When It Alteration Finds

by momatu

Summary

After the war, Harry left most of the Wizarding world behind and built a new life for himself in the Channel Islands. He opened a bakery and is happy with his life. Draco is a fiction author who writes under a penname, and he's currently suffering from writer's block. His agent suggests he try writing in a new environment and rents a cottage in the Channel Islands for him.

This fic is completed.

Notes

Hi all! This fic was written for the 2012 HD Career Fest on Livejournal. Comments and constructive criticism are very much welcomed.

Thank you to the army of betas who worked to get this ready for the fest: SecretlySeverus, Cleodoxa, EvilPumkin, AryaEragonPrincessShadeslayer, AsilleNellum, and Batgirl8968, and to Rebeccaann08 for submitting such a great prompt.

Author's Notes: I invented two spells. First, Recognise Me Not. It's similar to Notice Me Not (which I don't think is canon either, just in fanfic.) Someone else may have already used a similar spell or a different spell by the same name, but if I've seen it, I don't remember it.
Recognise Me Not is very important to this story, because both Harry and Draco are living under it. Unlike Glamours, it allows a person to retain their own face and body but prevents others from recognizing them. They see the person's true features, but the spell prevents them from realizing who it is they're seeing, no matter how well they know the person. The exception is if someone knows that the witch or wizard is under the spell, they aren't affected by it and can recognize the person, similar to how a person whose been told where Grimmauld Place is by the secret keeper is able to see it and gain access. But they don't need to be told directly, like with the Fidelius charm. If someone can figure it out on their own—for example, if something the person under the spell says or does gives them away or if he has something that is recognisable as definitely belonging to him—someone can see through it. The spell only masks the person, not their mannerisms or possessions.

The other spell is Celo, which is Latin for “to hide or to conceal” and does just that. It hides whatever is behind it. It is referred to in the fic by the name Celo or just as a privacy charm/shield/etc.

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See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

WHEN IT ALTERATION FINDS

Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds. . . .

“Sorry, mister!”

Biting back the retort at the tip of his tongue, Draco managed to force a convincing smile onto his face and tossed the ball that had just landed beside him, kicking up sand all over his parchment in the process, back to the breathless little boy running up to him.

“Not to worry.”

A bright smile lit up the child's face, showing off his two missing front teeth. The boy was about five or six, Draco imagined, and had hair as blond as his own.

He watched with a sigh as the boy ran back to a group of other children and tossed the ball to a little girl in a green bathing suit, their parents keeping a watchful eye from nearby.

Last year, Draco had turned thirty. He'd once expected to be married and settled with a child or two of his own by this point in his life, but he’d had to accept that wouldn’t be in the cards. Witches weren't exactly lining up at his door begging to be the next Mrs. Malfoy. No amount of restitution, no amount of penance or contrition, would ever outweigh the ugly, faded scar on his left arm in the eyes of the Wizarding world.

Not for the first time, he wondered about the fallout that would occur if he were to begin signing his real name when responding to the piles of letters he received on a weekly basis after the release of a new book. All his admirers would turn and run, tripping over each other in their haste to put as much distance between themselves and him as possible, insisting the whole time they'd known all along that something wasn't just right about that Simon Wrentmore bloke.

Also not for the first time, Draco told himself that the few moments of pleasure he'd get out of watching the same people who'd praised him for years squirm wouldn't be worth it. He'd worked too hard to earn that praise to throw it away.

Turning his attention back to the parchment in front of him, he dusted off the sand the little boy's ball had kicked up. The bloody thing was still blank, just as all his parchments back at home and all the parchments he'd brought with him were. Draco knew if he didn't think of something to write soon, whether he started signing his real name to his fan mail or stood in the middle of Diagon Alley and shouted the truth to the whole world would be irrelevant. A writer who couldn't write was no longer a writer anyway.

Loud peals of laughter erupted from the children playing with the ball, drawing Draco's attention away from his blank parchment, and he watched them toss the ball back and forth. It was hard for him to believe he had ever been that young, had ever found such enjoyment as those children did from such a simple game.
After watching the children play a few moments longer, Draco's eyes roamed around the beach, taking in all the families and couples on holiday. As far as he could see, he was the only person who was alone, and the knowledge lowered his already depressed mood.

Giving up on the hope that, surrounded by so much activity, some stroke of inspiration would hit him, he began to pack up what little he'd brought with him and brushed the sand off his ankles. He'd never cared for the beach—the sand ended up everywhere, and no matter how carefully and faithfully he applied sunscreen charms, he always ended up pink—and he didn't know why he'd let that crazy witch talk him into this trip.

No. That wasn't true; he did know. He'd let her talk him into it because he was desperate, and if there was any chance at all that her idea of a change of scenery would help him find his muse, as she called it, he would take it. But so far, it hadn't.

Thinking up stories had never been a problem for Draco. Growing up an only child, he'd had to find ways to amuse himself, and he had, at a young age, taken to making up elaborate stories. He'd always been an avid reader, and by the time his world had imploded around him, he'd been able to create people and places in his mind and bring them to life as well as some of his favourite authors did in their works. Ideas had simply come to him.

Granted, a lot of those ideas had been complete rubbish, but some had been quite good. Good enough to write down. Good enough, even, to get published.

But now the ideas just weren't coming. Nothing he did seemed to bring them back. And that scared him; those ideas were all he had left. So, here he sat on a beach on the west side of Guernsey in the Channel Islands, watching children he didn't know toss around a rubber ball because his agent had thought a change of scenery would fix whatever had gone wrong with him.

At this point, if she had suggested that a pair of radish earrings would help, he'd have pierced his ears himself.

Parchment and quills spelled to look like Muggle notebooks and biros tucked back into his rucksack, towel and blanket shaken out and folded up, beach chair closed up and tucked under his arm, Draco began the ten-minute walk back to the cottage Luna had hired for him for the summer. *Mille Fleurs* had beautiful gardens—even by Malfoy standards. His cottage offered its own private lawn overlooking a particularly lovely valley. He'd only just arrived on the island yesterday. There would be plenty of opportunity this summer to come up with an idea.

The next morning, Draco awoke to the sound of positively dreadful, off-pitch singing and the delicious aroma of his morning coffee. He cracked his eyes open only to squeeze them shut a moment later. The sun streaming brightly in through floor-to-ceiling windows mere feet away from his bed was not something he was accustomed to seeing upon awaking. He'd been just about to reach for his wand on the small table beside his bed to close the blasted curtains when the irresistible scent of bacon joined the aroma of the coffee, and his stomach rumbled.

Reluctantly pulling himself out of bed, Draco slid his arms into his dressing gown as he exited his bedroom and was greeted by the sight of Tibby, the house-elf who'd accompanied him, levitating rashers of bacon onto a plate. Her dreadful singing cut off abruptly the moment she saw him, and she anxiously lowered her eyes to the floor, her hands twisting the fabric of the clean, floral print pillow case she wore. Even after all this time, his house-elves expected severe punishment for even the slightest infraction, and that knowledge saddened Draco. He'd long since stopped caring if his tea was spilled or the windows had streaks or the bookcases were dusty. Draco had learnt the hard way that when your only regular company in the world was one crazy witch who wore vegetables and bottle caps for jewellery, house-elves and portraits of your dead parents, you become much less
picky very quickly.

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On the other side of the island, another kitchen was filled with equally bad singing, but this time there was no one to overhear, and the singer continued, unabashedly, to belt out whatever tune entered his head.

Several bowls of dough for the different types of bread he sold were resting on the counter and were covered with damp cloths, ready to be put in the cooker as soon as the muffins came out. The cakes and biscuits that had made him so well known on the island were cooling on their wire racks, and for right now, he had a few moments to himself. The smell of his kitchen in the morning was one of his favourite things in the world, and the young man poured himself a cup of coffee just the way he liked it in the morning—black and strong. The flavoured coffees and lattes he served his customers were fine for later in the day, but in his opinion, in the morning coffee should be strong and black.

Savouring his short break, a perfectly contented Harry Potter, known on the island as Evan Jameson, unlocked the front door of his small bakery and let the morning air fill his lungs. At this time of the morning, no one was yet up and about in his quiet little alley, and these quiet few minutes always made Harry feel like he had this perfect little island paradise all to himself.

Leaning against his door jamb, Harry took in the picturesque view of the St. Peter Port harbour his hilltop location afforded—the slate and terracotta roofline below, the boats docked at the Victoria and Albert Piers, Castle Cornet in the distance. The rising sun painted the sky gold, pink and purple, the water reflecting the colours like a rippled mirror. A cruise ship could be seen sailing passed on the horizon.

Harry had worked hard to turn his little combination bakery/coffee shop/tea house—which he'd named the Holly and Feather—into a success, and he was very proud of it and happy with the life he'd built for himself. He'd left London and the majority of the Wizarding world behind for the anonymity and privacy the Muggle world offered him, both things he could never have hoped to have if he'd stayed. His friends visited him often or he visited them, and he had built a strong relationship with his godson, Teddy, who had just finished his third year at Hogwarts. Over the years he'd been in Guernsey, many of his neighbours on the island had become his friends, and although none of them had any idea of the significance of the name he'd chosen for his bakery, or that his work load was significantly reduced by the assistance of a few well-placed magical enhancements—kneading charms were just about the best charms ever created, in Harry’s opinion—he valued their friendship deeply.

There were no wizards settled permanently on the island, aside from himself, and the attention of those who visited on holiday was easily avoided by a carefully cast Recognise Me Not spell, which had become as much a part of Harry's morning routine as brushing his teeth and a shaving charm. He refused to use a glamour charm. He had left his world behind and lived under an assumed name, but Harry had insisted that when he looked in the mirror, the face he saw would be his own.

His last step in building the peaceful life he had always wanted was to send an invitation to the Dursleys to come and visit him in his new home, thus ensuring they would never set foot on the island again.

All in all, Harry thought to himself as he re-entered his kitchen, he was very content in the life he'd made. He'd be happier with it still were he not waking up alone every morning, but he didn't want someone in his life just so he wouldn't wake up alone. He'd had a few relationships with Muggles, none that had worked out in the long run for one reason or another—that reason mainly being that
he'd had to keep so much of himself from the other person—but at the moment he was single. Harry wanted someone to share his life and his bed with, but he had to find the right person. And so far, he just hadn't.

After putting the bread in the cooker, Harry set to filling the lower display racks with biscuits—the perfect height for his littlest customers to pick out all their favourites—and decorating the cakes that would fill the top shelves. This was where magic came in.

Magic, and Molly Weasley.

After leaving Auror training after the first year, Harry had drifted aimlessly. It was one thing, he’d discovered, to decide what you did not want, but it was quite another to decide what you did. It had been in Molly Weasley’s kitchen, with the woman who was the closest thing to a mother he had ever known at his side, that Harry had decided what he wanted, and she had supported him all the way.

There were days that Harry still couldn’t believe it, but the child who had been a virtual kitchen slave to his so-called family and had hated every second of it, had grown into a man who found happiness in his own kitchen.

The difference, of course, was that it was just that, his kitchen, and he could make things he liked for people he liked.

With a few handy but tricky spells, Harry created truly beautiful cakes that tasted as good as they looked. It was all in the angle of the wand, Molly had explained. “You can’t just swish and flick any old way,” she’d demonstrated. “You have to hold your wand and aim your spell just so.” It was delicate work, precise work, and it took a steady hand. “It takes patience,” she’d soothed after many, many lopsided cakes. And she had been patient with him, showing him over and over the exact wand movements, teaching him the correct intonation of the spells.

Many of his first attempts had been dismal at best. His best friend, Ron, had said that if he didn’t get it right soon, none of them would fit through the doorway for eating all of his mistakes.

But in the end, Harry had mastered the spells perfectly, and his cakes had very quickly earned him quite the reputation around town, allowing him to build a lucrative secondary business of supplying a number of local restaurants and pubs with his treats as well as occasionally catering desserts for private parties.

Once the bread was on cooling racks, Harry’s work was done until he opened in an hour, and he cut himself a few thick slices of gâche, slathered them with Guernsey butter, grabbed a few chocolate biscuits—his favourite—poured himself a fresh cup of coffee, chose a book and settled down into one of the tables near the windows offering the best view.

Those closest to Harry didn’t know which surprised them more, his choice of career or the love he’d developed for reading. That too had come about after he’d left Auror training. Just like with baking, the difference was in doing something because you wanted to versus because you were made to.

As he enjoyed his breakfast and his book, Harry wondered about the author, Simon Wrentmore. Harry had read all of his books more than once. Wrentmore was one of the authors who’d opened the door for Harry with regards to reading; he’d read the first of Wrentmore’s books here on Guernsey, where he’d come on holiday. Harry could relate to the stories the man wrote, to the characters he created.

As well-known as his books were, Wrentmore himself was a mystery. The name was a pseudonym; everyone knew that. There was a great debate as to whether the man was a wizard or a Muggle with
knowledge of the Wizarding world—he wrote of both worlds accurately, and his books were read by wizards and Muggles alike—or for that matter, whether he was actually a woman writing under a male pseudonym. Either Muggle-born, the Muggle spouse of a witch or wizard, or a Squib living in the Muggle world was what most people believed, but it was Harry's personal belief that he (or she) was a pure-blood. When Simon Wrentmore wrote of the Muggle world, his words conveyed a sense of awe that Harry personally remembered feeling when introduced to the magical world.

Another common belief was that Wrentmore was a Frenchman living in England. His main character always had a French surname, but the character himself or herself was never French.

Whoever Simon Wrentmore was, one thing was certain. He hadn't released a new book in two years. His first book had come out three years after the war, though he'd had a number of short stories and then a novelette published as a serial, chapter by chapter, in *The Quibbler* before that. Thus, once his first novel had been published, he'd already had a solid fan base built from his exposure in *The Quibbler*, and the book had sold very well. After that, a new book had been published each year, each selling better than the last. But last year had brought no new book. The months had passed one by one until the new year came, but there was still no new book nor word from the author or his agent as to when there might be.

Wrentmore's agent was actually Harry's good friend Luna Lovegood, whose father was the editor of *The Quibbler*. No one knew how she had found him or how he had found her. Luna hadn't followed her father into the publishing business; she'd become a wizarding naturalist and had already discovered and documented a number of previously unknown magical species, though not the Crumple-Horned Snorkack, much to her father's disappointment. Wrentmore appeared to be something of a special interest of hers, her one foray into publishing, and she guarded his true identity faithfully. Speaking through a representative of the publishing house, Luna continually assured his (or her) readers the man (or woman) had not set his pen (or quill) down for good but had given no explanation for the delay.

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Early one morning a week after his arrival on the island, Draco was seated with his spelled parchment and quill in a secluded spot he'd found in the extensive gardens of *Mille Fleurs*. There was a comfortable park bench overlooking a grassy area and a small pond, its surface covered with water lily pads and broken by various aquatic plants, beyond which was a cluster of tall yellow lilies. It had become a favourite spot of his.

He'd been sitting there unproductively for over an hour when his hostess, the proprietress, approached carrying garden shears and a wicker basket containing several colourful cut flowers. Upon seeing him, she called out,

“Oh, hullo, my dear. I'd no idea anyone was here. What has you sitting here all alone and so quietly?” Winking at him, she asked, “Waiting on a special someone, perhaps?”

Unless the special someone she was referring to was the protagonist of his next novel, the answer was no.

“Afraid not.”

“Just taking a quiet breather, then? Well, in that case, I'll not disturb you.”

Not wanting to appear rude, Draco hastened to reassure her. It wasn't like he was accomplishing anything anyway. “Not at all, I assure you.”
She shifted the wicker basket on her hip. “Well, then. Is this your first trip to Guernsey? How are you enjoying our little island so far?”

“I'm afraid I've not had the opportunity to see much of it yet.”

“Well, there's certainly no hurry. You're here a good long time. Be practically a local by the end of the summer, I reckon. Where have you been so far?”

“Just the beach, really.”

“Oh, one of those, what the Americans call beach bums? Well, we've certainly got some lovely beaches on Guernsey, if I do say so myself. Been to St. Peter Port yet?”

“No, not yet.”

“Well, that's a must see, without a doubt. Beautiful town, that, and loads of young people always about. Delightful little shops and restaurants, and they've got guided walking tours, they do.”

Well, Draco thought to himself, sitting around here is accomplishing nothing. Might as well go try one of those walking tours. Maybe I'll see something that will click. Often, an idea for a new story would start from something as simple as a passerby catching his eye and starting his mind to wandering and wondering. Where was that person headed? What was that person up to? What was he or she thinking? Feeling? And just like that, a new character was born and a story began to weave itself around him or her. The person he'd originally passed by in the street or caught a glimpse of in a shop or stood behind in a queue was soon completely forgotten as the image in his mind developed into someone with their own characteristics, in both personality and appearance. Someone who, until two years ago, Draco had always been able to see in his mind as clearly as he could see his own reflection in a mirror.

But those ideas had simply stopped coming, and nothing he did seemed to bring them back. Draco was, in a word, terrified. He had already lost everything else because of his family's actions during the war. Writing was all he had left. It was something he enjoyed and something he was good at, something that brought enjoyment to his readers. It was something neither Voldemort nor the Ministry had been able to strip away from him. It was something that was solely his; not even his parents had known about the stories he'd always created in his head. He'd not started writing them down on parchment until after their deaths. Through their portraits, they supported him and told him they were proud of him—the one thing he had always wanted most—but during their lifetimes, they'd had no idea. And now having to face the possibility that he may have lost the one thing that was truly and uniquely his terrified him.

The bus transportation on Guernsey was very good, and in no time at all Draco found himself in the island’s capitol wandering around and browsing through various shops. Still no ideas came to him.

On the bus, he'd tried to observe his fellow riders. Seated opposite him and two rows forward, there had been a young couple he believed he'd seen on the beach the day after his arrival. The girl was quite pretty, but it was the young man who drew his attention, and Draco had felt a moment of hope. He’d tried to imagine where a man on a bus might be going, what he might be thinking, but instead of weaving some story around the figure, all Draco's mind had come up with was that the man was going to the same place he himself was going and was probably thinking of the girl beside him and hoping he'd get laid tonight. Not a very interesting plot line.

Just as his hostess had promised, St. Peter Port was a vibrant, eclectic town of cobbled streets lined with small shops and cafés. Draco passed shops selling everything from clothing, jewellery, artwork and perfume, to Muggle gadgets that even with all the time he'd come to spend in their world, Draco
still had no idea what they did, though he knew Muggles loved them. There were plenty of bistros
and charming-looking little restaurants with their tables lining the streets, but at this time of the
afternoon—past the lunch hour but too early for tea—those tables were mostly empty.

Draco sighed. All around him people were going on about their business as oblivious to him as
though he was walking around under a Notice Me Not rather than the Recognise Me Not spell he
cast upon himself every morning. Not that he expected to run into any wizards, but he couldn't be too
careful, and Recognise Me Not was, in his opinion, much better than a glamour charm. Draco
wanted to recognise himself in a mirror; he just didn't want anyone else to recognise him in the street.
Recognise Me Not gave him exactly that. Anyone who saw him, saw him—his face, his hair, his
build—but unless they were aware he was under a Recognise Me Not spell, they simply didn't
recognise him. The only one who did know he used that spell was his agent and only friend, Luna
Lovegood.

Turning off of the High Street, Draco followed a narrow cobbled alley winding uphill. It was quieter
here; there were far fewer people walking about. It was a residential area, but this close to the
bustling High Street, there were still a number of small shops and cafés scattered around.

He continued to follow the alley as it meandered its way up hill, passing a few people here and there
—families with prams or with older children, couples walking hand-in-hand.

In front of a building a short distance away, a group of four young women of probably around
twenty stood talking, and Draco noticed that where the families and couples passed by with just a
polite nod of the head or a casual greeting, the four young women watched him as he approached,
whispering to each other and grinning. Draco knew that while he was not what he considered
handsome, he could turn women's heads with his unusually fair colouring and well-bred carriage.
He nodded hello to them as he passed. They smiled coyly, two waved, two said "hullo," but Draco did
not stop. Under other circumstances, he would have, but Draco was too preoccupied with his
inability to come up with an idea for a new book after all this time to give much thought to anything
else anymore.

A short distance further up the street, he passed a small café that caught his eye, the Holly and
Feather. Like down on the High Street, there was a scattering of tables outside to take advantage of
Guernsey’s mild climate. Only one of those tables was occupied; at it, a man sat alone with a cup of
tea, an empty plate, and a book, his feet propped up on the chair opposite. He never looked up as
Draco neared.

It was early still for tea, but Draco decided he might as well stop as not, and he silently observed the
man closer as he turned and entered the café. He was a good looking man with coal black hair and
fair skin; he appeared slightly thinner and shorter than average, but what Draco could see of the
man’s arms were nicely toned, and his shoulders were broad. Seeker’s build, Draco’s mind supplied.

The door was covered a with large poster with the words “Keep Calm and Eat Cupcakes”
emblazoned across it in large gold letters; above the words was the image of a cupcake, the icing
replaced with a crown.

There was no one inside that Draco could see, and he was just about to either turn and leave or call
out when a voice behind him said, “Bienvnus.” He stepped aside, allowing the man from outside to
step around him.

“Sorry ’bout that, wasn't paying attention. We're usually pretty slow about this time. What can I get
you?”

Now that he was inside, Draco could see that what he had initially taken for a café was actually a
bakery. The poster on the door should have been a clue, he realised. In addition to a wide variety of sweets, Draco noticed a number of specialty coffees along with several kinds of tea listed on a large chalkboard mounted on the wall behind the counter. As he stepped up to the counter and looked over all the sweets available, his mouth watered. Draco had had a sweet tooth all his life, and it was the one thing that had continued to thrive under his writer's block.

Perhaps, he thought to himself, it was his sweet tooth—drawn by all the sugary goodies—that had led him to the place.

It was then that the man placed the book he'd been reading outside on the counter, and Draco saw that it was one of his own—his last . . . most recent, actually. He did not like to think of it as his last; it felt like admitting defeat, and Draco was not ready to put down his quill.

For the obvious reason, Draco had never had any personal interaction with his readers. He wrote under a pseudonym for a reason, after all. His contact with his readers was limited strictly to letters. Direct interaction with wizards was out of the question; not even under the strongest Recognise Me Not spell he could cast would he risk it. Even with his Muggle readers, it was just too risky. Wizards knew perfectly well his books were available in the Muggle world as well and could easily attend any book signing or reading he had scheduled there.

But now he had the chance he had never had before to actually talk one-on-one to someone who had read his books, and the prospect excited him.

If only he could think of some way to start a conversation, though. With women, it was easier. He knew what they wanted; they knew what he wanted, and conversation wasn't it. Chatting up a woman in a Muggle pub for a one off was easy, but his books were like his children and discussing one with someone who for all he knew wasn't very keen on it, gave him a case of butterflies in his stomach that felt more like a herd of dragons.

As he considered which of the variety of sweets he wanted to try, Draco ordered tea and tried to think of a conversation starter that didn't sound like a pickup line.

The man behind the counter put the kettle on and asked, “Anything to go with that?”

Draco answered, “I think one of everything.”

“You're my kind of customer, mate.” As the man behind the counter laughed, Draco noticed the way the corners of his green eyes crinkled.

Selecting buttered cinnamon toast and letting his sweet tooth have full rein—he did want to get on the man's good side after all—Draco ordered several goodies, including large, divine-looking deep red strawberries cut in quarters and filled with cream.

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From behind the counter, Harry watched his customer as the man took his time looking over everything in the display case before finally ordering enough to host a small party. He was a good looking bloke, alright. Long, white-blond hair tied back at the nape of his neck and equally fair skin, tall, and although slim, the fitted shirt he wore hinted at the toned shoulders and chest beneath it. Very nice, Harry thought to himself; he always had liked long hair. No ring and no girl beside him.

But Harry also noticed the man appeared anxious, uneasy about something. A number of times his eyes glanced up at Harry before straying away to settle on the counter in front of him or back to the
sweets inside it. But soon enough, those silvery grey eyes returned to Harry every time.

*Of course he's uneasy, you dolt. He's probably straight as a wand, and you couldn't be eyeing him up any more blatantly.*

Harry had never seen this man in his bakery before, and had it not been for the fact that he was alone, he'd have assumed the man was on holiday. *Had a row with his girlfriend? That would explain the party platter of sweets. Probably stop at the florist's shop next.*

“Girl troubles?” Harry asked.

“What? Oh, no. No... No.”

*Treats for the girlfriend, then. Probably still stop at the florist's. He looks like the type who would think to bring flowers. “On holiday?”*

“I'm supposed to be working.”

Harry gestured to the tray of sweets he held in his hand, “Treating the whole office? Want these boxed up?”

“I work from home. And no, I'll eat here.”

“Mate, you have got a wicked sweet tooth. I really hope you live nearby. I could use a new customer as good as you.”

“I'm... ah... not staying in town. Say, is that any book good?”

After an initial hesitation, the words were spoken in a nervous rush completely out of place for such a random question. Harry was intrigued. He wasn't by nature a nosy person; he valued his privacy, and he allowed others theirs. But something about this man struck a chord in him. He wasn't just nervous; he was downright scared.

“Er, yeah. Yeah, it is. Very good actually. I've got all his books. I think he's brilliant.”

Before speaking, a look passed over the man's face that could truly be described as radiant. “Really? Brilliant? You think he's brilliant?”

A smile covered the man's face that made Harry's breath catch in his throat. “Er... yeah. I... A friend turned me on to him.”

“Someone recommended his books to you?”

“Er, yeah.”

“What do you like best about his books? His characters? Plot development? Locations?”

“Er, I dunno, really. I just... I've never thought about it. I reckon all that.”

“All what?”

Harry wanted to laugh but didn't. Although he was amused, he tried not to let it show because after the initial smile had lit up his whole face, his customer had turned very serious. Whoever this man was, he was so earnest in his questions you would think his world rested on Harry's answers, like Harry was some kind of make-or-break-careers book critic instead of a simple shopkeeper. “All of what you just said. Go on, have a seat. I'll bring your tea right around.”
Once the tea had steeped, Harry poured out a cup and set the pot on a dark wood tray along with two plates covered with his customer's selections. He allowed himself to watch the man as he chose a table; everything about him demonstrated nervous excitement, and once he was seated, he began to fidget, his eyes continually returning to the book Harry had been reading when he’d arrived.

Harry had become something of a student of human nature over the years, and one of his favourite parts of his job was his ability to interact with so many different people. This man interested him. There was a puzzle there that Harry wanted to solve.

Not to mention how fine his arse looked in those trousers.

As Harry took the tray around to his customer, he asked conversationally, “Are you big reader?”

“I read quite a lot, yes.”

“Ever read any of Simon Wrentmore’s books yourself?”

There was a moment’s pause before the man answered. “I'm familiar with his work.”

“Well, then you know how good he is.”

“You really think he's good?” Hope filled the man's eyes.

“Well, yeah. Don't you?”

After another slight pause the man said, “I don't know that I'm the right person to ask.”

“Well why not? Your opinion's as valid as mine, surely.” Harry liked this man. Given the chance, he could really like this man, he thought. When most people asked someone's opinion, it was just cursory. But this man was really interested in what he thought. Harry introduced himself, giving the name he had assumed when he'd decided to leave the Wizarding world behind. “I'm Evan, by the way. Evan Jameson.”

Wiping his mouth on a serviette, the man swallowed and introduced himself as well. “Luke Black.”

“So, Luke, what line of work are you supposed to be doing?”

“I'm supposed to be writing.” Luke's voice dropped to barely a whisper, and his handsome face fell.

“Oh?” Harry felt a moment of panic that he suspected would never fully go away. “Are you a reporter?”

“No, I'm an author. . . or I'm supposed to be anyway.”

“Biographies?”

“No, fiction.”

“Oh.” Harry exhaled with relief. An aspiring fiction author, that explained the questions about what he liked about Simon Wrentmore's books, then. “You said 'supposed to be.' Don't you want to be?”

“More than anything.”

Those three words were spoken with more raw emotion, filled with more longing than Harry had heard in anyone's voice in long time. Luke's entire world was tied up in his career, clearly. While Harry certainly enjoyed his work, he didn't feel nearly as strongly about it as Luke apparently felt.
about his.

It was refreshing to Harry, in a way, to see someone embarking on a career they genuinely wanted to be doing, as most of his customers griped about their jobs, if they mentioned them at all. But while it was undoubtedly a good thing to enjoy one's work, the expression “All work and no play, makes Jack a dull boy,” rang in Harry’s ears. In speaking those three short words, Luke’s voice had held a desperation that made Harry think that not much else mattered to him besides becoming a writer. As much as Harry enjoyed his bakery and loved his life on the island, if one of his friends back home needed him, he’d close up shop and be gone in the swish of a wand.

The longer they spoke, the more Harry felt drawn to this man. He was more attracted to Luke than he had been to anyone in a while.

Which might not be a good thing, as Harry had no idea whether the man was straight or gay.

Luke continued, his voice filled with frustration, “But I can't think of a single thing. There's just nothing there.” He paused, rubbing his eyes roughly. “There used to be all these ideas in my head. I'd just start thinking, and my mind would run wild with what ifs. What if a person did this or went there or tried that? What if someone got in their way and tried to stop them? What would they do about it? How far would they go to get what they wanted? What if what they wanted something dangerous? What if the person trying to stop them was actually trying to help them?

“Or what if two people met and fell in love? Would their families approve? What if they didn't? What would the two do about it? Would they give each other up? Would they try to make a go of it anyway and risk losing their family for the other person? What if one of them wanted to give up and the other wanted to fight to make it work? Or what if there was a third person trying to split them up because they wanted one of them for him or herself? Or what if one of them cheated? What would the other do? Or what if only one of them was in love; the person they loved didn't feel the same? Or what if that person used them for sex and then dumped them? What would he or she do? Try to win the person back? Move on? Would they want to make the person they’d once loved pay for using them?”

“Those ideas all sound pretty good to me.”

“And they've all been written and rewritten hundreds of times!” Luke dropped his head into his hands. “I'm sorry. That sounded rude. I didn't mean it to. It's just so maddening! I haven't been able to write a word in over two years. I just sit there and stare at the blank paper.

“Before, whenever I read a book written by someone else, I'd be constantly saying to myself, ‘No, I'd have done this’ or ‘I'd have done that’ or ‘That sentence should've been written this way’ or ‘I'd not have used that word.’ Now, all I think when I'm reading someone else's work is, ‘That's a good idea. I wish I'd come up with it.’”

Luke sighed. “Oh, hell. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to dump all that on you. My agent suggested a change of scenery might get me sorted out and hired a place here for me for the summer. Fat lot of good it's done so far.”

“I don't mind, really. A lot of people tell me stuff. I'm part baker, part therapist. I reckon it’s the sweets that do it more than my stellar advice.” Harry managed to put a smile back on Luke's face, and he was glad.

“Well, I can vouch for you skills as a baker. These are wonderful.”
The door was thrown open, and in rushed a man dressed literally from head to foot in designer clothes—from his designer shoes to his designer sunglasses. Draco thought he looked like a walking advert. His blond hair was styled in a dishevelled way that was meant to appear as if he had just run his hands through it and not thought twice about it but had likely taken a good chunk of time in front of a mirror. His eyes were bright blue. His jaw was chiselled, and there was a slight cleft in his chin. He could've easily just stepped out of the pictures of a Muggle men’s fashion magazine.

“Evan! Thank goodness! You've no idea of my day! You've got it, right? It's finished? Is it magnificent? It's magnificent, right? Please, tell me it's ready!”

Draco was disappointed. Whoever this man was—likely the owner, Draco thought, by the way he’d charged in as if he was being chased by dementors—he passed Draco without noticing he was there, and went straight to Evan, stealing away the attention that had been only his up until now. It had been so nice to have those green eyes focused solely on him that Draco had shared his frustrations with Evan, someone he'd only just met, without a second thought. He couldn't even do that with Luna.

