HD Clinical Trials
by tigersilver

Summary

Auror Harry Potter has another service to perform for the Wizarding world and this one quite specifically involves that Unspeakable, Draco Malfoy.

Notes

This is an old fic of mine. Please note there are references to child abuse (past) for both Harry and Draco, as well as references to the abuse arising from the Wizarding Wars. This is not a 'non-consensual' fic, in the sense that there is rape or sexual abuse or assault occurring between Harry and Draco, because there absolutely isn't, but it is a Forced Bond, so be aware. It's a slow burn, I wrote it a long time ago, and I'm bringing it over for archiving. If you have any complaints please direct them to the Tiger of Ten Years Ago, ta.
Week 6 (B-Day Plus 42)

Chapter Summary

Things just seem to 'happen' to Harry.

Title: The Clinical Trials [& Sundry Tribulations] of Case VLA-101 (Malfoy-Potter)
Author: tigersilver
Prompt Number: #192 by nursedarry*
Summary: Auror Harry Potter has another service to perform for the Wizarding world and this one quite specifically involves that Unspeakable, Draco Malfoy.
Rating: NC-17
Pairing(s): Draco/Harry; implied R/Hr; LM/NM
Warnings: Veela; forced bonding; talkative firsts and rambunctious seconds; small rebellions and much banter. AU & EWE? Very much so, thanks.
Word Count: 65,500+-
Author's Notes: This prompt! Wooooot! Made for me, really, given the Pythonic reverb in the Veelic equation. I hope I managed, darlin' nursedarry*, to distill the essence of your desire, though I truly fear perhaps I may've skewed the view a bit, in the very end, and strayed from the marvellous blithely flavour I so wished to convey. Forgive my inadequacies and trespasses, and my verbosity, too. But I did provide you charts of sorts...and a little Latin tossed into the pot, for authentic flavour! [No, not salsa; pardon!] Beta'd by the wonderful, patient, and madly skilled demicus*, lonerofthepack and mijeli*; my love to all of them, and to vaysh11*, Mod Extraordinaire! You are purely wonderful to endure me, I so swear. Please note I have fiddled with the bloody fic after they performed their magic; all remaining errors are solely mine own.

Week 6 (B-Day Plus 42)

"We have a situation, gentle Wizards and Witches of the Ministry."

Kingsley's tones were just as deep and Cadbury fruity nut bar-rich as always, and Harry reflected that Kings could say fairly anything he wished to anyone in the world and they'd want to stop stock still and listen. Even if it were something as nape-prickling alarming as the flaming crimson code word 'situation'.

"I'd appreciate it if you, Harry, and you, Unspeakable Malfoy, would remain seated. The rest of you may leave, but please stay on high alert status. We will likely be requiring the cooperation of all departments and details will be provided you on a need-to-know basis. That will be all. Thank you, everyone, and good morning."

In a few moments the executive conference room, located deep in the subterranean levels of the rebuilt and restructured Ministry building, had emptied of chattering employees. Only the three of them remained: Kingsley Shacklebolt, the Minister; Harry Potter, a mid-level Auror despite his scant years of service; and Draco Malfoy, a brilliantly talented Unspeakable and the one
permanently attached to the Auror Department as an ongoing liaison-cum-consultant.

"Now, I've no doubt you, at least, are wondering what this is all about, Harry. I've asked a certain guest expert to visit with us today and explain further our thinking as to the most expedient resolution, but first, Unspeakable Malfoy, I believe you've a very pertinent fact you need to impart to Auror Potter?"

Harry turned to look at Malfoy, seated across from him, and garbed in his customary Unspeakable black matte robes. The only real color to him were his lips, which were a rose pink. The plump lower one, Harry noticed, looked to be slightly chewed on and maybe there were a few violet shadows under those grey eyes. All the rest was monochrome and bloodless. Like a fish belly, but not scaly, Malfoy.

Harry, had someone asked his random opinion, would've said he preferred Malfoy in Slytherin Quidditch attire, as at least that didn't leave the poor sod looking like he might have keeled days ago and no one had noticed it yet. The Unspeakables, however, though not a bad group when out at the Leaky after hours (could knock back pints with the best of them, Malfoy) were adept at appearing highly severe. This one example had it down to a bloody art form.

Malfoy thinned his already taut lips and sat up straighter under Harry's inquiring stare, and that led Harry to wonder how that was even possible: bloke had a poker stuck up his arse, twenty-four seven. Pretty frosty, Malfoy was, most days, but nowhere near the little shite he'd been, back in the day.

"Yes, Minister," Malfoy nodded sharply, and returned the cool grey eyes to meet Harry's mildly puzzled ones.

No, Harry decided, not cool at all - burning. Today, they were very intense, those nearly colourless eyes. He blinked, his curiosity whetted further by Malfoy's obvious (to Harry) upset.

Malfoy hadn't changed much, physically, from his years at Hogwarts. Still standing tall, still poised and composed, even under great pressure, he was, and Harry had noted that even when seated he had the habit of towering unapproachably. Git had filled in across the shoulders, perhaps, and gained back the stone or so he'd needed to cease aping a starving Thestral, though. Not too shabby, overall, when it came to the looks department, but very 'touch-me-not'.

The very epitome of 'cool blond'. Harry liked the type, true, but Malfoy? Knew him too well, really, for any sparks to ensue. And Malfoy certainly didn't engage in office romance...or possibly any sort of romance, according to rumour.

"Potter," he said, and Harry instantly snapped back from his musings. "This may be unpleasant to hear, and I realize you'll likely have some...additional issues, as you grapple with the many ramifications, but I ask you to please bear with me. Keep an open mind. This affects me on a very personal level and it is only with the greatest reluctance I'm sharing the information with you, at all."

Harry nodded, curious gaze darting from Malfoy to Kingsley - who appeared as gravely kind and reassuringly monumental as always - and then back to Malfoy, who was a prick and a minor nuisance, true, but a damned fine addition to the Aurors, what with all that Unspeakable knowledge. He nodded again, amiably enough. This was clearly a delicate case, if it involved the Unspeakable department from the get go. He'd no choice, either, not if the Minister himself was involved and requesting it of him personally, so might as well be civil over it, despite the addition to his already overweight caseload. Besides, there'd not been any single situation he'd not been able to handle, not since he started Aurors, straight out of Hogwarts. He was good at his job and loved
it, besides. Lived it and breathed it, and hated going home, really.

As Malfoy was damned good at his; Harry admitted that readily enough. One word: Helsinki.

"Of course, Malfoy," he replied, taking up his magically replenished mug and waving the other hand carelessly at the git's terminally pinched expression. Who should really loosen up, before he had a bloody heart attack. "Fire away. I'm all ears."

Malfoy winced, but then Harry's colloquialisms often had him looking as though lemons were a steady part of his daily intake. And recently Harry, in particular, had seen a great deal more of Malfoy than he ever had before, here at the Ministry.

The git would pop up unexpectedly in the Auror staff's microscopic kitchenette, when Harry was fixing his morning cuppa, and then stick around long enough to mouth a few polite words of greeting; he'd slide into the spare seat at Harry's table in the café, at luncheon, completely uninvited, and converse with Harry's mates in the Aurors, also sparingly. And with Ron, too, when he was eating in - Malfoy and Ron had settled their issues long ago.

He'd attend the few strictly Auror department planning meetings that had no direct bearing on the Unspeakables, sitting off on the sidelines by himself but never too far away from Harry's usual seat in the pecking order; observing all the while and making notes on the horrid Quik Quills notebook he always carried. Then, too, he'd be found more and more often firmly ensconced in the Staff Gymnasium, shirtless and stripped down to black nylon running togs and doggedly burning his way through endless, uncountable miles on the jogger thingbob when Harry went down after hours to work out his own frustrations, hauling oar on the rowing jig.

In fact, everywhere Harry looked recently, there was now Malfoy. Every time he turned 'round, the git was lurking - or rather, hovering. Over Harry, actually, as he had that undeniable inch or two on Harry's respectable 5' 7'', curse him.

It was a bit unsettling, to feel Malfoy's constant cool gaze trained on him, but Harry ignored it well enough. He and Malfoy had nothing between them now - certainly not as they'd had back in the days they were but hot-blooded schoolboys! All the bitter, smoldering fires had burnt down to cold ashes and been swept clean away. And it had been a clean, healthy break from the in-fighting and even pleasantly handled all round, mostly thanks to Arthur Weasley and Poppy Pomfrey. She was the key, really. The lynchpin.

For, after Hogwarts had administered their final NEWTS, a great many 'war heroes' and 'disadvantaged but brilliant youth' had immediately applied to the Ministry for positions, and in particular to the much thinned-down Auror Department. Harry, obviously, had fallen squarely in to the first category; Malfoy, though not as obviously, had met all the stringent requirements of the second - though he'd not fetched up in Aurors with Harry and Ron and a host of others; no, not in the end. Not, Harry knew, that the git had lost much in the way of the material and he was certainly not an orphan, as Harry was, but it was fairly universally agreed by both the Governors Board of Hogwarts and the Wizengamot that he, Malfoy, in company with any number of other Hogwarts students whose parents or guardians had been part of Voldemort's Dark forces, had had a certain nefarious advantage taken of them. Their active involvement in the War had amounted to nothing more nor less than child abuse. They were 'disadvantaged youth', the poor things.

The Wizarding World had been in the mood, after the fall of Voldemort, to feel very socially conscious. Everyone seemed to be casting about for a good cause, a personal way to play Hero, as Harry had with Voldemort. And it was pointed out with great fanfare, at precisely the right moment, that Wizards, on the whole, had but little care for their children.
The average Witch or Wizard, it seemed, did not make for a decent parent - or guardian, for that matter.

Harry Potter's plight as a young Wizard essentially abandoned to uncaring Muggle relatives for his own greater protection had most definitely played into that, much to his ongoing humiliation. And Lucius Malfoy, though he'd definitely recanted and further - at his soon to be ex-wife's urging - had admitted under Veritaserum during a routine interrogation that his father, Abraxas Malfoy, had placed undue pressure upon him in his youth to pursue the Dark Arts - further, he had confessed that his own son had been reduced to being regarded as but a pawn and plaything for the deceased Dark Lord.

Oh, not in any sexual sense, thankfully - Harry shuddered when he'd read the excepted transcript in the Prophet - Voldemort, if he had any of that most powerful instinct remaining in him, had no interest in either boys or girls in a purely pedophiliac way. That was perhaps the one, and the only one, point in his favour. But, still, Draco Malfoy, by nature of his very existence, had been viewed very much as the Death Eater's own private 'social experiment'.

To put it bluntly, as Hermione insisted on explaining it, insistent as always on talking over all these fascinating details of the motivations that drove people's behaviour, Draco had been regarded as being on the level with a Muggle guinea pig or lab rat, and was ultimately just as humanely treated. He suited the Dark Lord's convoluted plans perfectly: he was Pureblood in as much as that his forebears genetically were only ever either Wizards, Witches or Veela mixes with same. That was fact; the Black and Malfoy genealogies bore that out. Second, he was 'the' ultimate example of his Pureblood cohort: wealthy, titled (technically so, as the Malfoys ranked amongst the Muggle aristocracy in Wilts, although they had long regarded that honour as both dubious and highly immaterial), springing nicely gifted from what was an immensely powerful family magically to begin with - and, of course, he was the Seventh Son of his line. Seventh Sons, Harry had gathered, were rather considered a big deal amongst the Purebloods.

Rather naturally, to Voldemort's somewhat convoluted method of logic, Draco Malfoy had been the perfect raw material to manipulate at will. Harry shuddered again; poor sod. He knew; he'd been forced to watch.

Regarding the powerful 'Seventh Son' aspect and its Arithmantic significance, that was fairly obvious, or so Hermione claimed. For the Malfoys, like many other ancient Pureblood lineages, had produced but one child only per pairing and that a male. Flint, Goyle, Crabbe, Zabini, Longbottom - all were 'end-of-the line' male children, but none were as firmly entrenched in the history books as the Malfoys. Their ancient and honourable surnames would die out and be extinct if not continued, true. But only Draco happened to be the seventh of such instances in his line, patrolineally. His magical essence, by the concatenated Eleventh Law of Arithmancy, was logically exponentially enhanced to high degree. Draco was a Wizarding force to be reckoned with, for all his native inability to kill in cold blood or perform certain other instances of Dark Magic.

Harry had a serious contender for his unwanted title of 'Most Powerful Wizard', but thankfully, Malfoy showed no signs of wanting to make something of it. Really, he never had. The git had really only wanted that damned Snitch.

Voldemort, though he had been greatly displeased with Draco for his failure to murder Albus Dumbledore, had retained him, after, despite that little stumble on the road to pure Evil. He'd his plans for Draco and though he himself had no sexual interest, he was well aware of the fabled Veela Allure. Lucius Malfoy, proving once again his utter gittishness and lack of decent paternal instinct, had all but offered his son up on a solid silver platter when he confessed the high percentage of Veela blood his son boasted - enhanced to half again or more by virtue of that
Seventh Son equation.

Draco was promptly plopped down on the Dark Lord's books to star in Harry Potter's angsty teenaged sexual downfall - as nothing else had been at all effective - and, if not capable of subverting Harry himself, or so went Voldemort's thinking, he'd serve admirably as the instrument of the certain destruction of his less resistant followers, the Mudblood Witch and the Weasley Nuisance. Fortunately, it had never come to that, likely due to Severus Snape, the greasy (and still largely unsung) 'other' Hero of the War.

Arthur Weasley, when he'd read the Prophet's transcripts of that particular interview with Lucius, had practically stroked out at his own breakfast table. His wife had been incensed. They loved children (which was apparent) and this abuse on the person of Draco Malfoy was an outrage.

In any case, back in Harry's non-existent Seventh Year, Draco had been returned to Hogwarts under the supervision of the Carrows in order to implement this very plan. And Lucius Malfoy, so deep in Death Eater politics by then as to be entirely incapable of discovering an exit when his only child and heir's very existence was thus threatened, had proved a monstrous weak link when it came to fatherly instinct. He was a lousy dad, Lucius. He'd done nothing...and more of nothing, for the longest time.

The elder Malfoy's last moment about-face at the final battle was deemed insufficient to forgive him, even though he'd taken a somewhat half-hearted stand to protect his family, AK'ing a few stray DEs. It was Narcissa Malfoy, Draco's mother, who'd marched quite bravely - for a scheming and wily woman - into the fray, metaphorically, and pulled every string she could twist to prevent her husband's Lord from using Draco as planned. More than once, she'd done this, without Draco ever realizing it 'til much later.

Or Harry, who, as Hermione pointed out to him, had a great deal to admire Severus Snape for; rather significantly more, even, than he'd ever imagined.

Too, it was the unhappy fallout of Lucius's many shortcomings, after the battle and during the Trials, which drove Narcissa Malfoy to openly divorce the temporarily Azkaban-imprisoned Lucius, an unheard of event amongst Purebloods. And It was Draco's quite nebulous standing in the Death Eater ranks, however, which proved most interesting to the Wizengamot, the Hogwarts Governor's Board, the Pediatric staff at St. Mungo's and Madame Poppy Pomfrey, in particular. Young Malfoy bore the Dark Mark, certainly, but he'd never chosen it freely, no matter that he believed he had - and therein lay the crux.

Enter Madame Poppy Pomfrey, long accredited MediWitch at Hogwarts School, and a tour de force when it devolved to the weedy subject of the rights and responsibilities owed to minors. She had remained in her tenured position at Hogwarts, heading up the MediStaff (now expanded by two interns, a second Mediwitch and an on-call St. Mungo's pediatric chirurgeon), but she also lectured widely, published numerous articles and had a most visible hand in any cause that furthered the eradication of misuse of minors. Headmistress Minerva McGonagall was in full support of Madame's activities.

Harry Potter, as Pomfrey wrote in a ground-breaking open letter to the Prophet and the other media, had been the classic poster boy for the abused youngster, and it was clearly the fault and the responsibility of the adults in his life that his abuse had continued unabated for nearly two decades. It was more than time to change that, she argued logically, if only because Tom Riddle, though undoubtedly a special case in the annals of the genetically amoral, had also been abused, directly and through neglect, as had the deceased former Hogwarts Headmaster and Potions Instructor Severus Snape. And Sirius Black. And Remus Lupin, Auror Alistair Moody, Lucius Malfoy, Albus
Dumbledore, Regulus A. Black - and the list went on and on, most eloquently in its printed simplicity, and featured a great many well-known Wizarding names.

It was a dirty blow to the foundations of Wizarding culture, Poppy Pomfrey's list. The world rocked on its axis.

It included nearly all the Malfoys, but in particular Draco, the very last of them, and the one who'd been played unwitting pawn by both his own sire - acting as a trusted lieutenant to Voldemort - and by the long revered ex-Headmaster Albus Dumbledore. For (and this made Harry's lips tighten when he read of it) the then Headmaster had, quite deliberately and according to his notes in the diary he'd left behind in his desk drawer, consciously decided to allow the rivalry and bad blood between Harry and Draco to continue unabated and without interference, years and years previous. This, solely for the purpose of providing Harry Potter, the would-be Saviour, with a recognizable, accessible, flesh-and-blood enemy and a fine focus for his ever-increasing hatred of the Death Eaters.

Harry had nearly become a murderer, merely because of that one deliberate choice on the part of his trusted Headmaster Dumbledore. The end did not justify the means...at least not for Harry, but no one asked him.

Essentially, though, that unfortunate git Draco Malfoy had been both a lens to distill hatred and a puppet for the dancing, employed by both Dark and Light, and for purposes that an untried youngster had no hope of divining nor escaping. He was as much a victim of those who should have been minding his better welfare as Harry Potter had been and thus the Wizarding world was inclined to be exceptionally lenient with him.

Same held true for Parkinson, Zabini, Goyle and many others, who'd followed blindly in their elder's footsteps, though to a lesser degree, naturally. Theodore Nott, too, now in rehabilitation in James Thickey Ward, was one such example. He'd be a well-kept Ward of the Ministry for the rest of his life, his mind set adrift under the load of monumental emotional abuse. There was a host of other 'disadvantaged youth', too, culled from all of Hogwarts' Houses, who'd all been, to a one, diverted, subverted and funneled into behaviours that were not of their own volition, without their knowing consent. In a word, they'd been elected the infantry in their parent's war - and thus demonstrably abused.

Hermione had been specially excited by this revelation of Pomfrey's, as Harry recalled. It fit right in neatly with her SPEW crusade.

Pomfrey's initial article had quickly become an international media sensation. The attention to the cause of children's rights had spread like Fiendfyre, and soon it was all the Wizarding world could speak of - their own horrible lack. In logical backlash, focus soon zeroed in what was best for the generation most affected by Voldemort: how they could rehabilitated and re-assimilated and, too, how they might aid in the quest to eradicate any possibility of such a monster as Riddle arising unchecked in the future? Laws and regulations were hastily enacted; foundations and child protective services popped up like sodding mushrooms, overnight.

Harry Potter, chin well tucked, had sidestepped clamours for interviews and free therapy sessions and kept to his mandated Auror training after NEWTS.

Draco Malfoy, despite his long-term recuperation from stress-induced illness, in the interim sailed through his NEWTS with top marks and was accepted readily when he applied to the Ministry, same as Harry had been. He'd been instantly assigned to the Unspeakable Department, despite his application to Aurors, and placed under the wing of Undersecretary Arthur Weasley, who'd proved a capable and stable elder male influence in Draco's life. That extended well beyond the parameters
of the Ministry, apparently: Arthur Weasley had a soft heart for children of any sort, as did his
wife, Molly. A very soft heart.

Draco Malfoy was promptly introduced to the Burrow, Merlin forbid, and asked to make himself at
home there. As Ron had remarked to Harry, way back when, 'the world itself has turned itself on
it's bloody ear, mate! Bloody outrageous!'

Fate and Mr. Weasley dealt another high ace: Harry, as defacto son of the Weasley family, and
Ron, as the one Weasley child most often in direct conflict with Draco, had each received intensive
counseling, in the company of the young Malfoy heir (which oftimes included an eager and
somewhat horridly overly-eager Hermione Granger), in both group and one-on-one settings. This at
the elder Weasleys's urgings, which meant there was no polite avoidance possible, not even for
Harry - or rather, especially not for Harry. Poppy Pomfrey even sat in on many of their sessions,
possibly to referee. But...it was essentially effective, all that talk, talk, talk and Muggle
psychoanalytic jibber-jabber. Eventually all overt hostilities between the three - or four, actually -
thankfully ceased.

Seven solid years of rivalry bit the dust without a whimper; generations of Malfoy-Weasley
feuding did the same, with nary a protesting squeak.

Thus, at the ripe old age of twenty-four, Harry and Draco got along swimmingly, both in work and
out. Which said much for the idealistic changes wrought in the New Era, more for the crusading
Healer Poppy Pomfrey, and absolute gobs for their remarkable similarities in certain key
characteristics: single-minded to the point of obsession, determined and stonily dedicated to their
chosen paths. That stated, it was also true they'd little to do with one another on a day-to-day basis
and both were absolutely jammy with it. All was polite as could be when business required and
very much 'hands-off, git' when not.

'Til very recently, as Harry had begun noticing, all because Draco Malfoy had begun to pop up as a
regular fixture in Harry Potter's daily topography. He was ruddy everywhere Harry was and right at
the moment he was calmly peering at Harry as though he were a challenging, near-unsolvable
Arithmetic equational proof.

Harry blinked, setting his jaw. Bring it, git, he urged mentally...and then had to battle the impulse
to laugh.

"I am, Potter," the git stated calmly enough, and Harry leant forward, vastly intruged despite
himself, "what amounts to a half-blood Veela. To wit, I require a Mate to thrive and, sadly, that is
not in my hands nor of my choosing."

"Er...okay?" Harry nodded, unsure of what exactly he was supposed to be replying in response to
this unwanted information, but game enough.

"Potter, that would be you," Malfoy stated baldly. "I'm sorry, but there it is."

"Er?"

Harry gulped, and nearly dropped his mug in his lap. His eyes - gone wide, intensely emerald and
quite honestly bewildered - swiveled immediately from Malfoy's grave mien to Kingsley's broad
dark one, which smiled at him, and then nodded, reassuringly.

"Kings?" he squeaked. And instantly cleared his throat, after. "Ahem! Minister?"

"What this means to you, Harry," the Minister stepped up to the perceived breach immediately,
sending a second reassuring glance Malfoy's way, "is that for the good of the Aurors, the Ministry, the Wizarding world's interaction with other magical Species and, of course, Mr. Malfoy here, you'll be needing to cooperate with each other to the very fullest extent, in the intricate process of establishing the Life Bond Mr. Malfoy's exceptionally strong Veela instinct has initiated. It is, in fact, quite crucial you do so, Harry. Imperative, really. There's no breaking a Bond once it's started, sadly. And, as much as I do hate to ask this of you when you've given so much already, Mr. Malfoy's very existence depends upon this Bond, as does the fragile goodwill we Wizards have cemented with the other magical nations. Harry - I'm sorry, but - "

"Nah-urr?" Harry was a bit boggled by the list of people - Hades, not just people: institutions! Nations! - he'd be disappointing if he didn't cooperate - and, oh yeah, Malfoy would die.

Malfoy would die.

Fucking fantastic.

His mug cracked, spidering a tree-like webbing up the opposite side from the handle yet separating only by a smidgeon of a fissure, which was a measure of Harry's learnt self-control, really. He'd regularly sent the conference tables to careening 'round the room and blow out the wall sconces when he first made Aurors, before. This was an improvement, all 'round.

Well...the sugar packets were exploding, in little bursts of crystalline spray. That was not so good.

"Potter - " That was Malfoy, who'd sat as far forward as he could, Harry noted out of the corner of a rolling eyeball, and extended one of his white, manicured paws in Harry's direction. Likely a gesture of mutual sorrow, Harry decided, while the greater part of his head continued to chant: 'Gah! Gah! Gah!'

He could appreciate that gesture. Decent of Malfoy, really - but.

Um, no.

Harry shoved his chair back, instinctively; he wanted to run. Bolt; out of the room, the Ministry, this life of his, which was quite suddenly overwhelmingly removed from his control - again. Fuck it, again.

"Harry, there is no choice in the matter, we know that for certain now...but, well, we'd like to make every effort to smooth the way as much as possible for the both of you," Kingsley's voice rumbled on, a counterpoint to the pounding of blood at Harry's temples. "You two deserve our fullest consideration - our care and our protection. Everything we can do for you, in essence. So...if I may?"

Malfoy's fingers finally latched onto Harry's one flailing wrist and tightened. He frowned at Harry, who frowned back.

"What the bleeding fuck, Malfoy?" he mouthed, grimacing insanely, but the git only shook his manicured head sharply, fine hairs instantly falling back into place.

"Settle, Potter. It's not that bad; you'll see," he commanded in the cool, decisive voice of his - his Unspeakable voice. "Belt up."

"Hah! So you say!" Harry could hear his voice, going higher and higher, and didn't care a whit.

"Potter."
"Mother-fucking, father-fucking, Merlin-fucking situations I find myself in! It's not fucking right, Malfoy! 'Belt up', my fucking arse!"

"Poter."

"Bloody fuck, Malfoy!"

"Potter!"

Harry hissed and huffed, wavering, but after a long breathless moment, he relaxed infinitesimally. But only by the smallest of measures. True, he did trust Draco Malfoy; after all that sodding time spent divulging secrets and trading confessions, how could he not? Not to mention, the arse had covered his arse quite competently, more than a few times. In a word: Helsinki.

But on the job, that was. Nothing more.

Kingsley meanwhile had swiveled his chair sideways and turned his leonine head to stare piercingly at a nearly invisible door set in the beige-panelled walls.

"Madame Pomfrey? If you would be so kind as to join us now?" he called out, waving his wand at the soulless beige-taupe all conference rooms seemed to be afflicted with.


But his plea was cut short by the quick opening and closing of the discreet door, and Madame Pomfrey herself bustled into the hushed room, smelling of starch, muscle liniment, Skelegrow and breezy sunshine. They all took a long breath, involuntarily, each of them, and in the space of a split-second, the burning fug of tension had subsided by steady degrees, almost imperceptibly.

There was just something about Madame Pomfrey; something most amazingly positive. She was a fucking hub of cheery sanity in a mad, mad world, Harry thought. If anyone could 'fix you right up, Harry', it was Pomfrey.

Good old Pomfrey. Everything would be just fine; he knew it. He wanted very desperately to know it, Harry did.

Malfoy gripped his limp wrist all the tighter, meanwhile.

"Hullo, Harry. Good morning, Draco," she nodded, smiling broadly, and took the huge hands Kingsley Shacklebolt stretched out to her with a semi-deferential bob and a wide maternal grin, stopping just short of bussing him familiarly on the cheek. "Kingsley, my old friend, how very nice to meet with you again, and so very soon again. I trust you've briefed the boys?"

For Poppy Pomfrey, any man below the ripe age of sixty was a 'boy'. Harry grinned, despite the knowledge the git still had his wrist firmly leashed. He could feel the faint thrum of magic crackling where his flesh met Malfoy's, right at the bony knob above his hand, but that wasn't so bad, either. Gave him something to focus on other than outright panicking.

A good thing, really. Thoughtful. Malfoy wasn't such a bad chap, no.

"Poppy, a pleasure," the Minister intoned, on his feet - as were Malfoy and Harry, politely, though yet linked across the table, thanks to Malfoy - "and, no, sorry, I haven't quite finished it. We were actually just getting to the heart of the matter. Mr. Malfoy here has just now informed Harry of his Mate status and I was about to - "
"Just frighten the pants off poor Harry, here," chuckled Madame. "I'm sure." She twinkled at Harry and, oddly, that small gesture allowed him to at last swallow normally and fall back into his chair with a grateful thump. His compromised mug tilted at an alarming angle, but he hung onto it with a death grip. Malfoy, in turn, hung on to him.

"And how are you, Harry?" she asked, cheery as sodding anything in the midst of furor. "Everything going along alright?"

"Oh," he said, blankly. Malfoy remained on his feet, rigid under his severe black garb. "Um, er," Harry added, feeling at a distinct loss. "No, really..." But Pomfrey was looking to Malfoy instead and so it didn't matter that there was no good response to her question.

"Oh, Draco, dear - do sit, now. I'm sure you must be anxious to have this sorted," Pomfrey waved a lined but very capable hand at her other ex-charge from the old school Infirmary. "Really. Too much. At ease, gentlemen. Please."

Harry was visited by the sudden thought that Pomfrey must have seen to Malfoy's injuries nearly as often as she'd seen to his, in their respective boyhoods. Malfoy had been Seeker too, of course (as if Harry would ever forget that!) and had suffered just as many mishaps in practice; too, he'd been at the mercy of the elder Slytherins for any number of years and who knew what they'd gotten up to, the sadistic brutes? Marcus Flint came instantly to mind and Harry shuddered. Flint and a few others had been considered 'unfixable' after the Wars and had been summarily exiled - stripped of their magic and sent off to the Muggle world with numerous restrictions. Last he heard, Flint drove a lorry for a living somewhere in outer Antipodes and was happy enough, he supposed.

But that was not the issue at the moment. Malfoy's startling revelation was.

"Potter," Draco said quickly, quietly; leaning slightly forward over the shiny wooden surface between them and barely murmuring, under the cover of the scrape of Madame's chair. He'd not yet released Harry's hand. Harry had actually forgotten for moment he was even holding it...which was really very frightening, in a way!

"I'm extremely sorry - really, I am. I didn't mean for this to happen - "

"Of course you didn't, Draco, dear," Madame cut in kindly, proving that age had nothing to do with the ability to pay proper attention to one's patients. "Now do be seated and let me tell Harry all about it. You men have likely made this out to be far more frightening than it needs to be, I'm sure. With a little common sense we'll have it sorted; not to worry. Isn't that right, Kingsley, dear?"

"Oh, yes."

The Minister sat back with a huge sigh, one that stirred the very air currents, nodding eagerly. He was apparently more than joyful to have someone capable at hand to whom he might pass off the proverbial Galleon. One of the many positive attributes he demonstrated as Minister: knew his limits, Kingsley did.

"Exactly so, Poppy, and I'll leave this to your excellent devices." He turned his dark eyes to the stunned ex-Hero and the cast-in-marble Unspeakable, smiling his obvious relief. "Harry, Draco, make sure to listen closely, as Madame here has conjured up a most viable plan of action for you both - and one I'm sure we'll all be pleased to follow." Harry blinked at him, not at all sure of that. But the Minister was clearly champing at the bit to flee the scene of the crime. He rose, duly imposing in his robes of office. "Now, if you'll all pardon me, I'll leave you to it. Other duties call and those silly Muggles are creating something of ruckus in Cardiff. Harry, you know about that one, right?" He sent a knowing twinkle Harry's way. "Besides," Kingsley continued, nodding to
himself, "this is truly a Veela matter and the Ministry is very much hands-off, as is only proper. You know our policy."

"Nnh."

"Just so, Kingsley," Pomfrey nodded. Malfoy did as well, after a tiny pause.

"Yes. Just so, sir."

"Ngh," Harry gulped. He gathered himself, finally - finally! - shaking off Malfoy's grip, and sat up straight, spine reforming itself from the jelly it had been reduced, but a few moments previously.

He was a man, not a mouse, he informed himself sternly. An Auror - an ex-Gryffindor. Whatever being a Veela Mate meant, he could likely manage to do it. Or die trying.

"Ah."

"They'll be fine, Kingsley dear. Off you go," Pomfrey smiled.

"Right, er...yes. Alright there, young Draco?" Kingsley asked kindly, clearly itching to depart. "You're a bit squiffy 'round the gills. Greenish."

"Sir," Malfoy replied, hesitantly, and cast his eyes back to the smooth surface of the conference table. "I'm...tolerably well, thank you," he added quietly, "for allowing me the privacy of informing Potter of this here, in your office," and Harry cocked his head at him, curious.

Hmm...very thoughtful. A strange reaction from a Wizard who normally didn't pull his punches.

"Harry? How are you holding up?" the Minister wanted to know, edging toward the beige door.

"Ah...fine. Super, Kings, Madame." He found himself shugging; unhappily enough, true, but for the first time since Draco mentioned the word 'Mate' and Kings brought up the word 'situation', he let his shoulders fully ease out of their habitual fight-or-flight response. "Just...great, really," he added weakly. "Super...once we work this out, I'm sure." He swallowed. "Sir."

'Common sense,' Madame had said. If Harry knew Pomfrey, there was a spell to sort this out. Or a potion. Or a...something magical he'd just not heard of yet. Whatever it was, he'd nothing to be concerned about, really. Or, if he did, there was Hermione. And Ron. And even Malfoy, who wasn't to be sneezed at, not when it came to dealing with magical crapola that zinged a person sideways and backwards and tossed him peremptorily off his pins.

"Oh? Really 'alright', Potter?" Malfoy had his eyes on him again - had actually not ceased scanning him except for the very briefest of moments - which left Harry's nape prickling with an electric sort of feeling. Now he knew why, exactly, Malfoy had been so intent.

But that could be fixed up. Pomfrey was here, a Valkyrie in a starched cap.

"I'm fine," he repeated, tersely. "Thanks, though."

"You're welcome," Malfoy replied, his pupils a pansy-velvet dark, and Harry blinked. There was something nagging at him...nagging, nagging, in the far corners of his mind. What was that sodding thing Veelas had, again?

His sister-in-law (honorary, but who minded that?) had it in bags: Allure. Oh, yes... that. Like an Imperio, but more insidious, Allure. It was all about sex. Sex, sex, sex and reproduction. Survival
of the fucking fittest, no lie.

Oh, sodding *joy* - but Madame *was* present, right? All *would* be well. A potion - a spell - something, right?

Harry sat back with a tiny huff and cradled his half-full and slowly dribbling mug, still Charmed to steaming heat; absentmindedly mended it with a quick word, and, purely as an afterthought, reached for a heavily iced pastry from the tray left on the conference table. Sugar would likely be a good thing for sustained shock, though he'd prefer chocolate. He'd be gagging for every boost he could get, likely, given Malfoy's bombshell.

"Right, then," he said briskly, addressing only Madame Pomfrey, as Malfoy was folded in upon himself again, the git, and the Minister had departed at last, "what exactly *is* it you need of me?"

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**Patient Name**

**Age**

24, 9 months

**Gender/Descriptors**

Male; eye colour: grey; hair colour: blond; height: 5'9"; weight: TBD; Magical Stats: see Ministry notes, Unspeakable Files, Health Personnel Contact

**Date of First Treatment**

April XX, 20XX

**Diagnoses**

Veela, UnMated

(Veelus domesticus X H. sapiens, Wizarding)

**General Health**

Middling to Fair

**Prognosis**

Poor to Dire, if *not* Mated

**Seventh Son; History of prior abuse; Mate: Potter, Harry, Auror**

**Pertinent Additional Data**

Malfoy, Draco

**Case Notes:**

*Week 1*

It is recommended that Mr Malfoy and Mr Potter become more intimately acquainted stat, given
the known data on UnMated Male Veela. Diagnostics are called for, as is an additional, in-depth consult with the Leader of the Veela Nation, Madame Priscilla D'Argent. Material provided thus far insufficient for long-term planning of treatment, other than establishing need for an arranged Bonding as soon as can be scheduled.
A se'enight or so after the first meeting with Kingsley and Madame Pomfrey, Harry and Malfoy sat in an upscale Muggle cafe in SoHo, comparing notes over a quick meal taken after working hours.

It was their third 'date' and also the third distinct occasion they'd spent 'quality time' with each other outside working hours since meeting at Hogwarts Infirmary one week previous for a initial go-round and foray into the intricacies of building a 'relationship'. They'd had several 'lessons' since. Also, drinks at the Leaky and a business lunch from a cart in the park near the Ministry.

Harry was beginning to feel as though he spent far too much time quirking his mental fingers into snarky little parens, what with all these bloody euphemisms.

Also, sex. Not a euphemism, not at all. And not that they'd had that - oh, fucking no! - nor would they for quite some time to come, if Harry had much to say about it. But that was a whole 'nother kettle of Sneels.

But...it was coming.

The half-hysterical, half-ironic way in which that realization presented itself to him left Harry feeling twitchy, with a curious little smile and tilted eyebrows over the utter absurdity of 'dating' Malfoy...and that was maybe not a smile at all he felt tugging his lips. Still, there were a few...logical aftereffects to this whole Veela Mate experience he had to admit nagged at him like a socked jaw - or sore teeth. Or hen's teeth, perhaps, as they were impossible. Highly improbable, more like, but then he was half-Muggleborn and this was bloody magic. And, well, what did he know of all the peculiar ways of Purebloods?

"Allow me to recap," Malfoy murmured, examining the tiny Quik Quills pad he carried with him religiously, which he'd naturally spelled invisible to the Muggles, and for once not noticing Harry's expression at all...Harry hoped. It had been a pleasant enough dinner 'date' thus far; he'd much prefer it remained so. Made his brand new mission, er, easier. "That's no other persons allowed intimately for either of us, for approximately a month before Bonding, and - goes without saying, this - no extramarital affairs after, ever. Then, you'll be needing to do something useful about Grimmauld Place, Potter, as I must keep up the Manor for the entailment - we'll reside there, naturally."

"What about heirs, Malfoy?" Harry interrupted, willfully ignoring the matter of the Manor for the moment. There were far bigger fish to fry than where they'd be residing after Bonding and Poppy's most recent instructive hour had stuck this particular question firmly in the forefront of his cerebrum, like a giant motorway sign. No. Rather like a hot needle directly through the eyeball, actually. Difficult to ignore. "Hmm?"

Harry had found it helped his faculties immensely if he regarded this Veela Mate debacle as a very
long-term, very deep-in stealth assignment, one similar to his search for Voldemort's Horcruxes, but with the decided advantage of his not being actively hunted and harried by hostile forces. He had named it 'B-Day', in wry honour of the Allied Muggle Force's invasion of Normandy, back in the days (to him, at the ripe old age of twenty-four) 'of yore'. That small fancy pleased him, and he clung to any other he could find, as a coping mechanism. He was a soldier, an agent of the Law, and this was his job. But, too, the opposing forces weren't necessarily hostile. Exactly.

Right. Non-hostile, then.

Excepting, of course, if he were to idiotically go entirely spare from stress and stupidly come to regard either Poppy or Malfoy as 'hostile', which he decidedly didn't - and hadn't. And wouldn't, by Merlin, so help him, er, gods! Poppy was aiding them in every way she possibly could and it wasn't Malfoy's fault he'd turned up as more than half Veela, poor sod.

Much.

No, Harry assured himself, on the contrary, it wasn't all uniformly horrid. This admittedly unusual situation had one very unique advantage: it resulted in Harry having the whole Veela Nation firmly on his side, as well as international Veela Law regarding Mates, were any overly zealous Wizard or Witch to suddenly to start throwing spanners into the works and lead off their already complicated gavotte by threatening either of them, physically or magically. That was a very good thing. Veela Mating Law trumped both Ministry and Wizengamot rulings soundly in regard to Magical Creatures, rather like a Muggle diplomatic immunity, and thus they were safe enough from the press ('Down with Skeeter the Cheater!' went Harry's rousing mental cheer), the common-garden variety of celeb gossip ('Screw Witch Weekly!' he'd whooped, now and again) and the worst of the fringe element ('Sod off, all you whackjob Hero-worshippers!' he'd been heard to exclaim, fervently.)

And the Veela were damned formidable Creatures. Similar, Harry thought, to the magical range of the average Dumbledore or Grindelwald, only far more...attractive.

As was Malfoy, and also when wearing his usual skin of Wizard, which was precisely why he'd been instantly inducted into the Unspeakables and shoved up the merit ladder at a remarkable rate. The git - and Harry thought of him that way more out of an old and easy familiarity than resulting from any issues leftover from Hogwarts - was a top-notch Wizard, on par with Harry. Possibly exceeding, in some aspects. Harry had not really fully ingested that Malfoy was a force to deal with back when they were attending Hogwarts, but he was more than aware of it now - and thankful to have that sort of firepower on his side, stationed stolidly at his back should he - or any other Auror - be in need of it.

Which he - and other Aurors - already had, as Malfoy was their liaison to the Unspeakable department. This lot of needy Aurors included Harry's own partner, Ron, who'd been doing a brilliant job of being uniformly civil to Malfoy for more than several years now, ever since the Weasley-Potter-Malfoy mass therapy bout. Too, good old Ron had visibly thawed at least fifteen more degrees when Malfoy saved his freckled arse in Helsinki, two years previous.

Helsinki, Harry decided, had been one hell of a learning experience.

In any case, Wandless Magic, DADA and the expected Potions were the least of it; the bloke excelled at nearly every aspect of the Arts, and had even topped Hermione out scoring on a few of the more arcane NEWTS. Harry had never even known there was a NEWT was offered in either Ancestral Totem Construction or Sex Magic, but he supposed it made quite a lot of sense, the latter, 'specially after Poppy Pomfrey introduced the subject and Hermione (later that same day, though perhaps not as patiently - there'd been any number of 'Oh, Harry's!') explained it to him...
again, as a refresher. After all, there were Incubi and Veela, Houris and Genies abounding in the Wizarding world and the seduction of the physical senses was quite immensely crucial to them all.

Sex drove the ship, or certainly steered it. Without reproduction hard at work, there'd be no Magic a'tall.

Sex, indeed, as Madame had stated quite clinically and categorically, was the primary matter for any Magical Being who'd had a beating heart ticking over. Successful reproduction was paramount for the continuance of the various species and any enhancements to make that process more effective were passed down from generation to generation. Like that Muggle Darwin bloke's finches, but magical, so...more so. Draco had got his Veela blood because of it, actually. Veelas were potent creatures and Wizards, weak through inbreeding, had deeply desired to infuse that strength into their own genetic pools. Had succeeded, too, though they still had the unmitigated gall to refer to themselves as Purebloods.

Silly wankers.

Harry mused briefly over the Muggle Darwin and wondered what he might have had to remark on the microcosm of the magical milieu. He wasn't a total swot like Hermione - or Malfoy - but he could more than hold his own in the business of sorting things through, logically, 'especially if there weren't anyone actively trying to kill him. Aurors did that; part of the job description.

Well...still. His new milieu - or job description, as it were - now intimately involved two Wizards and to Harry's admittedly spotty knowledge, two Wizards did not reproduce.

"Potter? Were you saying something?" Malfoy, obviously annoyed at being dragged from his notes, gave him a little glare over the top of his Quik Quills. "Heirs? What of them?"

"Oh, well - yes. It's just this, Malfoy. Er, issue, progeny...ah, you know - kids. Um, how will we handle that...er, that part of this cock-up we've got ourselves into?" Malfoy blinked at Harry, face severely blank and business-like but enquiring all the same. Harry scrambled to lay out his line of reasoning. "Yes, well, see, we're both the last of our lines, respectively, right? I understand that bit, and while I know there must be ways and means of doing it - sodding Wizards, yeah? - I don't get the actual, er, process; not for us, at least. Do they have to be blood pure or can we adopt?"

"They?" Malfoy seemed startled for a moment, and Harry actually saw a faint flush rise in his cheeks before he ducked his sharp nose back behind the Quik Quills pad. "You mean, you want more than one? Oh."

Harry nodded as Malfoy surfaced again, briefly. The git blinked slowly at Harry, twice, grey eyes very wide, before diving his nose back into his notebook.

"Ah. I see," he muttered rapidly, sounding stifled. "I must admit I didn't realize, but. Erm, hmmm, let's see, Potter - hold up," he commanded, through a nice, healthy blush that did wonders for his habitual paleness, frowning distractedly and flipping rapidly through pages. He swallowed hard, throat muscles bobbing, at coming across some particular note and Harry peered curiously as Malfoy visibly fought to focus on the very small script he employed. "Hang on, then; a moment...hmm...no, no. It was earlier this week, wasn't it, that Pomfrey was talking up the family planning?"

Harry nodded again, silently, waiting.

"But - but, still, Potter, it's funny you should ask that now, though I rather think you've got the carriage well before the Abraxan - we're not even Bonded yet." Malfoy did not look up, which was just as well, really. "Hmm...mm-hmmm. No, not it. Well. Ah! Maybe here?"
Harry regarded him idly, eyes narrowed on Malfoy's refined yet capable hands as he ran a spit-spot fingernail across yet another page of his ridiculous, meticulous scrawls, tracking: the intent gaze, the gathered brow, the white teeth just nipping that fuller lower lip. All just so, as always. Indeed, Malfoy was the most Type-A wanker Harry'd ever had the pleasure of working with, but he did get the job done.

Unspeakably efficient, that was it. Ruthless in it, even.

"Hmm, I can't seem to find that particular reference; how odd? But, my mother did say I wasn't to concern myself over it unduly," Malfoy muttered away under his breath, possibly more to himself than Harry, "when I finally Changed over fully. It would all settle out in the end, but you know, Potter, I seem to recall Pomfrey did mention...something...specifically. Where...was it? Hmm, that's not unlike me, not to label these subtopics properly. Ah! Perhaps under a different heading! Procreation...?"

"Oi, Malfoy," Harry muttered finally, shifting in his seat uncomfortably as Malfoy sank ever deeper into his notebook. If there was a whole section on it, then...well. Perhaps he ought just take Poppy aside and ask for a private, um, 'lesson'. To bring Harry up to speed, as it were, on the Wizarding ways of it, as clearly they were different from the Muggle. As poor Malfoy looked as though he'd suddenly come down with a raging fever, he was so agitated; he was far from his usual composure as he scrabbled through page after page. This question of legally begotten heirs must be a huge deal, to do this to him! As it was to Harry, of course, but mayhap this wasn't quite the best time to try and discuss it. "Er, you don't have to fuss yourself this much over it. It's not...I mean. Look - it doesn't matter that much...really. Now. Yet."

"Hmm? Hold up, Potter. I'm still searching." Still blushing too, the git, and rather delightfully. "I'll find it, I swear, if you'll just-"

"More tea, gentleman? Coffee?"

"Oh, for the love of Brede! Leave us, will you?"

"Um, no, thanks. We're fine," Harry responded politely and loudly, over the endless ruffle of pages and Malfoy's vastly irritated sniff. "Totally fine; don't mind him. We'll let you know should we need anything, don't worry."

"Are you sure? We have water? Er, and milk?"

"No, really; we're okay for now, ta. Don't let us keep you."

Oblivious to the server's admiring glances, Harry's Veela thumbed through a few more closely scribbled pages, impatiently waving the poor hovering sod off. Tea it was, for Malfoy, actually, and he'd been his usual toplofty self over the fact he was presented a lone bag of trusty old PG Tips in a plebian ceramic mug and not top-quality Assam leaves in a proper pot. Harry grinned fleetingly at his Lordship's notoriously snooty preferences - and then ceased abruptly, his eyes going wide behind his spectacle frames. Those hyper-exacting preferences, those idiosyncrasies, that innate air of certain superiority! It was remarkably reminiscent of Dudley as a child.

Oh, Merlin bugger. Harry manfully repressed a shudder. He'd be doing this every damned day, soon enough, the minding and management of Malfoy! The idea of future parenting was abruptly a lot less important when compared to the ever-expanding list of git's foibles. They'd likely never get 'round to having little ones; he murder Malfoy first out of sheer bloody rage, if only over the idiot's utter fascination with his damned Quik Quills tablet!
"Oh, you know, don't worry if you can't find it, Malfoy," he hurried to repeat, suddenly vastly interested in turning the subject well away from their future progeny - and the exact means used to achieve them. The 'pleasant' part of their dinner date was slipping away like sand grains, lost under the annoying ruffle of pages turning and the odd befuddled colour coming and going on Malfoy's frustrated face. "No big deal; as you just said, it's not like it's important now."

"No...um, just another moment, please," Malfoy begged and waved a vague hand at him, deep into his fiddly subtopics.

"Oh, alright, whatever." That blasted notebook. Harry had glanced through it once out of sheer curiosity and discovered it drove him instantly mental. It was highlighted, had tab dividers stuck on and actual footnotes! If that was a true reflection of the normal state of Malfoy's mind, he'd bloody well string him up by his thumbs within days of Bonding - if they ever even made it that far!

Anal sod.

No wonder Malfoy had not even raised an eyebrow over Madame's mention of how Veela-ish Wizards went about it! He'd been too busy transcribing the mechanical details in his annoying little notebook!

Speaking of 'details'...

Harry blushed, heat prickling up his spine at the memory of Madame's lecture. Couldn't help it, really. The Muggle diner was much too humid for a balmy April evening. They should've sat outside, as he wanted. But no; Malfoy was concerned about insects.

"It's in here somewhere, I know it." The fixated git was still at it, interminably scanning over pages he must've gone through twice over. "I absolutely know it. Can remember Pomfrey's voice clearly when she referenced the--just...hmm. Prostate? Whatever is Prostate doing in my Queries area? Need to cross-index this recent one, though. Do it Sunday, I s'pose, after luncheon...Oh, I'm sorry, Potter." There was a quick flash of earnest grey eyes before Malfoy returned to his search. "I should be able to lay hands on this straight off. Don't mean to make a deal of it."

"Uh-huh. Alright, Malfoy. I suppose I'm happy you seem to care, so much."

"Of course I care!" Malfoy looked up long enough to shoot him an affronted glare, silvery eyes flashing. "It was you who asked, wasn't it?"

Harry's grin, when it finally, finally bloomed, was rueful, it was. Oddly affectionate, too, though he wasn't wishing to dwell on why that was, either! But, fortunately enough, Malfoy didn't notice it, as Harry couldn't have explained why he was suddenly smiling.

"You do that, then. Show that beastly thing who's the boss of it."

"Right, thank you. A moment..." Malfoy wasn't listening to him at all. Harry could've stomped off in a huff and likely Malfoy wouldn't have noticed him going, so caught up was he in doing this thing for Harry.

Oh, Merlin.

Harry gasped aloud. Fortunately, Malfoy didn't notice that either.

Picky, persnickety, all over the details; every little thing recorded, from the temperature to the time. What Harry liked to eat and how often; what he abhorred and shied away from; where'd they met
and when they would next; every single word the Mesdames Pomfrey and D'Argent had had to impart on the topic of their mutual 'little problem'. All there, written out meticulously in that horrible Quik Quills - and much of it verbatim. All of it, every bit of it, spun about so that the focus was always upon Malfoy's mate. Not Malfoy, but his all-important Mate.

It was...a little scary, Malfoy's view of the world. Too structured - too safe. Rigidly contained, as he was. Boxing Harry in without perhaps ever realizing, all because that was how Malfoy functioned.

Harry swallowed hard, furtively glancing over at his intent table mate. All to soon to become his life mate. A life sentence, more like.

And...for the remainder of his natural days Harry would be subject to Malfoy's annoying little fancies and quirks. Tea, food, clothing, housing; all manner of minutiae. All the those ickle little details that were such a huge part of living life daily would impact him - drive him frothing mad, if he allowed it. It was a dire, bleak landscape ahead, if he dwelt too deeply upon it. They were so very unalike, he and Malfoy. True, Malfoy was admittedly an excessively private person, as was Harry, but he'd been sadly spoilt silly as a child, and was quite demanding, even anal-retentive, when it came down to the wire.

...But, to give him some credit, he was also a nice enough looking chap, if one got past his...odd habits. And not too bad to chat with, on a strictly business basis...if one ignored the constant stream of mild sniping and the sheer intensity of his methods. And he was liked well enough, the blasted berk, by Harry's assorted pseudo-family...well, now he was, in the wake of their enforced group therapy. The elder Weasleys had truly taken a real shine to Malfoy, though Ginny - not so much.

And it could've been far worse., Harry knew. It could've been poor Theo Nott seated across from him, who was also a bit Veela, drooling.

Really, though, he told himself yet again, he had one job. He only had to continue thinking of this prolonged bout of insanity strictly as an undercover job, and he'd be alright. Harry was certain of it - he was.

The alternative was unthinkable, which rather put an end to any foolish wishing otherwise, full-stop.

"You know what? They never addressed it, Malfoy, not that I know of," he spoke up, firmly setting foibles aside in favour of returning to the subject at hand. He took to toying discontentedly with the last of his unappetizing wedge of tart. "The professors. Not at Hogwarts, at least." He scowled his latent irritation over that. There was far too much that had not ever been clearly stated, at least not to him. "You'd think they'd at least have managed some sort of Sex Education; I mean, the Muggles have it in their schools - why not Wizards? And it's a boarding school, for Merlin's sake! Everyone shags everyone!"

"Oh, well. That's true, Potter."

Malfoy, visibly intrigued, jerked up his chin, finally laid down his compendious pad and took up his neglected tea, tapping the mug once with a fingertip to re-warm it. He met Harry's gaze, and Harry could tell Malfoy felt he'd found yet another point they had in common. Or, at least could see eye to eye on. That was, um...what, three now, total? Maybe four. He smiled, pleased to have Malfoy's full attention once more. Being a Quik Quills widower wasn't much fun.

"Isn't it, then? Weird, huh? What were they even thinking?"
"I know," Malfoy nodded, "and I do agree with you, Potter, but if you recall, Madame also made a point to mention that quite a few subjects were forcibly elided from Hogwarts' curriculum after the close of the Sixties - all that 'Flower Power' movement and those heathen Hippies, whoever they were, I s'pose must've frightened the knickers off the Board - and then, if you recall? The Governor's Board was more than half Death Eater, even by then. And solely comprised of the Sacred Twenty-Eight, so definitely so Purebood they reeked of it. And it showed - you've not forgotten dear old Umbridge, have you? I doubt she was alone in her narrow view. Hah! If anything, she was likely considered too lax!"

Malfoy made a horrid face, chuckling ruefully, and Harry laughed along, lifting his shoulders and matching the grimace.

"Such embedded hypocrisy," Malfoy remarked. "Even at the premier seat of magical academia. No wonder we all ended a bit twisted by it, yes?"

"Merlin, yes! Faugh! But...Stubby Boardman, too." Harry went on, after the little insuppressible sick shudder the mere thought of Dolores Umbridge always yanked from his gut had ebbed. "Molly told me all about him, even showed me a poster. Sex on two legs, he was, walking, she said. Shocking, how much of a heartthrob everyone thought him. Like that, er, Elvish chap, um - what was his name again? Very popular with Muggles, early on...or - or maybe the Beatles! Them! I remember Dudley being very much a fan of them. Now, I much preferred current music, but I seldom had the opportunity to really listen to anyone specific on the wireless. Not much chance, when you're stuck in a cup-"

"Indeed," Malfoy cut in abruptly. He frowned at Harry, idly fingering the handle of his teaspoon. "Maybe you shouldn't talk about that right now, Potter. Veelas abhor the thought of anyone mistreating their Mates; makes them violent. I'd much prefer to leave this place without incident."

His cool grey gaze returned to his notebook, lying on the table, and he fell back into his earlier abstraction, rather firmly ignoring Harry's random recitation of the names of the bands he'd enjoyed, back in the day. He did that often, Harry had noticed, for the sake of peace between them: taking refuge in the utterly mundane. At least that's what Harry assumed he was doing, every time he felt they veered too close to disagreeing. And certainly any time the subject of their respective childhoods came up, Malfoy was always quick to change the subject.

Harry wondered briefly just exactly what it was Malfoy thought he really had left to hide, now. They were to be Mated, weren't they? He'd find it all out in the end, just as he always did.

"...but then my aunt bought him that drum kit, and it was all over," Harry concluded his tale of a youthful Dudders, well aware Malfoy had tuned him out some moments before, but not so much fussed by it. He was more chatting for the sake of chatting, anyway. Anything to avoid returning to the subject of their future children, what? "But for the shouting. Uncle Vernon wasn't so fond of the, er, rock music."

Malfoy snorted softly and fixed Harry with a piercing stare.

"Yes. Be that as it may, the Muggle rock music was no doubt the final nail in the coffin as far as any sort of official tolerance went for sensual music, for Boardman - and for your Muggle Buggles, Potter, I'm sure. Sex Magic was erased from the curriculum at Hogwarts, sadly. We're fortunate to have Pomfrey's guidance, I think, intrusive as it may be at our age. I, at least, am learning some valuable pointers."

"Hmm...I s'pose," Harry replied moodily, taking another small bite of his tart just for something to do. Malfoy reclaimed his notebook and flipped through it again, emitting a tiny little exclamation
of pleasure. "Maybe. Little weird, though, isn't it? I mean...it's Pomfrey, Malfoy. She used to mend our broken bones, not go about handing out the simple incantations for lube, you know? I just keep experiencing this total disconnect."

Malfoy only snorted again and shook his head, firmly folding away any hint of sharing Harry's grin in favour of waving a finger-marked page of his Quik Quills about.

"Well, be that as it may and to answer your first question, Potter, look here! I've noted that we male Veela and Mates have any number of options regards the production of heirs, from Potions to donors and surrogates to a few very arcane and ancient ancillary Blood Binding Charms which induce the necessary physiological attributes, but..." He seemed suddenly flustered. "But let's not concern ourselves over that now, shall we? We've the actual Binding yet to get through unscathed. Must say, I worry far more over how they wish us to accomplish that bit than any other - "

"As if I'm so bloody enthused, Malfoy!" Harry snapped, stabbing a floppy, cinnamon-baked apple slice viciously on the tines of his fork. "It'll be a sodding circus! Why it requires a freakin' audience, I'll never understand! It's not as if either of us are shrinking virgins, not at our age, and you'd think Veelas at least would be allowed their privacy - wait! Hang on! Isn't mad jealousy an issue with your sort, Malfoy? You're not going to hurt me or anything, are you? Over that shite? Because I've not shagged anyone for ages. Not even a bloody date," Harry shook his head decisively. "No time."

"No, Potter, I'm not," Malfoy replied, repressively. "Ever going to hurt you; don't be an idiot." Then he quirked a brow and dropped his Quick Quills again. He'd been fondling the spine and Harry had to drag his eyes away from the sight of those fingers moving softly across the tightly wound coil of metal. "And yes, Potter, of course it is."

"Er...yes it is' what?" Harry quirked his eyebrows right back, but in puzzlement. "Not following, Malfoy."

Malfoy sighed heavily, propping his pointy chin on his one fist and regarding Harry as if he were a particularly tricky Potion ingredient - one that didn't lend itself well to chopping, mincing, dicing or slicing. Thick and...and dense.

"Jealousy is a facet of this, Potter. Normally it's nothing more than a simple-minded euphemism for blatant territorialism, but for Veela folk it's far more than that. It is equally imperative to me that our Bond be recognized by as many magical beings as possible and that it is respected widely, on all counts. No naysayers allowed, get it? No one may be allowed to object. Because I can't very well have some half-crazed Potter fan cropping up later and attempting to seduce you away; people can be seriously injured, you know? Some have died because of that...jealousy, Potter."

"Yeah, yeah, right, Malfoy, like that would ever happen." Harry shook his head in patent disbelief. The very idea - hah! "Seduce me, huh? As if anyone would seriously try. Beyond Owling me their knickers, that is."

"Really? They do that?" Malfoy shook his head and looked dubious.

"Yeah, now and again. Not so much these days." Harry gulped and grabbed at Malfoy's sleeve across the table. "Look, forgive me for being a bit slow and all, but I'm still absorbing the concept of you being jealous over me, and not of me. All that guff from Hogwarts aside, I really don't believe I can stomach it. It's just not like you. Quidditch was one thing - my arse is entirely another!"

"Prat," Malfoy responded shortly, eyes flashing with temper, "you know I can't help this, Potter, so have a little care, alright?" He shook off Harry's hand. "I'm doing my best for your benefit in a most
"I know, I know; I get it. Look, I'm sorry," Harry replied hastily and thrust his hand across the table again, this time in a placating manner, laying it atop Malfoy's unoccupied one where it reposed lax on the table's slightly sticky Formica surface. "I am, really. I wasn't intending to ruffle your feathers, you old hippogriff - I just. I just. Really, Malfoy! It's outside of ridiculous, don't you think?"

"Stop, Potter. We don't need to revisit our Quidditch rivalry," Malfoy sniped. Even so, he visibly relaxed under the combined weight of Harry's petting fingertips and earnest gaze. Relieved, Harry smiled at him quite happily, all at once feeling oddly matey with his Mate. They were in this together, weren't they? Yes, they were. A bloody team, is what. He wasn't alone, struggling to make sense of the irrational.

Irrational.

Huh. Come to think of it, there was rather a lot irrational about the way he'd been feeling lately. Mood swings, for one thing.

Frowning, Harry pulled his hand back so he could take up his fork and make another halfhearted attempt at his fruit tart. Which was lousy, yes, and Malfoy was correct - this place was inferior, for all the Muggle papers had touted it. But he'd ordered it and he wasn't about to waste it, either. Not acceptable, wasting food.

"I'm not about to peck your stupid eyes out, either, or rip your arm clean off, much as you do drive me mental, mostly all the time," Malfoy was talking at Harry, his voice dry and one of those eyebrows of his arched high, as if to reflect his amazement over Harry's not already knowing all this. "I'm a Veela, not a savage. Not to worry yourself unduly, Potter. I've finally moved beyond that very natural urge I harbored back at Hogwarts. Same as it's been for years now."

Harry had to laugh, though he snapped his teeth shut on the sound of it. "Git." He poked his fork into his pudding a little harder, inner discontent welling. "Still..."

"Alright there, Potter?" Leaning in, Malfoy appraised him. "Oh no, you're not, are you?"

Harry had his hand overtaken, engulfed in Malfoy's own and patted in a kindly, avuncular manner. He scowled his annoyance instantly, though he wasn't so much angry at the gesture as - as? Confused, mayhap? By Malfoy's signals, perhaps. Which were skittering all over the fucking map: hot, cold, at times tediously tepid and at others soul-shatteringly fond. But Malfoy was just...like that. Bewildering. Came from the multi-tasking, Harry had figured, before. Now he rather had to wonder how much it had to do with the Veela ancestry...and how much it had to do with the way Malfoy's parents had raised him.

