymore…that she didn't hate him. She wanted to tell him that no matter what happened she would always be his friend. Life was too short to hold grudges. She just wanted things to go back to normal.

"I forgot to ask you," Blaise said as he made a pillow with his sweater, "How did things with Matt go?"

"Huh?"

"Matt? You know, the guy you went out with?"
"Oh, him…" with all the drama she almost forgot about Matt. Her original plan to lie about how amazing her terrible date was seemed impossible now. As she stared at the hospital doors wishing for nothing but Draco waltzing through her throat tightened. Something about imagining Draco and Narcissa anxiously praying for Lucius's survival made her completely incapable of lying to Blaise.

"I think I love him, Blaise…"

"What? You love Matt?"

"No, you prat," she choked out as her eyes began to water. "Draco."

"Oh…" he said awkwardly. He rushed over to Ginny's side and wrapped his arm around hers as he looked frightened by Ginny's increasing tears. "Hey, hey, why are you crying?"

"Because," she said in between sobs. "Because I'm in love with him and it's never going to work out. I'm fine with just being friends, I really am, but I love him. It sucks. Why couldn't I have fallen in love with someone more available, like Matt? Do I like to punish myself?"

"Hey, it's okay, calm down," he said trying to ease her increasingly frantic emotions. He rested her head on his shoulder. "You can't choose who you fall in love with. Sometimes it just happens…"

She let sniffled as she tried to level her breath feeling comforted by Blaise gently rubbing her back. He continued, "I'm a little confused, though. Did you just realize that you love him now?"

"Well, last night…"

"Oh, that's weird," he said. "It's been obvious for months."

She shoved his shoulder. "Shut up. That's not the point."

He laughed before saying, "Everything will be alright, Ginny. Things will get easier, I promise."

Despite her previous accusation against Blaise, his comforting touch made Ginny's eyes heavy, and slowly she felt herself being lulled to sleep. Thoughts of Draco finally escaped her mind as she fell into an uncomfortable dreamless sleep on Blaise's shoulder.

Unaware of how much time had passed, she was awoken by someone shaking her shoulder. Her eyes shot open hoping to see Draco in front of her, but instead, she met Luna's eyes.

"Hey sleepy head," she said. "Just so you know, Blaise drooled on your head."

"Ew!" Ginny screamed as she jolted away. The quick movements woke Blaise up. Still disoriented from the sleep, he looked confused as he stared at Luna.

"Hey, babe...where are we?"

"You're still in the hospital," she giggled. "I would have gotten here earlier but I had to work late."

"Oh, right…this damn hospital," he said. "What time is it?"

"Nearly eight o'clock," she answered. "Have you heard anything yet?"

Ginny shook her head. "We haven't even seen Draco yet."
"God, it's been so long…I hope everything is okay," she said as she grabbed a large bag from beside her. "I brought some supplies. I've got snacks, toothbrushes, pajamas, blankets, draughts of peace, some liquor…"

"I love you so much," Blaise said as he pulled Luna in for a hug. "No other woman would bring me snacks and booze to a hospital."

"Well, it's not all for you," she giggled before observing their appearances. "You both look terrible. Have you eaten all day?"

"Nope," Ginny answered. "Hook me up with some snacks."

She tossed Ginny a muffin and took a seat beside Blaise. Time continued to slowly trickle by.

Until finally…a grim and worn out looking Draco walked through the doors. His head was low and he didn't notice them. Ginny's heart skipped and she reflexively stood up.

"Draco?" her voice cracked out.

His head snapped towards her. A look of relief washed over his face as he sped towards her. Before she knew it, he had pulled her into a tender, warm embrace as his face pressed into her hair.

"Thank god you're here," he said, his voice muffled by her hair. She tightened the grip around his waist and basked in the sensation of his hands running through her hair.

"How's your dad? Is he okay?" she asked and she felt him nod.

"He's stable…he'll have to stay overnight. Maybe a few nights. But he's okay."

Relief flooded her body as she relaxed even more into his arms. She could feel his heart racing under his clothes as he continued playing with her hair. God, she had missed him. It felt so good having him back in her life. All she needed was his friendship. Even if it would be hard forgetting her romantic love for him, she would always love him as a friend, and she didn't want to lose that. Draco Malfoy and Ginny Weasley... the best of friends.

He pulled away from the hug and cupped her face with his hands, staring intently in her eyes.

"Ginny," he said, "I'm in love with you."

Her stomach flopped. Scratch all that friend talk...

"Sorry, what?"

"I'm in love with you."

She blinked at him a few times, her mouth hanging open.

"…Come again?"