Evan shook his head at the newcomer and smiled in an indulgent manner. “Of course, it's ready. Even if it is almost an hour earlier than you said you'd be here.”

“An hour! Really, Evan, it's nearly four.”

Evan glanced at his watch. “It's just past three.”

“Three, four, whatever. Can I see it?”

“Yeah, yeah. Hang on.” Draco's mood had sunk at the loss of Evan's attention, and he was just about to leave quietly when Evan said, “Excuse me a moment, Luke. Won't be a sec.”

When Evan addressed him, the newcomer turned to him and, slowly pulling off very expensive sunglasses, ran his eyes over Draco appraisingly. “Why, hullo there. I don't believe I've seen you around before.”

“Rhys!” Evan hissed.

The newcomer, who Draco now knew to be named Rhys, turned his head ever so slightly towards Evan, but his eyes never left Draco.

“Where have you been keeping him, Evan? He looks as delicious as—”

Evan cut him off with three clipped words. “Rhys. Kitchen. Now.” The green eyes that had been so soft when speaking to Draco had hardened.

Unfazed, Rhys drawled, “Oh, alright, alright,” and followed Evan into the kitchen. Although unable to understand what was being said—and he was unashamedly trying, even after all these years, Draco was nothing if not Slytherin—he could hear Evan's voice in harsh whispers interrupted periodically by Rhys' chortling.

Obviously amused, Rhys left the kitchen a moment later carrying a large white cake box with the name of the bakery emblazoned on it in red letters. A satisfied smirk on his face, he winked at Draco as he left.

Evan rejoined him a moment later, embarrassed and apologetic. His cheeks weren’t quite the same
red as the lettering on the cake box, but they weren't far off.

Before Evan could attempt to apologise for the other man's comments, Draco picked the last strawberry up from his plate and looked at it. While still whole, it was cut into sections which had been pushed slightly apart and a cream filling had been piped in.

“How do you do this, anyway?”

He could see Evan relax before he answered, “Magic.”

Had Draco had anything in his mouth, he'd have choked on it.

Evan laughed. “It's really not nearly as hard as it looks. You just have to be careful to cut far enough down but not too far. Not nearly as hard as writing a book, I'm sure.”

Draco sighed. A few years ago he'd have disagreed.

“Shit, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that.”

“Don't be.”

Evan seemed hesitant, and Draco was surprised how sorry he was that the ease with which they'd fallen into conversation had been lost.

Before he could think of anything to say to ease the other man back into conversation, the door opened again, and the four girls he'd passed in the street came in talking and laughing.

Almost in unison, all four said, “Hi, Evan,” before one of them noticed him and nudged her friends. They grinned as they looked between Evan and himself.

There was no use, Draco was forced to realise. The few moments they'd had alone to talk were gone, and he was sorry for it. He'd lost his chance to talk to someone who'd read and enjoyed his books.

Pushing his plate away, he said that he thought his eyes had been bigger than his stomach.

Evan seemed as disappointed as Draco was as he said that he'd get a box.

As Draco put the last of his sweets in the box and closed it, he looked at the name scrolled across it —the Holly and Feather. Without thinking, he commented, “Odd name for a bakery. One would think it was a pub.”

Light filled those green eyes, and something stirred inside Draco.

“Yeah. I get that a lot.”

For the first time in two years, Draco could feel the author buried somewhere inside him poking him, and he had to ask, “Is there a story behind it?”

Evan smiled, his eyebrow arched. “If only you knew.”
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That night, Draco tossed and turned. When he did sleep, green eyes that were at once familiar and not filled his dreams. Red lettering against a white background... the Holly and Feather... Odd name for a bakery. Draco punched his pillow and rolled over. Too much sugar, he thought to himself.

The next day found Draco back in St. Peter Port. Unlike his first visit to the town, which he'd spent aimlessly wandering around until stumbling upon the Holly and Feather, this visit had a particular purpose behind it. Yesterday, Evan had told him there was a story behind the name of the bakery he worked at, and for a reason Draco didn't fully understand, he wanted to know what that story was.

He’d timed his visit to the same time of day as yesterday, hoping to once again catch Evan alone, between his lunch and tea customers. He only hoped Evan was working today.

Following the High Street until it brought him to the alley he’d followed the day before, Draco’s strides had been determined. Once he'd started up the cobbled alley, however, his steps slowed as doubt began to dog him. He'd almost made up his mind to turn around when two of the girls from
yesterday bustled towards him; their heads bent together when they saw him approaching the bakery. As they passed him, they smiled and said as one, “Hi, again.” Draco could hear their snickering trailing behind them.

He couldn't turn around now. Evan would know he’d been on his street—everything Draco knew of women told him that. Those girls would tell him they’d seen him as soon as they could, he knew.

There was no way he could turn around now. Evan might think Draco was stalking him or something if he didn't go in. What other reason could he have for being on a largely residential side alley? On the High Street itself, there would be nothing unusual about that. But a steep and narrow, largely residential side street? It practically screamed, “Stalker!” Draco didn't know why, but it was important to him that Evan not think badly of him. Too many other people already did.

Opening the door to the Holly and Feather, Draco nearly turned on the spot and left. Evan was seated at a corner table, his head lowered on his folded arms. Across from him, his hand resting on Evan's forearm and his thumb gently stroking the skin, sat Rhys.

But just as it had been too late to turn around once he'd been seen by those two women, it was too late to leave because Rhys had turned his head the moment the door opened and was staring straight at him, a smile spreading slowly across his face.

His voice was gleeful. He practically sang, “Oh, Evan. Looks like you've got a visitor, love.”

“What?” Evan spoke as he raised his head from his arms. His face was incredulous. “Luke? You came back?”

Rhys was gloating. “Evan here thought I’d scared you off. Told him he was dead wrong, but would he listen? Nnooooo.”

Draco didn't know what to say. He wasn't stupid, nor was he blind. It was blatantly obvious to him what he'd interrupted. “Sorry, I thought you might be free. I'll just be going.” His voice sounded inexplicably resentful, Draco knew, but he couldn't help it. He'd only spent a short while in Evan's company yesterday; he had no claim on the man's time, he knew, but he had hoped to find him alone at this time of the afternoon, as he had yesterday, and the fact that he'd interrupted him with Rhys, of all people, rankled. Unreasonable and unjustifiable though it was, it was true.

Rhys, his cocky smile firmly in place, jumped to his feet. “Oh, no. Our Evan's very much free, I assure you. Well, three's a crowd or so they say. Of course, I rather think three's—”

“RHYS!” Evan shouted.

If Rhys was the owner, Draco worried that Evan might be flying on a dodgy broom. But Rhys excused himself, saying, “Yes, well. I'll just go. . . make myself useful in the kitchen, shall I?”

Evan groaned as the swinging door to the kitchen closed behind Rhys.

“Problem?” Draco couldn't help but ask.

Rubbing his eyes, Evan said, “He's not allowed in my kitchen unsupervised, and he knows it.” When Draco didn't respond, Evan sighed and explained further. “There's a bowl of chocolate frosting back there that I'm going to have to remake now. Knowing him, he's got the bowl in one hand and a spoon in the other.”

“Sweet tooth?”
“To rival yours.”

Several moments of awkward silence followed, during which Evan looked everywhere but at him, and Draco attempted to speak but failed, until the silence was broken by Rhys' voice calling out from the kitchen, “Don't make me come back out there!”

Evan moved behind the counter, his eyes still looking anywhere but at Draco. He ran a cloth over the already clean surface and straightened already straight displays. Draco recognised the act as the other man's need to put himself on familiar ground. Evan was clearly deeply embarrassed at having been caught in a private moment between himself and his... whatever it was that Rhys was to him, and Draco felt an illogical need to explain the interruption. Why should he have to explain himself? He'd entered a bakery. Nothing more. He'd not snuck behind a closed door; he'd entered a place of business during business hours.

If he and... and Rhys wanted privacy, they should've gone someplace private. Not sitting out in the open like—

“Was there something you wanted?”

Evan's question interrupted Draco's mental ramblings, drawing his attention back to his reason for coming. “What's the story?”

Nonplussed, Evan asked, “What?”

“The story. Behind the name. You said yesterday that there was a story behind the name of the bakery. I want to know what it is... Call it professional curiosity.”

The swinging door to the kitchen opened, and Rhys stuck his head out. A smudge of frosting at the corner of this mouth was visible from where Draco stood across the room. “Professional curiosity? That's the best you can come up with? You're a professional bakery namer, are you?”

“RHYS!”

“Sooooorry. But, seriously mate, professional curiosity over the name of a baker's shop? That's the single worst pick up line I've ever heard in my life.”

Draco's mouth fell open.

Elbows on the counter, Evan dropped his face into his hands. “Rhys... please. It's not a pick up line. He's a writer. He's here for the summer to write.”

“Oh!! A writer! You didn't tell me that! Oh, how delicious! I simply adore writers!”

His hands still covering his face, Evan's voice was muffled as he asked, “Since when?”

“Oh, since simply forever!” Rhys' head disappeared back into the kitchen for a moment, and Draco could hear what he presumed was the bowl of chocolate frosting being hurriedly set down before Rhys exited the kitchen and rejoined them. “Oh, you must tell me all about it. What types of books do you write? Nice smutty ones, I do hope? Filled with just loads of shirtless—”

“RHYS!”

“Oh, you never let me have any fun.” Rhys complained to Evan.

Draco was speechless. He could do nothing but stare at Rhys. The other man seemed to be either
completely oblivious to the discomfort he was causing or thriving on it. Draco couldn't quite tell which.

“Oh, have you been to Hauteville House yet?”

Draco began to ask what Hauteville House was, but before he could finish the question Rhys continued on excitedly.

“Oh, I know! Evan, you simply must take him to Hauteville House!”

“Rhys . . . .”

“Oh, don’t ‘Rhys’ me. When was your last afternoon off, hmm? Take the afternoon off and take your lovely writer friend here to Hauteville House.”

Evan looked panicked; his face was on the verge of turning that same shade of red that it had yesterday. “I’m sure Luke has plans, Rhys. I told you. He’s not here on holiday, he’s—”

“Actually, I’ve not got any plans,” Draco said. He’d spoken without thinking and wasn’t sure if he was sorry or glad he’d interrupted. He’d misread the scene he’d walked in on, clearly. Evan wasn’t . . . with Rhys like that. Their relationship was a close one, close enough to include the intimacy he’d glimpsed, but it wasn’t a romantic intimacy. Draco wasn't a fool. He’d been around long enough to know when someone was interested but reluctant and when someone else was giving that person a push.

Evan was interested but reluctant, and Rhys was giving him a push.

Quite frankly, the pleasure that realisation gave Draco scared him.

Other men had shown interest in him before, but although Draco had occasionally felt something, some . . . stirring inside him, some . . . curiosity, some . . . interest . . . in return, he’d never considered taking a man back to the flat he maintained in Muggle London for his one-offs with Muggle women. He had been attracted a time or two, yes, but not once had he been truly tempted. Men had been strictly, “Look all you want, but don’t touch.”

Not until now—not until Evan—had he let himself consider the possibility of taking a man to bed. It was clear Evan was attracted to him. Draco wondered what it would be like to feel another man's body—Evan's body—against his own.

Draco's body tingled with an anticipation he hadn't felt since Pansy Parkinson let him feel her up after the Yule Ball when they were fourteen.

He’d had to be so careful for so long. With all the women he’d been with, Draco had never been with someone twice. He couldn’t risk anything more than casual encounters, nothing more than one-offs. He couldn’t take the risks that would come with a real relationship.

He’d be on Guernsey all summer, but only for the summer. With Evan, he could have someone to spend that summer with, someone to go places with. He wouldn't be alone all day, every day. But at the end of the summer, he would be leaving, and Evan would know that all along. There would be no expectations, no risks. The summer would end, and he would leave.

He would have a chance to talk to Evan about what he liked about his books. Maybe even, he could bounce some ideas for a new book off him.

Assuming, that was, he got a new idea.
Remembering his writer's block dampened Draco's spirits somewhat, but he quickly rallied. He asked, “What is Hauteville House?”

Rhys exclaimed with all the excitement of an overzealous tour guide, “What is Hauteville House? Oh! It's the former residence of none other than Victor Hugo himself! It's simply a must see! And what with your being a writer! Well!” He turned to Evan. “Oh, you simply must take him, Evan. A writer—he simply must see it.”

Draco hadn't cared in the least what Hauteville House was; he'd simply wanted to spend first the afternoon with Evan, then hopefully, the night. Followed, hopefully, by tomorrow. Now though . . . . Victor Hugo, he thought to himself. His mind began to drift.

Having been faced with being persona non grata in his own world after the war, Draco had had no choice but to turn to the Muggle one. After his parents' deaths it had either been that or a lifetime of no one to speak to but portraits and house-elves. What he had found had been one of the greatest—and worst—surprises of his life, and seeing what his life had been up until then, that was saying something, he felt.

The Muggle world was immense, to say the least. There were more Muggles than he could ever have imagined possible. He had stood, his heart pounding wildly with fright, rooted to the spot and under the strongest Notice Me Not spell he could cast, transfixed by the sheer number of Muggles surrounding him and going on about their daily lives. He had no idea how long he'd stood there silently observing people he'd been raised to believe were inferior to him. It hadn't been until a large silver object flew—flew!—directly overhead at an unimaginable altitude that he'd moved from the spot. The Muggles had taken no notice of it, but he had been so lost in amazement, he had taken several steps forward, as if to follow the object, and had nearly walked directly into the street and the rush of oncoming traffic. Had he not overbalanced and nearly fallen when he'd stepped off the curb, he'd have walked directly into the path of a Muggle bus. Badly frightened, he had turned on the spot and Apparated directly back to the manor and hadn't left it again for nearly a week.

But then combined curiosity and boredom had gotten the better of him, and he'd tried again. His second attempt had gone better. He'd still hidden under the Notice Me Not spell, but he'd begun to explore. He’d gone back the next day, and then the day after that, and again the day after that, until after several visits he felt comfortable enough to cast Recognise Me Not instead and attempt to interact with Muggles.

The simple pleasure of walking down the street and having people pass by him, seeing him, without spitting—or worse—at him, of walking into a shop and being attended to, or walking into a restaurant and being welcomed and seated, being greeted and smiled at instead of being cursed and told to leave . . . . There were no words to describe it.

In time, he'd found Muggle museums. He'd found cinemas. He'd found stores filled with books he'd never heard of and bought as many as he could carry. He'd found music stores and art galleries. He'd found Muggle pubs and any number of women willing to do just about anything. He'd found libraries and had set about learning everything he could about the Muggle world—the real Muggle world, not the one he’d been raised to believe existed—studying their history and their culture and customs, their present and their past.

And he'd found Muggle theatres.

Les Misérables had been the first Muggle show Draco had ever seen, and it had captivated him. He’d gone straight to a Muggle bookstore and bought the book. It had been after what could have been his tenth reading that Draco had first sat down with a quill and parchment and had attempted to write down the stories he'd created in his head.
His first attempts had been pure rubbish. Although he could see his characters and the world around them as clearly in his mind as he could see physical objects with his eyes, he couldn't put them down on paper any more effectively than he could sit down and draw the room around him accurately. It had taken several attempts—and several snapped quills and shattered ink pots—to produce something that wasn't terrible, but the one thing Draco had had plenty of was spare time.

It had never entered his head that any other human being would ever see his writings.

But then a certain loony witch had shown up at his front gate one day shortly before the first Christmas after the war, with green ribbons adorning her normal radish earrings and a Christmas pudding in her hands, and declared that no one deserved to be alone at Christmas. Out of that one visit had somehow sprung the most important—not the mention the only—friendship of his post-war life, and before long, Simon Wrentmore had been born.

At the thought of not only spending the afternoon with Evan but of seeing the home of the man who had written the novel that had so captivated and inspired him, a slow smile spread across Draco's face. “I'd love to see it.”

XoXoX

As good a friend as Rhys was, Harry could've happily hexed him inside out, but the smile that had graced Luke's face at his suggestion had been so genuine and so hopeful that any rational thought in Harry's brain had died the moment it faded away, and Luke asked, “Is it far? Can I walk there, do you think, or should I hire a car?”

Harry knew he was making a huge mistake, but he couldn't help it. The way Luke had smiled at him had stirred something inside him, and the attraction that had begun yesterday grew. Never before had he fallen so hard and so fast for anyone, and the more time he spent in Luke's company the harder Harry knew he would fall.

But then he opened his mouth and all the air left his lungs in one swoosh of breath; before his brain could remind him he would only end up being hurt when the summer was over and Luke left him behind never to look back, Harry said, “It's not far. We can walk.”

“But you can't take the whole afternoon off just to show me around—”

“S'okay. I want to.” And he really did. Rhys was right. Luke was an aspiring writer, and the home of one of the most famous writers of all time—certainly the most famous to ever live in the Channel Islands—was about a quarter of a mile away. Harry wanted to be the one to show it to him. “He's right, I haven't taken any time off in ages.”

Very pleased with himself, Rhys volunteered, “I'll call Amie. She'll fill in; you know she will.”


“Rhys . . .” Harry reminded himself that Rhys was a good friend and that hexing him would be a bad idea.

Rhys held his hands up in surrender. “Oh, just leadin’ the horse to water. Pour saver, l’fau d'màndaïr.* Qui trache trouve.**”

Harry held back a groan. Had Rhys been a wizard, he'd have been in Ravenclaw, no doubt about it.

Taking a deep breath, he glanced at Luke out of the corner of his eye. Before Luke had arrived this afternoon, Rhys had insisted that he was not only gay but also very much interested. Harry wasn't so
sure, but although he knew it would be so much better for him if neither were true, part of him still hoped.

After all, Rhys had been right about one thing Harry had very much doubted. Just as Rhys had said he would, Luke had come back.

“You two, shoo.” Rhys waved them away. “Go, have fun. I'll hold down the fort until darling cousin Amie arrives.” Rhys already had his mobile in his hand and was ringing up his cousin.

“Try not to eat the place out of business, yeah?”

“Honestly, Evan. To listen to you, one would think I eat nothing but sweets all day.”

“One would be right.”

Harry opened the door, but before exiting with him, Luke turned to Rhys and, with a smirk on his face that felt oddly familiar to Harry, said, “You've got a little frosting, by the way,” he pointed to the corner of his own mouth, “just there, did you know?”

As the door closed behind them, Harry heard Rhys' chortling and mumbled, “Why, the cheeky bastard.”

Walking down the hill towards the High Street beside Luke, Harry couldn't think of anything to say. He'd spent all yesterday afternoon and night and all of today thinking about the man walking a foot away from him, but now that they were alone, he could not think of one single thing to say to him.

They were turning onto the High Street when Luke said, “He seems like a good friend.”

“Rhys? He is. Er, about Rhys. He can . . . er, be a bit too . . . er . . . . He's very happily paired up himself, you see, and . . . er . . . . He's rather like a little old lady who, with her own children married and settled, can't help but try to play matchmaker for everyone else. Er . . . he means well, really. But he can be a bit too . . . enthusiastic, I guess you could say. Please don't take anything he says too seriously.”

Harry could've kicked himself. Why was he rambling on? He felt like he had all those years ago trying to ask Cho Chang to the Yule Ball.

Luke didn't respond immediately; Harry thought he looked pensive. His eyebrows were drawn together, and there were slight frown lines around his eyes. After a moment he said, “It was nice of him to give you the afternoon off.”

Harry laughed. “Yeah, especially as I own the place.”

“Oh. I thought . . . . I didn’t realise . . . . I assumed you just worked there.”

An uncomfortable silence settled over them until Harry asked, “How long have you wanted to be a writer?”

At the mention of writing, Luke's face brightened. “It wasn't something I ever planned. I just sort of got lucky and fell into it.”

Harry realised he’d been mistaken; he’d thought Luke was an aspiring writer having trouble getting started. He hadn’t realised he already had a career as a writer. It was awkward. Harry didn’t flatter himself that he was familiar with every author out there, but he didn’t recognise Luke’s name.

“You’re already published, then? I’m sorry. I’m a little embarrassed. I thought you were a beginning
writer. I didn’t recognise your name, but then, I’m not all that well read, really.”

“You wouldn’t recognise my name. I write under a pseudonym.”

“Keeps away the legions of screaming fans, does it? I can understand that.”

“It definitely keeps the screaming down,” Luke said, somewhat cryptically.

“What genre do you write in?”

“A little of this, a little of that. I’ve not kept to one set genre. I’ve done historical fiction. I’ve done fantasy. The most important thing is the ending, I think. People want a happy ending. They want a good guy they can route for, and a bad guy they can root against, and they want a happy ending. Give them those three things in a story they don’t feel like they’ve read so many times that they know what’s going to happen before they turn the page, and chances are, it’ll do well.” Luke added, “And sex, of course. A little sex never hurts.”

“Unless, of course, you’re into that sort of thing,” Harry joked.


“A credit on a book about kinky sex.” Harry pretended to think about it. “Hmm, that could do wonders for my reputation, I’d bet. Could be a lot to have to live up to, though.”

“Yes, I’d think it could be. I really did get lucky, though. My agent . . . . She’s not just my agent; she’s the best friend I could’ve ever hoped for. I don’t know what I’d have done had it not been for her.”

“That’s me as well. Getting lucky and falling into a job I love, I mean. I certainly never thought I’d become a baker and own my own place. My best mate’s mum is a brilliant cook. I watched her make a cake for her granddaughter’s birthday, and I asked her if she needed help. I realised I really liked working in the kitchen. It felt good, having had a hand in making something people enjoyed.”

Luke asked him, “What did you think you’d do?”

Harry stuck to the story he’d give numerous times. It was an easy story to stick to because it was the truth, just not the whole truth. “I always thought I’d go into law enforcement. But then when it came right down to it, it was the last thing in the world I wanted to do. How about you? If you didn't plan on becoming a writer, what did you want to do?”

A pained look crossed Luke's face, but it passed so quickly Harry thought he'd been mistaken until he heard the strain in his voice. “The family business, I guess you could say.”

Harry could almost hear an audible click as a door closed on the subject. If Luke’s past was something he didn't want to discuss, that was just fine with him. It was, after all, something he understood perfectly.

In an obvious attempt to change the subject, Luke asked what it was that Rhys had said before they’d left. “It sounded like French, but it wasn’t.”

Harry had fallen in love with his adoptive home almost on first sight and talked about it enthusiastically. “It was D’gernésiais. Guernsey French. It’s the native language on the island, although it’s nearly gone dead. Mostly, the only people who actually speak it now are of pension age. There’s a push on, though, to revive it. There are lessons in schools now, and grandparents are
encouraged to speak it around their grandchildren."

Despite Harry's enthusiasm, Luke's attention had drifted away. His eyes stared straight ahead, but Harry had no idea what it was he was seeing. He doubted it was the same thing he himself was seeing, and he wondered if Luke had heard anything he'd just said. Some people would've been offended, but that was another thing Harry understood first hand. The expression on Luke's face was one he'd seen on so many faces after the war, one he knew others had seen on his own. It was the expression of someone who had been through something traumatic and had suddenly been unexpectedly returned to that time. Something Harry had said or maybe something Luke had seen had stirred up something in his mind that Harry was sure the other man would rather not have been reminded of. Harry wondered what Luke had been through to put that look on his face.

This belief was confirmed a moment later when Luke said, “Sometimes it's best that the old ways are allowed to die.” His voice had the flat, lifeless quality of an echo. He rubbed his left arm in what Harry recognised as a subconscious gesture, not unlike all the times he had tugged on his fringe, trying to hide his scar. Luke's arm, Harry noticed, was scarred almost all the way from his elbow to his wrist, like he'd been badly burnt.

Harry watched Luke try to force away whatever memory had grabbed hold of him. This time when he spoke, his voice began unnaturally pleasant but trailed off as it returned to a deadpan tone. “It's good that they're working to keep it alive, though. It's wrong to completely give up one's heritage.”

“Rhys' family has been on Guernsey just about forever. They're part of the movement to preserve the language. His grandparents all speak D’gernésiais. So does his cousin Amie. When they were in school, she tells me, D’gernésiais was the prevalent language, and English was the foreign language schoolchildren studied. Amie's my neighbour. She's been giving me lessons.”

“So that was what you said yesterday.”

“*Bienvenus*, welcome.”

“I thought your French was just really bad.”

Harry laughed. “My French is really bad, believe me. I only know enough to get by with tourists. Amie's been helping me with that too. She sort of took me under her wing when I came to the island.”

“You're not from Guernsey?”

“Oh, er, no.” Harry had to watch himself more closely. He never talked to anyone about his past because Evan Jameson had no past; he’d been born when Harry Potter had decided to disappear. But it was too late now; he couldn't take the words back. “No . . . I was born in the West Country. A tiny little village no one's ever heard of.”

“What made you decide to leave?” Luke looked at him like he was trying to solve a mystery; there was a note of jealousy in his voice Harry thought. As an afterthought he added, “If you don't mind my asking.”

Harry hesitated. “I didn't really decide. It just kind of happened. I just . . . needed to get away, you know? A friend recommended a holiday and suggested Guernsey. She'd been here with her parents as a child, then again with her father after her mother died.” Thinking of Luna always made Harry smile. She was unlike anyone else he knew. He shook his head. Luna and her father had come to Guernsey in search of the Pouques fairies they believed lived on the island. He'd come in search of peace and quiet. In the end, he'd been the one to find what he was looking for. “My friends all say I
forgot to leave, which is basically true, I reckon. I just fell in love with the place.”

The jealousy in Luke's voice turned to wistfulness. “Sometimes I've thought about just walking out the front door and never looking back.”

“Well, I wouldn't say I never looked back. I do go back. And my friends visit me here. I'm just . . . better off here.”

It was a short walk from the Holly and Feather to Hauteville House, and in less than ten minutes, they were turning onto Rue Hauteville, and the house was directly in front of them.

“Here we are.”

Harry looked at Luke, and his breath caught in his throat; Luke wore a rapt expression on his upturned face, his silver-grey eyes shining like diamonds.

The house itself was nondescript from the front, blending in with the neighbouring buildings and partially obscured from view by two large trees. From the front, three rows of windows were visible, though the house had four levels; the fourth of which overlooked the gardens and offered stunning views all the way to the neighbouring islands. Above its painted green front door flew the French flag.

When Luke questioned the French flag, Harry explained, “The house was donated by Victor Hugo's descendants to the City of Paris and houses the honorary consul to the French Embassy in London.”

“Can we go in?” Luke's voice was filled with a childlike wonder that reminded Harry of Christmas when his godchildren had been little.

Harry laughed, “That's why we came, isn't it?”

Upon entering the house and beginning their tour, they came to an elaborate archway inspired by *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and designed by Hugo himself. Luke was mesmerised. Harry was reminded of the first time he saw Diagon Alley as an 11-year-old; the wide-eyed wonder he’d seen on Luke's face was the same he remembered feeling that day.

Harry let him take his time. Had Luke been able to reach it, Harry thought he would be making a pencil rubbing of the author's signature to take home and frame. Finally, the tour guide urged them on.

As the tour moved on, the guide explained the history of the house. It was a story Harry had heard before, but seeing Luke's face as he absorbed every word was like seeing into the other man's soul. Harry felt a moment of dread, but it was too late. He'd already fallen much too hard for Luke to pretend otherwise. He'd be hurt when Luke left after the summer, yes, but he'd be hurt if he walked away now, too. At least, Harry told himself, he could enjoy his company for the summer.

The guide continued her memorised lines. “Believed to be haunted by the ghost of a woman who took her own life, the house sat vacant for several years before being purchased by Victor Hugo in 1856. The purchasing of Hauteville House provided Hugo with protection against deportation back to France, as Guernsey law prohibits the deportation of anyone owning a property on the island.

“Victor Hugo lived in the house during his exile from France from 1856 until 1870 and made his own unique mark on the house. Furniture and fittings were custom made. Each room is unique. Each floor is decorated in a different style.”

Entering the Tapestry Room, the guide drew the group's attention to a fireplace whose elaborately
carved wood surround covered one whole wall. “Here on the ground floor, the décor is neo-gothic and features large, detailed wooden carvings, hand crafted by local artisans, based on styles Hugo had seen on his travels through Europe . . . .”

The guide’s voice droned on, but Harry didn't listen; his attention was fixed solely on Luke.

As if he could sense Harry's eyes on him, Luke turned away from the fireplace and smiled at him. Harry's stomach did flip-flops.

The tour continued through the rest of the rooms on the ground floor before moving to the first floor and the red and blue drawing rooms. On the second floor, they saw the library and the oak gallery. The third floor housed Victor Hugo's study and bedroom.

The guide said, “Hugo's small bedroom leads directly into the Cristal Room, his private study, which is enclosed and roofed by windows and offers stunning views of St. Peter Port and its harbours, neighbouring islands and on a clear day, the coast of France . . . .” Harry heard Luke's sharply inhaled breath, then a moment later his slow exhale. Their guide had just pointed out a small oak table mounted in the corner of the room. “At this modest oak writing table, Victor Hugo completed his most famous work, Les Misérables and following that, Les Travailleurs de la Mer, The Toilers of the Sea, which he dedicated to the people of Guernsey. Hugo wrote standing up rather than sitting . . . .”

Harry thought Luke would've liked to have had his laptop with him. He could just see him standing at Victor Hugo's writing desk, his fingers flying over the keys as Muggles did. Personally, Harry could never understand how their fingers could move so fast over the keys, knowing what keys to hit without looking.

They were the last two members of the tour to leave the room, and the tour guide was impatient to get them out. Luke cast one long last look over his shoulder at the small table mounted in the corner of the room on his way out the door.

As all tourist attractions across the globe do, Hauteville House featured a gift shop, and seeing Luke browsing it reminded Harry of his first trip to Honeydukes as a third year.

Hauteville House also boasted an extensive garden which was open to the public. After wandering around, Harry and Luke made their way over to a stone bench and sat down.

Luke read the carved inscription on the back of the bench aloud. His French accent was perfect. “Liberté, égalité, fraternité. Freedom, equality, fraternity.” His eyes stared vacantly at the house. “Pretty words in theory, but they don't hold up well in practice.”

Harry said, “No, they don't always, do they? Still, he did return to France eventually, and as a hero, no less. At first, he supported Bonaparte, did you know? But after a few years he began to realise he didn't share the same moral or political ambitions, and his relationship with his political allies deteriorated rather quickly. Before he fled from France he said . . . er, what was it? 'We've had Napoleon the Great, now we've got Napoleon the Small' or something like that. If my friend, Mione, was here, she could tell you exactly.”

A dark, clouded look settled in Luke's eyes. His mind seemed to have returned to whatever past experience had plagued him earlier. When he spoke, his voice was low and filled with deep regret. His hand returned once again to subconsciously rub his arm. “He's not the only one to realise he's thrown himself behind the wrong person. But he escaped. He got out. It's not always possible to get out. Sometimes, no matter how badly you want to, it's not possible; there's just nowhere to go . . . . Sometimes it's too late. Sometimes . . . you get the chance, very unexpectedly, but cock it up because
Harry didn't know what to say. Luke's words reminded him strongly of the situation so many had found themselves in during the war. Whether they were seduced with promises of power, like Quirrel, or blindly followed the flawed beliefs of their families, like Regulus Black and so many of Harry's own classmates, once they were in, getting back out alive had been next to impossible.

As it had so many times before, Harry's mind drifted to Draco Malfoy. Professor Dumbledore had offered him a way out not only for himself but for his parents as well, and although he'd hesitated, he'd chosen to take it. Harry was as sure of that as he was that Malfoy had known bloody well that it was him when they'd been caught by Snatchers. He'd lowered his wand, or had begun to, but then it had all gone pear-shaped. Others had arrived, the Carrows, Greyback—Harry's fists clenched at the name—then finally, Snape. Malfoy had been offered a chance, a way out. But he'd cocked it up.