"Not at the top of my form, no," he replied tersely. "I'm an Auror, remember? I'm not fond of surprises."

"Um-hmm. There, there, Potter. Relax." Malfoy's reach extended over the table, wrist flexing as his light touch firmd and flexed 'round Harry's fingers. Harry flinched, jerking his arm back involuntarily. He wasn't fond of having his wand arm pinned. Malfoy didn't let go, though. "Don't fuss so," he said calmly, dropping an elbow on the table and propping his chin on his spare hand. He blinked slowly, his grey eyes tranquil. Waves of soothing energies settled over Harry's tense form, just like the folds of a warmed duvet. "You've nothing to worry about really. Being the Mate of a Veela can be a very fine experience, you know. Just don't fight it, will you?"
"Merlin!" Harry jounced in his seat, startled yet again by the abrupt alteration of ambiance. "Stop that! Look, I'm not three, you know? You don't have to coddle me-or, or soothe me, Malfoy, or whatever it is you think you're doing here...Oh! But it is strange, you have to admit it is," Harry prodded, not willing to let go of the topic of Veela jealousy, just as it seemed Malfoy wasn't willing to let go his hand, now he had it in possession. Harry ceased his little struggle, distracted. "Really. Would you ever have imagined this, back at Hogwarts? I mean, look here!" He turned his gaze pointed to their clasped hands. "See? I'm holding your bloody mitt; you're holding mine! We're 'holding hands', Malfoy! Like bloody boyfriends." Harry shook his head irritably, plagued by the fecking invisible quote marks that seemed to have overtaken his life. "Mills & Boon, Malfoy. We're bloody well in one."

"Mmm, no, Potter. Not hardly, back then. And yes - I do see."

Malfoy sighed wearily and opened the fisted fingers he'd been resting his chin on, only to run those same digits through his razored fall of white-blond hair. It cascaded artfully over his high forehead in a very fanciable way and Harry took in a rather sharp breath.

"I'm not certain who these people are whom you're referring to or what you say we're in, but no, I agree. We certainly weren't in the courtship mode back at Hogwarts. However..."

Harry nodded, distracted, barely listening to what Malfoy was rabbiting on about.

This. This rush of interest, quite fucking abruptly sensual interest, this heat and subtle swell between Harry's thighs, all brought on out of the clear blue just by the considering manner in which Malfoy was angling his head, the way in which his eyes glinted as they moved over Harry, the translucent grey thinning to a narrow rim as his pupils dilated. This, this was...interesting.

Harry inhaled sharply, every atom of his attention completely caught up in the very physical form of Draco Malfoy. Maybe it was the banked simmer in those eyes, or perhaps it was the lazy, perfect slide of hair, the tilt of firmed jaw above neck column, but...well, he found he could suddenly appreciate that Malfoy was not just handsome in a merely human male way, but also in a quite sexy, albeit far more alien way. He was a beast, Malfoy was - though clearly leashed and well-versed in blending in...most times.

This, Harry concluded hastily, must be the Allure Poppy spoke of, which he'd pretty much ignored, as he wasn't really affected, being the Mate. But now he stared stupidly across the cluttered surface of their table, transfixed.

Malfoy did indeed possess Allure, in heaps, piles and buckets. And it was potent.

"I don't disagree either, not completely, no," Mr. Sexy Even While Being a Git murmured softly, lower lip twitching just a bit as he leaned in just a tad closer. "But then again, Potter, I'd not have been particularly surprised by it, either. It's not as it wasn't in the realm of possibility." He raised his brows quizzically, cocking that sharp chin at Harry's hapless shrug and soundless "But--!"

"No, no, Potter. There was always something about you, damn your green eyes. Set me on edge, from the moment we met."

Malfoy's gaze dropped. He looked to the discarded cups before them and ran a spare forefinger round the lip of his. It sang, faintly, as china never did. Harry blinked and saw the cup flash into existence as a crystal goblet - and then back again, to settle into being merely earthly Mugglish pottery. Wild Magick, that.

"Enough of that; it was ages ago anyway. Our focus is on the present, Potter--and the future."
Harry focused on Malfoy's hands, the one he still held loosely and the one coming to rest after that idle little flash of wandless, wordless Magick. Twitchy fingers, Malfoy had; touchy-feely, too. Harry knew that was one of Malfoy's tells. He'd a few, for such a composed man. Made him more human, Harry thought. He liked that, though. In fact, he rather fancied the prospect of discovering the little things Malfoy thought he hid so well. It brought them closer, in a way. Not that they were strangers, by any means.

Not at all.

"Huh." Harry shrugged again, not sure what to say to that, or to any of it, really. They'd never know what might've been, would they? Malfoy was correct. 'Here and now' was the focus. "I suppose. Er, exactly how many years now, Malfoy, has it been?" he asked curiously, turning his hand within Malfoy's, so their digits overlapped in a loose clasping. Brought his other into play too, so that sly grabby-hands Malfoy couldn't fiddle with his stupid Quik Quill notes.

To that end, Harry set his forefinger to rubbing the thin skin on the back of Malfoys' hand, smoothing it over the beguiling surge of tendon, the white-and-pink brilliance of knuckles, flexing. The long wrist was thin and boney at the joint but very elegant; his unmarred skin was smooth and dusted with pale, almost colourless hairs. Harry rather liked the feel of that sparse fur against his fingerprint even though he did realize the attraction he felt was both magical and chemical. He wouldn't have ever necessarily noticed it, would he? Had he been left undisturbed by the mysterious process that chose a Veela's Mate for him - or her. Some other Wizard or Witch would've had the uneasy pleasure of receiving Malfoy's full attention. Which reminded Harry abruptly - he needed to consult with Bill and Fleur over this matter. Urgently.

Time to muster the troops; get an inside look into the mindset of a Veela. Should've done that in the very beginning, really, but he'd not thought too hard about it, being in the throes of accustoming himself to near daily doses of Draco Malfoy.

"You know that as well as I do, Potter. Twenty-four, less eleven."

There was so very much to this Harry didn't understand, still. Though, admittedly, it was becoming easier to simply accept. Veela Allure was nothing like an Imperio; there was none of that horrible 'can't fucking breathe!' sensation and a great deal more...comfort. And Malfoy, just by being his snippy Malfoy self, set Harry at ease, despite all this nonsense and brouhaha over Veelas. Harry was used to Malfoy; he was familiar; a known. Comfortably so. A quantity with familiar qualities. Foibles, habits, ways and means. Same as him, and he knew Malfoy was just as familiar with his little peculiarities, whether he liked them or no. They were - in a strange, weird way - already Bonded, yeah?

"Twelve - fifteen, now, that we've known one another?" Harry hazarded, tilting his head back and rolling his shoulders to ease the tension in his neck. "Years, that is. Horrid with maths, sorry."

"Mmm, thirteen." Malfoy inclined his chin. His eyes were half-hooded; grey eyes attuned to the slow sweep of Harry's finger. Harry grinned, pleased that he had Malfoy a bit off-balance, but also calmer, again - not so intense. That satisfied some internal gyroscope of his, one he'd not known he possessed - which was fitting, perhaps, in the nature of power between them - in his gut. Left him satisfied, withal, for reasons he didn't need to look into too closely. "A long time, certainly. And an admirably auspicious number."

"I'd've figured this would've happened back in Sixth or Seventh," Harry remarked idly, admiring the gentle arch of arrow-thin brows as Malfoy raised his eyes to meet his musing ones. "We were teenagers then and you know how they are. All hormones, all the time. Sex Ed lectures or no."
"Well, me as well, Potter," Malfoy nodded, frowning again. "Stands to reason, but..."

He lowered his regard to the fingers - Harry had allowed a few more to be involved in this slow, quite deliberate mellowing of Malfoy - that continued to caress him carefully. Eventually a very small but pleased smile slipped 'cross his mouth, lingering.

"But?"

"I do believe you may lawfully blame dear old Professor Snape for it not coming to pass - or thank him heartily, more like. He had me regularly downing some sort of vile tasting tonic for ages after I turned thirteen - likely a Suppressant Potion, I'd guess. S'pose the last thing he needed at the time was for me to kick up as an emergent Veela as well as a juvenile delinquent Death Eater. Can you even imagine the mess we'd be in now if that had gone forward?"

Harry shivered. He could, yes, vividly - and really, he didn't want to. If he'd been compromised by Malfoy when the git was still under Voldemort's rotting thumb, his life would've been very different. If he'd had one, which he wouldn't have. And - goes without saying - very much the worse for everyone else, all 'round. Including the git he was apparently the Mate of.

Thank Merlin, then, for bloody Horcruxes, which had shoved him out of the way safely - and thank ruddy old sneaky old Headmaster Snape for not sending a bloody Truancy officer after him! No...instead he'd sent his ruddy heart-wrenchingly sentimental Patronus and saved Harry's life...yet again.

"No," he agreed hastily, suppressing the instant, familiar well of regret, "and Hermione said as much to me, too; that Snape must've had something to do with it, and I suppose that's yet another reason we need to lobby for that Posthumous Order of Merlin for him, Malfoy. The greasy old git was sodding sharp to even think of a Suppression Potion, much less act on it so far in advance; damned canny all 'round, always - gods, we owe it to him, Malfoy. I owe him."

"That we do."

"Hear, hear."

Nodding sadly, Malfoy finally retrieved his hand: carefully and slowly, wincing as he gave up the contact. It was soothing to have Harry's hands upon him, Harry knew - he'd admitted as much when Pomfrey had handed over a copy of the short list of the absolutely necessary things they had to do for one another till the Binding took full effect. Touching one other as often as possible was key - kissing, too, upon appropriate occasion - conversation - casual contact, again. And nothing and no one must interfere with any of it, or it would not go well at all. Binding was volatile. Veelas were yet more so; everyone (but Harry) knew that.

Ron Weasley, being as Pureblooded as Malfoy ever was and brother-in-law to a Veela as well, had taken Harry aside a few days after he'd first learned his fate and explained it further, over a pint at the Leaky.

"It's like this, mate. You know how Fleur has her nasty little turns? She's all the sudden pointy and toothy when anyone is brainless enough to make sheep's eyes at Bill? Well, Malfoy's likely the same way over you, only worse, as he's male and the whole territory issue's about a million times more important to him. It's in his bits, right? Literally. And think of his pride, Harry - you're his, as far as his Veela instincts tell him, and anyone even breathing on you the wrong way will send him straight up like a ruddy rocket, right quick. He'll go all Veela-ballistic on their arses and he won't be able to stop, the poor sod. Fleur can be a bloody frightening piece of work, you know? I've seen it in action - and Mum's had to Floo people to St. Mungo's any number of times since they tied the
knot, 'specially when Fleur was carrying Victoire. Give the poor prat a break. Don't even think of letting him feel jealous over you or it'll go all wonky, trust me. In a very bad way."

It really had been startling, that entire conversation, but then Harry was pleased, too. 'Praps the counseling they'd all endured had been fundamentally useful, after all. He liked that Ron didn't seem to want to murder Malfoy straight off just for breathing - and that he wasn't sulking at his best mate, either, for something Harry had nothing to do with, really. Helsinki, for all that it had been horrid, had been a blessing in disguise, in the long run. They'd learned much about Malfoy, and all of it had been...good. Good shite. And Hermione? Well, Hermione was loving this 'code red' situation of Harry's to little pieces-and-bits, no matter how many times she'd pat his arm and make out that she was sorry over it. It was all about the rights of the downtrodden, the minorities and arcane Magical law, so it was right up her sodding alley, really. Not to mention, she'd this blasted bee in her bonnet for ever and ages about having Harry settle down. Find someone to love, as if it were that simple!

"Mmm," he hummed, recalling abruptly both his original question (future heirs), as if Potters had 'heirs' in place of merely 'children') and his boring apple tart, the forlorn carcass of which blandly awaited him yet, the vanilla ice having melted all over the chipped white plate. "Well, we'll deal with that another day, yeah?" He doggedly forked up another small soggy bite and raised an enquiring brow, swallowing determinedly. "Right then. What's next on our agenda, Malfoy? After kids and housing? Education? Taxes?"

"Our continuing education, Potter, more like. To wit, git, those Sex Ed lessons you were mourning so dolorously but a moment ago, hmm? Let's see..." Malfoy flipped through his pad again, studiously intent. "Okay. Here it is, our schedule. We've another meeting with Madame Pomfrey tomorrow, on the beginner mechanics of the male sex act. Hogwarts, in the Infirmary, as usual, half five. Lovely. Then, Thursday this, at six, we're set to appear before the Veela Council for another in-depth interview after our shifts, so we should be there, say, by quarter of - we're both on first shift this week, yes? Thought so - oh, and all the attention will be on you, Potter, so you'd better revise that summary I've given you on the regulations for Muggleborn Mates. And I imagine we should meet up again Wednesday, specifically for revising session, as you could really use the extra drill. You're lagging in all your auxiliary reading, Potter, which doesn't surprise me in the least. And that's it, for the moment - other than our standing 'dates', as your barmy mate Weasley insists upon calling them. I've one pencilled for Friday this, at eight. Supper and the Muggle cinema, before. Otherwise, business as usual: report in to work, follow Madame Pomfrey's orders to a sodding 'T', and carry on till further notice."

"Brilliant." Harry grinned, pleased. "That's not so bad, prat; thought it'd be far worse, even this early on. Six weeks and all, you see? Though I can't say I'm looking forward to cozying up yourHonoured Leader, Malfoy, for another of those chats of hers. She's, um, a right piece of work, the old bat. Er, Veela. Er...whatever."

"Healer and Leader, both. And she's only strict, is all." Malfoy glared at him, eyes narrowed. "Madame D'Argent is. Nothing wrong with strict, Potter."

"Uh-huh. Try terrifying, git. Strict is the least of it. McGonagall's strict. Your Leader's a bloody horror, walking."

"Potter!"

Still - Harry ably ignored the git's exclamation of annoyance - none of what Malfoy outlined would interfere too much with his job, thankfully, and too...it was pleasant, rather, to know there was someone anxious to spend the few hours he'd spare outside of work with him. Keeping company,
he and Malfoy were. He'd been maybe just a wee bit lonely lately, for some reason. Not so much to be irksome - he was busy, often; no, always - but, sometimes...it was nice.

Malfoy must still have been staring at Harry as he zoned out, because his tone was curiously careful. "Potter? You in there?"

"Oh! Sorry! Oh...er, wait."

A thought struck him; a rather blindingly mind-boggling thought. Harry's eyebrows went soaring and he cocked his chin at a crooked angle, instantly piqued.

"Um, that 'mechanics of the sex act', Malfoy; you've just mentioned it? Who puts what where, then? You don't mean me, do you? My arse?"

For the first time during the whole of their dinner date, Malfoy smiled widely at Harry - a boyishly charming grin, one that had Harry's insides melting profusely, much like his abandoned ice. Harry blinked in response; rapidly, dazzled. Couldn't help himself, and he may've even been drooling, a bit.

Wheeeoooh! More fucking Allure, incoming at nine o'clock! No! Sex bloody incarnate, leafing casually through a fucking Quik Quills notepad as if he hadn't a care, sod his elegant, pointy Veela-powered arse! Blast that Malfoy! Harry could feel all the nascent alarm bells jangling in his gut - which would tolerate no more soggy crust. Not if it was to twist like that!

He dropped his fork with a little clatter, swallowing more than mere stray crumbs. Allure like an Imperio! He was hard, too, because of it. As a rock. Bloody Merlin! Pomfrey hadn't mentioned that!

"Urgh!"

"Buggering, Potter," the far-too-Alluring-for Harry's own good Malfoy chuckled at him, sitting back apparently oblivious of exactly what was causing Harry's inner turmoil. The chuckle itself was staggeringly appealing to Harry's ears: rich, deep and toasty-warm, leagues better than his wretched finer pudding; he flinched miserably at the answering jerk of stolid interest rising within the pressed pleats of his uniform trousers. "It's called buggering," Malfoy informed him confidentially, leaning closer and nodding ever so sapiently, as if Harry were the veriest innocent, the soft blushing skin behind his buzzing ears wet as a newborn babe's. "Colloquially. Sodomy, if you prefer, Potter. You've heard of it, I'm sure? Dick up your bum? Or, er, giving a bloke a right rogering up his, if one's topping. In any course, we've the unparalleled pleasure of having it explained to us by a medical professional, Potter; no doubt with appropriate images and possibly a slideshow of them, knowing Pomfrey. She might even project them in holographics, right on the Infirmary wall, hmm? Or make use those Muggle PowerPoint slides she favours - you know how forward-thinking and Muggles-are-so-advanced Madame is. I simply can't wait for it - can you?"

"Merlin!" Harry flushed a brilliant scarlet, darker even than his full-dress Auror's robes, the ones he wore for only court appearances, and practically up in flames where he sat, slack-jawed. His ears steamed; he gagged on one last stray crumb of recalcitrant pie, coughing and snorting back his own rueful, reluctant giggles. Mental giggles, those. The very idea of he and Malfoy ever (ever!) being cast in that position! Bloody ridiculous! Bloody...bloody fuck! It was to be his arse, then! "Can this actually be worse, berk? P-PowerPoint slides?" he gasped, veering perilously near that looming hysteria. "No - forget I said that! I know it can - and it will, too. She will have pictures. They will be in full living colour, and they will likely have arrows and - and captions to them! My sodding luck."
"Damnably, yes, Potter," Malfoy agreed, with that vivid smile yet lurking though the overwhelming rush of Allure had thankfully died down. "It is lousy, yours? Stuck with us now, aren't you?" Harry allowed himself a tiny grin in return, pleased as punch for some reason his unasked for Malfoy was at last convivial, more so that he'd been all through their meal...or really, for ages now. He'd noticed it, Harry decided, most particularly. Malfoy was on constant edge; tense, even more than his usual - ever since the momentous meeting in Kingsley's private conference room. "Think you can count on it not to change up, much. It's that Saviour vibe of yours, come back to bite you in your very fit bum. Trouble finds you, Potter. Seeks you out."

"Can. Will!" Harry snorted. "Count on it, that is. Am doomed, I just know it. It'll be gaggable, Poppy talking us through...that. Urgh!"

"Likely so." Malfoy grinned. Then he paused, a slight frown gathering like a small cloud. "Well...it's not as if you couldn't bear a few lessons tucked under your belt, Potter. You're not exactly...vastly experienced; not from what I hear."

"Oi! I've had some, Malfoy!" Harry was quick to protest. "Maybe not recently, but I have!"

"Oh? Have you, now? Really."

His companion stirred restively in his seat, waving a careless hand over the Quik Quills to send it off to wherever it resided when he wasn't poring intently over it, and met Harry's twinkling gaze with a blank, level gaze.

"Fantastic, Potter. I s'pose you'll be able to manage it, then, when the time arrives. No worries."

"Um..." Harry opened his mouth, but there wasn't much to say, so he closed it again. Malfoy had turned his stare to Harry's tart, in any event, eying it with outright loathing. "...Right. I guess so, yeah?"

"Yes." Still utterly expressionless, he, except for those eyes of his. Piercing, they were. Painfully so. Grey. Just grey, with no light to them. "Well, Potter - if you're finished with that sorry excuse for a pudding?" Harry shrugged, uneasy in his skin, yet. A grinning git was ever so much nicer to view across the dinner table. "Has it been sufficiently mauled or would you like me to Crucio its sad remains and put it out of our misery? Because we should be off, now. As the server's been hovering over us for an age, wishing we'd settle up."

Harry glanced past Malfoy's one shoulder, guiltily, and spotted their Muggle waitress, tapping her foot. He was startled, yes, but more by Malfoy's apparent 'no-comment' state over his prior knowledge of buggery than by any impatient waitperson. He'd have thought the git would be...be more...well, never mind that. One less problematic issue to deal with, if he wasn't.

"Oh, ah. Right, then. Well spotted. Yes, ready to go, Malfoy, as you are."

"I've been," Malfoy drawled, mercurial as ever, "ready for ages. But the exquisite pleasure of your company, Potter, has eased my natural desire to flee this foul den of ill-prepared comestibles and poorer service."

"Has it, now?" Harry's lips twitched, unwillingly. "Really?"

"Oh, yes, Potter," Malfoy raised a brow, hinting at a second brilliant smile. It was nice to see his snarky, pointy face without the damned Quik Quills obscuring half of it, Harry thought, even if he was left with the impression Malfoy was teasing him. "Count on that instead, alright?"

Harry chuckled again, all at once weirdly delighted with the odd turn his life had taken. It was
quite possible they'd moved to flirting - and he. Well, he rather liked it! Hadn't flirted in an asses' age!

"So," he gibed, leaning back against the banquette cushion, "what you're really telling me, prat, is that this odd desire you exhibit, this saving me from my pudding and sweeping me off my feet with sweet talk, is all part and parcel of your standard Veela service? Protecting me from the bogies of bad Muggle baking, Malfoy? How very kind," Harry laughed a little, but not maliciously, rising to catching up his Transfigured cloak and fling it 'over his shoulders. "No, more. How quaintly caring, Malfoy. You know, I'll be admitting you're a catch, next. Telling all my friends what a charmer you are. My hero!"

"Exactly, Potter," Malfoy grinned, rising and raising his hand for the cheque. "Seventh Son, top of the line Wizarding product and don't you forget it - plus, I exist only to serve. Serve you, that is. Only you. Accio!"

"Oh! I..er. Well..."

The bill snapped into existence before them; the server gone Petrificus-still and blank-eyed where she stood, a hand still extending an unneeded Muggle Biro. A wave of Malfoy's long fingers Summoned a gold-feathered quill from thin air and had the tab signed away to Malfoy's Muggle credit card (platinum-level, Harry noted) in a trice; another snappy twiddle of thumb and forefinger had Harry's Transfigured sportcoat dusted off and him generally spiffed up, the crumbs in question vanished in a prismatic whirl, along with the offensive dessert, plate and all.

"Er, thanks," Harry said gingerly, eying his shoes warily. Surely they'd not been that highly polished, before? "Malfoy..."

"And don't you look a positive treat, Auror Potter?" the git cooed superciliously, handing Harry into his Transfigured overcoat with courteous grace. "Edible, really"

"Er...Malfoy?"

"You're a credit to my arm, Potty, really you are. Must say I'm delighted to have acquired my own personal Saviour. Only the very finest for a Malfoy."

"Gods! Gag me with a dead Nargle, Malfoy!" Harry grinned sideways, allowing Malfoy to link elbows and guide him between the plethora of tables. "Such a smooth talker, smooth as sodding Amortmentia, rather! Turning my poor little head about with your utter flummery, as if I'd buy any of your rubbishing compliments, Malfoy! You wish! And I'm hardly anyone's Saviour, now. Just your basic working clod, me."

"Oh, no, I'm entirely sincere in all my compliments, Potter," Malfoy smiled. "You do scrub up reasonably well; I've always thought so. And me, I'm just doing my small bit," he nodded gravely, as if entirely serious, though a strange light glinted deep in his wickedly gleaming gaze, "to inject much needed levity into a...difficult situation. I've noticed there's a faint smidgeon of appreciation for the sardonic in you, Potter, so appreciate me, do, as that I may boast of, and bear in mind my many and varied other attributes when Pomfrey's showing us those slides she's been saving up for us. Will take your mind off what you'll be up to, my pretty one, soon enough."

"Prick!" Harry snorted, forced into reluctant laughter once more. "Blecch! Don't go and remind me of that; not just now! I was just on the verge of fancying you might be fanciable, Malfoy! You're ruining my lovely vibe."

"Sure, Potter," Malfoy scoffed, stepping before Harry to hold open the glass double doors of the
diner. They spilt out into the dim circle of light and withdrew swiftly to one side, as there was a rather large, noisy Muggle family approaching. "Your 'vibe', Potter?" he went on, dryly. "You've not had a real date in eons; how would you even recognize a 'vibe', unless it marched right up and slapped you 'cross the chompers? You're woefully thick, Potter. That's a given. Impervious to the obvious."

"Shut up, Malfoy; I've been busy!" A hand tugged him away, down the busy walkway. He went, shivering a bit in the damp chill. "Very busy!"

"Potter, even I manage a wee social life, now and again." Malfoy bumped shoulders with him, apparently by accident, and then kept close. Which was a nice thing, being marginally warmer. The night was quite chilly for spring. Harry laughed...again. "I go out and about, which is more than you do."

"Yeah, and with Pansy, git, and I hardly be boasting of it, if I were you. She's married! Been married, too, you cheating, cuckolding dastard!"

"What?" Malfoy huffed, affronted. "Blaise knows."

"More like he tags along like a sodding terrier, Malfoy, on your wee little social outings. Was rather convinced you were all one item, me. Threesomes, much? How...very deviant, arse. Does Kingsley even know you're ethically compromised?"

"I am not a deviant, Potter" Malfoy's hand tightened in Harry's elbow. "Don't even begin to imply it. And it is social, clubbing with old friends. Quite social. More than you get, anyway. I never see you anywhere but the Ministry or Hogwarts, with Pomfrey. Or with me, recently. You've no real life to speak of, Potter. Don't pretend you do."

"Uh-huh, Malfoy, whatever you say...but, er, leave off now, alright? I have been busy."

"Mmm," Malfoy nodded, allowing the claim. "Alright, Potter. If you say so."

"I do...but I'll tell you," Harry remarked a moment later, contemplatively, as they were peering about them for a handy empty alley from which to Apparate, "I do wish I'd known you were my Veela when we were still at Hogwarts. Saved us all a deal of trouble if I'd managed to talk you over to our side - and I could've used your swotting arse in the D. A., too, damn it! Liked that Serpensortia of yours, I did - and your flying - and your bloody Potions, too. What a ruddy waste of effort - you could've been our secret weapon!"

"As if I'd have ever, Potter!" Malfoy protested, but his fingers clung to Harry, nonetheless, as they turned in place to Side-along back to the Ministry's telephone booth, having finally ducked 'round a damp, dark corner and into what appeared to be a deserted loading dock in the dim light. "Ever, in a million, billion years given you and your ragtag little Army a helping hand. Hah! You wish!"

Patient Name

Age

Gender/Descriptors
Date of First Treatment

Diagnoses

General Health

Prognosis

Pertinent Additional Data

Potter, Harry

24, 7 months

Male; eye colour: green; hair colour: black; height: 5'7"; weight: TBD; Magical Stats: see Ministry notes, Auror Files, Health Personnel

April XX, 20XX

Veela Mate, UnMated

Excellent

Poor, if not Mated

Saviour (see Spell Damage); History of prior abuse; Mate: Malfoy, Draco (Veela)

Case Notes: Week 2

As noted previously, Mr Potter was completely unaware of his status as Mate to Mr Malfoy, Veela. This complication results in a shockingly immediate need for direct instruction in sexual situations involving both Veela and males, as Mr Potter has confessed no known prior relations with Wizards, either. In fact, the patient appears to be amazingly underexposed to any sort of sexual contact, given his age and state. However, and more positively, Mr Potter also seems resigned to the upcoming Bonding; his spirits are generally high. This may actually be a symptom of denial, though, as his position is time-consuming and demanding and he has mentioned he rarely gets out. Caffeine intake should be monitored, same as with Mr Malfoy, since they both seem to work very long hours. The specialist, Madame D'Argent, has since interviewed the patient (report attached) and concludes he is a bright lad, though a bit dodgy over some of the Veela requirements concerning Mate safety. On a more personal note, I have not ever thought of the possibility of these two boys feeling a mutual attraction, but I must admit, there is much sense to be found in it. There was a great deal of unnecessary altercation between them when they attended Hogwarts and that leads me to wonder whether there might have been more to it, subconsciously. It is also increasingly puzzling that there was no overt manifestation of Mr Malfoy's sexual interest in Mr Potter at a much earlier date. I shall again examine Severus's notes and consult with his portrait, before I meet officially with either of these young men again. Albus may also have some light to shed on the situation.
Chapter Summary

Author's Note: This fic recounts the case files of a set of two patients. It is organized to reflect the countdown of days before a certain, very specific day of reckoning, i.e., 'Bonding Day'…or so one of the patients chooses to think of it. Rather similar to the countdown used in WWII for the Normandy invasion, actually. It's a fancy of Potter's and a device of the authors, but suffice to say it's a way to organize events sequentially in time. I use the 'Plus' to indicate the days remaining prior to the event, alright?

Week 4 (B-Day Plus 24)

"And you understand that it is Mr. Malfoy's inalienable right and responsibility to remove any perceived danger to either you or your Bond with him, Mr. Potter, even at the cost of a life? Any life?"

"I do, Ma'am."

"This, despite your sworn oath to the Aurors, Mr. Potter? If Mr. Malfoy eliminates a Witch, Wizard or Creature whom he perceives as threatening, you realize the act is fully condoned? By both the Veela Nation and the Wizengamot, Mr. Potter. For they are fully in cooperation with us on this subject. It is our law."

"I do. Y-Yes."

It was the third in the series of Harry's interviews with the Veela Council. He'd passed muster thus far, albeit with some rather intensive coaching, but Malfoy himself had stumbled over this part. As had Harry, at first. It went against the grain, rather, for both of them. There was the Code to think of - and then Harry's own moral compass.

Malfoy's, too. The bloke wasn't a bad chap, not deep down, nor at all untrustworthy or disloyal; he'd never have been elevated to his current position if anyone who was anyone truly believed so. Certainly Kingsley and Arthur trusted him implicitly, and he'd made definite fans among the Unspeakables - though they'd never admit it, the sods, as they were Unspeakables. Squirrelly lot, them.

"And you are in full and conscious compliance with the Laws and ancient Magic of the Veela, Mr. Potter, as they apply to Wizarding Mates? You have read our histories, learnt our stories? Understood the consequences? Accepted your myriad duties? Mr. Malfoy's life is dependent upon it, Mr. Potter."

"He's still in process, Ma'am," Malfoy butted in hastily, "of absorbing all of it - there's a great deal to digest and we both hold full-time positions within the Ministry - but I'm convinced that by the time we need apply any of this, he'll be - "

"Thank you, Mr. Malfoy, but your input is not necessary at this time. Please be seated and keep
still. Now, Mr. Potter, let us continue."
"Potter, come here."

"Oh, fuck off, git! I'm busy!"

"Two minutes, Potter. Two lousy little minutes of your time, enough to make the Veela happy. That's not too much to ask. Is it?"

"But—but. Oh, fine, you twink! But not—not here! In the break room, at least!"

"Three minutes, then, as you're insisting on relocating us both and now I'm to be delayed. I have a schedule as well, Potter."

"Oh. My. Bleeding. Gods, Malfoy!"

"Shut up, Potter. And come along, now—do. Step lively, if you want your privacy so badly."

"You! You!"

It was a matter of thirty seconds to reach the staff's cramped retreat; Malfoy closed the door smartly behind them and instantly reached out a shapely hand.

"...Er...what're you doing, Malfoy?" Harry stared down at his knuckles, abruptly entwined with tight white ones.

"Holding your hand, Potter. Obviously."

"...Huh. I can see that, Malfoy. It's, um...a little strange, isn't it?"

"Yes. Definitely. Do stop with that jiggling, Potter. Thirty seconds, now."

Harry frowned blackly at their clasped hands but held steady. Malfoy's fingers were cool and dry, in contrast to his own damp ones. It felt...it was abnormally hot and humid in the mini-kitchen. Harry contemplated sending a memo to the elves about it.

There had to be something off with the air.

"You're, er, breaking my hand, you know?" He winced.

Malfoy glanced at him from under his pale lashes. "Sorry."

"Um...s'alright. I guess." Harry parted his lips to say more, but Malfoy forestalled him.


"This is the weirdest thing—"

"Five. Hang on...and zero. There, all finished, Potter. Thank you."

"Oh, but—" Malfoy released him, with no fanfare whatsoever. Dropped Harry's wrist, as if it was a hot potato.
"You may go now."

"But, I—" Harry flapped the assaulted hand, as it was tingling. And he wasn't quite grasping the point of it all, either. What had that proved? Was it to do with the Veela—another essential requirement he'd somehow not picked up on when Madame was beating their ear over do's-and-don'ts? An explanation would be very much appreciated. "But—you—um…what? Is that all you wanted, Malfoy? Should've said so in the first place, then!"

"We're scheduled for this evening, don't forget." Malfoy didn't bother acknowledging Harry's remark; was half out the staff room's doorway before Harry could complete his series of startled rapid blinks and thus looked—in Harry's skewed view—much as if he'd been caught posing before some Muggle stop-action camera. Which was strange, also, like everything else this past five minutes time. "Seven, sharp," Malfoy prodded, lips thin and folded tight at Harry. "I'll be at your desk promptly to collect you. Don't lag over your casework."

Harry huffed at him, ill-tempered, falling back to rest his spine up against the lino'd countertop.

"I won't forget, Malfoy! Haven't yet, have I? I surely think I can manage to recall I've got a dinner date. Not a total blithering idiot, here. Don't even need a ruddy notepad to remind me of it, either—not like some gits I know!"

He expected a routine scowl or, at the very least, a frosty sneer, but it didn't come. Malfoy only regarded him carefully, eyes even more opaque than usual, and nodded blandly—the barest drop and lift of chin.

Vanilla, Harry thought, cocking his head curiously and returning Malfoy's regard with a challenging glare. A vanilla veil on him, all over him, like custard pudding—where's the fire? His fire? That's weird—

And so was the extended lack of conversation. Harry flushed, feeling very out-of-sorts. And guilty as well, though he'd no idea as to why, exactly. That certainly made no sense at all!

"Ah…look, you're positive that was all you needed?" Because, really, it seemed such a small requirement, holding hands. Didn't Veelas need more—more?

"Yes, Potter. That was all, thanks. A good day to you."

His Veela stepped neatly in reverse, his pristine head high, and turned sharply away, an invisible air of hurry settling about his Ministry robes. Harry only barely noted the last fleeting glance cast his way, a guarded peek over one black-clad shoulder only, before Mister Unspeakable Malfoy disappeared swiftly from Harry's purview, commencing an effortless glide down the grey Ministry hallway towards the lift bank, no doubt.

"Right," Harry called out after him, though proper manners were the absolute last item of importance in his jumbled thoughts. "Er—you, too, Malfoy! Take it easy, mate. Go boggle some bad guys, alright?"

"…Stay well, then," Harry's sharp ears heard the receding murmur of cultured syllables, and almost didn't, now the canteen door was left agape once more and the bustle of Aurors resounded to its normal level of frenetic energy. "Laters, Potter."

"That," Harry informed the deserted break room, with its scattered mugs and crumbs and its ancient burbling pot of brewed hot beverage—not proper tea, that shit, but excellent for bucking up a flagging Auror, still—
and its stale doughnuts in a crumpled brown paper packet, spilling icing sugar. He caught one up and took a bite, chewing meditatively. "That," he enunciated thickly, "was just sodding, bloody mental! Fancy."
"Potter, brilliant. There you are; how convenient. Come along."

"What? What, Malfoy? I'm on my way out the door! I'm already behind as it is!"

"Two minutes, Potter; that's all I require." He was pushed and shoved into the Staff break room willy-nilly. Grabbed and hugged, hard. "Right, this is good. Hold still."

"Argh! Let go! And look here, Malfoy, Ron's waiting and—and can we do this later? This whatever? Because I have to go now, right now—what. Are. You. Doing?"

"Embracing you, Potter. I should think it's bloody obvious."

If one discounted the business-like grip attached to either side of Harry's ribcage, right beneath his armpits (Malfoy had his too-long arms wrapped practically twice around Harry, grabby git), one would think this was perhaps a...a what? A prank? Hugging a bloke nearly to death in his own workplace? Anyone could walk in!

"Are you joking with me, Malfoy?" Harry demanded, frankly appalled and rearing back as far as he was physically able. "Let me go! I'm already late, prat—I've just told you! I've a Portkey waiting! And Ron—Ron's not going to be happy!"

"Potter. This is hardly even a blip in your so-busy schedule. You can afford two short minutes. Stay still; I'm nearly finished. Just...need...a little more."

"Oi!"

Malfoy had buried his pointy nose in Harry's hair, which had been tamed with water that morning but was already starting to tuft up. In another hour, it would regain his usual style: hedgehoggy, with a dash of club spike where his fringe tended to cowlick in two wildly different directions. Then the long slow slide into afternoon would begin and Harry would ruffle it continuously as he pored over his desk and attended meetings, leaving locks tumbling where they would. The end result was - so said Hermione, his self-nominated lifestyle consultant - not too, too awful, overall. And he should also be making an effort to go out more often and meet some new people, read social people, just as Hermione also advised, but right now Malfoy was holding him up (literally!) and he was late, late, so bloody late-!

Harry gulped, twisting. He couldn't meet new people—not now Malfoy had chosen him! And besides—he was so late at the moment, it was nearly criminal! Ron would flay him!

"Erm, that's it. Leave me alone! Get off, Malfoy! You're a fucking weird git, git, and we should discuss that at some point, but not now, 'cause I'm out of here now. Right. This. Minute. Gotta dash!"

"Really, Potter." Malfoy only clung a little tighter, which was very unlike him. "You don't say."

"Bastard!"

Harry firmly disengaged himself, stopping just short of using a localized Stinging Hex on Malfoy's grubby paws where they squeezed him like iron clamps. Twisting away, he brushed down his
robes with a huff and turned to flee.

"Rude, Potter. I was just done with you." Malfoy's rich sneer caught up with him mid-stride. The door was inches away and already swinging open invitingly.

"Mental, Malfoy. Totally." Harry swiveled back solely to glare a good-sized hole in his companion's forehead. He tapped his own, right on the scar, meaningfully. "Youare, git. Very mental. So...goodbye now, yeah? I'll be sure not to visit you in Thickey if the Healers come along and bag your barmy, huggy arse in the meantime. Good riddance!"

"Not nice, Potter." Malfoy harrumphed, nostrils flaring in a face gone paler than the norm. "I've an excellent reason for touching you, Potter. You'd know it, too, if you kept up with Pomfrey's many Owls. I keep shoving them onto your pitiful excuse for a desk, you know, in vain hopes you'll look them over, one day. Might spare them the odd glance, now and again; learn something."

Harry glared.

"Sod off, Malfoy! Not at work, I don't. That's entirely separate, the Veela what'sit. You know that."

"Hmm. Is it?"

"Yes! Yes, it is, Malfoy, and I thought we'd agreed on that one point, at least. Look, I can't stay to talk—have to go!"

Malfoy merely returned Harry's wildly rolling gaze calmly, steady on as a lurking heron eying a likely looking toad.

"Fine, then. Be off, I won't keep you."

"Well," Harry snorted. "Yes—fine! Super! Fantastic! Now you've delayed me, Malfoy! Thanks so much for that!"

"Mmm...right, Potter. Have a nice day, now."

Harry growled.

"Have a nice day?" he demanded, entirely infuriated. "Have a freaking nice day? Is that all you have to say to me, Malfoy? Do you even know what our Ronniekins is capable of? Do you?"

"Huh," Malfoy shook his head faintly, the whisper of an amused curl just brushing his lips. "I've some idea, yes. What of it?"

Malfoy did, however, incline his head faintly even as he folded his offensive arms firmly across his black-robed chest, like a sodding shield. Harry, drawn in by memories and not all of them at all decent, growled at his old acquaintance wordlessly, bewildered still by the unexpected hug but far more ruefully focused on his own dire tardiness. And his partner's likely piss-poor reaction.

"He'll bloody hound me, that's what," Harry snorted. "No—he'll be worse than that, prob'ly. You do recall therapy, don't you? He never lets anything go, Ron. Never!"

"Really." Bland as morning porridge, Malfoy's gaze. He seemed completely uncaring. "I see. Go then, why don't you?"

"Bah!" It burst out of Harry, driven by the unexpected hug, the terrible feeling of being late, late, late, like Muggle Alice—and something...more. Some inexplicable feeling, that had to do with
Malfoy, naturally. "Easy for you to say!"

…If only because all inexplicable feelings could be linked back to Malfoy, in the end.

Still, Harry absolutely abhorred being delayed catching a Portkey; Ron grumbled something awful when it happened, and wouldn't cease no matter how much Harry apologized. He hated more the pointless bickering with Malfoy, strictly because it was ruddy pointless. They had to rub along now, didn't they? And work was work!

He pouted.

"Could at least say you're sorry, git."

At which point, the annoying git himself broke the lingering tension, spreading his arms wide and flapping his long hands at Harry, shooing him off. Chuckling in a raspy sort of way that sent a thrill creeping straight up Harry's rigid spine, like wildfire: an undeniably sexual thrill.

"Aren't I even owed an apology?" Harry demanded ill-naturedly, now firmly set on what was owed him. He'd never been a morning person and testy didn't even begin to describe the altered set of this especial morning. "For making me late, Malfoy? 'Cause that was you—all your doing. You and your silly hugs, arse! How am I supposed to explain that to Ron, I ask you?"

Malfoy humped a careless shoulder under his severe black robes.

"Tut. Very well, then, Potter. I apologize. And as that'll be all I require of you; for today, at least, please be off with you, spit-spot. As you've got your knickers in such a twist over it."

"—sodding!—"

"Though do have a care, Potter," Malfoy went on, as if Harry weren't cursing a minor blue streak by the door, "when you take in that Falco Gondawissing, Senior."

Harry ceased cursing and stared. Since when did Malfoy check up on his schedule?

"He's an advanced Legilmens. A quite powerful one," Malfoy shook his sleek head over it, with a decided air of 'what can one do?' "Old school trained, that one. On level with Professor Snape, I should think. Father mentioned his prowess to me, years ago. Was never a Death Eater, per se, but likely he's still as good at Dark Magic as ever was. Keep an eye peeled."

"Bloody hell! What are you, Malfoy—my mum?"

Harry stomped deliberately as he spun away on a heavily planted heel, the soles of his uniform boots smacking the ancient lino. His trousers were uncomfortably tight, to top all else—and for no good reason other than chemistry! Bloody Veela! Bastarding Allure!

"You don't have tell me that, Malfoy! I'm the fucking agent assigned! I've read the case file on him—Merlin, I wrote it! I know all there is to know about your Gondawissing Senior and what exactly to do with him, once I've got my hands on him—and, git-for-brains, I'm a full seven minutes off schedule now instead of just the mere two, all thanks to you!"

"Touchy, touchy," Malfoy sniffed. "You make too much of it. I was only acting as our Healer required, for my health. We are to step up on the bodily contact, Potter. And, all the same, do have a care. Your skin is my skin, remember? I expect you to take decent care of it. No slacking."

Harry groaned aloud, he was so frustrated. Couldn't Malfoy see he was already distracted? That this
is wasn't helping? That the last possible item he needed shoved up his nose at the moment was discussing the finer points of their unwilling relationship?

"Piss off, git!" he snapped. "And don't go all touchy-feely on me later, either, you freak. I've two more on deck after this and all the effing arrest forms to fill out for Gwendoline, after! Triplicate, schmiplicate!"

He ran for the door, still scowling.

"And Ron—don't forget Ron, Malfoy. You know he's likely breathing fire right now, waiting for me!"

"Poor, poor, put-upon Auror Potter," Malfoy sneered lightly, from behind him. But Harry couldn't stay to get any deeper into it with the annoying prat...though perhaps he should've. He'd have learnt something. "Slaving away like the dedicated employee you are. What a hero."

"Malfoy!" Harry clamped his jaw shut; he'd no time to trade insults. "Malfoy, shut it. Don't push me."

"But enjoy your fleeting glory, do," that irritating voice carried faintly as Harry slammed loudly out of the staff room and pelted down the corridor at speed, "...to the very fullest, Potter, as it's the last you'll be in charge of, this lot. Madame's rather adamant about that strictly no-touching clause, Potter. She's already Owled Daw—"

Malfoy's annoying, penetrating jeer had happily fading away in the far misty distance, as Harry was already halfway to the Portkey Room and rapidly accelerating. He didn't catch the rest—and was damned glad of it. Talk about not mixing work and—er, work? Not pleasure, certainly.

...Because wasn't this situation with Malfoy and his bloody Veelaness just more work, really? Another job he must accomplish? Another problem that required fixing?

He arrived breathless and panting, and cringed under his best mate's nasty eyeroll.

"Oh, fucking Merlin, now what?" Harry demanded of Ron not a half hour later. He scowled at their first so-called 'criminal' arrest of the day, an elderly Witch who would've looked more at home selling crocheted cozies in a tea shop than shilling dubious items in Radik Alley. "Now I'm not supposed to do my sodding job? Bugger this shit for a lark!"

"Healer's orders, mate, sorry," Ron shrugged. "Straight from Pomfrey's Owl to Dawlish's ear while I was standing 'round with my thumb up my arse, waiting for you. And you know how Pomfrey is when you cross her, Harry; more than my life's worth, thanks. You just stand over there in the safe corner and read the nice Witch her Rowan & Romulus Rights like a good little Veela Mate. No hands, now. Wand only."

"Fuck you, Auror Weasley!" Harry stormed, tromping over to his new place of work, stuck on the sidelines. "And the—!"

"And the Cleansweep I rode in on," Ron continued, neatly Incarcerating the alleged, a Miss Prudence Picksnit, on charges of hawking illegally Charmed Muggle hare's feet from a broken-down street cart. "Yes, yes, Harry. Whatever. Here, go on. Do your bit, will you? We're still running behind, you know? Like to park my arse in my own bed sometime tonight. Maybe even have supper with m'wife, at a reasonable hour, like a normal person. Not like some bachelor who's all the free time in the world to laze about and meet up with his boyfriend whenever he feels like, snog him in the corners and whatnot, clog up the staff room with random acts of PDA—"
"Git! Fine, fine!" Harry stifled Ron's irritating whining by dint of shouting over it. He turned to glare at their arrested perpetrator, who was waiting rather patiently, really. And mightily interested in the by-play, too, judging by the greedy look on her sweet little old lady face. Harry scowled at her, instead, feeling very cross indeed. "Ahem! In the name of the Wizengamot and the Ministry, we hereby advise you, Miss Prudence Blackstorm Picksnit, spinster, of Fifteen Sloe Close, Chronic Alley, of intent to..." Harry dutifully carried on with his required drone, all the while fuming mightily. "...and to wit and hereforth, in accordance with the..."

He'd bet his second best broom repair kit Malfoy was out there, right this very minute, doing Unspeakable things to apprehended offenders, Unspeakably! All probably involving a great deal of Unspeakably miscellaneous touching and hands-on handcuffing and maybe even some fisticuffing, too, as necessary! It wasn't fucking fair, now was it? Nothing was fair—or right—or just! Not work—not Ron—and absolutely not this situation Harry'd managed to fall into, not even looking.

Well...damn that prat Malfoy and his inexplicable embraces! Harry would have to take a proper stand, now. Mate or no, he still had a proper job!
"He's so - so bloody bloodless sometimes, Hermione!" Harry whined and moaned drearily, only a day after, arms wrapped tight and morose 'round his kneecaps and mistreated person busily rocking away in foetal on his corner of the extra-elongated sofa. Thankfully it was Sunday and thankfully work was not an issue. He couldn't have faced Malfoy even Imperius'd, he was that...that perturbed!

"And bloodyminded!" It was all bubbling out of him, like ichor from a squashed bug. "Like a walking stick insect, he's that unemotional about it! A praying mantis! Comes right along to Aurors any old time he pleases, nabs me out of the thin air; fucking embraces me, Hermione! Me! Folds me right up, like a bloody, ruddy envelope and then goes right off on his merry way, cool as an effing icicle as if it's all in a day's work for him! Before anyone and everyone, Hermione - it doesn't seem to matter!"

"Harry."

"I can't abide it, that - that whole 'la-di-dah' attitude of his, like it's nothing more than minor inconvenience to him, when it's dismantling my life - piece by piece! He's making me out a laughingstock, Hermione! The other Aurors laugh at me! Ron laughs at me! Seamus is teasing me over him - Seamus!"

"Erm, Harry...Harry, maybe - I mean, Malfoy's a Veela now, Harry; your Veela. He rather has to touch you. You know what happens if he doesn't, right?" Hermione shook her head and made that 'I'm so sorry, Harry' face of hers, but Harry wasn't finished. No, not by a long shot.

"Of course I know what happens, Hermione! But the fucker's just as calm as calm could be, even when he's ruddy hugging me - hugging me, Hermione! - like it's all well and good and perfectly normal - but it isn't! This is my job, Hermione! My bloody goal and dream and exactly what I've wanted to be doing all my entire life and he's making me seem a bloody arse at it! And I've to deal with him acting this way - this 'la, la, la, fuck you, Potter' way - for the rest of my life, Hermione, just acting as he pleases, whenever he pleases! That's exactly what he does do, too; all he ever does! Like it's his bloody right, just for being born both a Malfoy and a Veela, Hermione!"

"Harry?"

"Oh! And Merlin forbid we forget that damnable Seventh Son shit, Hermione! Like I even care he's bloody souped up magically. He's still Malfoy!"

"Harry."

"It's unnatural - it's impossible, really. He's impossible - and I can't bear it - and it's not happening again! He's not jumping me again, not at work, at least, damn it all to Merlin's bloody bollocks! Anyone could've have just happened by and seen us, Hermione—anyone, and there he is. Plastered all over me, practically squashing me. It's too much—he's too much. I can't stand it!"

"Oh, Harry, now that's a bit much, don't you think?"

"I do think! I think he's a ruddy freak, Hermione - an utter sport-of-nature! A beast and a freak and a fucking failure as a normal human being! Doesn't even know the first thing about how to - how
to - he's all angles and elbows, and painful, and he doesn't - doesn't!"

"Doesn't what, Harry? What doesn't he do?"

Harry had arrived at a screaming, open-mouthed halt, though. He stoppered himself from sheer self-preservation, pop-eyed and gasping, and vaguely horrified at what he might've been about to spew next, heedlessly. Right before Hermione! Hermione, who did all her acrostics in bloody biro! There, but for the grace of whomever, maybe Merlin, maybe Salazar, he thought gratefully, go I, like a complete whittering nit, whining on over how I'm being hugged in passing by a fucking Malfoy! Improperly!

"Harry?" His friend crinkled her forehead at him, and Harry swallowed hard. "Harry, what? Tell me! What're you thinking?"

"Doesn't even know how to hold a man, the berk!" was what harry was thinking, somewhat stunned. He'd actually been ready to blurt that out without realizing - aloud! As if that were a valid complaint to have about sodding Draco Malfoy! And to no other than Hermione, even worse, who was all about Harry finding himself a 'loving, caring relationship' and who knew the inside of Harry's head like the back of her hand!

Egads! Awkward.

Really! As if Harry did? Know, that is, about holding other men. Er...how to. Well, other than Ron, of course, but Ron was different; they were basically brothers, he and Ron, and the Weasleys all hugged each other like mad, and sometimes half-choked each other, too, kidding around, but that was normal - and Malfoy wasn't; he was all arms at awkward angles and jutting elbows and hipbones; stiff, like, awkward and unyielding, and this was all a load of rancid piss, worrying over why Malfoy didn't touch him as if he really wished to - it was. It was...

"Bollixed up!" he exclaimed finally, recalling his audience. "Shit, Hermione! He is. It is!"

"Really, Harry!"

"It's true. Hermione, you know it's true. I'm not raving for the sake of my health, here."

He shut his jaw with a snap, and resolved himself to say nothing on the subject of proper male-to-male bodily contact, ever, because Hermione would (magically) know. Exactly. What was in his feverish brain, his Veela-turned brain, and likely better than Harry did, in fact.

"Hmm. Well, alright, I do know that, Harry. It's an unusual chain of events, yes, but there's still nothing you can do to alter it...or him." His friend looked as though she wished to embrace him then, specially when Harry pulled a long face, but then didn't, wincing instead and drawing away to the far end of Harry's long sectional divan. Harry earned a very awkward pat in place of the hug he sorely needed, her lightly burnished fingernails only barely brushing the surface of his curled up toes. He scowled, because of course Hermione knew...and was now planning on telling him, in exacting detail.

There were times when he wished Hermione would relax the grey matter, just a bit. Give it a rest, drop the sensible altogether and go for the spontaneous combustion aspect of her nature he knew for fact she kept well hidden, deep inside. T'would be so satisfactory, every now and again, to simply roar and not then automatically expect to be talked out of it.

But then...he loved that she was sensible, at least over him. It was...amazingly comforting. Really.
"You know that, too, if you'd only admit it, Harry," she went on—yes, sensibly. And Harry did, yes, but he wasn't in the mood to admit it, no. And no. "And Malfoy always was the self-contained type, Harry...well, except when he was on the warpath after you - or Ron. Mostly you, though. But that wasn't all that often, really. Remember? Kept himself to himself, Malfoy did. Unless he was telling you straight to your face how he despised you or calling me horrid names or Ron a Weasel, he didn't have much else to say to us, did he? Just went on and on about that horrible father of his and how his Dark Lord would change everything to favour his lot."

"Hah!" Harry burst out, glowering, because that was true, and proved beyond doubt that Malfoy was a git, still, even if he was now a good git. "That's right, Hermione. Just goes to show you how much he knew, doesn't it?"

"Look, Harry." Hermione peered at him uncertainly, tucking an errant curl behind a small ear. "Listen to me; really listen. Pay attention. You have to expect Malfoy not to have altered all that much since our school days, okay? People don't, alright? They are as they are - and they don't change really, ever, deep down. Habits, yes, but not personality. It's called character."

"That's not true, Hermione!" Harry exclaimed hotly. As this, too, was true. The git was proved to be a good git, sod his shimmery silver eyes. Helsinki, damn it! "It is different! Fine! He grew up and fine again, he and Ron - we all, all of us, Hermione, manage to be civil nowadays, even friendly enough, I suppose - and that's far more than we ever were, before! You can't deny that; you were there! You sat in on all those bleeding sessions we had, with Pomfrey and that weird American Healer bloke - what was his name again?"

"Dr. Phileus, Harry, and no, I'm certainly not, Harry," Hermione grinned at him. "Denying anything. Malfoy's absolutely a great deal more palatable these days; admittedly so, but people do grow up, too, as you yourself just said, and they can learn from their mistakes - research proves it. And he's not such an impossible prat now; not anything like what he was, Harry. That's all I'm saying. Had his comeuppance, I expect. Learnt from it, likely. But that's not changing the fact that he's generally always been...er, let's call it 'reserved', Harry. He's had his moments, but for the most part..." she flapped her hands, expressing wordlessly the conundrum that was Malfoy. "You simply have to accept that about him. You'll be miserable if you don't."

"More than - and I am already - but that's still no excuse for molesting me whenever he feels like, bloody arsehole! That's not normal, Hermione. And it's certainly not reserved!"

"Oh, Harry." Another abortive hug (which really would've been quite alright because it was only Hermione and no threat to the Veela) was transformed into a reluctant fingertip pat. Harry curled his toes tighter in utter frustration, clenching them. He moaned and she eyed him sympathetically. "I am sorry, but..."

"And that's another thing," Harry muttered darkly, glaring at his bent kneecaps. "He's got to do something about this situation with you and Ron, Hermione. I can't stand this frigging not being allowed to touch anyone other than him. Healer's orders, my arse! It's driving me spare. I can't even make an arrest, you know? Not allowed! Healer's fucking orders! Ron has to manage bloody everything now! 'Cept the paperwork - of course I'm landed with the paperwork! Sodding useless!"

"Oh! Poor Harry!" Hermione shook her head dolefully, but there wasn't a thing to be done...and they both knew it. "Poor old Harry. That is rough."

"Hah! Tell me about it, Hermione." Harry buried his head in his knees. "Poor pitiful old me. Bloody figures I'd land him for a Veela mate. Sodding figures I even have a Veela mate! I am so fucking doomed."
"Um-hmm. Of course you are, Harry." She petted him again, ever so lightly and fondly, but it didn't help, much.
Author's Note: It was mentioned that the 'mature' parts were wanting thus far in this tale of forced Bonding (hand-holding and banter being sweet and all, but sorely lacking in hard bits that sweaty and sticky), so here—have some! I hope you like. Tiger.

B-Day Plus 20

"Alright then, boys, this is essentially only an introductory practice session, so I don't expect you to go, ahem, 'all the way', or, erm, the 'drop the bomb' or 'do the nasty', as you younger generation like to say."

Malfoy and Potter exchanged glances, both—for once—suitably Unspeakable. Then they nodded, in unison, as this was their old school nurse smiling so cheerily at them, chatting away merrily of pre-shagging.

"Nor is ejaculation at all, er...suitable nor seemly at this early date," Madame Pomfrey shook her grey head to the negative. "Really, we're only hoping to establish trust sufficient for the Bond to take properly and, by extension, you should both always be mindful to, ah, attempt some degree of intimacy outside of these official sessions. That is your, um, take-away assignment, dears. Intimacy."

"Yes, Madame," Malfoy replied dutifully, nodding. "We've been keeping up on that, so far. When Potter cooperates, that is." He scowled. "Which is seldom."

Harry, meanwhile, had been undone by the horrendous mental rifts inherent in the situation. They disturbed him, greatly. His psyche quivered, bruised.

"Oh, Merlin, oh, gods, oh, Hell," he moaned softly, blearily regarding alternately his lovely safe kneecaps and Poppy Pomfrey's latest set of garish diagrammes and procedures, enlarged and projected magically on the nearest white-plastered wall. "D'you see that, Malfoy? Look at it! Fuck me!" Grimacing horribly, he nudged Malfoy's ribs the moment Madame looked away to take up her wand. She liked to use it as a pointer, ensuring neither young man missed a single anatomical detail. "Bloody John Thomas is larger than my head!" Malfoy ignored him, as usual, but that didn't faze Harry. He'd things to say and he bloody well would make them known! "I don't need this, Malfoy; I hate this part! In fact, I abhor all parts, Malfoy! Lessons, schmesshions! Supervised snogging, my arse! Next we'll be wanking off together and she'll be recording it for review! Crikey—she's bloody well pimping me out, Malfoy! Like a common whore! And to you, berk! Is that not horrid? I swear—I'm sick to my stomach. Sick!"

"Quiet, Potter."

Harry moaned again, just under his breath, to add emphasis, and clutched at his middle for good measure, rocking to-and-fro on his corner of the narrow cot. Neurotically, yes, but then it was a
rather neurotic-inducing episode, wasn't it? This lesson. He was certainly feeling that way even if the refrigerated git next to him was not!

Malfoy glared at him, sideways. His lip curled up and he wrinkled his nose, raising it.

"Shush, Potter! She'll hear you."

"I won't!" Harry hissed in return, fiddling with any stray item he could lay hands on—the sheets, the quilt, his kneecaps, which slid about when he gripped them in a very gross manner. Malfoy only snuck another very bleak and dreadfully severe frown Harry's way, eyeing with strong disfavour Harry's relentless fidgeting upon his perch, near the very bitter edge of their shared hospital bed. Madame meanwhile took a cheery moment to smile brightly at the two of them from her preferred station by the private ward's doorway, waving her Lumos-lit wand with all the panache of a pro lecturer. "I won't, Malfoy."

A vast cutaway image of a man's bollocks bloomed into view against the virgin white plaster. Harry winced; Malfoy sighed, inaudibly, shrugging his resigned acquiescence.

"Now, here we have the testicles, or, um, gonads, boys. Bollocks, I believe you call them? These are the organs which produce gametes—the male germ cells—if functioning as they should. If stimulated properly they will begin a tightening action, drawing up against the body and feeling, er...very full. Heavy. Which is a natural result of the sperm, coming together in preparation of issuing forth at a high rate of speed and force and penetrating the..."

Harry tuned that bit out, as it offended his delicate sensibilities, and every other icky word that followed. In sheer self-defense, naturally; no part of his job had ever required that he listen to his school nurse speak of the inner workings of a woodie...nor how to go about relieving one. Malfoy—the acknowledge scholar of the two—merely nodded glumly along as Pomfrey chirped her way through the normal sexually-based engorgement of the genitalia and related.

Harry stopped his relentless rocking after a short time, having noted something odd. As he was still an Auror, despite this little setback.

Usually, Pomfrey didn't care to come too close to them; kept her distance, rather. Harry had noticed it before, in passing, and immediately wondered why that was. Madame usually liked to be upfront and personal with a person's ailments. Not forward, exactly, but...scientifically-minded. She was a Healer to the very core and not afraid of mucking around as needed.

Perhaps it was the sex bit? But no...Harry couldn't imagine Madame being put off just by anything sexual—she working in a boarding school, for Merlin's sake! She dealt, too, with abused children.

Too, it wasn't as if they were about to tear each other's clothes off right this particular moment and dive into the down and the dirty; that git Malfoy could barely manage to brush his dry lips across Harry's still, even after one of their damned dinners out! Pathetic! Who'd ever have imagined Malfoy as shy?

...Mayhap it was the Veela, then. Madame seemed uncomfortable with Veela, even if she attempted to disguise it with heaps of charts and jargon. Veela were notoriously jealous. Their mates were sacred to them, above rubies. They tended to lash out first and ask questions much, much later—if ever. Perhaps Madame was only being understandably cautious, Malfoy being a pretty heady combo, what with all his blood-attributes he'd inherited.

_Huh_...Harry pondered. _Hmmmm_. Perhaps he himself should exhibit more caution around Malfoy? A little healthy fear wasn't a bad thing, necessarily...but, no. It was only Malfoy, after all, and Malfoy...
had proven multiple times he valued Harry's skin, at least professionally. He wasn't the threat in this situation—it was more the accumulated slow-burn of humiliation from these bloody lessons!

Harry sulked through the remainder of Madame's show-and-tell. Quietly, though. He meant no disrespect towards Madame; it was that bugger Malfoy, as always. Always devolved back to Malfoy, one way or another.