His chest heaved as he spoke with a sense of urgency, as if he didn't want to waste another second. "I almost lost one of the few people I love in this world," he said with his voice cracking, "and I'm not about to lose another one. I love you and I don't want to lose you."

Her eyes darted towards Luna and Blaise who were both wide-eyed and gawking at the scene in front of them. Slowly her eyes met Draco's intense stare again. Her mind was swirling. "But…what about the business?"
"I don't care," he said, "I'll talk to Mister Kant. I'll figure it out. We can be together in public, whatever it takes. I mean – assuming Blaise is alright with it."

Blaise narrowed his eyes in confusion. "What?"

"Ginny and I being together affects you, too," he said.

"Oh," Blaise said sounding surprised that he was included in the decision. "Fuck, you two blokes are so miserable to be around lately, if you don't work it out you'll drive me to quit anyways. Please, carry on."

Draco turned back to Ginny with a warm smile on his face. Ginny's eyes were watery.

"I love you, Ginny," he repeated. "If you don't feel the same, I get it. I've been a royal prick lately. You don't deserve that. Please, if you give me another chance, I promise I'll never hurt you again."

She gaped at him, stunned by his words. Merely minutes ago she was resolving that she was content only loving him as a friend… but now he was confessing his love for her? Her life was turned upside-down. Finally, after a suspenseful silence that was surely driving Draco mad, she managed to say, "I love you, too."

His lips pressed onto hers for their first ever public kiss. Luna squealed happily and Blaise held a smarmy grin on his face as he observed the scene. She had started to convince herself that she would never feel his lips against hers again so she reveled in his familiar touch. In her boyfriend's touch… Draco Malfoy was finally her boyfriend.

Later that night the group sat outside the hospital in a hidden patch of grass pouring the flask of alcohol in their pumpkin juice. Draco's arm barely left Ginny's shoulder for the remainder of the night as if he was proudly showing the world that Ginny was his girlfriend. It was something that Ginny never thought would happen. Who knew a hospital could be so romantic?

"I love all of you so much," Draco said, his words slightly slurring together. "Seriously, you all mean so much to me."

"That's great and all, Draco," Luna said giggling, "but if you start telling everyone that you love them, it's going to take away from your epic confession to Ginny."

Ginny laughed. "Hey, he can tell as many people as he wants. I much prefer you being open about this stuff than being the cold bitter person you've strived so hard to be."

Draco kissed the top of Ginny's hair before saying, "I love you the most, though, anyway."

"Great," Blaise rolled his eyes, "now we are going to have to see Draco being mushy. Can I revoke my previous statement saying I support your relationship?"

"Oh please," Ginny said, "we've been watching you two practically shag in public for the past six months. It's your turn now."

"It's true, babe," Luna said smiling. "We are pretty disgusting."

Draco sighed loudly and lied on the cold grass, staring at the stars shining brightly. "I can't believe my dad almost died today."

"Yeah, how are you holding up with everything, anyway?" Blaise asked.
Draco shrugged. "I mean, everything is going to be okay so now I'm just relieved. But my god, I'm glad none of you saw me earlier, I was a mess."

Ginny rubbed his arm comfortingly. "I'm so sorry all this is happening. It must have been terrifying."

"Thanks," he said as he traced her hand with his thumb.

"How's your mum doing?" Ginny asked and he sighed.

"I guess the same as me. Relieved now, manic and destroyed earlier," he said. "She's not going to leave his side until he's released. I should bring her some food, actually."

"You must all be so tired," Luna said. "I brought a couple draughts of peace if you'd like, she can have one as well to help her sleep."

"You're all so nice to me," he shook his head in disbelief. "Even after I've been such a dick the past month you're still all so nice."

"You haven't been that bad," Luna said.

"Besides, you've mainly just been a dick to me," Ginny said playfully.

"Yeah, plus you're always kind of a dick," Blaise said smirking. "I signed up for that when I agreed to be friends with you. It's nothing I'm not used to."

"Still," Draco said, "I feel really lucky to have you all in my life. This experience has made me realize a lot of things I've been doing wrong that I need to work on. Starting with not taking the people closest to me for granted."

"Well, at least an optimistic revelation came out of an otherwise tragic event?" Ginny said smiling.

"Are you nervous to talk to Mister Kant about you two?" Luna asked and Draco nodded.

"Yep. I have no idea how it's going to go. I have a meeting with him next week so I suppose I'll tell him then." He turned Ginny with a scared look in his eyes. "Oh god, please don't hate me. Is it okay if we kind of keep us on the down-low until we tell him? It would be better if he hears from me rather than an employee or something…"

Ginny laughed at his fearful face and said playfully, "Sorry, mate. Either we are snogging in the office tomorrow or we aren't dating." Draco's face fell. "I'm joking, you prat. Of course, we can keep it on the down-low. A week is much more tolerable than two years."