He'd waited too long.

But he, Harry, had also cocked up. He'd also had a chance to offer Malfoy a way out, but unlike Dumbledore, he'd not cared. One of his worst memories of the war was actually from before their world had even known there was a war. It was from his sixth year at Hogwarts—Malfoy, lying bleeding on the bathroom floor, sliced open from a spell that he, Harry, had cast without knowing what it would do. Had Harry been even just a small fraction of the wizard Dumbledore had been, he'd have recognised and seized the opportunity to help Malfoy, who he'd already known was in way over his head, but he'd let his hatred of the other boy get in the way. He'd condemned Malfoy for a crime he hadn't yet committed and was attempting to carry out only under threat of death for himself and his parents.

Malfoy hadn't known Harry was even there for several seconds. He'd had the upper hand. Harry could've disarmed Malfoy the moment he opened the door, prevented the duel that had nearly killed the other boy from ever happening. But not only had he not done that, the thought of doing so had never even entered his head.

To this day, Harry's regret of his actions in that bathroom was only surpassed by his guilt for falling for Voldemort's mind games in his fifth year and leading his friends into danger . . . and causing the death of his godfather.

Suddenly, Luke said, “Thank you for coming with me, really. I'm sorry I'm not better company. I seem to be all out of sorts today.”

Pulled from his memories, Harry said. “Not at all. We all get like that sometimes. I was just feeling rather out of sorts myself.”

“You did look like you had something on your mind.”

“I was just thinking about someone I went to school with.” The words were out before Harry had time to remember how dangerous getting into a conversation about his life before Guernsey could be, but again, it was too late to take it back. “Er, it was what you said reminded me of him. He got into trouble . . . serious trouble. He got in way over his head. Nearly landed himself in prison. Nearly got himself killed, actually. Are you hungry?” Harry added the non sequitur hoping to change the subject, but also because he didn't want his time with Luke to end. No matter how foolish he knew he was being, no matter how much he knew he was setting himself up to be hurt when the end of the summer came, he didn't want his time with Luke to end sooner than it had to.
D’germésiais expressions Rhys uses:
* Pour saver, l’fau d’màndaîr—To find out you must ask.
** Qui trache trouve—Seek and you shall find.

As anyone who has read my other fics already knows, I’m a bit of a research nut. (And that’s putting it politely.) I did a lot of research on Guernsey while I was writing this. I will mention several places on the island, and with the exception of the Holly and Feather, they are all real. Even Harry’s house is a real house in St. Peter Port I found listed for sale online. I’ve never been to Guernsey. Luckily, there is a ton of info on the internet, and I hope I was as accurate as possible. Thanks for reading! Let me know if you liked it!
Draco jumped at the chance to keep his afternoon with Evan going. “It's a little early, but let me buy you dinner as a thank you? Where would you recommend?”

“Well . . . the Old Quarter’s not far. There's some really great shops there, antiques and such. If you'd like, we could just walk around a bit first. They, er, have some antique jewellery stores . . . if there's someone you'd like to take a little something back to.”

Evan’s green eyes were fixed on a random spot on the ground. He was stuttering and nervous; he was acting like a teenager with a crush afraid of being shot down by the object of his affection. Draco had been raised to take advantage of anyone showing any kind of vulnerability, but what he felt at that moment was a wave of protectiveness. He said, “The only one waiting for me back home is my agent. What she really wants me to bring her back is a new manuscript, or at least an idea for one, but I would like to pick her up something.” Picturing radishes and bottle caps, he added, “Her taste in jewellery, though, is . . . somewhat eccentric, to say the least.”

Evan's lips twitched, curling into a smile seemingly against his will. Draco read this as the other man being pleased in spite of himself. But he was hesitant, like he wanted something he didn't think he should. He reminded Draco of the way a young child might eye up an older sibling's racing broom, wanting so badly to be up there himself, soaring through the sky, but afraid of falling.

No, Draco corrected himself. Evan looked like someone who had had a bad fall off his broom and was afraid of it happening again . . . wanting to grab a hold and take off, but the memory of his fall standing in his way. The protectiveness Draco had already begun to feel towards the other man doubled.

Casually, he asked, “How about you? Anyone you need to pick up something special for?”

“Oh, no. No, there's no one.”
After pausing as he tried to think of the right words, Draco said, “I had thought that possibly Rhys . . .” He let his voice trail off.

“Oh! No. Rhys is a friend.”

“With benefits?”

Evan choked with laughter. “No, definitely not.”

“It's just . . . when I walked in the door earlier . . . it rather looked like I'd interrupted something.”

“Rhys is . . . very . . . touchy-feely. It's just his nature. He's very perceptive, and he can't stand to see anyone hurting and not try to make them feel better. That's why he became a nurse. He works at the nursing home. When he came in yesterday, he was picking up a cake for one of the residents. It was her birthday, 100 years old. Got a letter from the Queen and everything.”

It didn't escape Draco's notice that Evan had just confirmed his suspicion—in not so many words—that something had hurt him, but he didn't mention it. What he did ask was, “He's perceptive?”

Evan nodded.

Taking a deep breath, Draco next asked, “And likes to play match maker for his friends?”

“God, yeah, he’s always trying to fix people up . . . Er . . .” Evan had begun to answer before seeming to realise the implication behind the question. When he did, his face turned crimson. “About that . . . .”

When Evan was unable to finish his sentence, Draco asked, “I know you said not to take him too seriously, but I just wondered . . . if . . . maybe he wasn't right. I can only answer for myself, of course, but he was pretty much spot on. And I'm rather hoping he was right regarding you as well.”

Evan’s eyes, fixed again on some random spot on the ground he apparently found very interesting, slowly closed. His face in profile, Draco could see his lips move, but he didn’t speak. He appeared to be either cursing under his breath or debating with himself. Draco thought he was possibly doing a little of both, and he gave the other man time to come to a decision. He just hoped it was the decision he wanted to hear.

Draco glanced around them; no one seemed to be in the same part of the garden or looking in their direction. With Evan’s attention focused away from him for the moment, he cautiously slid his wand out of the special pocket sown into the seam of his trousers and, keeping his hand lowered and blocked from sight beside his leg, cast a non-verbal Celo Charm to screen them from any eyes that might wonder their way.

Evan licked his lips, and Draco’s eyes widened as they followed the path of the tip of Evan’s tongue, wanting to feel that tongue against his own. When Evan bit his lower lip, pulling it slowly between his teeth, Draco nearly groaned out loud.

Evan laughed, but there was no humor in it. “Oh, I’m arse over tits, alright.”

It was exactly what Draco had wanted to hear, but the dejected tone didn’t match the words. Evan sounded like he was saying the exact opposite, like he was turning him down.

Draco waited, but Evan didn’t say anything more, disappointed he asked, “Is that a bad thing?”

“That’s a very bad thing.”
The words stung badly, but Draco reminded himself that he was sure Evan had been hurt before and that it was only to be expected he’d be skittish about opening himself up to being hurt again.

Evan continued, explaining, “I turned thirty last year. My best mates from school are all married, and most have kids. My closest friends here on Guernsey are settled; even Rhys, now. You know, it’s funny. All I’ve ever wanted to was to find someone and settle down, whereas Rhys always said settling down was nothing but settling for and there were too many blokes out there to ever settle for just one. But here we are, I’m still looking, and he’s been happily living with someone for nearly three years. I just . . . want someone I can fall asleep next to and have him or her still there when I wake up, and no matter how much I fancy you—and bloody fuck do I fancy you—you’re just not that person.”

Draco had never actually slept with anyone, ever. He’d shared a bed with many women, but there had never been any actual sleeping involved. They’d fucked, and that had been it. He’d never fallen asleep next to someone, had their arms to curl up in when his nightmares woke him in the middle of the night.

But he thought he might like wake up next to Evan in the morning.

When Draco told him as much, Evan said, “And September? Will you still be there in September?”

All Draco could do was admit that no, in September he wouldn’t still be there. He pictured himself returning to his empty manor, where, apart from Luna, he had nothing and no one but house-elves and portraits of dead people for company. It had never felt as bleak as it did after the prospect of spending the summer waking up next to Evan.

Evan said, “The end of the summer is going to come, and you’ll go home.”

“If you felt that way, why did you agree to come here with me?” Draco asked.

Evan studied his shoes before answering, “I think I must just be a masochist. You . . . just seemed so excited. I mean, you’re a writer, and to see Victor Hugo’s house must be a huge thing for you . . . and I just . . . wanted to be the one you saw it with.” Evan hesitated, then added in a low whisper, “Thought maybe you’d remember me, then.”

His words and the open and honest way they’d been spoken did a lot to soothe Draco’s disappointment, and he said, “Not likely to forget you. I, er . . . never . . . I’d fancied blokes before, but I’d never . . . I’ve never . . . .”

“You never acted on it before.”

It wasn’t a question, but Draco answered it regardless. “No.”

“Why not, may I ask?” Evan asked, his head tilted slightly to the side.

Draco breathed deeply as he considered why he’d never acted upon the attraction he’d sometimes felt to other men. “I don’t know, really. I just . . . My life has turned out so differently from what I’d expected—and in some ways, that’s a very good thing—that, I don’t know, I just always pictured myself with a wife and children, and I guess that I unknowingly clung to the idea of only seeing women to try to keep some small part of the life I’d grown up expecting to one day lead. Does that make sense?”

Any further explanation wasn’t possible because Draco saw Evan’s eyes settle on his mouth, and he found it difficult to think of anything else.
“It makes perfect sense,” Evan whispered.

Subconsciously reminded of watching Evan’s tongue glide across his lips, Draco’s own did the same, and it produced the same reaction in Evan as it had in him. He saw those green eyes widen and heard his breath hitch; Draco’s own breath caught in response, and he made himself look away before he did something to make a fool of himself.

Evan shifted his body to face him more fully. His voice was deep, husky. “I thought it’d be safe. I told myself Rhys was wrong, that you were likely as not straight as a wa . . . straight as an arrow. I told myself there was no way you returned my feelings, that I could spend time with you without risking anything because even if by some chance you were gay, your lovers have probably all been intellectuals. You’d not likely be interested in a simple baker who never went to university.”

Draco wanted to stand up and scream that his lovers had all been anyone willing to let him fuck them and that he’d never wanted any of them half as much as he wanted Evan, but as Evan had spoken, he’d slowly moved towards him, closing the distance between them, and Draco had lost the ability to speak, to move . . . to think of anything other than the fact that Evan’s lips were about to press against his own.

His last coherent thought, just before those lips brushed across his, was that he was bloody glad he’d cast that Celo Charm.

Evan’s lips were soft, warm skin against Draco’s own.

Evan was the aggressor; he controlled the kiss, and all Draco could do was follow along, let him take the lead. The kiss was slow, languid. Evan’s lips moved across Draco’s, covering them with slow, closed-mouth kisses. His hands came up and captured Draco’s face, holding him still while his tongue replaced his lips, and he alternated between light, quick licks along Draco’s lower lip and pulling it between his own to gently nibble.

His hands moved from Draco’s face, one burying itself in his hair, the other moving down his throat to his chest before wrapping around his waist and pulling them closer together.

This was all so new to Draco, and he was desperately trying to sort out his feelings—he didn’t know whether to pull Evan onto his lap or climb onto his, or to just pull him to the ground and climb on top of him. He settled for shifting his body to turn more fully towards Evan, and let his own tongue come out to meet his. As they deepened the kiss, they moaned into each other’s mouths.

Draco put his arms around Evan, holding him flush against his own body. He moved his mouth along Evan’s jaw and was surprised at how smooth the skin was. By this time of the afternoon, he’d have expected his jaw to be rough and coarse with stubble, but it was perfectly smooth. He sucked on the skin just below Evan’s ear, hard enough to be felt but not to leave a mark, before closing his lips over the lobe and softly biting down on it.

Evan moaned loudly.

Somewhere nearby a child squealed with laughter, and a man’s voice shouted, “No! Harry, stop!”

Draco and Evan jumped apart, both breathing hard.

About fifteen feet away, a young boy of around five had run away from his parents and had trampled his way into one of the many flower beds in the garden. A man, presumably his father, grabbed him by the arm and pulled him out of the bed, nervously looking around, clearly hoping the damage hadn’t been spotted by the staff. He dragged the child away from the trod-on flowers, scolding him
as they moved quickly away.

“I told you, Harry, not in the flowers!”

The child whined, “But I want to pick the pretty flowers for mummy!”

Draco couldn’t hear the father’s response; they’d gone too far away. Still breathing hard, he glanced at Evan. He was looking right at him. His eyes were wide, his lips were parted and swollen, a deeper pink after their kisses. He looked anxious. Understandable, really. Draco himself had had a bit of a fright at the thought of being caught snogging in public, and he knew they were well hidden from view by the Celo Charm he’d cast. But Evan didn’t know that.

Draco laughed nervously. He didn’t know if Evan was only shaken at the thought that they’d nearly been caught and was wondering how they hadn’t been—because it was obvious they hadn’t been seen in spite of how in the open they were—or if he regretted the kiss.

He thought to himself, _Merlin, please don’t let him regret it_, and aloud said, “Near thing, that.”

Evan studied his face for a moment before agreeing, his heavy breathing slowly returning to normal. “Very near.”

The corners of Evan’s mouth twitched before slowly spreading into a wide smile. He laughed and ran his hand through his hair. “I, er, believe you mentioned something about grabbing some dinner?”

“And I believe you mentioned something about the Old Quarter.”

XoXoX

Harry was more than ready to leave the gardens; although he’d known they were well hidden from view by the charm he’d cast quickly and quietly when Luke’s attention had been momentarily diverted, hearing his name shouted at such a moment had shaken him rather badly. He’d been sure he’d been recognised and that photos of him snogging Luke would be plastered all over the next morning’s _Daily Prophet_. Even after all this time, they couldn’t leave him be and often ran bogus stories about where he’d supposedly been seen, what he’d supposedly been doing, and with whom.

“Ready to get out of here, then?” Harry hoped his voice didn’t sound as anxious to Luke as it did to himself, but he badly wanted to leave and was almost ready to grab the other man by the arm and drag him out of there. Suddenly, every person in the garden seemed suspicious. The woman standing with young Harry and his father was looking straight at him; he was sure of it. Since the end of the war, it seemed like half the baby boys born in the Wizarding world had been named Harry. His best friend, Ron, liked to tease him that that was only because the other half already had an older brother named Harry. The three could be a magical family. Harry glanced back at the small family suspiciously before looking around the gardens.

_And the older couple just exiting the house . . . dressed like that? The man’s wearing a flower print shirt and short trousers with black knee socks and sandals. The hat the woman’s wearing . . . It looks like half of her head is being eaten by enormous, multi-coloured butterflies. No chance are they really Muggles._

“Very,” Luke said as he jumped to his feet. Surprisingly, Harry thought he seemed as anxious to leave as he himself was, and he appeared just as uneasy.

Harry dearly hoped that unease wasn’t the result of his regretting the kiss they’d shared, because the moment their lips had touched, any hope Harry had had of keeping things under control went flying
off the broom. To blazes with common sense; he wanted Luke, and unless the other man said no, he was going to have him, even if it was only for the summer. He didn’t want to waste a single day.

Harry guided them towards the Old Quarter. One of his favourite things about living in St. Peter Port was that he could get almost anywhere he needed to go by walking. His home to his bakery was only a ten minute walk. The market, his favourite pubs and restaurants, almost nothing was more than a fifteen or twenty minute walk away, even if most of that walk was either up or down hill. It kept him in shape—walking up and down all those hills and stairs—that was for sure. And the ease with which one could walk almost anywhere in town and the good bus transportation around the island made his never having learnt to drive irrelevant.

The walk was a silent one, but it was not a comfortable silence; for Harry, it was filled with anticipation, spent thinking about their mind-blowing kiss and wondering if Luke was also remembering it.

He also thought about doing more than just kissing the man walking beside him, and he wondered if Luke was thinking about that as well. But Luke had never been with a man before, and Harry wondered if he might want to take it slow.

He hoped not; they didn’t have time for slow.

Under normal circumstances, Harry was not one to jump into sex too quickly in a relationship. In his case, it could be very risky to give too much of himself to another person too soon; there was always the chance the person knew more than they let on, knew who he really was, and that he or she was only after his name or his money. He also wanted to be sure both he and the other person wanted the same thing, that the other person didn’t see him as just a casual fuck buddy.

But with Luke, he didn’t want to go slow. One thing he could never lose sight of was how very short a summer was. Better to enjoy every moment of Luke’s company whilst he could than to waste what little time they had regretting that time not be longer.

As he had once been told, it does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live.

Presently, they arrived at the Old Quarter and entered Mill St, which was decked out with bunting in Guernsey’s red, yellow and white colours. Luke stopped to look in the windows of the Quay Gallery and admire a display of landscape photographs taken all around the island. They went inside and browsed around. Luke bought prints of Fermain Bay and La Tables des Pions, The Fairy Ring. He seemed particularly interested in the prints of The Fairy Ring, and as they left the store and continued down the street, Harry explained, “They say if you walk around the stone circle three times and make a wish, it will come true.”

Luke grinned and asked him if he’d ever tried it, and he responded that no, he had not. Not for lack of Luna’s urging, he added silently. Out loud he said, “A friend of mine from school is convinced Guernsey is inhabited by fairies. Every time she visits we have to go to Le Creux ès Faies, Passage Tomb. She’s convinced it's the entrance to the Fairy Kingdom.”

“Your friend sounds a lot like my agent. She told me all about Guernsey’s native fairies. She said they’re helpful. She thought maybe they’d help me with a little inspiration. She’s a bit loony, but she’s a good friend, and at this point, I’ll try anything. I may even go to the Fairy Ring and give it a go. The place she hired for me is near there. Certainly couldn’t hurt.”

Glancing sideways at Luke, Harry ventured, “We could try that one day.”
He nearly jumped for joy when Luke grinned and said that yes, they could.

Harry said, “I think the fairies are supposed to be helpful more in the way of leaving someone a loaf of bread or gâche, or maybe a bean jar, though. Something like that.”


“Guernsey gâche. Gâche is the D’gernésiais word for cake. It’s a kind of a sweetbread. I make mine with candied orange peel and sultanas, but some people use currants. The Guernsey butter is key. You’ve got to use real Guernsey butter, or they’ll throw you off the island—literally, drag you to the harbour and chuck you off the pier.”

Luke laughed, “And a bean jar?”

“Just what the name says. A jar filled with beans. It takes days to make. Traditionally, women used to start it Friday night, so I’ve been told. The beans had to soak overnight. Then the next day, they’d be boiled in a stock with cheap cuts of meat and poured into a pottery jar. The jars would be stored for dinner on Monday.”

“Seems like a bloody load of work for some beans. Why the certain days of the week?”

“Monday was laundry day."

At Luke’s incredulous look, Harry explained, “This was back when there was more to doing laundry than throwing it in a machine and pressing a couple buttons. They didn’t have time to do all the family’s laundry for a whole week and cook. They would often reheat the jar for dinner on Tuesday, as well.”

“Why? What was Tuesday?”

“Ironing day.”

Luke laughed, “You are making this up!”

“I am not!” Harry feigned offense, but his grin gave him away. “Look, there’s a book shop, I bet they’ll have a book on Guernsey and its culture.”

Just as Harry had suspected, they found several books on Guernsey geared towards tourists in the store, and Harry was just about to show Luke one on the traditional food of the island, but the other man had drifted off to the other side of the shop. Harry moved over to him, the book he wanted to show him in his hand, but at the look on Luke’s face, he set it down, forgotten.

What had he been thinking, taking a writer who was suffering from writer’s block to a book store?

Luke’s silver eyes scanned the shelves, looking in the W’s. The shop had two of Simon Wrentmore’s books on the shelf. He picked up both of them.

“I’ve got all of his books back at mine. You’re welcome to borrow them, if you’d like,” Harry offered.

With a long last look, Luke set them down and turned away. His eyes averted, he opened his mouth twice without speaking before facing Harry and asking, “Which was your favourite? Of his books, I mean.”

Harry didn’t have to think about it. As they walked out the door, he answered, “His first. From This
“Why that one? Do you think they went downhill from there?”

“What? No. Not at all. It’s just . . . I’d been through . . . ,” Harry exhaled slowly, “some real shite, and when that book came out, I was still trying to get over it three years later.

“I’d gone back and finished school, then spent a year training for the job I’d always wanted, only to realise it wasn’t what I wanted to spend my life doing at all. Before the final year of training, my best mate and I got royally pissed for my birthday, and I blurted out that I bleedin’ hated it. The next day, when we’d sobered up, he confronted me. He told me it was OK to quit if it wasn’t what I wanted. It was what I had always thought I’d wanted, and it was what everyone I cared about expected of me, and it just . . . I know it sounds mad, but I honestly didn’t realise I didn’t have to do it. I didn’t realise I could just say I didn’t want to do it after all. I needed to be told I wouldn’t be letting everyone down if I quit.

“After that, I just . . . drifted. Nothing I did . . . fit quite right. I was relieved to not have to return to training for a job I knew I didn’t want, but there was nothing else I did want. A friend suggested I should go away on holiday, be alone for a while and get away from everything, and see if things didn’t seem clearer when I got back. She said sometimes you need to step away from all the trees before you can see the forest. She recommended Guernsey. She’d been here before.

“I’d never been much of a reader, but I had nothing but time on my hands, so another one of my friends stuck a pile of books in my bag—Mione’s answer to any and every problem is a book—and From This Day Forward was one of them. I couldn’t put it down. I read it cover to cover in a day and a half, and then I read it again. I could relate to the main character. I could understand him. He felt very real to me. I could see a lot of myself in him.” Harry smiled. “Figuratively, of course.”

Luke’s attention was rapt; he looked to be hanging on Harry’s every word. Harry stopped in front of their destination, The Old Quarter Restaurant on Mansell Street. He reached out for the door, holding it open and stepping aside for Luke to enter first, but the other man didn’t move. His eyes were looking straight into Harry’s. With his voice filled with emotion, he said, “It really meant something to you.”

“Er, yeah. Do you want to borrow it?”

Luke shook his head. He said, “I have a copy.”

Inside the restaurant, Harry was greeted by the owner personally, as he had been there many times with friends, and he introduced Luke. There was a scattering of customers, but the place was not yet full. As they were being shown to a corner table for two in the back, they passed families starting their meals and couples ignoring theirs, their eyes only for each other. At one table, a woman sat alone with a drink in front of her. She was casting anxious glances toward the door every time someone moved. Harry explained, “They’ve not been open long, but they’re already gaining quite a nice following. We’re lucky, it’s early. They’ll be packed soon, but not being on the seafront, they don’t get as many tourists as some places do.”

The place was small, cosy, with chairs upholstered in black or white leather and mahogany tables with heavy, turned legs, rough-hewn stone walls painted a soft white and lined by sconces, and heavy exposed dark wood beams in the ceiling. “It’s charming,” Luke responded as he looked around.
Scanning the menus they’d just been given, Luke asked, “What do you recommend?”

“Everything is good. The food here is really excellent. For starters, my favourite is the smoked salmon. But not this evening.”

“Why not this evening?”

Very bluntly, Harry said, “It’s served with rocket salad and horseradish cream dressing, and as I fully intend to snog you again after dinner, I think it best to avoid anything with horseradish.”

Harry had kept his head down while he spoke, but he glanced up to see Luke’s reaction to his words. The other man had just taken a sip of his water. He choked on it.

“Alright, there?”

Luke coughed. “Fine.” Looking down at his menu, he cleared his throat and said, “Best to stay away from the onion mash, then, as well.”

xOxOx

Walking back towards the marina to catch a bus back to his cottage, Draco spotted a secluded nook between two buildings and grabbed Evan by the arm, dragging him deep into the space and cutting him off mid-sentence. He pressed him up against a wall. “I believe you promised me another snog.” Without giving Evan a chance to answer, Draco covered his mouth with his own.

By the time pudding had been brought after dinner, a slight shadow had begun to appear along Evan’s jawline, and it had been driving Draco half mad. He hadn’t been able to concentrate on anything other than what the no longer perfectly smooth skin would feel like under his lips, and now he could finally find out. He dragged his lips from Evan’s mouth to run them along his jaw and moaned at the feel of the coarse hairs. He could feel Evan’s breath against his face. The body pressed against his was so perfectly masculine, from the roughness of Evan’s jawline under his lips, to the flat chest against his own, to the broad shoulders under his hands and the strong arms wrapped around him. Everything about kissing Evan was perfect—the sounds he made, the way his hands moved over Draco’s body, pressing them closer together. He matched Draco perfectly. He was somehow both aggressive and submissive at the same time. One minute he ceded control to Draco, the next he stole it back.

As they pulled apart for air, breathless and both wanting more, Draco thought to himself that the end of the summer seemed somehow much closer than it had thirty-six hours ago.

Evan’s mouth returned to Draco’s neck, and between licking, sucking, biting and kissing, he asked, “You’ll come back tomorrow?”

Draco heard the uncertainty in his voice. Remembering Evan’s words from earlier in the day, he promised, “I’ll be there in the morning. Likely late morning, though,” before recapturing the other man’s mouth. He tasted like chocolate and wine.

Draco knew that if they didn’t stop soon, they’d get carried away and go too far, and while it would hardly be his first time up against a wall in an alleyway, he didn’t want that with Evan. He let their kisses slow and become more leisurely, until he finally stepped back. Draco’s entire body thrummed with excitement as he caught his breath. His arms were scraped from being pressed between Evan’s back and the brick wall he’d pushed him against. His lips felt swollen and bruised, and they tingled from the stubble along Evan’s jaw and throat.
He felt more alive than he ever had before.

“I’ll see you in the morning, then,” Evan said, out of breath as well. He continued, “Tomorrow is supposed to be a particularly fine day, according to the weatherman. We could go to Fermain Bay, if you’d like. It’s quite small, but there’s a little café we could have lunch at. There’s a walk from town along the cliffs we could take. It’s about nine miles altogether. Fermain Bay is about halfway. To get down to the bay, you need to follow a steep cliff pathway, but it’s well worth it. There are places to stop here and there along the walk, and there is a tea room and a hotel with a bar near the end. Buses stop almost directly in front of the hotel to return to town. It usually takes about four or five hours, but it’ll be longer if we stop for lunch.”

Draco pressed another kiss against Evan’s lips. “Sounds perfect.”

Chapter End Notes

There a little snogging action for you!

The plot of Draco's first book will be revealed later. The hat the Muggle woman was wearing in the garden's at Hauteville House is meant to copy one worn by Princess Beatrice.

Drop me a review and let me know if you liked it!
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

This fic was written for the 2012 HD Career Fest on Livejournal.

Thank you to the army of betas who worked to get this ready for the fest: SecretlySeverus, Cleodoxa, EvilPumkin, AryaEragonPrincessShadeslayer, AsilleNellum, and Batgirl8968, and to Rebeccaann08 for submitting such a great prompt.

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In the morning, Draco found himself walking up the now-familiar side street towards the Holly and Feather, but the scene that greeted him as he approached was anything but familiar. The place was full of people. Every table was occupied, inside and out. There were people standing about, talking with each other and laughing, a cup of coffee or tea or a slice cake in hand. At some tables, a person sat quietly with a book or one of those electronic contraptions Muggles were so fond of. There was a queue of people at the counter. Loud chatter spilled over from those seated at one table to their friends at the next, and between those leaning against the walls and those in queue, but it all came to a hush as he stepped through the door, only to resume again a moment later in a rush of muffled whispers.

It was a friendly, warm environment. Neighbourly. A mix of young and old. Professional people, pensioners, and university students. Everyone knowing everyone else. Everyone talking to everyone else.

Draco felt the loneliness he’d lived with for so long stab through him.

Behind the counter stood Evan, his face scarlet but covered with a happy smile. Beside him stood a woman of an indeterminate age, and judging by the wink she’d just thrown at him, something she had said was the cause of the colour spreading across Evan’s cheeks. This, he suspected, was the cousin Amie who had covered for Evan on his afternoon off yesterday.

Draco felt uncomfortable, like a fish in a bowl. He did not like being the centre of attention, and as the only one not of the normal crowd, a newcomer interrupting the crowd of regulars, nearly every eye in the place was on him—some more discreetly than others, but all appraisingly. He felt like he’d crashed a party he’d not been invited to.

“Now, stop that, you lot,” the woman behind the counter admonished, and as if suddenly Imperiused, all eyes turned away and the level of conversation resumed what it had been before. “Evan, love, why don’t you take your friend ‘round back?”

As if he was the employee and she the boss, Evan obeyed and motioned for Draco to follow him through the door to the kitchen.
Evan’s kitchen was smaller than Draco would’ve imagined and so meticulously clean, it looked brand new, as if it had never been used before. “Is this a bad time?” he asked. “We never set an exact time, so I wasn’t sure.”

“Not at all. We’re just in the middle of elevenses, is all. There are a number of offices nearby—insurance agents, investment brokers, estate agents, and whatnot. They’re short on time, so they call their orders in ahead. It’s easy, though. It’s almost always the same people, and they almost always get the same thing. Some just get it to go, some stay. Probably depending on whether the boss is in or not, I reckon. Give it ten minutes and the place will mostly clear out as the last as the corporate lot get back to their offices. The rest of them will linger for a while longer.” Evan led him to a door in the back wall. “My office is through here.”

Once the office door closed, Draco pushed Evan up against the door and kissed him deeply.

Breathless, Evan said, “Good morning to you, too,” as they pulled apart. He added, “You seem to be developing a habit of pushing me up against things.”

“D’ you mind?”

Evan’s hands slid down Draco back to his arse and squeezed it. Draco tried to keep himself from moaning. In answer to his question, Evan said, “Fuck, no,” and attacked Draco’s neck, biting and sucking like he was part vampire. Draco let his head fall back, giving Evan better access, but the assault was short-lived, leaving Draco wanting more. “I have to get back out there.”

Contradictory to his words, Evan made no attempt to free himself, and instead he let his hands linger on Draco’s arse. “I thought about you last night.”

“You did?”

He kissed him again twice before pushing against Draco’s shoulders.

Reluctantly, Draco stepped back.

He pressed one last soft kiss against Draco’s lips and said, “I did, and I’ll tell you about it later. I won’t be long.”

The only chair in the room was Evan’s desk chair, and he motioned for Draco to have a seat at it while he finished up out front.

Like his kitchen, Evan’s office was small. Its largest feature was a very old-looking oak desk opposite a window overlooking a lane that ran behind the building. The walls were painted a soft off-white and were covered by a few photographs and several colourful children’s drawings, framed and matted as if they were artworks purchased in a gallery.

On the desk were more framed pictures, these were of Evan with different children. One boy in particular, the oldest by the looks of him, was in more of the pictures than any of the others. He was in nearly every one, in fact.

And he looked unmistakably like Evan.

Draco picked up one of the pictures of the boy at random and studied it. His loneliness stabbed at him as he looked at the picture of Evan and this boy, obviously his son, grinning at something or someone out of the camera’s range.

He set the photograph down and looked at the rest. Several of the children were redheaded, some a
light strawberry blond, some reddish brown, some truly ginger. He could be looking at the next generation of Weasleys, there was so much red hair. But in almost every picture the dark raven hair of Evan’s son stood out. Draco wondered where the boy was now.

True to his word, Evan returned in about fifteen minutes, grinning from ear to ear. That smile was for him, Draco knew. It wouldn’t be for long enough, but at least for today, and hopefully for the next several weeks, Evan was his. He asked, “All ready, then?”

XoXoX

Harry couldn’t wait to get started. He’d done this particular walk multiple times. He knew all the best, most secluded spots along the way, and he was looking forward to dragging Luke into as many of them as he could. He’d even taken the precaution of Apparating to a few of the best late last night and casting Muggle repelling and privacy charms. “Yeah. The crowd’s mostly cleared out. Just a few left, but they’re friends of Amie’s. They’ll be here for a while, likely as not,” Harry cringed, “gossiping.”