Damn it all to Merlin!

"Ready? Lie down, then," Pomfrey blandly requested, genially oblivious to any dark undercurrents running through her most favoured ex-Gryffindor charge. "And, er - begin, if you please, boys. Per the diagram on the wall, thank you. A slow, steady gripping motion, combined with rubbing. Please pay special attention to the foreskin, thank you. And I'll just - ah, I'll be sorting these splinting supplies, boys. Over here. Don't mind me, not at all. Simply behave naturally, as though I weren't in the room. Oh, and—you may pull the curtain to, if you wish. That's fine—anything to make you both more comfortable, yes?"

"Hah! Easy enough for you to say," Harry grumbled under his breath, scowling at his poor hapless knees. He transferred the scowl Malfoy's way, snapping his teeth together. "Comfortable? Hah! Wish I weren't here at all! Right, Malfoy? Smells like Skelegrow and antiseptic here. Hardly mood-enhancing, is it? Urgh!"

"Oh, give over, Potter," Malfoy hissed, toeing off his uniform boots with a jerk and huff. He swung his legs up on the mattress, tugging at Harry's elbow to hurry him along. "Stop your infernal bitching. You act like the whole world's on your shoulders, Potter; such a baby! Think of me, will you? I've to restrain the Veela - the beastie that wants nothing more than to shag your arse through the floor, you ungrateful little git - and that's a damned sight more problematic that it's been up to now, believe me. You have the cake part, Potter - as always! Just lie back and think of Dumbledore, or - or England, or - or something pleasant, will you? Do your damned Patronus spell, if it pleases; I'll do my best not to gross you out with my hand on your dick, you pussy... too, too much. Or with my own bits, since that's what's on today's menu."

"Fuck." Harry went bright red and practically dove for the thin hospital blanket, yanking it over himself and scrambling to finish his disrobing beneath it. "Merlin, don't remind me of your bloody bits, git! Eccch! I have to touch them! Don't wanna!"

"Well...not quite in the flesh, Potter, or to the degree you will be, but soon enough." The prat grinned evilly for a second, but it vanished quickly enough under the glancing slash of Pomfrey's brightly expectant air. Absolutely a robin, Poppy was, Harry thought, and they were the vastly tasty worms to be pecked at and eaten up; a breeding pair, even. Urgh! "Wait for it, though," Malfoy drawled softly, unabashed. "It'll happen soon enough, I'm sure. Bonding's not far away, really. A matter of weeks, now. And we might be forced to demonstrate a dry run soon, with fingers. Hmm. Next time, I imagine. That'd be logical."

"I hate you, Malfoy," Harry scowled. "I hate you loads."


"Piss off," Harry grinned at him, mercurially. "Serves you right, really—forced to fonder me. Haven't you always been more wanting the opposite?"

"Shut it, Potter," Malfoy growled. He motioned with a long hand, impatiently. "Shift your snippy, skinny little arse closer, please. Let's get on with this, shall we? Sooner done, sooner out. I've work
Malfoy—or so Harry had noticed—had actually been in a black mood since their shared morning cuppa in the canteen. Watching his mate-to-be out of corner of his eye as they methodically went about shedding their garb, Harry saw that Malfoy's infamous temper still lingered, unsatiated. But more than that: Malfoy was on edge. Feeling temperamental, really, more than tempestuous. That intense grey gaze of his, lowered to half-mast as Malfoy worked his buttons and unhooked his chained timepiece; it was heavy-lidded and more than a little bloodshot. His features were tight and he was quite wan, even for a man of his fair complexion. And he seemed exhausted, as well as being miffed as a tail-trodden Crup.

But that didn't prevent Harry from twitching the thin Infirmary blanket securely over the tops of his bared hips. There were lines in the metaphorical pavement and deliberately exposing his bits to Malfoy's glowering gaze was one he wasn't crossing—not till forced, at least.

"Fine. Whatever." Harry peered from the faux safety of his useless quilt, curious and perhaps willing to go easy on Malfoy—just this once. Since he could relate, really. "All good, here. You ready, git?"

"Yes," Malfoy beckoned impatiently, clad on in his shirttails and his thin silk pants. The button was undone on them; the flap gapped, providing Harry a view of a pale pureblood Malfoy cock, half-hard. "More than. If you'll just come closer, Potter. I can hardly reach you. Over there."

"Tosser," Harry replied equably and scooted over. "Get that curtain, will you?"

"Fine," Malfoy snapped, and waved a hand. Poppy's form thankfully disappeared from view. Harry sighed with relief, grateful for small favours. "That better for you, Potty? Anything else I can do for you?"

Harry snorted.

No, the more he considered it, the more Harry had to admit his especial Veela was wound tight as fuck-all. He'd assumed they were becoming more at ease with one another as they spent ever-increasing quantities of quality time together; certainly, he was much more...comfortable...in Malfoy's company than he'd ever have thought possible before. When the git let loose, and showed that lurking sense of humour of his, which was hardly ever, really, but, even then Malfoy...was still inherently Malfoy. Severe, contained, unyielding. Wanting every little thing exactly so. Attractive, mysterious—alluring. And apparently coiled closer today than his own pocket watch-works.

Harry couldn't help but wonder what was the cause? Poppy's instruction, perhaps? Pressure from the Unspeakable department? Bloody nerves, because wasn't Malfoy high-strung and Harry knew it, oh so well? Granted, he wasn't exactly pleased with being hauled to Hogwarts Infirmary every two, three days for obbo and an obligatory hour of what amounted to the Wizarding version of couple's therapy, but...still, Malfoy should expect this. He should be prepared for whatever nonsense Pomfrey had in store for them. He'd been the one after Harry not to forget their appointments and double-schedule yet again. He'd been the one waving that bloody QuikQuills of his under Harry's nose and complaining. Harry could be arsed to remember this crap—he'd enough to do, these days; Dawlish had him in charge of all the Aurors' collective paperwork now, sorting through and correcting their errors before it ever got to Gwendoline's desk, as Harry couldn't very well stay on active duty—not and be a proper Mate-in-Training. Couldn't touch anyone, could he? Not even in the course of working—or by accident. Or Malfoy would have a shite conniption on his arse and wouldn't that be utterly grand?

"Grrr!" Harry didn't care to recall Malfoys reaction when he smelt Hermione on Harry's favourite
jersey. It had not been a pleasant moment, that. He shuddered. "Ugh!"

"What, Potter?" Malfoy was certainly sharp as ever, even if he did look like hammered shit. "What's your damage now?"

"Boys?" Madame had turned about again and seemed vastly surprised they weren't already groping down one another's shorts. "Is there a problem? Have you even begun? Because I don't hear anything—and there should panting, I'd think, from the both of you, as your excitement builds. Perhaps some moaning, as well?"

"Fuck, Potter! Get over here! She's waiting on us!" Malfoy gritted his teeth in obvious exasperation. "You are so slow, sometimes. I don't know what to make of you."

"Yes, alright,," Harry shrugged. "Fine, I'm fucking coming. Hold your bloody Thestrals, Malfoy. Impatient arse."

"It's not me, Potter," Malfoy shot him a dangerous look. "It's Madame and you're malingering unnecessarily. Let's just get on with it. Come here."

Harry rolled his eyes and then closed them, taking in a deep, preparatory inhalation of bracing oxygen—Hogwarts air, sweet as it was, scented with chalk and ink and bandages and the memories of his school days. True, this situation he found himself thrust in was far and away different from - and far more uncomfortable than - a casual hand clasp across a dinner table or the unthinking linking of elbows when they strolled through the Park near the Ministry after a shared luncheon of carry-away souvlaki. He shivered in anticipation, goosebumps rising up his arms...and was visited with sudden rebellion.

Fine—he might have to do this, let Malfoy touch his bits, but! He didn't have to roll over, either! If nothing else, he could make fun of the whole bloody process—and keep a little face, as real Wizards certainly didn't bring each other off under the watchful eyes of their old school nurses!

"...Potter?" Malfoy demanded, suspiciously. "What's keeping you?"

"Here we go! Rah - fucking rah!" Harry stuck a random arm in the air, waving it in a mocking cheer. "Go, go, Potter! Go, go, Veela! Let it rock!"

"Oh—my—ancient—gods! You arse! You're ridiculous! Just shut it, Potter," Malfoy harrumphed disgustedly, lips twitching. "Here," he grabbed at Harry's flickering fingers and snagged them firmly, mid-wave. "Put your one sodding paw on my chest like a good boy Hero and stroke me with the other, will you? Forget fucking Quidditch."

"Gods, Malfoy! How horrid can you get? That sounds vile, even if it isn't!" Harry goggled at him, nervousness having slid oddly into a serious case of the sillies. Perhaps it was reaction. He was hard, inexplicably, under the thin coverlet, and he didn't want Malfoy - or Pomfrey - realizing it.

"Ordering a co-worker to stroke you! Bah! Besides, I can never forget Quidditch," he added gravely, blinking up at the thin-lipped Malfoy. "Quidditch is god, Malfoy - you know that. Quidditch is all."

Malfoy quirked his lips at Harry and there was maybe—possibly—the hint of a grin.

"You know, Potter, it can be much more so - er, 'vile', this little exercise of ours. Should I choose to make it so." Malfoy treated Harry to a tiny amused twitch of a pale brow, proving he was, indeed, somewhat human yet...though sometimes Harry doubted it. "Think of this one thing, if you please: it's a measure of my deep and abiding regard for you that you're not flat on your face right now,
Potter, chewing the down from that pillow. Because I could have you there and you'd never know what hit you, Potter."

"Pfft—oh! Ooooh—mmph!"

Harry found himself with a face full of Malfoy tongue and the distinct sensation of a rather unyielding foreign prick jammed cattycorner against his groin.

"Gah! Prick!" Harry's temper flared, obliterating his weird nerves. "Phooey! Malfoy cooties!" He freed himself from Malfoy's full-body grope by sheer main force, jabbing his bedmate on the shoulder sharply for good measure. But he wasn't kidding around - not now! His having a bloody boner was one thing; Malfoy waving his about indiscriminately in Harry's proximity was quite another entirely "Merlin, Malfoy! Keep that sodding thing away from me! I don't need to see your tool till next week - Poppy said so! Through the pants, remember? At least I was listening, git."

"Did she, now? I don't seem to recall that, Potter. I believe she gave us a fair amount of leeway—in fact, Muffliato!" Malfoy, narrow-eyed, twitched the curtain aside the merest amount and slid a careful glance over to their oblivious Healer, who seemed deep in the throes of counting up emptied Potions vials, and then turned his assessing gaze back to Harry. Harry, who promptly suck his abused tongue out at him, wagging it. "Oh, yes," Malfoy drawled. "I think we're safe enough, for now. Oh, and that thing of mine, Potter? It's rather a nice unit, thanks much—so I've been told, at least. Glad you're finally noticing it even exists. I was beginning to believe you were lying through your teeth about having had some, dickweed. Your virginity's showing."

"Yuck! It's pressing into my leg, Malfoy - how can I not?" Harry squirmed, which sent him closer to Malfoy than he'd been before; which had not been his intention - really! "Control that thing—and shift over, will you, for the love of Merlin? A little space, here? I think we've done enough for today's lesson!"

"That's not your leg it's pressing against, Potter, but...er, Dumbledore, remember?" Malfoy shied back, flushing pink and then paling for some reason, and drew his lower extremities well away from Harry's. But he still smirked, the prat, something awful. "Think of Dumbledore—or conjugate Latin verbs, if you must. But don't stop with the chest, either—or my balls; I like those bits. The caressing – it's very nice. And we have to—must—we're required, remember? She won't let us leave till we're finished this. And you do need the practice, Potter. I can feel you do, fumbling-fingers. It's all about dexterity, is it not? Try harder, Potter."

Harry huffed, rolling his eyes something fierce. Still...he kept his hand where Malfoy had forced it to remain, curled right 'round Malfoy's bits and, er, fumbling away at them.

"Please, Potter. Don't have all day to do this, do we?"

"Blimey! So demanding, Malfoy; one would think you never got any! First one thing and then the other and always due yesterday; however do you manage to put up with the rest of us poor mortals?" Harry, recovering himself, ruffled the arse's hair with the hand that had been rubbing Malfoy's nipples, just to distract him. Which distracted him, unfortunately, though he dutifully kept up his required handling. "Er, so...smooth? Hmm? How do you manage that? Mine's always - "

Malfoy, judging solely by the swelling of his cock in Harry's uncertain grip, very much liked that.

"Hmm...the hair is also very nice for stroking, Potter." He abruptly dropped his glare and positively purred, those heavy lids of his drooping slowly. "My scalp is sensitive and, you know? I do believe I might learn to enjoy these lessons more, Potter – if you keep that up, git—what you're doing now. Don't stop."
"Hah!" Harry pulled as face. A supposed-to-be 'degusted' face, but it really wasn't. It was more... curious. Malfoy always left him curious, wanting to know more—no matter what. "You're actually enjoying this! Being bloody petted! Like an animal, Malfoy—pathetic!"

Malfoy cracked a single open and gave Harry a sizzling glance. Then he ginned—dangerously—and shut his eyes altogether.

"What?" Harry wanted to know. "What, Malfoy?"

"Hmm. I am an animal, Potter; don't forget. There! That's it, Potter. I think you've finally gotten it, thank Salazar. My nape is quite tender, too, I find. Try down there, near my collar. But don't tug like that. It's irritating."

There was a slow warmth burning through Harry, starting as far down as his ankles and working its gradual way up through his gut. It left him breathless—much as the matching hand gripped 'round his own dick did.

"I - I rather think you've got that part covered, Malfoy," Harry gasped, and wriggled where he lay. Malfoy was as heavy as sin, and he'd rolled half over Harry as he muttered, pinning him. Now Harry couldn't manage a proper inhalation with the limber weight of Malfoy sprawled atop him - but his rapid shallow panting might also be in reaction to the very obvious sign of Malfoy's interest in him. The git's 'thing' was very nice, yes. Long, hard and thick. And, er...hot.

"Mmm?" Malfoy had his eyes closed still, in Zen mode; he obviously wasn't reading Harry's expression for clues as to what Harry might be alluding to. Harry didn't blame Malfoy a whit for that; he, too, was losing track of the sundries. "Mmm, Potter. Keep it up, I tell you. Harder."

"The sensitivity bit, I meant," Harry muttered gruffly, when he recalled what he was saying, flushing all down his bared chest and shivering. Malfoy's unexpected love of touch left him jittering on the insides; as if he'd had his organs whipped into a froth. "You seem very...very—well. Whatever."

He looked away, seeking refuge in the intermittent view of their Healer, what bits of here he could glimpse through the barely parted bed hangings, occupied with making copious notes on their respective charts. She clearly wasn't minding what they were getting up to in the privacy of the cot —and that lent Harry courage. He rubbed harder, as Malfoy wanted, and added a twist to the tip of Malfoy's rigid prick for fun. And because he liked it himself, when he was wanking—maybe Malfoy would, too. Not that he actually cared what Malfoy liked, but...no need to be chary, was there? They were just two blokes, jacking off together—right?

"And the irritating, as well! You're so - so ruddy prickly, Malfoy, always! And I didn't know you were so – so, um—mmm! Like that! Either! I mean, you're thin as a sodding rake! How can you— it—your cock's—oh, bloody eat more, will you? You're fading away, git."

"Equipped, Potter?" Malfoy, the sensitive yet irritating git, demonstrated his manual dexterity, smoothing fingertips up the unwilling length of Harry's half-hard dick through the thin shield of cotton. Harry wrenched his head back to meet the grey gaze he could feel burning through his temple and stared. The black had contracted in Malfoy's eyes; they were a sea of silvery glitter. "Yes, er. I am well-kitted out in that area, thanks." His voice was like the nubble of velvet against Harry's mental surfaces: soft, sensuous...sexy. "All purest blood Malfoy stock, Potter, all for you - and Veela. Prowess, Potter—and the proper equipment to back it up, too. You won't have to fret over that, at least, no matter how I am, otherwise."

"Ah! 'Kay, yes. That's - that's...very...okay, right, yesss..." Harry's cock was painfully engorged in
just the three rapid blinks, entirely unintentionally; he couldn't stop it, no more than the tide, all
due to that insidious growling voice of Malfoy's. His voice—his smell—the feel of him, hot against
Harry's hands. Did something to him—something chemical, and beyond his control - but
Merlin fuck! He rolled his hips against the cot, unable to stop them, either. Malfoy's roving hand—
the one not reducing Harry to a hazy state-slipped down his tingling torso...which was also a
pleasant development. It tingled—he tingled. It burned—he was a'fire! "Ummm. Oh,
ummmm...Mmm'foy!"

Very broad nimble hands, the arse had, Harry reflected dreamily, his eyelids drifting shut. And
dexterous as hell - no question. They covered him nicely, feeling their way...oooh, like that! - and
roaming. He could, with practice, grow accustomed to - this - this! Yessss!

"Tasty, Potter?" Malfoy had always to sneak in that last word, it seemed. He murmured ever so
snidely-sweetly, bent over Harry with a swoop the next moment and immediately sunk his teeth
into the giving flesh that stretched thin and pliant across Harry's bared collarbone, proving just how
nice it could be, practising trust and building flesh-and-blood relationships from mere medical
diagrammes. Harry gave a wordless little mumble in return, happily arching into Malfoy's gaping
jaw, his exploratory teeth, enjoying the tiny pain contrasting with the smooth sweep of those damp
palms and long, cool fingers.

"Yes, like that, Potter," the git nodded, withdrawing just enough to ghost his lips up Harry's neck,
muttering feverishly when Harry groaned. "Yes, it is. You are, rather. Tasty as ambrosia-duly
noted, Potter. Duly noted."
"Well? How goes it with Malfoy, Harry?"

Ron was all agog, which was faintly sick-making. As were Harry's recent recollections of his 'lessons' with Poppy and Malfoy. Harry shivered uneasily, remembering.

They'd had several sessions with Pomfrey thus far, all very invasive when it came to his personal space and the last two quite physical in nature. Nothing near actual intercourse, naturally, but...it'd been close, for a few moments there. He'd felt this awful urge, and of course Malfoy egged him on, licking various bits of him and sending his hands in places they'd never ventured before in all their schoolboy scraps. Or maybe they had, and maybe Harry had noticed, but there was no fucking way he was Pensieving those blurry schoolboy memories anytime soon. Er, make that ever.

Gods, no! Though there'd been a few very intense scuffles that had left him...wondering. Later.

"...Super. It was, um, good, actually," he ventured, trying like the dickens to be honest about his emotions, as Poppy Pomfrey counselled. "I, ah, put my hand on his dick, Ron. He - um, he pulled me off, not that Pomfrey saw. 'Course, we were expected to—urgh! And—and, Ron? I think I'm going to vomit just from saying this aloud, but it was...really very good."

"That's what Bill says, yeah," Ron nodded blandly, apparently totally jammy with being caught up on all the gory details of his best mate's now basically Veela-driven private life. "Veelas are meant to be awesome, that way."

Harry blinked at his pint, nonplussed. Like all else in his life at the moment, his best mate's reaction didn't quite seem...normal. But—Harry shrugged—whatever.

"Well, hey," Ron grinned, sipping, "good to hear. Glad you enjoyed it, mate. Bully for you, yeah?"

Harry did wonder now and again if perhaps Hermione routinely hit Ron with a double Cheering Charm before they met up for drinks after work, these days. Or not - Ron liked the sex talk, no matter whom it involved. Very visceral, earthy person, Ron was; bad as Seamus, really. Likely that was why they called chaps like that 'salt of the earth'. Be that as it may, Ron didn't mind Malfoy at all really, leastways not after his enforced 'therapy' for anger management. And Helsinki, obviously. Helsinki had been key, yes.

But that wasn't important at the moment, Ron's take on Harry's situation. What was important was that Harry planned on nailing Malfoy with a hard smack straight across the kisser but fierce if the silly arse didn't ease up on his own damned reins right smart. The man was driven. Harry didn't know off-hand if Wizards or Veela suffered from angina, but his particular Veela-Wizard, super-duper charged-up mate was a prime case for it, if ever he'd met one. Sodding workaholic, Malfoy was, and it was more and more evident to Harry - who knew one when he saw one, being one - and who'd become a million times more aware of Malfoy than ever before.

Malfoy was one very intense individual—almost as if he still had something to prove.

Sad to say, but there it was. And likely chemical, too, his sudden innate knowledge of Malfoy's troubles, or perhaps it was only Malfoy's bloody Veela pheromones seeping over.

...It was the little things that gave it away, Malfoy's problem: the way the arse was always, always
parked at his desk, down in the very lowest of lower levels - Unspeakable territory, that - arriving well before Harry did and usually leaving well after, unless they had a date. And then he'd always find an excuse to stop back, the sod, even if it was hours after his usual shift. Then there was his interminable lists of items to be sorted and so forth, all written out on that godawful little Quik Quills pad he carried, the very existence of which sometimes drove Harry utterly frothing when he was in a mood. And, too, there was Malfoy's constant and rather brittle air of jet-fueled efficiency...which worried Harry far more than most of his own worst cases ever had, at least at the moment.

He didn't like this, not one bit. He didn't like that Malfoy was so wrapped up in his job he lived it twenty-four/seven. And he very much didn't like the inevitable inferences as why that was so—why Malfoy had finally tipped over the edge from 'dedicated' to 'mental'. He'd have to ask Poppy. If Malfoy really was seriously ill...

...If it had to do with the Veela.

"You know, in a way," Ron went on blithely, shaking vinegar over the plate of chips they were sharing as he mused, "you're one lucky bastard, Harry. Not everyone gets a Veela all to themselves and they are damned fucking fit, as far as Magical Beings go. Remember when Beauxbatons came to stay with us, that one year? Fourth, was it? Wank material for ages and ages after, I had. And then Krum? Gods! Victor Krum! Everyone gagged for Krum. I hear he's supposed to have some Veela in him on his mum's dad's cousin's side. Hermione's still arsed with me over that, actually."

Harry nodded agreeably, but he could give a fig about Krum.

He'd the right to know about it, as his bloody Mate, Harry should—would! As in...what might happen after if one's destined Veela dropped dead of a fucking work-induced heart attack before one was ever fully Mated? Would he just pine away if the prat keeled over? Or would he move on...eventually? Muddle through the likely horrible fallout and then simply carry on, living what remained of his natural life, as if Malfoy were but a blip on his radar, winked out? Find somebody new?

Harry didn't know. Couldn't know; this was totally foreign, all of it. He should ask Pomfrey, really he should, but...jinxes, yeah? Harry shuddered. Self-fulfilling prophecies, more like...and he certainly didn't require any more of those. Of any sort, ever.

"I mean, everyone wanted Krum, Harry. Surprised you never mentioned it. What was up with that, mate?"

"Oh, fuck off, Ron," Harry sighed, flicking the chip he suddenly had no appetite for off the edge of the greasy platter and across the sticky surface of their table. It rebounded neatly off the vinegar dispenser, spinning like a tiny snitch. "You're not helping."

What if he couldn't? Get over it? The other last thing Harry required was one more person to be forced to regret. Last thing imaginable, that, regretting Malfoy. He'd been able to handle it before, that he might fail—that he might not manage to bring them both to safety—back when Malfoy was a just an unfortunate sod, caught in the wrong place, at the wrong time, in the wrong life. Now, though? Oh, no, not on; so very not on. That he did know, at least.

Harry wasn't losing Malfoy now—not if there was breath left in his body. He'd definitely be speaking to Pomfrey, then. First thing.

"Right, mate, sorry," Ron shrugged and happily ate the beer soaked chip Harry had table-hockeyed. He crunched it, tilting his chin to peer more closely at his friend's face. "But...still. Can't be that
bad, really. It's a handjob, Harry."

"Ron!"

"What? It is."

Patient Name

Age

Gender/Descriptors

Date of First Treatment

Diagnoses

General Health

Prognosis

Pertinent Additional Data

Malfoy, Draco

24, 9 months

Male; eye colour: grey; hair colour: blond ...

April XX, 20XX

Veela, UnMated

Declining

Dire, if not Mated

Mate: Potter, Harry

**Case Notes: Week 3**

Mr Malfoy and Mr Potter seem to be becoming more attuned; much more so than during their early lessons. Much credit goes to Mr Potter in this aspect; Mr Malfoy is still abnormally tense when under observation, as always. Harry, at least, seems have a different attitude. In any case, Mr. Malfoy (Draco, henceforth, as of course this Healer has known the dear boy since he was a mere lad of eleven!) Draco, on the other hand, is exhibiting all the signs of a Veela who is extremely frustrated, physically. Stress-laden, and visibly so: weight loss; sleep deprivation; nervous tics (well Glamoured, of course; Draco was always quite aware of his own grooming, unlike our dear Harry); some small degree of palsy evident in the extremities. Harry seems be only vaguely aware of the physical side-effects of prolonged strain, but he is aware, which is a positive step forward. However, both boys simply must concentrate much more intently on laying down a foundation for their future together as Mates or this Healer feels the Bond will likely fail to take, for lack of connectivity. Madame D'Argent insists the intimacy upfront is crucial for Veela and I agree, at least in theory, especially as Severus has confided to me he actively Suppressed poor Draco with an experimental potion for the better part of four years, consecutive! Naturally, I fear for him, in particular. Severus was forced to act, being under a Geas, and although he's of the opinion the long-term effects of the Suppressant Potion are likely negligible, we can't know that for certain. It
only heightens the sense of overall urgency, I fear, and greatly increases the likelihood of
Draco not surviving this if, for some reason, Harry becomes unable - or unwilling - to mate with
him. To this end, and for Draco's sake in particular, the poor thing, I shall step up my usual routine
diagnostics to four times weekly for Draco and supply him with a tonic, as well as increasing the
bezoars prescribed specifically for mood swings. Caffeine and complex sugars are no longer
allowable, excepting chocolate; a low-stress diet is indicated. And too, I will schedule a private
conference with the boy. Draco is a most intelligent young man, and most attentive. He's always
excelled academically. Perhaps if he is made more aware of his own personal risks and advised to
worry himself less over Harry's duties as an Auror (Harry is deskbound now, thankfully, or so
Kingsley assures me, and completely out of harm's way), he may be able to take the proper steps to
speed along the process on his own. I do so hope so, for his sake and for Harry's; the boy is very
headstrong, still, for all that he's quiet.
"Pomfrey tells me we're not sufficiently intimate, Potter; leastways not for the time we've remaining before the Bond. We need to concentrate, alright? Our buffer's running out." Malfoy nodded his sharp chin regally and flipped a page in his bloody Quik Quills, as if his having declared it officially sorted the issue out.

"Oh...super," Harry shrugged the merest bit, at a loss as to what to say to that. Or do, for that matter. "She's actually measured this? Merlin!" He lifted a shoulder again aimlessly and eyed his tea cup blankly for an instant before glancing up to capture the grey gaze. "Well? What d'you suggest, Malfoy, to prove beyond doubt the strength of our, um, 'intimacy'? Perhaps a blow job in the Atrium proper? Streaking together through Hyde? Oooh! I know—how 'bout sharing the same Firewhisky glass at the Leaky? Our lips might touch by osmosis! That's daring!"

He snorted and Malfoy glared at him, clearly discomfited. He thinned his pink lips and glared sternly.

"I think—as you're asking...more snogging to begin with, and as for you, don't be any more ruddy ridiculous than you need be, Potter! This is not something to take lightly."

"Never said it was," Harry growled—but quietly. "Neither."

"Besides, a certain amount of heavy petting appears to satisfy my needs," Malfoy added, gaze skittering off to the middle distance, "At least from what Madame has noted in her chart. I'm happy with that, Potter. Don't know about you."

"Hey!" Harry bared his teeth. "Don't be shoving the problem off on me, Malfoy!"

Malfoy gamely ignored him. "'Course, it issupposed to be an enjoyable activity, snogging, but you do sometimes seem as if you're about to cry, after." He grimaced, not meeting Harry's furious eyes. "Not a very inviting prospect, that. One would be forced to conclude you don't like me or... something."

"Pfft!" Harry snorted again, louder. "Prat. Of course you're alright, Malfoy. Don't be stupid."

Grey eyes met green again, finally. Malfoy stared very seriously at Harry, as of he wished to convey something crucial, for which there were no proper words.

"I'm not, Potter," was what he said, though, snippily. "I'm actually listening to what our Healer directs us, which is exactly what you wanted me to do, wasn't it? Some nonsense about my appearance, I believe? You were the one causing the flap, Potter. Don't blame me if it comes back to bite you."

"Oi! I'm not!" Harry was quick to deny it. "Or...at least..."

Malfoy only quirked pale brows at Harry and sat back, his arms folded neatly across his natty Unspeakable robes, the ones that suited his colouring to a 'T'. This evening he'd enspelled them to resemble a vaguely Oriental-style light jacket, made of quilted satin, a deep matte black and figured with embroidered Fireballs in silver-gilt thread. He often did that tucking motion to hide his hands, which he'd shove deep into the sleeves—or so Harry-the-Auror had noticed. His hands, which Harry had also noticed had developed something of a distinct tremor. But Malfoy wasn't
weak or feeble. No, it was not that the prat's magic was in any way affected by all this Veelish daftness; if anything, it was surging strongly. Harry could nearly taste it whenever he was within ten yards of Malfoy. It was a tang to the very air—a singing awareness tickling his skin.

He glanced sideways, blinked at Malfoy and took a deep calming breath.

"Well, that's not what I meant. Erm...did she really say that, Malfoy? That we needed to do...more? You know—that way?"

"Mm-hmm, Potter." Malfoy actually grinned at him, which was a pleasant surprise. Pleased immensely for no reason, Harry smiled shyly in return.

"Ah." And then instantly flushed scarlet. The thought of Poppy Pomfrey urging sex upon them still sent his every nerve into a right proper tizzy! "Super, then. Er, right. S'pose we'll have to get on it, then."

"Mmm."

He made the same sound again, moments later, after they'd made their way to the next scheduled stop on their carefully mapped out 'date route'. Malfoy had the habit of organizing all things, including the time he and Harry spent together. Tehre was never a single moment wasted, really. Not with Malfoy at the helm, at least.

At times it bothered Harry...at times, many different items in his life bothered him.

"Mmm..."

Harry immediately glanced away, focussing absentely on the small sea of mostly empty rows before him, all upholstered with stained red mock-velvet and sagging some in the seat bits. That sort of high magical level Malfoy possessed as Seventh Son...well, it was inherently attractive. Sultry—sexy. Like the Veela, but with an added zing to it. And to Harry, at least—or perhaps especially—but then he wasn't exactly...experienced. The only other Wizard he'd ever met with power amped up to that degree had been Dumbledore - who'd certainly never been any sort of teenaged pash for Harry! Well, there was Voldemort, too, but that was just...horrid.

"Look, um. About that."

He squirmed uncomfortably in his seat (which was only marginally worth sitting upon, having been flattened by years of Muggle arses over its extended lifetime) and considered charming it into a proper armchair. But that wouldn't do—the Muggles would surely notice, even in the intimate gloom of the theatre.

He and Malfoy were presently attending the local Muggle cinema in Knightsbridge, and, at the moment occupied with waiting out mostly patiently the opening prevues and credits of some run-of-the-mill action-adventure flick they'd both agreed earlier seemed intriguing. They'd been planning to take a late supper, after, and then the idiot git had murmured unintelligibly that he might—ahem—check back in with the Third shift duty officer over some Unspeakable business Malfoy had left bubbling on his mental back burner.

Harry scowled at the innocent Muggles seated before him, his heated gaze doubtless stinging their napes. He was appropriately irate, being Malfoy's intended mate and all. Leaving a date to pop back to his job? How rude, really—and how ultimately unnecessary. Even Malfoy was not indispensible!

Workaholic freak—that was Malfoy,still! Despite his separate private appointment with Pomfrey to
discuss his declining health; despite how apparent his needy Veela nature had become these last weeks, he was still the same stubborn git as always was—and Harry wasn't pleased by it. Oh, no. Harry had been hoping to dissuade him from returning to the Ministry this evening; perhaps even convince him to go home to his damned pile of expensive rocks and have a good sleep, but...no. Malfoy had nimbly avoided the question, sod him.

"Bah!" Harry couldn't help the small noise escaping: Malfoy frustrated him so, at times.

"Yes, Potter?"

Harry twisted about and grabbed at a handful of melty chocolate malted sweets from the open box situated on Malfoy's lap, simply to have something to do with his fingers, as they seemed to want to curl up and bury themselves in the pockets of his denims. The brush of his nails against what was undisguisably a raging erection poking nearly through Malfoy's trousers did sodding nothing for his poor nerve-endings.

Harry gasped involuntarily.

This. This was all —no! Not a'tall everwhat he'd rather naïvely expected from dating and marriage! Oh, the dating bit was fairly routine: catching flicks, dining out, trotting off to museums and galleries in each other's company. Parks, bistro's, shopping, chatting, drinks at this club or t'other - all very much the usual. It was the company that had him so - so bloody buggered: this man whom Harry had...

Whom Harry had never once even considered romantically!

...He didn't think. Well, er, um. A few stray notions surfacing here and there when he'd been all of fourteen or fifteen weren't exactly worth mentioning. And there'd been Gin, too. Sheds preoccupied the bits that weren't struggling to survive back when Harry was a teenager. Not that he'd thought all that much about dating and marriage then or later, after it was over with Ginny, after the end of the war. No. No, he hadn't, decidedly. He'd thought very often about surviving, at first—almost solely. As expected. And then he'd thought seriously about not surviving. Also par for the course, given the circumstances. After that, he'd thought about getting off, which was normal. Human. Male.

And sometimes his mind would stray to the idea of getting off with others, when Hermione nagged at him...maybe lots of others. People from bars and clubs, people from parties. Not Malfoys, and not a bloke he saw every day in the office. Merlin, he knew exactly what Malfoy looked like at seven in the fucking morning after pulling an all-nighter on a project! Stubbly, hollow-eyed, twitchy. That was hardly...he was not. Malfoy wasn't. New, nor intriguing - nor particularly exciting. Not as a complete stranger would be...or should be, had Harry ever had a moment and the actual inclination to find out for himself.

Well, none of this was what Harry had been expecting, to put it bluntly. He'd been working, for Merlin's sake - he hadn't really thought beyond that. But still...there were a few small points in favour.

'Honestly, Harry," Pomfrey had urged him, just a day or so previous, 'the burden's rather squarely on you, dear, especially as our boy Draco is very much a closed-mouthed individual,' and Harry had experienced a flash of ready guilt when she'd said that. And anger - at Malfoy, of course, who'd taken to hiding his fingers just because they trembled! Hades in a handbasket, Harry's whole body had taken to trembling periodically and it wasn't exactly what he'd signed up for when Kingsley leaned on him to cooperate to his fullest extent, three weeks ago. He'd never, in his wildest dreams, anticipated this!
"Potter!"

Harry jumped two feet straight up, thoroughly startled. He turned wild eyes on his companion. Malfoy glared him, tapping his fingernails on the sweets box, looking expectant. Harry recalled he’d finished his previous sentence—er, oops.

"What! What? Oh, yeah. Um. What I meant to say, Malfoy, is I, er - I really actually like the, um, heavy petting, but."

"But?" Now Malfoy seemed to look a bit squidgy. Cagey-like, as if he was concealing something. Harry glared at him, his anger not far from the surface.

"Ah...I've some issues that maybe Madam's not mentioned to you?" His stomach twisted as he dragged his thoughts back to his goal of the evening. Had needed to accomplish, before this all went any farther than it already had. "Maybe, maybe...I should probably," he shrugged. "Tell you. Now."

No response.

Malfoy simply watched him for a long, silent moment, not reacting, until Harry at last flushed a brilliant red, and joggled his knees around. His chocs squished in his palm, having oozed into liquid from transferred heat. He licked his lips nervously before raising his besmirched hand and absentmindedly mouthing at the smear dribbling sticky past the squeeze of his knuckles.

Malfoy caught his breath, a muffled gasp, and his eyebrows climbed high on his narrow face. Harry wasn't exactly...precisely. Well. This wasn't familiar territory they'd ventured into. He licked his palm, stalling.

Beside him, a mere inch away, Malfoy groaned almost inaudibly, and the intense stare cut off abruptly as he squeezed his eyes shut and turned swiftly face-forwards to the white glow of the cinema screen - but Harry heard the faint note of anguish, nonetheless. It both shocked and startled him—why was Malfoy so off-kilter?

Harry took it as a sign of Malfoy's unwillingness, too. Git likely had read about it, about him, his own particular history—and this was likely pointless, Harry concluded: his stupid notion he should be so blatantly honest and open with the git. Likely the last thing Malfoy wanted was him slobbering out his...issues with intimacy. Malfoy wouldn't be interested, even if he were Harry's Veela. That sort of intimacy really didn't enter into it. Did it?

Well, fine. That suited Harry.

He thinned his chocolate-smeared lips to a narrow line; waved the fistful of chocs fretfully, nearly clipping Malfoy's nose.

"Or not, if you don't care to hear it, Malfoy. We can just drop it, too. You probably know everything there is to know about me already," he grumbled nastily, and proceeded to tongue round the edges of his curled hand, lapping up stray sugar and cacao. Chocolate really was soothing in stressful situations; bless Remus for impressing that firmly on Harry's mind. And may his old friend rest in peace, his issues with life sorted. Harry was not so fortunate. He scowled. "It's certainly been broadcast, my life. Everyone knows bloody everything about me—or thinks they do, at least."

"Actually...that'd be a treat, Potter." The chin swiveled back in Harry's direction. Grey eyes snapped open and Malfoy replied in his usual dry manner - and ever so politely, too, as he was no
longer audibly groaning over Harry's excess of sharing, the berk. And that—somehow, in some way—irked Harry, too: Malfoy's willingness. It seemed so...forced. So...expected. "Ah. Yes, well, if you did care to relate to me the details, in your own words, I'd appreciate it." The git's air was once again perfectly at ease, the so-parfait knight, but he'd his knees budge up tighter than ever, though. They were camped together and his fingers were also clamped, round the chocs, knuckles white. Harry noted out of the corner of his eye. In fact, the chocolates box was in serious danger of spilling everywhere, cocked at a quite dangerous angle. "Honestly, Potter," Malfoy added, with a little choke to his voice Harry had never heard before—ever. "We're supposed to be practicing it. Trust building, eh? So, er—speak to me. Please."

"Meh," Harry was not so sure he was willing, now. He shrugged, and returned to licking his fist. "Hmm."

"No, really, Potter. I'd, er, be honoured."

Blond hair lifted as Malfoy bobbed his chin, emphatically. The git sounded so sincere, Harry found himself rather impressed. He leveraged his mobile face, too, the wanker, the lines of it altering substantially from polite interest to a burning desire to hear. Harry was treated to a very unusual Malfoy expression, one he'd never before witnessed: an ex-Slytherin exhibiting openly what counted as ready sympathy. That tentative half-grin and that elegantly arched brow; the confiding drop of his chin could be nothing else but comradely. Every part of Malfoy's person fairly shrieked of his concern for Harry—his intensity of empathy.

...Well, Malfoy might be acting out 'empathetic', perhaps, given that Malfoy had his own pock-marked prehistory to boast of...but it wasn't pity, at least, he was feeling. Displaying, rather, for Harry's suspicious eyes. Which was brilliant, because Harry would have to hex him if he dared show Harry such a paltry thing as pity.

"I would. Really. Tell me." Harry cocked his head, considering it. Tricky, it was, trusting Malfoy—though of course he trusted Malfoy...at work.

But, logically, Harry's old rival had access to all Skeeter's many stories about Harry; those he hadn't arranged for in the first place, that was! Absolutely, too, Malfoy was aware of Healer Pomfrey's theories on the nature of abuse from the inside and the out, having been there himself—in that same situation of victimhood. But his usual toffee-toned, spoilt rich-boy accents reflected none of the heaped up concern (real or bosh!) Harry had come across elsewhere, from other people, when they reacted to him and his stupid 'Boy Who Lived' shit. ...No, to a passing stranger, Malfoy would seem just as usual: cool and contained.

It was...just... his expression—or so Harry decided. A bit off, like so, and his fingertips, too, curling slightly inwards, with a hint of banked fury on Harry's behalf; oh! and there was that one eyebrow...and even all those small clues were still vastly subtle to the eye: a tilt here, a twist there, a tooth resting on a lip - the exact way his chin firmed and the precise gleam the grey eyes Harry had a peripheral view of. True, Harry could perceive—could detect and extrapolate—what was likely running through the git's head easily enough, through the veil of gleaming hair that trailed down across Malfoy's brow and his striking eyes: build trust. Build Trust, in great big screaming caps, like a banner. As per Pomfrey—as per the Veela imperative. But that and the other little things: all taken altogether, they amounted to a series of signs only an trained Auror like Harry could see - or, he supposed, a potential mate, such as Harry, now he'd been handed all these many chances to know Malfoy so much the better.

He did, in fact, know Malfoy better than he ever had before. Even after the therapy, even after Hogwarts. He knew Malfoy. It was a bit...shocking, that.
Huh, fancy that. Harry snorted, stifling a sardonic snicker. An empathetic, sympathetic, sincerely interested Malfoy. Wonders would never cease, then, though it was likely the Veela driving it. Veelas cared about their Mates; Pomfrey had repeated that umpteen times. Ad Harry believed her. But, still...Malfoy?

"Potter," Malfoy muttered, creasing his forehead. "Potter, I do now a little."

Thus Harry continued to observe the git carefully, to see what he might get up to next. This was...interesting, Malfoy's reaction. Not the norm. It was...intriguing, that Malfoy was interested.

"Potter, I'm not completely out of the gossip loop." He lifted a malicious corner of his mouth. "I am an Unspeakable, Potter."

"Huh." Harry didn't care about that. Not a fig, thank you. He licked his fingers, sulking. "Really."

The git was still speaking, soft and low: "I'd heard the rumours about...that part of your life, of course, but...not pursued it, naturally. It's your business, Potter; I've my own dirty linen, thanks. And you don't need to...if you don't wish to. But...I would appreciate it."

"Er, right, but - " Harry stalled, halted. Warm...cool. What? Contradictory git!

"I should imagine your past affects you, no matter what else had happened since." Malfoy really did sound like he cared. "I should learn more of it, I think, so I don't inadvertently take missteps, Potter, in your company. Or with—with your, ah...feelings. We'll be cohabiting, won't we? We should be...comfortable, at least, with each other. No harm, as they say—no foul. So, erm, carry on, then - you may tell me all you wish, to the extent you wish. I'll endeavour to listen."

"Oh, now that makes it so easy, Malfoy," Harry protested finally, less irked than he'd been but still tetchy, and finally and completely distracted from his last smudges of soothing chocolate. Malfoy wasn't being particularly patronizing, then - he knew better than that, now - but still. Did he always have to be like this? So sodding stiff? Pasteboard cutouts had more vim to them! "Come on, you prick! Listen to yourself: 'Tell me if you want, but I don't really care, 'cause it won't matter in the long run'? We're still stuck?"

Malfoy snorted at him. Not a pained inhale, nor even a huff, but a definite, pronounced snort. As if he couldn't believe Harry didn't instantly wish to bare his all and his everything, now that Malfoy had allowed he was willing to hear it.

"Not what I said, Potter. But - fire away, do, if you're up for it."

"Huh. Maybe I don't want to, Malfoy."

Harry shrugged irritably at the implied dare, grimacing at his own so-lurid past.

And it was lurid, wasn't it? Bosh! Orphan - Saviour - Victim. Lurid in the sense it was considered worth splashing over the headlines in an endless bilious-inducing cycle, that was, whenever the rags lacked real news. And hadn't Madame - and Skeeter, for that matter - made every single excruciating detail of the Dursley's horribleness and Dumbledore's somewhat ethically shaky personal agenda a matter of public record? StupidMalfoy, for not acting like every other curious sod in the universe and gobbling up every horrid gulp of gossip available about 'the great Harry Potter!' Though, honestly, the git should just know all this rot - Harry shouldn't have to tell him!

"Potter, come on."
Just as Harry knew about Malfoy's dad, and grandfather, too. And never brought it up. Would never, either, unless expressly invited. Likely not then, either.

"Talk to me, Potter. Sometime this century."

Conversely - perversely - Harry did want this. He wanted to do it—to speak freely, to confess all. Malfoy was in his same ship, in a manner of speaking. They were equals, and in a great many ways Harry had simply never thought of before now. Still...git wasn't exactly a people-person, either. His, er, bedside manner really, truly sucked hind teat.

"Whenever, Potter," Malfoy prompted, when Harry kept his trap firmly shut and idly contemplated the consequences of licking his chocolate-smeared hand completely clean in a public place. "I'm waiting. When you're ready. We're here for what? Two hours, isn't it? More than, really. Nice and private, here. Perfect for pouring out your woes, Potter—very secluded."

Harry sniffed, elbow jostling the icy drink Malfoy had procured for him, innocently sitting in its cup holster, and thus also Malfoy's adjacent elbow by extension, which in turn nearly upset the git's grip on the concealing box of chocs. They both shifted suddenly as he righted himself and Malfoy took steps to secure their snacks. Harry could still see the signs of Malfoy's quite interested cock—the swell of strained fabric below the skewed chocs box, should he care to stare. That hadn't changed, at least.

Malfoy cleared his throat, adjusting the box. Tucked his giveaway hands beneath it as an afterthought. Regarded the individual chocolates left within as though they held the secrets of the cosmos, in the form of malted balls. Cleared his throat again when Harry didn't look at him.

"Or...we could discuss it over dinner later, Potter? I mean—d'you fancy fish with your confessions? Catholic tastes, perhaps?"

Malfoy joking? Jollying Harry—deliberately? That caught Harry out; forced him to smile. "Huh. Way to go with the trust building, dear fiancé. Like I would want to tell you anything, now." He shifted about in his seat, resettling himself, and nearly missed Malfoy's next remark. "Stoopid."

"Fiancé?" Malfoy blinked rapidly, swallowing. "Ah...I s'pose it is...that. I should...I should perhaps procure you a ring, then. A symbol of some sort. For the Binding rite, naturally. Wizards do that too, Potter—same as your Muggles."

"Fancy." Harry was sulky now, and didn't care who knew it. He abhorred having doubts over his doubts - so confusing. "And they're not all my Muggles, Malfoy. Stop handing me them."

"Sorry. Ill-put, eh?"

Malfoy, brows jerking up at Harry's terse reply, glanced instantly down at his own knees, neatly crossed. He jiggled a dangling loafer next for the space of two ticks; ceased that abruptly and then resettled his long hands in a loose clasp above his lap, elbows clamped to the sweets box and the tips of his fingers meeting and parting in a tented arch rhythmically, over and over - which was something he only did when he was extremely shaken. Harry knew this mannerism strictly due to Helsinki...and too, he'd been observing Malfoy closely as of late, attempting to quietly sort out how he was to deal amiably with such a...a compactly packaged person. A locked trunk, as it were, and he with the sole key. His box, now. And not of sweets, either.

"But, Potter, that aside...sorry to be..." Malfoy seemed entirely out of sorts and Harry suspected it wasn't only his, er, betrothed's own past history affecting him. Or Harry's. "Well. I'm a bit - I'm somewhat frustrated, currently," Malfoy went on stoutly, his voice unnaturally subdued, all hint of
his usual dry humour fled completely. "At work, of course; always a hair-pulling, that, but also due
to the Bond. Of course."

"Of course," Harry echoed, widening his eyes at the scrolling screen; he'd had Malfoy apologise
sincerely to him before, yes, but...not like this. Never...like this. He almost had to hold his breath,
the git's voice was so terribly quiet. The hiss from the film rolling nearly drowned it.

He leant nearer, listening for all he was worth.

"This isn't easy, the infernal waiting to have this done and over with," Malfoy confessed
awkwardly. "It's, er...very chemical, a Veela Bond. Stridently chemical, Potter. And I'm...well, I'm
perhaps less patient with you than I should be. I mean—I'm sure I could be doing better. If this
were the usual sort of meet-and-mate, I suppose it would be very much the easier on you. You'd
expect it—you'd have had some warning, at least. Instead, there's pressure, from all sides: Pomfrey,
the Ministry - even Dawlish. I am sorry to be the catalyst, Potter, for what it's worth."

"I know, I guess," Harry agreed instantly, feeling terribly contrite. "I do know, really—always
have."

Surely, if he had it bad, then what about his partner in happenstance, who'd that damned Veela
Blood taunting him? Harry had it easier in the end, yes; he wouldn't expire outright if they didn't
follow through, as Malfoy would. But he would suffer; like losing a limb, Madame had said, when
he met with her privately, when one lost a Veela. Amputation on the inside.

Nope. There was really nothing fair about this situation; not for either of them, in any functional
arena. Malfoy wasn't putting in those long hours after hours because he was a total idiot and career-
driven. He had to, being as deskbound as Harry, and therefore exempt from his usual duties. It had
to be stressful, being an Unspeakable who was also now rendered an Untouchable.

It would, indeed, be so much the better when the Bond was complete. He'd not understood that
before - not the complexity of the ramifications, not the immense toll waiting to be exacted.

"I mean, I'm sorry too, Malfoy," Harry made haste to go on. "Really, I am. I shouldn't jump down
your throat as I do - I shouldn't let it bother me, but. It does. Alright? See it my way. I can't say it
doesn't, Malfoy. I imagine I'm still resentful for being landed with this—this mate situation, and,
while I know in my head I can't be blaming you, particularly - shouldn't be blaming you for
something that's just coincidence really; has to be, yeah? - there's still some part of me that does - "

"That does, and yes, Potter, I feel exactly the same," Malfoy replied, eagerly. He sat upright in a
rush, swinging his entire torso 'round to face Harry, rearranging his long limbs in the cramped
theatre seat and steadying the box he yet clutched, crumpling. Elegantly, as always. "We're simply
fated to be tangled up in one another, aren't we, one way or the other, no matter what we do to
avoid it? It seems like."

"Yeah," Harry bobbed his chin, eyes grim on the screen as it rolled meaningless Muggle names and
jobs: Key Grip, Gaffer, Associate Assistant to the Assistant Associate of some famed actor. His
smeared store of chocolate was mostly gone, sod it. He needed more, for distraction, but it was
parked squarely in Malfoy's lap, the box of malted balls - and he wasn't going there, not right at the
moment. Wasn't looking directly at Malfoy, either, because of - because of his own prurient
interest, which lay in eager wait for the slightest encouragement. Sticking his hands on Malfoy's
bits and grubbing about for candy would be exactly that—encouragement—and they were supposed
to be talking, not groping. Groping did not Trust build. "Yes, Malfoy," he repeated grimly. "Feels
that way, doesn't it?"
Not drawing attention to that, no. Cinema - Muggles - not the best idea, no.

"Mmm-hmm." Malfoy nodded, barely. "Yes. Precisely, Potter."

None inappropriate erections required.

"Exactly that!" Harry was alight with a flare of mutual agreeableness; he glowed with his passion to relate it to Malfoy coherently—well, with most any topic that would distract him from the bonfire building between his own damned thighs, that is.

"Yes. Stuck. Fated," Malfoy pondered this visibly; he, too, must be in the mood to chat—with the air of avoiding nimbly the force that yanking physical reactions form the both of them. "Hmm… Something complicated and Greek, no doubt. Hubris, perhaps." Harry murmured his agreement with that, though mayhap 'hubris' wasn't quite the proper term. "And, Potter," Malfoy continued, his nose wrinkled up in thought; "I don't necessarily want to feel that way about the person I'm to spend my life with, you know? Or...I think I don't." He swallowed and dropped the level of his gaze, transferring his stare to Harry's neck. "I shouldn't, in any case. I may've wanted...love, I s'pose, at one time—I don't know, Potter. Options open for it to happen, at least. That's what you're generally supposed to want, right? Love?"

Harry made an inarticulate sound; Malfoy swung his head back the other way abruptly, his hair sliding forward in a smooth curve, so Harry couldn't possibly manage to maintain his eagle-eyed watch on his expression in the gathering gloom of the theatre. Distracted by the blond—the impossible blond of it—he rather thought Malfoy kept the hair style he'd had ever since the last years at Hogwarts deliberately (longish up top to allow the shielding fringe when he didn't slick it back; short up the back to stay professional in appearance) and to be as different, physically, as he possibly could from his so-similar father.

Malfoy's hair, like the rest of him, was special. Not the usual, by any means. It rather figured Harry's mate—as it appeared the Fates had it in for him—would be 'special'. Clearly Harry was never meant to be comfortably normal—in any aspect.

"Perhaps, Potter." Malfoy was, of course, completely unaware Harry was actively ruing his hair colour.

"Yeah. Perhaps."

Malfoy didn't 'Hmm,' or grunt nor even nod. Didn't rush to confess his manly dreams of meeting someone special, either, if he'd had any. He simply stared off in the distance, utterly quiet—not uttering a peep more on the subject. Which was exactly what Harry would expect of him, but still...

The dead silence between them wended its uncomfortable way forward, tick by tick. Harry shifted in his seat for the umpteenth time and stared at the blipping Muggle cinema screen instead. The adverts and prevues held no interest for him; he couldn't think, now. After a brief internal struggle, he took a sharp breath, determined.

He needed to know, honestly. Right now, no waiting. It wasn't fair, was it - for either of them? He should know - if Malfoy thought the same way he did, right? Right?

"Um...what of you, Malfoy? What did you want? What were you thinking?"

Music swelled as the house lights were dimmed further, sundry cinematic nonsense done with. A raft of strings and some brass and percussion slid in to build audience excitement, booming through the speakers, and Harry had a difficult time hearing Malfoy's eventual reply. Not that he heard the
"Love, Potter?" his companion mused, his question thin as any high-strung violin note and nearly inaudible beneath the rising crescendo of the film's energetic soundtrack. A huge Technicolour James Bond posed suavely with a Muggle gun; bikini-clad girls pranced about in sexy silhouette behind him. "It's just another word, isn't it? Doesn't mean much, not in the long haul. Not to a Veela, per se. We're all about instinctual mates, Potter. Chemistry, not fluffy, inchoate emoting. Can't do much about 'love', sorry. Not me."

"But - what about to a Malfoy? Not just a Veela?" Harry demanded, twisting 'round in his flat-cushioned seat in a flurry. He grabbed at Malfoy's arm to gain his full attention, smearing it with a brown, sticky stain, the very last remnant of his sweets. "I mean, really, Malfoy!"

There was a sodding bonfire in Harry's middle; he had to know what Malfoy thought.

"I know you're capable," Harry insisted. "I've seen it. I know exactly what you've done for love, Malfoy. Your parents - your mates, back in Slytherin. Poor Crabbe - Goyle. Parkinson, even. So what does it take to wring that sort of level out of you for anyone other than them? What would you have done if this hadn't happened to you—if there'd been no Veela?"

Malfoy bridled sharply under Harry's touch, jolting as if electrified, grim and pinched-faced and put-upon. The clasped hands in his lap tightened and the corners of the box crumpled further, but he didn't shrug Harry off. Didn't make a single move to lean away, either. Only glared at his besmirched sleeve, yes, but left it. He—Malfoy—he craved the warmth of hands on him, Harry knew. Harry's hands only, though.

No, he fucking needed it, the git, as much as he needed oxygen, though he had immense trouble telling Harry so. Poppy had said as much to Harry, in confidence. And so much for stupid trust-building, yeah?

"Nothing, Potter," Harry's Veela growled, eyes averted. "Married someone suitable, I imagine. Or not. But other than that - nothing. I have no reason. No reason a'tall."

"I can't believe that, Malfoy," Harry swore, infuriated. There was a limit, damn it. Even he had one, though he barely paid attention to it. "You're a man as well as a Veela, Malfoy, as well as a Wizard and a Seventh whatever and all that rot! Haven't you ever wanted someone to just - just be with? To wake up to? Know they're there for you, no matter what may come your way?"

Malfoy humped a careless collarbone, twitchily. His face was stony, like a blank slab of marble.

"Maybe long ago, Potter, but not now," he allowed. "Besides, I have someone: you. That's more than enough, thanks. That's plenty."

For all that Malfoy's Veela had chosen Harry, Malfoy himself didn't seem exactly thrilled by it.

"You're impossible sometimes, Malfoy," Harry huffed, his irritation swelling dramatically. Rejection—or so it seemed—went both ways.

He tightened his grip, so that Malfoy would be forced to stay focused on him, though naturally the git glanced away instantly, soon as he could. "I simply cannot accept you desire nothing and no one, Malfoy. It's not like you at all - you aren't a totally frigid git and I know it - I've seen it! Felt it, for fuck's sake! How often have you punched me - or snogged me? And you were totally all about how you despised me as a kid, Malfoy! Don't pretend now you're some dispassionate island, some heartless bloke, because I won't believe you for an instant! You're as fallible as the rest of us,
Malfy. You feel! You want! You've said it yourself; you need things – people—you need me!"

"No."

Malfy was amazingly impassive, even now, when Harry would've lashed out in return long ago, sparked by the tension that pounded between them. He'd his eyes fixed firmly on the credits and there was nothing in his expression to give Harry even the smallest clue. Nor his voice when he finally spoke, which was level and dry as the likely well-withered flesh on the basilisk's bones.

"Potter, when I say I want for nothing, I am perfectly serious. There's nothing I want you'll ever be willing to give me, I'm sure, beyond what you already are. Have and will, as my mate. Which, emphatically, is more than enough and more, too, than I ever truly expected, going into this disaster with open eyes and almost no expectations. This is chemical, Potter; this is blood instinct and the Veela drive for a mate, nothing else. Nothing more. Whatever I may've wanted once upon a time doesn't enter into it. Hasn't, for a very long while."

"Bullshit, Malfy! Bleeding crap you're telling me!"

"Maybe so, to your view, leastways, but that's not really your business, Potter. Not your concern, either, in the future. My world doesn't exactly allow for a wallow of excess emotion. In the real world—where we actually live, Potter—I'm perfectly content with the way things are. I've a mate, now. I wont die because of it. I'm quite lucky, really. And I'd be a fool to try to change matters up now, in fact. I want to live, alright? Live another day."

"Fuck that for a lark! There's more to life, Malfy, than mere survival." Harry dug his fingers into Malfy's elbow testily. "You know that as well as I. You—of all people—know, just as I do!"

Malfy stiffened beneath Harry's hands.

"Right, sure. Of course there is, Potter," Malfy nodded abruptly, finally glancing Harry's way. "Whatever—of course there's more, if you say so. And I'm not arguing it with you, alright? Not now, at least. Now's not the time, clearly—"

"Malfy!"

"Look, er," Malfy flinched when Harry's fingers pinched harder. "Let's just have a nice snog, shall we? And cease with the digging into my psyche. And...and the pointless sharing, alright? Clearly that's not working—don't know why Pomfrey ever thought it would. We're already well acquainted and no one's watching over us at the moment, right? No Pomfrey, no Nation Council. And we've both the time and opportunity, here. It's dark and it's quiet enough, Potter - better than anything we'll get after. Might as well practice up a bit while we can, at least on the physical end of it. Take advantage."

"Huh," Harry snorted. "And that's why, Malfy - that's exactly why, in a nutshell. You're not fooling me, not for an instant. You do want more, same as me. Of whatever it is we're supposed to be wanting. Love, maybe. Closeness—not being alone. And you—you're just settling, Malfy. Taking whatever life hands you and not bothering about it. Rolling over, git."

"Or not," Malfy bit out tensely, disgruntled at Harry's insistence, evidently. "A settled life is good enough. Guaranteed sex is icing on it. I'm not intending to need more than that, Potter." He was the very epitome of adamant, setting his jaw, so stolidly thought the bones might crack. "I don't need it, no matter what guff you might have had stuffed in your head in the past, you bloody ex-Gryffindor pansy. You're all such romantics, you lot. Drippy girls, like that Brown bint was. Is—doesn't she write for the Quibbler now?"
"Malfoy!" Harry was amazed he even recalled Lavender, much less what Lav did for a living - and appalled to be called a bloody girl. Girls were - girls were a whole other species, that's what! Bloody aliens, even. No one understood girls, and certainly not Harry! "You twat of a git! Take that back!"

"No," Malfoy shot back instantly. "I won't, Potter. You're a definite girl when it comes to this topic—and I'm not. That's all there is to it; case closed, alright?"

"Not alright!"

"Now look," Malfoy spoke right over Harry's outrage. "Kiss me, you fool, and let's put some effort into that trust mechanism Madame always goes on about being automatic between us. You for me and me for you - all that rot. That's far more to the point, I think."

"I still say you're going about this all wrong, Mal -"

"Shut up, Potter. I am, for once, going about this all right. For me - and for you. And you'll bloody well admit it, at the end. This is plenty, what we have. We're lucky to have it. Most people don't."

"I won't! I won't, ever!" Harry insisted, leaning forward to press his nose up against Malfoy's beaky one. He grabbed at Malfoy's shoulder, just to give the idiot man a little wake-up shake. "It's - it's unnatural, just settling for...for whatever you can get! Something 'chemical', my arse! That's not what I want, Malfoy!"

"Liar, liar, pants on fire," Malfoy drawled. "You like our chemistry, Potter - admit it."

"Look, stuff it. You don't have a clue, git. Not that I do, eith -"

"Indeed I do, Potter. You didn't have living parents - well, I did. Do, still. And I've learnt from it, alright? Love's not all roses and rice showers, twenty years down the road. It's selfish and petty and people forget why they even bothered," Malfoy's voice was acid; he was ticking off his points on his spread fingers as he made them, but his knuckles were white as the bone within them. For some reason, that irked Harry to no end, that Malfoy wasn't waving his arms around and shouting. Harry would be shouting, if it were him.

But Malfoy didn't ever shout. He'd gone beyond that. He was an Unspeakable. Talking was a bloody effort for that lot. Screaming would likely kill them outright.