"Just a suggestion," Blaise started, "but I think it'll be best if the three of us do the meeting."

"Really?" Draco and Ginny both asked.

"I think it'll be helpful if you have me vouching for you two," Blaise said. "Obviously, me supporting you two when it directly affects me as well says a little more than Draco merely saying 'I love Ginny and I don't give a fuck what you think, Mister Kant.'"

"Good point," Ginny said. "I can go as well."

"Look at this solid teamwork," Luna said laughing.

"Well, it's settled then. Next week it'll be finalized," Draco said before gazing at the hospital's windows. "I'd better go back to them, though. I need to bring my mum some food. If you guys want
to go home that's fine."

Blaise and Luna nodded but Ginny shook her head. "I can stay with you,"

"You don't have to," he said but he smiled warmly in appreciation. "The hospital's beds are terrible and you have to be family to be allowed in the room with us. You'll be alone most of the time."

"That's fine," she said. She knew she would hate sleeping alone after a night like Draco's. "At least there's beds available. Blaise and I crashed pretty hard on the chairs in the waiting room, any bed at all is an improvement. It's no big deal."

Draco smiled brightly at her. "Thank you."

Hours later Ginny was lying in the small hospital bed in a white room that was so tiny it could be mistaken for a broom closet. She couldn't sleep, not because the bed was uncomfortable, but because her stomach was doing somersaults. How did any of this happen? Life was so unpredictable. She smiled as she touched her lips, remembering Draco's. He loved her. This was officially serious. She would finally get the relationship she always wanted just as she gave up all hope. She frowned when she realized she would have to tell her family she was dating Draco, but she decided she would worry about that another day. She was jolted from her thoughts when the door cracked open and Draco slipped inside the room.

He yawned loudly. "I'm so bloody tired. I've been awake since three in the morning."

"That's only 24 hours, you pansy." She smirked at him. "How's your dad?"

"He's good. He's sleeping but he's good," he said as he unbuttoned his shirt. "Mum is finally going to get some sleep. She's very grateful for the draught of peace, by the way."

"Good, I'm glad," she said happily before nervously fidgeting. "Did you tell her I'm here?"

"Oh yeah," he said as he crawled under the blankets. "She's always been supportive of you and I. They were the ones who convinced me to go over to your house on Christmas."

"You don't say," Ginny said as she mentally praised Narcissa and Lucius Malfoy, an action that would forever rattle Ginny's mind. "I'm really glad everything is okay. We were all so worried about you both."

"Me too." He wrapped his arms around Ginny's waist and hugged her close. "And I'm really glad that you're here. I never thought I would sleep in the same bed as you again."

She giggled. "It's a little weird that our reunion is in a St. Mungo's bed."

"It'll be a tale to tell our grandchildren," he said and Ginny's stomach flopped at the small mention of their future. His eyes began closing quickly when he muttered, "I forgot to ask; who watched the store when you were all here?"

"Erm…Allen did."

His eyes shot open.

"You're joking," he groaned. "We'll be lucky if we even have a shop to go back to!"

"Well, we didn't see him here tonight so if there were any explosions they couldn't have been that bad."
"Typical Ginny, always finding the silver lining in a situation."

She propped herself up with her elbow and smiled mischievously as she admired his face when his eyes were closed. "Remember when we first started hanging out?"

"Yeah?"

"I kind of had a little crush on you."

"I figured." He smirked with his eyes remaining closed. "Most girls do."

"Don't be arrogant," she said playfully. "I um...I kind of thought that you would never like me. Thought you viewed me as like a little sister or something."

"Well, that would be weird now, wouldn't it?"

"You know what I mean."

"I did view you as just a friend for the longest time," his eyes finally opened as he spoke with a gentle smile.

"What changed?"

"Well, for starters I finally realized how much of a babe you were so naturally I wanted to fuck you," he said as his gentle smile transformed back into his trademark smirk.

"How romantic." She rolled her eyes.

"And then," he continued as he played with her fingers, "I realized you had the most amazing personality and I couldn't get enough of you. I had never met anyone like you before."

They both smiled warmly at each other but stayed silent. His eyes began closing again and he yawned, nuzzling his face into Ginny's neck. He was drifting off to sleep when he quietly muttered: "Love you, Weasley..."

"Love you too, Malfoy."

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A/N: Awwwww cheezy stuff, guyzzz. Yay, everything worked out for the most part!

Chapter End Notes

D'aawwwww. Cheeeesyyy stuff. They finally smartened the hell up haha. Hope you enjoyed the chapter! Let me know what you think!

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