Luke made a scandalized face before smiling. “Gossiping? Surely not. About who, or daren’t I ask?”

“Well, it’s not the latest Wills and Kate baby rumour.”

“What could possibly beat out whether or not there is a baby bump hidden behind the strategically held handbag?” Luke laughed.

The words had been spoken with no trace of sarcasm, and Harry felt his stomach lurch. He’d thought Luke had realised the talk was centred on them. No one knew better than Harry what it was like to be the subject of the gossip of strangers, and he had no idea how Luke would react. His friends and customers were a good group of people, and the gossip was good-natured, ranging from guessing the penname of Guernsey’s new secret author, to tragic theories for his writer’s block, to the romantic possibility of their island—or, rather, one of their island’s inhabitants in particular—curing it.

A moment before Luke had walked in, Amie had suggested, in a voice too low to carry beyond themselves, that if Luke wrote a book about kinky sex based on the two of them, that he should insist Luke change his name, or he’d need to add on to the shop to accommodate all the new customers wanting to get a glimpse of him and sample his goodies in person.

Harry cleared his throat. “Er, apparently . . . we do.”


“But only until tomorrow when someone’s daughter announces she’s having a baby or someone gets a new carpet in the parlour. They’re a fickle bunch.”

“Fame is a very fleeting thing, or so they say.”

To Harry, it felt like his fame would never fade. Surely his fifteen minutes should have ended by now, he thought. “Or so they say,” he repeated.

As they headed south, Castle Cornet came into view. “It starts just along here,” Harry said as they walked along the picturesque waterfront—shops painted in shades of white or with the stone left its natural grey colour stood to their right; to their left, waves lapped the old seawall several feet below. Harry inhaled deeply. The weatherman had been spot on with the day’s forecast. It was mild, with a light breeze coming in off the sea; high above them, wispy white cirrus clouds streaked across the
bright blue sky. The water in the harbour rippled as countless boats manoeuvred their way from the marina to the open sea. It was perfect.

He said, “One of the last stops on the walk is Petit Port bay. It’s lovely, but we can skip it, if you’d rather. A lot of people do.”

“Why would we skip it?”

“It’s only accessible by a flight of stairs. About three hundred of them.”

“Ah. Yes, perhaps we could pass. I’m sure there are other sights to see.”

Harry grinned mischievously. “Yes, I’m sure there are.”

Every so often their hands bumped as they walked. The accidental, casual brush of Luke’s hand against his felt both innocent and intimate, and Harry’s heart jumped each and every time. This was something real couples did. Real couples went for walks together, their hands brushing each other’s; they took afternoons off to just enjoying being together.

It had been so long since Harry had been a part of a real couple. If he wasn’t careful, he could forget that his time with Luke was limited. Luke was interesting, and he was funny. He made Harry feel like he was really listening to whatever Harry had to say, even when he’d seemed distracted. Those times, it had seemed like Luke’s mind had drifted off somewhere because he’d been listening, because something Harry had said had struck a chord inside him. Luke made him feel like whatever Harry said or felt about something mattered to him. And sometimes, in the very limited time they’d spent together, Harry thought he’d caught a glimpse of something hidden behind those silver eyes, something that reminded Harry of what he saw reflected back to him in the mirror every morning.

Harry knew he was in very real danger of falling much harder than he should for the man walking beside him. Luke wasn’t his to keep.

They’d been walking a good while when Harry commented, “I hope you wore good walking shoes.”

“I came prepared. Luna made me get a pair when she hired the cottage for me.”

“Luna?”

“My friend. Coming to Guernsey was her idea.” Changing the subject Luke said, “It was nice of Amie to fill in for you.”

“Amie’s a kind of sometime part-time employee. She’s retired, and whenever she feels like working, she tells me I work too hard and need to take some time off. But she’s a great help. I normally take a lot of time off during the summer when my godson visits, and she takes care of the place for me. But Teddy’s not been feeling well. He must’ve caught some kind of bug at school; he’s been run down for weeks. His grandmother thought it best he stay home.”

“Your godson. About twelve or thirteen, dark hair? Looks exactly like you?”

Harry stumbled over his words. He had pictures of Teddy all over his desk, of course Luke would’ve seen them. Teddy, was a Metamorphmagus, which meant he could change his appearance at will. When he’d been younger, he’d not had much control over his ability, and his face and hair would shift to mimic those of people around him anytime he became excited. Anytime the two of them were together, he shifted to look like a near replica of Harry, and in the photos on his desk, Teddy could almost pass for a young Harry. “Er, yeah. That’s Teddy.”
“I thought he was your son. There’s quite a resemblance.”

“Yeah. Yeah, there is.” Harry let it go at that, hoping Luke would assume Teddy was a close relative, possibly a nephew, and that that would explain the resemblance.

A moment later, as they reached the top of the stairs at Clarence Battery and followed the footpath signs for Fermain Bay, Harry said. “There are several tracks that lead off the main path just through here.” The track joined the road for a short while before returning to the footpath. At a junction in front of a fence, Harry turned them down a track to the right, leading them away from the granite footpath signs for Fermain Bay. At Luke’s questioning glance, Harry said, “There’s something else down this way.”

Luke followed without further comment until, after only a couple of minutes, the track turned a corner, losing sight of the footpath to Fermain Bay completely, and abruptly ended. “It’s a dead end,” he said, surprised.

“I know,” Harry replied. “In the spring, this whole area is carpeted with little blue flowers, and loads of people take these little dead end tracks.”

“It’s summer.”

“Yeah, the flowers are long gone now. Nobody comes back this way this time of year.”

“Then why did we?”

Harry smirked and said, “Because nobody else will.”

And then he kissed him.

“Brilliant plan,” Luke gasped out as Harry ran his tongue over his Adam’s apple.

Harry pushed Luke backwards until he was pressed against a large tree. He said, “I thought so.”

Kissing Luke out in the wide open—though safely protected by his previously cast privacy spells—was hot as hell. Harry felt unrestrained, unrestricted, like never before. He couldn’t get enough of Luke, couldn’t kiss him deeply enough, couldn’t pull him firmly enough against himself. And Luke returned every kiss, every touch of lips and tongue eagerly. Gasps and sighs were interrupted by moans which became louder and more frequent as the two men locked together grew more heated. Hands became bolder, explored further, moved lower, slid under shirts, skimmed over muscled backs, up to broad shoulders. Hearts raced; breathing sped up.

Catching his breath momentarily, Harry let both of his hands fall below Luke’s waist and settle on his arse. He could feel Luke pressed against him, and it made him feel giddy how badly he wanted to slide his hands down the front of those trousers, feel Luke in his hands, taste him in his mouth. He felt as randy as a teenager losing his virginity but with none of the insecurity.

“I believe,” Luke panted, “you promise to tell me something.”

Unable to think of anything other than how badly he wanted the man in his arms, Harry asked, “I did?”

“You said you thought about me last night. You promised you’d tell me about it.”

“So I did,” Harry agreed. He’d been trying to get his breathing under control, but the reminder had the opposite effect. “In the shower. I imagined you there, watching me. Wanna guess what I was...

Eyes dilated with desire, cheeks flushed, lips slightly parted, Luke shook his head.

Harry’s hand slipped down to Luke’s waist and around to his stomach. He played with the scattering of hair around Luke’d navel before moving to the waistband of his trousers and teasing him. Harry captured his hand and pressed it against the bulge in the front of Luke’s own trousers. He could feel the tip of Luke’s arousal against his fingers, and he pressed slightly against it. His voice low and husky, Harry whispered, “I want to watch you.”

Luke’s eyes widened before falling half-lidded. He glanced around them. “Here?”

Harry felt bolder than he could ever remember. He pressed Luke’s palm harder against his own arousal. “Yes, here. Right now.”

Luke looked alarmed, but he also looked undeniably interested. “Someone could come,” he attempted to argue, but there was no power to it, and he stepped closer to Harry. Beneath his hand, Harry could feel Luke fondling himself.

“That’s the plan,” Harry said against his lips as Luke kissed him.

“You know what I mean.” His voice held more conviction that it had a moment earlier, but his hand never stopped moving over himself.

“No one will see us. I promise.”

Luke’s mouth moved over Harry’s face, kissing his chin, his eyes, his jaw. “Close your eyes.”

“No, I want to watch you.”

“Hearing you say that has to be the most erotic thing I’ve ever heard.” He kissed Harry’s eyelids. “Just keep them closed for a second for me. Humour me, yeah?”

Harry did as asked.


“That rather takes the fun out of it.”

“You said you imagined me watching you. I’m watching you now. Show me what you did to yourself last night.”

Keeping his eyes closed, Harry undid the button on his fly. “You want to order me what to do?” he asked, his voice seductively low. As Harry slid his hand down his trousers and took his cock in his hand he heard hiss-like sounds, like Parseltongue. The sounds had come from both of them and combined on the air into one. Harry teased himself, running his hand up and down his length slowly, taking his time, drawing it out, knowing full well Luke was following the movement of his hand.

His voice trembling, Luke asked, “Do you have any idea what you look like right now?”

They kissed while Harry continued to stroke himself, and he heard the sound of buttons being pulled open and fabric being pushed aside before he heard a long breathy moan. “Open your eyes. Open your eyes and watch me watching you.”
Harry opened his eyes and saw that Luke had opened his trousers far more than he himself had. Rather than pulling himself through the slit in his boxers as Harry had, Luke had pushed the thin cotton of his boxer briefs down, putting himself fully on display for Harry’s eyes as he stroked himself.

The air around them was filled with the sound of heavy breathing and muffled oaths as their hands moved. They looked into each other’s eyes and watched as the other pumped himself, both working himself closer to his climax until Harry cried out, “Oh, fuck, yes,” followed moments later by Luke, gasping and panting, their cum landing on the ground at their feet.

Breathlessly, Luke sighed against Harry’s temple, “Fuck, I feel like a teenager getting his first hand job behind the broomshed.”

Harry’s post-orgasm bliss was gone in a second, and he felt gooseflesh run up his back. “Behind the broomshed?”

Luke’s body felt rigid in his arms for a moment before he relaxed, and he laughed. “Did I say that? See what you do to me? I don’t even know what I’m saying. I meant in the broom closet.”

Harry forced himself to relax, but a small knot remained in the pit of his stomach. Trying to drive the nagging sense of foreboding from his mind, he told himself it had just been a slip of the tongue—Luke had misspoken, that was all. Repeating that to himself, Harry said, “And I haven’t even touched you yet.”

“No, you haven’t.”

A small part of Harry’s mind was warning him something wasn’t right, but the greater portion of him was telling him this, being with Luke, might just be more right than any of his other relationships had ever been before. Harry listened to the latter part and pushed the former to a back corner of his mind. He tightened his arms around Luke and leaned his forehead against Luke’s shoulder as their breathing returned to normal. He was in way too deep after just three days, and he had no idea how he was going to give this man up at the end of the summer.

Luke’s fingers slid up and down Harry’s spine. When he spoke, Harry could feel his breath mingle in his hair. “Anything wrong?”

Harry shook his head. “I’m just surprised at myself, is all. I don’t usually let myself fall this badly for people I barely know. I’m usually much more guarded.”

“You mean you don’t make a habit of pulling men into dead end trails in the woods and wanking with them on three days acquaintance?”

“Definitely not,” Harry said emphatically, pressing a kiss into the point where Luke’s neck curved into his shoulder. They stood together silently, each lost in his own thoughts but each thinking the same thing—that they didn’t want the summer to end. After a long pause, Harry asked, “I don’t suppose I could convince you to extend your stay?”

Reluctantly, Luke answered, “I’m afraid not.”

Harry heard enough hesitance in Luke’s voice that, against his better judgement, he felt a small ray of hope form inside him. He tried to tell himself not to let himself get carried away—even if Luke didn’t leave at the end of the summer, he knew nothing about Harry, not even his real name. That had always been the obstacle that had derailed his past relationships. He’d never been able to get passed it, to bring himself to tell his partner the truth about himself and his past, and they had all eventually
gotten tired of knowing he was keeping something from them. The secret that allowed him to live a normal life was also the secret that prevented him from doing so. It was the perfect catch-22.

But for the first time, Harry thought maybe the risk of telling someone would be worth taking.

“Can’t blame a bloke for trying,” he said.

Chapter End Notes

I know, I know. Short chapter. But I hope the, um, walk through the woods made up for it. This is one of two short chapters.

Drop me a review and let me know what you thought!
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

This fic was written for the 2012 HD Career Fest on Livejournal.

Thank you to the army of betas who worked to get this ready for the fest: SecretlySeverus, Cleodoxa, EvilPumkin, AryaEragonPrincessShadeslayer, AsilleNellum, and Batgirl8968, and to Rebeccaann08 for submitting such a great prompt.

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See the end of the chapter for more notes

The next morning, Draco opened his eyes, happier to see the new day than he could remember being since his childhood. He was going to see Evan again. They’d made plans to go to a beach on the west side of the island that Evan said had the best chippy on Guernsey. Draco grinned and stretched languidly in bed. They’d eventually gone on to finish their walk yesterday, even if it had taken significantly longer than the four hours the guidebooks claimed. There’d been quite a few dead end tracks off the main footpath to be explored.

He could hear Tibby singing in the kitchen as she prepared his breakfast. In his good mood, even her off-key singing sounded better. Throwing his covers off, he decided he would have to buy the elf her own wireless, so she could have some musical accompaniment.

Arriving in St. Peter Port on one of the earliest buses, Draco made straight for the Holly and Feather. It would be far more convenient to find a secluded area he could ward and Apparate to, but he was resigned to taking the bus. When living in the Muggle world, one needed to be seen coming and going as a Muggle.

As he walked along the High Street, Draco’s eye was caught by a window display featuring an assortment of trinkets, including music boxes. He stopped to look, and he smiled. A few minutes later, he exited the store with a small bag containing a delicate little music box made of burl vavona and burl madrona woods and adorned with flowers made from inlaid white enamel. It was trimmed with carved ebony. The music box rivalled anything his mother might have had on her own dressing table and had cost an obscene amount of money.

All Tibby would know or care about was that it was pretty and played pretty music.

He arrived at the Holly and Feather before the elevenses crowd to find Evan alone and wiping down the counter. He looked up when Draco entered and smiled, but the smile didn’t reach his eyes. He explained without Draco’s needing to ask.

“I spoke to my godson’s grandmother this morning. He’s still not feeling well.”

“Flu?”
“No. That’s what’s so odd—he’s not ill. He’s just not well. He’s out of breath constantly. He’s eating her out of house and home—which is pretty much normal seeing as he’s thirteen—but he’s eating even more than usual now. He’s very lethargic, which is very unusual. Teddy’s normally like a lightning bolt of energy, but now he just lies around.”

“Has he been seen by a doctor?”

Evan nodded. “An endless stream of them, it seems. Teddy’s health . . .” He sighed, “Teddy’s father had . . . a serious health issue. No one knows for sure how Teddy’s health will be affected by his father’s condition. So far, all the tests have come back negative, but there’s no way to know for sure that that won’t change as he grows, so we just keep testing.”

“Are Teddy’s symptoms the same as his father’s?”

“No, nothing remotely like, thankfully.”


“He’s such a great kid. I’ve four godchildren, and I know I shouldn’t, but I have to admit, Teddy’s my favourite. He was my first.” The green of Evan’s eyes seemed to sparkle as he talked about his godson.

“And he looks just like you.”

“Yes, he does.”

Evan turned away and straightened already straight stacks of coffee cups. Draco recognised the action from the other day; straightening things was a nervous habit of Evan’s, it seemed. “If you’d rather cancel because you’re worried about your godson . . .” He let his sentence trail off, hoping Evan didn’t want to cancel their afternoon plans.

“Oh, no! No, not at all. I am worried about Teddy, of course, but there is no need to cancel our plans. I’d not be of any use to him hanging around this place. I’m sure it’s nothing serious; with all the tests the poor boy is subjected to, we’d know if it was.”

Two women came in, and Draco took a seat by the window and looked down the street towards the port while Evan waited on them. They took their time making their selections, but were soon gone.

“I know I’m early this morning. I hope I’m not in the way.”

“Course not. It’ll be a little while before Amie comes, though. Have you had breakfast? Can I get you anything before she comes?”

“Maybe some of those strawberries with the cream?”

“Coming right up. Tea?”

Evan put the kettle on without waiting for an answer and brought a plate of strawberries filled with cream over to Draco’s table.

“These are so good,” Draco said as he picked one up. “How do you do this?” he asked, referring to the way the strawberry was cut into quarters to just before the stem and filled with thick cream.

“I told you,” Evan smirked. “Magic.”

“Is that so?”
“It is,” Evan responded as he took a berry from the plate and licked the cream off the side before biting into the fruit. “Maybe one day, I’ll show you.” He licked a little cream off the side of his finger. “If you stay, that is.”

Draco bit his lip and cast his eyes down. He could see himself giving in, staying on Guernsey, staying with Evan. How he could be considering leaving the manor behind for a man he’d only known for a few days, Draco didn’t know, but he was. He’d thought of little else last night while lying alone in his bed. But if Evan knew the truth about him, he’d not be asking him to stay.

“You did a little shopping, I see? A present for your agent?” Evan asked. His voice was light, but Draco could hear an echo of disappointment beneath his casual tone.

“Oh, Luna, no. No, this is for Tibby. She’s . . . . Tibby takes care of me.”

“You’ve a housekeeper?” Evan’s surprise was clear in his voice.

Draco debated how much to tell Evan. But he’d already let the pixie out of the cage, and there was so much that he had to keep from Evan—what little of himself Draco could share with him, he wanted to. Maybe it would help him understand why he couldn’t stay, even if he might want to. “I’ve a staff. Tibby’s more my personal servant. The others mainly take care of the estate and grounds.”

“You have . . . an estate.” The surprise in Evan’s voice had turned to incredulity.

“Er, yes.”

“A real estate.” Evan’s words were both a statement and a question.

“Yes, a real estate.”

“Like on those Great Treasure Houses of England type programmes?”

“Basically.”

“Bloody hell. You’re serious, aren’t you? You’re not having me on? Are you, are you titled or something? Should I be calling you ‘Sir’?”

“I’m not titled, but you can call me ‘sir’ if you want. You did say something yesterday about my telling you what to do that sounded like it could have potential.” Draco smirked and wiggled his eyebrows. He turned serious. “But now do you see why I have to go back? Even if I wanted to stay, which I’m afraid I might, I can’t. I’m the last of my line. My parents are gone; I’ve no brothers or sisters. I’m all that’s left. The only family I have are an aunt and a cousin I’ve never met.”

“Hm, the only family I have are an aunt and a cousin I wish I’d never met.”

Evan started to laugh, but before Draco could ask him what was funny, the first of the elevenses crowd arrived, and he got up to go back to work. Amie arrived shortly after the first of the customers, and as Draco watched the two work behind the counter, his mind started to drift, and he thought about the young sales girl who’d rung up the music box for him. Something about her had felt familiar, but he couldn’t place it.

Suddenly, he realised what it was. She’d reminded him of a woman he’d noticed at the Old Quarter restaurant that first night with Evan. Something about her had peeked his interest, but then Evan had mentioned snogging, and the woman had flown right from his mind.
As he watched people walking in the street, some passing by the bakery going about their business and others stopping in, Draco’s mind wandered, remembering the woman in the restaurant. She’d been sitting alone. That had been what caught his attention, he supposed. She’d had long brown hair that hung loose over her shoulders, and she had been dressed expensively. Rather over dressed, he remembered thinking, as the restaurant had been a nice one, but casual. And she’d been nervous. By the way she’d been twisting the napkin in her hands and glancing fretfully at the door every time somebody had moved, he’d gotten the impression that whomever she’d been meeting was somebody she’d wanted to impress, but at the same time, not somebody she’d been particularly anxious to see.

Nervous. A blind date perhaps? his mind supplied. Not a lover—wrong kind of anxious. Perhaps it wasn’t that she didn’t want to see the person she’d been waiting on, perhaps it had been the circumstances. She’d worried about being seen with him possibly? A married lover, maybe? Or was she the one who was married? A married woman meeting her lover?

“I brought you a coffee for whilst you wait. I forgot about the pot of tea I put on earlier.”

Draco was startled to see that while his mind had been drifting, the bakery had filled. Every table was taken, and people were again standing, leaning against the walls with sweets and cups of tea.

Some were looking at him and the empty plate in front of him.

“Should I go in the back?” he asked as he took a spoon and skimmed off some of the cocoa powder dusted whipped cream.

“No, stay here.”

Draco hummed with approval as he sipped the coffee.

Luke grinned. “Like it?”

“It’s wonderful. What is it?”

“Iced hazelnut coffee with whipped Guernsey cream and cocoa powder.” he answered. “What were you thinking about just now? You looked so serious.” Evan brushed his fingers across his forehead. “Your forehead was all crinkled up.”

“I was just thinking about a woman I remembered.”

Evan was surprised, and he looked hurt, though he tried to hide it. “Oh?”

“Don’t be daft,” Draco said, smiling. “Not like that. Just someone I remembered seeing when we had dinner the other night. She was sitting by herself.”

Evan nodded. “I remember noticing her. All done up, she was.”

“Exactly. All done up, and sitting in a restaurant alone. I just wondered why.”

“Waiting for her date, I reckon.”

“Mhmm. But she was nervous.”

“Blind date, then.”

“That’s what I was thinking. But what if it wasn’t a blind date? What if she was married and waiting for her lover?”
“You think she was having an affair?” Evan asked, surprised.

“Oh, no. Not at all. I wasn’t really thinking about her at all—not specifically, I mean. Not her as a real person, just a hypothetical nervous woman all done up and waiting alone in a restaurant.” Draco paused and looked out the window. Turning back to Evan he asked, “You wouldn’t have some paper and a biro I could borrow, would you?”

Eyes widening, Evan smiled and said, “Yeah, sure. Hang on.”

He returned a moment later with a pad of paper and a black biro, and Draco spent the next hour jotting things down, mumbling to himself, striking out what he’d just written and writing something else. When he looked back up, the bakery was empty save himself, Evan and Amie, both of whom were behind the counter and leaning forward on their elbows, quietly watching him work. “How long have I—” He cut himself off looking at his watch. “You should’ve said something. We’ve got plans.”

Evan shook his head. “And all summer to do them. The fish and chips in Cobo aren’t going anywhere.” He was happy and proud as he looked at Draco, and Draco felt something tug inside him. Leaving Guernsey—leaving Evan—was going to be harder than he could have ever imagined. “You were writing,” Evan said, beaming.

Looking down at his work, Draco wanted to run up and down the street telling everyone he saw that he’d written something, but he refrained. It was good, he thought. Potentially really good. But also very preliminary; it might not go anywhere. He’d had plenty of ideas start off strong but then fizzle out over the past ten years. “It’s just a beginning. It’s very rough.”

“But it is a beginning,” Evan insisted.

“Yes, it’s a beginning,” Draco agreed.

XoXoX

“So, you just start with a sketch?” Harry asked later that afternoon.

“Basically, yes. Just a very rough idea. Then, I make an outline of the main plot points. And from there I go back and fill things in—minor characters, locations, side stories and such. Develop the characters’ personalities, give them little idiosyncrasies. Then once it’s done, I scratch half of it out and start again. The end product usually is nothing like my original outline. The characters don’t cooperate. They develop minds of their own and insist on having their own way with my plot line.”

Harry laughed. “But how do you know what to write? I just can’t imagine thinking of what to write.”

“Don’t you ever day dream?”

“Well, yeah, of course. But just random things, nothing detailed. Nothing I could actually put into words,” Harry said as he licked salt and grease from his fingers.

They’d taken the bus from St. Peter Port to Cobo on the west coast of the island and had walked along the beach all the way past Grandes Rocques up to Port Soif and turned inland and walked through Saumarez Park before heading back to Cobo for a dinner of fish and chips on the beach. A shorter walk than the one they’d taken yesterday—and none of the private spots to nip into—even with taking their time and stopping here and there to watch the ocean, the trek had taken just under three hours. Now, he and Luke sat against the seawall eating and enjoying the spectacular view. The
sea in front of them was a stunning cool aqua blue contrasted by the reddish and taupe browns of the rocky coastline. The temperature had begun to drop, but a few of the heartiest windsurfers still glided across the water dressed in their neoprene wetsuits.

Harry polished off the last of his fish and licked the last of the salt and grease from his fingers. “Is there anything in the world better than really good fish and chips?” he asked, turning to Luke. Luke’s eyes were following the movement of his hand as Harry brought it to his mouth, and Harry smirked, making a show of licking his fingers.

“You can make even just eating fish and chip positively obscene, you know that?” Luke asked.

“I don’t know what you mean,” Harry responded a moment before running his tongue along his index finger.

Luke swallowed and exhaled slowly. He looked around them; they were surrounded by people. “If we were alone right now . . .” He left his sentence unfinished, but his meaning was clear.

Harry’s heart sped up at the look of pure lust in those silver eyes. “We could get out of here. Go someplace more private.”

Back in St. Peter Port after another bus ride that seemed much longer than normal, Harry was five steps ahead of Luke, encouraging him. “Come on, we’re almost at the top, I promise. It’s only a few more steps.”

Luke panted as he climbed the stairs. “What is it with you people on this island and steps? First that bay yesterday, now this.”

Trying not to grin too much, Harry responded, “Well, there are quite a lot of hills on the island, if you’ve not noticed. And I did say there was another way.”

“Said . . . this was . . . faster.” Luke gasped out.

“It is.”

The shortest route from the bus stop to Harry’s house was up the Constitution Steps, which led from Market St. up to Clifton, Harry’s house being on Clifton St., two houses away from the top of the steps. Harry had never actually counted the number of steps, but if he had to guess, he’d put it at somewhere around two hundred.

“You climb this . . . every day?”

“I’m a baker, and I’ve a sweet tooth of my own. If I didn’t do something, I’d be over twenty stone by now, and this is easier than going to a gym.”

As they finally reached the top, Harry consoled, “You did really well for a first time. We only stopped twice. Whenever my best mate and his family visit all together, he and his brothers try to best each other—see who can beat me to the top. They’ve yet to make it without stopping one or twice. Charlie nearly made it last time, got almost all the way to the top before he quit. ‘Course, he’s nearly forty, and I’m not thirty-one yet. But then, he does work outdoors.” Luke leaned against a wall to try to catch his breath. They were alone; no one else was about just then, and Harry kissed him lightly on the lips. “You did really well,” he repeated.

Luke wrapped his arms around Harry’s waist and settled his hands low on his back. He returned the kiss, deepening it momentarily. “Now I know how you got such a fine arse.” He leaned against Harry, still out of breath. “I’d no idea I was in such bad shape.”
“I’ve no complaints about your shape. I think it’s rather nice.” To demonstrate his point, Harry slide his hands down to Luke’s bum. “Come on, my place is just down here. You can sit down, and I’ll get you something to drink.”

Harry lived in a large, three story, white house with a terracotta red roof. By far his favourite feature of the house, which had sold him on it before he’d even set foot inside, was its two decks—a small one leading from his bedroom and a lower one, which wrapped around the back half of the house. Both offered spectacular views over the tops off all the other terracotta red rooftops and down to the pier below and were connected by stairs, which wrapped around the house, ending just next to the double French doors leading from his lounge to the lower deck. When at home, he spent a good portion of his time out on these decks, and they were furnished and decorated—largely by a combined effort of the women in his life—as if they were additional rooms. Comfortable, weatherproof cushioned chairs and benches, tables and a top of the line gas barbeque, Harry even had his own garden and grew both vegetables and flowers in containers. Much like kitchen work, Harry had found he quite enjoyed taking care of a garden when it was his garden.

The first two floors were in every way a typical Muggle home. The ground floor featured his kitchen, dining room and lounge—the lounge being particularly large and divided into two separate living spaces, one for watching the telly and one for reading. On the first floor were his and Teddy’s bedrooms and a large, spacious bath which—while nothing on the scale of the prefects’ bath at Hogwarts—could accommodate two people quite nicely, as Harry knew from experience.

The second floor was the magical part of his home. The original floor plan when he’d purchased the house had two additional bedrooms and a small bath and toilet. With the help of a few trusted and skilled witches and wizards, it had been heavily warded against curious Muggles and had been magically altered so that, similar to the Wizarding tents Harry was all too familiar with, it was now a living space large enough to house the entire Weasley clan, spouses and children included, at once. His heavily warded Floo was also located on the second floor. Harry’s Floo was as well protected as that of the Minister of Magic himself.

While he hoped he’d never be house proud in the same way the Dursleys were, Harry readily admitted he was very proud of his home.

Of course, he’d never before had a house guest who lived on an estate and had a staff—and wouldn’t Aunt Petunia just spontaneously combust with jealousy if she knew he did?

“Well, this is it,” he said as he turned the key and pushed the front door open. He stepped inside and held the door open for Luke.


“Would you like a tour?”

“If it involves more steps, can it wait?” As he spoke, Luke closed the distance between them and pressed his lips against Harry’s. The kiss was lazy and slow. It was comfortable, the way a kiss felt when you woke up next to your lover of several years after a night of particularly mind-blowing sex—unhurried and easy.

As they separated for air, Harry trailed kisses, alternating his lips and tongue, along Luke’s jaw. His skin was smoother than Harry’d have expected for this time of the day—without his shaving charm, which lasted considerably longer than shaving the Muggle way, Harry’s own beard would have started to grow in by this time of the day, leaving a dark shadow along his jaw. But then, he thought to himself, Luke’s hair was finer than his own, and that was likely why his skin was still smooth at this hour. Harry moved his hands to the nape of Luke’s neck and slid his long, silvery-blond hair free
from the black leather strap binding it together. Dropping the leather thong to the ground, forgotten, Harry buried his hands in the blond strands, drawing a deep moan from Luke. Pressing his forehead against Luke’s, Harry asked, “How are your legs? I’m sorry. I should’ve taken the long way around, only it’s a rather steep climb in its own right. But at least it’s not up steps.”


Harry played along as he moved his attention from Luke’s jaw to his neck. “And it would be all my fault. I can’t let that happened, now can I?” He pushed Luke backwards and guided him down the entrance hall and into the lounge. “I’ll have to take care of you.”

“Yes, you will. And I expect to be well taken care of.”

“Oh, don’t worry. You will be.” Harry pushed Luke onto the sofa. “Lie back, stretch out.”

Luke did as he was told, and Harry knelt beside him. Luke’s eyes followed his every movement. He ran his hands from Luke’s shoulder, down his chest, over his abdomen and down his thigh, ignoring the prominent bulge in the front of his trousers.

“That’s not very nice,” Luke protested. “You promised to take care of me.”

“Oh, I will. I think a nice massage will help your aching muscles.” Harry positioned himself over Luke, straddling his lower legs so that he had one foot on the floor and the other leg kneeling on the couch. He placed his hands on Luke’s thighs, just above his knees, and leaning some of his weight onto his hands, he kneaded the tired muscles. Luke let his eyes fall shut for a moment before reopening them and looking directly into Harry’s. “You like that?” Harry asked.

“S’brilliant.”

Slowly, Harry moved his hands up Luke’s legs, thoroughly covering every inch, paying special attention to his inner thighs. Moving steadily upward, Harry pushed Luke’s legs slightly apart, and as he worked in a circular motion, he let the tips of his fingers lightly brush against Luke’s bullocks, teasing him and drawing the most delicious sounds from him.


“In due time. Now roll over.”

Luke protested but did what Harry instructed. “You are evil. Getting me all worked up and—OH!”

Harry brought his hand down sharply against the other man’s arse. A resounding Whack! carried across the room as his hand made contact a second time. “Like that, do you?”