"It's not worth it, not in the end. Doesn't enter into it, your pitiful love." Except it seemed Malfoy could his feelings perfectly clear, when he really wanted. "It's naught but a dream, Potter. No—a nightmare."

That last had been said as if 'love' were a filthy imprecation, like 'Mudblood'; Harry recognized the inflection right off.

"We're better off as we are, Potter - trust me," Malfoy pronounced, as if that were the bitter end of it. Harry wasn't buying. "Just trust me for once. I know whereof I speak."

"Dick, Malfoy - you are a bloody dick! Head up your ruddy arsehole, in like Flynn!"

Harry's muffled shout rose to a minor roar in his tempest of indignation; he could scream even louder; would do, too, if he wanted. If need be. If the git wouldn't listen, or even bother himself to try. Harry had his own damned opinion and sod Malfoy if he dared brush it off! The few scattered heads farther forward in the cinema turned to stare at them. A couple—a pair of older women—a mother and son duo. That lady clapped her hands over her teenaged son's ears and seemed
absolutely scandalized.

"Excuse me?" she gasped faintly. Harry ignored her.

"A disbelieving, demoralized dick!" he added, just to make it very clear he wasn't to have his thoughts squashed like so many bugs on a Muggle motorcar's windscreen.

Because - because maybe he hadn't had it, this 'love'. Personally, that is, but other people had! There was proof! His parents, for one shining example. Severus Snape, for another...sad as that was to even consider - but still true. Truth! For real!

"Oh!" the woman squealed, plainly horrified. "Oh, don't listen, Liam! Don't listen to those men! That's—! Whatever it is they're discussing, Liam it's personal—leave it alone!"

It existed, then. Harry was sure of it. And Malfoy was wrong to deny it.

Liam—a bespectacled teen with spots—was not leaving it. He was hanging on every word.

"But, Mum!"

"Er—oh! I—I'm so sor—"

Harry was startled to be scrutinized by some rabidly curious Muggle boy. He was just taking in the rest of the avid audience on their periphery, when Malfoy leant forward to speak over his stutter, clearly ready to take charge. "We were - we're just. Oh, shit! Pardon us-

"Hush, Potter, Malfoy growled in Harry's ear, nimbly blocking his view of the Muggles simultaneously—and their view of him. "You're creating a scene, here, and I don't wish to be forced to Obliviate all these Muggles, alright? I'm off the damned time clock for once in a bloody blue moon. Like it to stay that way, thanks."

He promptly turned to the upset mother with a most engaging smile, instantly switching up gears to full-out perfect Malfoy manners.

"We're most sorry we disturbed you, ma'am," he assured her, all smarmy and toffee-wouldn't-melt. "With out chatter. We won't do it again, I assure you. Just a minor quibble over the names of the Mug-er- the *actors*, and it's all sorted now, see? Don't mind it, please."

"Oh!" The woman jumped and then…she smiled at Malfoy in return, melting under the force of Malfoy's adroit words. "Oh, well, in that case…"

Liam, her boy, didn't stop staring for a second. Harry glared him down and finally the little twat glanced away.

But it was open season on them, it seemed; the few other patrons were all gawping intensely at them now, the gyrations of James Bond and a great lot of lissome Muggle females notwithstanding. Another woman - considerably older and with a face like a painted coal shovel—was pointing garish pink-tipped talons and grumbling, building up a head of righteous indignation, till she took it upon herself to come all over Pince and directly reprimand them on behalf of her fellow theatergoers.

"Shush, please, the two of you!" she commanded. "The both of you boys; it's disgraceful! Cursing at each other like that, squabbling like-like schoolboys! Some of us are here to actually view this film, gentlemen! Paid good pounds to do so, in fact! Take it outside if you must insist o fighting! Isn't that right, Elspeth? They oughtn't be allowed—it's a free country!"
She'd a voice like a coal shovel, too, that old cow, banging away at he and Malfoy. Harry glowered at her, butting into what wasn't her business. Or maybe it was fingernails screeching across a chalkboard. Whatever—it wasn't pleasant, and they'd hardly been that loud!

"Malfoy!" Harry muttered darkly. "Do something about that one, will you? She's a corker!"

Malfoy shrugged, still partially obscuring Harry from the sidelong glances and glares of the Muggles.

"Ignore her, Potter. She'll settle soon enough. Show's started."

Indeed, it had, but no one seemed really to care. They kept right on peeping over their shoulders at Harry and his Veela, as if they expected something exciting to happen. And that old cow, two rows before them, with her wispy, grey-bun pal? She was obviously just waiting for the next chance to take them to task, glared at them steadily in a jowly, pugnacious manner. If she'd been Wizarding stock, Harry was sure they'd both have been hexed senseless already; as it was, he was reminded strongly of Aunt Marge. Then yet more talking heads turned; the theatre was sparsely populated, but still...there were plenty of Muggles out to view the latest James Bond flick this rainy, dull Sunday. And really—they were all of them, the Muggles, nattering away now, attention drawn to Harry and Draco, and some looked to be just on the point of calling out the corps of ushers.

Granted, Malfoy was worth looking at, no excuse necessary—but Harry wasn't liking the attention, not one bit. In fact, the last thing Harry needed was to be tossed out of a Muggle theatre for causing a ruckus with Malfoy! All he'd actually done was, er, um...perhaps raise his voice once or twice; that was the extent of it!

…Besides – he'd actually wanted to view this film. He thought the actor who played Bond was rather...attractive. Not like Stubby Boardman, maybe, or even the so-icily perfect git Malfoy...but still very fit. And endlessly athletically flexible.

"Boo!" shrieked a little girl seven rows ahead, whom Harry considered shouldn't even be allowed in. What with the skimpy bikinis and all. "Bad men, Mum! Bad men! Noisy bad men! Rude men, who should have better manners! I don't act like that—do I, Mum?"

"Ack! Malfoy, really-do something!" Harry hissed, desperately. "Now! Make them stop!"

"Oh, I will, believe me. This is rather annoying, isn't it, Potter?"

The git's voice purred in his ear and Harry blushed and tried to make himself very small and insignificant in his seat. Malfoy, on the other hand, sat up even taller, actually appearing to grow a few inches to do so, and half-rose, knees bent as he leant familiarly across the backs of the row of seats before them. Again, the bulk of him was strategically placed before Harry, shielding him. All Harry could see clearly was Malfoy's smile as he turned on his Veela: intense grey eyes blinking slowly at the old Muggle, with a nefariously lusty glint in them. It was a feral 'bad boy' smile, choc-o-bloc with all the bloody quality of 'It' any Muggle celeb could summon.

Veela Allure: potent shit. And it was alarmingly effective on an immediate basis: the shovel-faced woman sighed like a lovebird, flushing a delicate pink.

"Ohh!" she trilled. "You!"

Nasty to smitten, all in six seconds. Harry cast Malfoy a glance of reluctant admiration.

"Our apologies, ma'am," Malfoy smirked smoothly, if insincerely, and Harry could swear he felt a
tidal wave of fucking Allure pour past him, sending residual tingles up his spine and down his arms. It spread out to his own groin just he noted the assorted Muggles settling back, blissful smiles plastered all over their dreamy faces. "It was only a little tiff between the two of us. All taken care of now, now, sorry. We'll be quiet, I promise. Better yet—allow us to show you just how quiet we'll be."

Without further adieu, he bent back 'round in a sinuously spry motion and captured Harry's parted lips with his own, jaw angling in for the most effective coverage, sweet-talking tongue following right behind like an express train. Long fingers latched onto Harry's shoulders, yanking him tight up against Malfoy's hardened nipples and incidentally splashing the fizzy drink in its cup holder every which way.

"Mum - they's is kissing, Mum! See? See them?" The little girl squealed delighted, from somewhere far, far away. "The bad men is kissing! K-I-S-S-I-N-G!"

"Oh!"

The pugnacious lady squealed, too, like a stuck pig, but gleeful. She elbowed her companion and turned a full-out toothy smile on Harry and Draco, which Harry only barely glimpsed from the corner of hastily closing eye.

"Oh, now, you dear boys!" she cooed, abruptly simpering. "It's a lover's spat, tisn't it? That's perfectly alright! You go at it, dear, you and your young man! Make up! That's always the best part, isn't it, Elspeth? Isn't it?" She elbowed Elspeth and gosh, but it had to smart. She was sharp all 'round, that lady. "Ah, young love!" she cooed, not knowing when to shut it. "Just the grandest thing evah! Right, Elspeth?" She nuded her fascinated companion once more, send the pop-eyed and cherry-cheeked elderly woman staggering sideways in her seat. "Just like me and my 'Enry, before he passed, rest his soul! Passionate! A firecracker, my 'Enry!"

The middle-aged mum with the teenaged son was far less sanguine.

"Ah! Er - ooooh!" She blushed scarlet. Visibly, even in the dark of the theatre. "Liam! Liam, I say! Stop making googly eyes at them! Naughty!"

"But, Mum! They're going at it, Mum! Right there! How can I not look?"

"M-Malfoy!" Harry gasped. Were they in fact 'going at it'? It certainly felt as though they might, any moment.

"Turn your head 'round, Liam - this instant! There's a good boy, then!"

The poor woman valiantly kept up her attempts to shield her teenaged son's view, whilst he in turn ducked and squirmed, as did Malfoy, though he remained apparently supremely unconcerned over their audience. Instead of minding he bent his full weight into Harry, squashing him flat against his seat cushions. One long hand capably groped 'round about Harry's crotch - very interested in events there, in that particular area of Harry's body. The other gripped Harry's neck and forced him to sit still and take it. Again. And again and...again.

It was a kiss of long duration and magically-enhanced staying power. Liam, ignoring his agitated mum, took especial interest. Practically hauled out a pair of opera glasses to view it, the creepy little sod!

"Oh! My! Goodness!" The poor harried woman gasped, fluttering her useless hands and giving up entirely, and Malfoy - perhaps spurred on by their audience; who knew? - kissed Harry all the
harder, till Harry practically gagged on bounteous lashings of tongue, vaguely chocolate-malt flavoured.

"Oh, now, don't look that way, Liam darling, please," the poor woman begged in a last ditch effort to comply with Malfoy's Veela. "For chrissake, darling-don't look! Eyes forward, son! Give them their privacy, please, dear. And there, look! The film's begun - see? It's Bond, Liam! He's got some sort of - what is that thing, Liam? A weapon?"

That fortunately snagged the teenager's straying attention. Finally he faced the screen; Harry's sigh of relief was lost somewhere against Malfoy's glottis.

"Oh, Mum! It's an Uzi, Mum! Don't you know an Uzi when you see one?"

Even the gorgon who'd been widowed by poor "Enry' finally turned her head away, dragging her shocked friend Elspeth with her, and the little girl was firmly and finally shushed by her mother.

"Mmmph! Mm-nnh-mmph!" As Harry was being shushed by Malfoy.

"Potter..." Malfoy muttered, drawing back a great while later but still nipping his way 'round Harry's smeared, swollen lips, the Muggles readily forgotten, obviously. "We don't need anything more. This is more than good enough. Don't you think?"

"Er - " Harry gulped, dragging his mouth away from Malfoy's devouring one for an instant. "Malfoy!" he panted, unsure whether he was furious or simply turned on. "Malfoy, you rotten, evil bugger! That wasn't legal, you know that? Using your Veela like that! We could get in trouble with the Ministry! And the Muggles - that's such a thing as public decency laws, you know that? I'm not risking my pro - "

He was summarily shushed again. It was sloppy and there was no traces of chocolate left anywhere on him when Malfoy ceased searching.

"Indeed. You don't say, Potter," Malfoy smiled at him with all the usual innate arrogance, the odd little gleam of raw heat vanished beneath the supercilious bastard he could still be, upon occasion. But that was instantly replaced by a distinctly familiar malicious twinkle—not 'Malfoy' so much as 'school boy'. "Recall I'm a Veela, please," he leered. "You do know what Veelas do, don't you? Fair game, these nosy sods are, same as Wizards. Same as everyone, including you, my 'young man', Potter. Mine, don't forget."

"Suffering Salazar!" Harry moaned, mainly because Malfoy's hands hadn't stopped roaming even while the git talked and talked to no purpose. He, sadly, was in clear and present danger of spilling his gathering semen all over their wildly scattered box of chocs because of it. Too, the fizzy drink tilted dangerously between, threatening imminent spillage and the cold wash of crushed ice across highly hotted-up privates. Harry, at his wit's end, thought he might even welcome it—the ice. Not the very real possibility of ejaculating in a public place, of course. "You're such an arse, Malfoy - such an arse! A real wanker! Just you wait till I sic Pomfrey on you! You have it coming!"

Malfoy relented for the moment, ably rescuing cup and even the endangered chocolates, but kept the other hand firmly laid across Harry's throbbing cock, where it strained painfully beneath his flies. Having sorted the extraneous away somewhere—likely Vanished them, the git—he returned to stroking Harry's bits with a will and a deviously sexy half-grin. Harry entered into a tremulous sort of stasis, incredibly thankful the house lights had finally gone all the way down; more so that Malfoy's Veela had befuddled the other cinema goers. The Muggles weren't watching them at all, not even a peep, not after Malfoy essentially ordered them not to.
"Point, tattletale," Malfoy snickered. "But not for much longer, right, Potter? I've got you, haven't I? And you, most assuredly, have me." Harry's hand was possessed...and maneuvered. The possibly forgotten chocs box teetering on the edge of Malfoy's seat smacked the floor with a little thump.

Harry squealed, dodging and gamely attempting to fend off Malfoys roving hands.

"Grrrr! Fucking - hell, Malfoy! What're you doing! I don't want to touch...that...ahhh! Ohhhh...gods!" Harry whimpered, as yes, now he was touching 'that'—and that was quite the impressive object. It filled his palm and it throbbed—and Malfoy was bloody purring at him. "Why're you making me touch it?"

"There, Potter, it's not so bad, is it?" Harry had never heard that note in Malfoy's voice before...no. Not ever. "Better than going it alone, yeah?" Malfoy questioned him. He nodded that chin. "Ages better, I'd say."

"Ooooh! Ooh, fuck!" Harry didn't mind the tone nor the arrogance—nor the Muggles nor James Bond, either. There was nothing—absolutely nothing—but Malfoy. In his mouth, in his hand, pressed against him and practically through him. "Good!"

Invading.

"Shhh. Shhh, Potter. Hush, now."
"…Hey, where's your Quik Quills, Malfoy?"

"On my dresser at home, Potter. Why?"

"I thought you always carried that horrid thing with you, that's all. I needed to check up on something."

Malfoy stared at Harry for a long moment, blank as a grey stone wall.

"...You don't like it, Potter," he said, expressionless. Harry opened his mouth to reply but Malfoy forestalled him. "I'm hardly an idiot; even I could see that. Now I scan it in the morning and make my notes before bed."

"Oh—I," Harry swallowed.

"What did you need to know, anyway?" An eyebrow inched up enquiringly.

"Um," Harry stopped to think this unusual development over. A Malfoy without a Quik Quills was a strange Malfoy indeed. Um…

Malfoy waited upon him patiently, sipping his morning brew.

He was...pleased, yes. And taken a bit back by it. Malfoy was addicted to his Quik Quills; to give it up for Harry's sake was...was very kind. Though 'kind' wasn't the word Harry was reaching for, either.

"Um, nothing special, really, just a date for an appointment. For Madame D'Argent. I think I'm set up for Frid—"

"Tomorrow, Potter," Malfoy informed him blandly. "Tomorrow, at six, on the dot. We're going along over to her office together, remember? I was to meet you after Auror wrap-up meeting in Dawlish's office. At half five."

Those details—half blurred in Harry's short-term memory—came clear again. He nodded gratefully. Thank Merlin Malfoy was such a anal sod sometimes; Harry wasn't sure how he'd function without the constant reminders.

He'd grown accustomed to them.

"Oh...yes. That's it, thanks...and er. Thanks."

Though they were annoying, naturally. He was an adult, after all.

"For what, Potter?" Malfoy seemed surprised. "Remembering our schedule? That's hardly difficult."

"No! Not that, git! Um, for...you know." Harry shrugged, pulling a face. "The notebook. Your Quik Quills. Er...that." He flushed lightly, glancing away, not quite certain how to phrase it. "You didn't need to, but—er, I liked it. Like it, rather—so...thanks."
Malfoy looked at him for another very long moment; no, he truly examined Harry, his grey eyes softer, Harry thought, than he'd seen them yet, ever, even in the midst of a long, leisurely mutual wank off session atop Poppy's Infirmary cot. They'd been molten then and he'd compared them to liquid silver in his mind; now they were cloudy and...so very deep for such a pale watery hue. Invitingly deep, the sort of eyes one fell into, if one didn't care about falling.

"No matter, Potter," Malfoy treated him to a quick grin. "Think nothing of it."

"Er, um."

Harry scuffed his boot tips, not daring to meet Malfoy's gaze again because eyes like that on a Malfoy were just...odd. They did funny, swoopy, bubbly things to his bloodstream and, well. Well...

He sighed.

"Yeah."
"Under the stairs, yes. In a cubby, basically. Locked up half the time, too."

Right, right: time for the long dreaded heart-to-heart. Bleecch!

Harry gagged internally and frowned outwardly, not happy at a'tall, no how, but fairly blasé about it—after all, how many times now had he gone over this? Malfoy, on the other hand, was clearly livid. His nostrils flared, his chin was thrust forward; the cool grey was crackling sparks of bound-back fury. He kept to his seat on the other end of Harry's sofa only with visible effort; Harry would've wagered he'd be up and pacing furiously if he didn't have a demonstrably iron will and the steely self-control to match it, the sod. Instead, he tapped on the arm of the sofa and jiggled a loafer-clad foot in steady time, and Harry was visited with fancy that he could likely toast bread soon, if Malfoy's internal temp rose any higher.

Not that Harry could really wrap his head 'round Malfoy's level of upset. It seemed extreme, even alien. It'd been difficult enough to imagine the git lamenting over his prior misdeeds against Harry's younger self, much less giving a real rap about the Dursleys, even a few short weeks ago. Why would he even care, after all? He'd his own past and his own burdens, and all that was water gone under the bridge, now. Now they'd other issues to fret over. But no, though he still projected that whole Unspeakably Unspeakable air, cracks showed themselves all over Malfoy, like darker, vengeful shadows beneath that porcelain surface. Harry could see them, even if he simply went by the most obvious: the fiercely leveled brows and the disgusted twitch of those firm lips.

Clues, tells, body language: the meat of an Auror's business.

Hands, eyes, the set of wide shoulders, even the raising of the very veins and arteries under the paper thin skin of his wrists and forearms; the tension the whole of Malfoy radiated as much as he radiated his damned Veela: it was potent, and more than that, really, for this offended him across the entirety of his range, Harry's unfortunate past. It was all quite demonstrably clear to a decent observer such as Harry, and he couldn't possibly deny it. Perhaps Malfoy might not speak of it—quite possibly he wouldn't, being who he was—but he certainly felt strongly enough.

How he felt about that...well, Harry wasn't so certain.

"And they didn't feed you properly, either?" Malfoy demanded abruptly. Harry nodded; humped a shoulder, one hand flinging palm up and out as if to say 'What could one do, honestly?'

"And that's the reason why you always were so sodding skeletal at beginning of term?" Malfoy enunciated as if the very syllables he spoke had the power to offend him. "You must have dropped a stone or more, every single summer. At the least. No wonder you gobbled like a proper pig, Potter...And hoarded."

"No wonder." Harry twitched his lips; could've been a reminiscent grin...or could not. Hard to say, really.

"And that old arse Dumbledore just let them have at you? He allowed it? Condoned it?"

"Mm-hmm."

"Well." Malfoy swallowed. "I see."
It was apparently utterly inconceivable to Malfoy that anyone - any Wizard, at least - could've treated Harry as his aunt and uncle and cousin had. He really didn't see; he couldn't. But the thought of the apparently kindly but quite inscrutable Headmaster Dumbledore turning a blind eye to it, year after year, clearly sent him into an absolute tizzy - Malfoy-style.

Harry had gathered the impression the git had rather accepted what had been done to him by his own dad as 'normal' - par for the course. He'd been at least very well fed and clothed while he was being brutally brainwashed and used, of course - and Pureblood children were accustomed to doing exactly as they were told, even as they were spoilt and indulged. But there was an unspoken contract, too. *Tit for tat*, went the transaction. *You rub my back, I'll rub yours."

"Yes."

Meanwhile, only the best of the best for a Malfoy heir, and in return, unswerving loyalty. Till Voldemort had tipped that precarious balance and asked of Malfoy what he simply couldn't give.

"And the clothes you wore, those horrid rags - all your cousin's cast-offs, Potter? Underthings, too?"

Malfoy, by definition, couldn't possibly comprehend the lot of an unwanted Muggleborn. He simply had no room in his head for it; just as most Purebloods had never had a clear grip on what drove Tom Riddle. There was nothing for him to latch on to - no common ground. No intersection in any Venn pentagram.

"Mmm-hmm, yes. All of it." Harry shook his head, ran a cursory hand through it, sifting out tangles at the ends. "Look, er - could we stop now? You can read the back issues of the *Prophet* for the rest, yeah? Because, ah - I'm a bit peckish. Was a long day, actually. I was in early."

"Oh, bu—"

But whatever Malfoy's lacks - understandable, forgivable, or not - Harry was done with this shit. They'd all their lives ahead to talk over their pasts. To speak of what was to Harry still mostly unspeakable. It was enough - for now. He was glad Malfoy's response was genuine; another point in his favour, the prick, and he was racking them up left and right, the more Harry grew to know him.

Very dangerous, that. Poppy Pomfrey had neglected to mention the pitfalls inherent in handing one's life over to another person, gift-wrapped. No wonder poor Malfoy's fingers twitched. Harry must drive him spare, daily. They were so very...different. For all that they shared, still.

"...Yes," Malfoy nodded; glanced quickly away. "Alright, then, Potter. But...give me a moment, please. If you will."

"Sure."

Harry's Veela eyed the creamy-taupe paint on the wall instead of Harry, subjecting it to the intense glare of grim grey eyes—the North Sea, on a rough day—and taking deep slow breaths, deliberately; one after another, his ribs heaving visibly beneath the weight of his work robes. His features were schooled to a gravity befitting a professional mourner's and he'd his two hands fisted so tightly Harry worried the git's knuckles might just split and bleed from sheer pressure exerted. But Malfoy was calming gradually, ever so slowly and purposefully, occupied with his Zen breathing exercises - and Harry was grateful for that, too, oddly enough.

He winced; this had been—was—would always be purely awful, this particular topic, which is why
he'd put it off for as long as possible. He'd not meant to wind his already antsy Veela up another umpteen notches. It was...unavoidable, though; Malfoy was insistent upon knowing everything there was to know about Harry. And he rather expected to feel the same, when the day came that Malfoy finally got 'round to revealing what had been done to him, well before Harry ever started his intensified Sixth Form spying. Likely it was just as bad as Harry's had ever been, and more than likely Malfoy hadn't a clue why that was. It had taken a MediWitch to point it out to him, hadn't it? People just didn't think, not when they were in the midst of something like that. They merely endured.

"I apologize, Potter," Malfoy announced, derailing Harry's gloomy musings. "I should let you know I'm sorry. I didn't mean to drag it up; I only - you see - I should know, should I not? Be in the loop. It's...part and parcel."

Perhaps...the practiced breathing exercises apparently weren't working as well as they should be. Harry smiled, amused. Malfoy was an excitable bloke, yet, which he would bet a cool hundred Galleons most of his fellow Unspeakables never realized.

But he knew; he remembered, and people didn't really change much, did they?

Harry waved his hands feebly. Pulled a sour face.

"I know. Shut up already, Malfoy. You don't have to say you're sorry for something you can't help."

Malfoy inclined his chin at Harry, acknowledging that.

"You needed to be told, though," Harry went on, because it needed to be made clear to them both. And that could always stand repeating. "Officially, and by me. Not just what's... what's...in the rags. And I'd much rather it were me than anyone else, so...yes. There it is, in all its glory: my sorry little pity-party. And now we're done with it; end of story, alright? Put it out of your head, git, because it's long over. I'm over it, and I'm the so-called injured party. Alright?"

"Huh!"

Harry lifted his shoulders philosophically at Malfoy's disbelieving snort. There was more to than a cupboard and a lack of basic comforts, naturally; oh, reams more, but Malfoy would never need to know all the tiny little details. And if he did, Harry was sure it was a matter of public record, somewhere. Skeeter, whatever her faults, was a matchless reporter of minutiae. Even he'd not read all the rubbish she'd written about him, over the years. And Poppy Pomfrey had studied him, in depth, and there were medical records aplenty, stashed away in her archives at Hogwarts. Very kindly and with much care in handling she'd placed him under her 'scope, yes, but still.

Malfoy could go forth and dig it out, if it mattered that much to him. But Harry didn't believe he would, somehow. It wouldn't be...like him, not now.

"Alright?" he said again, prodding; his voice a little louder, because it really needed to be. He needed it to be, more like. "Malfoy?"

"...Alright. And thank you, Potter," Malfoy nodded stiffly, his eyes meeting Harry's full on and directly after finally shifting from the flat's endlessly bland walls. "Again, for your patience with me. I'll bear all of this in mind, of course. It-It...explains a few items I've been wondering over, through the years - and of course, I apologize for my prying. I didn't wish to put you through that; wish I'd never needed to. I...did not realize the extent of it."

"Right," Harry nodded slowly. "Yes, enough. Okay, git, stow it now. No more and I mean it. I'm
done; you're done, too. Finished! Well, but... don't forget you owe whatever's left of yours, Malfoy. The shit we didn't manage to sort, back at Weasleys, when we all made our peace. Fair's fair. Not that I want to hear it, necessarily - no offense."

"None taken," Malfoy bobbed his chin, a rueful grin at last lightening the drawn lines 'round his mouth. "And I shan't forget, Potter. No fear."

Harry nodded, vigorously. He shifted against the cushions, his skin prickly with a restless urge. The flat was too small—the walls too bland—he had to move. Had to move, yes.

"Super...um. I, er. I'd like to go out now, if you don't mind. Ah...maybe...something to eat? Catch a drink? Or three. It's still early, but - "

"Oh, yes." Malfoy was on his feet and moving with his usual economical grace. "Yes." He gave a hand to Harry and pulled him up and off the sofa; caught him as he stumbled over his baggy socks. "We can do that, Potter. I think...maybe Greek tonight? Hummus - spanakopita? Salad? Something light, yes?"

"Hmm," Harry nodded. "Yeah, or souvlaki. Grilled veg, maybe. Sounds...alright, I guess."

"Hmm." Malfoy wrapped an arm carefully around Harry's waist, sending one of his silent Accios after Harry's shoes and cloak. They came rushing through the intervening space and he caught them up, one-handed. "There's a little place I know of in Piccadilly; hole-in-the-wall, really, but the seafood's superb. I've had lunch there, many a time. Could fancy a dish of grilled squid, maybe. Um...Side-Along?"

"Mmm, alright. I'm...I'm not all that hungry, though. I just want - "

"Out. Right, I get it, Potter. S'okay. I'm not, either. We'll just - well, there's ouzo, yeah? The worthwhile stuff, not the shite they import legally. And we can order small plates and not too many. Share."

"Alright."

Harry tucked his head into Malfoy's neck, nudging the whole himself closer as Malfoy swept his cloak 'round him, hauling his armpits up him just a bit so that Harry's sock-covered feet could find proper balance atop Malfoy's polished loafers. Harry's effects were clutched behind his cloth-shielded spine in that one capable hand; apparently, they could wait to be donned till after.

He wasn't going to argue the point, not now. Malfoy's arms tightened about him; Harry was steadied, and felt that way, too, even shoeless and rumpled.

"Good. Let's go. Hold tight."
Madame was all business and equipped with her usual clipboard. That fluttered officiously with their charts, greatly increased over the last month by her copious note-taking, the reams of diagnostic scans and the reports she'd been cc'd by Madame D'Argent, their assigned Veela Elder and Bonding specialist. It was daunting, the sheer amount of paperwork a supposedly simple Bonding could generate.

'Course this Bond wasn't simple; nothing was.

Harry sighed and idly kicked his heels. It was this, however, that grew tiresome apace, this being forced to be intimate with Malfoy before an audience. Even if it was only dear Poppy Pomfrey, it was damned awkward. Worse, Pomfrey was an audience who'd known them both since they were eleven and practically still blubbering infants.

Harry was still reeling over that.

And it wasn't as though they weren't doing alright by themselves in the intimacy drill. He was fairly sure they were forging ahead by leaps and bounds. Last night in the loo, for example. That had been something else—something amazing—and leagues out of Harry's limited experience...in a very exciting way!

He'd never known Malfoy could be fierce like that. That Malfoy's fingers could bite into the tender flesh of his hips and Harry would welcome the bruising; that his lips could bleed from being snogged and he wouldn't mind at all. That he could become so aroused and so quickly...or that Malfoy could provide him sweet relief in torrents...

"Harry, dear, do stop gazing out the window. It's only practice Quidditch; you may stay to watch them after, if you like."

"Ahem! Potter!" Malfoy cleared his throat ostentatiously and treated Harry to a reapproving glance. "Head's up, here."

"Oh! Oi, sorry!"

Harry smiled feebly at his old school nurse and his—his personal, er...Malfoy, and tucked his chin to his chest, eyes dutifully fixed upon Pomfrey. Poppy was in the process of directing the lesson, so perhaps he ought to be paying at least a modicum of attention.

"Now, for this afternoon's session I want the two of you to concentrate on caressing each other solely below the belt, as it were." Madame smiled gamely at them both, in turn, two spots of colour pasted high on her apple cheeks. She specialized mainly in paediatrics, of course; Sex Ed wasn't her forte. This was quite possibly a form of torture for the poor old dear. "It doesn't need to be in the...er, extremely intimate and fulfilling sense, particularly, but I do want to see you both actively involved in this...er, activity, Harry, Draco. Gaining a sense of each other's...privates, if I may be allowed to be so medically vague. You may choose to retain your, er, underclothes for this exercise. Or not. Erm...Madame D'Argent has outlined the course for this particular form of...therapy which indicates that they should be, ah, discarded, however."

...Though he'd really rather dwell on the loo incident, as he'd never come that hard, and he'd never...
noticed before that Malfoy had a lovely mouth—

"Steady on, then, yes? We shall be making some progress, I'm sure. Er, hah. Ah-ha....ah!"

Clearly off her game, Pomfrey gasped out a tiny, high-pitched giggle, more suited to a Fifth Year student than a world-renowned Healer, and Harry felt his politely attentive smile congeal. If Pomfrey was already in this state her blasted chart must call for something a sight more than a mere mutual wank. A sidelong glance showed him a Malfoy with the exact same sickly sort of grimace he wore plastered square upon his angular jaw. And that very lovely mouth...Harry blinked and focussed on Pomfrey again, feeling oddly reassured.

Good; not alone in facing this bout of utter humiliation, then. That was brilliant to know; Malfoy should share in this, just as he insisted upon sharing everything else going on with Harry lately. And Madame D'Argent, the beady-eyed old bag of an Elder, could stick her explicit instructions concerning sex acts right up her no doubt feathery bum; Harry would venture no farther into the territory of passion than he was comfortable, by crumb!

"Now. Yes." Madame waved her clipboard. "Go on, then. Please shed your outer robes and—and other layers—and we'll, ah, begin."

"Fucking fantastic," Harry muttered under his breath, nudging his cot-mate. "This afternoon's excitement: we earn a pecker check by our old school nurse. Super." But Malfoy's attention was for once not even peripherally upon Harry's person; instead it was all directed to their MediWitch-of-record. He cleared his throat menacingly and raised his supercilious eyebrows at her, very much the high-ranking Unspeakable he was, the git.

Harry watched, curious, as he began to work his buttons and laces.

"Er. Question? For how many minutes, precisely, Madame, do we need engage in this exercise and, more to the point, what if the situation, ah, gets out of hand?" Malfoy demanded querulously, a slight crease dawning across his high, pale forehead. "And more—you say 'below the waist' intimacy and contrarily not too much of that, but we are full-grown men, Madame, and I am Veela. I rather anticipate difficulties with this lesson from the start."

This particular day the trademark Malfoy hair was artfully spiked and tousled, so it tumbled an icy lock down over one piercing gunmetal eyeball. With his chin tilted at a pugnacious angle, Malfoy seemed quite as fierce as he had the night before, in the Ministry—in the loo. It was quite a good look on him, rumpled, Harry decided, but...he still seemed quite disturbingly hawkish at the moment, his gaze bearing down coldly on poor Poppy. All keen and predatory, and that didn't do wonders for Harry's unsteady nerves. Um, no—it did not. Which was likely why—

"I can take anything you care to dish out, git," Harry grumbled grumpily, feeling slighted and sensing a challenge in the air. He moodily untied his shoelaces. "No problermo whatsoever, dickweed. Show me your stuff, then; let's get on with this farce."

"Potter!"

Harry felt contrary. Unsettled. Odd. He stuck his tongue out at Malfoy when the git slewed his perfect face round to stare.

Malfoy's eyes narrowed, implicitly threatening Harry.

"Boys!" Harry heard Poppy exclaim, but only vaguely. His attention was all on Malfoy—and Malfoy was certainly paying attention to Harry now! He bent nearer, so his shoulder brushed up
against Harry's. "Boys, really! This is hardly the time nor the place!"

"Then...how 'bout I shag you up against the wall over there, then, Potter?" Malfoy hissed for Harry's ears only, striking out like a bloody cobra, with fingers spread claw-like to grasp at Harry's upper arm - that quickly - and Harry shied away, flinching from the warmth and the threat of the fastidious hand, hovering, practically levitating his own arse a foot down the length of the cot. "C'mere, Potter; let me show exactly what I can dish out!"

Harry gasped.

"Whoa! Merlin, Malfoy! Ease off! I was only kidding with you! Settle down!"

"Shut up, Potter. Be still, now, if you please." Malfoy backed off, but barely.

"Oh, but—" Harry planned to reply with something—perhaps something witty, to make Malfoy laugh, or maybe something soothing, to make the git stop scowling-but Malfoy was no longer attending him in the slightest. Pomfrey and he had locked eyes in what seemed to be duel-to-the-death. Of sorts. And Malfoy was speaking to her, not to Harry.

"Look, not to be in any way uncooperative, Madame Pomfrey, but the Binding ritual's just the two weeks from today and it's not exactly simple to, ah, disengage at your say-so. I know this for fact, as we've been - well, we've been experimenting, Potter and I. With physical intimacy, as directed. And, too, this really isn't fair to Potter, is it? I could quite easily - I mean to say, it's distinctly likely I could frighten him—and have, actually." Malfoy swallowed; his voice hardened. "I could venture too far from his comfort level, Madame. Which is rather limited, yet. So, yes, this could be an issue, Madame. In fact, I'm sure it will be. I'd suggest some other manner of instruction for this afternoon. Perhaps more of those action diagrammes you favour. Most instructive for Potter, those."

"Hmm."

Madame Pomfrey cocked her head at Malfoy, rather like a fat spring robin examining the worm she'd just unearthed and finding it paltry and not quite up-to-par. She seemed patently unconvinced.

"Oh, really, Draco? You think so, do you?"

"I do, yes."

"Malfoy! You dog! I'm flattered!"

Harry, sitting amidst the tatters of his dignity ('limited'! the arse had just announced to Poppy! As if Harry was an untutored ninny who'd never gotten past Start!'), was struck by the utter absurdity of Malfoy's apparently persistent mental image of him as a shrinking violet Victorian maiden. Fuck, no. Worse! He had to giggle—had to! In fact, he was in silent hysterical spasms where he sat - not - which was entirely inappropriate to an Infirmary and for the obvious gravity of his partner's utterly filthy mood.

"No, really. I am."

Come to think, what sort of insect had crawled up the git's bound-up bum lately? Harry's Veela seemed very...tense.

"Potter, whatever it is you're on about, stop. Hush!"

Malfoy cranked his perfect noggin about and scowled ferociously at Harry, presumably for
saying at all; Madame merely frowned Harry's way in passing, her lined face taking on a thoughtful, considering look, one which indicated the Healer was emerging first and foremost. She consulted her clipboard for a long moment and then nodded at Draco reluctantly.

"Hmm. I see, Draco. That's absolutely correct; it is in just the two weeks, yes, the Bonding, but still—we've more than sufficient days yet to build to it, dear, in terms of comfort zones. And you both do require the practice, Draco. According to my records Harry, here, has never had a significant relationship with a Wizard prior to this one. In fact, he's not had much of any sort of meaningful relationship since the time spent with Ms. Weasley, according to his chart - "

"Poppy!" Harry howled, beet red. "You don't need to be telling Malfoy that! Patient confidentiality, damn it!"

Pomfrey ignored him; what was more, Malfoy ignored him. Harry huffed, sitting on his hands so they would not curl up into primal fists as they itched to. How utterly bloody-minded!

"Yes, Madame," Malfoy was unperturbed. "I know this about Potter and you are completely correct. In that aspect Potter is woefully...innocent. Untried, even. However, the fact remains that it is his innocence which will likely toss a spanner into today's instruction—Veela's preferring virgins—and therefore I must object - "

"I. Am. Not. A Virgin!" Harry growled. "I've had some, damn it! Stupid-arse Malfoy—shut up!"

"You, Potter—please."

"Oh!" Harry clenched his eyes shut, so he wouldn't have to gaze upon that smarmy face. "Fuck off, why don't you?"

"Draco, this is really is non-negotiable," Madame interjected firmly. She tapped her reams of assorted charts and notes with her quill point in a no-nonsense manner. "You and Harry simply must do as I tell you, that's all there is to it. Full stop."

"Madame!"

"No, Draco. I am speaking now, dear; do extend the courtesy to allow me to finish." Malfoy flushed and closed his lips, so hard and tight the pink almost disappeared into his pale face, and shrugged mutinously. Harry watched, his eyes widening behind his spec frames. "Draco, the Veela Nation's Leader has outlined the normal mating progression, step by step. Right here," she waved her clipboard, "in this flow-chart. There is science underlying all of this practice, Draco. Technique. First Bonds can be quite...quite, er, rough, on both the Veela and the Mate. And, once begun, consummation may progress...very quickly, or so I'm told," Madame blushed and swallowed. Malfoy merely looked superior. "So. There you have it. There's not a lot of time to lay the groundwork, if you understand me. We must think preventively, to avoid injury."

"My gods!" Harry groaned loudly, his eyes very wide as he followed the rapid volley. "Why are you just now mentioning that? What 'injury', Poppy?"

"Quiet, Potter," Malfoy snapped. "We're speaking to that very subject, if you'll just keep still. I'll manage this, thanks."

Harry dropped his head into his hands and moaned piteously. This was just worse and worser; he'd known at the start he never should've have stumbled out of bed this morning. It was rainy and muddy, first off, and Malfoy was a tetchy, overweening bastard, more gittish than ever, and now - well, now, there was this. His 'lack'; his personal matters under discussion between the wizard who
wanted to shag him into a wall and the medical professional who was—in her own way—
encouraging it. And mentions of injury in the offing—what next?

And for chrissake, he'd been busy! Too busy to bother! Why did they never recall that?

But Madame had her eyes fixed solely on Malfoy. Who wasn't standing down, apparently.

"Draco, this is for your own good—yours and Harry's. This lesson must proceed as planned.
Today."

"Madame, no! I don't believe we should be risking Potter's - "

"We're not risking anything, dear; that is the very point of this. Better to be safe now than sorry,
later."

"Madame! Exposure is taxing."

Malfoy was quick to riposte, but Harry didn't wait a moment longer to wade into it. It was already
ridiculous, having Malfoy and his old school nurse argue the consequences of his sexual gaps right
under his very nose - and not even bother with whether he had an opinion of same! He only wished
to be on with it, today's lesson, whatever it was - have it over with, more like, and be gone like the
bloody wind! He'd a heaping lot of new case files to review gathering dust on his desk and Ron
was on literal hold at the moment, with nothing useful to be about until Harry returned from
Hogwarts and sorted out their agenda. All of which meant they'd both be leaving work a great deal
later than their usual half six. Ron would, without doubt, have cause for complaint.

Ron, Harry believed, enjoyed complaining. He'd made an art of it, certainly. But not as much as
Malfoy, who was champion. Harry just had to object.

"My gods, that's enough! Madame! And you, Malfoy!" he burst out, speaking over the both of
them. "Come on, git! Stop acting like a damned wuss over this lesson. Just let's do it and stop
yapping about it, alright? Um, lie back and think of - of England, why don't you? Or your current
assignments at work, if you're so concerned about touching me, er...intimately! And by all means
let's just simply get on with it!"

"Potter." Malfoy turned his well-studied scowl in Harry's direction, beetling his brows for
emphasis. "I am only concerned for your sake, in this. Only for you, Potter. And you may be very
grateful that I am even bothering before very much longer. It's your arse on the line, don't forget."

"Oh, right, Malfoy," Harry snorted. "Now I'm frightened. Not."

"Potter, you will allow me the opportunity to handle this without butting your nose in, if you know
what's good for you. Which you clearly do not."

"I don't think so, git. You might be a Veela, but I'm not exactly a bathmat, Malfoy. I can take it,
trust me. I can take you!"

"Boys, bickering amongst yourselves solves nothing," Poppy warned. They readily ignored her,
gazes locked.

"The hell you say, Potter!" Malfoy bit out. "You're but a babe in the woods when it comes to this.
I know," Malfoy stated, looking very smarmy all the while and annoyingly so. Harry snorted his
disgust and disbelief, scooching down the cot to nudge a harsh elbow joint at the prat's ribs through
his robes. "For fact. So shut up! Ow! Uncalled for, Potter! Get off me, damn it."
"What? You won't listen, Malfoy. What am I s'posed to do, huh?"

Malfoy leveled him such as stare as could start landslides on the Moon; a gimlet-eyed scan purveying all manner of doom to be doled at later.

Harry blinked at his Veela, alarmed. This was...totally mad, this. And he...he felt...really distinctly odd, today. Not Felix-odd, exactly, but...punch-drunken, perhaps? He was tired and droopy; hadn't been sleeping at all well, recently, and he craved...well, he craved something.

He felt...reckless. Rushed and yet languorously, all at once, as if he was in need of another of those awkward, all elbows embraces of Malfoy's - and yet quite as antsy as poor Kreacher would be, confronted with a mountain of gifted socks. Hungry, too, but for what sort of sustenance Harry didn't know. Certainly his gut was in a terrible muddle and his head was a bit fuzzy. Absolutely he felt decidedly strange. And Madame's fluttering clipboard and cheery expectant expression was outside of enough. As was Malfoy, Mister-Poker-Up-His-Arse and I-Know-What's-Best, Potter.

No. No, no, no. This was all so unreal, yet, this situation—all of it. So friggin' unreal.

"Don't be silly!" Harry taunted Malfoy, because he could - because it was...the thing to do, right now. He knew it. The git only required a proper shove. "Just doit, git. I'm a grown man, Malfoy - I can take it."

"Stopper yourself, Potter, and cease this incessant begging. It isn't," Malfoy hissed him, leaning over to block Madame out, "that you are a man or not, arsehole. No one doubts your manliness; certainly I don't! It's the Veela, which is decidedly not a bundle of Hufflepuffian sunshine, Potter, nor soggy tissue. The Veela instinct is excessively strong, idjiit; you should know that by now. Remember yesterday evening, in the upstairs loo? We were damned close to pushing past all your internal boundaries, Potter; blasting right on through them, actually! You should be considering that before you take your fences— I am."

"Oh. Er, well. Yes." Harry blinked, his random tailwind subsiding abruptly. "There was that, yes." And blushed a brilliant scarlet, from hairline to collarbone, and possibly naval...and resumed his prior fidgeting. He most definitely recalled the loo. He wasn't likely to ever forget the loo, either. "Um."

"Exactly, Potter." Malfoy preened in his rightousness. "This is a serious matter. I'm glad you're finally acknowledging it."

The loo was...forever engraved on the backs of Harry's eyelids. (His lips, hips and his still very-much-handled-recently cock, too - gods!) If this was likely to devolve into more of the same, and that quickly, Malfoy was perfectly right to feel his much-vaunted 'concern'. He clearly recalled someone (likely him) whimpering yesterday evening—also some amount of shouting (the word 'fuck!' came to mind)—and Merlin knew he didn't care to revisit that before Poppy Pomfrey!

....And wasn't that Slytherin and Gryffindor teams having a bit of practice skirmish out on the Pitch? Oh, my!

"Er...right," he mumbled. "Yeah, okay. Sorry I mentioned it, Malfoy. I've the headache, I think; feel odd. Erm...carry on, then."

"Excellent. Now, Madame—"

"Oh, but still, Draco dear," Madame protested, having considered it further whilst Harry and Malfoy were conferring in hasty whispers, "as repugnant as it may be at the moment, you both
need to be practicing these acts and with professional medical guidance at hand, as well, so there are no...no little mishaps. I'm afraid I must insist."

"Like the loo, Potter," Malfoy sniped, sotto voce, out of the corner of his mouth. "Remember the fucking loo. Mishap, indeed."

"Alright, alright, I remember the loo, Malfoy," Harry muttered back, scowling darkly. "Shut up about the loo, yeah?"

"But, Madame!" Draco repeated, louder.

"The Binding will not take proper effect unless you and Harry are completely at ease and accepting of it, from the very start," Madame Pomfrey went on regardless, though Harry rather thought it sounded as though she were merely parroting someone's else words. Likely that nasty old voyueur Madam D'Argent, Harry thought. "That's really what this session is all about, Draco; establishing a trusting, loving relationship - and you've known that from day one; agreed to it, dear, for Harry's sake! We simply can't risk trouble in any form - an imperfect Veela Bond is dangerously unstable - and there's your health to consider, which isn't optimal, and Harry's, and I don't see why you can't simply follow the - "

Malfoy shut Pomfrey's fretful diatribe off with a palm flattened against the antiseptically-fragranced air of their private ward.

"Well, and what exactly is it I need to do to ensure it is stable, Madame? Has the Veela Council Leader provided a real, honest-to-Merlin guideline for this process or is this just all some hodgepodge Wizarding rubbish, gleaned from legend and oral history? Courtship Rites 101, maybe? Sacred Veela Rituals for Dummies? The Sex Magic course for Sixth and above we were never allowed to elect when we were here as students? Because you're not seriously expecting us to hold hands and play footsies under the table now, are you, Madame Pomfrey? There's only the two weeks to go till Bonding."

Madame Pomfrey drew her small stature up and waved her clipboard at him.

"Draco Malfoy! No need to be impertinent, young man! No need at all! Remember where you are and whom you are addressing, please. I have no wish to call for the Headmistress, but rest assured I will if you continue to be obstreperous!"

His Veela, Harry noted from his place safely on the sidelines, had graduated from mildly irate and impatient to clipped, terse and intense. Which meant, in Harry's experience, that Malfoy was now immensely, volcanically annoyed with Madame...and maybe also irritated over some other item, too, if Madame's scheme for their practicum wasn't the only thing royally yanking him off. But...what else was there that would serve to crank the git up to this level? Work? The Ministry?

No, their jobs were alright; they'd both grown accustomed to their new roles as primary paperpushers. Not happily, but it was necessary. They'd hashed it over, even, and been mutually sympathetic.

Harry tensed where he sat, hard by Malfoy's jiggling kneecap and on the very edge of the curtained bed Madame had earlier Transfigured from their usual cot, and wondered anxiously what it was actually eating away at Malfoy. Couldn't really be Harry's so-called 'innocence'; that didn't really apply, not so much. They'd made progress, hadn't they? The ruddy loo had been progress of sorts; that was certain! Quite a lot of ground traversed, very quickly!

A thought struck him. A blindingly brilliant realization, which might just result in a resolution.
Which, in turn, would equate to departing the Infirmary compound on schedule. Ron was waiting. Ron despised waiting; said it made him feel small.

"Malfoy," he muttered out of the side of his mouth. He inched over, shoving his hand out to grab at Malfoy's thigh and jiggle it furiously. "Malfoy! Oi! Listen!"

Gods, yes, Harry gasped silently, feeling the flex of corded muscle beneath his outspread fingers. Thin, expensive fabric, the trousers Malfoy wore were; didn't even begin to disguise the quiver of leashed energy below his hand worth a toss; couldn't suppress the distinct elongated lump he noted straining Malfoy's flies, either.

Malfoy was packing a stiffie already. They'd not even begun and he was already randy!

Crikey!

That had been pressed against him, in the loo. Rubbed against him in a mad fury. Malfoy had thighs of carbon steel and abs of iron, and Harry knew that now, excruciatingly well. They'd been imprinted on his own, like a bloody waffle iron. He'd been marked, manhandled and left irrevocably changed by it.

Indeed, great heaping gobs of forward movement in the art of intimacy had been made the night previous - and all blithely in-between the usual flushes of the toilets in the stalls on either side. He'd come in his shorts as fellow Wizards had been heedlessly waving their emptied peckers at porcelain heads and not concerned himself the least bit over the sordidness of it; that was the state bloody Malfoy had reduced him to! Call it 'progress', really—that he shouldn't give a flying fig where they were parked as long as it was Malfoy's hands all over his bits.

Well...at least, Harry concluded, he was of the opinion they'd upped the mutual trust-and-comfort ratio, though Malfoy had yet to relate much prior self-history to him in actual words, being more of the physical sort of communicator, demonstrably. Maybe it was due to his bloody Unspeakableness or perhaps the ingrained Malfoy stiff upper lip, but the chap didn't often mention either his past or his daily life; in fact, he seemed far more interested in Harry's. Actually, all of Harry seemed to enthral Malfoy, tip to toe and side to side. Every part of Harry, inside and out, and not in such a way that felt intrusive...or abusive. Not like the stupid press, not like Poppy's well-meaning scrutiny. Not like Hermione, either, with her perpetual thread of sisterly worry woven through and through, nor Ron, with his well-meaning, basic guy, 'get over it, mate' attitude.

Which was strikingly...weird, in Harry's view, but...nice, too. He'd not expected Malfoy to feel so intensely; not over him. They should be old hat to each other.

"Er—Malfoy?" he repeated, hopefully. "A word?"

"Quiet, Potter. Pomfrey needs to answer my question, first. It's your arse on the line, git, so cut line." He could hear teeth grinding close by him; he huffed at the noise irritably, but shut it, as requested.

Harry had to admit he was growing accustomed to the intensity, rather. He'd never received that sort of attention before - not...like...this. This was all-encompassing; a continual searchlight bathing him, as though Harry were the most important person in the world to Draco Malfoy, full stop. And...it wasn't so awful, being that.

However, that sort of investment called for a reciprocal responsibility, and Harry...well, he knew about obligations. Lived and breathed them, yeah. He'd a clear duty to his personal mariner's albatross of a Veela. He'd follow through on it, too, even if it bloody near killed him to make peace
and roll the fuck over.

"Hsst!" he whispered. Poppy was yapping on about 'natural urges', bless her. Malfoy seemed appropriately bored and fidgety. "But, Malfoy! Listen! I've an idea!"

"For the last time, would you simply hush for a moment, git? I need this addressed, Potter," Malfoy snapped, barely glancing out of his nearer eye. "Let me get on with it, will you?"

"Blast!"

Harry stuck his lower lip out somewhat mutinously, finally getting round to kicking off his work boots. He was only attempting to help. Fine, then...he'd try it again in a moment, when Poppy stopped with her endless babble.

…If she stopped, that was, before they ran out of session time altogether.

"Now, Draco, I, of all people, would hardly subject you or Harry, here, to any untested procedures." Madame seemed to have moved on from 'personally offended adult' to 'professionally offended Healer' - and perhaps rightly so. She was accredited internationally. She was a force majeur, walking, for the inalienable rights of Wizarding children everywhere. And this woman could talk a blue streak when pressed; was paid to do so, actually, being in great demand professionally by all those children's foundations and organizations that had sprung up since the end of the war. "And yes, I do, certainly, have the data and research to substantiate. The Council Leader was most gracious as to share a great deal of solid, detailed information on Bonding - facts and figures, young man, not hearsay - with me, given your status as Wizards and my position as the Healer-in-charge of you both. Everything I prescribe for you is based on purely scientific observation of the process of, er, establishing the groundwork for a lifelong Bond pairing, Draco. Birds do it; Veela do it - Wizards, too! And I would not approach the problem in any other way except with an eye toward your health and safety - nor ask it of you, either! I hold your best interests at heart, young man."

Malfoy, faced with an earnest and voluble Pomfrey, finally lost his state of grim parboil and gave in to outright fluster. He must be, Harry decided, as freaked out by this as Harry was, no matter how he disguised it. And maybe as tired and hungry and so forth.

Harry squared his shoulders; duty called.

"Of course, Madame; I know you do and I - " Malfoy soldiered on, drearily.

"Malfoy - maybe we should - just, um." He was bloody well determined to insert his brill idea in edgewise or sideways, if nowhere else, and ease them all on through this little bump in the macadam, but sodding Malfoy only waved a peremptory hand at him. Harry gritted his teeth and dove back in. "I mean, we might just as well - go along with it," he mumbled insistently, the full lower lip making another appearance. "Take our sodding chances. Yeah?"

That earned him another stifling glare. Harry figured he was definitely first name on Malfoy's shit list; years ago he'd have been covered in boils already.

"Draco? Are you hearing me?" Pomfrey's patience at nearing it's thin edge; neither noticed, occupied with angry glaring.

"My gods - shut your mouth, Potter, for the last time, before I shut it for you! You don't know, do you? You've no clue and I am actively watching out for your best interests, here, so... please...simply...keep...quiet!"
"Boys."

"I just," Harry muttered, inching away again in mounting pique, "don't see why this is such a huge deal. I mean, it's only getting off, isn't it? Wank job, right? We can do that; it's easy enough, even to each other. We just did, yeah? And I can do it, too, likely, all by my lonesome," he added, nastily. "Don't even need you around to watch, git. Leave, if you're so shirty, why don't you? Go take it up with that crone D'Argent!"

"Boys? Boys?...oh, dearie me."

"Potter!" Malfoy barked fiercely, before he swiveled his evilly slitted silvery gaze back to Madame Pomfrey. He glared nastily at poor Madame's sternly set - and somewhat vaguely hurt - expression, eyeing her multiple chins with strong disfavour as they bobbed from between their cot to the nearby cabinet shelf she'd been fiddling with.

"I'm so sorry, Madame—it's Potter, here. He won't be still. Now, as I was just saying—"

For whilst they been whispering furiously in spurts and dribbles, their Healer had considerately bustled over to a nearby Infirmary trolley and occupied herself by straightening already neatly folded packets of bandages to picture-perfect, textbook-image examples, before she stowed them away in a supply closet. Poppy Pomfrey was kind in that way; she knew to provide her patients their privacy. But her hands were perhaps a tad shaky as they moved about their busywork and the offensive, always-present clipboard of medically approved mating procedure was clamped firmly under one white-garbed arm, at the ready.

Perhaps poor Poppy was also on edge, Harry mused, even as he glared his heart out at that stubborn prick Malfoy's profile; an unhappy Veela wasn't something anyone in their right mind cared to deal with. And Malfoy was certainly not happy. Nor was he, by association.

Oh, joy. Poppy had utterly failed to mention in all her many lectures this crucial aspect of Bonding: patience. *Grit one's teeth and bear it* patience. Unholy amounts of it, yanked out of one's arse if from nowhere else, and applied as necessary to one's partner for however long a stretch it required, as required.

A lifetime, likely. It was Malfoy, wasn't it?

"Madame?"

"Oh, er, yes, dear? I'm sorry; didn't hear you there. Are you two quite ready now?"

"Madame." Malfoy had apparently decided to counter Poppy's professional affront with his own variety of charm, but Harry could discern the strain beneath the quiet, coaxing tone. Malfoy was cracking up, poor old sod. "We are not. Again, I ask this of you. Please reconsider. Please, please do recall we have less than a month before this Binding becomes official. I am perilously close to entering a fugue state, or so Madame D'Argent advises me. The Wizard, Madame, is losing out to the Veela. And the Veela, Madame, states quite firmly that it is not at all acceptable to allow Potter here to be subjected to another's direction or influence at this time - not at all. The Veela wants charge of this, Madame. It doesn't matter a whit that it's you, whom I've known and trusted most of my life, nor that the Nation itself approves this - this invasion of our lives. It simply is, Madame Pomfrey. Potter is mine, Madame - mine to keep, mine to hold, mine to satisfy in every way. There's nothing more important to me at this point, truly, howsoever I may wish it so. I am tried nearly to the limit; I cannot bear you to stand over us and that's all there is to it."

"Malf--" Harry shifted closer again, those un-sayable, Unspeakable words ringing through his
head: barbells bouncing down stairwells; a crushing weight of inference into the inner Malfoy. There were a lot of them, these words; they were very weighty, horrendously so, but on the whole...he approved. If it was going to be this way between them, then it was all or nothing, and he was all for 'all'. "Malfoy, listen to me."

But still, Poppy Pomfrey was an old Witch, who'd witnessed much in her time; she was Harry's friend, and someone he trusted. He knew for certain Malfoy felt pretty much exactly the same, for all his Veela bits were stroppy over Poppy. If Poppy really, really required this for her peace of mind, then he'd do it - make it happen, for her, and to teach Malfoy that there was still room for compromise, even so.

"Malfoy, you tit, it's alright, really; I'm okay with it. I am." Because, by Merlin, that was one lesson they both required, and they'd better damned well practice it as often as they possibly could! "I'm good to go; she can watch."

"Potter!"

Malfoy, twisting his entire torso sideways, threw his hands up in the air and shook his head fiercely at Harry, his expression nearly unreadable—but not in a good way. Harry winced.

Gods, but he was a bloody bowstring. A loaded Muggle gun, ready to go off without warning.

"Malfoy." Harry stared straight back at him, meaningfully, and waited, knowingly. "What? She can."

"Really!" Madame sniffed, drawing herself up before her trolley, though she didn't brandish her paper shield immediately. It took a great deal to truly unsettle a witch of Pomfrey's caliber. "Draco - I don't think you're recalling what you and Madame D'Argent both agreed to, months ago when we first met with the Ministry! Or the specific promise you made to the Minister himself, for that matter! Tell me—do you?"

Malfoy's fair head shot back round to face her; this time Harry winced for his neck pain—poor Malfoy.

Malfoy swallowed carefully beneath Madame's minatory gaze and Harry really felt for the git, something awful. Deep in his chest, too. Poor, poor sod.

"Alright, Madame, yes," Malfoy allowed, with effort. "Of course you are right, absolutely, and I am bound to that promise - and to my oath of office. But just bear with me for a moment, alright? I suggested this earlier but let me rephrase. I put forth that perhaps in place of these so-called 'lessons' in intimacy, it might be possible to obtain for ourselves that guide you have? Then we'll have a plan—lessons, if you will—we can absorb on our own time. This without the added pressure of travelling to Hogwarts Infirmary every two days and committing what essentially amounts to a public display of affection - a debauchery of mating, I might add? It's outside of enough that we're...committing to the final step here, with you as witness, Madame. I can hardly bear that as it is, but - we aren't two schoolboys, either. We don't need supervision every sodding step of the way. Even the Minister would agree that's reasonable. We can...compromise. For Potter's benefit."

"But..." Harry piped up, shrugging fatalistically. "It's okay! I'm not bothered." He - in all honesty - didn't mind it that much. Not what was coming - oh, how he minded that! - but now. This was alright. The little things she told them; the advice she gave so matter-of-factly. It was...sound, all of it. Made sense, and Harry had never had a mum or dad to tell him a sodding word. "I don't mind it, Malfoy! Really, I don't!"
"What?" Malfoy snapped his head around, his face startled. "Potter! What are you saying? That's nothing like what you've been whinging on about before! First it's that wild hippogriffs can't possibly make you and now you're all for it? Make up your damned mind, damn it! You're mental!"

Harry had to laugh, just a little. Uneasily, as the grey eyeballs rolling wildly at him were red-veined.

So, yes. Even if it was weird and - and perhaps juvenile, even, to have Poppy watching over them like a guardian angel, it was still...comforting, in a strange sort of way. But Malfoy likely didn't get that - and how could he? He'd had his parents. Still did, though they were a bit...fucked up. He had the wretched old puss of a Veela Leader, too, guiding him. He'd had advice Harry was never going to get from his mum and dad.

No intersections, again, in the pentacle they'd been soundly planted in, but...there was always a way 'round things, if not directly through them. This, Harry knew.

"...Potter?"

"Malfoy, ah - ahem, could I talk to you for a sec? Now? This minute? Because I have this idea and I really do think it will work. Make everyone happy. I think."

"I - I. Not yet, Potter. Please; it's important. One moment more and I'll give you all my undivided attention, I promise."

He turned sharply away, and Harry caught a glimpse of regret in those eyes - really? regret? - but his narrow, sharply carven features were set concrete-stolid again when he faced poor Poppy. He simply stared at her, a deadly ironic eyebrow raised on high, and appeared for all the world a carbon copy of Lucius Malfoy. Harry shivered involuntarily, even though he knew, now.

He knew. Nothing like - or if the git shared traits, it was only superficially. Malfoy wasn't Lucius; Harry had known him for a very long time, now.

"No! Malfoy, no. Now. It needs to be now, before this goes any further - "

"Quiet, Potter," Malfoy snapped, and strengthened his glare. Poor Madame Pomfrey paled under the force of it, faltering.

Oh - but - sometimes Malfoy was his horrid father all over again, Muggle haircut aside. Harry recalled clearly -

But Pomfrey was far more unsettled than he, apparently. And not at all afraid to do something positive about it. She stomped her slippered foot; certainly the clipboard was in evidence, a strong breeze ruffling its reams.