Luke pillowed his head on his folded arms and buried his face into his elbow. His voice was muffled as he cried out, “Fuck, yes.”

“What was that? Could quite hear you?” Whack!


“What? Stop?” Evan asked in a husky, playfully mocking voice. As Luke protested, Harry curled his hands into fists and moved so that he could place his knuckles against the backs of Luke’s knees. He slid his hands up the backs of Luke’s legs, working the muscles with his knuckles as he moved, continuing over his bum and drawing moans from the man beneath him. “Like that?”

Harry’s hands travelled over Luke’s body from his legs to his shoulders, working and kneading the muscles as he went. Finally reaching his shoulders, Harry laid down next to him, pulling him onto his side, Luke’s back snug against Harry’s chest, and nuzzled his neck, biting then kissing and licking the skin. He ran his hands through Luke’s hair. “You should wear your hair loose,” he said.

Harry propped himself up on his elbow, and Luke moved, twisting and stretching till he was able to meet his lips in an awkward but perfect kiss. He raised his hand and twisted his fingers in Harry’s hair, pulling him closer. As they kissed, Harry’s free hand continued to explore Luke’s body, over his chest, down his stomach until he reached the waistband of his trousers. As he had yesterday, Harry played with the coarse hair that lightly covered Luke’s stomach. “Let me touch you. Let me make you come,” Harry whispered against his lips and without waiting for a response, he pulled the buttons on Luke’s trousers open. Not wanting to continue without giving Luke the chance to say no, Harry ran his fingers over him, over his clothing, but when Luke’s only response was an increase in his breathing and moistening his lips with the tip of his tongue, Harry slid his hand inside.

Luke cried out when Harry’s fingers wrapped around his hard cock and stroked it slowly from base to head, up and down, over and over. Harry teased him; he changed his grip—firmer, softer; he changed speeds—one moment fast, the next slow. He dipped his hand lower, fondling his bullocks, rolling them in his hand. He let the tips of his fingers just barely brush against the underside of Luke’s cock, tracing the vein. His hand travelled back up to Luke’s abdomen, circling his navel, his mouth attacking Luke’s neck all the while as Luke objected to not having that hand where he most wanted it.

“You need to learn patience. It’s a virtue, you know,” Harry said as his hand caressed Luke’s chest, pinching his nipple.

“Oh . . . Never been a virtue of mine,” Luke rasped out.

Confined in his jeans, Harry’s own cock was aching for release. He wanted to rub himself against Luke’s arse, wanted to press himself firmly against the man nestled so close to him and feel the pressure and friction from moving against Luke so intimately.

“Please,” Luke begged as Harry toyed with his nipples.

Harry’s hand returned to Luke’s cock, no longer teasing but intent on making the other man come. “Since you asked so nicely.” Harry worked expertly. When with a partner, he always paid attention to the other person’s queues—their gasps and moans, the change in their breathing—to find just how they liked to be touched. His favourite part of the first time with someone was learning what they liked most and giving it to them. He thrilled at knowing the sounds his lover was making were because of him. By listening to Luke’s gasping breath and feeling the way his body tensed and moved so close to his own, Harry found just the right pressure, just the right speed and soon Luke was shouting out his name as he came in Harry’s hand.

Except the name he shouted out wasn’t “Harry,” of course; it was “Evan.”

Even after all these years, it still came as something of a shock to Harry when a lover cried out a name other than his own, but never before had it cut into him as deeply as it did when Luke said “Evan” rather than “Harry” as he came.

Harry pressed his face into Luke’s hair; the long strands tickled. He shifted, sliding down to press his forehead against the back of Luke’s neck; Harry held him tightly. Neither of them spoke as Luke’s breathing slowly returned to normal.
Not for the first time since meeting Luke, Harry asked himself just what he thought he was doing. He was taking an enormous risk, and he knew it. Luke could be anybody. His being an author suffering from writer’s block, the story about his parents being dead and his only family being an aunt and a cousin he’d never met, his living on an estate—that could all be a made up story, created specifically to give to Harry to gain his trust; it was a tragically romantic story. There were similarities between Luke and himself, Harry admitted. Luke’s parents were dead, as were his own. Neither had siblings. Luke’s only family was an aunt and a cousin, just like Harry—it had been several years since Harry had referred to Vernon Dursley as his uncle. But Luke had never met his aunt or cousin, whereas Harry wished to have never met his. Both were the last of their lines.

He could be making a huge mistake, he knew, but he’d already fallen, and it was too late to try to stop now.

He wouldn’t bring it up again in the meantime, but Harry resolved that at the end of the summer, he would ask Luke again to stay with him, but before he did that, he would come clean, tell him everything. It was unfair to ask Luke to change his life so dramatically without telling him the whole truth about his own life.

Pressing a kiss between Luke’s shoulders, Harry sent up a silent prayer.

Please, be who you say you are.

OxOxO

Catching his breath as his heart rate returned to normal, Draco’s whole being was focused on one of two things. The first being the feel of the fingers trailing along his lower stomach—the fingers that had just given him the most intense orgasm he could remember having since he was sixteen. His toes had curled so tightly his feet had cramped. Fireworks had exploded behind his eyelids.

The second, and the one that was preventing his heart from settling into its normal rhythm, being the unmistakable hardness that had been nestled so snugly against his arse. Evan’s cock had been pressed against him, and even if it was through multiple layers of clothing, the knowledge had made Draco’s mouth go dry.

What would it have felt like if Evan had moved his hips in pace with his hand, his cock thrusting against him as his hand stroked him?

What would it have felt like had those layers of clothing not been there?

Anal sex had always been an incredible turn on for Draco, but it was not something the women he’d been with had typically been receptive to. It was certainly not something he’d ever envisioned himself on the receiving end of, not until he felt that hardness pressed so firmly against him.

Evan pressed a soft kiss between his shoulders, and Draco rolled over—carefully as the couch did not allow much room to manoeuvre—shifting lower to take those lips with his own. In this position, his exposed, overly sensitive, post-coital cock was pressed against Evan’s denim-clad, hard one. Their legs twisted together, and Draco—eager but rather out of his area of expertise—tried something that always felt good to him when a woman did it. He slid his leg between Evan’s and gently moved it, tentatively at first, slowly and carefully, but as his actions drew appreciative groans and sighs, he grew more confident, increasing the pressure and speed.

Evan’s hands grasped at him; his hips thrust against Draco’s leg; his nails dragged across Draco’s back, and Draco quickly pulled his shirt over his head, wanting to feel those hands on his skin. His
hands went to Evan’s waist and pulled his shirt off as well. He wanted to feel Evan’s flat, masculine chest pressed against his own, and it was perfect. They moved and slid against each other perfectly. Draco knew he’d likely have angry, red lines crisscrossing his back, and it made him feel like a kid with his first love bite.

Without conscious thought his hand covered the substantial bulge in the front of Evan’s jeans, and he pressed his palm firmly against it, his fingers lightly stroking and gently squeezing it.

“S’ok if you don’t want to—” Evan gasped out.

Draco cut him off, “Want to.” His hands pulled open the button and slid down the zip. His hand slipped inside. Draco didn’t spare a moment to think that another man’s cock was in his hand; he went straight to work. Unlike Evan, he didn’t take time to draw it out. His was focused on making Evan come, making Evan feel the incredible pleasure he had brought out in Draco, and his hand went about accomplishing that goal. Feeding off the sounds he was pulling from his lover—his lover!—the way fire fed off oxygen, Draco’s heartbeat and breathing sped up as Evan’s did. He matched Evan’s every moan, his every gasp, and as Evan came, and Draco felt his cum land on his stomach, his own cock throbbed in response.

The only thing that made it less than perfect was the fact that as Evan had come in Draco’s hand, it hadn’t been Draco’s name he’d cried out.

Draco had had numerous partners, but he’d never had anyone he considered a lover, not until today. Plenty of his one offs had wanted a second go, wanted to see him again, but he’d always disappointed them. It hadn’t been due to any fault on the women’s parts, he readily acknowledged—he’d not stuck around long enough to even learn what their faults might have been. It had been solely him. He’d never been willing to risk coming to care for someone, not been willing to see their revulsion when they inevitably learned the truth of what he’d done, what his side in a war they’d not known ever happened had done. He’d only spent a few days in Evan’s company—one short week ago, he’d had no idea the man existed—but as they lay together on Evan’s couch, Draco knew he was in very real danger of falling in love, something he’d long ago given up the idea of ever experiencing.

Evan was everything he’d once hoped he’d find in someone. He was funny and intelligent. They could talk, or they could simply be together as they were in this moment, as they’d been more than once during their walks, comfortable together without the need to say something simply for the sake of saying something or because the silence was awkward.

He was too good to be true, Draco was afraid.

Evan was interested in his writing, but he never asked what the pseudonym he wrote under was, as if he understood how precious privacy could be. But there was more than just that. Draco didn’t understand where the certainty came from, but he was absolutely certain that Evan understood loss every bit as well as he himself did. It was more than just the fact that Evan’s parents were gone, like Draco’s own were. It went deeper. He wondered if Evan woke up from nightmares like he himself did, and Draco found himself wanting to be next to him, to hold him when his nightmares woke him in the middle of the night.

Evan looked at him and grinned. “What are you think about?” he asked. “You look so serious.”

Right then, what Draco was thinking was that if Evan asked him to extend his stay a second time, he’d say yes.
Chapter End Notes

Drop me a review and let me know what you thought!
Draco exited the car and paid the driver. He carried an umbrella, but for the few steps from the taxi to the front door of the Holly and Feather, he didn’t bother with it. He’d cast an Impervius spell on himself before he’d left his cottage this morning—just a weak one, nothing that would keep him dry in a steady rain or that would draw the attention of the Muggles, but the rain was barely a drizzle, and the distance from the curb to the door not more than a few steps. He could see Evan through the window as he approached. He was behind the counter, filling the display case with biscuits. As Draco pulled open the door, Evan up looked from his work, grinning when he saw him. “Morning,” he said. Draco placed his umbrella down in the stand just inside the door and crossed the bakery. He tucked his hair behind his ears; in the past weeks, he’d taken to wearing his long hair loose because Evan preferred it that way and often played with the long strands. Personally, Draco preferred it tied back as his father had worn his—loose, it was always falling into his face—but the way Evan buried his hands in it when they kissed and toyed with the long strands when they sat close together talking made wearing it loose worth it. Besides, Evan had let his facial hair grow a little after Draco had told him how much he liked the feel of the short, coarse hairs against his lips. Draco didn’t know how Evan did it, but the stubble on his jaw was always perfect, never quite smooth, but it was never too long, never more than just a mild roughness, a dark shadow.

He went around behind the counter and kissed Evan squarely on the mouth. “Morning to you, too,” he said, sliding his hands into the back pockets of Evan’s jeans.

Over the past weeks, they had settled into a comfortable routine. Draco showed up bright and early every morning before the shop opened, and they had breakfast together outside at a table overlooking the harbour in the distance. Covering the table between them would be plates filled with scones with butter and jam, gâche, chocolate biscuits, buttered bread still warm from the oven and—Draco’s favourite—those delectable cream filled strawberries.

As they ate, they talked about everything. Draco had talked more about himself—censored though it needed to be—than he ever had in his life.
He’d given Evan a “Mugglized” version of his life. It hadn’t been hard. As he’d come to learn, the Muggle world had their fair share of hate groups that could rival the Death Eaters in terms of brutality and ruthlessness. Without giving specifics or going into detail, he’d given Evan an account of his life similar to the version he’d written about in his first book, *From This Day Forward*, only updated to today’s world.

In the book, the main character had been born in Germany in 1928 to a wealthy and politically powerful family which had moved from France to Germany several decades earlier. He’d named the man Max Degrelle. He’d liked that though the character was German, his surname was French, as was Draco’s own. He’d continued that in his subsequent books; his main characters always had a French surname, but the character himself or herself, was never French. He’d come up with Max’s name after reversing his own initials, a pattern also repeated in each of his books—the initials of the main character were always the reversed initials of someone he’d lost. It was the closest he could come to signing his books with his own name.

The book was not about the Muggle war the main character’s family had been involved in; he’d had enough war to last a lifetime, as had his world. Rather, it was about the aftermath of war—the years that came after the fighting ended, the struggle of living with the overwhelming guilt of what you’d done—or not done, what your side had done, and trying to build a life for yourself in a world that would not let you. Like Draco, Max had only been seventeen at the end of the war that had shaped his entire life, and as Draco had—first with Potter’s testifying on his mother’s and his behalves, and then, later, Luna’s initial Christmas visit and subsequent friendship—Max had had one or two people take pity on him and help him create a new life under a new name. But also like Draco, Max was always afraid he’d be found out one day, and the new life he’d worked so hard to build for himself would be lost.

As Draco himself had, Max had revered his father—the man could do no wrong; he was all powerful in Max’s eyes, as Lucius had been in Draco’s. Heroes for their people. And Max had adored his mother—a beautiful, intelligent woman devoted to her husband and son. Nadja Degrelle had been fashioned so exactly after Narcissa Malfoy, that Draco had worried his mother would be recognised in Max’s, but nearly three years had passed since his mother’s murder covered the front page of the Daily Prophet every morning, and like a bad dream, she had long been forgotten by the Wizarding world.

Like Draco, Max had grown up taught to idolise a man, their leader; every word he spoke was the absolute, unquestioned and unquestionable law. And as had been the case with Draco, that man had proved to be nothing but an evil megalomaniac whose rhetoric had been nothing but blind hate, veiled with well-crafted, self-serving lies which had bewitched multitudes of people with visions of their own imagined self-importance and superiority over others.

And like Draco’s, Max’s family did not survive the fallout after the war.

His mother, after the war had been lost, had provided the enemy with information on German safe houses in England and the names of English collaborators in desperate hopes of currying favour for herself and her son. As a result, she’d been murdered by someone from within the Party, as Draco’s had been for lying to Voldemort, telling him Potter was dead when she’d known he’d survived the killing curse a second time. She’d not lied to help Potter but to be able to enter the castle and find her son. She’d tried to protect her son, and it had cost her her life.

Max’s father . . . Here Draco had struggled the most. In truth, Draco did not know how his father had died, and he never would, not for certain. Lucius Malfoy had died in his sleep. The official ruling was that he had died of heart failure, but that was ambiguous at best—after all, wasn’t that what, technically, everyone died from? Because their heart stopped beating? But what had caused his
father’s heart to fail? There was no question that his father’s health had been severely impacted by his time in Azkaban, short though it had been. He’d contracted a particularly severe case of pneumonia, and neglected, the infection had spread throughout his body, leaving his heart and kidneys badly weakened. His poor health had played a factor in the Wizengamot’s decision to confine him to house arrest rather than sentence him to Azkaban. His body and spirit both broken, it was entirely plausible that following the shock of his mother’s murder, his father’s heart had simply given out.

Of course, the official ruling did nothing to prevent the Prophet from running wild with rampant speculation that the fabulously wealthy, once great and powerful wizard had killed himself, abandoning his son to carry the burden of the family’s crimes alone. Draco was ashamed to admit that the thought had occurred to him before he’d seen it in print, but seeing it in black and white seemed to make the possibility all the more real. Which was absurd, he’d told himself numerous times; this was the Prophet, after all—not the most reliable source for the truth.

In the end, Draco had chosen to give his father the benefit of the doubt, and Max’s father had died from a heart attack.

He’d given the same story, that his father’d had a heart attack, to the man in his arms. He’d told him his mother had been killed in an accident.

“Looks like we’ll be eating in doors,” Evan said to him as Draco stepped aside to allow him to finish what he’d been doing when he’d arrived.

“Looks like,” Draco agreed.

On mornings when the weather kept them from breakfasting outside, they took their breakfast in Evan’s spotlessly clean kitchen. Draco had been tempted more than once to put a small smudge of something in an inconspicuous spot—a few inches back in the narrow gap between the fridge and the wall, say—just to see if it would still be there the next day. He didn’t think it wouldn’t be. Even his house elves wouldn’t be able to find a speck of dirt or the smallest crumb of food in Evan’s kitchen, Draco suspected. It was unnervingly clean.

Evan closed the door at the back of the display cabinet, and they entered the kitchen together. Laid out on the table were all their usual selections, minus one. There were no cream filled strawberries.

At Draco’s arched eyebrow, Evan held his hands up protectively in front of himself. “Now, don’t get your knickers in a twist.”

Draco’s stern, disapproving expression collapsed as his mouth twitched, and he gave in and laughed.

“I tried something different,” Evan said. “And I need you to sample them and give me your honest impression before I can take them out front.”

“Not with my strawberries, I hope. One does simply not mess with perfec—”

Evan had retrieved a covered plate from the counter by the sink and removed the lid with a flourish. “Well? What do you think?”

“Oh . . . Oh, my.”

“Is that a good ‘oh, my’ or a what-the-hell-have-you-done ‘oh, my?’”

On the plate in Evan’s hand were six large, red strawberries, cut into quarters and filled with cream. But the strawberries had been dipped in dark chocolate before being cut.
“That is a very good ‘oh, my,’” Draco answered, helping himself to the berry closest to him and taking a bite. “A very, very good ‘oh, my,’” he repeated, his mouth full. “I do hope you made more for your paying customers, because these are not leaving this kitchen.”

Evan placed the plate on the kitchen and picked up his cup of coffee.

“Think you could show me how you make these?” Draco asked. “You did say you would, you know.”

Evan choked on his coffee, and his cup slipped from his hand. He bent over coughing violently, one hand covering his mouth, the other on his chest. Draco got him a glass of cold water. “Thank you,” he rasped out.

“Okay, there? What do you put in your coffee that you could choke on it like that?” Draco asked as he picked up the broken pieces of ceramic. Glancing up at Evan to make sure he wasn’t being watched, he slid a small shard under the toe kick at the bottom of the cupboards.

Evan laughed, which brought on a new wave of coughing, and Draco slapped him on the back.

“I’m okay,” Evan said once the coughing settled. His eyes were watering, and his face was red. He went to the sink and splashed some cold water on his face. Using the hem of his shirt to dry his face, he reminded Draco, “I do believe my offer of showing you the secret of the strawberries was conditional.”

He was right, Draco remembered too late. “Maybe one day, I’ll show you,” Evan had said as he’d licked cream off the side of his finger. “If you stay, that is,” he’d qualified. Evan didn’t ask if he’d changed his mind, but Draco could see that he badly wanted to, and knowing how his own thoughts had been running on that matter, Draco half wished that he would.

After they’d had their breakfast, they returned to the front of the shop. Evan finished preparing for the day, and Draco settled into the table next to the window he’d laid claim to with his paper and Muggle biro. They each worked, Evan at whatever needed to be taken care of before he opened for business for the day, Draco at his writing.

He’d accomplished a fair amount over the past weeks and had a strong working outline and at least forty pages of Muggle notebook paper covered with his tight, neat handwriting—and countless scribbles over something he’d not liked, arrows where something needed to be moved, and question marks or exclamation points where something needed to be better clarified or emphasised.

Most days, Evan finished up his work well before it was time for him to open, and he would bring Draco a vanilla hazelnut coffee with whipped Guernsey cream and cocoa powder and would sit with him and read the local newspaper while Draco worked. Today was one of those days, and Draco sipped his coffee while he pondered a particular point that was giving him trouble. He set his pen down and, sighing, sat back in his chair. Evan didn’t speak, but he did look at him questioningly over the top of his paper. “I can’t decide how I want to handle something, is all,” he explained. “If I try to think about it too much, I’ll only give myself a migraine. Best to just skip over it and work on something else. If I don’t try to force it, it’ll come to me much better. Of course, it’ll probably come to me at three in the morning and wake me up.”

“Does that happen often?”

“That an idea will wake me up in the middle of the night? I wouldn’t say often, but it’s happened a couple dozen times at least. Of course, what looks brilliant at three in the morning, usually doesn’t hold up by daylight.”
Evan’s eyes dropped to the stack of papers in front of Draco. He’d not asked for details of the new story, but Draco knew he was curious. Right now, he looked as confused as he did curious. He bit his lip and seemed to be deciding whether to ask something. Finally, he decided and asked, “Do you always hand write your books? You don’t type them? I just . . . I’d assumed you’d have typed them on a laptop. What if something happens to the papers? You’d not have a copy.”

Of course, that wasn’t true. Everything he wrote was copied as he wrote it. His quills and parchments—now, his paper and biros—were charmed to make two identical copies of everything he wrote, one appeared and was stored in a vault in his study, the other in a spell-locked cabinet at Luna’s. But he could hardly tell Evan that.

“Aren’t you afraid of losing all your work?” Evan asked.

“I’m afraid I never quite mastered typing.” Draco raised his hands and mimicked the motion of Muggles typing on their flat, black gadgets—laptops, he knew they were called. Whenever he wrote something set in the Muggle world, it was easier to keep it historical. They’d well documented their history, and it was easier to not have to deal with the array of electronic gadgets they worshiped.

“I’m rather all thumbs. The result would not even resemble English. But I do keep a copy. And Luna gets a copy, as well.”

XoXoX

Harry nodded his head to show he understood. A notion had entered his head one morning while watching Luke write. Wrentmore hadn’t released a book in two years, and Luke had been suffering from writer’s block for that long. Everyone knew Simon Wrentmore was an alias, and Luke wrote under a pseudonym. Of all the books Harry had on the shelves in his home, the only ones that Luke had ever asked him about were Simon Wrentmore’s. He took an inordinate amount of interest in Harry’s opinion of Wrentmore’s work, and practically glowed with pleasure when Harry expressed his love of the author’s books. Harry had known all along that his friend, Luna Lovegood, was not only Wrentmore’s agent but his friend, and Luke had talked about his agent and close friend, although he’d only ever used her first name: Luna. Harry remembered that he’d even once referred to Luna’s—eccentric was the word Harry thought he’d used—taste in jewellery. Luna Lovegood frequently wore radishes and bottle caps as jewellery.

Sitting across the table from him, his forehead crossed with frown lines as he worked something out in his mind while staring out the window of Harry’s bakery, sat Simon Wrentmore.

Harry didn’t know why he hadn’t made the realisation sooner; he supposed it was because it simply hadn’t mattered. It was a man he was falling in love with, not his name.

Besides, he’d been so sure that Wrentmore was a wizard, a pure-blood specifically, that with Luke’s being a Muggle, the connections between the two hadn’t occurred to him. He’d not even known Luna had Muggle friends, and he couldn’t imagine how the two had met.

When Luke had told him about his life, it had been virtually a modern day mirror of the main character from From This Day Forward. The book was basically a disguised autobiography, swapping one hate group and one era for another. Harry had seen so much of himself in the book because the hate Max had learned from his parents in World War Two Germany so closely mirrored what so many of his classmates had learned from their parents towards Muggle-born witches and wizards. Hate was hate—magical or Muggle; it made no difference. Hate was only capable of destruction, and it destroyed as effectively as Fiendfyre; everything in its path was engulfed, and
when it had completely consumed one target, it moved on to another—it mattered not what nor whom, only that it have more fuel to feed from.

It had surprised Harry how much of himself he’d seen in a man who had been on the other side of the war, so to speak, but there were undeniable similarities. They’d both struggled to find a place for themselves in their post-war worlds, but their respective worlds had refused to let them.

The Prophet had gone wild when Harry’d dropped out of Auror training, claiming he was abandoning his responsibilities in defending their world. Harry rather thought he’d done enough already.

He’d identified with Max’s disillusionment, the crushing realisation that what he’d been taught was right and just and had prepared most of his life to fight for had all been a lie. Harry had hoped that with the end of the war, things would improve virtually overnight, that winning the war would bring peace. It had been a foolish hope, he understood now, but he had been so very young—only seventeen, the same age as Max had been in the book at the end of the war. Harry had hoped that with the fall of Voldemort, the hatred he’d spewed would fall as well, but he’d been so wrong.

Ending one man, did not end the hate he had embodied.

The hatred had remained; it had only found a new target, a new fuel for its fire. In the aftermath of the war there had been a backlash against pure-bloods. Pure-bloods were collectively seen by some half-bloods and Muggle-borns as being guilty for the actions of Voldemort and his Death Eaters—guilt by association. Unless they could prove unequivocally to have actively fought against Voldemort, they were condemned in the eyes of many as having supported him.

There were also those who blamed Harry for not having done enough, for not having ended the war sooner, before their own son or daughter, their own parent or brother or sister had been killed. There were so many people who blamed everyone else but who never looked at their own actions or inactions. So many had pledged to help rebuild Hogwarts, but so few had shown up after the first few days, after the cameras had left.

Their world now had a strong leader in their Minister of Magic, Kingsley Shacklebolt, but Kingsley had his work cut out for him. Corruption still existed in the Ministry. Money still spoke loudly, although it did so more discretely than it had under Fudge. Kingsley dealt swiftly with anyone proven to be offering or accepting bribes, but in order for him to hear about it, someone had to speak up, and few people were willing to turn in the person lining their pockets or doing their bidding.

It had all been more than Harry had been able to stand, and like Max in the book, he’d felt he’d had no other option but to start over, to build a life for himself under an assumed name. And like Max, every day he wondered at least once if that would be the day he was found out.

Across the table from him, Luke muttered under his breath, “No, no. That’s all wrong. That’s why it doesn’t work,” and he returned to his writing, the frown lines easing from his forehead.

“I don’t suppose you’d give me a clue what it’s about?” Harry ventured, not truly expecting Luke to tell him. He would imagine a writer would be very possessive of his work while it was still in the process of being written, and not surprisingly, Luke appeared distressed. “How about just the name of the main character?” Harry bargained. *The surname is going to be French. I know it,* he thought to himself.


Harry repressed a grin and asked innocently, “Oh, is it set in France, then? Géroux is a French name,
isn’t it?”

“Er, yes. Yes, it is. But no, it’s set in Britain. Wales, specifically.”

“Oh,” Harry commented, returning his attention to his paper and hiding his face. He was unable to suppress his grin any longer.

.”

“But, you must’ve cooked for yourself at some point, certainly.” Harry insisted.


Amie had come for the elevenses crowd and Harry and Luke had gone on their way. Either she or one of the other locals Harry sometimes hired to fill in for him had been covering in the afternoon, so he could spend time with Luke. After leaving the Holly and Feather, they’d gone back to Harry’s home—the weather forecast for the rest of the day being scattered rain, they were planning on staying in.

And entertaining themselves.

“How could you never have cooked for yourself?”

“There’s never been the need. At home, I’ve always had a cook, and at school, of course, meals were provided.”

“But still . . . Never?”

“No,” Luke laughed. He was greatly amused at Harry’s disbelief that he’d never had to cook for himself. “I’m not even sure I could find the kitchen.”

“Oh, come on!”

“Okay, I admit it. That I did make up. I do know where the kitchen is.”

“Right, well, now you’re going to learn how to use one. Here take these.” Harry handed Luke the three tomatoes he’d just picked from his garden. Two were going into the sauce for their pasta, the other into their salad. “And these.” Harry added a green bell pepper and large handfuls of basil. His lettuces and salad rocket were done for the year—they’d had to stop at the market and buy some—and the garlic he’d already harvested was stored in his kitchen. “Right, now, follow me.”

“Do you always put your guests to work?”

“Yes,” Harry said as he held the door open for Luke. It was true. It was generally well known throughout Harry’s circle of friends that if you were invited to dinner at his house, you would likely be pitching in with the preparing of the meal in some way. It was one of Harry’s favourite parts about having friends over for dinner—everyone in the kitchen, working together to fix their meal.

The decks were Harry’s favourite feature of his house, but inside, it was his kitchen he loved best—the kitchen and his bathroom with its tub-for-two. He watched as Luke set the food on the counter. Maybe one of these days, Harry could show it to him.

Harry’s kitchen was an eclectic mix of finishes—modern stainless steel countertops and top of the line cookware and appliances, wooden cupboards original to the house and painted a soft green that Ginny Weasley had informed him was called “sea foam,” dark grey slate floor, an unfinished pine
island and pot rack, mosaic tile backsplash around the sink and above it, an antique stained glass window. The kitchen was open on one end, flowing directly into his parlour, and offered a good view of the deck through two sets of French doors.

Retrieving a plate from his cupboard, Harry set Luke to dicing the tomatoes. “Two into small cubes, for the sauce, and the third into larger ones, for the salad.” He watched as Luke expertly cut the tomatoes into perfect cubes. “You have so cooked before,” he chastised.

“No, really, I’ve not.”

“Uh huh,” Harry responded, motioning to the uniform pieces on the plate. “Definitely a beginner job, that. I bet if I got a ruler out and measured them, they’d all be the same size.”

“Er . . . Well, it wasn’t a terribly difficult job, you know.”

“Mhmm.”

“Really. Give me something else to do. I bet I’ll be pants at it.”

Harry shook his head. “I’m sure you will—on purpose, no doubt. It’s too late. You’ve given yourself away. Here, we’re having linguini with tomato and pesto,” Harry said as he handed Luke a measuring cup. “Fill this with two cups of the basil leaves, packing them down.”

“That sounds lovely. This is the basil, right?” Luke asked as he started pulling leaves off the sprigs of basil Harry had picked.

“Nice try.”

Luke stopped immediately. “Am I doing it wrong?”

Harry laughed indulgently. “You’re laying it on a bit thick.”

“Am I packing them too tightly?” he asked, looking at the leaves in the measuring cup.

Harry continued to laugh before he kissed him. “No, you’re doing just fine.” He poured out some olive oil into a smaller measuring cup and set it aside, going on to prepare the rest of the ingredients for their pesto.

“Garlic?” Luke questioned as Harry minced three cloves.

“I’ve breath mints.” He winked. “Two cups, or do we need more?” he asked, indicating the measuring cup.

“Just enough. You’ve a good eye.”

Harry kissed him again. “Yes, I do.”

From his pantry, Harry retrieved a food processor, to which he had Luke add everything for the sauce but the oil. “Press this button,” he indicted which, “but don’t hold it down. Tap it. We want to chop the leaves and blend the sauce, not completely puree it.”

“Right.”

Before Harry could replace the cover, Luke did as he’d been instructed. He pressed the button Harry’d told him to, sending basil leaves, pine nuts, cheese and garlic flying into the air. Startled, Luke jumped back immediately. Both men stood motionless for a brief moment before looking at
each other and laughing.

“You’ve really not ever done this before, have you?” Harry asked as he pulled basil leaves from Luke’s long hair.

“I told you I’d not. What did I do wrong? I pressed the button you told me to.”

Harry held up the lid and arched his eyebrows.

“Oh.”

A second attempt was more successful, and after putting on the water for the pasta, Harry moved on to afters.

“Have you ever been to America?” he asked. At Luke’s negative, he continued, “I love to travel. Some people bring back postcards, I bring back recipes. I visited Florida a few years ago with some friends—the Keys, mostly. We stayed in Miami a couple nights, then one of my friends—his name is Dean—drove us down the Overseas Highway. We stopped at the different islands along the way before reaching Key West.

“They make this pudding called, Key Lime Pie. I’ve tried it at the shop, but it didn’t sell well. Pity—it’s grand. It’s something of a very firm, tart custard.” As he spoke, Harry pulled a small bottle from a cupboard. “They have these special limes—key limes, they call them—they’re very small but have a much stronger flavour than normal limes. You can’t get them here unfortunately, at least, I’ve not found them. I’ve had to order the juice from a company located right in the Keys. Normally, I would prefer to juice the limes myself—I prefer to use fresh whenever possible—but in this case, it’s just not quite the same, I’ve found. Here, open this and pour it into the bowl.” Harry handed Luke a tin of sweetened condensed milk and a thin plastic spatula. “They’ve been making this in the Keys since the late 1800’s our waitress told us. And I’m doing it again, I’m sorry.”

“Sorry for what?” Luke asked, scraping out the inside of the tin.

“Rambling on. I do that sometimes. Any time I find a new kind of biscuit or any kind of sweet, I get excited about it—especially if it’s when I’m traveling and it’s got any kind of local history connected to it. My friends all laugh at me. They say all that ‘catching the bad guys stuff’ was a mistake and that I was really born to be a baker all along.” He scratched his head and chuckled. “I reckon maybe I was at that.”

“I don’t mind, really. I travelled with my parents as a child, mostly around the continent, but I’ve not had any opportunity to travel at all since well before they died. Hearing about any place I’ve not been interests me. And I like hearing you talk about something that interests you. Please, go on.”

Harry was deeply touched, and he kissed Luke soundly. The kiss was just getting heated up when the water for the pasta boiled over. Harry lowered the flame, and the rapidly boiling water settled down. His rapidly beating heart was somewhat harder to calm, and he had to clear his throat to rid himself of the tightness that had resulted from Luke’s words. It had been such a simple statement, but to the lonely little boy locked away in the cupboard under the stairs that still resided somewhere deep inside of Harry, Luke’s saying that he liked hearing him talk about something that interested him was a treasure the other man couldn’t imagine he’d given him.

If Luke’s being tied to his family’s estate was what was keeping him from staying with Harry, why couldn’t they divide their time between the two—Luke’s estate and Harry’s home on Guernsey?

What about his shop? As much as Harry loved his shop, he’d always known that if one of his friends
needed him back home, he’d pack up and leave. Would he also close up shop for Luke? If he could ask Luke to give up his life and stay with him; was it not only fair he at least consider giving up his life and leaving with Luke? Or, Harry thought to himself, I could hire a Muggle staff to run the place while I was away. He only used magic because he could—everything he did could be done the Muggle way as well. It would just take significantly longer.


“Oh, er, yes. Yes. Here, just drop them in whole. Exactly—just like that,” Harry said as Luke put the dried linguini in the pot. He handed him a long handled, wooden spoon. “You have to stir it, or we’ll be having one solid clump of linguini for lunch. Slowly, don’t splash. There, that’s good enough for now.”

Luke set the spoon down on a kitchen towel Harry had placed on the counter.

“We need eggs yolks,” Harry said as he took three eggs and cracked them against the side of a second bowl. He separated the yolks from the whites one-handed by dropping them into an egg separator, the whites falling into the second bowl, the yolks remaining in the strainer and being added to the first bowl with the sweetened condensed milk.

“Finish what you were telling me. They’ve been making this since the 1800’s you said.”

“Er, yes. Here, take this and whisk the milk and yolks together. Good, just like that. Keep going while I pour the juice in.”

“Aren’t limes green?” Luke asked as Harry added the pale yellow key lime juice.

“The limes we get are. Key limes are bright yellow when ripe.” As Harry slowly added the lime juice and Luke whisked it all together, the mixture began to thicken, and Harry explained, “The original versions made in the Keys weren’t baked. A chemical reaction between the juice and the condensed milk, called souring, causes the mixture to thicken without baking. Which was important as it’s hot as bloody hell there in the summer, so not having to use the cooker was a very good thing. Also, they had limited electricity until 1930, when the Oversees Highway was completed, so no refrigeration, and there were no cattle, so the only milk they had available was tinned. There, perfect.”

Harry closed the bottle and placed it in the fridge, pulling out a premade pie crust.

Luke gave him a face; his expression said, “Store bought pie crust? Really? What kind of baker are you?”

“Don’t look at me like that. I made it yesterday to use today. Most people use a graham cracker crust, but I make a shortbread crust with crushed HobNobs for mine.” He uncovered the pie crust.

“British it up a bit?”

Harry grinned. “Exactly.” He stirred the pasta. “Originally, like I said, the pie wouldn’t have been baked. But this is the 21st century, not the 19th, and we know about something called salmonella, which they didn’t. I bake mine. Poisoning people is bad for business.” He made a meringue topping from the egg whites, explaining, “I don’t like to let anything go to waste if I can avoid it. And there is protein in egg whites, you know. Not to mention, the filling is made with fruit juice and milk. So really, it’s health food.”

“I like your logic.”
“Mm, Teddy’s grandmother and my other godchildren’s parents didn’t seem to appreciate it when I fed the kids chocolate cake and ice cream for breakfast.”


“No, nor could I. I reminded them that chocolate cake is made with eggs and milk. I even used flour made from whole wheat. And really—ice cream, it’s dairy. They didn’t buy it, though.” Harry handed him the pie. “Here, I’ve already heated the cooker, slide this onto the rack, in the middle.” As Luke closed the cooker door Harry slipped his arms around him. “Look at you, not only cooking but baking as well. Ever think about working in a bakery?”

“I think I’ll stick to writing,” Luke responded before meeting Harry’s lips in a searing kiss.

Chapter End Notes

That's chapter six--only three more to go! Let me know what you thought!

Harry’s feeding the next generation chocolate cake for breakfast is from Bill Cosby, Himself. I couldn’t resist. My Harry is not a father, and rationalizing chocolate cake as an acceptable breakfast food is something I think I could see a “not-a-father Harry” doing. His own childhood was so bleak with the Dursley’s, I can see him wanting to indulge the kids in his life. My mom has a sweatshirt that says “What Happens at Gramma’s, Stays at Gramma’s.” I can see “not-a-father-Harry” having that philosophy with his godchildren and the other next generation kids. This time, though, he got caught. As for Bill Cosby, Himself—if you haven’t seen it, you must. You will never in your life see anything funnier.
“So? You’ve never done it?” Draco asked.

Evan responded, “No. I’ve friends who’ve tried it, though.”

“And did it work?”

“Some said yes, some said no. Some wouldn’t say. Do you want to try it?” Evan asked, grinning at him.

Draco wondered if he could manage to distract Evan long enough to cast a privacy charm. He glanced around them; they weren’t quite alone, but there weren’t many people about, and those who were, weren’t paying any attention to them. Yesterday morning’s light drizzle had turned into an all-afternoon-long steady rain, and today’s forecast promising more of the same had led to few people daring to venture out. So far though, the rain had held out.

They’d gone to Pleinmont on the island’s southwest today, not far from Draco’s cottage, and were taking a walk that started at a small bay near the beach he’d gone to the day after arriving on the island. From the start point, they’d begun by walking along the cliff top path—to their left were spectacular views of the coastline with its earthy greens, beiges, and browns, falling into the ocean, which stretched out uninterrupted to the horizon, the sea a stunning cool aqua blue beneath the variegated light and dark greys of the cloud-covered sky.

They’d continued on along the track, descending down a rather muddy path to arrive at Le Table des Pions, or The Fairy Ring, and were debating on whether to follow the local superstition of walking around the ring three times in order to be granted a wish. Local folklore connected the spot to fairies, witches and elves and held that, in ancient times, fairies would dance around the ring and had worn down the earth, forming the grove that surrounded the stone circle. But there was nothing the least bit magical about the spot. The Fairy Ring was a table and nothing more—and a table for those too low ranking to be permitted to eat with their betters at that.

Bordered on one side by deep emerald green hills and on the other by the rocky coastline and cool blue of the sea, the backdrop surrounding Le Table des Pions was at once both serene and dramatic.
The stone circle had been constructed in the 1700’s, when a procession, known as the Chevauchee parade, would make a circuit of the island every two years, inspecting the roads and coastal defences. The area had been one of the resting points along the route, and a feast would have been held for the officials of the Royal Court who had made up the procession. A tent would have been erected to shelter the officials while they ate their meal; however the lesser members of the party would not have been permitted to enter, and thus, a table had been dug into the ground to allow them someplace to eat.

*Le Table des Pions*, or very literally, The Table of Peons.

As a wizard, Draco felt rather silly at the idea of walking around a non-magical spot in the hopes of being granted a wish, but there was a playful gleam in Evan’s eyes that he couldn’t resist. He glanced around them again. What few other people were around still weren’t paying attention to them, but even if they were, so what? So they saw them walk around what amounted to nothing but an old ditch, so what?

Besides, looking at Evan, Draco knew what his wish would be—that he not have to leave. “You want to, don’t you?” Draco asked him.

Evan shrugged his shoulders noncommittally, but his smile grew wider. “Couldn’t hurt.”

Grinning like a couple of school children, they walked side by side around The Fairy Ring three times. Even knowing it to be nothing but silly local superstition, Draco couldn’t help but repeat his wish in his mind.

*I wish I didn’t have to leave. I wish I could stay with Evan.*

Beside him, Evan sent out his own wish.

*I wish I wasn’t going to lose him. Here or at his home, I don’t care where, I wish I could stay with Luke.*

Resuming the walk, they left The Fairy Ring and continued on. Shortly, they came upon a place where the track offered them three different routes.

“The main route,” Evan explained, “follows a path which runs up a shallow valley and leads to steps—I know how much you love our steps on the island,” Evan grinned at him. “There is a second route, but it’s narrow and steep and after the rain yesterday, it will be very muddy and slippery.”

“And the third route?” Draco asked.

Evan smirked; his eyes were challenging. “Straight up the cliff. It’s a very rocky climb; it’s steep and a bit of a rough go, but it’s doable—if you don’t mind a bit of a crawl on your hands and knees, that is. Once you get about half way, the rock ends and there’s a track, but it’s rather loose and undefined. It gets more marked as it goes. Think you can handle it?”

Draco rose to the challenge. “Lead the way.”

The climb was challenging, but as Evan had said, it was doable, and after they’d reached the top, Evan and Draco sat down on a small bench to rest. Evan carried a rucksack, and he pulled out two bottles of water. As they drank, he explained what they were looking at. The spot overlooked *Les Hanois* reef and lighthouse. “There have been loads of wrecks, despite the lighthouse. There was one about a year after I came to the island. It caused a bit of a sensation for a couple days.”

Further down the path, Evan drew his attention to the remains of a watch house, which had served as
the inspiration for the house the main character in Victor Hugo’s *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*, a man called Gilliat, had lived in as a child.

They stopped briefly, but the sky overhead had begun to darken ominously, and they pressed on.

They passed leftover reminders of the German occupation of Guernsey during WWII—a watch tower and bunker—but did not stop. Evan explained that after the war, people wanted to get rid of all reminders the Germans had ever been on the island and couldn’t do so quickly enough, with most of the equipment they’d left behind being cut up for scrap or dumped and the buildings being allowed to fall into disrepair. Now, people wished that part of their island’s history had been preserved, and the buildings were being restored. Evan said, “Everyone wants to preserve history, once it’s become history, but before that, when it’s not history but the present and the pain of whatever horror has occurred is still fresh, people want to forget, to move on. No one’s thinking about what someone fifty or sixty years down the road might like to have. Their only goal is to get everything back to the way it was before, get everything back to normal. That’s as it should be, I suppose.”

Walking some minutes more, they passed through agricultural lands with stunning, wide open views in each direction.

The wind had picked up, and the air felt noticeably cooler. At a fork in the road, they kept left and reached a sign directing them to Portelet Bay, and from there the track led them down through a wooded area thick with pine trees. Like various sections of the track, the ground through here was still somewhat muddy from yesterday’s soaking rain, as there had been no sunshine to help dry it up.

They reached the car park from where they’d begun the walk just as the first flash of lightening lit up the dark sky. Moments later, a loud crash of thunder boomed through the air. They were still perhaps a half-hour’s or longer walk from Draco’s cottage.

Knowing they’d never reach *Mille Fleurs* before the rain came, they opted to catch a bus that, while it wouldn’t take them to his doorstep, would cut their walk down to less than ten minutes. Bus service on Guernsey ran quite frequently, and they did not have to wait long, but during that wait, the sky had continued to darken until it was nearly as dark as night, and as they found seats, another flash of lightening spread throughout the black clouds above them. The ride up the main road to just past Fort Grey took under five minutes, and they walked quickly, retracing the same route Draco had taken on his return from the beach to his cottage the day after he’d arrived on the island.

As they hurried along the winding lanes, Draco’s mind couldn’t help but point out to him how very different this trip with Evan beside him was than his first, which he’d made alone after watching children play on the beach and families and couples enjoying themselves and each other.

He did not want to go back to being alone.

He also thought of Gilliat, the outcast main character from Victor Hugo’s *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*. He thought about the despair the character must have felt after watching the woman he loved sail away from him with her new husband.

And he thought about Evan.

As they’d hurried along the lanes leading to *Mille Fleurs*, lightening had continued to streak across the sky above them, and loud rumbles of thunder soon followed. Turning up the lane that would lead them straight to the cottages, they’d made it to nearly within sight of Draco’s cottage before the sky opened up as it had been threatening to do, and the rain came down hard and fast.

They raced along the last one or two hundred yards in a mad sprint, being pelted by the driving rain
at their backs, and by the time they reached the door of the cottage, they were thoroughly soaked through.

Out of breath, Draco unlocked the door. Somewhere along the last few dozen yards, they’d begun laughing like schoolboys, and they all but fell through the door as he pushed it open.

Being accustomed to walking all around the steep hills and steps of St. Peter Port, Evan regained his breath much faster than Draco, who stood, leaning against the door with his hands braced against his knees.

“I realise being a writer is a very sedentary life, but I’d no idea how out of shape I’d let myself become.”

His long hair, worn loose because Evan liked it like that, was plastered to his face. Both his and Evan’s clothing was sopping wet and dripping on the floor.

Pushing his hair from his face, Draco panted, “You could at least pretend to be winded.”

Evan laughed and took several deep, gasping breaths. He asked, “Better?”

“Oh, much.”

As funny as they’d both found having been drenched, the reality was that, summer or not, the rain had been cold. Evan’s hair was much longer when wet. His fringe hung into his eyes, and as Draco offered to fetch them both dry clothes, Evan ran his hand through his hair, slicking it back. There was a faint scar on his forehead over his right eye which, his forehead always having been covered by his fringe, Draco had never noticed before. It was so faint, he could barely see it now.

Evan followed him through the cottage towards his bedroom. He pulled his wet shirt over his head, as they walked. “Put my wet things in the bath, shall I?” he asked.

As Evan spoke, Draco turned his head to him, about to answer, but the sight of Evan standing shirtless and dripping wet in his bedroom drove the thought from his mind. A droplet of water fell from Evan’s hair, landing on his shoulder and sliding down his chest. Draco’s eyes followed its path before returning to Evan’s face.

The atmosphere had changed. Everything Draco had come to feel for the man in front of him over the past weeks was reflected back at him from deep green eyes, and he closed the few steps distance between them, taking Evan in his arms and kissing him. Evan dropped his wet shirt to the floor, forgotten. Both men eagerly deepened the kiss. Evan’s hands scrambled to remove Draco’s shirt; it fell on top of Evan’s. Sighs from one melted with moans from the other, and neither knew which sound had come from which of them. Lips and tongues met with rapidly growing urgency. Hands roamed over shoulder and backs, grasping each other tightly.

Evan’s hands moved to the button on Draco’s trousers as they stumbled together towards the bed. Evan pushed Draco’s trousers down his legs as Draco pulled open Evan’s jeans, but the wet denim was more difficult to remove and, not willing to break their kiss, it took both of them to slide the jeans off.

Stretching out together on Draco’s bed, their frantic pace slowed, and they took their time, savouring each other. Skin slid against skin, legs twisted together, hands roamed over and under cotton boxers, arms held each other close. Since that first time on Evan’s couch, they’d touched each other numerous times, usually on that same couch or the floor in front of the fireplace in Evan’s parlour, even in his kitchen. But they’d never gone to bed together before.
They’d only ever touched each other with their hands, but tonight was going to be different. Tonight was going to be more. Draco wanted to feel Evan’s mouth on him, to see those full lips close around him. He wanted to put his mouth on Evan and take him into his body. He was scared as hell, but he trusted Evan. Draco loved Evan and wanted to feel him inside of him. Ever since he’d felt Evan pressed against him that first time, he’d thought about it, and tonight it was going to happen

“Stay with me tonight,” Draco said, his lips skimming along Evan’s jaw, the dark hairs deliciously course against his lips. “I want to taste you.” Draco moved down Evan’s body, nervous but eager and nearly delirious with how much he wanted the man beneath him. He ran the tip of his tongue over the bulge of Evan’s cock inside his boxers as he hooked his fingers under the elastic waistband. He looked up at Evan and met his eyes as he began to lower the cotton down his hips.

“Stay.” Evan didn’t say anything more than that one word, but his meaning was clear. He was asking Draco to not leave—not just to extend his stay, but to not leave. Draco hesitated. He wanted more than anything to say yes and finish what they’d started, but there was too much about him that Evan didn’t know, that he had a right to know before they could even think about anything more than one summer together.

Reluctantly, he stopped what he’d been about to do and moved to lay his head on the pillow beside Evan. Draco kissed him, and Evan attempted to deepen the kiss; he pushed against Draco’s shoulder to roll him onto his back.

At Draco’s resistance, Evan stopped. He said, “I know it’s soon. I know we’ve not known each other for more than a few weeks, but I am . . . crazy about you.” He swallowed, looking frightened and vulnerable. Draco wanted to wrap his arms around him and never let go. “I’m not asking for . . . for any big promises or anything. I’m not suggesting we pick out curtains and flatware. But we’re good together, Luke. Can you see how good we are together? I just, I think if we had the chance, we could be really good. We could make it work.”

Draco looked away. He bit his lip and sighed, turning back to Evan. He laid on his back and pulled Evan down against him. Reluctantly, he started the conversation he was very afraid would send Evan running from him. His arms tightened around the man beside him as if he could prevent him from leaving once he knew the whole truth. “There’s so much you don’t know about me, Evan. If you did, you’d not be asking me to stay. I’m afraid . . . I’m afraid you’d want nothing more to do with me.”

“I doubt that,” Evan replied, his fingers toying with the long strands of Draco’s hair.

“Don’t.”

Evan studied him closely, and Draco tried not to flinch under the scrutiny of those intense green eyes. Evan took a deep breath and never breaking eye contact said, “There’s quite a lot you don’t know about me as well. Everything I’ve told you is true, but I’ve kept something from you, something I’ve never told anyone, but I want to tell you. I think . . . .” Evan looked scared, and he paused before he continued, his resolve strengthened. “We have a mutual friend. Luna Lovegood.”

Draco felt as if his lungs had turned to stone, and he couldn’t breathe. Evan lay beside him; his fingers had moved to stroke Draco’s upper arm, coming to within inches of the scar left behind by the Dark Mark Draco had so arrogantly and stupidly been proud to take before he’d known better.

Draco wished he had a Time Turner. He wished he could undo the past few seconds. Or had minutes already passed? Time itself seemed to have been frozen by Evan’s words. Seconds or minutes, it made no difference, they felt the same.
Evan knew Luna.

But as far as Draco knew, Luna had no Muggle friends.

So, if Evan knew Luna . . . then . . .

Oh, Merlin. If Evan knew Luna, then . . .

“You know Luna?” Draco managed to croak out. The words felt like razor blades, shredding his insides to ribbons. If Evan knew Luna, then . . .

Although there was audible apprehension in Evan’s voice, he never looked away, never hesitated as he said, “We went to school together.”

Draco’s heart felt like it vanished from inside his chest as though it had been cast from Leprechaun gold, and his body went stiff.

“Please don’t be afraid of me,” Evan begged with something bordering on desperation. He reached out and placed his hand gently on Draco’s chest. “I’m still the same person I was before. I’m no different from Luna.”

Evan’s fingers had begun to lightly stroke Draco’s chest as he spoke. They had been tracing random patterns on his skin but had suddenly stilled as his voice trailed off. They moved and began a new course, running in a perfectly straight line from Draco’s left rib cage, across his abdomen to his right side. Draco knew those fingers were following the line of a barely visible scar received during his sixth year at Hogwarts. Only occasionally had any of Draco’s past sexual partners even noticed it; one had to see it from a certain angle, or it was all but invisible.

Through his shock at learning Evan to be a wizard, Draco idly wondered why the faint scar across his stomach had drawn Evan’s attention so completely. Then he realised Evan had a scar on his forehead over his right eye. He also realised there hadn’t been a student named Evan Jameson at Hogwarts while he and Luna had been there.

Draco’s heart had time to beat ferociously three times before Evan flew off the bed as if he’d been thrown from it by a curse. In one more painful beat of his heart, a very familiar wand was pointed at him, and if Draco hadn’t already realised who he’d been in bed with, that wand would have left no doubt in his mind.

It was the most famous wand in existence—more famous, even, than the Elder Wand.

It was eleven inches, made of holly with a phoenix feather core. The Holly and Feather.

It was the wand that had caused the scar on his stomach.

Two former rivals, now former lovers as well, stared at each other, both wide-eyed with equal disbelief and horror, one still in bed, the other standing beside it. Both breathing hard, but for a very different reason than they had been so very recently.

Upon jumping off the bed, Potter had retrieved his jeans from the floor and had pulled his wand from a concealed pocket. Draco had seen that wand pointed at him more than once, but he’d never seen the hand holding it shake. He’d seen revulsion in those green eyes before, but he’d never seen the agony they now held.

Without saying a word and before Draco could think clearly enough to say anything himself, Potter turned on the spot and vanished.
Draco lay on his bed, dressed only in his boxers, and stared disbelievingly at the now vacant spot. His breath was coming shallow and fast. His heart was pounding painfully hard in his chest. He felt ill. Evan, the man he’d fallen in love with and had been ready to stay with, to give up everything for, to confess everything to, hadn’t been Evan.

Evan had never existed.

He’d been Potter all along.

Truly believing he might be sick, Draco slowly crawled out of bed. He felt like a small child waking up after a nightmare in an unfamiliar room. A flash of lightning illuminated everything with blindingly white light, and a moment later, a loud crash of thunder made Draco jump. The sudden noise helped to snap him out of the shock he’d been in, and his eyes darted around the room like a frightened crup.

A few short minutes ago—had it really only been minutes ago?—he’d been ready to give up everything and stay on this island with Evan. But none of it had been real. Evan had never existed, and now all Draco wanted to do was get away from Guernsey as quickly as possible.

Draco grabbed his trousers from the floor and pulled them on quickly, nearly overbalancing in his haste. He called for Tibby and told her they were returning to the manor immediately. The little elf had been asleep and rubbed her large bulbous eyes tiredly. He was sorry to have woken her, but obediently and without question at the abrupt change in his plans, the little elf snapped her fingers, and his magically shrunken trunks flew out from under his bed and resumed their true size. They popped open as clothes zoomed from the closet and dresser drawers. In the bathroom, he could hear his toiletries packing themselves away as well.

He wanted to curl up and cry as he stared down at the bed with its rumpled linens; the pillows were still dented where their heads had lain. None of it had been real. All this time, all these weeks they’d spent together, everything they’d said and done, none of it had ever been real. Evan had never been real. He’d been Potter all along.

Staring blindly in a mixture of disbelief and grief, Draco turned his attention to the small elf beside him as she said, “All is being ready, Master Malfoy.” They Apparated back to the manor leaving nothing behind them to show that he had ever occupied the space other than a rumpled bed.

Chapter End Notes

And there we have it--the bit shit-hits-the fan scene. Drop me a review and let me know what you thought!
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

Since chapter seven was a bit tough, I thought I’d be nice and give you chapter eight right away.

This fic was written for the 2012 HD Career Fest on Livejournal.

Thank you to the army of betas who worked to get this ready for the fest: SecretlySeverus, Cleodoxa, EvilPumkin, AryaEragonPrincessShadeslayer, AsilleNellum, and Batgirl8968, and to Rebeccaann08 for submitting such a great prompt.

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See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Five days later, Harry sat on his deck staring out towards the harbour. Rhys sat beside him. He’d not been back to the Holly and Feather since leaving it with Luke to walk around Pleinmont, and his friend had gotten fed up with his moping around and had come after him.

“Come on. What’s say we round up a few of the boys and go out and get ourselves royally pissed? It’ll be fun,” Rhys suggested.

“I don’t feel like it, Rhys. But you go. Have a pint or two for me.”

“Rather defeats the purpose of getting you out of the bleedin’ house if we get drunk without you, mate.”

Harry gestured around them. “I am out of the house.”

“On the deck does not qualify as ‘out of the house.’ If you don’t want to go out, why don’t we just get ourselves a couple nice steaks and throw them on the barbeque?”

“I’m not hungry.”
“You need to eat.”

“I ate earlier.”

“And what did you eat? A couple pints of ice cream? Bag or two of crisps?”

Harry didn’t answer. His mind had returned to a cottage on the other side of the island as it had so many times these past few days. Malfoy. Luke had never existed; he’d been Malfoy all along. All the times he’d rubbed at his left forearm, Harry had wondered how he’d gotten his scar. Now, he knew.

After everything had gone so spectacularly pear shaped, Harry’d Apparated back to his home and had paced around his room. He’d fallen arse over tits in love with Malfoy, and he’d been about to tell him. The only thing that had stopped him was his wanting Luke to choose to stay on the island because of his own feelings for Harry, not Harry’s for him. He’d had no idea what to do, and in the end, he’d collapsed into his bed and curled up into a small ball, just as he’d done all those years ago when Vernon had shoved him away in the cupboard under the stairs like an unwanted possession.

At some point, he’d fallen asleep in his wet jeans, and a nightmare had woken him early the next morning. A hot shower and a strong pot of coffee had made him feel no better. Heartbroken and not knowing what to do with himself, Harry had roamed aimlessly through his home, but everywhere he’d looked, he’d seen Luke—especially the couch. Harry could see him standing at the counter in the kitchen, whisking together the filling for Key Lime Pie. All of his books were on the shelf in Harry’s parlour. Even the bathroom, where Harry had hoped they could soak in his bath together, was haunted by Luke. It had only been a few hours, but even then, Harry had already missed Luke so much it hurt.

Once the initial shock had faded, he had been able to see the things Luke had told him of his life as what they really were, Malfoy’s life. Even From This Day Forward, one of his favourite books, Harry could now see for what it really was—a veiled autobiography; dates and names and places and circumstances were all changed, but Harry could see now that it had been Draco Malfoy he’d been reading about.

Part of him hoped that Draco would come after him, but he never did, and sometime early that afternoon, Harry had decided to go back to the cottage, try to talk to Malfoy. Maybe . . . Harry hadn’t known what he expected to gain; Malfoy would hex him on sight likely as not.

Harry hadn’t known what he had expected or hoped for, or even what he wanted, but what he’d
found was an empty cottage. The proprietress had been just exiting the property as Harry’d approached, walking up the same path he’d run up with Malfoy in the rain just the day before. He’d inquired after Malfoy—almost forgetting to call him Luke—and had been told that “The gentleman had received an urgent call from home and had had to return earlier than he’d planned.” Dejected, Harry had returned home.

Needing someone to talk to but not knowing who to turn to, Harry had thought to Floo call Luna, but then realised it was possible that Malfoy was with her, and he had been unwilling to risk it. The empty cottage had spoken loudly enough. Malfoy wanted nothing to do with him.

His eyes still fixed on the harbour in the distance, Harry said, “I know it was only a few weeks, but I loved him, you know?”

“Yeah, mate, I know,” Rhys replied sadly.

Late the next morning, Harry got a Floo call that would at first drive Malfoy from his mind altogether then return him to it front and centre.

“Harry? Harry!” came Hermione’s voice, magically amplified so that he, but no one else, would be able to hear it anywhere in the house. Like Rhys, Hermione had been checking on him these past few days. She knew that Harry’s latest relationship had fizzled out, but she didn’t know why. He’d told his friends at home about Luke only two weeks ago, and now he wished he hadn’t. Being so far from him, Harry knew how much his friends worried about him, especially when his relationships had all eventually fallen apart. He stared up at the ceiling, hoping if he didn’t answer, she’d think he was still asleep and leave him alone.

“Harry!”

Harry rolled over and looked out the French door to the deck outside his bedroom.

“HARRY!” Hermione’s voice grew frantic. “It’s Teddy!”

In an instant, Harry bolted from his bed and ran up the stairs. He fell to the floor in front of the Floo, but before he could ask what was wrong, Hermione explained.
“Andromeda was unable to rouse him this morning. They were supposed to go to Diagon Alley for his school supplies, but he wouldn’t wake up,” she cried. “Oh, Harry. He’s in St. Mungo’s. The healers don’t know what’s wrong. He’s been unwell, but . . . Oh, Harry, you must come home.”

Harry threw some clothes in a bag, quickly rung up Rhys and Amie and within ten minutes of Hermione’s Floo call, he was gone.

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After a long day of meeting with various healers and being poked and scanned and answering questions about his lifestyle, health, and diet, Draco sat quietly beside Luna in the small waiting room they’d been shown to. It was a typical waiting room with uncomfortable, wooden chairs. It had walls painted in what someone must’ve thought was a soothing shade of green and small tables covered by piles of magazines—the most recent of which were several months old. The charmed windows showed peaceful rolling hills and bright blue skies, rather than the hustle and bustle of Muggle London which existed on the other side of the glass. The mediwitch who had escorted them to the waiting room after his meeting with the Heads of both Haematology and Magical Creature Maladies had very curtly told them to wait here, and the others would be with them shortly. That had been twenty minutes ago, and they’d not seen a single soul since.

Better, Draco supposed, than being the subject of the scorn of strangers, as he had been with the mediwitch, thinly veiled as that scorn had been due to Luna’s presence. He dropped his head into his hands and attempted to run his fingers through his hair before remembering he’d tied it back.

Odd, he thought to himself, how quickly he’d grown used to wearing it loose rather than tightly pulled back like he normally did.

Absently flipping through the pages of a nearly year old *Quibbler*, Luna observed, her dream-like voice light as air, “Harry always has had a weakness for men with long hair.”

Grateful though he was that she’d accompanied him, Draco ignored her. It had been her idea that he go to that blasted island in the first place.

Evan had never existed; it had been Potter under the same spell which he himself used.

Once the shock had worn off, he’d realised Luna, his friend whom he trusted, had sent him to Guernsey knowing Potter lived there. He’d Flooed to her house none too pleased the day after he returned home, determined to give her a piece of his mind, but Luna possessed some queer ethereal quality that prohibited him from either staying angry with her or keeping anything from her, and the moment he’d seen her, he’d broken down and confessed everything that had happened between
Potter and himself to her.

Luna had only appeared surprised for a matter of seconds before she smiled charmingly and nodded her head. “Yes, I can see that. You and Harry could be good together.”

Draco had been indignant. Indignant, outraged, scandalised. He’d been unable to respond.

“Oh, now, don’t look at me like that, Draco,” Luna had soothed in her dream-like voice. “You and Harry have a lot in common, when one stops to really think about it. But I must say, when I suggested that perhaps the Pouques fairies might provide a little inspiration, this is rather more than I had in mind.”

Refusing to think on it, Draco glanced at his watch. Another five minutes had passed.

The door opened and revealed an old and very fat wizard speaking sycophantically over his shoulder to someone whom Draco could not see.

Draco knew the identity of the old wizard immediately; he was none other than Horatio Hurst, the Healer in charge of St. Mungo’s, himself. Once upon a time, Hurst had been a regular dinner guest at Malfoy Manor, back when the Malfoy name had been a prestigious one and their patronage actively pursued. But those days were long gone, and when Hurst stepped into the room and saw Draco sitting there, his face blanched, and he quickly turned away to address whomever was hidden from view by his great bulk.

Draco could hear Hurst’s profuse apologies that he had believed the room to be empty stammered nineteen to the dozen, and then it happened. Luna, seated to his left and having a slightly different angle, craned her neck to the side and caught a glimpse of the person concealed from Draco’s view.

“Hello, Harry!” she called out. Draco repressed a groan and slid lower in his seat.

“Luna,” Harry breathed out as he stepped around Hurst and squeezed through the narrow gap between the man and the door. She rose and met him in the middle of the room, and the friends embraced each other tightly. Harry looked terrible—wrung out, exhausted. His hair was sticking up even more than usual; his clothes were rumpled. Draco looked away, willing himself not to remember what that hair felt like between his fingers.
“How is Teddy today?” Luna asked.