"Draco! Draco, dear! Are you truly that dissatisfied with the methods I'm employing?" she enquired, her pencil-thin grey brows cocked, a quibbly little scowl plastering itself disagreeably across her normally pleasant face. "That unwilling?"

She blinked rapidly at Malfoy and Harry felt a strong pang of empathy for her. She was most definitely highly offended, he decided, mentally shuffling back to his former role as mere observer for the moment (only being practical about the situation, he told himself, in need of justification) but then, their old nurse was also quite demonstrably curious, too, being a Healer by avocation. And one who'd just had her finer feelings firmly trampled upon by a very high-in-the-instep Magical Creature. Whom, in the end, was distinctly the better Wizard of the two of them, thus she couldn't even compel the git to cooperate with her, Harry noted, his own eyes narrowing.
Hmmm. *He* could, though.

Her primary patient was not responding as planned, Harry concluded ruefully. Nor was he, the 'other one', the easy one, but his issue was...different, again. He bloody well wanted to have Malfoy's hands on his bits and that was far, far distant territory from where he'd been standing, even a fortnight ago. The real fuss wasn't over that - not to him, no matter what Poppy Pomfrey might be thinking, or stupid, dense Malfoy...though Malfoy should know instinctively where Harry was, mentally, at the moment. Malfoy should abso-fucking-lutely know where Harry stood!

Gods, no, they were well beyond false modesty and had been for ages. Malfoy was scared, though. Very. Terrified shitless, no matter what the git said. Harry could sense that from leagues, really. He'd been off now for - what? Several days, at least. Maybe more...

And Poppy, who was one very determined lady, was still nattering on at them, as Healer-in-charge:

"Because, boys, I have consulted with the head of the Veela Nation at length and this is precisely the course of action she'd have you both follow. Recall, Draco, this is not your normal, common-garden Mating, and you must take into account that Harry was never willingly seduced by your Allure. He wasn't even aware of it 'til very recently! For his safety and yours, dear, if naught else, I do honestly believe - "

"Madame!" Draco's nostrils flared; now he wasn't a picture of his father at all. He was harking back to the loo incident, actually. Ears practically steaming and all a'bristle with contained emotion. Malfoy had been struck jealous over something - someone; a flunky, likely; who'd gotten his person perilously near Harry's. Someone not important in the least and never a real threat to his intended Mate - and that was what had set him off. One moment his Unspeakable old self; the next, a madman. A fucking madman, literally.

Harry, recalling everything yet again, shrank away. Only a tiny distance down the cot, but sufficient to gather his defenses. He ruddy well needed them. What in hell was going on with the git, really? Hot, cold - arctic, ironic, sardonic, even bloody moronic - all over the map, damn it! How the fuck was he supposed to keep up? He wasn't Veela! He didn't know!

"Madame, I am well aware of Harry's state - and of the circumstances," Harry's Veela hissed, for the Malfoy bits had apparently been belayed and possibly tossed overboard altogether. Harry winced in ready sympathy; oh, poor Poppy! There went that damned Allure!

Waves of it, echoing into his wide-open senses. A bloody Neanderthal drumbeat, invincible.

"And Potter's safety and comfort are paramount to me, of course." Malfoy drew himself up, a tight smile sliding across his severe features. Tight, yes - but bloody sexy, too. "All I am saying to you is that we may be able to learn what we need to know far more effectively if we do it at our own rate. And privacy would be greatly appreciated. I must tell you - I am not at all pleased with the way this is panning out. A Bond is an intensely intimate matter, Madame. You're turning us into a sideshow, you and the Leader and the sodding Ministry - even Shacklebolt! That's not acceptable, not in any way."

Malfoy, Harry reflected, didn't yell or carry on any more when he craved attention. He enunciated clearly, and threw perfect diction in his target's teeth, and that was far, far worse. Then he trounced his victims soundly with sheer animal magnetism - which was efficiently effective. Mostly.

"Come, Madame Pomfrey, surely you agree? Isn't Potter's wellbeing the most important concern of all? If it is, then please help me in maintaining it, I beg you. Let us do this my way."
Mostly. But Poppy Pomfrey must have taken a damned vaccine! She lit into him - as much as she ever did, with a precious patient.

"You do not have time for privacy, Draco," Madame replied very sternly indeed. She clutched her clipboard like the veritable shield it was - 'with it or on it', and Harry could practically divine her thinking. "That time is past, if it ever existed. Don't forget the Suppression potion Headmaster Snape administered you, dear boy. The effects of that - well, even Madame D'Argent doesn't quite know what will happen to you. You're twenty-four, nearly twenty-five, and still unMated, Draco, and that is a most serious health hazard for a Veela, especially a male!"

She shook her net-covered bun, and stood her ground.

"The fact of the matter is, dear boy, this is a forced Binding and we are in a huge rush to have it done properly. Trust me when I tell you we act this way for your sakes, Harry, Draco - and that you will be supervised, one way or another. I stand by that, no matter what. I must. I am your Healer, boys. You must respect that I know what's best."

"Oh, gods! Oh, fucking Merlin!"

Malfoy, muttering under his breath, slumped, clearly torn by his old nurse's words, and scrubbed a weary hand across his tense features. Harry, sensing his distress - how could he not, with it written large over the git's pale face? - scooted over again, closer by another thin inch. When he laid his hand on Malfoy's thigh this time, the argumentative prat clutched it instantly, and hung on.

"Yes, Madame," Harry's Veela sighed, evidently wearying at last of fighting the unfightable, "and yes - I do appreciate the circumstances, as I've said. No one does, I imagine, as much as I do, now. And perhaps I would be more agreeable to them if there was more time, but this is ridiculous! How are we to 'learn' to be intimate if we're not given a moment by ourselves to do so? I hold a relatively high position in the Ministry ranks, as does Potter! Our jobs are not exactly unimportant or to be discounted, Madame - we've not much free time as it is! We can't spend it here, holding hands like Firsties and practicing our snogging skills."

Madame, sensing victory at last, was still astride her high horse.

"Draco! Really, it's hardly as though any of those involved are impeding you! To the contrary, we are all doing our very best to ensure the Binding will be a glorious occasion. Even the Minister - especially the Minister! You are free to meet outside this room - indeed, I understand you do, now, and more often than ever before, which is excellent progress, surely - "

"Madame, Madame, as I said - perhaps, just perhaps, we could be granted the procedural guidelines - even the basics would be sufficient for our needs. Something to go by - the incantations, at least."

"Um," Harry piped up, having had quite enough of Malfoy being highly unpredictable within a hand's-breadth of him. Quite enough of Poppy's chin wobbling and soap boxes, too. This was all outside of enough and he, for one, was washing his hands of it. At this rate, he not manage to regain his bed till well after midnight! And Ron - poor Ron - damn it all, was waiting on him!

"Right, that's it. Er, this is what I'm thinking, since I'm what Malfoy here is so concerned with protecting. Look, what if we were to come here, Madame, as per usual, but instead of you being in the same room the entire time and watching over what we do, one or the other of us will give you a Pensieve recollection, after we've done whatever it is you require of us - to, um, prove we've done it, but as a means of taking away the pressure of - ah - actually showing you? In person? Would that be acceptable? Malfoy?"
Malfoy slewed his head about to face Harry's hopeful gaze, clearly startled. Madame blinked rapidly and consulted her charts, scanning them quickly.

"Oh...well, Harry. Hmm. Let's see, now. That's a...novel approach."

"Potter, really, I don't think Madame's going to want to view that much detail - "

"On the contrary," Madame nodded happily, having gone through her carefully hoarded rules of engagement for Veela kind. "That may possibly work, Harry. Quite well."

They both turned to stare at her. Harry swallowed, and essayed a relieved grin.

"Good - then, by all means, let's get on - "

"But...one thing, one point yet, that needs sorting," Pomfrey slapped the charts. "This must be clarified before we proceed. Draco, dear, will you mind it as much if it were Harry who gave the Pensieve memories over? I know your Veela will likely not wish you to, but if it is your Mate-to-be who - ah, let's call it, cooperates with me, as Healer? Would that be...acceptable?"

"I - I." Malfoy, bridling suddenly, whipped his chin around to stare at Harry. He rose abruptly to his feet, pacing back and forth a quick few steps in the confined area.

"Potter! Are you certain? It's your head, after all. I mean, I can't even begin to countenance turning my memories over, not of that, but - but, if you feel comfortable with it, then I suppose it's alright. I...could allow it, if it's strictly controlled."

"Malfoy." Harry grabbed a black sleeve as it whipped past him and tugged Malfoy back down. He sat, with a surprised huff. "Come here."

"What, Potter?"

Harry scooted that hairsbreadth over again and ended close enough for their hipbones to butt up together. He was visited with the fancy he could somehow transfer over a scrap of physical comfort, in an odd, off-the-cuff manner. Malfoy was increasingly antsy these days if he wasn't in contact every so often, no question - Harry had noticed it, even with everything else going on in Aurors.

Unspeakable Malfoy plumped his arse right down next to Harry now, in every Staff meeting, without so much as a by-your-leave-mate. He commandeered the next chair over when they ate luncheon in the canteen. He was within a yard or less of Harry, it seemed, whenever he turned about. The kissing they'd both avoided - that snogging which escalated too rapidly to be safe or sane (oh, the loo!) - but Malfoy certainly didn't seem to mind the handholding and the hair-petting Harry offered him on occasion - craved it, in fact. The intervals he signaled his need of such things were growing ever shorter, Harry had noted, same as the gap between their arranged meeting times. Now it was almost daily they met up; twice even, or three times each day, when before they'd both been fine with easy lulls elapsing between 'dates', as Ron insisted calling them.

"Um. See."

But Harry knew to expect this now, and it was a bit of an all right, he supposed. A little handholding wouldn't hurt him. Ah...today was supposed to be focused all below the waist. Er, cock-holding, then. He just...wouldn't stare too closely, not at Malfoy's long hands and not at his own broader ones, and then Madame wouldn't see the event recalled in full flesh-toned graphics, after.
"Potter?"

"The question is, will it let you feel better, Malfoy? Will you be all freaky, after - over Madame seeing what I see? I don't mind it, not too particularly. I trust Poppy and I know for a fact none of this will ever go past Hogwarts' Infirmary doors and I'm not even really planning to - I'll be closing my eyes, mostly, all through, alright? When we're here, I mean. But the Veela, Malfoy, your Veela - will it be jealous? Could you, erm, settle down? Concentrate...so, you know, we can, ah, move on with...things?"

"Things, Potter?" Malfoy snorted softly and possessed himself of Harry's hand again, clasping it firmly. "That's ever so clearly stated - 'things'. Things! Huh! Hmm, well, first off, it's not a separate beast, Potter. The Veela is me, you know. As much as the Wizard ever was, I s'pose." The git chuckled wryly, but Harry thought it wasn't amusement; it was more that he was weary of endlessly considering the Veela and never the 'Malfoy'. "You should cease referring to it as if I'm hosting a symbiotic parasite, because I'm not."

"Sorry," Harry replied quickly and meant it, most sincerely. It always annoyed him when Madame D'Argent addressed him as 'Mate Potter'. It was so arbitrary, that stupid title, and limiting, and he knew exactly how Malfoy was feeling...if that was the git's problem today. Which it likely wasn't. "I - er. I'm just - I'm thinking about the way you were before, Malfoy. Here, at school - or even just at work, these last few years. We've not exactly been living in each other's pockets, have we? And...well, I'm sorry, but this is still very strange to me, even now. You are strange, like this. I...don't mind having the additional time to, er, to get used to it. Or Poppy's diagrams, either."

"Ah."

Malfoy stared at Harry searchingly, grey eyes shadowed. How he could do that and still be so reticent, Harry couldn't fathom.

Hell, Harry thought, peering, and damn. Malfoy's entire face was hollowed, tinged with faint, exhausted grey hue. Even his lips were blueish. He looked like shite in the watery light of an early spring afternoon: fatigued and run-down, which was starkly evident here in this white-on-white sterile atmosphere as it hadn't been back in the dim discreet confines of the Ministry. There were fine furrows on his pale forehead that hadn't been there even as recently as the yesterday evening after work, when Harry had last seen him. In the loo. The lighting was lousy in the loo, though, granted. Magic'd Muggle fluorescent bulbs, which made even the most robust of Wizards look like bloody Inferi. And he'd had his eyes shut for most of the action, Harry had, mainly because he'd not been able to summon up the raw courage to open them. He'd been too afraid of what his own hands and lips and hips were getting up to, the traitors.

They'd had dinner, after, at a miniscule pub in the Strand; so small, in fact, there had been only one other couple dining. And Malfoy had made Harry switch seats with him, so he'd sat with his back to the other couple. And had been stared at the entire time by a very closely intent Malfoy, and had his fingers and wrists touched far often for it to be even slightly accidental. The light hadn't been particularly bright in the pub, either, but Harry really only recalled the look in Malfoy's eyes anyway. He couldn't even remember what they'd eaten, he'd been so...entranced. Hadn't been Allure, either last night.

Oh, yes; Malfoy had it sodding awful, his Veela thing. And so, it seemed, did Harry. By association.

"Poppy," he called out, breaking the eerie quiet, and this was strictly for the git's benefit, and to
lessen the strain 'round his beautiful mouth, "Poppy, we'll need all those instructions of yours, I do believe. The diagrammes, too. I agree with Malfoy; I want something specific to go on with. We'll be wanting the incantations, in any case. We've to memorise them for the Bonding ceremony, remember?"

"Oh! Oh, you're absolutely correct, Harry," Poppy burbled, popping her head out from the folding screen that blocked part of Harry's view of the Quidditch Pitch, her most recent direction of retreat being the room's single, narrow slice of a window. "I'd not thought - but...yes, of course. You will. I'll just...make some copies, shall I? Over here."

"Thank you, Poppy. Appreciate it," Harry sent a fleeting grin of thanks her way and then turned back to face his snarky cotmate. "Well? That suit you, Malfoy? Pensieve here, practice in private?"

He was met with heavy silence and still arched eyebrows. An uncomfortably long silence it was, too.

"Malfoy," Harry prompted, "our clock is ticking." Malfoy jumped, slightly. His eyes went sharp and narrow: the usual Malfoy.

"Right. I see how it is, then. If you're sure, Potter, well I...maybe," Malfoy agreed, but then faltered. There was another significantly too-long pause, during which Harry ached to twist his hands together nervously, and anxiously reconsidered his whole offer. Perhaps it would just make it worse, the Pensieve idea? But at least they'd have these super-secret directions Malfoy was lustng after so badly, so... "Maybe so, Potter. We can...we can attempt it, at least the one time, as a trial. And only if you're sure? Because I am not so sanguine -"

"I'm sure," Harry said hastily, though of course he wasn't, again. He wasn't sure of much, recently. Or rather, he would entirely sure of certain absolutes and then they change up on him, when he wasn't on the lookout. "I really can't have you walking around like this, all...all wonky. You're a bloody zombie - a weird, affectionate zombie! It upsets me, too, Malfoy. I don't like it."

"Does it? Hmmm, I wonder, Potter, but...fine, then. We'll do it. Madame?"

Madame had thoughtfully taken herself even farther away from them and had her head stuck firmly in a huge potions supply cabinet, where she was ostensibly fiddling with something else medical. Harry grinned at her bent back. The old dear certainly did mean well, even if...well. Enough said.

Now she popped her head out and spun about, smiling brightly.

"Yes, Draco? Harry? Have you two settled it, finally? You're ready to continue today's session? Because we've only the ten minutes left, now."

"Of course - provided we are allowed to work on this trust-building process by ourselves, Madame? You will be stepping out? And you'll supply us a copy of whatever Madame D'Argent gave you, correct? All the proper Charms and so forth?"

"Of course, Draco dear," Madame was all smiles now and Harry wondered if his Mate-to-be had unleashed a bit more of that Allure the texts spoke so blithely of. The stuff he'd no problem with using in gobs on unsuspecting Muggles.

"Heh!" Harry muttered nastily. "I know what you're up to, you git. You need to stop that. Not nice."

"Hush, Potter," Malfoy ordered, out of the corner of his mouth, though it did twitch into the very faintest of faint smiles. "Just hush. You've done enough damage."
"Whatever makes you both comfortable, boys. I'll believe just be off and dig up a Pensieve for after, alright? I do recall poor Severus had one of his own stored in the Headmaster's office and Headmistress McGonagall's left it just where it was, gathering dust. We can make use of it, I'm sure; Minerva won't mind at all, when she knows why. So, er, boys, I'll plan to return in, say, ten or fifteen minutes? That should be more than sufficient, I'd think. To go on with."

"More than enough, yes. Thank you, Madame." Malfoy nodded, pleasant again now that he'd obtained at least part of what he'd been lobbying for.

"Yes, thanks, Poppy," Harry added, eager to bustle her on her way. Whatever he might say about being fine with it to Malfoy, aloud, being a good sport, this whole situation still wasn't optimal - it was far indeed from how he'd imagined any relationship he'd ever have would turn out. Far and away...and really arse-over-teakettle odd, considering whom his partner had ended up being. "We really appreciate this. Your efforts, um, particularly. Leastways, I do."

"Right, then. Good luck, boys!"

"See you soon, Madame," Harry replied, ever so cheerily. "Hah. Ahaha...yes. Right, Malfoy?"

"Mmm."

The moment the swish of Madame's robes were to be heard whisking round the door, Malfoy seemed immediately less strained. They heard the lock snick behind her and Harry threw up a repelling ward almost without thinking, just in case. Classes were in full session and this was a secluded private room in the Infirmary, reserved for contagious cases such as Dragon Pox, but...no harm in being extra-cautious. He could feel Malfoy incanting another one immediately after his own - a much stronger version, Veela-powered.

"Potter, in the future, do not take it upon yourself to imply that I am not cooperative," he sniped. He shifted 'round on the mattress, so that their knees were budged up together. Harry, miffed, lifted his one leg and folded it under himself. "I am a most reasonable person, and that was a valid complaint. Still is, for that matter."

"Whatever. Okay, then. Let's get this started. I have to leave in the dot today - Ron's waiting on me."

"Yessss. Let's, Potter."

And then there were wings.

Harry blinked, startled.

Wings, by Merlin. By fucking bloodyMerlin!

...Wings.

Patient Name

Age

Gender/Descriptors

Date of First Treatment

Diagnoses
General Health

Prognosis

Pertinent Additional Data

Potter, Harry

24, 7 months

Male; eye colour: green; hair colour: black ...

April XX, 20XX

Veela Mate, UnMated

Fair to Middling

Very Poor, if not Mated

Mate: Malfoy, Draco (Veela)

Case Notes:

Week 4

Harry, the dear boy, has been remarkably sanguine about this whole ordeal, remaining steady as poor Draco has declined. I've come to believe that Veela instinct is indeed all it's cracked up to be. These Veela have an excellent sense of what they require, and how to go about obtaining it. No wonder they have done so well when other creatures have suffered once they come into contact with Wizards. In any case, we are down to the final days before the Bond, and it is likely the boys will enter seclusion any day now. Kingsley has alerted the Ministry and everyone is more than happy to cooperate. Harry is, of course, well loved there and Draco, too, although naturally the Unspeakables can't say much about it. They have managed to convey their full cooperation, though, which is what was needed. Narcissa Malfoy has departed the Manor in preparation. I imagine that Draco plans to use that for his and Harry's residence and his mother will retreat to the estate in France Draco mentioned, used by the Dowagers in days past. Privacy will not be an issue and Harry will be very safe, indeed. At the very least, they are well prepared. The information on the specific rites and incantations has been given over, along with Madame D'Argent's case notes and directions. We are all in readiness, though I imagine I'll have to content myself with Owls to the Manor, quite soon, at least until the Big Day. Personally, I must confess I adore a wedding, and this seems to be very like one. I shall have to look about for a suitable gift to wish them well. Lastly, Minerva has requested to be a part of the observation team (currently myself and Madame D'Argent, representing both the Wizard and the Veela aspects/factions) and I see no reason to deny her. Minnie is such a sensible woman, and very powerful, too. It will be a relief, I confess, to have her present. I've never witnessed a Veela Mating and I must also confess to this: it is somewhat a daunting prospect. In any event, we will continue with our regularly scheduled appointments until Draco makes his move toward Nesting. I don't imagine it will be long.
"I think, for a moment, my heart just stopped," Harry babbled excitedly, his pint sloshing with every flap, "right there, dead in my chest, like a stone! They were absofuckinglutely fantastic, Ron! I mean, you should've seen them! All miles wide and feathery - well, of course they were feathery; what am I saying? - but you know what I meant, right? Flapping - and so brilliantly white! Pure as snow - like those Muggle archangels! Michael and Whos'Is? Gabriel! No—Lucifer!"

"Better I don't, mate." A mellow Ron shook his head sagely over his pint and cracked another peanut shell. "You'd be short a best man, next," he went on, munching busily, "when you have your big Wizarding do."

Harry slewed his whole head 'round to stare, vastly perplexed.

"Wait, what, Ron? Why? How d'you mean, short?"

"Harry, um." Ron sidled a little closer on his barstool and leant his flaming red head in, speaking softly. He shot darting little glances about him all the while. Harry blinked, bewildered. "Perhaps you don't realize this, mate, but Veelas don't do the wing thing unless they're actively attacking or, ah, let's say...they're – well, they're - um, they're fancying their Mate, like. Posturing. Showing off for them, yeah? Like Malfoy's sodding peacocks—or Buckbeak, when he's in season."

"Ah?" Harry's jaw dropped.

Ron nodded again, very much the wise old man. "And, yeah, though I am sincere when I say I'm glad it was brill for you, Harry - and I'm not saying it isn't - it's not something the rest of ever want to see in person, trust me. The wings, that is. Might just be that last thing we ever see, get me?"

"Really?" Harry was as wide-eyed as he'd been back in First, over almost everything new and magical. "Because they really were bloody gorgeous, Ron!" He took a short breath, excited. "I mean, I simply can't get over it - never seen anything like them, never. And his face, Malfoy's - Merlin! He's not a bad-looking chap when all's said and done, but I swear that's the first time I've ever felt the full force of it, that Allure what'sit he's got. I mean to say: bags and bags of sex appeal, Ron. Amazing shit, I tell you, the feel of it—the way he looks - absolutely amazing! What a fucking rush!"

"Super, Harry. That's, er...brilliant, yeah. Great."

Ron twitched his lips into a rather carefully composed smile, but he'd a weather eye cocked to the Wizarding side entryway of the Leaky all the same. That git Malfoy of Harry's was imminently due to arrive and whisk his frisky, overly talkative friend off to some tiny little restaurant in Muggle Mayfair. Rather cramped Ron's style, not having a chance to chat with Harry on a regular basis after work, but...well, Veela mates came first. Or so his Mum said.

"Umm..." Harry sighed, happily floating off to an Allure-based reverie. "Yeah...yes. Really super, Ron."

Ron coughed gently, though he kept that eye out for Malfoy.

"I'm really am happy for you, just as I was saying, Harry. It's, er...it's fantastic you've got someone now—at least both Hermione and I think so—and Malfoy's alright enough, I guess. He's, um...oh!"
There was minor flurry at the doorway to the Leaky; people's heads turned. "And, um, yeah. Look who's arrived, right on schedule. The very git we speak of - "

Harry nearly spun off his stool, zipping around to peer in the right direction. His face lit up—and Ron would bet all his carefully set aside vacation Galleons he'd no idea it had.

"Oh? Huh? Already, Ron? He's early again! Told me he'd be later, the liar. Oi! Malfoy! Over here!"

"Mm-hmm."

Grinning behind his pint glass, Harry's partner nodded discreetly at the doorway of the Leaky and downed the remainder of his pint, simultaneously. Let the countdown begin, then.

A tall Wizard with the unmistakable Malfoy colouring stood poised in the Leaky's ages-old slab-and-plank doorframe, his hair a glorious candle's flame atop a pillar of charcoal wax, shifting silver-white as the rush from the pass-through breeze ruffled it; his grey eyes very sharp indeed as they scanned the crowded room, chock-a-clock with weary post-workaday Wizards and Witches. They lit on Harry's equally distinctive mop almost instantly and Ron caught a glimpse of straight white teeth, bared wide in a terribly satisfied smirk. Then the keen gaze shifted over to him.

Ron flinched even though he know it coming, nearly knocked his emptied mug over, what with rising abruptly. Temperature had instantly dropped some fifteen degrees locally; he was distinctly unwanted and he damned well knew it, too. Stupid Veela!

"Ah...right, then," he muttered under his breath, but his best mate didn't hear him. "Time to go, yeah."

No...Harry was busy enough with his own two feet, stumbling to get them beneath him so he too could shoot up off his barstool; acting the eager arse, the little sod. And everyone else present swiveled their pointy caps from the brilliant view of impeccable Unspeakable Draco Malfoy to watch Harry Potter instead, just as they always did.

Ron snorted. Even as tense as he was, he had to laugh. It was a riot, the world was. He should know, yeah?

"Oi, Malfoy!" Harry bawled out happily and stuck an arm up, waving it over his head wildly. Fortunately it wasn't the one clutching his pint. "Draco! Over here, mate! We've been waiting for you! Where've you been, all this ti—?"

"I think - " Ron mumbled, edging away from their table. "He's seen you, mate. And...um. I'll just be going off home – now, this minute - Harry. I've left, actually."

"Ah? Wha—?" Harry's curious green eyes turned back in his direction for an instant. "But—what d'you mean, Ron?"

"Weasley." Malfoy arrived with a swish of expensive blacker-than-midnight Ministry robes and a stern eye to Ron's partner. "For Merlin's sake, Potter, do cease attracting attention to yourself. You get enough as it is."

"Oops!" Harry, distracted, glance from Ron to Draco and then all about the bar, cheeks flushing. "Um, yeah - sorry about that."

"Malfoy." Ron nodded carefully. "Oi, mate." He stepped backwards from the bar rail, taking quite large strides indeed. Veelas had exceptionally long reach and they came equipped with talons. And teeth. He wondered if Harry had seen those yet. Hah! Not likely! Bill had said Fleur had saved
them up till well after the Bonding...but they had their uses, too—or so Bill said. Blasted arse had smirked when he said it, too. Ron didn't want to know that, really. The sex lives of one's brothers simply should never be mentioned—at all. Ever. Didn't need to stick around either, especially as he knew he wasn't wanted. Leastways, not by the blond snarky contingent. "Yeah, nice to see you again." He inched another little ways off, being cautious; Harry didn't notice at all. "Um, ah. So. H-have a super evening, you two. Enjoy your dinner out. And, er. Harry, mate, I'll...ahhh. I'll catch up to you, maybe even tomorrow, alright? Or not. Laters."

"Huh?" Harry gawped, finally shifting his eyes from Malfoy. "Wait!" Ron quite thought his friend had his eyes glued to Malfoy's straight shoulders, just waiting for the next outbreak of feathers. "Hang on, Ron—"

"Not," Malfoy purred at Ron, eyes narrowed and quite, quite poisonous a shade of mercury. "Likely. No offense, Weasley."

Ron swallowed, blanching. "Hey! Not's fine, too, Malfoy! And none taken, either. Totally not a problem, okay?" He bobbed his head, sending his ginger fringe straight into his eyes. Blinked rapidly. "Good-oh, then. I, er—I understand, mate. Ahhh, so! Have a great time, Harry! Good luck with it all!"

Two more long strides had Ron well away from the immediate reach of even a long-limbed Malfoy. He instantly breathed out a gust of his relief, huffing.

"Whew! That's better!"

"Oh, hey, Ron - but, wait a sec, alright? I thought we were all—" Harry wasn't twigging on any of it; not at all. Oblivious git. "But-we're having dinner together, right? The three of us? The Cannon's match we were supposed to watch tonight, remember? It's on at eight sharp—"


"I. B-But—"

"Laters, guys. See ya." Ron waggled his fingers into a little wave, but it was too late. "Have, um… fun." Or maybe it was just soon enough.

Malfoy step-turned himself and Harry into a slick Side-along before Harry could work his lips 'round another syllable and they both popped out of the smoky, beery atmosphere of the bar with a silent, sub-aural 'Crack!', leaving more than a few nervous patrons staring dazedly after them. The atmosphere had been rather ramped up to sliceable by the almost palpable miasma of irritated Veela. Ron Weasley, just like any number of others watching wide-eyed and gawping, heaved a huff of relief, even though he'd noted Malfoy had been snogging Harry something ferocious as they winked out of view.

"Thank Merlin. 'Bout time, Malfoy," he informed the empty space, scowling. Everyone else had had a good gander at the snog, too. He wasn't the only one. "Took you long enough!"

Too much tongue had been visible, even if only for an instant—at least for Ron's comfort level. And poor Malfoy was clearly effing twitchy. And too, also clearly, perched right on the tottering brink. Reminded Ron of his sister-in-law on a Very Bad Day, the git did. When she'd just about to pop out little Victoire, yes.
Ron looked about him, considering another pint. The remainder of the Leakey's clientele went back to their butterbeers and whiskys, meads and ales. The usual low murmur of a Friday night crowd rose again. But—wait. Perhaps it was a bit more excited a noise than usual. After all, now they all had something to gossip about.

So, er...this was it, then. End game. All the world absolutely knew for certain, now, that Harry Potter was hooked up right and tight with his fellow Ministry worker, Draco Malfoy, Veela. Even if the general populace had their collective heads up their arses and they'd somehow managed to avoid the press notices from the Ministry that touted it as the next greatest thing since tinned Flobberworms, presliced, then it would only require approximately one half-hour to spread the gossip from the Leaky to every corner of the Wizarding world.

Which, Ron knew, being both a logical man and one who lived with Hermione, was a damned good thing, as Veela weren't known for their easy-going natures and the world needed to back off a bit on poor Harry. He and Hermione had even discussed it, and come to conclusion the whole mess wasn't such a bad lot in life for their mate: guaranteed to-the-death devotion, Veela-powered privacy whenever he needed it and no fucking flak over whom he settled down with. Plus, it wasn't as if Malfoy couldn't keep Harry in fine style for the remainder of his days and well into the hereafter; chap had bags of more than just sex appeal.

And Harry really did seem...he seemed pretty much alright with it; alright with Malfoy. Like it was well enough, wings and all, really. Too, Malfoy had saved Ron's life, once. Or maybe more than once, but the one in particular. That was a point in his favour. Not that he'd ever be returning to bloody Helsinki and thankfully that particular old Death Eater renegade was stowed in Azkaban now, but...nice to know one's best mate was to mate and marry a Veela. Veela were bloody nothing to sneeze at; so, yes, an added cachet to Ron's reputation by association and all that.

Not so bad, then. Just be a little lonely 'round the office till Harry came back, that's all.

With a last glance 'round him and a disgusted snort at the busy gossipers, Ron popped off home, ready to report the latest to his eager wife. Tomorrow he'd be assigned a temporary partner and Hermione could—and likely already had-ensure it wasn't that smarmy, uppity, hoity-toity berk Smith, bless her dear little organizational heart.

As for Harry...and Malfoy. Currently somewhere else, they were. But not far distant...no, not far at all, geographically.

Perhaps if Harry's best mate had bothered to foolishly waste his time awaiting their return, Harry would've been able to provide him with a greatly clarified and far less pie-eyed view of that famous Veela Allure and those brilliant white, feathery wings Malfoy sported. Except Harry's lips were already far too swollen and his tongue felt horribly thick, from abuse. And he was beyond being calm and rational enough to explain anything to anyone, much.

And the two of them didn't bother to return to the Leaky, either, Harry and Malfoy; not even to make good the tab Harry had promised Ron he'd pick up. Not for weeks upon weeks. But that was what Malfoy's Quik Quills were for—noting outstanding Galleons owed and ensuring Gringott's paid them in a timely fashion.
"For the final and the absolutely last bloody time, Malfoy, that was unconscionable! That was damned near rape, what you almost did to me! You will not molest me without my fucking consent. I don't give a rap if you're a bloody Veela or not a bloody Veela, I will not be shoved up against dirty bricks and practically shagged through them!"

"Potter."

"I will not! Not even your fancy-pants Nation Council will allow that, Draco Malfoy! If I go to them and inform them of what you just did to me - and only because you were sodding jealous, when there's nothing on earth to be jealous of!"

Malfoy was blank-faced and perfectly still, a Wizard doing his best to emulate a statue.

"They'd tell you it was perfectly understandable, Potter. My right. And it was."

"No such thing, you bloody arsewipe - the Ministry, then! Kingsley will never accept this! You'll lose your position - maybe even be arrested!" Harry thrust an accusing forefinger out, a bare inch away from poking Malfoy right in his patrician nostril. "You! You had my fucking trousers about my ankles, Malfoy! In public!"

"For what it's worth, Potter, I do apologize." A slight inclination of the chin accompanied that. "But that won't happen."

"That's not enough, Malfoy! Not near enough! I want more than some fucking half-arsed apology! Way the hell more –I want-!"

Malfoy didn't budge an inch. He did, however, modulate the usual calm, clipped severity tones. Harry had to lean in—reluctantly-just to catch his quiet murmur.

"Potter, listen."

"Don't want to."

"You must understand, the Binding is not far off, now."

"Fuck that!"

"I am at my wit's end in the Department at the moment and I am well beyond that fragile limit with you."

"Me?" Harry stomped off to the other end of his parlour and crossed his arms, tired of waving them. "What did I ever do? What d'you even mean by that?" he demanded fiercely. "I've been more than cooperative! More than! I've done bloody every single goddamned thing that was asked of me and cartloads more besides - you can't seriously be saying I haven't! Where do you get off, twat? Tell me!"

Finally Malfoy moved, but not by much. A merest shift; a hunch of shoulders.

"Of course you have, Potter," he replied, waving a wrist; he was openly conciliatory for once, the
Harry spun on a heel, swift and hot, seeing red. He cast a hand out to a nearby wall, gaining strength from the solid magical foundation.

"'No others'? I'm not seeing anyone else, Malfoy! How could I be? You'd fucking rend them limb to limb! Your so-wise Leader so as much as told me so, flat out!" Photos in their silver frames tumbled off their stands; the paint on those selfsame walls seemed to shimmer. Harry drew a deep breath. The room seemed all at once airless. "*Your* lot are bloody vicious, you Veela types! And I did manage all my supplementary reading, thanks so much - made fucking notes on it, Malfoy! In a bloody Quik Quills pad, even! So - *so*, piss *off!*"

As if wound-up, his spring-catch finally released, Malfoy advanced upon him, undaunted. This, though the last thing Harry wanted was for the wanker to come near him; not *again*. He was still tingling from the last time; still shaken to the core from being nearly climbed into - ravaged and assaulted.

It had been—he couldn't begin to describe what it had been like. He shuddered, closing his burning eyes for one moment of relief. When he opened them again, Malfoy was right there, before him. So close his breath brushed Harry's hot cheeks.

They burned hotter yet.

"*Get-*!"

"I cannot do that, Potter. Not even for you, I cannot." The grey eyes were dead calm and dead steady; Malfoy was one hundred percent Unspeakable at the moment...or perhaps it was more a hundred and twenty percent 'dangerous'; all Wizard, though, and it appeared the Veela was locked up tight. Harry, reduced to slumping up against the reassuring solidity of the wall, thought briefly of bolting, but Malfoy didn't have *that* look in his eyes - not like before, outside the Leaky. *That* look was his undoing; would be well to keep that in mind, for the future.

"No others," Malfoy repeated, having come up and stationed his precise arse right before Harry's very nose, his voice deathly quiet. "Verbatim from Madame; both of the Mesdames, really. Even Wizards know that, Potter. It's Veela law, incontrovertible. A law which effectively translates into no friends, as in Weasley and Granger, specifically. No pals to waste your free time with at the local, knocking back a pint; no miscellaneous stops over to your Burrow to hobnob with the gingery gang. No significant time spent with Aunt Andromeda or Teddy, either - nor even appointments with either of our dear Healers, not at this point. No popping by to see Shacklebolt or Neville or any other human being in the Ministry on a whim. No *office*, Potter, a'tall. That's done with. It would be you and me, Potter, from this point on."

"You're joking me." Harry feebly tottered off his sturdy wall and brushed past his nemesis with naught but a despairing glance; found his way blindly to the reassuring bulk of his sofa, where he sat his bewildered arse down upon the corner of the 'L' with a solid thump. There was something about the smell of it—the whole odour of his flat, his *home*, that brought him back, though. A blink or two, a huge inhale, and he was nearly back in fighting fettle. "You're fucking *joking*! I'm an Auror, Malfoy; I can't just stop reporting to work. I'll lose - *

Malfoy quirked a wry brow. He didn't follow, fortunately. Harry would've had to hex him if he had.
"They'll lose, Potter, if they dare interfere," he replied staidly. "Any Witch or Wizard who stands between us is a potential target; there will be blood shed over you, I guarantee."

Harry stared, appalled. Malfoy bowed his head sedately. His smile was really only teeth showing.

"I'm not safe, not as I am now. I'm not in control of any of this any longer. They will lose, Potter, and they know it full well, have been expecting it even, and the Minister and Dawlish are already well ahead of you in the planning process. You and I have been granted an indefinite leave of absence, effective immediately, by Shacklebolt himself. The Aurors are already notified; Weasel has a temporary partner assigned him. And Mother has vacated the Manor as of last night and we'll be removing there, immediately. To live. I would suggest you take this time to pack up whatever personal belongings you'll need."

"No..."

Harry blanched, swaying where he huddled, greenish about the gills, and trembling. He was abandoned, it seemed, by all that was sweetly familiar. Torn away, ripped away, isolated—

But...perhaps, not quite. Malfoy was by his side in a blur of monochrome, kneeling before him, in less than the time it took to refocus Harry's abruptly stinging eyes. He grabbed fiercely at Harry's chilled fingers, lacing his own tightly around them. Coolish and smooth, the narrow knuckles were, thinned to bone with raw emotion, rampant-just like Harry's—and then, in a rush, as hot as Guy Fawkes blazes, searing Harry's frozen fingers to the core.

"Potter, keep it together. Potter."

Harry blinked.

Wings again, ripping through Malfoy's pristine black uniform. Git would probably be furious over it later. He hated waste, Malfoy did. Hated losing himself to something beyond his own control. Harry couldn't find it in himself to blame him for it, either. Had to be horrid, that. Could relate.

He opened his lips to say so, but the words weren't there. Like his former familiar world, they had deserted him.

"Potter?"

"No...really, no," Harry whispered when he could, shaking his head in a slow sad travesty of rejection, for really, there was no out remaining—not for him. Not now. Not ever. "I didn't exactly think - I mean, Malfoy," he faltered; till he inflated his starving lungs with a conscious jolt. "You're not - this is - really?"

"Potter, I'm so very sorry," and the beast that was Malfoy seemed to be genuinely so. Even his wings were curling down towards the two of them, creating a glowing white hollow shell about them: ephemeral shelter in an invisible maelstrom. And Harry could read real contrition in the darkening of the grey lakes that were Malfoy's hand-me-down Black eyes, even through the irritatingly painful blurriness he was so desperately attempting to blink away. Harry did not cry; he would not cry. There was, when all was said and done, nothing left to mourn. So...he listened, instead, with all his might, and Malfoy sounded exactly as he should—even apologizing. "I said I was, before, and I meant it, really I did. But this is the way it must be - the way it is, from this moment forward and for some time to come. Now, may I help you gather your things? Or Summon Kreacher to fetch you some tea first? You look as though you could use a cuppa."

Harry nodded, and the lava-hot hands slipped further up his wrists and arms, never leaving go.
Malfoy's face was so close to his Harry seriously feared their eyelashes would entangle.

"Brilliant. It'll warm you up, Potter. I guarantee it."
"Well, the Floo had better not be off limits and neither should fucking Owls, for that matter! Gods, it's just like the Dursleys, Hermione, all over again! Stuck in a fucking cupboard - a bloody huge fucking cupboard, but same damned difference!"

"Harry, really," Hermione shook her head reprovingly. "I think you're overreacting. Malfoy had to do it; everyone knew it, and it won't be for long. You'll be back in your office before you can blink and everything will be as it should be. You'll see."

"Hermione, nothing will be as it should be - nothing! And you know it as well as I do, so stop trying to slap a good face on this shit storm! I'm a fucking prisoner, Hermione, and this time it's a lifer! Not a bloody fucking thing anyone does can change that!"

"Potter, if I may?" Malfoy stood poised in the doorway, his usual unruffled self. Harry jerked his head about to glare all manner of pointy objects at him, lips parted for the next gout of venting. "Oh. Good evening, Granger."

"Malfoy," Hermione smiled perkily-albeit in a ripply green fashion-from across the miles, raising her fingertips in a small, cautious wave. "Er. How are you holding up?"

"What? What now, you wanker?" Harry growled unpleasantly, speaking right over Hermione's polite question and not caring in the slightest he was being a rudesby. His ineffably uppity Malfoy Veela only raised a mildly scolding brow at him; Harry scowled all the harder. "What do you want now, damn it?"

"It is time to eat, Potter," his host shrugged. "Gone seven already; the elves have just called us to table. So...if you wouldn't mind cutting short your conversation with Granger? Coq au vin is best when it's still warm." He nodded Hermione's way, obviously poised to usher Harry off to trough. "Granger, it's been a pleasure to see you, as always. You're well, I hope?"

"Eat?" Harry snorted. "Eat!"

"Very, thanks. Nice to see you, too, Malfoy, and...and, well, I won't bother asking how it goes, then." Hermione nodded back, just as pleasantly. "I can see for myself."

"You want me to eat?" Harry flapped his hands in a huff and a flurry, eyeballs rolling. "As if I could stomach anything in this state, git! Fuck off!"

"As well as could possibly be expected," Malfoy observed dryly, his gaze switching to meet Harry's abysmally noir scowl. "Potter is...adjusting...slowly."

"Potter is still right here, you know," Harry gritted, rising to his feet and dusting off his knees. "Right here, as bloody required." He ducked right back down again, sticking his head back in the Floo, presenting his friend a feeble parting smile. "Duty calls, Merlin fuck it! Look, g'night, Hermione. I'll Floo you two tomorrow, alright?"

"Sure, Harry," Hermione smiled in return, tentatively. "Take care, okay?"

Harry viciously bobbed his firmed chin.
"Right, right—riiight. You bet, Hermione," he snarled. "Sure!"

"Harry."

"Oh, but, hey, Hermione," Harry paused, mid-grimace, collecting himself, as it really wasn't her fault Malfoy expected him to consume fancy chicken in the midst of a great big effing cage made of stone and magic, "um…thanks for lending me an ear. I'm damned glad someone still gives a flying fuck how I feel!"

Hermione, damn her pretty brown eyes and despite the utter gravity of the situation—coq au vin shared with Malfoy, of all people!—had the temerity to giggle faintly.

"No problem, Harry." She caught her breath, biting her lower lip and batting her lashes at him through the flames. "Harry. Just... well, just try to relax, alright? It'll all be so much better very soon, you know. Only the two weeks now."

"Hah!" Harry snorted, a disbelieving sound that had even brave Hermione flinching. "Little you know, Hermione!"

"Potter?" Malfoy prodded. "Cold coq au vin is not particularly appetizing. Move along, will you? I'm waiting."

"Right, then," Hermione bustled, her wand already out to douse the flames on her end. "Um, tomorrow, Harry—we'll be waiting. And, erm...'nighty-night, Malfoy. Cheers!"

Malfoy, the polite git, inclined his head in a regal nod, a tilt to his broad shoulders. The firelight sent blue-green shimmers glancing through his perfect hair; lent a hint of viridian to the opaque grey of his striking eyes. For a blindingly heated moment Harry literally hated Malfoy's guts even more for his so-perfect manners. Such an utter tosser! Such a high-handed, pointy stick-up-his-pointy pedigreed arsewipe; a blasted, blood-cursed wanker! And a hypocrite, too! Where was his bred-in-the-bone Blood purity now? Making nice with a Mudblood? Malfoy? ..Oh, er, right, right! Harry's eyes snapped wide open on the remembrance. That was all well in the past, wasn't it? Sifted through, discussed to death, and sanitized to within an inch of its pitiful life. Elided and exorcised. For that matter, all the bloody Weasleys bloody well got along with Malfoy these days—damn them!

…Er, not so much Ginny, though. Pity, that.

Harry blinked back from his brief reverie to witness Malfoy's fair head still inclined in one of his incredibly annoying little half-bows. He was just such a civil fucker, Malfoy. Wasn't he? The nerve!

"Goodnight, Granger. And do give my best regards to the Weasel."

Excuse me? Harry thought, and set his teeth with a snap. The hell you say! What about me? Where was the wanker's concern for Harry? Harry Potter, who was trapped right here in the dickweed's third best parlour?

The Floo fire extinguished with a tiny popping sound; there was only the hiss of the dying embers remaining...and Harry's furious intake of pure, unadulterated oxygen as he wheeled about where he stood, fuming.

Not twenty-four hours in and he was already choking on isolation; bloody drowning in it. And there was only this - this sodding freak around to rely on when his godsawful claustrophobia really
If only. If only he could leave, step right on through the Floo to the safety of Hermione and Ron's kitschily-countrified kitchen, but...he couldn't. No possible mangling of his good conscious would allow it, no matter that it was a mere step-spin-upset-gut moment to reach actual freedom.

Malfoy beckoned, long fingers extended.

"Right, Potter. Get along, please. Late, now."

No, no. He simply wouldn't—and damn and blast Malfoy for being bloody what he was and needing Harry to fix it, fuck him!

"Fucking Veela," he snarled, stalking past his bloody mate-in-waiting on stiff legs, practically emanating visible 'Don't touch me!' vibes. There was no help for it; bloody wanker would bloody die without him. Why the bleeding fuck did always have to be him? "I'm coming, alright? Get off my case, git! Fucking git! Fucking food, too! Food! I'm not even the slightest bit hungry!"
"Better?"

"Um. A bit."

"It's odd, that."

"What is?"

"I wouldn't think the separation anxiety would affect you as much as it does me, Potter. You should be experiencing a great deal less of the overall impact, actually. We should consult the Leader when we see her next."

"Huh. Too late, then."

"Mmm."

They were practicing 'trust', as per Poppy's terse, perfect copper-plate inscribed 'lessons'. Or, at least in Harry's case, in the midst of discovering a few awesomely new and brilliant facets of body and soul that might've left him rather uneasy but a brief few days before. Or possibly furious. Or...merely bewildered.

"Still...if I do this, Potter, does it feel good?" Malfoy was a handy git with his mitts; those slim, cool fingers of his were a tad sight useful for more than only the rigours of wandless incantation.

"Mmm." Harry closed his eyes. "Mmm-hmm." Malfoy had the golden touch: not too tight, not too loose, not too rough nor limp-wristed feeble. Perfect.

"And...how about this?" His bollocks were taken up; milked and fondled, rolled about in Malfoy's palm like rare gems.

"Ye-ess! That's, um. That's – er, you could go harder, you know. With the...the. Ah!" Harry clenched his eyelids till they wrinkled; that was more like!

"Yes?"

"Wouldn't mind it," he allowed, and when Malfoy's palm went corkscrewing about, he found he had to concentrate in order to speak in any way coherently. Very handy with his hands, his Veela! "And I - I, er. Aahhh..."

Wel. Coherence had its limitations, after all.

"Mmm, you've quite soft skin here, Potter. Tastes good—smells good." Lips trailed across his forehead, smoothing away the tiny frown Harry didn't realize he was wearing. "Nice, that."

"Um, thanks, I think." Harry squirmed, fitfully, but mostly to push himself closer. Absolutely always closer, nearer, in. "Ah. I...was thinking..." he faltered, but it petered out to a tiny open-mouthed moan under the pressure of the pad of Malfoy's sure thumb.

Demon Malfoy; Harry was certain he'd have been a bloody goner back in Sixth Form without that greasy git looking out for the both of them - thank Merlin for Snape.
The thought of Snape brought Harry back to sharp awareness with a start, much as a bucket of ice water would've.

"Was thinking, Malfoy...um."

"I don't believe you're required to be thinking; not right at this particular moment, Potter," Malfoy chuckled. All supremely matey now, he was, having laid his paws on what he wanted. "Rather you didn't." Fucking spritely; more animated than he'd been in days. Harry might've been a wee bit miffed with him over it, if it hadn't been exactly what he'd been wanting, too. "Just feel," the calm, even voice told him, and Harry nearly gave in...except. Except he was missing something key, somehow. "Let me."

"Wait—I!" Harry swallowed hard; it wasn't that he didn't want—it was that it was unbalanced. "Uh, Malfoy?"

Something rather crucial, if this was all about making up a pair. Something he should likely be doing...

"Could I touch you...here?" The quiet even voice in Harry's was not quite as confident as it had been; the fingertips that touched down lightly on his perineum tapped and tickled only for the space of a breath, then fled again, not lingering. Returned hesitantly, with butterfly wing brushes. "Potter?"

"Oh—ahhhh. Sure?"

Harry shrugged helplessly and spread his legs a bit, allowing access. He didn't mind; not so much. Let him go to town, then, if it gave him...pleasure. Git could stand to relax some; maybe...maybe even cease with the stiff-rumped formality that drove Harry barmy. Very difficult to be close with a sodding paragon.

"But, I—I want to, too."

Finally recalling he had them too (with some little effort, as his faculties were rather impaired), Harry employed his own fingers at last, to great good purpose. A short reach, a fast grab; a slip-slide stroke upon landing, with a soupcon of rolling pressure. Like a flute player would call a scale: just enough fiddly-work to summon nearly anything.

"Touch you, Malfoy. Fair's fair."

Malfoy jolted instantly under his touch, as if Harry had slapped him silly instead of grasping his bits very carefully. The hand that had slipped up to lay spread so possessively across Harry's abdomen scabbled taut; Harry felt the slight scrape of short, well-buffed fingernails scoring the deep indent of his navel with fine thin trails. He'd have marks, later—tiny ones, from Veela talons. Match the others—on his back, his buttocks.

"Eh!" he gasped, flinching in reaction, but more because Malfoy was long and hard and so blistering hot in his palm. Pulsing with quick wet, too, which startled him, and stinking of male.

Reeled Harry in, rather. The odour—the slickness—the meat of it. Here it was, Malfoy's want, alive in his palm like a wild animal—and he'd never truly let the unplumbed depths of that built-in bound fascination with Malfoy rise to the forefront of his mind; not really. Or been confronted with the reality quite like this. Yes, okay, they'd wanked—often. Never, however, to this extent - to this 'here and now, and ain't it grand?' Had shoved it all away, as fast as he'd tasted the alien nature of his burgeoning want. Want, for Malfoy. Heh. Hah. Yeah, that set him widdershins every time, the
stark newness of it. Before, it had been all about Harry's getting off—*Harry's* want, not Malfoy's. But he did. Want him. The git.

Must be the horizontalness; must be the quiet privacy—must be that he and Malfoy were all unclothed, both at once, and no one standing over with a chart.

"Potter..." Malfoy moaned nasally, shifting as his head slumped back on the pillows they shared, turning away and instant, as if he were ashamed to be seen. "Potter!" His frame quivered from head to toe with the huge breath he dragged in and then he slid that shining, finger-mussed head of his very carefully back in Harry's direction—ever so slow the motion was, as if Harry might disappear if he chanced to examine too closely.

Harry's eyes widened. The grey gaze was hazy-brilliant: drugged. But there was the old fierce spark, there, yet burning, way far away deep in the silvery swirl that ringed pansy-dark pupil.

"Potter, you don't have to—I'm fine." If Malfoy got any tauter, he'd bloody snap in two. Harry blinked at him for two seconds—then narrowed them accusingly. "You're not," he flung back. "Don't fib—*honesty*, remember?"

"Potter..." The moan was far more desperate sounding when Malfoy finally relented and closed those disturbingly dazed eyes of his.

Harry swallowed, seeing the way Malfoy's eyelids fluttered even as his lashes lay still. Brought his face very close to Malfoy's, so they poked noses, touched brows, stubbly cheeks brushing. Oh, yes. He did. He must.

He upped his rhythm; it was like breathing. He liked it lots and Malfoy would too or Harry would want to know the bloody reason why, after.

"Like this? I like this, Malfoy, when I do it. To me, I meant." Could snog Malfoy; lightly, drowsing...comfortably so, if feeling one's heart racing away at a tremendous speed could ever be called that.

But he was comfortable, all the same. This was Malfoy; he knew Malfoy, and...and he was fairly certain it was alright to share this information with him. He'd always been notably reticent about these sorts of...pleasures, and he knew it. He'd not exactly spent hours telling over the subject of what made him come like the ruddy dickens with his mates - not even with good old Ron; no, certainly not with Ron, who'd been endlessly fixated on knockers since he was barely twelve - but he'd his preferences when it came to how he was handled. Seemed Malfoy shared some.

"I fancy this rather a lot, actually. Do you?"

"Gods."

Malfoy did; he certainly shoved himself into Harry's palm as if he couldn't get enough, ever. Harry grinned, pleased as punch, and slid into his favourite, bollocks-aching gait: pull-long-and-force-through curled knuckles maneuver. It was good to be in charge of something again, even if it was only the poor git's wank.

He could safely say Malfoy's equipment was pretty damned decent. Yes.

Still, Harry had always been an arse man. He liked them firm and taut, and with lean flanks and an indent over the hipbones he could imagine digging his fingers in and feeling. He loved the very
idea of the smooth dip and swell of them under his hands when he rubbed and the wiggle-and-jerk reaction his kneading fingers might elicit.

He liked cock, too, upon occasion and as yet pretty much theoretically—working, remember? Always working—and the Wizarding world seemed alright with that...if Harry had ever managed to act on it. It had been one of those few unadulterated joys he'd experienced when he'd had more than two moments to string thoughts about himself along together, to consider what lit his fuse; turned him on, other than Ginny and Cho...and Cedric. Poor fit Cedric, but...

Malfoy's cock, heavy and ripe, slotted into the 'what turned Harry on' category nicely, rather as though it was expressly made for it. His hand flipped and twisted about the shaft and swollen glans with competent ease, more than happy enough to be about it, and Malfoy pumped his hips in Harry's direction in an erratic beat, swiveling his bits into Harry's slippery palm like a mad screwdriver and emitting gasps and swallowed near-silenced almost-noises of approval and lust. Thrust and back, withdraw and lunge forward, and the air whistled through his flared nostrils with increasing urgency on every stroke. Malfoy was ever so hard...for Harry. Turnabout was fair play, it seemed. Harry would have to remember that.

"Potter. Potter!"

"Malfoy." Harry frowned. Still and all, it seemed a bit too desperate, Malfoy's agita. "Er, how. Um, how long has it been, Malfoy? Exactly? Since you, er...?"

"Shut—shut...up!" Malfoy's teeth snapped dangerously; Harry was treated to one long searing glance before Malfoy swung his chin away swiftly, eyelids already drooping.

He was instantly embarrassed to have even enquired; if he were Malfoy, he'd never even consider responding to a question like that and would've have hexed the stupid fool who dared ask in an instant. But Harry was...curious. Intensely so. How much of this was him and how much was the Veela thing and solely sodding biological chemistry?

What - whom - was Malfoy responding to, other than the obvious?
Week 2, B-Day Plus 11 [Later; 1700 Hours]

B-Day Plus 11 [1700 Hours]

"I cannot not watch you, Potter."

Mesmerizing, the methods Malfoy used to seduce Harry. Coax him closer; lure him into hand's reach. Some niggly part of Harry's well-trained Auror-mapped brain realized full well the depth of his susceptibility to a Malfoy-driven deliberate seduction; rued it, perhaps. The remainder only revelled.

Hands, lips, hands, tongue, hands, touch. So much touching, as if Malfoy were petting him into acquiescence.

"I'm forced to restrain myself from following you about..." Lips travelled over Harry's brow, his hair, his eyelids. Tickled, that, but it felt good. "Hovering, Potter. I am reduced to hovering over you and never have I done such a thing in all my days. It's ruddy disgusting; I could hate you for it."

"Mmm..." Harry was warm and comfy-cosy, wrapped up in arms that were more like thick strands of safety-webbing than Incarcerous ropes. "And?"

Malfoy chuckled in Harry's ear, a dry little cough of a laugh. Kissed his way 'round the edge of it, muttering darkly.

"And nothing. I do, and it's purely horrid. Like a disease, an illness. Can't seem to leave you be, Potter."

"Mmm."

Harry shifted, tiring of having his nose squashed into the swells and hollows of Malfoy's bare chest, nice as it was, and Malfoy went with him easily, only to settle Harry's floppy, relaxed limbs more securely in the unrelenting cage of his arms.

"Can't seem to bear considering it, even..." The lips never left him, even murmuring, and there was tongue, too, dipping here, sipping there. His skin was being tasted; his every delicate strike point found and laid bare to the softest and hottest of steamy brands. "Can...not."

Harry was in process of becoming owned, ever so gradually. Likely he should resist a bit more than he was...but. Pomfrey had not mentioned this, either. This…this he could grow quite fond of, in short order.

"Do you?" he breathed, hoping to draw Malfoy to a next confession but not wanting to disrupt that busy tongue, those stroking fingertips. The nails on them were sharpish currently, pointy, but still...they were lovely skittering across his skin, and so gentle. His blood sang to their calling, rising high and filling him with a champagne flush. "Do you want to, Malfoy? Leave me?"

"No."

Very flat, that. Unquestionable. Followed by yet more mouth, and Harry couldn't be bothered with any other questions. Forgot them completely, under sure swipes of tongue and hot hands that were everywhere at once, and yet always so securely wrapped 'round him. And Malfoy didn't offer to elaborate, either...but then, he didn't need to.
Harry knew exactly what he meant.
"You simply must learn to ease up, Potter. Relax your damnably fit arse muscles; I literally can't get my fingers up you properly if you're tense like this. Take a bloody damper, will you? Fucking \textit{inhale}.

Malfoy was rumpled, half-naked, sheened with sweat, scowling...and rather more irritable than seductive. Quite unjustly so, Harry fumed to himself. \textit{He} wasn't sprawled flat on his back—starkers and with his bloody kneecaps tucked nearly behind his ears, like a bloody altar chalice—all over Malfoy's massive mattress because he'd gone suddenly barmy-mad-looney and \textit{lobbied} for the opportunity—no, fuck it!—and so Malfoy should be immensely grateful for whatever grudging cooperation Harry chose to dish out. \textit{He should}, but he very clearly wasn't.

"Fuck off," he snapped, wincing horribly. "Wanker, I'm doing my best."

"Hah, hardly," Malfoy grumped, blatant disbelief writ all over his handsome face. "I mean you say so, but...well." He shook his head, frowning fretfully at Harry's poor mistreated arsehole, where his slender forefinger was likely being strangulated at the knuckle joint. "Potter, I told you: easy does it. This happens to be the most delicate part and you must-

"Hardly \textit{delicate}, Malfoy!" Harry snarled. "Got your whole sodding fist jammed up my bum by the feel of it!"

"I do not."

Malfoy pursed his lips, swollen from snogging. Rather lovely snogging, yes, but it had led to \textit{this}—this damnably awkward imbroglio, wherein Harry was left feeling bloody violated and Malfoy was not being the slightest dash sympathetic.

"One finger, Potter. Just the one and only to the knuckle. I'm just barely shifting it, too." He demonstrated once more how he was 'just barely shifting' it. Harry yelped his indignation, arching his spine involuntarily—which only pushed the much-argued fingertip farther out of his twingeing, clenching hole. Malfoy's irritation with him increased, visibly and by degrees of high-browed stern. Glinty-eyed and flushed, his sleep pants stretched to bursting over his leashed bits but yet quite obviously rattled by Harry's sudden attack of nerves, he was not the sort of Malfoy Harry had experienced prior to this moment.

Harry really rather disliked this sort...intensely.

"Has anyone," the git bit out, twisting that damned enormous paw of his ever so carefully within the spongey interior edges of Harry's perineum, "ever mentioned before you're terribly oversensitive, Potter? Or, say, a squeamish, mealy-mouthed coward—a wuss? Bear down!"

"Hah! Fuck you—and fine fucking words for your fucking \textit{Mate}, Malfoy!" Harry, stunningly furious, was not at all interested in bearing down, thanks so much. "So?" he demanded spitefully. "What happened to all that bleeding concern you were harbouring for me and my damnably fit arse; all that sentimental guff you spouted on and on about to Pomfrey? Where's that gone, now? Is it here? Oh, no, I don't think so, git. Now it's all about stuffing your sodding cock up my poor bum quick as you possibly can and you couldn't give a tinker's damn if I like it or if I \textit{don't}—bloody \textit{tosser}!"
"Potter—"

Harry panted, flailing about on the cushy bed, wrenching legs, arms and hips this way and that in an attempt to scramble as far away from Malfoy as fast as he possibly could. Which he did manage, though the tangled sheets and the slime of excess lube sticking skin to skin made it difficult.

"Git!"

"Potter!"

Malfoy ripped his offending finger out fully at last—felt like 'ripping', at least to Harry—but not without a likely accidental drag of perfectly manicured nail edge across the sensitized flesh of Harry's rim. Harry winced, snapping his teeth like a dog and shivering, and hissed his general unhappiness…and then promptly curled his abused person into an as-small-as-possible huddle, tumbling over himself in his haste to face away from his dreadfully insensitive 'fated mate'.

Bugger Malfoy!

Malfoy reared back even as Harry groped for escape, twisting his whole length towards the edge of the mattress as he went, his sticky fingers making loose fists. He was a blur of blond hair flying as he shifted his torso and legs entirely away from Harry. Peeping suspiciously over his shoulder, Harry could see that Malfoy had ended up lying stiffly upon one flank, spine rigid and turned square to Harry's scrunched-up 'misery' face. He could be heard breathing noisily: in through his mouth and then out through his pointy nose; a huff followed by a subdued whistle. And then more regularly, as he slid into that Zen breathing thingbob he employed every so often; in and out, with ever longer pauses between, till at last he lay calm as a still pool and just as silent in his chosen retreat…and silence settled between them. As if nothing untoward had just occurred, despite the evidence contrary. Perhaps it was just a bit more pronounced than usual, Malfoy's respiration, but that was all. Harry could, however, practically hear his mate's mind whirring away, from that long yard's distance, busily shunting 'round possibilities, sorting this, organizing that. In brief, exerting that fabulous Malfoy control in spades, but over...what, exactly? His libido? His Veela powers? Er...his patience? Because Malfoy wasn't known for his great patience, 'leastways not before.

The question went begging; Harry was feeling a tad too inwardly addled to really care about Malfoy's ickle feelings. He blinked slowly and regarded the superiour weave of the bed hangings in all their rich silk glory: it was a paisley-arse prison he was in and he was yet abed with his damnable gaoler. Right? Was that not so?

Yet...

"Potter," Malfoy piped up after a staggeringly long while—and quietly, almost too quietly. "Potter, we are not to that point yet, not by any stretch of the imagination. The actual Bonding is not for another ten days—ages away, practically—eons. But you did ask of me how anal penetration really felt and I was simply attempting to demonstrate, with all due care. I wasn't featuring one single inch more—just a smidgeon of basic prep, that's it. But, Potter, if you don't want it, you merely have to say. I'll refrain."

"Yeah, right! Buggering arse! Sure felt like it a moment ago!" Harry snapped back, fury welling again at the bastard's untimely reminder he'd been the one stupid enough to ask for this.

What had he been thinking, really? he asked of himself bitterly. Had the sodding snogging been that super-fantastic, that he should go and toss his damned pointy Wizarding hat over any passing windmill? Want to get a leg over—or be the one receiving, rather—when he'd never (ever)
managed to approach this level of action before? No, he was by no means a virgin—hah!—but still. Mouth and hand and willing crack of arse cheeks had done him very well, before.

"...Very well."

*Before.*

A deathly silence fell between them, but for the squeaky grit of Harry's clenched teeth as he ground them—his jaw ached something awful—and the rasp of his still too rapid exhalations. They matched the muffled thunder of his heart, pounding against the heaped up pillows, and it all sounded to his ears far louder within the stuffy confines of the bed hangings than Malfoy's sharp intake of breath ever did.

Harry pulled a face; likely Malfoy was doing his bloody ice pop trick. Had that frosty poker he carried with him always stuffed solidly right back his own highborn bum and was sulking—over there, a full three feet away from Harry.

Silence, sweet silence reigned, pregnant and heavy, pouring like barley-sugar syrup over troubled waters. Gradually by surely lulling Harry back to calm, to sense, at least for the nonce. Malfoy vouchsafed nothing further, only lay corpseslike upon his all too perfectly comfortable bed, mum as a mute jarvey. And Harry remained just as motionless, glad to be shed of his foreordained Git for even a moment—happy as a lark to be left to collect himself for even half a tick...until eventually one of Poppy's lectures pinged his short-term recollection.

It had been a chart, actually. With arrows, coloured, pointing up and down. It measured how it was that Veela fared when they honestly believed they'd been rejected. Poorly, that's how. Quite, quite poorly.

*Shit.* The seconds ticked on by like leaden weights on the pendulum clock; he could feel them, piling up like bloody metaphorical sandbags between him and the git. *Shit, shit, shit.* He'd just practically sucker-punched Malfoy—right where it was bound to damage him the most. *Oh, shit.* And Malfoy hadn't instantly retaliated, hadn't ranted nor raved, nor uttered so much as a single peep about Harry's going back on his word—his massive failure to put out, as he'd rather tacitly promised, back a few moments ago when they were only just snogging.

Because Harry had done, and he knew it. He'd been acting the sodding cocktease, worse than that Chang bint had ever done to him.

The old Malfoy would've had his revenge, Harry was sure. And quickly. Some petty form of cutting comeback, some minor hex or curse, absolutely—*something.* Harry wouldn't have gotten clean away with it, not without being called firmly upon the carpet. But this new species of Malfoy said nothing—did nothing—only laid still and bloody took it, like a bathmat. And that wasn't right.

It just wasn't...*right.*

"Malfoy?"

Harry's thoughts ranged sloppily to ways of maybe closing that breach, after another moment's shaky adjustment. Perhaps just a little olive twig—a sop to his conscious? Because, really, it hadn't been that *too* terribly horrible, the finger, just...just invasive. And he was irritable too, being cooped up like this in Malfoy's sodding enormous manse, and knew it. The Manor was gasping huge, but a closet was a closet, no matter how spacious. He felt just like poor old Hedwig likely had, stuck at the Dursleys for summer hols. Tiny bars, airless room, doors that only locked from the outside.
In a way, Malfoy was in the same ship. His locks were all external now; he was dependent, he couldn't get out. Only Harry could release him…if Harry would.

*Harry*—Harry decided right that moment—*would*.

He rolled over, facing the obdurate spine above the silk sleep pants. It was broad and pale and muscled. He remembered clearly the planes of it under his nails, moments ago, when they’d been snogging.

"Malfoy, look," he said. There were, he noticed, red marks from his own hands on Malfoy's back. Faint but definite. "Try it again. I'll, erm, behave."

Malfoy sighed, but he didn't shift an inch. The spine presented to Harry stayed alarmingly rigid. There were no signs of the wings erupting - those beautiful wings. Harry missed them; they were always so...distracting.

"Potter, go to sleep," Malfoy's tone was his usual one. "It's late, you're tired, we're both on edge. Go to sleep."

"No, really, Malfoy, I think we should." Harry shook his head; his heartbeat was steady as a rock. "I mean, we must, don't we?"

No reply. Harry, irked, poked at Malfoy's ribs, which were far too visible these days. He'd been nicely sleek, weeks before, when Harry glimpsed him so often in the Ministry's gym. Jogging, as he always did. The prat had thighs one could bounce a sickel off.

"Don't we have to?" he repeated. Poked again, this time harder. Spread his fingers wide to soothe the white-on-white indents away. "I know we do. Come on, roll over, face me. Belt up, you stubborn git."

A flurry of long limbs and lamp-lit hair in motion signaled Malfoy's tacit reply. Harry peeped carefully at his destined Veela-for-life, checking for signs of telltale Malfoy temper, but he seemed only rather startled by Harry's insistence…though concealing it well. Or perhaps he wasn't at all taken aback, but instead had some bloody bug up his arse over Harry's—admittedly—rather foul attack of missishness.

"Yes, Potter, of course we do. Not denying that."

No, not temper; very much under wraps if it were, but...

"But...it doesn't all need to be accomplished in one instant," Malfoy went on, staid as anything, his grey eyes dark and steady on Harry's wide green ones. "We've time yet—loads, really."

Malfoy waved a casual hand (which trembled, *not* casually at all, the sneaky bastard) and Harry snatched at it instantly, scowling. Cradled it in his own, twining fingers and crossing thumbs.

"*You* don't, twat," he replied shortly, feeling nastily peevish.

He might be somewhat self-centered, yes, that could be; and he might even be admittedly not all that brilliant at deciphering the emotional telegraphs of others but Malfoy was noticeably thinner. Wan, worn, and on a very, very short string. Fact. Evidence, even. Lost a half-stone, the git had, in literally no time at all, Harry reckoned, and weight he really couldn't afford to be shed of, lean of build as he was. Still phenomenally Malfoy-perfect, grooming-wise, and perhaps not as always-exhausted since they'd started sleeping in the same bed, but he wasn't even in the same Pitch as his usual tip-top, high-grade, Unspeakable condition, Malfoy.
Harry felt responsible. Worse, he felt guilty.

"Face it, git. You don't, even if I do. There's a time limit for this and we're already pushing the envelop. Next week's B-Day; you know, like the Muggles had, for their Second War, and we need - "

Malfoy's brows rose, but he didn't bother to question Harry's reference to a Muggle armed invasion long over with... though likely the berk would know exactly who Churchill had been and how many Muggle troops had been deployed. He was just that way, the sod. "Hardly, Potter," was all he said, his lips pinched.

"To practice," Harry glared, speaking more loudly than mayhap was necessary. "'Cause, truth of the matter is, sooner rather than later we'll be going at it hammer-and-tongs with a bloody audience or you'll fucking kick the bucket, Malfoy; let's just leave it at that. Come what may, that's the end result. Shag or death. So...yeah, we need to move past this. I even know that much. Try again, then —I'm telling you. Just...just with the fingers. I'm not going to sleep 'til you do."

Malfoy's lips twitched; lost their disturbing paleness. He struggled manfully for a second, his face rippling through an assortment of emotions, all far too quickly for Harry to easily identify, and then the prat chortled right in Harry's earnestly serious and still slightly belligerent face. Softly, yes; even kindly, but the skin 'round his eyes crinkled in Slytherin merriment, even so.

Sly and sardonic, that half stifled giggle—just like the old days. Hogwarts days.

Better, Harry concluded triumphantly...better by miles! But there was no sodding way he was letting on to the stubborn git he thought so. Nosodding way.

"You're a card, Potter; a precious, fucking card," Malfoy was still chuckling away and it was definitely fond, now. Harry let go his frown in favour of a suspiciously assessing squint, his chin angled. "Good old Gryffindor elbow grease and brainless initiative, yeah? Keep at it 'til you have it down pat, yeah? Do something, anything, even if it's wrong?"

Harry shrugged it off, smiling tightly. Nodding slightly, too, his eyes keen as tack-ends. "Sure, and why not, Malfoy? It works, doesn't it? Gets the job done."

"Heh!" Malfoy snorted. A casual hand brushed Harry's tumbled hair back from his forehead. "If you say so, Potter. A bit crude, but yes, effective, I imagine."

"Right. So—do it again," Harry ordered impatiently, batting the hand away. "Or, wait. Hold up. Let me—I'll just. Just—here, hang on..."

He readjusted himself, bringing his knees up again as they'd been before Malfoy had assaulted him with something that (no matter what Malfoy claimed) felt as if it had been one whole hell of a lot larger than a single finger. Clamped his hands firmly 'round his kneecaps, thumbs jammed behind them so they wouldn't slip. Braced himself against the heaps of silk, satin and goosedown and turned a challenging stare upon the git. Hisgit, now. He'd have to take better care of him, then.

"Kay, I'm ready. Now."

"You're a fool, Potter," Malfoy gazed at him, grave as a tomb once more and as composed as always, and made no move to do anything. Didn't lift a finger, the prick. "We don't need to rush this."

"Get on with it, Malfoy," was all Harry had to say. He waited.
After a pause - of, say, a millennium or two, but hey, Harry wasn't exactly counting - Malfoy knelt up once more and crouched over him like some great white beast. He calmly proceeded to slick up his fingers on conjured oil for the second time that evening and flexed them, shaking them out like some prize-winning pugilist.

"Right," he announced, warily. "Don't say I didn't warn you, Potter. We'll go exceptionally slowly, my little fool. This time 'round."

"Maybe so," Harry allowed snidely. "Maybe I am, at that, but you're an ungrateful bastard and a literal pain in my arse, so that's enough from you, Malfoy. Drop that shit attitude of yours and concentrate on making me forget what's going in me, instead. That's your fucking job, now. I'm ready—and waiting."

"And a most imperious fool, too." Malfoy bit his lip, lightly oiled fingertips pattering like raindrops 'round the edges of Harry's arsehole. "As befits a hero." Harry flinched, and then bravely got hold himself when Malfoy gripped one knee and forced it sideways and back farther yet. His hip panged, but…he knew this git - and the git knew precisely when to be rough and when not to be; that, at least, had been proven. Too, Harry knew he was infinitely precious to Malfoy. Unspeakably rare; his ticket to life.

"Go on." Harry heard himself clearly. He sounded implacable; that was his best Auror voice, the one that always, always worked like a charm.

"Fine," Malfoy chomped down on the single syllable as if he were a seriously narked Nundu but his dancing fingertips spoke of something else entirely. One slid in, just lightly—like a feather-then two. Swept in a easy, gentle circle barely within the elastic skin of Harry's hole and forged further. "It's your funeral, Potter."

Harry inhaled. He'd forgotten about that—the first scissoring stretch; now he remembered. It seemed alright. Better. Better.

"Uh-huh, tell me about it. Go on, then. More."

Malfoy bit his lip, his eyes narrowed in concentration. He stayed at the two, though.

"A little more, Malfoy. Three, now."

His Veela grunted, pressing an unsteady palm against the bulging front of his sleep pants.

"Malfoy," Harry coaxed, his gaze flickering down to watch the bulge grow geometrically with every swipe deeper within. "Come on. I'm not made of glass."
"Hey, Harry!" Luna was smiling; Luna was often smiling, even when her brows quirked in vague puzzlement as they did now. "Hermione mentioned I should Floo you, so here I am."

"Hey, Luna," Harry grinned. He'd not had a chance to be in touch with the outside world for what felt like days, but was really only two. For forty-eight hours Malfoy straight had kept him busy, trotting him all 'round the Manor and talking up antiques and whatnots, portraits of ancestors, the singularly large Library and the endless wine cellars. Then there were the cold houses and the Home Farm, the orchards, the apiary and the stables. He'd ridden a blooded Abraxan mare and had a jaunt on one of Malfoy's many foreign-made racing brooms; been introduced to the estate ledgers and been served a luxurious picnic in the largest of the gazebos, the Palladian one situated down by the Malfoy's own artificial lake. It had been an overwhelming experience (all these possessions and property, and all of them top-notch!) and his ears rang, still, with accumulated factoids about them, as delivered in that cool, calm tone Malfoy used with him when he wanted Harry's professional attention.

The world outside the Manor wards hadn't forgotten them, though. Kingsley had sent them both Owls the day previous, wishing them luck, followed quickly enough by a more harried scroll from Madame Pomfrey, chockablock with last-moment instructions and sound medical advice. Their scheduled sessions with Poppy and the Veela harridan were no more, of course, but they were still most definitely expected to show up at Hogwarts Infirmary on the red-circled date on Malfoy's desk calendar. Whereupon Harry would officially lose his virginity - his second, rather. Malfoy didn't ever want to hear about his first; set him off, that subject. Something fierce.

But for this moment Harry smiled goofily at Luna and was pleased as punch to see her vaguely curious face in his floo fire.

"I, erm. Luna. I had a question and Hermione referred me to you. If you've a moment...? It's a little difficult, actually, um, so - "

He stopped, overcome by a sudden hesitancy, his brain fogging up now it came down the actual wire. How to say this? He hadn't a clue, Merlin help him.

"Malfoy's Veela blood, Harry? Hmm-mm, so what did you want to know?" Luna, as always, was oddly attuned to Harry's ricocheting thought processes. Odd but incredibly convenient, that. He grinned happily again, all at once more at ease, though this wasn't easy, exactly what he needed to ask. And likely Malfoy would have a strop. But...needs must.

He must.

"Ah. Well, in as much as we must do this Binding and all that, er, why is it now? I mean, why is it so absolutely must happen right this sodding minute, all the sudden? Malfoy was Suppressed and all - or so we assume; Snape administered him this potion regularly - but Madame even said she thought it, the Veela, should've manifested much, much earlier - and we should've been dealing with this all back when he turned twenty-one at the latest - or earlier, even, at Hogwarts. When we were sixteen or seventeen. And also, I've got - I'm coming up with these...I'll call them 'symptoms', I s'pose, but ones that are a bit...unusual. Too much so to ignore. Like, see, I know what he's feeling, even when he's not in the room with me. Or I'm always aware he's following after me and wants to know what I'm up to. If I'm alright, if I'm tired—things like that. So, as you're the
only expert we both know on Magical Creatures other than Hagrid—can't ask him; not this!" Harry blushed vermillion at the mere thought. "I—I-we thought we'd consult with you?"

Luna nodded amiable. Her pale face lit up in dawning understanding…of sorts.

"Oh. Oh, Harry, but that's simple! Easy-peasy, pudding and pie, really. That's just an aspect of the Veela Bond, settling in. It's not dependent on the actual, erm, rite. The sex bit, I meant. But…haven't you asked the Leader of the Veela Nation all your questions, you and Draco? She's so lovely, Harry! Very sweet to me, always, whenever I pop over to Veela HQ to make use of the Repository, and I'm sure she wouldn't mind it –can't imagine she would—"

"Er, Luna - Luna!" Harry flapped his hands at her puzzled expression, flustered.

"Hmm? Yes, Harry?"

"We've - I've-had these, um, interviews, let's call them. With her...with Madame D'Argent. Er, more like interrogations, really, and Malfoy's pretty much had the same again. I mean, she's strict, Luna! She's not been exactly...forthcoming. It's like, well…well, I don't feel as if I should even raise the question, much less expect her to be chatty over it and give us advice like Agony Aunty - "

Luna's face brightened even further, if that was possible. She nodded furiously, her blond hair flying about in wisps and tendrils.

"Oh, Harry, you're not Mated yet, so of course! Stands to reason, doesn't it? You're still an Outsider and poor Malfoy's only a Fledgling. Right, yes; I can see, then, why she wouldn't - but Hermione said she's been more than cooperative with Madame Pomfrey? They're all palsy-walsy, right? Best of good friends, all that?"

Harry grimaced.

"Yes. That's so odd about this. I mean, why Madame Pomfrey, who's a Witch, and not Malfoy, who's actually a Veela? I mean, that's weird, Luna. Don't you think?"

"You know, Harry, I'd imagine it's the maternal instinct. Madame's been married, hasn't she? Has grandbabies and so on; been a mum. Veelas like that, Harry; in fact, they're much more likely to speak freely to a Witch than a Wizard. Don't forget the majority are female and they're mums, too. It's an empathy thing."

Harry cocked his chin, sorting it through, what Luna was telling him.

"An... 'empathy thing'? Ah...fantastic. Great, so we're stuck, then? 'Cause there's not much to go on, as it is. I mean, Madame owled us this sort of scant list of next-steps and the incantations we need to swot but we haven't - I mean to say, there's not much detail. Slot A into B sort of thing. I don't even know what it is I'm supposed to actually do on the big day, other than recite incantations by the bucket load and go by the pretty pictures - ah!"

Pictures! As in diagrammes, full colour, excruciatingly detailed! Slot A into Hole B sort of pictures…gah!

He stopped speaking suddenly, mid-stream, choking just a bit on the words that clogged his throat. Really, as much as he needed her help - well, both he and Malfoy; same boat, yeah? 'Cause the git was no where near as experienced as he let on! - it was incredibly odd to be seeking what amounted to couple's advice from Luna Lovegood. He'd gone to Hogwarts with Luna Lovegood - she was his age! Or nearly! This was building into a damnably humiliating, horribly embarrassing
conversation, even if his other half was a bloody Magical Creature and she was 'the' Magical Creature expert, accredited!

And some of those Slot A- into-Hole B images? Graphic! Hard to go wrong, really; couldn't be misinterpreted, no how, no way. He just happened to be 'B', and perhaps that was what was niggling at him. Wasn't B the disadvantage one? Er...no?

Or...not.

Because he wasn't feeling all that disadvantaged when Malfoy stuck his fingers up him or sucked his cock to blissful limpness! Who knew? Likely not Luna, and if she did, Harry wasn't at all certain if he was really prepared for her take on as an intellectual question the matter of Malfoy rogering him up his arse in Hogwarts Infirmary. Before a sodding avid audience of two elderly medical matrons, both just likely taking extensive notes on the historic act for the sake of science!

Oh, no! Bad—very bad!

Harry gulped, retreating a safe step back form the hearth.

"Er, you know, Luna?"

"Hmm, Harry? What?"

"Never mind, really. We'll sort it, I'm sure. We've Pomfrey - "

Harry didn't have the chance to make up some nonsense about consulting further with Poppy. Luna had the bit between her teeth, now.

"Harry, has Draco's mother already gone off?" Luna, despite her usual almost uncanny sonar when it came to emotional disturbance, seemed to have firmed her chin and become oddly determined to pursue the idea, even as she smiled dreamily at him through green haze of the Floo fire. She arched her blonde brows at him. "Or if she has, could you Owl her? Or even," and even Luna shuddered a bit over this, "or even that nasty Mister Malfoy? He's a bit Veela too, you know. In spots. And maybe...maybe they can help you with this? At least, with the sex questions. I'll be more than happy to share with you all I know about the recombinant DNA and the recessive traits involved, which is why Malfoy's showing such a high percentage, for goodness sake, but - "

"Recessive traits?" Harry gaped at her, diverted. "DNA? Luna, isn't that Muggle science?"

"Umm, yes, Harry. So?"

He swallowed, blinking curiously.

"But - but how would it apply? These are Magical Creatures! Magical! I don't quite see the connection - "

Luna flapped a hand, as if it were all in a day's work, what Veelas got up to when Wizards weren't watching.

"Oh, similar physiologies, Harry, and of course the instinctual reproductive imperatives are paramount across speciation and population, no matter the genetic make-up, Magical or not, and then there's the whole 'when did they split?', historically speaking, and the 'common ancestor' quandary, which is my particular field. Of course, I've been looking more particularly into the groups that intermingle socially with Muggles yet seldom splice genetically - yeti, centaurs, unicorns and the like - but there are many more, Harry, that share actual genetic overlap and
heritage. The MerPeople and the Veela; Giants and that's just the horn of the narwhal, really."

Harry considered this, licking his lips uneasily.

"Luna, you really believe the Malfoys might be able to answer my-our questions. Maybe...er, maybe help us out?"

Luna smiled, so widely her teeth sparkled greenish in the merry flames.

"Why, yes, Harry, I do. You'll need to be accepted into their covy, in any case. Um, you might call it a Nest, actually. It's their space - their, um, familiar place. Still, I think - Veela mate for life, even with the divorce and all. Formality, really - that. Um. But it's all about scent, Harry, that's what. I imagine that's why Missus Malfoy's gone from the Manor. Can't stand the smell of you, yet."

"What?" Harry was shocked. He smelt? Badly?

"What I just said, Harry. You'll be in Malfoy's Nest after you Bind, and then they'll be able to be near you; they'll even welcome you, just as they do Draco. Can't abide you now, likely - no full or part-Veela can, other than your Mate, I'd imagine, and Madame D'Argent, the Leader. Oh, Harry, she's super; very strong-minded; published a brilliant discourse on Murdock's fossil findings a few years ago; likely you weren't aware - but I expect even the partial interbred variations would be forced to object to you on the basis of odour alone. Malfoy's just been going about keeping you safe and sound, Harry, all along. You should make certain to thank him."

"Thank...him?"

"Oh, yes. Now, is there anything el-?"

"No..." Harry made haste to stop her. "No, I'm good, Luna. Yes - yes. Very good. More than. That's a lot you've told me, just now. I mean to say - it's more than enough, thanks. So, erm - thanks again, Luna; a bunch. Your...your advice is invaluable."

Luna nodded kindly, clearly dusting her mental hands of it, pleased.

"Oh, no problem, Harry. Any time, just floo me! Cheers, now. Happy Bindings!"

The flames doused themselves abruptly; Harry sat back on his haunches,swiping a sooty hand across his crinkled brow.

He smelt? Poorly? As in...reeked?

"Really, Potter." Behind him was the faint sound of handmade sole on expensive carpet. "Was that absolutely necessary?"

"Malfoy!"

"I mean to say, brilliant choice of guide, that. Very helpful sort of consult. Lovegood comes through again like a bloody trooper, shoving a positive raft of useless information into your pointy little head, all of it completely tangential to what we actually have to accomplish. How...entirely expected."

"Malfoy."

"Pot-ter." Malfoy made a moue of annoyance at Harry's glare. "You know it's true."

"Bah. Whatever, Malfoy. Least I'm asking, alright?"
Harry climbed back to his feet, shaking ash from his hair like a dog. A careless waft of Malfoy's white hand had him spotless once more and the po-faced git advanced fully into the Floo Parlour, stalking Harry.

"I can't say that I see the need to ask. We have our instructions; they're rather clear. At least to me, Potter."

It was really the third best private sitting room, Harry's current retreat; the one reserved for unannounced visitors and tradesmen, but Harry preferred it over the more formal rooms and even over the ones the Malfoys' had so obviously dwelt in before they departed for, er, other destinations. Less stuffed full of gilt French furniture, this small space, and far more comfortably-Harris-tweed and Burberry mac-oriented. Here was a place he could keep on his muddy wellies after tromping out to the glasshouses or the stables and not be concerned that the poor Malfoy House Elves were hemorrhaging fluids over it - here was a suitable sanctum for a Harry Potter. And sodding Malfoy was invading it. In fact, sodding Malfoy haunted it. In fact, sodding Malfoy was invading it. In fact, sodding Malfoy haunted it, the git.

"I take it she suggested speaking directly to the parents, then? My parents?"


For Malfoy was visibly trembling where he'd fetched up, a few feet distant. Just a bit, as if there was a gale that only affected him - 'til Harry ventured closer, both hands outstretched in case the poor sod lost his senses altogether and he had to leap to catch him - and then whatever wave it was affecting Malfoy hit him, too. Not Allure, no...not _that_.

"Pot - !"

Something else, then. Deeper than any old Allure; stronger than any old wonky Veela 'odour', however foul or exquisite.

Bone deep. Soul deep. Cellular.

They were in each other's arms in a blink and half a breath; Malfoy's jaw wide open across Harry's half-parted lips, gnawing at the edges for access. Which Harry gave him freely with the smallest of dreamy sighs and a heady rush of pleasure. And proceeded to lose himself, nearly altogether, to the searching fingers that travelled over his robes and the Muggle casual clothes he wore under them, seeking skin and as much of it as possible, soonest.

Mouth, tongue, hands, hands, tongue...hands. A heart thudding triple-time and a Malfoy blind-eyed and grabby-fingered with wanting him. Needing him and only him—and so much.

"Potter..." he groaned, a guttural gargle, and yanked Harry yet more closely to him, so that they pressed intimately at hip, waist and shoulder, chest, knee and thigh - even shins and ankles. He rocked on the balls of his well-shod feet and Harry slid into the easy motion, grinding his aching pelvis against Malfoy's taller frame and keening wordlessly. He wouldn't have known what to say if he'd been able. Gods, but it felt so...very...

"Potter, my _gods_!"

There went all his buttons, flying away; Harry couldn't give a rap if Malfoy ripped him raw with those pointy nails.

"Mmmm..." he murmured, arching his neck so Malfoy could suck on it, Luna's tangential and quite possibly mostly bogus quasi-scientific information almost forgotten already. At least he smelt good
to someone. Clearly. "Oh, Malf..."
Draco Malfoy was a bloody wanker.

Harry knew this. But the wanker's spots—or, rather, stripes—were not his ancient old familiar. Draco Malfoy was a wanker strictly due to his extraordinarily stiff upper lip. Granite-hewn, the silly git wouldn't admit a weakness if it killed him. Well, cancel that. He would, but then he'd sulk over it silently.

It had gotten so that Harry had taken to dogging Malfoy as he moved about the estate grounds… from sheer gut-wrenching anxiety. For who could guess when the Veela would overcome the Wizard? Malfoy stumbled when that happened; he lost his train of thought, his balance, his very senses if it struck him too particularly hard, his need—in fact, he'd developed a tendency to collapse outright if Harry wasn't close at hand at all times. Very; read within a hand's ready reach. Within sniffing range, or was that more like 'snogging range'?

Whatever it was—and it was almost always the Veela, acting up, causing it—Harry felt quite necessary. In a good way (though he thought maybe it was a bit egotistical to dwell on that aspect. After all, poor blighter hadn't chosen to be a Veela—he just was.) But Harry liked it. It lent him purpose. More so than before, when Malfoy had maintained his Unspeakable mask twenty-four seven.

"...Mmm...Potter," Malfoy muttered, inhaling Harry as if he were the finest scent from the finest rose in his bounteous gardens. "S'good."

He'd his chin cocked at an angle; the sun played merrily down upon shades of white, cream and threads of gold interlaced amongst them as it riffled through his hair. His eyelashes cast a shadow upon his taut-drawn cheeks, camouflaging the ever-present purply shadows beneath. Sunshine was a brilliant foil for Malfoy; he literally glowed.

"Malfoy," Harry chuckled, shifting restlessly but still liking far too much these fast-developing cracks in the Malfoy facade. "You're snorting up my hair, git. Stop. I just brushed it."

Harry actually would've liked to see those wings of Malfoy's in the sun, but no—they'd been stubborn Dark-dwellers only and Malfoy only ever really cared to unfurl them in the safety of their curtained bed.

Now he leant backwards—a bare smidgeon—away from his mate and their breakfast, quirking pale arching eyebrows in affront.

"I'm not. It's that the breeze is blowing it about, Potter—right into my eyes, too." He blinked, long and slow and Harry smiled. No such thing; the sunny morning was calm as a mill pond, not a wisp of zephyr fluttered the snowy tablecloth on the table where they breakfasted al fresco. "Hmm. Perhaps a trim might be in order? You're a tad...unkempt."

Harry laughed; guffawed, actually.

"Hah! Go ahead, git—try it! I'll guarantee it'll be the way it always is by morning. You know how many 'trims' I've had? About a million and all of them useless. It always grows back super fast when I'm—I'm—"
Swallowing hard, he glanced away, blinking himself but quite rapidly. Malfoy edged closer, subtly curling himself toward Harry's slighter form. The table was smallish, crowded with pots of preserves, plates and items breakfasty—but Malfoy still managed to give the clear impression he was hovering over Harry.

Harry kept right on smiling bravely; now that he'd grown used it, he rather liked that part, too. Comforting, wasn't it? Yes.

"You're?" his Veela prompted softly. "You're what, Potter?"

"Ah," Harry gulped, remembering abruptly his former dis-ease; he forced himself to meet those serious grey eyes directly. "Um, ah. Stressed, maybe?"

He had to tread so carefully, Harry did. So many pitfalls, what with Malfoy's monumental pride and his own, their bloody fierce senses of individual independence and—well, they still managed better when they didn't converse quite so much. Malfoy could say a million brilliant things with hands alone…

Swift comprehension dawned on that lean face; it made him seem somehow more angular, as if the sharpness that characterized his diamond-cut mind reflected across his chin, nose and slashing cheekbones: dancing glints, barely visible.

"Ah," he allowed quietly. "I see." There was, perhaps, the very faintest inflection of disappointment in his sparse acknowledgement.

Harry scrambled mentally to correct the unmeant slight.

"No! Not like that—I mean, my hair. I've had it done, of course; Hermione and Missus Weasley made me; literally dragged me off to the barber kicking and screaming, and usually it's alright at first and it'll last for a bit—"

"Yes, yes," Malfoy muttered. "I seem to recall it was fairly decent, some weeks ago—not too long in the back, shiny and—"

"Right, exactly!" Harry bobbed his chin up and down furiously. "It's just that when I'm—when I'm, er, a little bent out of shape, okay? My bloody hair goes all wonky. Develops a mind of its own, almost. Ron says I'm a throwback to Merlin or something."

"Really?" Malfoy's speaking eyebrows quirked again. "How so?"

"Well, Wizards always seem to have all this excess hair—you know, beards and mustachios and all that; look at Dumbledore, alright? Miles of it, all hair—and then Hermione tells me there's this old wives' tale that a Wizard's hair is where his magic lives. Which is bosh, but…well, a little like, um, that one bint the Muggles tell stories about—er, Rapunzel!" Harry concluded triumphantly. "That girl. Famous. A princess or some such, but whatever; s'not important now. Thing is, she'd an awful lot of hair even though she was Muggle and it was spelled to be magical. By a sorcerer or a nasty-arse Witch or someone. You know it?" Harry humped a shoulder, hoping Malfoy did actually know. As he didn't know enough of the story to really tell it. "It's a story. An old one. Even I'd heard of it, years ago."

Malfoy stared at him blankly, not twigging at all, obviously.

"And?"

It was a leading 'and'; one that clearly indicated Harry's convoluted explanation was a bit too
labyrinthine for even an Unspeakable versed in the ways of both Wizard and Muggle alike. Un-
speakables were known for the length and breadth of their magical knowledge; every sort from
Wild—like the Muggles showed, occasionally—to Elemental, the kind good old Mother Nature
unleashed every now and again. But their Muggle knowledge was perhaps still a little laggard;
Hermione could only do so much with her bloody seminars and Owl-lessons.

"Go on, then," Malfoy urged. "Your point, Potter?"

Harry, meanwhile, had been ensnared in those eyes of Malfoy's: silvery-pale, nearly translucent in
the reflected morning sunlight off the cutlery, they were marked by a narrowing, lengthening
pupil: almost cat's eyes in appearance. A sign of the Veela, simmering away beneath the Malfoy
surface.

"Um!" Harry jumped, startled. "Right, where was I?"

"Hair," Malfoy replied succinctly. "You were gong on about hair."

"Mine—well, mine grows like mad when I'm," Harry gulped, "when I'm pushed. I mean, not
pushed precisely, but not calm, either. Er…" he flapped a hand at the grounds rolling off into the
distance, green as anything and manicured to within an inch. "Here. This is…different. Not what
I'm used to. And, um, you."

"…Me, Potter?" Malfoy returned this ever so softly, lounging back farther into his wrought-iron
seat and crossing his arms just-so before his chest. "I'm hardly a stranger."

"No! Not that—you aren't; of course not, git!" Harry hastened to state. "But…but—"

"But?"

"You. You're not. You're always—" Harry struggled; there had to be a polite way to phrase it, what
he wanted to say. How Malfoy was Malfoy but not…and that he rather liked it, now he'd gotten to
know it. "…always…"

That it was actually not so bad, this sort of life. Eating a leisurely breakfast every fine spritely
spring morning and having a very handsome man pursue one constantly. Flattering…no, deeper
than that. Much deeper.

"I'm always what?"

"Um…?" There had to be a word for Malfoy; just the proper word; this Harry was certain of, but he

"…Hungry?" Funnily enough, Malfoy didn't seem offended at all. He leant across the tiny tabletop
instead, uncrossing his arms so he could lay gentle hands upon Harry's propped-up forearms. His
fingers trailed down to Harry's wrists—and then his hands, where they fiddled with his abandoned
tea cup. "Hmm. I s'pose that's a way of describing it: hungry. Though I'd say more…'dependent',
really. I am dependent upon you."

Harry grinned, lowering his arms fully so his own fingers could find Malfoy's elbow joints;
gripping them and jostling cups and dirtied plates heedlessly.

"You're not dependent, git—you're a bloody Veela. That's all. It's just what your sort does, is all.
S'not a weakness, twat."

Malfoy smiled, saturnine, and his sunlit eyes glittered.
"Oh," he murmured, "that's not right, either. Not really, Potter—as you're well aware. I'm hardly the man I was—"

"You're better!" Harry exclaimed fiercely. "You're so much better, Malfoy! I mean, you're human now and before—before—" he stalled, remembering 'before', but that old Malfoy was a bit hazy in his recollection, as used to this one as he was. Not that this Malfoy wasn't snotty and prat-ly and Slytherin. Or Malfoy, either.

It was all so muddled, at times. Harry sighed heavily, almost missing Malfoy's jerky twitch, quickly stilled.

"Huh," Malfoy snorted bitterly. "Hardly. Not human, Potter—far from it. A beast, perhaps. Don't your Muggles have a tale that covers that old chestnut, too?"

Harry shrugged; he'd no idea—nor did he care, much. His mind was on more important matters. Malfoy was fragile enough already, physically; the last thing Harry wanted was for him to walk away from the breakfast table believing his chosen Mate thought of him as some sort of monster—a beast.

"...Though, you are beautiful, Potter. In a rudely healthy sort of way."

Harry barely heard Malfoy's low mutter.

"To me, at least."

Because—really!—Malfoy was as far from beastly as any man could be: a perfect gentleman, always. Perfectly built, perfectly fit, perfectly groomed. Until he wasn't, but that wasn't his fault. It was his nature and it was to be expected and it was how things worked, in the real world. Veelas needed their Mates so they could make more Veelas, just as Wizards and Witches needed each other and Muggles needed Muggles, too.

It was all...so big, so capaciously all-encompassing, this idea, but so...very...simple. So extremely obvious, just as Poppy had always said: sex drove the ship.

"Malfoy!" he announced excitedly. "I've got it—what I was trying to say, earlier!"

"Oh?" It seemed almost as though the table had Shrunk; Malfoy was that much closer again, his hands sliding slowly up and up to grasp at Harry's collarbone, exposed by any number of undone buttons. Their kneecaps brushed; a long leg came swiftly to twine about one of his, anklebones knocking. They were close enough for Malfoy to inhale even more profoundly of Harry's fresh-bathed scent—looking the better for it, too—and smile that (very occasional) zinger of a grin he possessed, stowed away in his arsenal of Allure.

The particular smile that caused Harry's heart to race uncontrollably; the one that made Malfoy positively edible. Tender, even. Reminded him of a boy—and shoved the image of the man to the very forefront of Harry's brain.

No...all his senses, every one.

"Ohhh..." he breathed, lost in it. "Yes, just like that: better. Better."

Malfoy shrugged the compliment off amiably enough, his pale pink lips but a breath away from Harry's parted ones. A snog was imminent, of course. And perhaps more...the balcony was deserted but for the bees scurrying about the climbing roses.
"Whatever, Potter," he whispered. "Just…move…a little…bit…closer—"

And Harry did.

And it was brilliant, tasting a Malfoy who tasted of honey and melted butter and toast crumbs. Feeling a Malfoy whose strong arms and rippling torso responded like liquid-steel magic wherever Harry's reaching hands strayed.

Knowing—quite as one knew the sun rose and set, every day—that he was bloody essential. And that he should be. It was purposeful, this. All of it, from start to end.

Inclusive in a circle of two, he was. Two halves, indistinguishable.

…The breakfast table conveniently vanished; Veelas were really quite something else, magically. A cut above—and then some.

* A/N: This chapter is a Bonus, for you, and was not included in the original post at the *DracoTopsHarry* Fest, 2011. There may be another, as the thought strikes me…*
Fleur and Molly had come to call, just on elevenses. Malfoy, thank Merlin, was out of the house safely elsewhere, and occupied. Harry was under the impression he was meeting with his man of business over some capital investments they'd needed to settle; the details were fuzzy when murmured softly in his ear after Malfoy had sucked him off this morning under the breakfast table. Most details were, at this point.

The majority of Harry's attention was focused on just the one thing: Malfoy.

"Well, you look alright, Harry," Molly remarked, setting down her cup with an air of business to be gotten on with, right smart. "Healthy. Happy. Erm...satisfied."

Fleur, had she the full blood Veela's pointy ears, would've perked them inquisitively at Harry. Instead, she only sat up straighter in her seat across from him, the very picture of the demure daughter-in-law. She had a very odd expression on her face, though: one part carefully but not completely concealed disgust, one part avid curiosity and two parts concern. For a married lady and the mother of one quite rambunctious little girl, she was just as lovely as she'd ever been, and still as compellingly beautiful as Harry remembered her from the wedding, but time, the aftermath of the war and motherhood had taken their due, nonetheless. That brilliant 'come hither' air she and all the Beauxbatons girls had carried about with them like bright banners so long ago had been burnished into something much more steely in nature, Harry thought. There was an indefinable, ineffable likeness to Molly Weasley; a sort of 'I am Woman! I am Mum!' that overlaid the lambent 'I am Veela!'

For a spare blip of a moment, he wondered if Malfoy would bear that same look to him, years down the road: 'I am Man, I am Husband!' and if he would, as well. Like crups and their owners, growing to resemble one another as they kept each other in care. If so, he'd likely be forced to practice that one particular Malfoy down-the-nose stare the git had perfected to truly fit in with the remainder of the uppity lot of them. And likely, too, learn to carry about a leather-bound Quik Quills notebook regularly, to keep track of his many important appointments.

Harry wasn't, for all he was an Auror and good one, all that skilled in reading the emotions of his trusted few. He rather took them for granted, and relished that he could. There was nothing like knowing a person would die for one's sake - willingly - to leave one feeling oddly reassured. Molly and Fleur were family, and Fleur was as much Harry's sister-in-law as Ron was Harry's brother. And Molly was...Molly was Harry's very overprotective 'other' Mum. Of course they'd come, then. He sighed.

Families were the very arse-aches at times, being nosy. He was in for it and Molly likely wouldn't budge till she was satisfied all was right and tight, no matter how fond she and Arthur were of Malfoy these days.

"I am," Harry replied, flushing. "Maybe a bit, er - "

"Overwhelmed, 'Arry?" Fleur wanted to know, her accent a faint, pleasant buzz to her light voice. "That iz natural, of courze."

"Is it? Oh." Harry was certain there were reams more to that innocuous comment than appeared.
And he? He was piqued by Fleur's apparent interest in Malfoy, but then his interest in Malfoy was always burbling away inside him, a pot come to perpetual simmer. The man bloody well fascinated him, and on levels he'd not even conceived of previously. "And that means...what, exactly? Is it something to do with the Veela, Fleur?"

He ditched his teacup entirely, the better to pay attention. Here was a real live Veela, come to call, and one he trusted implicitly. Mayhap Fleur could shed some light on his and Malfoy's somewhat precipitous proceedings. He could use the help, absolutely. Fascination didn't equate to knowledge, necessarily.

"Well, it iz," Fleur set her cup down as well, and Molly nodded. "He iz exerting ze Allure most particularly on your zenzes, 'Arry. He doez not wish you to escape, az it were. You are important to 'im."

"Harry, he is taking good care of you, isn't he?" Molly interrupted. She frowned quellingly at him and Harry instantly felt somewhat guilty for causing her a moment's worry. "Draco is? I know he's quite reformed - a model citizen these days and the dearest of boys, really, under all those silly manners - but, Harry! It's very odd to me that it should be you two, of all people, given how you were, once. Friends I can understand, even mates like you and Ronald, but this!" She shook her head, fretfully. "Seems strange…"

"But no, Maman, it iz not at a'tall strange!" Fleur raised her pretty chin and glared at her mother-in-law. "It iz more than comprehenzible, this. I am only zurprized 'e haz not taken 'iz steps long since to Bond with you, 'Arry. Ah!" Her exquisite face brightened as a thought stuck her. "There waz some sort of Supprezzant Potion he waz given, az I understand it?"

Harry nodded, casually smoothing out his robes. Here was a question that always niggled away at his mind, raising yet more questions along the way.

"Yes, actually. Snape - er, Professor Snape gave it to him, all through Sixth and after, too." Harry reflected for a quick second, recalling what he'd been told by Malfoy and Poppy. "No, um, for longer than that, actually. Onset of puberty and up until the end of that year's April, or so Snape said, so from maybe age thirteen or so until just before the last battle with Voldemort, I think. Years, it was. And then Madame D'Argent, the Veela Leader, also mentioned to us these staggered maturational cycles Veela have and - and then there's some special trait called 'conjunctive superannuated timing', which is a typical male Veela behaviour, apparently, and which is why it wasn't 'til really recently he - well, he caught on it was me he was, erm...wanting. Or...at least that's what Madame Pomfrey's theorizing these days, though I'm not sure I buy it. Nor have all the details straight, either, sorry. I know Malfoy's being the Seventh Son figures in, too, in some way —Pomfrey said—but...it's complicated. Very."

"Very!" Molly repeated, snorting and tossing her head. "Need a map to keep all that in order, Harry, I don't doubt! Or perhaps a chart—like the Order used, remember?"

Harry laughed. "Poppy Pomfrey's enough medical charts for us already, believe me, and I'm sure there's probably a whole lot she's conjured up just for Malfoy alone. He's a bit of a freak, it seems, even just himself, eh? The Seventh Son, last scion, ancient Blood thing he's got going...but, yes. It's been a real puzzler, actually, why his Veela instinct was that long delayed."

"Hmmm," Fleur looked askance at Harry, as if she doubted in the reliability of any Healer's expertise as compared to the natural abilities of a Veela, even a sport like Malfoy. "I, for one, do not believe even the most powerful Confundum could have that effect, 'Arry, much less a mere Potion, but then the boy iz only partly Veela. Perhapz...but, only perhapz, it iz so."
"Well," Harry began, fluttering his fingers, "we've really only Snape's portrait's recollections to go on, y'see, and you know how they can be—it's paint on canvas, in the final say. I mean, it's not Snape really—"

"The real point is, Harry." Molly had polished off a second sliver of the lemon curd cake the Elves had provided them (an excellent cake, that, and one of Harry's favourites) while she patiently whiled away Fleur's murmured-aloud mull over the oddity of Malfoy and his peculiar manifestations of Veeladom. Clearly, though, Harry's adoptive Mum was waiting on courtesy no more; she'd her say to say, yet. "The point is, is Draco good for you, dear? Is he minding your needs and wishes, Harry? Because if he's not, then Veela or no, Draco or no, he'll have us to answer to, us Weasleys - well, me, Harry, really! You know how Arthur is, always the forgiving one, heart as big as the sea, but you're as much mine as any of them, Harry, and I'll not sit back and see you mistreated! He's such a kind boy, 'neath it all, but those parents of his - well, I've issues to take up with them, still! Never doubt it!"

"Molly! Molly, it's really alright," Harry hastened to say. "It is!" He shifted uncomfortably, recalling all the ways Malfoy was 'minding' him, these days. His knees trembled, from remembering; his chest ached in a most delightful way. "It is. He's been - he's been more than adequately...caring, Molly. Concerned, over me, always. And kind - thoughtful, too. In fact, you'd think I was the only one in the world for him, the way he carries on over the slightest little-"

"But you are, 'Arry," Fleur interjected, and she had that peculiar little frown on her face again as if she smelt something fishy in the very atmosphere. "You are the one and only for 'im, make no doubt of eet, 'Arry. He iz not looking at anyone elze, not now. 'Ee will never. It iz only so very strange to my mind that he went so long without. I admit I am excessively puzzled by it. It iz not the natural order of the Veela, to know of the exiztenze of one'z true mate for zhooverly long and yet not - "

"He did, actually!" Harry gulped, blushing. "Er, well as soon as he knew it couldn't be helped, Fleur. He'd gone and arranged with Kings and Poppy and Madame when he sorted there was no stopping it; all these details I'd've never thought of, all for me, really; for my sake so I'd feel easier with it. Being him, that is. But, well, yes; we're both puzzled by how long it took to happen, still," Harry admitted. "Malfoy and I. Though Snape's portrait insists it was possible; Madame Pomfrey's already enquired of him any number of times. I only—I still can't accept - and neither does Hermione, for that matter - that any Potion should've kept his Veela bits at bay for what amounted to nearly a full decade, but...it has. It did. No arguing that."

"It may be that he waz not often in your company, 'Arry?"

"No!"

Harry shook his head, emphatically. Brushed his fringe back carelessly when strands tangled into his lashes, as they always did.

"No...no, that's not it either, Fleur. We've been working together for years now at the Ministry and, from what he's said, this just landed on him out of the blue, one day not long ago. I mean, he fought it off for a bit, but...it iz a puzzler. A mystery. Even Poppy's completely at a loss as to why it took so long to rear its head, the Veela. And Madame D'Argent's not saying one way or t'other. Don't think she knows either, the old biddy."

Fleur snorted, her eyes sparkling at him, the blue very beautiful indeed when angry.

"We are not ze Thestralz, 'Arry! Not zee Beasts of zee field, either! We are just az much Wizard az you!"
"Oh! Um, no—I didn't mean!" Harry jumped and began to gabble. "Not beasts, Fleur—clearly you're not and he's not—well, ah, sometimes...sometimes he is, but that's differ—"

"Harry," Molly quirked a quizzical brow at Harry's flushed face and deftly changed the subject, "Harry, Bill mentioned once that he was, er, ah, insulated, I s'pose you might call it, from Fleur's Veela Allure, at first. Didn't see it. Really, didn't notice her at all for the longest time, not until well after they'd been introduced in passing. And Fleur, you've told me any number of times how it was for you, with, ah, the glow and the scent and all - "

"Eet waz a revelation, Maman, yesss!" Fleur agreed happily, bouncing all at once in her seat like the youngest of schoolgirls. "Eet might be like that, yesss! Theze 'appenings are all at onze, on occazion, especially for the part-Veela. Iwaz not affected by my lovely 'Illiam at all for forever and a day and then, voila! My beautiful 'Illiam waz all I could think of!"

"Fancy," Harry said. "Imagine that." He blinked. Oh, certainly, Fleur was Veela.

She was smiling cheerily her satisfaction at her memories—the moment she and Bill had realized their mutual attraction, most likely—and it was a most beautiful sight, that. Harry felt a vicarious thrill that ran right down to his curling toes. Of course, he was far more susceptible to Veela magic of any sort, these days...but he couldn't help but shudder a bit, too, anxiety rife amidst the pleasure. Malfoy's reaction to him noticing anyone other than Malfoy would likely be...dire, if he were aware.

Hopefully he wasn't; hopefully Malfoy was safely stowed with his goblin-of-business, yet, and nowhere about.

"Ah...anyway..."

"'Arry?" Fleur cocked her pretty chin at him.

"Dear?" And Molly her slight wattle, enquiringly.

Harry most particularly didn't wish him to be. Jealous, that was. As there was no need for it, not at all. Malfoy was ragged enough these days; he always looked sickly and wan, no matter how much sleep they got or how much fine Elf-made food Harry stuffed down his elegant craw. He needed not to be concerned unduly over something as inconsequential as Harry's family coming to tea.

"Um!" he added urgently, suddenly in a massive hurry to shove his adoptive mum and sister-in-law right through the Floo. It wasn't what he wanted to have happen, really; he'd have liked some time to chat with them both but Malfoy might be returning any moment, and...who knew? Harry squirmed, the sense of impending doom growing with every second. He knew. Poor git! Harry should do everything he could to spare him that. "Mum Weasley, Fleur—I really should be revising that last set of instructions the Leader gave Pomfrey. She had it Owled over this morning, that last incantation, and we've only a few days left before we - ah, before we do it. So...ah, if you wouldn't mind?"

He nodded meaningfully toward the hearth, hoping he'd not set off a flurry of Mum Weasley's fussing—nor accidently poked at Fleur's Veela pride.

"'Arry." Fleur, however, instantly rose in a swish of pale blue that became her colouring delightfully and took Molly along with, by dint of a soft hand subtly slipped beneath the elder woman's elbow. "We understand, 'Arry. Malfoy will be scenting us out, az a 'ound doez ol' Reynard, and 'ee will not like eet. But...'Arry?"
"Yes?" Harry was on his feet as well, hastily, and taking a sideways step to wordlessly usher them out all the quicker. His nape had begun to prickle uncomfortably; the back of his throat was dried out. Malfoy was most definitely back in the vicinity, if not already striding through the Manor proper, and he wanted no part of explaining to his Veela why there was a beautiful woman - a gorgeous, married, also-Veela woman – standing not three feet away from him. Malfoy would flip first and only maybe ask questions later. "You were saying, Fleur?"

"Ee iz deep in, 'Arry, your Malfoy. There iz no hope for 'im now. Be kind, yes? Even if you are not where 'ee iz in your 'eart of 'earts, you must think of 'im now; 'iz needz are life or- "

"I...I rather think it's alright, Fleur," Harry babbled, even more anxious to send them on their way. "I wouldn't hurt him—not for anything, believe me! And Molly - Mum Weasley, I do, really. I'm good with this, I am. He's not half bad, not when you know him. A little stick-up-the-arse, but...I quite like him."

"Well, good-oh, Harry!" Molly pronounced, absentmindedly shaking off her daughter-in-law's iron grip. "That's a start and too, we all can't have those grand love affairs they blather on about over the wireless. Just do be careful, Harry. We fret over you, all alone here with that poor, dear boy. We fret over him, too, but you—you are just so-"

"I'm alright, Molly," Harry smiled. "And he's hardly a boy; I mean, not any more than I am. Sure, it took some getting used to at first, but I really think it'll work out. I can see it, now. Spending my life with him. It's not so bad a prospect."

"Ah! Brilliant, 'Arry...but I will not kizz you, all the zame," Fleur smiled, taking up a handful of Floo powder, "as 'ee will not like eet. But alwayz remember, we are but a Firecall away if you 'ave the need for uz."

"Thanks, Fleur. Thanks, Mum Weasley. That's - well, that's really very...kind," Harry blinked, his lashes a bit moist. He knew - as well as Fleur likely did - exactly what potentially horrendous reaction the people who cared for him were risking, coming within leagues of a shortly-to-be-Mated Veela's chosen one. "You—both—um, thanks."

They smiled at him, kindly, even as it pinged at his long-term recollection, that. The jealousy—the sense of Malfoy always, always hovering about him, chasing off anyone who might harm or bother Harry. Rather similar to the situation he'd been in with Voldemort after his arse, murder in those red eyes, but marginally better. Veela were not...not particularly barmy, precisely, when they were jealous or possessive. Nor purposefully malicious, either; only quite driven by that urge to Bind. To Have. To Keep. Didn't brook any interference, that's all. Very...purposeful the urge was...just like Malfoy.

"Oh! Er?" Still, the next thought struck him as a distinct blow across the chops and brought his back to his present with a sting and a snap. There was this one thing he - they - really required advice on; this one most crucial, harrowing question left hanging. "Fleur - one last, er, point, before you go off? Did you and Bill? I mean to say, erm, before you were married, had you? Um...ah?"

Harry went scarlet; he couldn't help himself. What he and Malfoy did in their grand bed still flustered the Merlin out of him. Even thinking of it made his heart race like a mad thing!

"Bonded, 'Arry?" Fleur giggled and Molly turned an interesting shade of red, brick as opposed to Harry's Gryffindor scarlet, whipping her head about at Harry's almost-question. She raised her gingery brows at him in silent reproof and he blushed all the darker. Asking Fleur whether she and Bill had been intimate before they, er, tied the knot, wasn't exactly...au fait, as Fleur would say. "'Arry, are you asking if we did ze nazty?"
"Nrrgh," Harry nodded frantically, eager and antsy, all at once. Malfoy was coming closer; he could feel it. "Um-ah?"

"But yesss, of course, 'Arry," Fleur chattered blithely, even going so far as to wink at him. "Eet waz not pozzible not to, comprenez vous? We would 'ave run mad, otherwize. We could not 'elp it."

"Harry Potter!" Molly huffed. "You are not thinking of anticipating this - this marriage ceremony of yours? Why, it's - it's a wedding, Harry! A sacred event! You can't possibly-!"

"Oh! Ack! Ah - no! Of course not, Mum Weasley - no such thing, but...um, well, Malfoy's on his way; I can feel it, so I can't - erm, goodbye!" Harry gabbled. "Good day! See you all in a few weeks, alright? At the—at the party we'll have, right? And - and Molly, if you'd please just also give Arthur our thanks for the use of the Burrow for the after-party, will you? Fleur - Fleur, thanks so much - I can't even begin to tell you how much that helps us-!"

"Harry Potter, you are up to something, aren't you?" Molly demanded suspiciously, hands planted firmly on wide hips. "You and Draco, both!" She paid no mind at all to his shooing motions or his unhappy little dance on the hearth rug. "Harry, dear, if Poppy says you two boys must do the deed properly then don't you dare even think about countermanding her orders! That's—that's an order, Harry! My order!"

"Er, um..." Harry muttered faintly, "about that, y'see, Mum Weasley...I sort of...I mean, I don't think it's going to be quite that easy..."

"Harry!"

"Come along, Maman," Fleur intervened kindly and hauled a grumbly Molly Weasley away with her through the hearth in a double-puff of greenish soot and cinders, still fulminating. "It iz not for you to worry over, that. That iz up to 'Arry 'ere and hiz Malfoy."

"But—!"
Caught snogging by McGonagall wasn't a situation Harry relished; no, not \textit{a'tall}.

He went red as hot coals from hairline to exposed left nipple and forcibly dragged his mouth from Malfoy's, craning his neck to stare wild-eyed at the Floo fire. A tartan hat floated there, perched atop the steel-grey bun of an elderly Witch he was quite well acquainted with, indeed.

"Ack! Shit! Malf- !"

Malfoy was preoccupied, what with snogging Harry's lips to mushy pillows and twisting those reddened nipples counterclockwise and reverse.

"Mmmphf!"

"Mmm, Potter, what the \textit{fu- ?}!" The blond head retreated a scant inch, slewing sideways. Hazy grey eyes blinked themselves back to clarity in an instant. "Oh. Right. Super. Headmistress. Good morning, Headmistress."

Harry, gasping with surprise tinged by a faint sense of general outrage, spent a fleeting second bloody \textit{envying} Malfoy's quick recovery time; \textit{he} had no such vast reserves of Pureblood training to draw upon.

"Profess-!" he gulped but his former Head of House was already galloping into speech, lips pursed and severe bun tilted just so, the tartan of her steepled hat prim and proper as starch.

"Good morning, boys – er. Pardon me, I'm sure." Headmistress assumed a rather severe expression, even more so than usual. "For intruding. Oughtn't you have closed down your Floo, though? Most irregular, to leave it wide open to calls when you are engaging in a private mom- "

"Ah! Ah, er! Um, pardon \textit{us}, Professor!" Harry leapt into useless apology before Malfoy could say a word, his skin flushing to a whole new level of wine-blush. Honestly, his cheeks literally felt scorched, they were so hot with blood. Talk about humiliating!

"Mmm." Headmistress blinked. "I see—but."

…As was the length of Malfoy, pressed against him. Hot, damp, twisty-sinuous, all the lovely lines of him alight with not very well banked fire, and as much of that inferno of a form bang up against Harry as Malfoy could possibly manage. Harry gulped helplessly, feeling the need to fill the breech—somehow, anyhow, even if it was only by babbling idiotically till someone else was willing to jump in and utter a sentence that made sense.

"Ah, no! \textit{Me}, really—it was me," he flung out, willy-nilly, not that Headmistress had issued a word of blame. "That was my fault—the Floo. Mrs. Weasley and Fleur were just by a moment ago, and I-I \textit{didn't}. I mean I, er—I forgot all about the damned Floo."

"Hmm," Malfoy hummed, the sharp eyes squinching to steely-hued slits. He was observing Headmistress McGonagall's floating green face with obvious care but he vouchsafed no more than that small noise against Harry's brilliantly scarlet-lobed ear.

Instead, he licked it, the git—tongue-tip darting. \textit{And} sucked the lobe, just as if he were extracting
the juice form a strawberry!

With a second start, Harry realized more fully he was half-disrobed, trousers mostly open and briefs bulging, and that Malfoy was sporting one fuck of a boner—one that burnt against Harry's thigh like molten lead.

And the wanker was licking him, right beneath McGonagall's very proper nose!

"Ngh!"

Of course, he'd not had the actual time to remember. Before. The Floo, that was—the damned Floo. Not one second to react or reflect. No, the door to Harry's little sanctuary had slammed open with force, bouncing off the plaster and then rebounding just as speedily, banging shut with the impact (one-two! *whomp* and *whomp*, again!) literally the second Molly's and Fleur's robes had swished on through, off to the Burrow and Shell Cottage variously. Then there was Malfoy bearing down upon Harry, wild-eyed and stormy, like a bloody Fury. As if he owned the place, really - and just as Harry was shuffling back from his hearth for the second time that morning, flustered and gasping. For before Mrs Weasley and Fleur had popped in he'd had himself a quick check-in with Ron and Hermione. As was his usual habit and Malfoy generally left him be for that, perhaps out of courtesy.

"Potter!" Harry's Veela had hissed, stomping elegantly, every inch the Unspeakable, the Slytherin...the ruddy Malfoy. "I just knew I smelt something foul. A woman, here—and a Veela at that. No—two women! Are you daft? Must I constantly remind you that you may not simply allow people to wander the Manor freely? This is no joking matter, Potter! Come the fuck here."

And then Harry had seen stars, from the second Malfoy's long arms had reeled him in on a stumble, spinning him dizzily and practically ironing him flat against the nearby wall. Had proceeded to snog the living daylights out of him. And Harry had tasted blood, too, from where Malfoy had pressed his jawbone so hard against Harry's still-open mouth, he'd forced his puffy lower lip against his own teeth, but that...was.

"Don't do that again. I can't be held responsible."

How the git could growl like that and yet still sound so meticulously controlled, Harry couldn't fathom.

That was…

That was alright, really, Harry concluded mid-devourment, feeling dazed and panting rapidly under a tongue lapping up the well of salty vermillion droplets as soon as they appeared. He didn't mind it. Purely primeval, yeah, but in a good way. Snogged as if he meant it, did Malfoy. No mucking about.

"No visitors, Potter. Got that?"

"uh…hmmm," Harry had nodded vaguely his agreement to that stern dictum, barely hearing the snarl. Or rather, hearing it with his cock, which was very interested all the sudden.

"No one else. No. One. Else."

The growl was so deep as be a rumble; Harry's chest vibrated where it rubbed naked against Malfoy's high-buttoned robes.

"Potter."
"Um?" Harry, distracted by his own reaction, had lost track. He blushed; he gasped; he twitched, fumbling. "Oh! No—no, no one. I pro—"

Never got to finish his sentence, either; Malfoy was back on him like glue. No...hot wax, singing his nerve endings, making his skin sing.

Now, however, that same git Malfoy only smirked coolly at the Headmistress of Hogwarts, the two-faced wanker. Pulled his Harry-licking lips into a species of plastic leer—unbelievable—right at the tartan hat! Sneer-smiling, he was, albeit politely, and directly at Harry's own former Head of House!

Harry, what with his body clamouring for more Malfoy kisses, more Malfoy pressure—that hardened prick bloody only millimeters separated from his own—and what with his own mercurial temper rising, right along with the ever-deepening blush to his scorched cheeks, felt deeply nonplussed. Highly nonplussed! How dare the git smirk? Gall!