“They have him under magical sedation. It’s . . . They said it will help keep up his strength.”

“Well, that’s all right, then.”

“He,” Harry sobbed, his head bowed, his face pressed against Luna’s shoulder. “He’s so pale. He’d been unwell for a while, but no one ever dreamt. . . .”

“He needs his rest, Harry. Best thing for him right now, by far. Parents often give their children a mild sleeping draught to help them to sleep when they come down with Sanguifício, so I’ve read.” Luna looked back over her shoulder at Draco. “Isn’t that right, Draco?” she asked.

Harry raised his head. His eyes were red, and there were dark circles beneath them. He looked desperate for any reassurance anyone could give him, even if that anyone was Draco.

Draco turned his head; the memory of those eyes staring into his own as Evan asked him to stay with him was too much. He cleared his throat and answered, keeping his face averted so as not to show Harry how badly he could affect him. “Er, yes. That’s true. My mother gave me small doses of sleeping draught mixed with warm milk. I was in bed for the better part of two weeks.”

“Your friend is quite correct, Mr. Potter,” Healer Hurst interjected. Draco noticed the singular form of the word “friend” and was under no disillusion as to which of them, Luna or himself, the word had referred. Regardless, clarification was provided a moment later.

“As Miss Lovegood said, Mr. Potter, sleep is the best thing for a child in young Teddy’s condition.”

Harry shivered. Teddy’s body had slowly been losing its ability to absorb the vitamins and minerals, the protein, fiber, and carbohydrates from his food for months, essentially starving itself.

“Come, Harry. Come, sit down.”

Luna guided Harry to the chair beside the one she had been sitting in, and he followed her mechanically. He sat down heavily and dropped his head into his hands.
Healer Hurst soon departed, offering Harry repeated assurances that everything magically possible was being done and promising that he would return presently with the team of healers and mediwizards and witches directly responsible for Teddy’s care, who would explain exactly what the treatment plan they’d devised would entail.

Hurst tipped his head to Luna before leaving the room. He never acknowledged Draco’s presence in any way.

Luna rubbed Harry’s back briefly before squeezing his shoulder and saying, “You and Andromeda mustn’t blame yourselves, Harry.” When Harry didn’t respond, she continued in her soothing, dream-like voice, “Sanguificio is rare as it is, and it’s unheard of in someone Teddy’s age. It normally strikes the very young. Of course no one suspected it.”

Harry raised his hand and placed it over hers, but he did not respond.

She caught Draco’s eye over Harry’s bowed head and lowered her gaze to Harry, returning it to Draco a moment later with an arched eyebrow. She excused herself to find the ladies’.

Draco’s eyes widened with alarm, and he followed her across the room. Just outside the door, in the thankfully—empty corridor, Draco whispered desperate pleas for her not to leave.

“Go in there. Talk to him. He needs you,” she responded.

“I’m the last person in the world Potter wants near him right now.”

A subtle smile on her face, Luna said, “I wouldn’t be so sure about that.”

“Luna, you don’t get it. It wasn’t real. None of it was real.”

“Of course it was. Why should the fact that his name is Harry instead of Evan mean it wasn’t real?”

Draco decided that as much as he loved Luna, sometimes the absolute confidence held in that
uncannily calm, soft-as-silk voice could grate on a man’s last nerve, and he had just resolved to stand there in the corridor and wait for her to return when two young mediwitches exited a room further down. Upon seeing him, they gasped simultaneously and whispered to each other before turning on the spot and hurrying off in the opposite direction.

At least in the waiting room with Potter, Draco’s humiliation would be limited to just one person, and he hurriedly re-entered the room.

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Left alone together, Harry sat on one side of the room, idly thumbing through an outdated magazine, while Draco leaned against a wall in the opposite corner, his arms folded in front of him, his face lowered. They were as far apart as the room would allow, both anxious, neither looking directly at the other, but both surreptitiously watching the other via brief glances from seemingly averted eyes.

Inevitably, both chose the same moment to glance at the other, and their eyes met. Both looked away quickly, but neither could continue to pretend the other was not there.

Clearing his throat, Harry asked, “How are you?”

Draco looked away, tugging on his sleeve as he answered, “Well.” He paused and took a deep breath. “You?” He glanced towards Harry, whose eyes were fixed on Draco’s left arm. Resuming his earlier defensive stance, Draco folded his arms in front of himself once again, and Harry jumped, as if startled out of his trance by the movement. He cast his eyes aside, embarrassed at having been caught staring.

“I’m fine.” Uncomfortable, Harry rambled on, his words running together, “It’s good of you to do this. You didn’t have to.”

“Did you think I would refuse?” Draco’s disappointment and hurt were too genuine to hide and were audible as he spoke.

Harry’s voice was firm in response. “No. I told them you’d agree.”

And he had; as soon as the nature of Teddy’s condition and what would be needed for his care had been explained to him, Harry had immediately contradicted the healers’ doubts that Draco would be willing to help.
Neither knowing what to say next, an awkward silence settled over them.

Finally, Harry said, “Andromeda is with Teddy, but I know she wants to thank you personally. She is very grateful.” He paused and added, “So am I.”

Draco fidgeted. “He is my cousin.”

Harry adored his godson, and bragging about him came easily. He enthused, “He’s a great kid, really. You should see him on a broom. He’s brilliant.”

“You taught him.”

It was a simple statement, made matter-of-factly and without pretence or malice, and Harry felt the full weight of the compliment in those three little words. He said, “Actually, he reminds me of you when he flies.”

“Ruthless, is he?”

Harry couldn’t remember Draco’s voice ever holding the range of emotion he heard in it now. It had certainly never held anything but contempt when directed at him before—not, at least, when Draco had known it was him. The Malfoy Harry had known would never have allowed the vulnerability of letting his emotions be heard in his voice, especially not when speaking to him.


Getting back to Teddy, Harry said, “He’s very focused, intent. He’s precise. He’s a very technically correct flier. His posture on a broom is perfect.”

The silence returned and after a period of time, Harry ventured, “Maybe . . . once he’s well, you could come see him fly. If you’d like.”

Draco hesitated but said, “I’d like that.”
Again, the manner in which those three simple words were spoken—tentative and uncertain, but with undeniable and genuine interest—made Harry’s breath catch in his throat. A flicker of hope was springing up inside him, and wanting to keep the conversation going, he spoke without thinking. “You could come to a Quidditch match. He’s the Gryffindor seeker.” Harry could see Draco withdraw into himself; he seemed to physically shrink in size before Harry’s very eyes.

Hogwarts held terrible memories for both of them, but Harry had gone back and faced his. He had worked side by side with others to repair the destroyed stone and wood, the shattered glass, but he had also begun the long road to healing himself, to burying his dead. Through the act of reclaiming the first real home he had ever known from the madman who had attempted to destroy it, Harry had begun the process of reclaiming himself as well.

But Draco had never had that chance. He’d retreated back to his manor, figuratively carrying his dead with him, and there he had lived, like a hermit, with their ghosts and the ghosts of so many others haunting him, his only escape the temporary reprieve his writing had provided him. But now that escape had been threatened by his inability to write.

Harry began to better appreciate the anxiety he’d seen and heard from Luke when speaking about his writer’s block.

But he’d begun to get it back on Guernsey. It had only been a small start, but he’d begun to get it back. Harry remembered the way Draco’s silver eyes had lost their focus while sitting in the Holly and Feather, staring straight ahead, but seeing the scene he’d begun to create in his mind rather than the one in front of him: The girl in the restaurant. Waiting on whom? he’d asked.

Harry remembered the way Draco had scribbled so furiously across the page, trying to get his thoughts down on paper before they slipped away from him. He remembered the way Draco had bitten his lower lip as he wrote, the way he would stop periodically and cover his eyes, his lips moving silently as he ran something over in his mind.

Harry was pulled from his thoughts as Draco suddenly said, “Thank you. For not telling anyone, about my books, I mean.” His voice has started off in a rush but had trailed off to a whisper.

Surprised, Harry said, “I wouldn’t do that.” Hurt, he added, “Did you expect me to?”

Draco looked at him for several long seconds before looking away. He shook his head slowly. “No. Not you. Anyone else would’ve, but not you.”
Harry cleared his throat. “What about you? You could’ve told someone where I was, but you didn’t.”

Draco laughed humourlessly. “Who could I have told?”

Harry’s eyes fell to the floor. “Others would have gone to the Prophet. They’d pay a fortune to know where I’ve been and what I’d been doing all this time.”

“I have money. Fat lot of good that it is.”

Hearing the desolation and loneliness in Draco’s voice was too much, and Harry stammered, “Draco, I . . . I’d . . .” He wanted to apologise for his reaction, for running away. He wasn’t one to run away from something, and he was not proud of himself for having done so. But wanting to apologise and finding the words to do so were very different things. “I would . . . That is, I regret—”

Draco’s eyes looked directly at him and his lips parted, drawing Harry’s attention against his will, but the words that had been on the tip of Harry’s tongue died there as Luna opened the door, calling out loudly to Healer Hurst, who had returned with the team of healers treating Teddy. A moment later, the room was filled by Hurst accompanied by several healers, and Harry’s chance to talk to Draco was lost.

Andromeda, crying softly, entered last; she was leaning heavily against Molly Weasley and accompanied by a member of St. Mungo’s family support staff. Upon seeing Draco, she released Molly’s arm and went to him, embracing him. Her crying increased as she voiced her gratitude.

Draco, visibly overwhelmed, awkwardly patted her shoulder and tried to reassure her that all would be well.

Molly retrieved her charge, placing her arm around Andromeda’s shoulder and guiding her to a chair; she nodded at Draco, an uncertain and tentative smile of thanks tugging at the corner of her lips. The elderly support staff witch handed Andromeda a glass of water and a fresh handkerchief with a kindly, “Here you are, my dear.” Obediently, Andromeda wiped her eyes and took a small sip. Her tears subsided.

The room had magically expanded to accommodate the crowd of people, some of whom Harry noted were unmistakably casting harsh glances in Draco’s direction and taking very little care to hide it. Harry set his jaw and moved closer to him, masking his movement by whispering to both Draco
and Luna, “Calming draught,” in reference to the glass of water Andromeda held. He moved towards the three seats left open next to Andromeda at the end of the row. Luna touched Draco’s shoulder, and they followed him. Harry sat beside Andromeda, while Luna took the end seat, leaving only the middle seat next to Harry open for Draco to take.

Healer Hurst spoke, introducing the heads of various departments throughout the hospital and their respective staffs. The Heads of Department were identifiable by the white shield behind the embroidered crossed wand and bone emblem of St. Mungo’s adorning their lime green robes. By the time the last witch had been introduced, Harry was lost as to who was whom, but he did not care—that the healers and mediwizards and witches tending to Teddy were the top of their fields was all that mattered. He knew that with the exception of Andrew Clarke, Head of Magical Creature Maladies, who had been involved personally with Teddy since infancy due to his unique status as the only known offspring of a werewolf, the Heads of Department’s personal overseeing of Teddy’s treatment was because of him, because he was Teddy’s godfather, and for the first time, Harry found himself unspeakably grateful for the influence his name held in the Wizarding world.

Elspeth Leatherby, Head of Paediatric Contagious Maladies, a kindly and professional looking witch with neatly arranged white-grey hair and bright red framed glasses, began by giving a brief explanation of Teddy’s diagnosis, a paediatric ailment called Sanguificio. “Sanguificio is a rare virus which typically runs in families. It attacks the red blood cells, or RBC’s, killing them at a rate faster than the body can replace them. Not seen in girls, it normally affects young boys of about four or five. Previously, the oldest child diagnosed with Sanguificio was eight years old.

“Often, the virus starts slowly and will be present for several weeks—typically four or five weeks but as long as two months in some cases—before being diagnosed, as it takes that long for the RBC count to fall to a low enough level to cause obvious and prolonged symptoms.

“Normal signs in a young child are continued shortness of breath, even while at rest, and an increased appetite, as the body attempts to compensate for the lack of nutrients.”

The narration moved from one department head to another. Harry appreciated that the healers were taking the time to thoroughly explain Teddy’s condition, but he couldn’t help but quickly grow frustrated. He was really much more interested in what was to be done to put his godson to rights, but every time one healer left off, just as he opened his mouth to interrupt, another picked up the explanation before he’d had the chance.

“As the virus affects the red blood cells while leaving the white blood cells untouched, the body will, in time and with only minimal outside intervention, fend off the virus. Simply put, the virus largely burns itself out. As the RBC count drops, the spread of the virus is slowed, and the body’s immune system can better fight it. The child will often be given a mild paediatric sleeping draught in order to speed recovery, as the virus spreads considerably slower when the child is at rest.”
Harry spoke up. “But Teddy’s case is different.”

Andrew Clarke, the Head of Magical Creature Maladies and Magical Creature Induced Injuries, and Teddy’s primary healer, spoke for the first time. “As we all know, everything about Teddy is unique. We just don’t know to what extent, or indeed even if, his father’s Lycanthropy will ever affect him. So far, thankfully, there have been no particular concerns noted; he has met all major developmental milestones satisfactorily and has been perfectly healthy with no signs of developing Lycanthropy or being a carrier. I’ve personally tested young Teddy’s blood and saliva regularly over the years, and I have completed additional tests since his admittance to the hospital. There are not, nor have there ever been, any Lycanthropic cells.

“But Lycanthropy is essentially a blood disorder, as is Sanguificio. We don’t know to what extent the former has affected the latter. While Lycanthropy is transmitted via saliva, it is the blood that is infected. Teddy has had other common illnesses before, all of which developed and progressed normally, and he recovered as one would expect of a young wizard of his age. However, it is entirely possible that it may be a complication in this case as it has not previously affected other illnesses.”

“But you can help him? You can cure him?” Harry asked with growing unease.

The healers shared anxious glances for several seconds. They seemed to be silently electing a spokesperson to deliver news that none of them wanted to give. Harry could see the same thought written cross each of their faces: “I’m not going to be the one to tell Harry Potter we can’t help his godson.”

From its location in his throat, Harry’s heart pounded.

Rather than one stepping forward, four appeared to take a simultaneous step back, metaphorically leaving one to stand alone–Gregory Garrott, Director of Contagious Maladies, had drawn the short straw.

“Mr. Potter, there is no cure for Sanguificio. The immune system destroys the virus. We can help it to do so more quickly, but the body must heal itself.”

Andromeda wept softly into a handkerchief.

Harry wished he had a calming draught of his own. “But . . . Teddy’s . . .”
“Teddy’s body is not fighting the virus the way we would expect. Typically, the RBC count falls to a certain range, levels off, and begins to increase.”

Harry felt like he was trapped in a waking nightmare. “But Teddy’s is still falling.”

“It is.”

“But there is something that can be done. Healer Hurst said you’d come up with a plan.”

Jonathan Gelson, Head of Muggle Medical and Magical Healing Collaboration, spoke for the first time and explained what they planned to do—a blood transfusion.

One of the outcomes of the war had been a keen interest in all things Muggle. That interest ranged from the purely for fun—such as George Weasley’s ‘WizPod,’ a small, rectangular object charmed to play a witch or wizard’s favourite music and which came with a variation of the Extendable Ears he and his twin, Fred, had invented prior to the war—to much more serious concerns. Those serious concerns included modern Muggle medicine.

A select team of healers, most of whom were young and had connections to the Muggle world and of which Healer Gelson was the head, had devoted themselves to studying Muggle medical practices and developing ways to expand magical healing through what they’d learnt. The concept of blood, tissue and organ donation was one of those ways.

Slowly, Harry nodded his head in understanding. “This is where Draco comes in.”

“This is where Mr. Malfoy comes in, yes. As a first cousin, once removed, who had Sanguificio himself as a child, Mr. Malfoy is an ideal candidate for donation. According to the tests we’ve run, his blood is an excellent match for Teddy.”

Her arm around Andromeda’s shoulders, Molly Weasley shuddered. The practice may be commonplace in the Muggle world, but that was certainly not the case in the Wizarding one. When reports first broke that healers were studying the subject for possible introduction to magical healing practices, there had been an outcry of opposition to the idea. The Wizarding world was deeply opposed to the practice, Muggle-born, half-blood and pure-blood alike. The resistance in the
Wizarding world was exponentially greater to anything Muggle doctors might once have had to contend with due to the magical properties inherent in their blood and tissue. Due to the amount of magic—and most of it dark—that could be performed with blood and tissue, it was not something that was treated lightly in the Wizarding world, especially with the war such a recent memory.

Although he’d known of and agreed to the transfusion procedure, Harry could see the thoughts and feelings of most wizards on the subject clearly reflected in Draco’s silver eyes. Other than himself, Harry doubted there was any wizard alive who knew more personally the damage a dark witch or wizard could do with just a few small drops of a wizard’s blood than Draco.

And yet, there he sat.

Before this day, Draco had never set eyes on Teddy. Though connected through blood, there was no contact between the last two remaining factions of the Black family. And yet, there Draco sat, ready and willing to give his own blood—and knowing the potential risk of that action—to Teddy.

Healer Humphrey Edeson, Head of Haematology, gave a detailed explanation of antibodies, finishing by saying, “The body’s immune system produces these antibodies to ward off foreign antigens, such as bacteria, or in this case the virus which causes Sanguificio. A specific antibody is created for a specific antigen. Teddy’s body is not producing the antibody needed to fight the Sanguificio virus.”

Draco spoke for the first time. His voice was so soft, so quiet, that had Harry not been looking at him and seen his lips move, he might’ve missed his words. “But mine can.”

“It can.” After looking closely into Draco’s eyes and holding their gaze for several long seconds, Healer Edeson sighed and turned his eyes away. He continued, “This procedure is highly controversial. Everyone assembled here acknowledges that fact, but we truly believe this will help Teddy. We have no previous case studies to turn to for guidance, but from what we have learnt from our Muggle counterparts, we are confident this will work.

“It is a relatively easy concept to explain in layman’s terms. When a person is exposed to a type of bacteria or virus, the immune system makes antibodies to fight that specific organism. After the foreign antigens are destroyed, these antibodies remain in the immune system in low quantities to protect the body. Should the virus or bacteria reappear, the immune system will essentially remember it and quickly reactivate its antibodies to destroy the organism again, preventing the person from falling ill, thus creating immunity.

“As Mr. Malfoy had Sanguificio as a young child, his body has immunity to reinfection through its
remaining antibodies, and through the proposed transfusion, he can pass that immunity on to Teddy.”

Harry felt his breath rush from his lungs. Could it be that easy? Living in the Muggle world as he had been for so long, the concept of blood donation and transfusion was not unfamiliar to him. The National Health Service ran drives to ask for donors regularly.

A moment later, Harry’s unasked question was answered by Jonathan Gelson, Head of Muggle Medical and Magical Healing Collaboration. No, it would not be that easy.

“Muggles donate blood all the time. It is, normally, a quite simple procedure, which takes little time and poses little inconvenience to the donor. Most feel no ill effects other than occasional, temporary giddiness. However, as I have already explained personally to Mr. Malfoy, this will not be a normal case. In order to introduce the needed antibodies into young Teddy’s system in sufficient quantity, he will need to have a quarter of his blood volume replaced, approximately one litre, or roughly twenty percent of Mr. Malfoy’s total blood volume.”

Harry’s heart fell from its perch in his throat, landing in his stomach as mental pictures of litre bottles of pop floated through his head. One litre of blood was a hell of a lot. How much blood was even in the human body?

And how much of that blood was safe to lose?

Harry could see both Molly and Andromeda with expressions on their faces that he was sure matched the one on his own. Only a few drops of blood were required for use in magic—a litre of blood was an unimaginable amount. And Draco had already agreed to give it. Harry had so many questions in his head, but he was unable to voice them. He could only sit mutely as Healer Edeson picked up the narration.

“Although far from potentially life threatening, this is, obviously, a very substantial amount of blood—more than twice what would be taken from a blood donor in the Muggle world. Twenty percent blood loss is considered a Class II Haemorrhage; at this level a person is in the beginning stages of shock. The heart will beat faster, and the person will start to both look pale and feel cool.

“As I have previously discussed with Mr. Malfoy privately, all possible precautions will be in place for his well-being. He will be closely monitored via both continuous monitoring spells and frequent checks from our team of healers and mediwizards and mediwitches, as well as by myself. Additionally, he will be prescribed a blood replenishing potion.”
The tight knot in Harry’s chest that had formed when he’d heard just how very much blood they were asking of Draco began to relax. It was going to be OK. Everything was going to be OK.

A quick glance was passed between the healers, and the tightness returned to Harry’s chest.

After everything they’d already been told, there was *more*?

“To maximize the quantity of antibodies introduced into Teddy’s system, the virus has already been introduced into Mr. Malfoy’s blood. His body has already begun reactivating and replicating the needed antibodies, and the white blood cells in Mr. Malfoy’s blood will continue to do so once in Teddy’s body.”

It had been Elspeth Leatheryby, Head of Paediatric Contagious Maladies, who’d spoken, but it had been Healer Clarke from Magical Creatures whose voice Harry had heard echoing through his entire body.

“I’ve personally tested young Teddy’s blood and saliva regularly over the years, and I have completed additional tests since his admittance to the hospital. There are not, nor have there ever been, any Lycanthropic cells.”

Harry’s mouth went dry. Draco had not only agreed to give his own blood, but had agreed to allow them to give him Teddy’s blood—the blood of the offspring of a werewolf.

Harry spoke without conscious thought. “Is that safe?” He didn’t recognise the sound of his own voice.

As the most knowledgeable about blood and the one who would be performing the transfusion, it had been Healer Edeson who had done most of the talking, and it was again him who spoke. His voice held both authority and compassion; it was confident but held no trace of arrogance or defensiveness. “Before any procedure of this type would even be considered, regardless of the people involved, every possible precaution would be taken. No one in Britain, or in all of Europe, is more knowledgeable about Lycanthropy, Teddy’s unique case in particular, than Healer Clarke. He and I have tested Teddy’s blood personally. Lycanthropic cells are unmistakable and easily detected in infected samples regardless of the time of the lunar cycle at which they are collected. There is no danger that we can detect. I am as confident of Mr. Malfoy’s safety during this procedure as it is possible to be for any patient undergoing any form of healing magic. I would not have permitted it to proceed otherwise, nor would any of us seated here before you. The considerations for the recipient do not outweigh those for the donor.”
Healer Hurst asked if there were any more questions and when there were none, began to draw the meeting to a close.

The transfusion was set for the following day at noon, a little more than eighteen hours from now, time enough for Draco’s body to build up a sufficient number of antibodies to transfer his immunity to Teddy. To reduce the stress to his circulatory system, the transfusion would take two hours, significantly longer than a Muggle blood donation. His body would be replacing the lost blood even during the procedure itself. He would need to remain at St. Mungo’s overnight so that the healers could monitor him as he recovered from the blood loss.

Harry tried to catch Draco’s eye but failed. As the healers rose and returned to their other responsibilities, Harry tried to catch Draco’s attention, but he steadfastly refused to acknowledge Harry was in the room.

After asking him to give up his life in England and stay with him on Guernsey, only to turn and Apparate away minutes later, how could Harry blame him if he never wanted to see him again? He couldn’t. After how he had acted, Draco had every right to tell him to stay the hell away from him.

But nothing short of exactly that would keep Harry away. He had made up his mind; he’d been happy with Luke and miserable without him. Looking at Draco, he could still see the man he’d fallen in love with. If there was any possible way to get Draco to forgive him and hopefully get him back, Harry would do it.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you liked it! Little bit of a better ending than the last chapter? One more chapter to go!
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

Here we are--the last chapter! This fic was written for the 2012 HD Career Fest on Livejournal. If you liked it, hop on over there and check out all the great fics archived from past fests, and check out this year's fest when posting begins September 26th.

Thank you to the army of betas who worked to get this ready for the fest: SecretlySeverus, Cleodoxa, EvilPumkin, AryaEragonPrincessShadeslayer, AsilleNellum, and Batgirl8968, and to Rebeccaann08 for submitting such a great prompt.

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This was what Draco had been dreading the most, facing Potter. The awkwardness between them when they’d been left alone together earlier had been bad enough; it would only be that much worse now that Harry knew what exactly was involved in this transfusion procedure.

Harry had made his feelings perfectly clear on Guernsey. He’d been so thoroughly repulsed at the realisation of whom it had been that he had gotten so close to—whom he had been about to be intimate with—that he had done the one thing that Draco was sure Potter had never done before; he’d run.

Draco wasn’t proud of it, but that was his exact intention as well—at the first possible moment, he intended to run. He knew Harry had been trying to attract his attention, but listening to Potter’s heart-felt gratitude for helping his godson was more than Draco could bear—not knowing what other heart-felt words sounded like as they fell from those lips.

And just how quickly they’d evaporated.

His Aunt Andromeda, whom he’d never met in person before today, approached him hesitantly with the Weasley matriarch at her right. Potter was beside her as well, to her left. Had it been only Potter, Draco would’ve turned on his heels and Apparated away.

Certainly Potter would’ve understood the gesture—after all, that had been exactly what he had done such a short while ago himself.

Such a short while ago . . . Draco thought to himself. What had happened between them on Guernsey felt so long ago, it could’ve been a different lifetime. Those few weeks with Evan had been the happiest of his life.

“Draco, I . . .” his aunt started to say before her breath caught in her throat. She clutched his hands in hers. “I can never thank you enough. I had no idea . . . I didn’t know . . . how much . . . or that . . . Thank you. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.”
“Draco is happy he could help.” Luna stood beside him, wrapped her arm around his, and laid her hand against forearm. He was more grateful for her presence beside him than he could say. He may only have one friend in the world, but that one was the best friend he could have hoped for.

Even if sending him to that bloody island had been all her idea.

“Er, yes. Yes, I . . .” Draco’s voice faded away as he made the mistake of letting his eyes slide from his aunt’s to Potter’s. The green shimmered as a small tear gathered in the corner of his eye.

“Isn’t that right, Draco?” Luna prodded.

Draco shook himself free from his stupor and called upon every ounce of composure he possessed. “Yes, of course.” He continued, not making the mistake of letting his eyes return to Harry’s again, “Potter, you should take my aunt back to her grandson.”

“I loved your mother very much,” Andromeda Tonks stated hurriedly, as if she’d known he’d been about to vanish.

Draco had been about to Apparate away, but his aunt’s voice stopped him in his tracks.

“I did. I don’t know if you could ever believe that, but I did,” she stated.

Had Luna not still had her arm around his, Draco thought he might have ended up on the floor as his mother’s face swam before his eyes.

Upon learning of the death of her brother-in-law during the war and the deaths of her niece and her niece’s husband at the Battle of Hogwarts, his mother had reached out to her sister, to offer her condolences and attempt to begin a reconciliation. But the attempt had not been welcomed.

Draco had been disappointed for his mother; it had been plain how much she’d wanted to make amends with her sister.

“Please don’t blame ‘Dromeda, darling,” his mother had said, the letter she’d written to her sister laying in the shreds it had been returned in on the table beside them. “My family—you and your father—survived, while her husband, daughter, and son-in-law did not. Perhaps, in time . . .” His mother had not finished her sentence. She had never had the chance to try again.

Clearing his throat to rid himself of the lump that had formed, Draco said, “She kept your photograph hidden away. A small one, of the two of you together as children, taking tea in the nursery. I doubt my father ever knew she had it. I found it amongst her things after . . .” He didn’t know why he was telling his aunt this. His mother had been murdered not long after the failed attempt at reconciliation, and they’d not heard a word from his mother’s sister at that time or since. But Draco felt his mother would have wanted him to continue the effort she had begun thirteen years ago.

Or, perhaps, it was something within himself, something that had been ignored and forgotten but that longed for a connection to his last remaining family.

Or, perhaps, it was simply time. Perhaps old wrongs, old hurts and grudges had been allowed to go on for too long. Perhaps it was time to release themselves from the mistakes of the past.

“I could copy it for you, if you would like,” he offered.

Andromeda Tonks’ red, swollen eyes smiled through their worry for her grandson. “I would. I would like that very much. Thank you.”
His aunt studied his face. Draco very much wanted to leave, to escape the green eyes watching him from behind his aunt, but he felt rooted to the spot by his aunt’s gaze. At least, he hoped it was his aunt’s scrutiny that held him there and not Potter’s.

“You’re very like her,” Andromeda said. “You have her eyes.”

Draco opened his mouth to speak, but closed it as his aunt continued, “Oh, not the colour. I didn’t mean that. The colour is all Lucius, but you have Cissy’s deep-set eyes. The shape, the expressiveness in them, the line of your brow...”

When Andromeda fell silent, Molly Weasley tactfully suggested they return to Teddy and suggested that perhaps Draco would like to see his cousin before leaving the hospital.

“Er, I... I think perhaps I should return to the manor.” Draco hoped the words did not sound rude; he did not mean them to be so. But he could feel Potter’s eyes watching him, and if he didn’t get out of there soon, Draco was afraid he’d do something foolish—like look into those eyes. Looking into those eyes would be as fatal as looking into a basilisk’s.

His aunt retook his hand and squeezed it. “We will see you tomorrow, then.”

Harry said, “Andromeda, you go ahead down with Molly, and I’ll meet you there. I’d like to talk to Draco for a moment.”

But Draco had already pulled his wand from his robe pocket, and turning on the spot, the last words he heard before Disapparating away were Harry calling out to him, “Draco! Wait!”

That night, Draco’s combined worry about the upcoming transfusion and his regret for the loss of what he’d hoped he’d found on Guernsey had his stomach twisting in knots and his mind unable to shut down, and he got no sleep. In the early morning hours, after staring at the canopy over his bed for he didn’t know how long, he gave up and threw his bed covers off. He crossed his room and stepped out onto the balcony overlooking the south lawn and the manor’s flower gardens. The gardens were exquisite, as always. The manor’s elves did a superb job of maintaining the grounds, but Draco admitted to himself that he wished more than anything that he was back in the gardens at Mille Fleurs. Seeing Potter had been a painful reminder of how close he’d come to having everything he’d long ago given up hope of ever having. Those weeks that were so special to him were probably looked on now as a huge mistake by Potter, if they were looked on at all.

The sky above him was moonless and dark. He could smell the fragrance of the night-blooming jasmine wafting up from the garden below. Draco braced his hands on the centuries-old stone railing and bowed his head. He refused to think about the plain black t-shirt neatly folded in the drawer of his bedside table. Packing his things as quickly as she had, Tibby had mistakenly swept Potter’s shirt off the floor with Draco’s own, and he had found it the next morning amongst his belongings.

Maybe... if he had told Harry the truth himself rather than having it come out the way it did, and at the moment it did, maybe things would have been different. Maybe he would have still been at Mille Fleurs.

Or, maybe he would have been in St. Peter Port.

Draco remembered sitting and writing at the little table by the window in The Holly and Feather. Harry had been so happy, so proud to see him writing.

Well, he’d been happy and proud to see Luke writing.
He’d kept up a steady stream of that vanilla hazelnut coffee with the whipped Guernsey cream and cocoa powder that Draco had loved so much. And every time there was a lull in customers, Harry had come and sat with him. He’d not spoken while Draco had been writing—sometimes he’d silently read the newspaper, sometimes a book, sometimes he’d worked on a crossword—but the companionship of having someone just sit beside him while he wrote had been wonderful.

The forty-some pages he’d written in the Holly and Feather were in his desk, and with a sense of purpose, Draco re-entered his bedroom and passed through it to his study. Sitting at his desk, he pulled out the pages and leafed through them one by one, muttering to himself as he read a line here, a few more lines there. Page after page, it was all wrong. The story as he’d begun it was all wrong. That was not the way the way it was supposed to go at all. Reaching for his quill and ink pot and, like a sculptor cutting away at a hunk of clay to reveal the statue hidden within, Draco began heavily crossing out everything that didn’t belong and left pages and pages littering the floor of his study the way the sculptor would have mounds of clay.