"That would be Potter's error, Headmistress. Normally, we keep this particular Floo open only for scheduled appointments but he chooses to employ it as readily as the Muggles use their cellulars; whenever he feels the urge, more like. Gabby, irresponsible git." Malfoy's thin disapproving smirk descended to a full-out disgusted sneer. "It's not as though I've not mentioned it to him before, either. Bone of contention, ma'am, sorry."

"Hmm, I see," McGonagall nodded abruptly, as if that settled it. "Still…"

Harry gawped, jaw unhinging as it dropped down.

"Bone of!"

How dare the git blame him?

"Grrr!" Now it was Harry's turn at growling. "Mal-!"

"However, Draco Malfoy," McGonagall tutted through the fire, her expression quite severe and disapproving, "there's no cause to take that tone with me, young man. And I imagine our Harry's still adjusting. You must try to be more patient with him."

No! Harry's head spun. No, no, no! Wait just a sodding-!

"Um, but - " Harry protested instantly, as that wasn't the way of it. It hadn't been Malfoy, damn it—it had been him!

Yes, the git was a git, but he wasn't a mean git or even a petty one, yammering on over every little transgression—well, he'd been testy now and again, but that was hardly surprising, what with and all, and—and what Prof—Headmistress McGonagall was clearly concluding hadn't been what had actually happened. Harry simply had to set the record straight.

"No, really; it's alright, Minerva," he said earnestly, formality cast aside in his burning desire to make her see the right of it. "Malfoy's being a stiff-rumped git about it, absolutely," he agreed hastily, "just as he always is, but he's correct - I shouldn't have, but - I. Er, I just...lost the page, sorry. It's been an...it's been a really unusual morning. Unsettling."

One of Headmistress's eyebrows twitched, just the merest tad. If she'd have been in cat form Harry fancied that would've been an ear, flicking.

"And I, ma'am, am more than patient with Potter," Malfoy broke back into the stilted excuse for a
conversation at last. Judging by the darkly ominous shimmy of his blond eyebrows, Harry concluded he was patently irked at being chided like a piddling schoolboy. But he was yet 'the' Malfoy, and thus always all about 'the' manners; his slightly frigid half-smile hadn't sagged an inch. Indeed, it was sharp as broken glass...as was the glance he sent Harry's way. "Always. I must be, don't you see, to retain what remains of my sanity. But, pardon. I simply must enquire, ma'am. To what do we owe the honour? I believe Madam Pomfrey's relayed the drill to you? We're not due to report to the Infirmary 'til this Friday and it's barely Sunday noon. Has there been a change of plans?"

"Malfoy, you nit, if you'd only just listen!" Harry's mind, once he'd ascertained Malfoy wasn't going to rip off Minerva's head just for making a morning Floo call, had immediately returned to the pesky issue of why there was so much social activity in his own private hearth of a morning. He felt curiously impelled to explain he'd not invited Mrs. Weasley and Fleur; it was more that they'd barrelled through to the small space he'd claimed as his own and taken up residence, not to be dislodged. And eaten all his favourite cake, too. "I didn't ask them to come, not at all! They just did! So, you can't simply assume I'm the one who's at fau - "

A quick kiss glancing across his parted lips stoppered him like a cork. Malfoy frowned down at him, though, apparently still querulous. "Potter, cease your jabber. Headmistress is waiting in your Floo; I imagine there's some good reason for it." His chin swung abruptly in her direction. "Ma'am?"

McGonagall bobbed that tartan hat of hers, sniffing. Harry goggled at her; he forgotten her presence on the scene for a second, what with Malfoy's fit bod still practically glued to his own.

"Why, yes, you two. There is, in fact." She smiled stiffly, her gaze darting from one to the other of them. "We've had word from the Leader of the Veela Nation that she'll be in attendance this Friday, observing ther goings-on alongside our dear Madame Pomfrey, and I thought perhaps you might be wish to be informed of that, in advance." Malfoy's eyebrows rose sharply; Harry's jaw unhinged. "I," she added, almost as an afterthought, "may also attend, in my capacity as unofficial representative for the Board, the Order and the Ministry. A little preemptive eyewitnessing never comes amiss, as it's a rather…momentous, er…occasion for the two of you, and thus I thought to provide you some fore-notice. Also, boys, Madame D'Argent is what I believe you two might call a stickler for a proper Bonding ritual. It is best if you have more resources at your disposal and I may be so bold as to say Veela and their ways have always been of professional interest to me. I have some small store of knowledge."

"Ngh?" Harry reeled upon his own feet; fortunately Malfoy had him firmly. His toes tingled as they curled in horrified reaction; his eyes felt as though they'd bulge right out his head. "What's that you say!"

"Hmm." Malfoy indicated no real emotion one way or another. Unlike Harry, he was unfazed. "Right, then."

"I do expect you've made yourselves completely familiar with the rituals and the necessary sex magic charms?" McGonagall's eyebrows climbed like inquisitive grey caterpillars under her tartan brim. If they hadn't, being foolishly distracted from their duties, she'd be wanting to know the reason why not, or so it was strongly implied; Harry swallowed hard at that notion, shuddering. "The Wizarding one's I'm sure our dear Poppy's gone over with you countless times," she continued smoothly, "but the Veela...the Veela are not Madame Pomfrey's specific area of expertise, admittedly."

Malfoy nodded equably, his gaze unreadable, even by Harry. "Yes, Madame, we have rehearsed
them, rest assured, and yes, that is unexpected news, thank you - "

"Oh, shit!" Harry gasped, and whipped his taut form about, scrabbling at Malfoy's shoulders for support when his knees threatened to go out from under him. "Oh, fucking no, Malfoy! She'll be watching us go at it, too?" He bobbed his head vaguely in the direction of the Floo, but he didn't mean McGonagall—not, not at all. "That old martinet of yours—D'Argent? D'Argent scares me pantless, Malfoy! I'm not doing it, not with her there! Not my bare arse and her eyeballs on it! No bloody, sodding, frigging way!"

"Harry Potter!" The Headmistress huffed. "Language, young sirrah! Keep in mind I'm still present, please. Control your tongue."

"Urgh!"

Harry's suddenly wan face sported twinned spots of red, high on his cheeks, but he wasn't to be cowed. Not even by McGonagall! Rather, especially not by Minerva. They'd always had a soft spot for one another, he and she, but this! This was too much!

"Sorry!"

"Potter."

He couldn't possibly agree to it. Not without one fuck of a tantrum, at least. Enough was bloody well enough!

"Erm - right, sorry about that, yes, but - is that old bat truly planning on being in the actual Infirmary with us, Professor? Does she have to be? It's awful enough that Poppy's to be standing over us, y'see? And I really don't think I can bear having anyone else in the room - gods, I feel sick!" He clasped a hand to his gut and nearly doubled over; fortunately Malfoy had firm hold of him. "The idea makes me bilious; really weedy!"

"Potter, shut up now," Malfoy shushed Harry's mouth forcibly, sliding a cool palm over his open lips. "Quiet down; shush. I'll handle this, but-if that's what's required to settle this whole Bonding up properly, than that's what we will do. Whatever it takes, Potter. Remember, we agreed."

"Uhn! Mmmphf! Shhtop tha'!"

Harry bit down instinctively on the fleshy bulge that muffled him, hard enough for Malfoy to send him a wounded look as he ripped his maltreated hand away.

"Potter! Unkind!"

"Bast - er - no, no, really, Malfoy! I don't think you quite understand what I'm on about, here. I mean, I'm the one who's required to - it's my arse literally on the line - oh, blast, Malfoy! Look, we really must speak about this, privately!" Harry hissed his discontent and ire. "Right now!"

"Potter, if you'll just be patient." Malfoy sent McGonagall a glancing polite smile, but it was clear he was fast losing patience with the news, the bearer of it—and Harry. "I'm certain it will all work out on the day. Likely we shan't notice any of them, prat. We'll have the Ritual to perform."

"That's! That's not it!" Harry managed by main force and some fancy sideways footwork to yank at the git's wrist sufficient to spit a few terse words in his face; the next second he was once again muffled. The prat still had his Seeker's hands, it seemed. "Ma'fffoy!" Harry howled, impotent. "Nnnrrrrgh!"
"Indeed. Such hysterics. Clearly, you must confer, the two of you. And not before me, boys," Headmistress McGonagall inserted herself neatly into the rout, folding her lips in a severe line and sending them her best classroom glare. "If you please, Harry, Draco; that's outside of enough in company. However, and your small squabbles aside, although I personally may be not be either Bonded nor wed, boys, I do have more than a passing notion as to what goes on between both newlyweds and Veelas. Priscilla D'Argent is a very particular friend of mine - I assure you especially, Harry; she's entirely discreet."

"What? You know her, Headmistress? You're acquainted? Mates from school?" Malfoy abruptly plumped his arse on Harry's scuffed-up third best divan, taking a gawping red-faced Harry with him and forcefully manhandling him across bent knees. "The Leader is, Headmistress? Merlin!" He blinked, taken aback. "Now, that's quite the surprise. I was under the distinct impression she didn't think all that highly of the Wizarding world. I'd no idea she even knew you."

Harry gurgled his own bewilderment. It was all he could manage. His ex-Transfigurations Prof merely nodded pleasantly at their staring faces, entirely unruffled, and with a fondly reminiscent smile lighting her wise old eyes.

Even the hat seemed to take on an air of reminiscing; the very tip of it drooping to one side.

"Oh, yes," she smiled. "Did you not ever think I might happen to know a few people, boys? Outside the boundaries of academe?" Harry shook his head slowly; Malfoy only waited patiently for her to continue. "Oh, we've been acquainted for ages, Prissy and I. If I'm not mistaken, I believe it was beginning from the year she spent at Hogwarts for the One Hundred Twenty-Ninth TriWizard, when I was but a girl of, hmm - was it thirteen years - or was I fourteen, then? Can never quite recall. Of course, Priss is my elder by several years, naturally, but - still. Now, ahem. Now, of course, Prissy's a very wise Veela Council Head and a respected Healer in her own right. You'll be well enough, young Harry, during your Bonding. I'd not fret over much."

"Hmm." Malfoy nodded. "Good enough." His spine and shoulders, which had been held rigidly all throughout, relaxed a smidgeon.

"Oooh, I get it now!" Harry exclaimed, using Malfoy's lapse to finally pry his way out of captivity and burst into a mutant form of perverted laughter, a squeaky gargle with more than a hint of insanity to it. "I see it now! The more, the fucking merrier! Let's all watch Harry's arse, shall we? Make a bloody party of it! Doesn't it, Malfoy? What bloody bad luck, my ruddy arse! Well, there's no sodding prophecy this time - not this time! Malfoy, do something! Anything! Put a stop to this nonsense, damn it!"

He wriggled vehemently upon the hard lap he was ensconced in, enough so that Malfoy's rigid cock wasn't quite so prominently poking up into his tense thighs - or between them, rather, pushing against his half-unbuttoned flies.

Curse the bastard's lightweight woolen trousers and his habit of leaving his expensive robes unbuttoned and wide open when they were at home! Having Professor McGonagall pop up and spy them when they were...when they were at it hot-and-heavy was in no way ideal. Unsupportable!

Harry's blush, which had receded in the face of sheer shock, returned full force, amped by the power of ten. Learning Madame-bloody-Veela-D'Argent was to be observing the bloody Bonding was beyond the bloody pale!

"Malfoy!" Harry grasped at the git's shoulders, intensely unhappy. "Say something! Be a damned Malfoy, won't you? Make it stop!"
That had the git's lips quirking; Harry inhaled sharply. How dare the prick actually smile over this coming disaster? It was his arse!

"Potter, hush!" He was peremptorily soothed, a pale hand pushing his disturbed fringe off his scarred forehead. "Right, right, of course, Headmistress. I see now." Malfoy turned his attention back to McGonagall's patient face. nodded quickly at her, as always and ever quite the gentleman even with his skin 'round his lips reddened and practically soaked in the remnants of Harry's rapidly cooling saliva.

…It had been a rather all-consuming snog, that one. Harry, angry though he was, melted a bit, just recalling.

"Mal—" he began to say, but the git wasn't paying him any mind. The hand at his back though, rubbing circles—that was nice. "Malfoy!"

"I understand," his Veela nodded his resignation. "And so she is to observe us, as well. For the record. All of it, then; the entire ceremony?"

"Indeed, from start to finish," Headmistress shrugged her thin shoulders, "which is why you'll both be wishing to perform it utterly perfectly, boys." She huffed. "Not that anyone expects you to come up short, of course. Poppy's had nothing but good things to relate about your progress."

"Proreffffh!" Harry mouth was muffled again before he could so much as blink. "Prffle!"

"Well, that's it," Headmistress ignored him completely, setting her hat to rights in a pleased way. "I shall expect you both in my office a half hour or so before you report to the Infirmary, then. We'll reserve a quiet moment for any final advice the Healers might want to impart you and then you'll be off to begin your new life together - as, ahem, a Bonded couple. My congratulations, boys. It is quite the exciting event."

The hand at Harry's back spread wide, pointy fingernails digging in right through Harry's mussed robes. The other one—palm hot and perspiring against Harry's parted lips, pressing tight—cupped his jaw gently.

"Potter," Malfoy whispered, for his ears alone. "Sit still. Not another word, please."

Harry, done in by his own personal blond fifth column, gave up on his pointless squirming. Malfoy had him clasped far too tightly to do much toward outright fleeing or even stomping a foot on Malfoy's toes in sheer temper - and buried his face hastily in the git's convenient armpit.

"Arrrgh!" he growled repeatedly, nuzzling; knowing naught else to do in this quandary but that. "Grrrr! Grr, grr, grrrr!"

Malfoy's answering embrace nearly crushed his ribs. The hand that had subdued him slipped and sifted through Harry's hair, fingertips gentle as feathers aloft.

The contrast between Malfoy's hands and his admonitory voice was a total shock to Harry's system.

"Potter. Idiot! You're embarrassing, git. Sit straight, please. Slouching doesn't become you." He cleared his throat as Harry jerked his chin once more and returned all of his attention to McGonagall. "Ahem, thank you, Headmistress, for the kind alert. We'll be sure to keep that in mind...both of us, as we, ah, perform."

McGonagall nodded politely and Harry, gawping at her out of the corner of one nastily-slitted eye, caught a glint of barely-there amusement in her glinting gaze. That only served to heighten his
inarticulate fury.

"Headmiss - Prof - Minerva!" he roared, still game to protest. Manfully, he wrestled himself away from the git's Squid-grip to face her down but his Veela promptly silenced him yet again with that same damned tooth-marked palm. "Minerva, I object!" he managed, before stiflement. "You mustn't let that damned Vee-m'urgh! Mmph! Mmmmphhhnn, Mmf'oy!"

McGonagall, apparently concluding she'd wasted enough precious time away form her regular duties, ducked back and away from her side of the hearth.

"Right. All settled, then; carry on, do. Till Friday, Draco, Harry. Best of luck to you both on the big day."

"And a pleasant morning to you, too, ma'am," Malfoy replied coolly. Harry struggled inarticulately, redder and redder still with asphyxiation and bundled-up temper. "Thanks again for the heads-up."

The tartan hat winked abruptly out of view, though not before Harry heard McGonagall's voice once more, evidently directed at someone visible only outside normal Floo range. Likely toward one the many portraits that lined her office walls: "How very droll, Albus! Potter and Malfoy, can you imagine? How utterly droll!"

Harry didn't catch his old Headmaster's reply—if any. He'd more important things to fret over.

"Argh - argh - argh - ah - unnnnh! M'foy!" he gritted, shifting about so he could bang his forehead into Malfoy's hard collarbone repeatedly until the bastard removed his blasted hand from Harry's face for the third and final time. He felt soiled; superbly so. It was a matter of principle, damn it. Principle! "I. Hate. Being. Fucked with! Arghh-fucked up is what I meant! The arse, Malfoy - you know that? I hate it! And by you, you dirty wanker!"

"Pah!"

Malfoy snorted, and only shrugged at him, slightly, as if there was nothing to it. As if it weren't the worst scenario Harry could possibly ever imagine: Poppy, Madame D'Argent, and now McGonagall, too, all with their beady professional, official eyes trained on his bloody naked arsehole when Malfoy finally rammed his Veela dick up it.

"Malfoy!"

"Well, Potter, that's a damned pity, is all I have to say about it, as it's your role to play in our little ongoing domestic drama," he replied dryly. "So, so sorry. Really. Now stop damaging my poor bones and let's continue where we left off, hmm?"

"Wha-what?" Harry exclaimed. "How dare-?"

"I've been wanting you like a mad thing this last hour and you...you positively reek of those women," Malfoy informed him smoothly. "Don't care for that, Potter." His hands wandered down to Harry's crotch, where both pricks could be felt poking. Harry's hard-on, amazingly enough, had never flagged the entire time McGonagall had spent with them. Neither, evidently, had Malfoy's. "Can't have it, you know. Won't have it. You are mine, Potter; don't forget now. The more who know of it, the better."

"Oh!" Harry snorted, rolling his eyeballs in temper. "Oh, very well, if that's all you have to say about it, git-**ack! Gi-mphff!**"
"You know what's really, really gotten my goat, Malfoy?" Harry demanded. Their bedroom was a peaceful, dim refuge in the vastness of the Manor. He preferred it, along with the third best Floo Parlour, out of all of the many. "What irks me beyond anything?"

"No, Potter," Malfoy replied patiently, stroking Harry's tumbled hair. "I don't. Enlighten me, do."

Oh, the git was happy enough now, Harry knew, having been thoroughly sucked off. Not that the randy arse wouldn't be ready again for more of the same in minutes - and Harry, too - and not they weren't venturing a little farther down the garden path each time. For instance, he'd fetched up with a heretofore unsuspected gift for swallowing semen. Deep throating: just the thing for his Wizarding CV!

Hah!

Placing that unexpected talent firmly aside, Harry grumbled on, his ire-filled gaze fixed steadily on the canopy. So incendiary it was, it was a wonder the charmed cloth didn't catch fire. Instead the embroidered silvery dragons romped with their tiny golden snitches, playfully, entirely ignorant of his snit.

…Not all of Malfoy was starchy, no.

"It's the utter chaos of it," Harry announced to the canopy. "The complete lack of common sense! I mean, who would ever, ever think to hitch you and I together, Malfoy? I don't understand it, this Veela imperative what'sit that's driving this bus. It's not - not logical!"

"Oh, I wouldn't say that, Potter," Malfoy, bestirring himself, rolled over on his side and Harry felt the grey gaze roaming up and down his prone length. "No, I wouldn't say that. I've not many objections left, you know. You're rather...fine, if one is knowledgeable enough to realize the value of diamonds in the rough. Which, of course, I am."

"Well, that's you, Malfoy, and we all know it's not within your control," Harry retorted tersely, ignoring the quasi-compliment as so much chaff. 'Course, Malfoy gave him any number of those; little off-handed remarks that were actually small strokes to Harry's ego. So many accumulating here and therein, they piled themselves about the edges of his mind like ramparts, always bolstering him up when he was down…or simply flagging…or frustrated, as in this moment.

Harry grinned at the canopy, crinkling his nose over the fancy.

Some bits of Malfoy were actually quite thoughtful...and kind. Who knew?

"...Potter?"

"Anyway, as I was saying, it just buggers the sodding stuffing out of me - drives me mental to even attempt to wrap my brain 'round this mess. Makes no sense, no matter how I look at it."

Malfoy grunted, indicating he was listening. Cool fingertips curled meanwhile 'round the edges of the nearer of Harry's ears, smoothing back stray hairs, tucking them away neatly. Harry jostled his head on his pillow, allowing Malfoy the indulgence.
The curls—damp with perspiration—sprung back again, with a vengeance.

"First off, I don't see why it wouldn't have you choose someone you were at least compatible with from the very start: a Slytherin, a Pureblood, an Unspeakable, maybe. Someone like that. Why me, when it took bloody months of learned arses with doctoral degrees haranguing us to talk to one another frankly before we could really even begin to manage a civil conversation more than five minutes long - and Poppy, too, bustling about, helping out - and not that I wasn't concerned over you, of course, during the war, because of course I was. Had been, really."

"You're babbling, Potter," Malfoy almost-smiled at Harry. "Take a breath."

" - stuck here with Voldemort and then at Hogwarts with those horrid Carrows," Harry waved his hands, intent on spilling all his pent-up thoughts on this particular puzzle of Veeladom. "I mean. I'm damned glad I went back for you that time, don't get me wrong, but - "

Malfoy frowned, resettling Harry's hair yet again.

"Speaking of, Potter, why ever would you bother? Why did you?"

Harry grimaced; his scalp tingled. "Twat. Duh! You didn't deserve to die, Malfoy. You know that as well as I do, so don't be so fucking coy. Being a git-brain does not a murderer make. Why'd you think I went back for you? Shits-and-giggles? Feed my inner Hero? It was damned close, that!"

"Yes, it was, and do calm yourself, Potter." Malfoy petted him right atop where Harry's part would've been, if he owned one. "I just thought - I mean, it was strange, later, when I thought about it. That's all."

"Nothing strange about it, Malfoy."

"Well, needless to say, I'm glad you did. Makes me not mind this so much, the need for you. At least I know you're an honourable man and not just some lucky sod with a prophecy."

"Lucky? Me?" scoffed Harry, and twisted 'round to face Malfoy fully. The light from the brilliantly starry, Snitchy canopy allowed him just enough glow to see the faintly humorous quirk settled on Malfoy's expressive mouth. "Right, tell me another one. Hardly lucky."

Malfoy's fair brows twitched closer together; his foiled hair-tucking fingertips found the lean line of Harry's jawbone.

"Mmm, maybe not, when you weigh up everything that has happened to you, Potter. And this here - " Malfoy waved his other hand at the two of them, legs already shifting to entwine, groins level and more than willing to be pressed together in search of heady friction. "This is not what I'd necessarily term 'lucky' for you, though there are some undeniably excellent benefits."

"Hmm, you're fishing, Malfoy," Harry chuckled. "I'm sorting you out, git. You want a compliment from me and you always use the same methods, unimaginative wanker: push, prod, think you can lead me about by the nose and then attack me without warning, when I'm least expecting it. And tease - you're a great teasing prick, you are. I abhor being teased. Did you know?"

"I'm not, Potter," Malfoy was smiling openly now, conjured starlight gilding all his shining handsome glory. "I'm merely easing your way. You'd only end up where I want you, anyway - it's the Veela. This simply gives you the illusion of choice."

"Gitface."
Malfoy's wings unfurled, sending an answering trill straight up Harry's spine—like a lightning rod it was.

"Thank you."

He shifted closer, dislodging the fingertips so they swept across his barely parted lips.

"Any time, mate."

"Then...how 'bout now, Potter? Now is...convenient."

"Mmm."
"Whatever do you mean, Potter, 'you're not walking in there blind'? We're hardly...innocent, either of us."

"Malfoy, look at it this way, alright? One way or another, it's me with my arse in the air and you who's piloting the blasted broomstick. I'm not allowing that to happen for the very first time before Pomfrey, McGonagall and your so-esteemed Leader - I'm not! We'll have a trial run first or I'm not cooperating, not at all! Call the whole thing off - I could care less!"

"Potter! It's a Bond, Potter - a sacred rite between Veela and mate, and it must be witnessed and attested to! We're not fucking this up now because you're having a fit of the vapors!"

Harry huffed and gained his feet in a rush. Three quick strides took him around the breakfast table and a wriggle-and-shove had him astride Malfoy's serviette-covered thighs. The git was ghostly pale, with raccoon circles and fine lines of fatigue on his forehead and 'round that narrow-lipped mouth - ten times worse than he'd looked the day before - and this after night upon night of pleasurable satisfaction and day upon day of late morning lie-ins and lazy, aimless hours.

In fact, they'd done little other than eat, sleep, nap and chat of random matters, domestic details mostly, all the while tactfully exploring each other's bodies, between the odd brief bout of fending off Floo calls and well-wishing Owls from Pomfrey, the Ministry and their assorted mates and acquaintances. It was basically barmy, Harry had decided, to wait another pointless moment. They were all but arrived, already. May as well be done with it.

...And Malfoy looked like hammered shit. Pitiful, really. Harry snorted at him softly and went in for the next strike. Someone had to be sensible and tackle the fucking hump. That would be him, evidently, as the mulish tit he was sitting on wasn't up for it.

"It's eating you right up, Malfoy, the Veela is. I can see it; I'm not a fool. And me, well, I'm understandably nervous, alright? This is not where I thought I'd fetch up when I've considered marriage, Malfoy! Not at all - not one fucking little iota! But it is what it is, yeah? So, you'll be listening to me, for once, dickweed. I want this over with. Finished, ended, wrapped up. I want it a done deal, signed and sealed, before we ever even stick our noses through that Infirmary door. If you had the sense the Great Mother handed out to sodding clams, Malfoy, you'd shut your trap and go along with it!"

Malfoy winced, his hands held well away from Harry's body. He still clutched his fork in one, which left him seeming oddly helpless before Harry's beetle-browed glare. Trapped before a plate of eggs and rashers he feebly shook his lank pelt of Malfoy-hued hair in negation, which only flopped dully across his frowning forehead, and breathed out a long-suffering sigh. A 'don't touch me!' sigh. Harry was visited with the distinct impression Malfoy would've sooner donned one of the many random suits of medieval armour that dotted the mansion if he could but lever Harry off his lap long enough to do so, than face down his would-be chosen one in a strop. Very off-putting, that 'anywhere but here' attitude... except Harry also knew his Veela was fucking gagging over the absolute, dire necessity of having him here, here, here, always within reaching distance. Sometimes literally, too, the gagging, when his shrunken stomach rebelled.

"Potter...oh, Potter, don't do this," the stubborn tosser replied, all of him dreadfully still. Oh, so politely, as if it weren't the most hugely momentous event that had ever happened to either of...
them, this. Worse than Voldemort had ever been. They'd only confronted a painful death with him; this was Life they had to deal with and that was far more a sticky wicket than putting down a mad dog. Life was complex; it was all about exactly what they'd been learning these last weeks...and learning well. "Not now, please," Malfoy requested wearily. "It's but a few more days and then we're home free; the Bond will be complete and we can resume our normal lives, both of us. This is difficult enough already without you galloping roughshod over the order of events - shit, Potter, I can't even begin to think when you move like that - stop it at once!"

Harry smirked at the stern, miserable face tilted up toward him. He ignored the flying fork, too.

"You're hard, Malfoy," he taunted. "So very hard. For me. Always are and have been for weeks now and always will be in the future; don't you deny it. So...er. Do something about it, then. Follow through on that giant boner you're toting about - I dare you. No...I double-dare you, git."

"Infantile, Potter."

Malfoy closed his eyelids wearily and firmly turned his pointy chin away, facing obdurately in the direction of the French doors leading out to the endless wraparound marble balcony, as if he couldn't even bear to meet Harry's gaze any longer, much less bother himself over a schoolboy dare. The thin spring sunlight did little to lend him the colour of life; he seemed defeated. Exhausted and limp, when Harry knew for fact Malfoy should be far from sickly, by rights. He'd everything a Veela required, the ungrateful prat did, right here in his arms...except the one thing. The one thing he truly couldn't live without.

"No - no, Potter," the response came soft, calm, and quiet, unruffled on the surface. A level grey sea under a heavy layer of cloud. "We cannot risk anything of the sort. They'll know if we do, sod it. Certainly Madame D'Argent will; she can sniff out irregularity for miles, I shouldn't wonder. So, no. Please return to your seat. Your breakfast is cooling."

Harry's temper wasn't, but he tucked it away discreetly for the moment, choosing honey over vinegar.

"Malfoy..." he murmured softly, stoking the git's pliant hair back from a lined forehead. "Malfoy." His fingers coaxed wordlessly, but Malfoy was always the determined prat. He kept his eyes fixed on the green sweep of lawn and tacitly refused to turn his stoic gaze back to meet Harry's. "Malfoy, be reasonable. Please."

Thin lips tightened even as Harry brushed a fingertip over them. The pale throat flexed once beneath the constrains of his high-buttoned shirt collar.

"I am, Potter; I am. You're the one forgetting. It'll likely bollocks up the whole Bond rite, anticipating it, and then take me right out with it. And then, my rash and heedless Potter, I'll be truly dead and gone and well out of your horridly lovely hair - or, is that what you've wanted? All along? To be shed of this?" He spread his fingers at the view, the silver cutlery, the huge, cocooning bulk that was his home. Harry's home.

"What a great sodding load of Abraxan crap!" Harry harrumphed loudly, landing the birdbrain a sharp rap on his nearly white noggin. "Arsehole! Listen to yourself, yeah? You're an old lady, Malfoy, quivering in your boots over what some prissy ancient puss preaches when it's your sodding life! Belt the fuck up, man. I want to do this! Today - now! This minute!"

Malfoy set his chin at Harry. Stuck his jaw out in a stony shelf of rejection, generally an ominous sign of his refusal to budge from a stance, ever. Harry had seen that chin an awful lot in Fifth and Sixth Year. In Ministry meetings, too, when the Aurors and the Unspeakables were required to
coordinate and he and Malfoy had to make it all work as it was supposed to. That chin was a bloody menace, all by itself.

"The Leader's name is Priscilla D'Argent, Potter, and I wouldn't refer to her as either 'prissy' nor 'puss'. Not if you know what's good for you," he replied calmly enough, though his eyes flashed a faint spark of his ancient boyhood fire. Malfoy straightened his shoulders and his spine, two more clues that spoke of his resistance to Harry's view. "She'd gut you in a blink if she believed you were insubordinate, Potter. As to your…suggestion, we've an established, safe, workable procedure to follow; we shall endeavour to do so. Now, get off me and finish your breakfast." He shifted uneasily, as if to unbalance Harry's unrelenting self; long fingers curled down upon themselves loosely—and the fork wavered. "We'll agree to say no more about this, shall we? It's not too long to wait now and we shall do it properly, as per schedule. No more arguments, if you please. Go on."

"No!

Harry wasn't budging, either; not a bit of it. He ground his narrow pelvis bones down like the very dickens and rocked the firm cheeks of his arse across the corded tendons of Malfoy's thighs, enough to feel the quickly answering swell swiftly rise beneath him. Malfoy wanted him and he? He was horny as goats; he was frustrated as sin, and he'd be double-damned if Malfoy would be allowed to fade away before his very eyes when there was something he could be doing about it. No; there was absolutely no bloody way he'd be put off his chosen course, not now.

"No, and no, Malfoy," he repeated firmly, with a calm intensity that had Malfoy's grey orbs pinned to his instantly - and narrowed in high suspicion. "Read my lips, git. I'm not allowing you to go on being stupidly noble over what's essentially a great lot of silly, useless paperwork and I'm not waiting about! You're in danger! What's more, this is killing me, the bloody waiting, waiting, waiting, and you look like death warmed over, numbnuts, no matter how often I get you off. Hands and mouth don't cut the mustard, alright? Not any more. So, no. Positively no more mucking around, cooling our heels for an arbitrary date on a made-up calendar. We're doing this; we're doing this today - right now! And don't think we aren't, either, because I'm starting it, you tosser. Look, I'm taking off my shirt now, Malfoy. See?"

"Potter, listen," Malfoy winced visibly, sighing another of those very heavy sighs of his—the irksome ones—and finally laid down his bloody fork, fumbling it a tad. He'd been clinging to it the whole time and Harry was amazed he'd not dropped it.

In fact, how the silly stubborn nit could converse with his cock that swollen, Harry couldn't fathom - except he was doing the exact same thing himself, and only because talking his reluctant Veela 'round to see bloody reason was that important to him.

"Hear me out to the very end, for once in your mad dash, Potter. It really is a sacred Bond, alright? There is an aspect of the rites we perform and the ancient spells we incant which require a listening, viewing audience to be fully effective. If there is no one to watch us, no one present to hear, then it's all null and void, essentially. It's just shagging, Potter - not a true Veela Bond. Now...return to your seat, please, like a civilized human being. I'm not taking your arse today. Absolutely not."

"Fine. Whatever. You talk, Malfoy; I'll strip. There goes my shirt," Harry fingers were busily ruthless; he tossed his brand new designer shirt offsides without even glancing at it. Kept his eyes on the prat and made sure to tantalize him, rubbing cocks through cloth. "Trousers next up. Here's a thought for you, peckerhead: we'll have Ron and Hermione come. They can be our witnesses, Malfoy! Because, you see, I'm not allowing you to say 'no' to me. Not an option. You'll fucking kick the bucket on me before Friday ever arrives; I'll be a widower before I'm even married! Look
"I'll kill them, Potter," Malfoy informed him stonily, blanching. His hands had returned to hovering just off Harry's upper arms, curved into loose fists, but they didn't alight as Harry willed them to. "The moment they step through your Floo. They aren't in my Nest. They aren't Veela. So, no, I'd rather not, thanks all the same. I'm not fancying their blood on my hands - not at this late date."

Harry paused in his increasingly frantic efforts to remove his shorts and trousers unaided and without shifting from where he perched, half-crouched an inch or so above Malfoy's close-together kneecaps and all his muscles aquiver with mounting urgency.

"Oh - oh, fuck, Malfoy! Then haul in your frigging parents from where ever they've gone - and why in the bleeding fuck aren't they here, supporting you? They might not like the way I smell, but you - you're their son! They love you! Your mum, at least!"

Again with the slow shake of the head...and the patented long-suffering sigh, the one implying clearly Malfoy had already been there, thanks, and thought of it, but to no avail. "But Potter, that's just it. You don't smell like a Malfoy; you aren't a real Mate yet. And I'm not even a real Veela. We need the Bond consummated for that. There's no way 'round it. And do - do stop disrobing. I'm not touching you now."

Harry grunted, furious, his nostrils flaring.

The mess of rumpled cloth had been meanwhile forcibly dragged down around his knees, unzipped flies scraping skin incidentally. Harry's shoes had been toed off and he was nearly tipping off his precarious perch altogether, squirming there, what with yanking madly at the recalcitrant folds. He set his teeth and spat at Malfoy through them, entirely unimpressed.

"Oh, my god. A little help, please? And I can't believe this, Malfoy! Or you - I am begging you, here! Are you not noticing I am practically on my knees, Malfoy, begging you to take what's yours? Fuck me, you bloody nit? And you - you can't be bothered to do anything other than to blindly do as we've been told? Malfoy!"

There was a pale blur: scanning eyes, faintly threaded with reddened veins; those long, cool fingers cupping in mid-air. Harry flinched, shedding his pants as fast as he'd shed his inhibitions.

Quick hands slapped hard upon his bare hips kept Harry in place; he was naked, finally, and panting with it, but that git Malfoy didn't seem to take note. Much. Enough.

"Oh, Potter, please!" So very patient, so very set in his ways; idiot, blind wanker! "Please, don't. I can't bear—just...don't, alright? Get hold of yourself. Get your clothes back on you; go eat your eggs. Now."

Harry smothered a quick triumphant grin.

Right; so maybe he did, the fool, but was just that insulated against his own frailty. Was used to not being able to grab fast to what he had to have...or perhaps was compelled not to, as Harry was his to care for, to cherish, and Mates absolutely came first. Malfoy, the selfish nit, who, when push came to bitter shove, was a bloody, dyed-in-the-wool, Veela-soaked altruist!

Yes...clearly, without a single doubt, it was up to Harry to slice this Gordian knot of theirs in twain.

"Malfoy!" he bellowed - or mayhap it was only an emphatic wail of sheer despair - and took a few furious whacks at the unfeeling, unwavering git who sat beneath him like a sodding lump; light blows, all about his upper arms and wide shoulders. "Malfoy."
Then grasped his stubborn git about the throat when that assault had no effect and glared him straight in the bloodshot grey eyeballs, Wizard to Wizard. Man to bloody man.

"I...just...can't...can not, Malfoy...believe you! Unreal! Filthy coward! Do you even hear yourself, what you're saying? Where's your bollocks, arsehole?"

He ignored the faint choking murmur of protest that elicited, the irritated sniff, and rubbed the very tips of their noses against one another in a mocking travesty of the all-over nuzzling Malfoy had lavished upon him only an hour or so before. An hour before, he'd been happy enough, yes...except for the pang in his chest: concern. Fear. He would not lose this; he'd only just found it!

"Right, fine, you prick." Harry huffed. "Then we'll just shag, alright? We'll shag, right now, this minute, and so what if we have to do it again, later? No, no - that's it. Brilliant! We'll shag first, for practice, and then I'll know what to do and it won't hurt and you'll come to your fucking senses at last, you bleeder - "

"I'll never hurt you, Potter - never," Malfoy informed him gravely, and Harry squeezed his moist eyelids tighter. "I wouldn't."

"Idiot. I know that bit - I know. You think I don't realize? That's just - that's exactly why, damn it! Because I know. I want it to be just us, the first time! Why can't you just get a bloody clue, you stupid thick Slytherin prick? I don't want to do this before everyone and their sodding Veela - I want you, Malfoy!" Harry dragging a sobbing gulp, grinding their foreheads together.

"Just...fucking...you - all to myself."

Malfoy swallowed, teeth grinding within that chiseled jaw of his, and Harry pulled back just enough to risk a good long look at his Veela's strained features, seeking any sign of pending capitulation, any at all.

But, no. It was a tight, shuttered mask, far more agonized than the usual supernaturally handsome: all the fair, newly close-shaven skin 'round his pink, chewed-upon lips pulled thin and dead white, nearly blue, and those same lips were pressed together so closely Harry could see the red line of blood seeping watery pink where Malfoy must have bitten them again. Licked at them discreetly when Harry wasn't looking, likely; to hide it, as he routinely tucked away his palsied hands.

The grey glittered inscrutably and Harry couldn't tell if there were actually tears gathered in the corners or if the sheen was only the reflection from the distant lake, bouncing off the glass panes of the walk-through doors.

It hurt for Harry to see; it sodding hurt.

"Malfoy, please," he muttered. There was hole in his chest a mile wide. "It can't possibly damage our Bond. They'd have told us if it would. Poppy's not a dolt, Malfoy - and she knows us. She knows me. She'd realize - she'd have guessed we'd be - "

Malfoy reared his head back, fine hair flying; sat up with a jerk.

"And if you realize you don't want it, Potter? Say, halfway through." That voice could've honed the blades of sodding armies. "What then? Call the whole deal off, as you've just threatened? Bolt out on me; pack up your bags and go? Or leave me here to wait for you even longer, when I cannot wait?"

Harry slid his grasping, clawing fingers down Malfoy's long neck; found the steady plane of collarbone where it met upper arm and settled there, tight upon the joints. Shook them hard, so the
neatly trimmed tendrils of white-blond hair fluttered. He was falling into a dull grey lake, but no. That was only Malfoy's deadened eyes, staring blankly up at him.

"Malfoy, I will like it - I can pretty much guarantee I'll like it," Harry whispered, burying his nose into that sheaf of almost colourless hair, for he couldn't possibly feature looking any longer. Malfoy should never be so passive, so accepting; Harry wouldn't allow that, either. "Haven't you noticed, you great tit? I'm not exactly holding out here. I ache for you, git. I do."

It was only maybe ten seconds that sped past, but an extraordinary long time, all the same. Harry caught his tortured breath just to listen, opening up all his senses but feeling only the dampened brush of Malfoy's lashes against his cheekbone, slow and sure. Felt the cold tip of the nose accidently and then on-purpose poking into his one ear, the lime-scented skin of the shaven chin ghosted against his jaw, brushing by.

He knew the exact nanosecond Malfoy gave in. Was grateful to every drop of imperious, instinctual Veela blood flowing through Malfoy's Pureblood veins, if this was what resulted, in the end.

"Potter...Potter, you'll have to swear to me, or - I."

He'd won. It was an extremely difficult internal struggle for Harry not to burst out into huge gasps of relieved chortles and gulping chuckles; not to literally dance about where he sat, plopped atop Malfoy's straining cock. "I'll swear on whatever you like - and I don't lie, Malfoy, and I don't break promises. You know I won't leave you. You know, git."

"Gods!" A great, harsh laugh was ripped from the faintly heaving chest beneath him. It startled Harry so much, he nearly fell off. "Gods, Potter. Merlin." Malfoy blinked at him, eyelashes cobwebby fine as they listed. "There's no need - you needn't be so ready to promise me all that. I - I don't doubt you, you know."

"Malfoy?"

There was a note in the git's voice that puzzled Harry. He quirked an eyebrow, seeking. Malfoy blinked again; gaze never shifting.

But it was soft, the leaden-dull colour. Warm again, somehow, and a tiny part of Harry unclenched from foetal, just from seeing the light shining again through those windowpane eyes.

"This is still purely impossible, Potter, and you know it," Malfoy sniped. "Irresponsible and extremely risky, besides. Let it stand that I object, but..." He glanced away and back again, imperious chin swinging. "But I can hardly deny you, can I? Salazar, I can't deny you, not if you insist...if you want it so much."

"I know," Harry sighed happily, hiding his shit-eating grin. Now was not the time to go crowing over what he'd just accomplished, no. "And I do. Er...now, please, Malfoy? Before I lose my nerve?"

"You will, Potter - " Malfoy gulped over this, and firmed his ten-fingered grasp 'round Harry's waist, each digit digging in separately, and there were again the sharpened claws Harry ached to feel; pinpricks of painful, sensuous claim. "You will - "

"I will...?" Harry prompted, when his companion stalled out. "Malfoy?" Yanked away from the possessive grip just enough to focus on a haze of heated silver-ringed, cat-eyed pupils, both deep as infinite night, hot as the heart of a star, tracking his every move intently.
"You will treat me...kindly, Potter. Because this is real; for me, at least. As real as Friday's rite will ever be."

Harry smiled fully at Malfoy; an entire face-full's worth of grin, and the grey eyes widened impossibly in return. He could feel his own tension lightening up of an instant; indeed, it felt exactly like that first crack of dawn on a high summer day, inside him, and his heart surged within his chest, buoyant at last.

"I would never treat you with anything less than kindness, Malfoy," he swore gravely. "You are...dear...to me, now."

Malfoy closed his pale, smudged eyelids for one second - one tenth of a second, no more, and that span endlessly long - and then he sucked in a hard breath, spine slumping under Harry's relentless hands. There were the nobs of where wings grew; there was the starchy column that kept Harry's Veela so bloody, sodding proper.

Harry smiled at the fancy; grinned delightedly at the thrusting birth of wings, trapped still under fine cloth.

Any moment now…any moment.

"Then lead on, MacDuff, as your Muggleborn Bard directs. I'm yours to command, Potter."

Harry grinned like the bloody sun at the resigned eyes raised squarely to meet his sparkling green ones; it was that utterly brilliant, and there was a touch of sly about his lips that maybe hadn't been evident before. Victory was his, undeniably. He did, so very much, adore winning. Winning was all. And this was absolutely win-win.

"Brilliant! You won't regret a thing, Malfoy; trust me on that."
"Anh...anh...nmmn," Harry panted. He gulped between pants, throat flexing. "Ahhh—Ma—!"

Malfoy kissed him to soothe; kissed him because he'd not been able to lift his lips from Harry's person for the last little while and couldn't seem to help but keep them always pressed to Harry's skin.

"Mmph!" Harry gasped. It was good, it was brilliant; it was horrid and evil; Malfoy was a sodding bas—"Mngh!"

"Potter..."

It was slow going, excruciatingly so. Harry thought it took an age to stretch his arsehole sufficiently for Malfoy to lever his cock into it; he'd jogged a knee impatiently throughout, 'til Malfoy ceased his deliberate slip in-slip out, twist 'round motions (first one finger and then two) and had instead spent a solid few moments snogging Harry straight back into bliss, state of.

When Harry's Veela resumed the march forward toward actual shagging, with a grim-eyed determination that had his white teeth gritting and his jaw clamped so tight they actually squeaked, Harry only moaned and flopped, jerking in reaction every time Malfoy foraged a bit deeper or spread those two fingers wide and apart, in a sloppy 'V'.

They didn't speak at first; Harry beyond words and Malfoy clearly only focussed on directly applying all he'd learnt recently of Harry's likes and dislikes towards making the whole experience stunningly brilliant for his partner.

The 'stunning' bit was right on, but Harry could've told him it wouldn't matter - couldn't matter. Even if the idiot git had slammed him up against a wall and taken him by force—high, dry and nasty—Harry wasn't leaving him. Couldn't even consider leaving him. He'd grown accustomed to Malfoy in his life.

"Mmaaaaahhh, Malfoy!" Harry exclaimed suddenly, arching up with an electrified jolt, and his eyes popped wide open from their previous squinch of breathless desperation. "Oh! Oh! Malfoy!"

*That* had been exquisite!

"Do...do..." he pleaded, "...do...'gain!"

"Potter...Potter, that's it," Malfoy rewarded Harry's rubbery knees and quivering self with gnawing kisses, all down Harry's damp neck and across his sweaty, pink-streaked torso, nipples included. His expression was one of exalted but quiet triumph - and glinty possession. "Think I've found it, Potter...oh, yes, Potter!"

Harry watched through a hazy, pillowy-soft sensation (they were in Malfoy's bed; where else?) as Malfoy reared up to his knees and poured yet more almond-scented oil into the centre of his palm, warming it. The midmorning sunlight filtering through the curtain swags gilded Malfoy, highlighting especially the hair that was usually as neatly kept as it had been in their school days, though tumbled fiercely now from Harry's searching fingers; the grey eyes, dark now with slitted...
velvet pupil and straying always to Harry, as if every glance reaffirmed his continued presence at hand. He was breathing fast and rough, Malfoy was, and there was a most attractive flush across his cheekbones. His lips were berry-red from Harry's nipping and slurping at them; his shoulders and chest limned with perspiration, down even to the faint trail of platinum curls beginning just below his navel. His thighs—one could bounce a sodding sickel off them, the git! Even unto his trim ankles and long, elegantly sculpted feet, Malfoy was a treat to view; bloody beautiful and Harry knew he could be even more so.

"Wings - wings, Malfoy?" he whispered, shivering in anticipation. "Mmmm, yes - just there," when Malfoy wordlessly grasped at his cock, yanking carefully, slathering oil and more oil everywhere, "but - but - I want to see them. I want..."

"Mmm, Potter," Malfoy murmured in return, a wisp of a grin lightening his severe expression. "They'll come, don't fret. Can you - would you hold your legs for me? Wide now, Potter. I have to - I must - yes, like that, Potter. Good; like that."

Harry fumbled for his half-bent, lolling knees once more; they'd collapsed the moment Malfoy had got a hand 'round his throbbing dick. His palms were slippery-damp with sweat and saliva, too, from where Malfoy had licked and suckled every single finger, one by one. Had driven him nearly spare, just from that - and all the other that followed after that singular act of adoration was an incredible, amazing juxtaposition of discomfort and gut-wrenching pleasure. He'd mewed and moaned incoherently, twitched and jumped, and they'd not even managed to approach to the main event.

But it was maybe now?

"Are you - finally?" Now, maybe? Harry's haze was subsiding, his brain whetted sharp with anticipation. Finally, now?

Malfoy grunted.

A firm hand shoved one trembling kneecap nearly into Harry's flaring nostrils, almost bloodying them; the other had gotten hold of a spare pillow and was actively wedging it under Harry's buttocks, elevating them.

"Up a bit, Potter - yeah, like that. Good boy, good boy, Potter," the unctuous git praised feverishly, licking at dried-out lips. Harry glared furiously, not liking the oh-so-superior words one bit, though the tone was alright.

"Not - not a pet, Malfoy," he protested fretfully, squirming his uncooperative body into a more comfortable position. "Don't - don't!" and Malfoy shook his head instantly, brow wrinkled, obviously distracted. "Not—don't say!"

"No, Potter, not - like that." He was snogged again, a caressing, glancing kiss that spoke volumes. "Didn't mean that, ah. Ah? Up, now, yes. Here - are you ready?"

He'd taken hold of his own cock meanwhile, Malfoy had; rubbing it slowly and methodically along the flushed girth, spreading the headily-scented almond oil. Harry gazed at it, fascinated, a mixture of longing and fear coursing through his system. It was larger than his own by just a little, just as Malfoy had that undeniable inch or so on him and weighed in on the Infirmary scales a negligible miniscule pound more than he did. Harry was slightly built and fast with it, still with a Seeker's frame at twenty some-odd, but Malfoy was fitted out physically more like a champion swimmer, all shoulders and a tapered chest and abs that rippled smoothly, and not a single extra ounce anywhere, so that visible scads of muscles bunched and flexed sinuous under his hands when Harry
grabbed at them. Malfoy was...he was like a Greek god, Harry thought, which was so...so horribly trite, but true all the same. Or perhaps he was more the idealized statue of one, and nearly as translucent as the Italian marble the ancients favoured, his body hair limited to a fine, transparent fuzz and tufts of sweaty curls beneath his pits and massed round his pubes. Veins ran under skin, violet-blue, swelled by steel-clad tendons; every line of him was all Thoroughbred. And the trickling fall of white-gold sliding silken over his forehead as he bent over Harry: that was bloody Malfoy. That hadn't changed a whit from their time at Hogwarts.

Malfoy hadn't changed, really.

He wanted him.

"Yes...yes, please! Now, Malfoy - stop stalling...please, stop - I can't bear it."

Harry wanted all that Olympian loveliness, every sodding atom, with a furious appetite that overcame any lingering nerves. But there was so much oil slopping about Harry barely felt the first satisfying burn of entry; it trickled down his arse cheeks and he knew it was staining the sheets and couldn't care. Malfoy had stuck his pointy scarlet tongue right in Harry's arsehole a short while before he'd started with the fingers; tentatively, as if he wasn't sure Harry would like it. Harry had adored it; had so much been tickled pink by sensation that he'd shrieked like a girl and flung himself bodily at Malfoy's darting tongue, nearly coming on the spot. But that exercise had been abandoned forthwith, and all too quickly.

"No - no, wait, Potter, not yet,” Malfoy had cautioned him, petting away at Harry's arse and kissing him everywhere else but there; always kissing. "Not yet—not yet. I want you. I need you to be - I need to be inside when you come."

Harry had hummed fretfully, letting it go. Now he was here, with his knees every which way and his arse spread for Malfoy's delectation.

They were utter blithering idiots at this, Harry knew. At age twenty-four, they were both pathetically under-experienced; he, because he'd concentrated on Aurors, Aurors and only Aurors, and Malfoy because -

"I never. I mean, girls, Potter, here and there, but...and there was a bloke in a pub who gave me a handjob once, but...I never. It wasn't what I wanted. I didn't really know what I wanted, not then...now, though. Now, it's you."

That had been the most jubilant moment ever; Harry hadn't been able to stop grinning after hearing, not for ages. It had aced every gift he'd ever been given, those three words.

Gods, but he was a goner. A silly sod, done in by inferences and intimations. And he'd bloody well die if Malfoy didn't follow through!

"Alright there, Potter?" Malfoy breathed the question, shifting about as he made ready, jamming a hand under Harry's one arse cheek to tip him up to a better angle, the other holding steady on his cock as he angled his hips forward, guiding it. It slowly drove in and Harry couldn't help but wince. It was larger than it had looked even a moment before and it wasn't puny at all, even just to stare at. He'd found Malfoy's cock oddly fascinating, as he'd slowly discovered all of Draco Malfoy was precisely that way - a person who'd literally grabbed his attention and wouldn't let go. "Tell me you're alright, Potter," he demanded tetchily, impatient, his blond brows tensed together. "Say it."

…Wouldn't ever let go. Veelas didn't.
"Ummm," Harry nodded dreamily at last and inched himself treaclely-slow down the mattress, like an earthworm wriggling, so he could be a millimetre closer to all that was Malfoy. Spread his knees even wider apart and closed his eyes tight, even though he desperately wanted to see Malfoy's wings when they spread. It would be -

"Oh! Oh, glory!"

**It would be now! Oh, yes please now!**

Harry willed with all his might, and pried his recalcitrant lids up again to see it. Malfoy had eased himself completely past the tight furl of sphincter and was sliding home; jerkily, yes, but true as a longbow arrow, straight into Harry.

"Ungh!" He couldn't help it. "Nuurrr-urk! Oi!"

Inside the hazy swirl, his brain screamed: 'Invader - **invader**!' Too fast - too much - **too soon**! He cried out and Malfoy stopped just like that, stone-solid still, with some superhuman act of sheer willpower, and then crouched motionless, waiting for Harry to adjust. "Oh-arr! Mal - " Harry moaned. Why was nothing ever easy?

"Potter?" The flap of feathers nearly eclipsed his Veela's worried mutter. "Potter, are you - shall I?"

"No!" Harry burst out, rolling his head frantically across his perspired-upon pillow. "Keep - keep going, please...just...continue. Please."

"Yeah, okay," Malfoy bobbed his head and set his teeth once more. "Ohh-kaay."

His expression was the weirdest one Harry had ever seen him wear: all twisted into a black scowl of anxiety but still lit up from deep within, like a lightbulb glowing behind a tragedy mask. Even his pale eyes were literally glowing; they actually burnt quicksilver, Harry thought, and stared deeply into them for comfort, locking on as a lifeline, because - *jeez* - this hurt.

Hurt, hurt, hurt. Fucking Merlin, it hurt. It wasn't excruciating, not like a Crucio, not like the basilisk fang or the effects of Skelegrow. Not like that, but ...it claimed its own place in the arcana of painful moments studding Harry's memory. He felt like a clam and Malfoy the knife, prying him open, and Merlin it was tight and -

"Argh!" he gasped, and Malfoy - the git - instantly halted that too-slow progression once more.

"I can't!" he announced abruptly, and made as if to pull out, sagging against Harry's one folded leg as if it were the only thing keeping him upright. "No - we need to wait; I can't do this." He was blinking so fast at Harry, his lashes were but a blur. His wings had stilled; folded down tight and fast at his curved back. "We need the ritual, Potter. I'm going to fucking kill you, otherwise."

"Stupid!" Harry panted, infuriated by this soppy last-minute nervous spasm on Malfoy's part. "You won't! Get your cock forward, Malfoy - I'm waiting! Don't stop!"

"It'll tear - it's too much," Malfoy replied grimly, meeting Harry's urgent gaze with an unnatural calm. "You - you're not slicked up enough and you're—you're very tense."

"So? I'll breathe, alright? I'll just breathe through it and you push," Harry ordered. "Don't stop, not till I say so."

"No." He was treated to a Malfoy who'd gone oddly hesitant - and that wasn't a sight anyone saw often. Malfoy radiated confidence normally; so much so it was annoying. "I. Potter, I don't - I
"If you don't finish fucking me right now, Malfoy, I am going to bloody well rip your bollocks off and feed them to the nearest hippogriff!" Harry bit out. Vision red with a tide of ire, he thrust his hips forward, screwing his arsehole down upon the giant thing that invaded it. "I swear. I so swear. On my mum's grave, I swear this. And if - -"

"Oh, hush, Potter!" Malfoy scowled snippily, but he did manage get back in the game; thrust his unwilted prick just that tiny surge of 'makes-a-damned-difference' forward, enough to gain momentum, and Harry only barely chomped down on an anguished but satisfied howl. "This is a mistake and you - you're impossible, you know that? Unbelievable!"

"And you've got a broomstick up your arse, Malfoy," Harry retorted. "So? Come on, now. Show me your mettle, Malfoy. I know you have it in you - "

"Potter - Potter!" Malfoy reared way, way up, balancing on his kneecaps and carrying Harry's legs as he went. He settled himself into what must've been a better angle, because the effect was immediate. "Fine! Fucker! Lubricus maximus!"

Their groins were instantaneously awash with the sticky, gooey stuff. It was like Fang had slobbered all over him - over his bits, rather! Harry winced, disgusted, but then Malfoy went forward again - finally, the treacherous arsewipe - by what felt like several more miles of throbbing hard flesh and he gulped, instead.

"Fuck!" he choked, feeling as if his esophagus had been abruptly turned inside out. In a...in a good way. "Mer - fuck!"

And it panged, deep within him. The spongy-slippery-taut feeling aside, Malfoy's prick had come to rest against something - something nice. Something that eclipsed nice and went right on to ecstatic. A tiny nub of nerve endings; a lover's knot that did for Harry what magic had, when he'd first found it.

Cake! Harry thought, inconsequentially. Cake-cake—cake!

"Aright? Alright now, Potter?" Malfoy, for all that he was poised on the very brink of movement, had ceased again, but it felt like his dick was vibrating like mad, deep within Harry. "Potter?"

"Ah-ahhungh - oh!" Harry nodded so hard it made him dizzy and left him speechless. This was first fucking stupendous thing about being split open by a bargepole-sized dick he'd felt yet. Not that there wasn't anything excellent about having his arse invaded, because of course there was - that tongue action - oh, shit! Who cared for that now? "Mo-more!" he managed faintly. "Mo-move!"

"Potter, Potter, Potter," Malfoy chanted, and rocked his hips into the beat. Closed his eyes as if all his preoccupation with the mechanics of the process had finally been overcome by raw sensation. "Meum, tuem."

"Wh-what?" Harry demanded faintly and rolled his pelvis to help Malfoy out with the newfound rhythm. If they could but find the right one, he was certain, this would all be better, right smart. No - make that fantastic. Malfoy's wings, which had flagged for a spell, coming down from their initial triumphant furl to a semi-droopy dispirited sag down his shoulders and spine, began to flap, ever so softly. "Malfoy?"

"Say it with me, Potter," Malfoy muttered, and grasped Harry's long-neglected prick, finally, with the hand he wasn't using to prop himself up, the fingernails of which dug deep into Harry's
"Vi-vicimus et - " Another long haul back, and Harry's buttocks clenched, and then relaxed, loosening, "'Meus est! Vicimus at meus est!'" The crackle of discomfort that caused ceased abruptly when Malfoy forced forward again, literally falling into Harry's bum, his face intent, and was replaced with that pang - that toll of a bell deep within him.

"'Meum! T-t-tuem!'" Harry shrieked quietly in answer, repeating blindly, because it was even better, now. It rolled through him, the feeling: a brand-new feeling, not one he'd ever felt before.

"'Meum', Potter," Malfoy murmured softly, singsong and with those intense eyes of his at half-mast. He looked to be drugged to the gills, Harry noted, before the sloshy slide of cock claimed his every active nerve ending. "'Tuem', Potter. 'Tuem - tuem - tuem...'

"I-I'm going to - " Harry, overcome, taken by surprise, flopped bonelessly, sodden. "Going!"

Malfoy had firm grip on him and was pumping his dick in the most mesmerizing manner. His arse was being reamed out, yes, but there was that - that thing inside him, which far outweighed the lingering discomfort - and Malfoys' eyes, glittering...they were exquisite, beautiful. Full of worlds of promise. The wings were fucking beautiful, now spread high over the both of them and wafting gently. "Oh-ooh-g-going to!"

"Wait!" Malfoy ordered, and reared up even farther, so that Harry's buttocks were dragged ninety degrees from horizontal. Malfoy towered above him, an avenging angel, and thrust Harry's ankles roughly behind his head. "Wait, Potter! Say - say it! Say Amor vincit omnia - te amo Say that now, Potter - repeat after me, you wanker - we must!"

"Oh fuck, now?" Harry protested. "Now, Malfoy?"

It was just getting good, finally. He could feel his balls drawing up, and Malfoy was rolling them like a sack of marbles across his slick-wet palm, squeezing and milking. And the thrust-return motion they had going - it had settled into the most mind-blowing rhythm. All his endorphins Poppy talked of - the ones that ruled his pleasure centers - they were on overload, every time Malfoy went gouging in a little farther with that massive cock of his.

It was - it was fucking a good thing. The very last thing Harry wanted to do was incant an effing spell!

"Potter! Say it! Or I'll stop, you little git. I'll stop right this very minute and you won't come," Malfoy threatened. Harry popped his nearly closed eyes wide open at that, blearily.

Unbelievable!

"You wouldn't, Malfoy!" he gasped. That would be cruel, especially after subjecting him to torture. "Malfy!

"No - no, probably not, Potter," Malfoy flushed guiltily and dropped his arrogant chin, still palming Harry's balls, his hips-thrusting motion slowed to a syrupy crawl that had the advantage of nudging constantly into Harry's...prostate, wasn't it? What Madame said? Glorious organ, that! "But I'll go real slow, Potter, till you talk. At least - "

"Why?" Harry wanted to know. "Why now, M-Malfoy?" he whinged piteously. "Can't we do that later? I mean, I'd kind of like to come first - make this whole ordeal worthwhile!"

"Prick," Malfoy growled at him, and did stop altogether again, probably entirely from spite. "No,
"Hardly f-fucking you for shits-and-giggles, Malfoy!" Harry protested angrily. "Am I? I am sincere! I'm here, aren't I? You've got your fucking dick up my bum, don't you?"

The feathers flapped down; despondently, Harry would swear.

"Look, come on, let's just finish this - " he begged, desperate for relief. It was so - so Malfoy to want to swot up now. Now was practice – this time was all about growing used to it, this oneness. This togetherness. This them.

"Potter."

How Malfoy could manage to look so - so very staid, even with his hair all mussed up and his cheeks flushed red, with sweat coating him and wings askew, Harry couldn't fathom. He wasn't any better off himself, he was sure. His hard-won Auror composure was all to shreds-and-tatters.

He grimaced, pulling a long face, sullenly; Malfoy sent a nasty sneer right back at him, immediately.

"Potter, if this is the first time, then it counts. We're Bonding, Potter. Right here and right now. So say the words, alright? Or you'll fucking do me in – rejecting it, yeah? And then you won't have to worry about it, will you? You'll be free again, to sod the fuck off and find that 'love' you're always talking of, I suppose, and live a long, healthy, happy life, Veela-free - "

Pouty, woe-be-gone, Malfoy was, but there was a well of despondency in the depths of those eyes. Like a dark Mark, swallowing all hope from within.

"Shut up!" Harry struggled up on his elbows, uncaring if Malfoy's fingers tightened rather meaningfully round his ball sack. "Shut up! I won't, you self-absorbed prick! I want you, alright? I want to be with you, stupid git! You're mine!"

Malfoy rolled his eyes at him but Harry could feel the resurgence of the dick lodged deep within him. He was very much more relaxed now, overall, even with quick spurts of adrenaline pumping through his veins - even knowing he was being the 'girl' and taking it (with barely a murmur, which wasn't how he'd ever envisioned it before Veeladom entered his life, but who knew?) and Malfoy was staking an unalterable claim upon his arse, his future, his very life's blood - didn't matter. Didn't matter, especially if the git would just shut up and get on with it. He didn't mind it.

No, he wanted it - he wasn't lying. Wasn't taking pity; wasn't doing his job. Harry was a damned fine Auror—tiptop, ace—but no-one was that good.

"Malfoy, you stupid, blind twat." Each word a spur forward, unrelenting. "Just keep on. Finish what you've started!"

"Potter!" Malfoy growled the 'r's of it, and had his mouth open to utter more nonsense, perhaps in denial, but Harry wasn't having it. He'd been struck again by that nasty little niggle of doubt. No - not 'little'. Huge! Paramount in the scheme of things. Why, exactly, had this taken so long?

They were nearly a quarter-century gone in their years, and if what that old biddy said was true and Poppy, too, Malfoy should've claimed Harry long before this moment. What had stopped him?
"Malfoy, are you - I mean, do you even want this? Me? You, Malfoy - not your sodding Veela bits, but you?"

The grey eyes rolled again and Malfoy snorted, tossing his head, finally leaving go of Harry's 'nads. Reluctantly, Harry noted. Quite.

"My gods, Potter!" he scoffed, upper lip curling to reveal tooth. "Are you ever the half-blind git, still? Of course!"

"There's no 'of course' about it, Malfoy." Harry was stony. And stone-cold serious. "This isn't something either of us chose and I still don't even know how exactly we got here, or why we're weren't doing this long ago for that matter, but the fact is –the fact is, it's not going work if you don't want it. I want it, you prick, and not because I have to."

"No?" Malfoy went very still atop him, and his wings lifted slightly, just catching the air currents. It smelt, Harry noticed thoughtfully, delicious. The room, the bed. The man—Malfoy. Like - like nothing he'd ever smelt before...and he could only suppose that was the scent Luna spoke of, or maybe Malfoy's Allure, finally settling firmly onto his skin and working its way into bone, never to be parted. "No, Potter? Because I thought –I thought… "

"You think I'm here because I have to be here, don't you?"

"Well, yes, Potter," Malfoy twitched a brow, lifting it. But he didn't sound...nasty about it, so Harry took heart. "Of course."

Harry huffed at him, blowing his sweat-sodden fringe off his brow. His faded scar peeped out briefly and was covered again by an errant tuft.

"Well, surprise, surprise, git, 'cause I'm not. I'm here because you make me feel - things. Um, good things. Like I belong...to you. Like you - "

"Want you, Potter?" Malfoy broke in, and there was the very beginnings of a pleased grin tugging at his reddened lips. "Want you so much I would actually just as soon sod off and die without you, even I weren't a bloody damned Veela? Is that it, maybe?"

Harry flushed, dropping his gaze from Malfoy's amused one - his warm, amused one. Git was laughing inside, maybe, but...not at him. Not at Harry.

"Exactly." He dropped back down, the pillows enfolding him, and Malfoy's incredible wings went up and up; great plume-y swathes of sleek feathers, so that the early morning beams of light shone through them. They were incredibly white and pure, just as the snow was. But they were nothing compared to the expression on Malfoy's face. Nothing. "So. And don't look so puffed up over it, wanker," Harry added, out of habit. Lovely, familiar habit. Where would he be without this, anyway? "Go on, then. What're you waiting for?"

Bereft.

But...he wasn't, was he?

"Well?" Malfoy drawled, chin out and one eyebrow raised, and Harry snorted at it, the Malfoy bits of the Veela. Well...they'd not even come near the silly, soppy, goo-goo eyes stuff Hermione always rabbited on about; Harry didn't think they were likely to. No need. "You are intending on incanting the Rite, right? No...no reason not to, yeah?...Now."

"Um."
Harry grinned invitingly and wriggled his arse, easing up on his cramping spinal cord. The git's cock had slipped a bit; it was again poised on the very edge of sliding out of his hole and he didn't want that to happen. Not after all that strenuous work to have it in him; not after all this bloody effort. Besides, he liked the connection too much; he wanted more of the same.

"Maybe," he teased. "If you'll help me. I'm pants at Latin, Malfoy. You know that."

"I know that," Malfoy smiled gloriously. "Another reason you need me, Potter. Alright, then." He bent his back to it, sharp-pointy tipped fingers grasping, muscles tense as he shoved and tugged. "Hup!"

Harry's quivering legs were hoisted once more and once more Malfoy drove his hard hips forward, but this time it was much easier. The drag of bulbous tip of the cock within Harry, stretching him wider than the mouth of the Nile, it wasn't unbearable at all, nor painful - it was exhilarating. He inhaled, recalling that whole long involved passage of Latin, rehearsing it again, mentally.

It went...it went -

"Er, like this, right? 'Denique nitentem contra elabique volentem...'"3 Harry began, and Malfoy moaned just under his breath, shoving. Harry took a great breath and forged on, though his head was humming - as was his arse, where Malfoy had begun a slow steady batter against his prostate.

"'Inplicat ut serpens, quam regia sustinet ales sublimemque rapit'...that's right, Malfoy? That's right?"

"Pot-ter!"

He'd have bruises, Harry knew. Malfoy had a death grip on his hipbones, flexing his strong wrists to guide them, and he was bucking now, jerking as he yanked and surged, and panting with his mouth open. Harry only hoped he'd remember it all in proper order- because this was damned important, what they were doing - right now, this minute. That they'd both recall. Because his brain was melting.

But Malfoy didn't let him down; Malfoy wouldn't.

"'Pendens caput illa pedesque adligat'," he growled in reply and a slow thrill climbed Harry's spine. The gaze was pinning him to the mattress and he couldn't even think to move. Besides, he knew what the words meant; knew where they'd come from. Knew Malfoy meant them.

"'Ah! Ah, 'et - et cauda spatiantes implicat alas', Potter. 'Utve solent hederae longos intexere truncos, utque sub aequoribus deprensum polypus hostem continet ex omni dimissis parte flagellis!'" 4

"'Tecum vivere amem, tecum obeam libens',5 Malfoy," Harry whispered and sent a gentle questing hand up to that jaw that was tightly drawn above his. Stroked it, and put his whole, entire heart into the final words of their first Bonding:

"'Te amo...te amo...te amo'6 - ah! I'm - Fuck! Malfoy!"

And came as abruptly as Malfoy did, at the same exact instant, with the same gritted-teeth, flying-high sensation (something which never happened in real life); it was only in the old stories, except this was one, really. An old, old story, a thousand years ancient, maybe more, and a good one. One he'd go back to again and again, he was certain.
1 "'He is mine!' quoth the Naiad."
from: Ovid, *The Story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*

2 'Love conquers all.' (Common Latin phrases)

3 "So when the wrigling snake is snatcht on high
   In Eagle's claws, and hisses in the sky,
   Around the foe his twirling tail he flings,
   And twists her legs, and wriths about her wings..."
from: Ovid, *The Story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*

   *Harry and Draco recount this snippet of the story to each other throughout; it is a large part of the Binding Blessing Rite.*

4 *See Footnote #1*

5 'I want to live, and die with you.' (Horace)

6 'I love you.' (Common Latin)
Draco Malfoy strolled into Headmistress McGonagall’s office with not a care in the world, the very epitome of casual elegance and sparkling Veela good health. Harry, tagging along at his side, moved a bit more gingerly and was perhaps slightly favouring his still wobbly extremities and his pleasantly aching arse, but he was yet positively jaunty. Glad of the hand casually poised at his elbow, though.

Felt like a million Galleons, actually, though admittedly he was a bit irked at being dragged away from the comfortable confines of Malfoy's bed - his bed, too, of course - but he'd something to prove and too, there was that daring, familiar urge to flip the proverbial two fingers at authority. They'd said to wait, all these learned professionals, and to be cautious and namby-pamby. Hah! He and Malfoy had more than demonstrated that some acts required sheer naked nerve—bollocks of steel. And, also, on a softer, soppier note...being Malfoy's had to be the best thing, ever.

Harry admitted he was a bit smitten, privately. Not that arse Malfoy couldn't see it written all over him, just from looking, the daft, proud git.

"Good morning, ladies," Malfoy smiled, courteous as always. "How are you this brilliant morning? Lovely weather, isn't it?"

Harry nodded politely enough all 'round at Madame Pomfrey, the Headmistress and the ancient nosy Veela Leader, Madame D'Argent, feeling very smug. All the portrait frames, he noticed, were conspicuously empty; the details of their Rite were still top-secret, then, and likely at Madame D'Argent’s orders.

"Hi, there," he burbled, grinning as wide as any Cheshire. Knowledge was bloody power! "Everyone ready to go, then? I am."

"And a pleasant good morning to you both, Draco, Harry," Poppy Pomfrey replied, a faint blush staining her apple cheeks. "You seem to be in fine fettle, boys; all to the good, yes? You'll no doubt be in need of that energy."

McGonagall allowed them her usual curt nod and murmured something along the same lines as Pomfrey, but the Veela Leader, the dried-up old puss Harry hadn't ever quite managed to feel easy with, she favoured them both a crocodilian grin, which only grew wider and longer and more toothy as she gazed knowingly at Harry's slight list and barely repressed air of triumph.

He straightened up, automatically, standing proud and stuffing it back, his justifiable sense of pride, just as he and Malfoy had discussed earlier that morning. If nothing else, though, the old bitch certainly couldn't claim he smelt bad!

"Ahhh," she said, tilted her head at them provocatively, and was that a bloody wink? Oh! It was! Harry clamped down upon his own rather confused response with sheer willpower; couldn't let on what they'd been up to, no! No. The name of the game, Malfoy had told him, was tact. They should just gloss it over, their deviation from script. P'raps no one would notice. "Yessss," she hissed, "I see," and the white teeth seemed to multiply as she quite deliberately looked the two of them over, thoroughly, from head to heel and back again. "Hum. I knew it, Mr. Malfoy. Mr. Potter. Mmm...interesting. Can't say I didn't expect as much." Then she, too, nodded, just as Headmistress had, but it wasn't a polite 'good morning', that. More of a...challenge, perhaps? Approval? Or not?
Harry wasn't sure, but – stupid Veela with their extra-sensory perception!

He did his best to appear excessively innocent, all the same.

"Malfoy – we're both Malfoy, Ma'am," Malfoy interposed quickly enough, twigging instantly. He stepped slightly before Harry, edging him back with a subtle shove. "As of this morning's Bonding rite, naturally," he added carefully, ever the Ministry employee and therefore versed in double-talk. "It will be Malfoy, after. Naturally."

Headmistress and Pomfrey were chatting idly off to the side as Poppy flipped through her charts one last time, no doubt searching for any detail left unattended. With a sidelong sly glance at them, Madame D'Argent's horridly off-putting lip-stretch segued into an expression far more charming.

Harry blinked, perplexed. He'd never felt any particular air of Allure from the 'revered Leader'; she scared the sodding pants off him, honestly, on a good day. But now—what with that teasing look to her—she wasn't quite as bad. Maybe.

"But of course it is, boy." The Veela chuckled softly, and came up to them; entirely too close, Harry thought. She was practically sniffing them! "Both Malfoy. As it was well before this morning's Bonding rite, young man," she murmured, chiding. She bobbed her quite pointy chin at Harry, the very faint wrinkles she sported tightening across her long scarf-bedecked throat. "Don't, please, think you're fooling me, either of you. I know very well what's gone on here - ah!"

Harry flushed, as did even Malfoy, the imperturbable Unspeakable firmly fastened to his side. Madame spread her hands wide with a gracious wave. The other two ladies still paid no heed.

"But, all the same, a warm welcome to our Nation, young Harry. You've gone and had your way, then? Mates will do that - yes. It happens." She shrugged her thin shoulders, bony and rigid under the most expensive of robes. "C'est vie. My most sincere congratulations to you two, all the same. It is most gratifying to see, this new contentment you share. Nearly palpable." She waved her manicured talons at them once more, expressing what Harry hoped was actual honest-to-gods approval. He'd rather like that, actually. Be nice to be on the harridan's good side for once...if she owned one. Pomfrey he knew well, McGonigall for all her native stern demeanour, was an old friend and compatriot, well-trusted, but Madame D'Argent was a bloody severe stickler and he'd been...well, he'd been concerned on Malfoy's behalf, for all his assurances they'd be forgiven.

Harry wouldn't be a'tall pleased if the Veela cow tore strips off Malfoy. He might be forced to do something drastic about it, if pressed. Good to know it was now unlikely, that scenario.

Poppy Pomfrey, who wasn't quite close enough to have caught the Veela Healer's murmur, turned her starched-cap topped grey head their way and narrowed her eyes at them, peering. She sent an enquiring glances, both at Headmistress's bland mien and Madame D'Argent's smirk, and promptly assumed a somewhat suspicious pout. Her perpetual clipboard was held at the fore and quite, quite rigid with notated parchment reams. Stick-ums of stray coloured parchment stuck out at odd edges; Harry noted she'd a easel floating quietly at her heels, already laden with a huge pasteboard chart.

"Something amiss, gentlemen? Madame D'Argent?"

"Not at all, Poppy, dear." Madame D'Argent folded her thin vermilion painted lips into a tucked-up smile; feline, this time, in place of the reptilian one. "Nothing amiss; all is very well, indeed. In fact, I suggest we proceed with the formalities of the rite, straight away. Time is a precious commodity, is it not? We should not be standing about, frittering it away."

Poppy quirked her brows at them, looking not particularly assured.
"There is nothing to delay us then, boys? No physical abnormalities or issues? Because of course we can reschedule if need be, though we've really very little lee—"

"Oh, no, Madame Pomfrey!" Harry assured her airily, all over the utter ingénue in spades, but still really rather eager not to be found out by either of the other ladies present right off the bat. Poppy would, of course, eventually forgive them both and let bygones be bygones, as no harm had been done (Malfoy looked fucking fabulously fit, the arse; a dead-to-rights giveaway!) but Minerva McGonagall was another matter, yes, indeed. Ship-shape and letter-perfect, the Headmistress; she'd not likely appreciate their hasty anticipation of their vows, no. Well...he didn't think...she had said clearly enough she was well-versed in Veela lore and knew what newlyweds did, so...mayhap. Perhaps he was fretting over nothing, but still...best to have this out of the way. "Everything's super, except, um...could we actually get this ball rolling, as Madame D'Argent says? I'm - er, I ama little...fatigued, that's all. Run down. Haven't been sleeping soundly, lately. Though I'm sure I don't know why."

At his side (always, now) Malfoy stifled a tiny muffled snort.

Oh, he knew well enough why Harry was, er, 'fatigued', the prat! Harry fumed, feeling at once quite trenchant. He was the problem, the great big prick...and the sole cause! Who knew Veela were that...were that energetic? Merlin!

Harry was lucky he could walk at all!

"Of course everything is alright, Madame Pomfrey; we are quite well and hale," the git chimed in, smooth as all the silks that bedecked his huge bed. "Potter here is certainly healthy enough to continue, as am I. We're more than prepared to, uh, ah, perform, as it were. Every single preparation we could make is in most excellent order." Hand stationed at Harry's sore back, he allowed them all a smile of great and sanguine charm before continuing, at his most urbane. "As is to be expected, what with such excellent tutelage. We're decidedly more than eager to do this, in fact, unless, ah...there's any last minute advice to be given before we begin? Ladies?"

He glanced meaningfully round the room. Headmistress only tilted the tartan hat, lips pursed; the Veela Healer simply twinkled at them.

"Oh, no, boys," Pomfrey tapped her charts hurriedly. "No, no, I do believe we've covered it all, soup to, um, nuts...erm. Ahem! But, Draco, dear, you mustn't forget the initial preparation procedure. Most important, that part! Really amazingly crucial. I've taken the liberty of bringing along a visual aide, just for that purpose." She reached behind her blinding, giving the easel a good solid pat. "Because, remember, we always need to be safe and not-"

"'Not sorry,'" Harry finished her usual mantra right along with and did have the courtesy to blush, after; this was still a most humiliating experience, what lay before them. Malfoy blinked at their old school Healer- slowly, hypnotically, likely emitting great waves of soothing Allure in her direction. Like the Veela he was, the git. "It's alright, Poppy—really. I trust him."

"Of course not, Madame Pomfrey," Malfoy chimed in, right on queue. "We, er, shan't. Forget, that is. It'll go swimmingly; you'll see."

"Oh!" Madame D'Argent grinned that nasty grin of hers. "We will see, won't we. Poppy dear? Every gratuitous detail, I should think. For the purposes of medical science, of course."

Speaking of Allure and other Veela tricks of trade, Harry noticed there was rather a boatload of it, suddenly floating about the stern atmosphere of the Headmistress's office.
"Ahem!"

Pomfrey went red as blazes—no, as scarlet as her namesake, poor woman! Panting furiously, was she, and waving her clipboard about vigorously to cool her heated face. Obviously, a fully-fledged Veela male on the hoof was quite a bit more potent than an unMated one—or a well-respected matron-Healer, like D'Argent...but then, she wouldn't necessarily expect that, would she? Harry thought. He'd not.

...But then he was only truly susceptible to the berk at his side and that...that was different again. Very different. That wasn't Allure; that was Malfoy.

"Mmm, I see how it is," Madame D'Argent had apparently given them her specialist's canny eye and arrived at an executive decision. "I think...the sooner the better, yes?" She dipped her sharp, pointy chin abruptly and stepped well back, flapping a cursory hand. The office door slammed open with an awful bang. "No, Poppy, Minnie, I think we've conveyed everything we can to these dear young gentlemen; to delay will be harmful. Let them begin." She waved a hand tipped with scarlet claws. "At once, if you please. To the Infirmary, boys - your stage awaits you."

"Stage, Priss?" McGonagall was the one with her ears perked now, her sharp eyes squinting behind her wire-rimmed spectacles. "What 'stage'? How do you mean that? Exactly?"

"Oh...you'll see soon enough, Min." The Veela chuckled richly; she seemed to be finding much enjoyment in this, the Binding of Malfoy and Potter. Harry eyed her warily as he trotted along after his mate, wondering if she, too, was as much of a bloody tease as his blasted Veela. "Only in that they are, in fact, performing - for us, in a way. Are they not, Poppy? Minerva? It is a stage, that room, for the private screening of their Bond as they consummate it. But forgive me, do – t’is merely a flight of silly fancy from an old woman, m’dears. Nothing more. I fear I do not get about as much as I used to these days. I am sadly out of touch with the realities of modern-day romance."

"Er...right, Priss. If you say so, dear. You do know best in these matters." McGonagall seemed a bit put off by all this talk of 'stage' and 'performance', but willing enough to move on with matters. No doubt she thought of the Rite as she thought of Transfiguration—a matter of will over raw material. "Hm. Alright, Harry, Draco, I can't think of a single thing we've overlooked and there's no earthly reason to wait about, so if you'd please proceed us to the Infirmary? Everything is in readiness there. Or—so I'm told."

"Yes, yes," Pomfrey burst in to second, heartily. "It is, yes!" She waved her ever-present clipboard and seemed still a tad flustered; the faint blush was now two definite spots of red blazoned across her cheekbones. Perhaps she was feeling left out of the ages-old rapport that existed between D'Argent and McGonagall. Or perhaps she was simply impatient to have this long drawn-out procedure over and done with, just as Harry was. "We should just - just get on with it, now. Best thing, I think, is not to dawdle."

"Right you are, Madame Pomfrey," Harry grinned at her cheerily over his shoulder. "Leave it to us, alright? Nothing to worry about."

Poor dear Poppy was nervous! He could've advised her there was nothing to be nervous over; they were old hands at it now, thank Merlin! He nearly winked at her, to let her in on the not-so-secret, but fortunately Malfoy glared at him sideways, slant-eyed, scowling, and gave him a little warning pinch on the one arsecheek for good measure. No point in giving the game away now, his grey gaze communicated clearly. Pot-ter.

Harry nodded in return, discreetly. But his lurking grin was impossible to be rid of; felt like it had taken him over, that smile. He couldn't fucking wait to show off to Poppy what they'd - er.
Learned. If, ah, she could bear knowing, that was.

What a far cry from his reaction just the six weeks before, yeah?

Their specially warded private room in the Infirmary, when they arrived, all bustling along in a rush excepting Harry, a bit gimpy yet, was hardly a bower of marital celebration, not as the Weasley's Burrow would be some few weeks hence, when Molly and Arthur would host their grand after-party.

The Charmed four-poster, which resembled nothing so much as the ancient old dorm bed Harry had slept in back in Gryffindor Tower, though this one was swagged purely in sterile white linens, stood at the ready and patiently waiting. There were spick-and-span hand towels aplenty and a selection of lubes, oils and unguents placed in a kidney-shaped metal tray, all placed just-so upon the small table that stood by the Transfigured cot. Thankfully, though, Pomfrey hadn't included any of the 'toys' she'd spent one session reviewing with them. They, as Harry recalled from his notes and Malfoy's Quik Quill commentary, were normally kept reserved for the more advanced couples.

Wizarding ones, he supposed. Veelas didn't require much in the way of sexual aids. Um—he blushed so hard he felt dizzy—no! Definitely not!

Malfoy, after a scant moment of lingering over Harry's person quite closely, fingertips skating here and there-perhaps to ensure Harry truly was steady on his pins—immediately began the process of stripping down, quite methodically. Robes, shirt, loafers, belt and trousers all discarded neatly and set to floating, folded precisely. Harry followed his example, in a much more leisurely fashion.

The three women, having entered in a loose pack, stood well back to the one side of the room, in an elderly female version of a Quidditch huddle, stationed close by the locked and warded door. Pomfrey whipped out a different pair of golden-framed bi-focals after a hasty exchange with the other two and used her Healer's wand to wave a decidedly difficult to ignore placquard into existence. It was planted firmly on the obedient easel and turned so that the occupants of the four poster couldn't possibly not see it. And it was positively covered in bits and pieces of Latin verse, writ huge and neatly in her familiar copperplate script, and those phrases then festooned with several huge scarlet arrows, brilliant yellow asterisks and DayGlo-hued stars.

Headmistress hovered the closest to the doorway. She discreetly drew Madame D'Argent into a very hush-hush confab whilst their primary Healer bustled away at her task. Pomfrey, to Harry's eye, still seemed oddly alert and on edge, at least to Harry's covert eye, as her eyes continually darted over to check on Malfoy's calm striptease and Harry's languid struggles with his expensive new garb far too often to be really necessary. They were only undressing! Harry snorted to himself. Surely she trusted them to manage that much! Still, she was clearly controlling any excess personal curiosity she harboured, busying herself with finely adjusting the large chart so it could be even more easily viewed from the bed.

Perhaps the poster she fiddled with was meant for their ready reference, Harry concluded, carelessly ripping his raw silk tunic over his head and wriggling out of his shorts and Italian lightweight woollen trousers in one fell swoop. He kicked away the shiny dragonhide half-boots Malfoy had presented him yesterday and dropped his clothes in an untidy heap.

…That is…in the unlikely event he and Malfoy should somehow forget what went where!

Not bloody likely, what? Oh, no!

She glanced their way yet again when she was finishing up her last-minute surge of fussing,
waggling her brows at them and clearly assessing their overall state and condition. He was down to just his socks by then and Malfoy past that stage and at full starkers. The Headmistress naturally chose just that particular embarrassing moment to stride forward and pull up before them, addressing he and Malfoy on the confidential QT, as it were, though she kindly kept her eyes affixed to the level of their ankles. At least, that's where it seemed she was gazing so intently, bless her. Harry sincerely hoped it was no higher.

"Ahem. I find you don't really require me present, boys, not for this bit, so I'll only wish you the best of luck and take myself out of the way. I'll be just outside the door, of course, waiting for the all clear, since class is, naturally enough, in session. We wouldn't want some unknowing Firstie blundering in, now would we?" Bemused, Harry shook his head slowly at her, frowning. No, that wouldn't be exactly smart! "I thought not."

"Right, then. Champagne in my office for afters, don't forget, and a cold collation, should you be peckish. Oh, and I do believe both Severus and Albus's portraits would like the favour of a few words with you two, Harry, Draco. Afterwards, of course. To wish you well and all that. They are most...sincerely...pleased. Really. So I have been told—er, Albus, especially."

"Ummm..." Harry blushed, nodding. "M'kay." Malfoy raised his arching eyebrows at her, leveling a stare.

"How...thoughtful."

She, in turn, quirked her narrow lips wryly at the collection of toes, socked and not, wriggling impatiently on the chill stone flooring and leant just a hint closer to them both, though the next was apparently directed at Harry, alone.

"Um, ah. Potter. Don't cock it up, alright? Poor Poppy is fretting you'll, er, refuse the fence. In a manner of speaking. Alright, Harry?"

"Yes, ma'am," Harry agreed willingly enough. "But no fear. I won't." He grinned at her, unable to keep the excitement bubbling up in his veins contained. Cleared his throat, because he had always rather had a soft spot for her and she, at least, had the good sense to leave them alone. "Wouldn't dream of it, Minerva." He cast his eyes down as Malfoy (right at his elbow, always) twitched suddenly. He could feel the git's silent laughter. "Erm, it's okay, really and...and thanks for - well, thanks for everything, Professor. Being here—and letting us, in private. All that. You, ah...you do know, right?"

The fabled McGonagall twinkle - as rare as hen's teeth, but much nicer - was most definitely in residence. She knew. She knew very well indeed what they'd gone ahead and done, just as much as did the bloody hawk-eyed Veela Leader. Evidently, the only one still floundering about in the dark was their poor, dear Healer Poppy Pomfrey, who currently had her head buried deep in her copious case notes...and was wearing very pink cheeks indeed for a medical professional.

"Of course I know, Harry. Ever the impetuous rascallion, you are. I've learnt to expect it...oh, and Draco, dear, I trust you will, er?" McGonagall sent a highly speaking look at the Unspeakably upright man that pipsqueak Slytherin brat had become. "Ahem," she cleared her throat in a most meaningful way. "About our Harry."

"Yes, ma'am, absolutely," Malfoy smiled kindly in return, instantly finding Harry's lax fingers and linking hands with him. There was a quiet pride and confidence in every line of him and not a scrap of the evil, pointy git of yesteryear. "You may rest easy; I swear it. My word as a Malfoy."

Harry flushed with quick pleasure; it seemed he'd been changing colour all morning, what with
first one thing and then another.

McGonagall twinkled at them again, well satisfied with the situation. "Very well, I'll leave it to you."

With a last hushed word to the other two ladies she withdrew, the door locked tight and well-warded behind her.

"Ready, boys?" Pomfrey looked up from her chart, and raised an inquiring brow. "You should begin this immediately, you know. Better to set a good, steady pace from the start, yes?"

"Absolutely," Harry replied gaily, yanking the curtains out of the way. "Count on us, ma'am!"

"More than that raft of nonsense," Malfoy muttered, "we'll go as slow as we need, Potter. Bugger the Rite's pacing, what?" He barely bit back a smarmy grin when Harry scowled disapprovingly at him. "You're sore, aren't you? We've all the time in the world, now."

Oh, but he looked every inch a superb creature, at least to Harry's admittedly biased gaze: shiny and gleaming pure as a new fall of snow, bathed bright in the white reflections that bounced off every surface of the hospital room. And…rather giddy with it, if Harry did say so himself.

"On the bed then, Potter, if you please. Spit spot."

"Right-oh," Harry agreed easily and clambered right up and over, positioning himself carefully upon the spelled mattress. Malfoy swept off Harry's forgotten socks at the very last moment, smiling at Harry's narrow feet flexing free, all ten toes spread. Those were quite sensitive digits they'd found, after exploration; he could, in fact, orgasm merely from having Malfoy's long tongue laid wet and hot between the joints, curling salaciously into the thin web of skin that connected them. The mere recollection was enough to make his dick stiffen. "Go on, then, slow top," he dared, smirking. "Let's make this bloody ritual happen for real, yeah?"

"Um-hmm." Malfoy, clearly not be rushed, took up a bottle of lube after looking the selection over thoroughly. He wafted the opened vial under Harry's nose; it was a strawberry scented concoction and somewhat thicker than the almond oil they'd made such good use of, prior. "Edible, Potter. Alright with that?"

Harry quivered. He nodded eagerly, his cock swelling between his thighs unbidden. As was Malfoy's and didn't that look just delicious? Would be even better with strawberry, no doubt!

"Just shift your arse, prat. I'm famished enough. We've skipped breakfast for this, remember?"

"Right, certainly," Malfoy glinted at him. "Can't have you passing out on me, Potter, not from malnutrition. Leave a bad impression, that. On your knees, from the rear, then? Front-facing? Or would you prefer-?"

"Lap, Malfoy," Harry was adamant. "Want to be upright. That way you can hang on to me if I go dizzy." Also, though he wasn't mentioning it, that happened to be by far his favourite position of the several they'd tried; it allowed for a degree of penetration he found quite addictive.

"Got it, Potter." Malfoy hmm'd, settling himself on the bed. "Let me just...begin with this, then. Lie back for now, will you?" Harry obliged and Malfoy bent to beginning 'this' with a will, notching a forefinger into Harry's loosened-from-recent use sphincter and wiggling it 'round with comfortable ease, as if Harry were a bloody years-long pro at this instead of supposed first-timer. Which of course he was not, not at all, but likely he would be, in short order.
A professional.

Harry smiled at the fancy whilst gasping at the intrusion, and followed that with a sigh of heady satisfaction after, rolling his eyes back in his head and relaxing in a supine sprawl. The curtains were partially undone; the room was quiet enough and he couldn't really distinguish the sounds of the elder ladies breathing and shifting about where they patiently waited. There was a far distant hum, which likely indicated the presence of many, many young people - the students, plus the venerable staff of Hogwart, naturally, beavering away at their work - and there was, as well, the light waft of a sunny breeze stirring the sheer curtains at the far window.

Birdsong and bees; a beautiful day to be Bonded, Harry concluded gleefully, to be sure. Not that he wasn't already that, he crowed silently, sinking further down into the heaped pillows, freshly starched in their cases. Thank fucking Merlin for that!

Malfoy, meanwhile, had got his regulation three fingers up Harry's hole readily enough. A last little reach-and-jab put them in blissful touch with Harry's well-used prostate.

"Oooh!" Harry flinched happily and huffed loudly. "Ah!" he exclaimed, and Malfoy twitched the corner of a lip at him, fond as anything.

"Enough?"

"More than. Mmmm, yes. Shall we?"

"Mmm-hmm. Sit up now, Potter - here, let me help - good, yes. There, I've got you."

Malfoy capably drew him forward and arranged Harry's arsecheeks across his waiting thighs, Harry helpfully clamping his upper legs 'round the narrow waist for balance. He squeezed for an instant, teasing, tightening them a tad more firmly than necessary, and grinned rather idiotically when Malfoy glared. This was so much easier to manage, now he knew what was coming. Malfoy continue to stare him down for anoth long moment, forehead dark as thunder, before giving in to a rather rueful chuckle.

"Pisspot Potter. Always the same. Stop, please - or you'll make me laugh, twit. There's the vibe, remember? Infirmary—Rite to managed. Must maintain a proper attitude. Be serious, now. Concentrate."

Harry smirked. "Just...some encouragement, Malfoy; that's all. In, now?"

"Snog a little first, yeah? For verisimilitude-naturally. We've an audience to impress, don't forget."

Malfoy was all glints and airs, completely at his arrogant ease and bloody gorgeous to gaze upon, and Harry draped his arms familiarly 'round those wide shoulders of his, leaning toward the git's waiting lips.

They'd hastily spelt all the many love bites and fingernail scratches off the both of them but a bare hour before Apparating to Hogwart's gate; he dearly hoped they'd not missed any in their hurry. Dead giveaway, those—at least the location of some-and he didn't want Pomfrey on a tear over Bonding protocol. Bad enough they were likely to hear about it from D'Argent, who - when Harry peered sideways past the half-drawn white curtains - was watching them avidly. Her thin brows were raised at a sardonic, knowing angle, as if she were a ruddy connoisseur of Veela Mating...and perhaps she was, at that. She'd moved closer to the four-poster; Pomfrey, however, had her eyes glued firmly to her medical chart and seemed to be edging decidedly in the opposite direction.

"Mmm, Potter..." Malfoy murmured in Harry's ear. "Eyes on me, please. Eyes always on me."
"Boys?" their Healer called out uncertainly, even as Harry suppressed a tiny triumphant snort. He'd not thought she'd actually dare stand over them, not really—but this was purely comical, her discreet crabways sidle. The Veela Healer, of course, might still take a few liberties with their semi-privacy...but Malfoy could deal with her, Harry hoped. No, he knew. Those wings!

"Are you...I mean to say, are you both arrived at that point so soon?" She cocked her chin, clearly trying to peer in without being obvious about it. "P-Penetration already? Shouldn't there be more...more foreplay to this? If you'll recall, we've reviewed it in detail."

"It's fine, Madame Pomfrey," Malfoy sang out, and promptly bit Harry's neck, replacing the missing love bites with a fresh one. Harry groaned, arching into it. "Really. Just - just perfect."

"Umph! Yes - all good, Madame!" his mate agreed dreamily, tilting his rumpled head back for access. "Very!"

"And...and you're positive of that? Boys? Not rushing through or anything?"

Madame Pomfrey didn't sound quite so convinced, but Malfoy had already claimed Harry's full attention; Pomfrey was the last bloody thing on his mind at the moment. Fingers slick with strawberries crushed in cream - or so the thick lotion was scented - trailed down Harry's ribs and flanks, lulling him. He flinched as they crept down his crack to dip inside, tipping his head way back in a happy loll over it, and allowed Malfoy to urge him up. A little jounce and he was balanced on his flexed knees, floating between Malfoy's guiding hands atop the springy mattress and sinking ever so slowly, like melted wax, down Malfoy's rigid spur of a stiffie. An impressive prick, too; Malfoys did nothing by mere halves!

"We've - been - practicing - intimacy - Madame!" Malfoy gasped a very long time after—or so it seemed to Harry, who'd lost track, somewhere along the way. His handsome face was screwed into some form of quasi-ecstasy as he pumped up and Harry would've given him points for coherency, had he been coherent enough to assign them. Or more so. "Religiously!"

Harry awarded his Veela points anyway, for bothering with what was happening beyond their small circle at all. Veela were awesome like that.

"Oh-gods-gods-gods..." he breathed, caught up in the slow glide of his fall and his rise, and Malfoy licked the tiny, fretful wince right off his brow. Every thrust pulled a bit at muscles and flesh already panging. It was a pain the arse, honestly—but a damned fine one. "You're so fucking big, you rotter!" he complained into Malfoy's ear, meaning none of it, not a word. He'd found he adored that Malfoy was...built on the larger side, physically. Large meant more, and more meant mind-blowing. "Nuurgh!"

The git drew back just enough to smirk back, pleased as punch, the silly goose. So easy, Malfoy, once one had a handle on what made him tick.

"Easy, Potter." There was no sign of the sharpish, prickly git currently; it was all opposite. "Take it easy...nice and slow...perfect. Merlin - you're all fire inside, Potter - so hot, all velvet. All - perfect - perfect, Potter!"

Even Unspeakables—those pattern-cards of propriety and sobriety—could evince a little enthusiasm, when it was necessary.

"Potter?"

With a grunt and a slow hiss, and grinning like a loon now and again, Harry took all that rigid
length deep inside him. Now he ground his hips down, digging his kneecaps into the mattress and huffing with effort. The bollocks nudged hot and tight alongside one another; Malfoy’s wide-spread palms clasped Harry’s clavicles, rubbing slowly.

The unimaginable, once. This—all of this. He stilled himself at last, adjusting internally, and Malfoy took a deep breath and waited patiently for his signal.

That had been the extant of it, Poppy's foreplay. Now came the real show—and Malfoy would be properly merciless, Harry knew.

"Potter—ready yet?"

He wanted that. He could give a flying fuck who knew it, too.

"Nnnn-hhnnn," Harry managed after a tiny gap of hurried 'in-nose, out-mouth' respiration, and Malfoy somehow realized that really meant he was still to hold up - give Harry another moment more to grow accustomed. They weren't so practiced at this yet that he could simply give in to the flow; there'd been those times that had been truly hair-raising, even frightening. Twinges that left him sure he'd been ripped to pieces; occasions when Malfoy drove in too damned fast or at the wrong angle and dull pain or jackknife jabs tolled like curses within Harry's insides. But they were seldom, now, and fewer still than they'd been those first hours of trial-and-error. Not every experience had been stellar—not every one had left him sodding high on life, either.

Which sort were a blur now; a bloody brilliant blur of feasting his eyes on a Malfoy well recovered. Healthy, hearty—the git from the Ministry gym, the sleek and powerful Wizard. It had been the right thing to do, Harry knew that. He'd do it again in an instant.

"Boys? Boys!"

Madame's voice intruded once again; Harry could hear her worriment mounting.

"Harry? Draco, dear? Everything all right in there? You should be in the process of readying Harry slowly, Draco; you've not gone and skipped too far ahead, have you? That would be...not advisable, dear. There's the chart right here, should you need it. Recall the earlier diagrammes, Draco - oh, do!"

"Poppy?" Madame D'Argent snapped. "Poppy, do be silent, dear. I'm trying to observe this—and you're not helping matters."

"Oh, really? Well...!"

Harry heard his old school nurse grumbling quietly over that and was hard pressed to respond for the smile that had overtaken his cheeks. Malfoy simply ignored everyone else present in the room with them, all his entire person solely concentrated upon his mate.

"Alright there, Potter?" He eased his damp palms up Harry's ribcage and barely wisped the question, nibbling little kisses down the length of Harry's throat. "Are you...? Mmm...you taste so-
"

"Mmmm," Harry hummed tentatively, still unsure. He ached a bit; he was actually in need of breakfast. "Nnnn..."

"Damn those idiot curtains!" A fretful outburst was heard. "I knew I should've have simply widened the cot and left it as it was!" Madame Pomfrey was muttering in the distance. "Can't even-Priscilla, can you see them from where you stand? Because I cannot."
Harry tuned her out completely, with a last fervent hope they really couldn't. See the details, at least, like the way he was draped all over Malfoy like a bloody barnacle.

"Most annoying," Pomfrey snorted. "Bloody irksome. However am I supposed to record this?"

"Hush, dear," Madame D'Argent replied, "shhhhh!" And there was silence in the room again, excepting the faraway noises that never ceased.

"Mmm. Uhh-hmm, I...think...so," he muttered in Malfoy's convenient ear; a Malfoy who instantly took affirmative action.

"No, really." A cabinet door slammed; the easel was jerked aside. "I can't see! And I'm supposed to be—"

"I can, Poppy," Madame D'Argent was heard to hiss as she ably positioned her very well-turned out person between Pomfrey and the fourposter. "Shush, now! Quiet! All is proceeding to plan and very nicely - oh, but Mr. Malfoy?"

"Ah?" Malfoy's pale head jerked up; his nostrils quivered, scenting. "Er - Ma'am?"

He'd his hands clamped firmly to Harry's ribs; was raising him ever so gently, and then letting him subside, just as. Harry struggled fitfully now it had finally begun, but not in protest. He wanted more, faster, and he wanted it now. But he knew, too, he shouldn't. Poppy's advice, for all its seeming inanity and ill-timing, wasn't so bad, really. Better 'safe', really.

Harry wasn't sorry, though. That he was not!

"The first incantation of Binding would be quite appropriate now, Mr. Malfoy. You know the drill, surely."

"Oh...um. Potter, remember that?" Malfoy, blinking himself, jigged Harry into abrupt awareness. "We went over it, just yesterday."

"Huh? What? Now, Malfoy?" Harry scowled. The Rite was old hat—how many times now had he said it, 'Te amo'? "But, I'm - I'm –I'm just now—"

"Yes, now! Start it, Potter, will you? And are you...ready, yet? Need a moment more?"

"Mmm...no. It's alright, I think. Go faster...but go slow. At first."

"Uh-huh," Malfoy pulled a face at him. "You prat; that makes perfect sense. The spell, Potter?"

"Right, ah...'vicimus et meus est' - "[3]

"'Vicimus et meus est',' Malfoy echoed, and thrust up, his eyes closed.

The sterile white swirled away into colour. The curtains flapped wildly at the window and a rush resounded.

"Ahh!" Harry heard the Veela Leader's satisfied exclamation, but only barely. He heard Malfoy's voice, first and foremost, always in his heart.

"Denique nitentem contra elabique volentem'," Malfoy moaned, gulped for air and going on in a gasp, "'implicat ut serpens, quam regia sustinet ales sublimemque rapit'...Pot-ter!"

Harry rolled up and back, dancing to the force within, and kept to his beat only by the thud of his
thighs against Malfoy's.

"Pendens caput illa pedesque adligat et cauda spatiantes implicat alas; utve solent hederae longos intexere trunctos, utque sub aequoribus deprensum polypus hostem continet ex omni dimissis parte flagellis!" [4]

"I am yours, you know," he added, with absolutely no hesitation whatsoever; Harry had no doubts of his Veela.

"I know."

"The Second, boys - quickly now!" Madame D'Argent urged, an eagle eye fixed full upon them. She raised her hands high and they curled like claws before her—just like the eagle's, from which a poor, unwary serpent might easily dangle, caught. Pomfrey gasped, staggering backwards, and went ghastly pale, but no one noticed.

A great wave of something sweetly odoured and very powerful indeed boomed silently about the small Infirmary room. The very air particles glistened with it.

"...Cras amet qui nunquam amavit; quique amavit, cras amet,"[5] Malfoy muttered, and Harry's throat tingled.

Here were the wings he craved, and so lovely before him. About him. They wrapped him up in care and concern, trembling and rustling like leaves of aspen.

Malfoy's cock took him up and up, drawing every last ounce of he-that-was-only-Harry to thin edge—seared. He flew.

"'Amor vincit omnia',"[6] he moaned in response and this, he knew.

"Boys? Are you nearly through it already?" Madame Pomfrey's tone was near hysterical. "You can't be! This is not nearly enough time! You must follow the guidelines!"

"Poppy, stuff it!" Madame D'Argent hissed. "Shut your trap, dear-you're interrupting! The Third and final incantation, Draco Malfoy - Harry Potter! Use it now!"

"'Tecum vivere amem, tecum obeam libens', Potter."[7] The third lunge did the trick; Malfoy panted the syllables and never took his eyes from Harry's, not even to blink—to inhale. "'Te amo, te amo, te amo!'"[8]

"'Te amo...'" Harry groaned, and there it was, again, something indescribable. His.

When he fell, he went no further than Malfoy's tight grip allowed him, and then it was all about sweat, come and strawberries and the lingering scent of almonds, left over from the very early morning.

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[1] 'So when the wrigling snake is snatcht on high
In Eagle's claws, and hisses in the sky,
Around the foe his twirling tail he flings,
And twists her legs, and wriths about her wings...'
from: Ovid, *The Story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*  
OVIDI NASONIS METAMORPHOSEN LIBER QVARTVS (Latin), Metamorphoses (English translation)

[2] 'I want to live, and die with you.' (Horace)  
from: Latin Phrases: love

[3] "'He is mine!' quoth the NaWad."  
from: Ovid, *The Story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*

[4] "So when the wrigling snake is snatcht on high  
In Eagle's claws, and hisses in the sky,  
Around the foe his twirling tail he flings,  
And twists her legs, and wriths about her wings..."
from: Ovid, *The Story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*

[5] 'May he love tomorrow who has never loved before;  
And may he who has loved, love tomorrow as well.'  
from: Latin Phrases: love

[6] 'Love conquers all.'  
from: Latin Phrases: love

[7] 'I want to live, and die with you.' (Horace)  
from: Latin Phrases: love

[8] 'I love you.'
"Congratulations, Malfoys," the Veela Leader toasted them with a very fine vintage indeed, straight from the Malfoy cellars. She'd revived the slumping Healer Pomfrey with a terse "Ennervate, Poppy! You wimpy old bat!" and dragged her out of the Infirmary room till Harry and Malfoy were once again presentable.

They'd all gathered in Headmistress's office, after. Harry, though beyond famished, was a tad too loopy to actually nibble on the spread of delectable nosh the elves had laid out.

Malfoy, evidently, was not interested in food. Instead, he nibbled discreetly on the visible bits of Harry: ears, throat and hair in particular, whilst snorting up great huffs of sex-laced Harry-odours.

Harry thought it was most considerate of the three ladies celebrating with them not to mention that.

"Indeed. This is a most excellent and, may I say, a most fortuitous occasion, Harry and Draco," the Headmistress agreed heartily, with the air of a job well done. "Sláinte!"

She raised her flute for the third rapid flurry of Bonding Day congratulatory speeches. Slurped her bubbly mendaciously and assumed a very thoughtful air indeed—even the tartan hat seemed to be mulling. Harry—as an Auror, he possessed a finely honed sense of impending danger—shivered.

"Naturally," McGonagall went on, musing aloud, "now I shall have to be calling upon you both to come here and speak to the Sixth and Seventh Years of it. You know, to add to Poppy's reinstituted Sex Magic lectures. Best to use current examples, what? And likely Care of Creatures, too - given the Veela. Can't be slighting dear old Rubeus, can we?" She bobbed the tartan, satisfied. "Hmm. It will quite make our current assistant instructor's year, if you do come. He's a graduate student, of course, over from Flamel, and working away on his thesis. Concentrating on Pureblood anomalies."

"Anomalies?"

Malfoy was instantly appalled: he jerked up his chin from where it rested lightly against the side of Harry's one ear and went utterly rigid in stance.

"Ew! Fuck, no - I mean to say, Headmistress, you wouldn't!"

"But Draco, dear," McGonagall twinkled, "it all simply lends itself to a perfect teaching opportunity, this Bonding. Why, we've not had a Veela-Wizard event quite like this for at least fifty—"

"Oh, no!" Unspeakable Malfoy stomped his smartly turned-out heel, nearly cracking the flagstone. "Oh, no, no, no, ma'am! That is outside of enough!"

"Oh! Oh-oh, bugger!"

Harry, increasingly lightheaded and a bit wobbly all over, truthfully, gasped aloud—and then chortled helplessly till he was all but bent in half, grasping frantically at his much abused groin. Malfoy had him contained immediately, yanking Harry flush against him to provide a convenient prop.
"Steady, Potter."

"Your face - Merlin, Malfoy!" Harry fell into a second wheezy bout of the giggles. "She's not serious, git! She's joshing you!"

Pale blond eyebrows soared skyward, dubious as anything; Harry paused, mid-grin, seeing that. His dizzy head turned Headmistress's way, ever so slowly. He blinked at her.

"Er…" he said. "You are, aren't you? Minerva?"

"Really, Harry?" The Headmistress chuckled; champagne was indeed the oil of sociable events. "You think I'm not completely serious, do you? Why, only consider the benefits, do. There are so many."

"Potter!" Malfoy bridled a second time, blanching and clutching Harry tight to his taut chest. He fell back a step or three, dragging Harry right along with him. "Professor! Merlin, there's no need to – no call for— the very idea's preposterous! We're not a lesson for schoolchildren, either of you! My sodding gods!"

The headmistress grinned, all Scots guile.

Madame D'Argent went off into peals of unseemly (for her age) laughter, full, rich and far too loud in the confines of the Headmistress's office. Madame Pomfrey only shook her starched cap at them all, dazed. She was a bit pale yet, though the copious lashings of champagne seemed to be effective at taking the brittle edge off.

Harry was glad to see that, yes, but he'd bigger fish to fry. Malfoy, for one, who seemed ready to bolt at a merest pin-fall.

"No, no, of course not, Malfoy," he made haste to assure. "Er – I was only—I mean, it was funny!"

"Whaat? You find that idea amusing, Potter?"

"Now, Malfoy…” Harry decided a little marital influence was justifiable. "Malfoy, would I ever be likely to really agree to such a thing, much less come and gab to little kids the details of our—our —you know," he blushed profusely, shyly examining his toes, "um, Bond?"

"Well…” Malfoy tilted his chin at Harry—a sure sign he was feeling indulgent—but his gaze was very squinty-eyed. "I wouldn't put it past you, Potter. Let's just say that."

"Malfoy," Harry blinked up at him, well aware he looked to be very recently tumbled, as he was, in fact; equally well aware of what salubrious effect that particular look had upon his Permanent Git. "Really, really? Mmm?"

"Oh…well."

Malfoy clicked his back teeth, shrugging it off. Harry smiled up sweetly as pie and took the liberty of solicitously patting the hand groping his hip.

McGonagall watched them from her station at the Floo hearthrug, eyes bright, lips twitching, but she said not a word more about having them in to lecture a slew of teenagers on the sex acts of Veela. The Veela harridan herself, Harry noticed out of the corner of eye, had meanwhile broken out the brandy and was plying poor Poppy with it. And Poppy looked to be more than ready for a restorative lie-down, the old dear.
Much as he was, at the moment.

Malfoy shuffled a bit, firming his hold upon available Harry-bits. He pursed his lips.

"Hmm…humour, is it? Well, I s'pose in a way it is a—a laughable idea, Potter," he frowned fretfully. "But—no. And that's my last word on it."

"It's not as if I meant it, Malfoy!" Harry protested, a wheedling grin aimed at him. "Not that I was serious a'tall, git. Terrible invasion of our privacy, isn't it? Not to be considered, ever—and then there's the terms of the Veela-Wizarding Treaty of 1810 to remember. No undue publicity. Correct, Madame D'Argent?"

The elder Veela dragged her attentions from poor Pomfrey, swallowed back the very last of the unseemly giggles and narrowed her piercing eyes upon both of them, specifically zeroing in on Harry after a long blink.

"Oh—zat iz very good, 'Arry," she praised, the faint traces of accent slipping through her hastily-donned mask of stern Elderness. "You have indeed been keeping up with your required reading. Well done!" She fluttered her vermillion claws at him and practically beamed her approval. Harry was justifiably proud of himself; lessons recited correctly! "I am that proud of you. You're a fine addition to our ranks, young man."

"Er…well done, Potter," Harry's Bondmate echoed their Leader instantly, but he still seemed a tad antsy. "Good show." Harry petted his twitchy elbow joint, hoping to soothe. "And that's enough. Enough of that subject, at least." Malfoy gave him one last stink-eye and returned his stormy grey regard to McGonagall. "Now, Headmistress, as to the oath-bound sanctity of the Infirmary records kept here at Hogwarts, I know Minister Shacklebolt will be asking for official confirmation. That's all well and good, that, and expected—but, I am afraid we can't ever allow a word of what happened this morning to reach either the papers or the general pub—"

He immediately launched into a listing of the myriad reasons why the Ministry (and hoi polloi) shouldn't be privy to more than the barest bones of their Bonding, citing acts of law as far back as the 1200's.

Points to him, then. Harry smiled to himself, well pleased he'd deftly averted a fit of Malfoy temper.

He tossed back the last of his champagne with a growing sense of exasperation, though. He needed food; that, and he desperately required a nice lie-down very soon, before the post-coital exhaustion knocked him senseless (Malfoy did do terrible things to his rock-steady equilibrium). Most of all, he very much wished to return to that slumberous, satisfied state they'd been entwined in only just this morning. Alone, together.

Forty-eight hours they'd been at it, shagging away like jarvies in heat. Was it only that long? Such a short time, subjectively, and the six weeks before that had been but the blink of an eye in an eon. But there was so much more, still to come. Much to think on; much to anticipate.

"You're a pair of randy, headstrong slyboots, the two of you," Madame D'Argent had chided them earlier, albeit discreetly, whilst Pomfrey lay half-dazed over the arm of a handy visitor's armchair, back in their little room. "But it is much for the best that you are, boys. Had you waited any longer - "

"Told you so, Malfoy!" Harry sent him a triumphant look. "Right, wasn't I? I was! Admit it, git."
"Pfft! Like I'll ever!"

Madame cleared her throat loudly and tapped a toe at them, pointedly.

"Ahem. Boys. As I was saying, I would've suffered some...understandable hesitation in accepting the validity of your Bond, had you actually waited until this morning to consummate. No true Veela will ever be herded about by another's expectations; we are, above all, a very free-thinking Nation, answerable to no other. But that... small...issue has been handled quite, quite thoroughly, I think it's safe to say, and you've satisfied the Wizarding end of the bargain admirably well, simply by showing your noses here this morning. It is witnessed and it is now Law, your Bond. Thoroughly. Me, I anticipate no further difficulties in the offing...do you, Draco? Harry? Either of you? You Wizards are not always as you seem, of course. Complicates matters."

"None, Madame, no," Malfoy stated firmly. He squared his bared shoulders, pink with the trails of Harry's stubby nails. "None, whatsoever. Right, Potter?"

"Right, Malfoy," Harry grinned like a happy crocodile, despite his achy arsehole. "All good. Tip-top."

The Veela Leader clapped her hands, softly. She was not so starchy, now that Harry smelt distinctly of Malfoy. Indeed, most everything in the room smelt of Malfoy! Poor, poor Poppy!

"Then I can only wish the two of you the very best of Bonded lives and a most delightful honeymoon to come, Misters Malfoy," she smiled. "Oh - one more item, which I'll address after you're presentable again. Do not take your leave without that, Malfoys. It's of importance."

…'of importance'.

"Malfoy," he nudged his Veela's ribcage impatiently. "Come on. Leave off Minerva—she'll never allow anyone access to our records and you know it. Now, we need to talk to her—" a quick slant of eyebrows indicated which 'her' he meant, "before we leave."

"Bother," Malfoy huffed, but he came along after Harry's shuffle, only shooting Headmistress one last warning glare before fetching up before D'Argent. "Very well, Potter. As you will."

Harry fidgeted. The Veela Leader was clearly still very much amused by them, apparently. It bugged him.

"Er. Yes? You wanted to say something to us, Ma'am?"

"Ah!" Her features settled into lines of quick understanding. "Yes. This is a most critical advisement, Malfoys. Do not be a stranger to us Veela when it comes to your future family planning, boys. Consult the Nation first, if you will. I know Poppy has some...interesting...theories on that front—far too many—but we've an extensive medical Library to our credit and I myself have bred and borne many a healthy child. And midwived many more."

"Oh?" Malfoy was taken aback; his raised eyebrows practically shouted it. "Does she, now? Theories, you say? And, er, you, too? Er. Super. Er...Potter?" He gave a Harry a little shake, though what he meant by it, Harry wasn't certain. "Something to say?"

"Bridge that chasm when we come to it, thanks ever so," Harry replied hastily, all his nape hairs leaping to the 'danger, danger!' position for the umpteenth time in one excruciatingly lengthy morning. Family planning! What a laugh! That is to say, all his remnants of bodily fur—thanks to those Muggle ape ancestor instincts—was standing straight up and damnably prickly with it. He shuddered, goosepimply all over and showing it, too, more's the pity. "In fact, erm—ah!"
"Potter, just tell her 'thank you',' Malfoy murmured. "And don't fret over it now, git. Now's not the time." The clipped syllables were only for Harry's hearing.

He blushed, his jaw working madly as the phrase 'future family planning' truly sunk in.

"How would it be if—if—let's say we'll call you, Madame." Merlin, family planning! "First, if, ah, ah—if ever—rather than you, or—not Poppy, obviously. Not Veela, right? Wouldn't know enough about it, I s'pose…"

"Potter, spit it out, do." Malfoy advised dryly. "This is painful to listen to."

"Right!" Harry jumped, skin heated to parboiled pink. He twitched. "I mean." Here was a bloody Bludger, right out of left field! There was something about it in his notes…right? Gods, that was weeks ago—he could barely recall how it had been then. "Right, um. That is, ma'am, whenever we manage to come to that point—the point of…of even—"

He'd been so blithe, back at that horrid café, asking after taxes and schooling. He'd not known the half of it, not then.

Harry halted completely, lips parted, croaking incoherently. His mouth just couldn't seem to wrap itself easily 'round the word 'pregnant'. Nor 'expecting', nor 'up the duff'—nor really any phrase indicating the creation and later arrival into the world smaller, blood-related persons directly incubated inside either his or Malfoy's actual bodies. It boggled the mind, the very idea.

"Even so!"

"…Even so?" Malfoy prompted him patiently. "Potter?"

"Ah!" Harry gave it up as bad job, altogether. "Yes, well!" He flung out his hands, flapping them inarticulately, expressing…something polite, he hoped, along the lines of a suitable 'thank you'. "Which I'm sure won't be for a very long time yet!" Shifting a half-step sideways, he grasped his Veela's arm firmly, giving it a little shake. "Will it, Malfoy? No! Didn't think so! Now, um...shall we?" he jerked his chin toward the doorway meaningfully, waggling his brows and furiously blinking in marital Morse code like there was no sodding tomorrow. "Now, please? I'm - I really could use —just now- "

"Breakfast, Potter—and bed. Of course."

Malfoy didn't hesitate, his word law; Harry was quite sure he knew exactly what Harry needed next up. And the git would move heaven and earth to deliver, as always.

The soft rend of magically altered fabric rustled at Malfoy's back; Harry glimpsed the tips of wings curling 'round carefully, just fluttering upon the edge of vision. He sighed, pure relief flowing fast through his veins.

"Mmmm."

"Immediately, as you wish. Come along then. We're going home." He possessed himself of Harry's arm and folded a hand over it firmly. A long arm resecured itself 'round Harry's waist, tight as Incarcerous. "Well. A good day to you, ladies. Our heartfelt thanks for this. It's been—"

"—really—"

Harry jumped in with an edgewise word as Malfoy stuck his free hand in the Floo pot.
"A useful, lively—Malfoy Manor!"

"—and informative—" Harry jittered, squirming about as the familiar green flames leapt up. He glanced at his Veela, tugging him forward. "Er. Helpful."

"Visit," Malfoy snapped at the last, his teeth well in it. "Bonding—appointment. Whatever; we're going now. Best regards, Mesdames."

Wings—wings, closing down tight about the two of them.

Malfoy bent his pale head low over Harry's uptilted one, whispering furiously, even as the green light throbbed, signaling the activation of the spell. "Do stop your ceaseless jabber, Potter—we're standing in the bloody Floo already; I've thrown the powder. Stow it, will you?"

"Bugger!" Harry snorted. "I am not 'jabbering', git—I'm being well-mannered and thanking them politely!" He scowled dark as thunder, yanking his shoulders back far enough so he could screw his nose up at Malfoy's sneery lips. "Isn't that what bloody Malfoys do? Be sodding proper?"

"Oh, Pot—"

The Headmistress's private Floo flared a final green-and-silver flash, shooting sparks. This familiar illumination was even brighter than the usual, sparkling brilliantly upon a throaty rising giggle from a rather inebriated Healer, a knowing feline glint cast ironically upon the sharp features of an esteemed Veela Leader and an equally sharp nod of 'fare-thee-well' from the current Headmistress.

"Good day to you, boys. Clear sailing."

"Happy shagging, ducks!" Pomfrey chuckled, waving them off with her clipboard. "Go at it!"

"Bonne chance, Malfoys. Au revoir."

…And, as well, the Floo light reached as far as the cold stone walls, graced with many a portrait. A painted ex-Potion Master's dry-as-dust smirk was highlighted Slytherin hue- and one much revered ex-Headmaster Albus Dumbledore's speculative oil-and-canvas chuckle came rolling faintly from gilded frame.

Those last mentioned gentlemen, mere portraits they were and not ever again the real article, had had a few choice words prepared for the post-nuptial tea all the same, but—but, the Misters Malfoy and Malfoy were well shot of Hogwarts proper, in a blink and a winking. They'd—Master and Servant, both—never even gotten the chance to wedge their two sickels in, even edgewise or perpendicular.

The fabled Veela 'nesting instinct'—which was utterly dependent upon a proper and successful Bonding, naturally—was already quite decisively installed…and well up and running. Sealed in semen, did any of them but know it.

For it was absolutely sex that steered the ship; sex that had cock pointed, bobbing and wagging like mad, ready to fire away; sex that built Nations and bore fruit after flower. Sex, the imperative. Sex, paramount.

…But it was love which called forth wings.
A/N: Oi! Hold up a mo’, please!

There’s a few people I’d like specially to mention here, in closing. First off, I’d absolutely no idea this fic would prove to be something people actually read and followed after-much less that there’d be anticipation for my postings! Blimey! I was bowled over (am still) by the very kind responses and I must truly, really, from my tip to my tail, from my stripey, furry heart, thank you. Animaven, you are as wonderful as always.

ShantiSmurf, the conversations are/will be, I’m sure, delightful.

Kittiyloveranime, foxtrot 21, greypen, Kris and Aekm14, I wish so desperately I could reach you to reply but I sadly cannot, as ff. net doesn't allow it. But thank you so very much in any case, for sticking by me. I hugs you!

Dazzlexme, dreaminGemini, nikotehfox, bookwork19065, addiena-saffir, lis.n, furious m: thanking you kindly, my dears. You’re as kind as they come to an author and this one appreciates it daily. Can’t say it enough, ever.

Xx-Pandy-Pocky-xX, ForgottenTales, AcadianProud, truelavender, Cheating Gravity and Makeupholic: you are so sweet, every one of you! I glomps you and squishes! Madly!

Atlantis51, your voice is one I always look forward to hearing in my head: thank you, my dear, for everything.

Windseeker2305 and lilz54, I have to say I look for you both when posting here and when I see those monikers on my screen, I feel as though I'm not soo00 bad at this writing gig. You're a tonic, the two of you, like spring always is. Full of lovely stuff. Never stop and…

Thank You, Everyone.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!