The next morning, Draco awoke, achy and with his joints stiff, to find his house elf, Tibby, looking up at him regretfully with her enormous, watery blue eyes. He rubbed a crick in his neck and stretched as the little elf apologised for waking him and announced that his breakfast was ready in the small dining room.

Draco had fallen asleep at his desk with papers strewn all around him. It took a whole five seconds for him to remember why he was at his desk and not in his bed, but when he remembered the changes he’d made to his new story idea, a grin spread across his cheeks. He had woken up hunched over his desk after being kept up at night by a new idea several times before, but as he had once told Evan, more often than not what had seemed like a brilliant idea at three in the morning, looked like rubbish by nine.

Not this time, though. This new story was good. It was real good. Some of his best work, Draco proudly thought.

Maybe something good would come from his trip to that blasted island after all.

At St. Mungo’s that afternoon, nearly an hour into the transfusion, Luna inspected the thin Muggle tube running from Draco’s arm to Teddy’s. Draco hadn’t expected to be able to see his blood leave his body and flow towards his cousin’s. He’d not thought much on that aspect of the transfusion; it had been the idea of the transfusion itself that had him worried. But now that it was in progress, it rather fascinated him. Healer Edeson and his team were very skilled; the needle had been inserted into his vein in only a few seconds. Now, part of him would live in another. For someone who, like Draco, had had no familial connection for so long, the reality of having a bond with the boy lying in the bed across from him beyond that of normal cousins was powerful.

“You would think they would design it so that the blood wouldn’t be visible,” Luna observed.

The thin tube was suspended in the air and protected by a strong shield charm. In addition to the shield charm, there were also layers of spells and charms designed to do everything from maintaining the proper temperature of the blood to scanning it for illicit potions, Muggle drugs, alcohol and various diseases. Healer Edeson assured him the spells were all standard. In the Muggle world, he’d explained, donated blood would go through a series of tests to ensure its safety; in their world, the spells performed that role.

The edge of Draco’s scar disappeared under the Spello-tape covering the needle. He had not realised the healer would want to use his left arm—which arm would be used hadn’t been discussed it during
their meeting yesterday—but Healer Edeson had explained that it would be preferable to use his non-wand arm. Tactfully, he had left the decision to Draco. There had been only a moment’s hesitation. Their entire world knew that scar was there; trying to hide it was pointless.

Potter was sat beside his godson’s bed only a few feet away, and Draco knew he’d been sneaking glances at him, but between Andromeda, the Weasley woman, and the army of healers and mediwizards and witches continually streaming in and out of the room, he’d not had the opportunity of approaching him. That Potter would not approach him in front of anyone served, in Draco’s mind, as confirmation that he considered what had happened between them as best forgotten, and it hurt. Draco reassured himself that he did not want to speak to Potter anyway, and he certainly did not want to hear him confirm Draco’s belief that he considered what had happened between them to have been a horrible mistake. Hearing him begin to say that he regretted it yesterday when they’d been alone together had been all the confirmation Draco needed.

“Mr. Malfoy, how are you feeling so far? How is your arm? Is there any pain?” Healer Edeson asked after returning to the room with a goblet in his hand, a parchment and a quill hovering beside him.

Once the transfusion had gotten underway and was proceeding well, the army of healers and mediwitches and mediwizards had departed, giving them privacy. Different coloured orbs of light hovered in the air over both Teddy’s and Draco’s beds; these were the monitoring spells that told the healers everything from their temperature to their respiration and heart rate and, in Teddy’s case, the level of antibodies in his system. Identical orbs were being monitored at the mediwizard station and in the healer’s offices. The most important and most closely watched was the yellow one—it represented the presence of the antibodies in Teddy’s blood stream. It had appeared as a dim glow shortly after the transfusion had begun and had steadily grown to a soft, buttery yellow. When it reached the colour of bright lemon yellow—hopefully within the next hour—the blue orb of the enchanted sleep spell would begin to fade, allowing Teddy to pass into normal sleep and wake up gradually and naturally.

Healer Edison removed the Spello-tape from Draco’s arm and inspected the needle, then replaced the tape and repeated the process on Teddy, the quill beside him making notes on their charts.

Draco shook his head, which was a mistake because it caused the room to spin. He closed his eyes and breathed through his nose until the giddiness passed. “Only some slight tenderness. It mostly feels very odd.”

The quill scribbled away taking notes as the healer checked the pitcher of water beside Draco’s bed. “Feeling giddy?”

“Yes, very. But only just this moment. Not before.”

“Try to lie still; it will help. Drinking plenty? That’s very important to help your body replace the blood you are losing.”

“Yes.”

“Any nausea?”

“No.”

“Good, very good. I have the first dose of your blood replenishing potion. I must warn you, it is quite vile.”

“Aren’t they all?”
Healer Edeson agreed, “Unfortunately, yes, for the most part they are, but it will help with the giddiness considerably. I want you to take one sip every twenty minutes for the remainder of the transfusion and once an hour for two hours afterward. The goblet is charmed to refill itself, and an alarm will sound when you are due for your next dose.

Draco obeyed, barely suppressing a wince. The potion truly was vile, as the healer had warned, and it left a bitter, metallic taste in his mouth. Grateful, Draco accepted a glass of water from Luna and drank it down.

As the healer had promised, the giddiness quickly faded away. Draco leaned back against the pillows and closed his eyes as he let the plot of his new book float through his mind, mentally adding little details here and there.

“Are you feeling tired, Mr. Malfoy?” the healer asked.

Draco opened his eyes and said that no, he was not. “Do you think I might have some parchment and a quill?” he asked.

The healer was surprised, but he agreed. “Of course, but do not overexert yourself.”

A self-inking quill and parchment were brought, and Draco wrote a few lines, only to cross them out and start again. He repeated this process three times before setting the quill down and rubbing his eyes.

“You’ve burnt whole chapters before when they weren’t exactly what you wanted. Don’t get frustrated.” Luna had leaned closer to him and spoken so softly that there was little chance her words would be overheard; everyone in the room had their focus on something other than the two of them. In any event, the only person close enough to her to be likely to overhear was Potter, and he already knew.

Draco glanced at Potter, whose green eyes looked quickly away, only to return a moment later.

“Why don’t I pop over to the manor and ask Tibby to fetch what you’ve got so far, hmm?” Luna asked.

“What? No! No, Luna!”

But Luna ignored him and continued on as if he’d not spoken, “Harry, would you mind sitting with Draco while I run out to fetch something for him?”

“Luna!” Draco hissed.

“I . . .” Harry glanced at him then looked back to Luna; his face lit up as understanding dawned in his eyes. “Of course.”

“Luna!” had Draco not had a long, sharp, metal object stuck in his arm, he’d have run after her.

As Harry stood up, Andromeda and Mrs. Weasley also rose. “Harry, dear, Andromeda and I are going to step outside for some air,” the Weasley woman said as Draco’s aunt fussed with her grandson’s bed sheets and touched his face gently.

“I’ll be right back, Teddy Bear,” she said. The boy lay eerily still in his enchanted sleep as the orbs of light which were the spells monitoring his vital signs floated overhead.

As his aunt passed Draco’s bed, she stopped and placed her hand on his shoulder. Leaning down,
she whispered softly, “He’s a good man. Talk to him.” Her voice sounded like his mother’s.

Draco could feel his heart beat faster as he began to panic. He’d not known anyone but Potter, Luna and himself knew what had happened on Guernsey. Luna must’ve told his aunt and the Weasley woman and orchestrated this with them last night.

Harry sat down beside Draco’s bed and poured him a glass of water.

“I don’t want a glass of water.”

“The healer said—”

“I bloody well know what the healer said, Potter. I don’t want a glass of water.” Draco was aware that he sounded like a petulant five-year-old, but he didn’t care.

A mediwitch came in and checked Draco’s arm. She didn’t speak, and she had a pinched expression on her face which soured further when she saw the faded scar on his arm.

“Is there a problem, Madame . . .” Harry’s voice was as hard as nails when he finished after reading the woman’s name on her robes, “Parker?”

“None at all, Mr. Potter.” The mediwitch continued her exam, the ever present quill taking notes as she worked.

“Are Draco’s readings good?”

“The patient’s vital signs are satisfactory, Mr. Potter,” she said calmly but coldly.

The mediwitch’s eyes never left her wand as she worked. She moved to Teddy’s bed and performed the same spells. Once she’d finished her duties, she left the room without another word.

Draco could see Harry was close to losing his temper—he doubted anyone was more familiar with the signs of Potter about to lose his temper than he was.

Harry said, “I’ll speak to Healer Hurst. Treating a patient like—”

“Don’t.”

“She has no right—”

“I said, don’t.”

“She was—”

“Let it go.”

“But she was—”

“Potter, I write under a pseudonym for a reason. People don’t like me, with very good reason I might add, and getting a mediwitch fired for not being nice to me is not going to change that. Let it go.”

“It’s not fair. What did she do during the war that she thinks she has a right to—”

“Don’t tell me you still believe life’s fair, Potter.”

“Would you let me finish a sentence, please?”
“I’m not the one who asked you to sit with me. I’m perfectly content to be by myself. I assure you; I’m well used to it.” Draco was aware of just how rude he sounded; he’d intended his words to make clear to Potter that one of them was free to get up and leave, and it wasn’t him. But Potter looked like a small child who’d just lost his puppy, and Draco hated that that look made him wish he could take his words back. He’d meant them to be rude, dammit.

“Look, Draco . . . I, er, I wanted to talk to you . . . about . . . what, er, happened.”

Draco closed his eyes and inhaled slowly. As he exhaled, he said, “Potter, there is nothing that needs to—”

“Yes, there is. Draco, I—”

“No, there’s not. I don’t—”

“I want to say that—”

“There is nothing you could say that—”

Angry, Harry stood up to leave. “Fine, then. I won’t say anything.”

“Good, I mmphhh.” What Draco had been about to say was cut off. Rather than leaving as Draco had expected, Harry had stepped up to his bed and leaned over him, kissing him before Draco’s mind had had a chance to register what he’d been about to do. In his surprise, Draco was frozen, unable to move. This kiss was nothing like the ones they’d shared on Guernsey; it was angry and possessive and demanding.

And brilliant.

Harry’s hand had cupped the side of his face, holding him still, and now it slid back into Draco’s hair, pulling out the leather thong he’d used to tie it back. Harry’s blunt nails scratched his scalp painfully as he buried his fingers in the long blond strands.

As half of Draco’s mind screamed at him to hex Potter’s bollocks off, the other half screamed at him to pull Harry onto the bed next to him. Trapped between the two opposing options, Draco could only moan as Harry’s tongue traced along his lower lip. Harry’s tongue had tipped the scales, and all thoughts of stopping were shut down. Draco ran his hand up Harry’s arm as he let his mouth fall open, inviting Harry’s tongue inside once again.

The door was flung open and Healer Edeson rushed in. “Mr. Ma . . . ah . . . Er . . .” Several of his team, Madame Parker among them, followed on his heels.

Harry had jumped away from Draco, but not quickly enough, and the healer had caught an eyeful of them snogging.

The healer cleared his throat in embarrassment, but there was a gleam in his eyes that was not unkind. “Please, excuse me,” he said. “The monitoring spells indicated that my patient’s heart rate had suddenly escalated. I worried there might have been a complication.”

The healers, mediwitches, and mediwizards were quickly ushered out of the room by the Head of the Department, who assured them it had been a false alarm and that all was well, his mouth stubbornly twitching at the corners. Over his shoulder he said, “Your healer’s orders include no strenuous activity, Mr. Malfoy. Do remember that, won’t you?”

The door fell shut behind him, leaving Harry and Draco alone once again.
Draco, angry with himself for believing Harry wanted him, snapped, “If you think for one second that I’m going to be some dirty little secret you keep—”

“What? No, Draco, I—”

“You couldn’t get far enough away from me fast enough at the thought that someone might see you kissing me.”

“Draco, I . . . No, I, that wasn’t it at all.”

“At least you didn’t Apparate away this time.” All the hurt Draco had felt came out in his voice as spite.

Harry blanched. He pulled the chair up closer beside Draco’s bed. “I’m sorry about that. I’m sorry. I . . . just, I panicked. And I’m sorry. I went back the next day hoping to talk to you, but you were already gone. I thought that was your way of saying to stay away from you. I thought, I thought . . . that if you’d wanted to see me, you’d have waited, or maybe you’d have come after me. But you left.”

Draco’s eyes fell shut. He felt like a deflated balloon as all the resentment he’d felt drained out of him. How differently something could look when you saw it through someone else’s eyes. Harry hadn’t been the only one to turn and Apparate away. Harry had hoped he’d come after him, but he hadn’t. He’d turned and run in the opposite direction. It had been Harry who’d come back looking for him, but he’d already turned and run.

But it had also been Harry who couldn’t jump far enough away from him at the thought of someone walking in on them snogging.

Harry grinned at the accusation. “I wasn’t sure how you’d react. I was afraid you’d punch me. I wanted to get out of arm’s length.”

“It wasn’t because you were ashamed of being seen with me?” Draco asked, keeping his eyes averted.

“Merlin, no! I’m not an exhibitionist, Draco. I never have been. I’ve never been comfortable kissing a partner in front of anyone. Too many reporters about with cameras, even after all this time, I reckon. And then all the Muggle-borns with their blasted camera phones . . . It’s too ingrained in me to keep what’s private, private. You’re not the only one living under an assumed name, you know. I don’t want to see myself and my boyfriend snogging on the front page of the Prophet.”

A knock sounded on the door, and a moment later a different mediwitch entered the room. This one was much more pleasant than the last, Harry was glad to see.

She approached Draco’s bed and introduced herself as a senior mediwitch in the haematology department. She removed the tape and checked the needle quickly and efficiently, never flinching at the sight of his scar. As she replaced the tape, she patted Draco’s hand. “One sees quite a lot of simply dreadful scars in this occupation, Mr. Malfoy. I’ve seen far worse, I assure you. Please allow me to say what a brave thing I think you are doing. You are to be commended. Not everyone would have said yes as unhesitatingly as you. You are doing a very good thing.” She smiled at them both before moving on to check Teddy, and then quietly left the room.

Draco felt an uncomfortable tightness in his throat, and Harry slipped his hand in his. “Some people have begun to let go of the war, Draco. Don’t you think it’s time you did as well?”

Draco couldn’t answer.
Harry continued, “You had only just turned sixteen when you took the Mark. Sixteen. It’s time to stop punishing yourself.”

Draco turned to Harry; he tried to hide his fear behind an angry mask. “Would you feel that way had that poisoned mead killed Weasley? Or Katie Bell? What if she’d touched that necklace with her bare hand and not through a hole in her glove? I could’ve killed them.”

Harry collected his thoughts before speaking. When he did speak, he looked directly into Draco’s eyes, his gaze so intent Draco was unable to look away. “Draco, I saw you. I saw how terrified you were, and I know what Voldemort was holding over your head. No, I don’t know how I would feel or what I would say had either of those things happened, but they didn’t. Believe me, I’ve got loads of my own ‘what ifs.’ You can’t let them rule your life. Honestly, were my parents still alive and held by Voldemort, I don’t know what I would or wouldn’t have done, but I do know you lowered your wand. Your life and your parents’ lives were at stake, but when you had Professor Dumbledore at wand point, on the top of the astronomy tower, you lowered your wand.”

“I’ve used the Cruciatus Curse,” Draco said, defiantly.

“So’ve I. Next.”

“Potter, you don’t get it! I’m Marked. This isn’t ever going to go away,” Draco said as he raised his scarred arm.

“No, it won’t. Nor will this.” Harry pushed his fringe off his forehead.

“It’s not the same thing, and you know it. That makes you a hero. This,” Draco raised his arm again, “makes me a coward.”

“The bloody hell it does!” Harry shouted. “Cowards don’t drag the unconscious body of their former friend up a pile of rubbish trying to escape Fiendfyre, Draco. They don’t push that former friend onto a broom before climbing onto one themselves. And they certainly don’t lie to a room full of Death Eaters when they know bloody well they’d got me captured and unarmed. That mediwitch was right just now, you know. This is a very good thing you’re doing, but it’s not the first good thing you’ve done.”

Draco sat up to continue arguing, but he moved too quickly, causing the room to spin. He fell back against the pillows, his eyes squeezed shut and breathing deeply through his nose.

He felt Harry’s fingers slide gently through his hair as he whispered, “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have argued with you. Can I get you anything?”

“Pumpkin juice. Better than water the healer said. Sugar.”

Harry picked up the glass of juice from Draco’s bedside table and placed the straw between his lips. “Take small sips,” Harry advised.

“Thank you,” Draco said after he’d had enough. “Brilliant things, straws.”

“Better?”

“Yes.”

A soft chirping sound came from the goblet of Draco’s blood replenishing potion, and he groaned. “So soon?” Harry handed it to him along with a refilled glass of ice water. Alone with Harry, Draco made no attempt to hide his wince at the revolting taste of the potion. It was a bit late in the day to
worry about keeping up appearances in front of Potter. He rested his head on the pillow and closed his eyes.

“Two doses. That’s another forty minutes, then,” Harry mentioned, trying to steer the conversation towards something they might not argue over.

“How is the yellow orb?” Draco asked, his eyes closed once again.

“Seems a bit brighter, I reckon.”

“Potter?”

“Yeah?”

“Believe it or not, I was relieved Weasley and Bell were alright.”

Harry retook his hand and stroked the back of his knuckles with his thumb. “I believe you.”

“It’s horrible. Knowing you nearly killed someone.”

“Yeah. I know.”

Draco opened his eyes and looked at Potter. “That was hardly the same thing. I was one syllable away from casting an Unforgivable. You did what you had to do to protect yourself.”

“So did you. I wish you could see that. And what you were trying to protect yourself and your parents from was far worse. Cruciatu wouldn’t have left me bleeding to death on the floor, Draco. Besides, I really don’t think it would’ve worked for you. Oh, for a few seconds, yes, definitely. But not prolonged. I’ve no doubt you hated me and wanted to hurt me enough to cast it, but that’s not enough.” Harry’s mind drifted back to the witches and wizards he’d seen successfully cast that curse and hold it. They’d not just wanted to cause their victim pain; they’d enjoyed doing it. “You’re not like them,” Harry said as he squeezed Draco’s hand.

Draco shivered under the intensity of Harry’s gaze.

Harry jumped up. “Are you cold? The healer said you might feel cold.”

“I’m not cold,” Draco said as Harry pulled a blanket from the foot of his bed and settled it over him.

A silence settled over them that was nearly as comfortable as the ones they’d shared together on Guernsey until Harry said, “We were good together.”

Draco looked away and inhaled deeply.

“I thought we were, anyway,” Harry said, his eyes fixed on a random spot on the ground, his voice fading as he spoke.

Draco remained silent, and Harry had given up any hope he’d had that Draco would have agreed when he finally said, “Yeah. Yeah, we were.” A moment later he added in a very quiet voice, “Did you really go back looking for me?”

“Yeah, I did. The owner said you’d had to return home sooner than you’d planned. You’d received an urgent call, she said.”

“That would be Luna. She covered for me.”
“She’s a good friend to have.”

Draco hadn’t looked at Harry once since the subject of the weeks they’d spent together came up, and he continued to keep his eyes averted as he said, “Yeah. She is. I’ve . . .” With his eyes trained on his blanket-covered feet, Draco continued in a whisper, “I’ve never understood why she bothered with me. She was locked up in our dungeons, for Merlin’s sake. Then, after the war she comes to wish me a Happy Christmas. Even brought me a Christmas pudding.”

“Made with dirigible plums, was it?” Harry joked.

“I half thought she’d poisoned it.”

Draco opened his mouth to speak but closed it. He did this twice more before asking, “Why did you kiss me earlier?”

Harry swallowed and ran his hand over his face. He answered honestly, “Because I really, really wanted to.” He cleared his throat and continued, “Draco, what you said, about being a dirty little secret, please don’t think . . .” Harry’s voice trailed off. Draco was looking at him, really looking at him, and there was so much emotion visible in those storm cloud grey eyes, that Harry’s words died in his throat.

Without saying another word, Harry rose from his chair and sat on the side of Draco’s bed. He leaned over him slowly, wanting to give Draco the chance to say this wasn’t what he wanted, but instead, Draco reached his good arm towards Harry and pulled him down. Their lips met slowly—this wasn’t the angry, possessive kiss from earlier; this was the slow burning kiss of two people who’d thought they’d never kiss again. It was a question asked and answered without words.

It was, in a word, perfect.

When they parted for air, Draco said, breathing heavily, “We’ve got to be half mad to even attempt this. It’ll not be easy.”

“Why? Do you snore?” Harry laughed but then turned serious. “We can make this work.”

“You sound so sure.”

Harry kissed him again. “I am sure.” His lips moving across Draco’s jaw, he whispered, “I missed this so much. I missed you.”

“I missed you, too.”

The reunited couple kissed until they were was interrupted by a knock on the door, and Luna’s voice floated into the room innocently. “May we come back in yet? Only, you’re giving poor Healer Edeson nervous attacks. Apparently, Draco’s heart rate is rather elevated again.”

Sitting on the edge of Draco’s bed and threading their fingers together, Harry called out, “Yes, Luna. You can come back in now.”

Luna smiled serenely at the sight of Harry’s and Draco’s joined hands. Andromeda went directly to her grandson’s side, but once she’d checked on him, she told both Harry and Draco she was happy for them. Molly Weasley hesitated only a moment before embracing Harry. She nodded her head at Draco, which all things considered, both Harry and Draco thought was a pretty good start.

A few feet away, Teddy stirred. Raising a hand to rub at his eyes he looked around sleepily and asked, “Why do I have a tube Spello-taped to my arm?”
Six months later,

Awaking in the middle of the night, Harry rolled over and reached out for the man lying beside him, but his hand found nothing but an empty space where his lover should be lying. He cracked one eye open. The other side of the bed was empty, and the sheets were cold. He raised his head off the pillow. The room was dark. One of the blankets was missing from their bed. Sitting up straight, he rubbed his eyes tiredly and looked at the clock beside their bed; the little glowing numbers showed him that it was nearly two thirty in the morning. From the French doors leading to the deck outside their bedroom, Harry could see a bright glow emanating from the tip of a wand. His lover sat at the small table just outside the doors, wrapped in the missing blanket. His lit wand lay beside a stack of papers, and Draco was busy writing.

Shaking his head, Harry grabbed his pillow and moved so that he was lying with his head at the foot of their bed. He was naked—as was his lover beneath that blanket, he knew—but he made no attempt to cover himself. Lying on his stomach, he watched as his boyfriend worked. Draco was so close to finishing his book now, he was nearly constantly bent over a stack of papers scratching out something and muttering to himself as he rewrote something he wasn’t happy with. His fingers and often his jaw or forehead were smudged with ink.

The story itself was all written; what was left were the finishing touches, and then it would be ready to be sent to his editor, their friend, Luna. The writing, Draco had explained many times these past months, was the easy part. The hard part was the editing and rewriting, the deciding what stayed and what had to go that came next. Knowing when to stop was the hardest of all.

Draco’s quill stilled, and he covered his eyes with his free hand. Harry could see his lips moving silently as he ran a scene through in his mind, and he smiled as he recalled watching Draco do that so often since that first time in the Holly and Feather all those months ago. The quill moved again. Harry could see that rather than writing, it was striking out what was on the page. Draco stopped and picked up a pile of pages, scanning them over one by one. He began to write again over what had just been stricken out. As Harry watched, he repeated that process several more times before dropping first his quill then his head to the table.

Reaching back to the nightstand beside the bed, Harry picked up his wand and waved it in the air. A plate of large, deep red strawberries dipped in dark chocolate appeared next to Draco and were split into quarters almost all the way to the stem by an unseen knife. A pastry bag filled with fresh whipped Guernsey cream hovered over the strawberries, piping the cream into the quartered berries.

Draco’s face split into a smile, and he looked into the bedroom. He picked up his wand and extinguished the light. He cast a spell which sent the papers swirling up into the air as if a great gust of wind had come and swept them up, but rather than being blown away, they shuffled themselves together, sorting themselves in the proper order, and neatly arranged themselves into a pile. Draco ran the tip of his wand along the left hand side of the pile, binding them together. Holding the blanket around himself with one hand, he held his wand in the other hand and levitated both the newly bound manuscript for his book and the plate of berries.

Harry arched his eyebrow when Draco had no free hands to open the door. “You’ll just have to drop the blanket,” he called out.

Draco smirked in response and said, “Alohamora.” He entered the bedroom and laughed, “Honestly, Potter. Are you a wizard or not?”

“Accio blanket.”
“Hey!” Draco shouted as the blanket unwrapped itself from around him, leaving him naked, before flying across the bedroom and landing on the bed next to Harry.

“What?” Harry asked innocently.

Draco climbed into bed and slipped under the blankets. “Budge up. It’s cold out there.”

“It’s mid-April, and it’s the middle of the night. What did you expect?” Harry’s voice rose an octave as Draco pressed his cold feet against his legs. “Get your feet off me! They’re bloody freezing!”

Draco curled himself around Harry. “Oh, but you’re so nice and warm.”

“That’s because I’m not the lunatic sitting outside in the middle of the night naked! Now, get your feet off of me!” Harry squirmed to get away from Draco, but Draco held him closer.

“It was worth it.”

“What could be worth losing your toes?”

“It’s hardly cold enough to worry about losing my toes to frostbite.”

“Who said anything about frostbite?” Harry asked as he tried in vain to free himself.

“Oh, fine.” Draco cast a warming charm. “Better?”

Harry settled against Draco and buried his face in his neck. “Much.”

“Good. Thank you for these,” Draco said as he picked up a strawberry off the plate hovering beside the bed and licked the cream off. He kept his eyes on Harry, knowing the effect his action would have on his lover. “Want some?” He offered Harry a bite of the fruit and watched as Harry’s lips closed around the ripe berry. A trickle of juice ran down his finger, and Harry caught it with his tongue. He took Draco’s hand in his and guided it to his mouth; he sucked the finger into his mouth and ran his tongue along it the same way he’d done to Draco’s cock the night before, drawing a deep moan from his lover.

Harry pushed Draco onto his back and pinned him down, straddling his thighs. He kept one hand on Draco’s chest and let the other slide down his stomach. He traced around Draco’s navel with his fingertip. “That wasn’t very nice of you, putting your cold feet against my leg. I think you should be punished for that.”

Draco grinned and fed Harry another strawberry. “You know I love it when you punish me.”

“Oh?” Rather than letting his hand continue lower, Harry slid his hands to Draco’s sides and tickled him.

“HARRY!”

“That’s it, scream my name,” Harry taunted as he continued to tickle Draco mercilessly.

“STOP IT!”

“But you said you liked being punished.”

Draco laughed as he thrashed wildly beneath him, trying to free himself. “NOT WHAT I MEANT AND YOU KNOW IT! NOW STOP IT!”
“Not what you meant? Hmm, what did you mean?” Harry didn’t let up. Draco’s face was turning red from laughing and trying to fight his way free.

“You know what I meant! Stop it, Harry! What are you? Some kind of nut?”

“No, I don’t know. Tell me.”

“You bloody well do know!”

“Say it.”

“No!”

“Say it!”

“Spank me! You’re supposed to spank me!” Draco gasped out.

“Oh, well why didn’t you say so?” Harry’s hands stilled on Draco’s hips, and before he could catch his breath, Harry rolled him over and brought his hand down across his arse hard. A loud Crack! rang across the room, followed by another. “Like that, do you?”

“Oh, fuck yes. Harder!”

Harry did as he was told. Who’d have guessed their kinks fit together as well as their bodies did?

Draco moved to his hands and knees, his arse raised for Harry’s repeated blows. Harry dragged his blunt nails across the reddened cheeks before urging his lover to spread his legs for him and letting his touch turn gentle as his fingertips teased his lover’s cock. “Mmm, so hard for me. What do you want, love?”

“You, inside me,” Draco exhaled.

Harry moved behind him and cast a lubrication spell on his hand. He let his finger slide into his lover; he was still loose from their lovemaking the night before. “Not sore?”

Draco moaned and pushed back as Harry slid a second finger inside and scissored them. “Burns a bit, but it feels so good. Don’t stop.”

Harry pulled his fingers out and brought his hand down across Draco’s arse. Crack!

He alternately fucked him with his fingers and spanked him, and when he was sure his lover was ready, Harry knelt behind him and buried his cock inside him with one thrust. This was Harry’s favourite part—next to the moment when his orgasm exploded through him, of course—entering the man he loved for the first time, that feeling of being one with the man he loved. It made him think of the first time they’d made love after Draco had agreed to return to Guernsey with him. Harry leaned against Draco’s back and pressed a kiss between his should blades. “I love you so much.”

Draco twisted his head around to meet Harry’s lips and whispered, “I love you, too,” into their kiss. “Now, start moving.”

“So bossy.” Harry’s arm wrapped around Draco’s waist, and his hand closed around Draco’s cock, pumping him in time to his thrusts. Both men moved together as one; the sound of skin slapping against skin filled the room, the pleasure building inside them until they came moments apart, both gasping and crying out the other’s name.

They collapsed together onto their bed, lying side by side as they caught their breath. Harry pulled
the blanket over them as their bodies cooled.

“Mmm,” Draco hummed as he snuggled into Harry spooned behind him. “Promise me you’ll fuck me like that every time I finish a book.”

Excited, Harry pushed himself up onto his elbow. “You finished it? It’s really done? Can I see it now? You said I could when you finished it.”

“It’s not finished properly. It still needs to——”

“Go to Luna and be torn to shreds. I know, you’ve said. Come on, please?”

Draco had adamantly refused to let Harry see so much as a single page of his book, insisting it wasn’t ready to be seen by anyone yet. Harry didn’t even know what the book was about, other than that the idea for it had begun at their first dinner together at The Old Quarter, when Draco had noticed a woman waiting for her dinner partner to arrive and started wondering about an imaginary person waiting for an unknown dinner partner.

“I’m not a book critic, Draco. I’m not going to criticise anything. Whatever you’ve written, you know I’ll love it.”

Draco sighed and ran his hand down Harry’s chest. “That’s exactly the problem, don’t you see? You wouldn’t be objective. I need someone who’s going to be looking at it and looking for problems and mistakes, things that don’t work or don’t make sense. Things that aren’t needed and need to be scrapped. Not someone who’s going into it wanting to love every page of it.”

Harry understood perfectly. “You mean, like when you said that new recipe for the chocolate zucchini cake I experimented with was good when it was——”

“Horrible. Yes, exactly.”

“I can do that.”

“Can you? You can’t try to spare my feelings. If something is rubbish you need to tell me.”

Harry held out his hand. “Give me the book, Ferret Face.”

Smiling at the name that would once have sent him into an irate fit, Draco handed over his manuscript. This was the first time someone other than Luna was seeing one of his books in such a raw state. He was glad it was Harry who was seeing this particular book first.

After all, it was about the two of them.

“If something needs to go or be changed, you’ve got to tell me. Agreed?”

Reading the first page, Harry didn’t immediately answer, but as he flipped the page he nodded his head to show his agreement.

Flipping back to the first page, he read out loud:

Going off to school was something that ten-year-old Dillon Mardling had looked forward to for as long as he could remember. Some of his earliest memories were of the tales his parents had told about their years at Cliffsham Academy and his family’s long standing history of attending the prestigious school.

And now it was finally his turn.
His family’s name was one of the most respected of all the school’s notable alumni. Generous supporters of the school and its academic and sports pursuits, both the library and the new weight room bore his family’s name.

His ancestors had, without exception, all been members of Grunnion House, and Dillon could already see the silver and red of the Grunnion House emblem displayed proudly on his lapel and the house tie around his neck as the seamstress measured him for his uniform. Now, it was finally his turn to carry on his family’s great tradition. He would be the top student in his year. He would make the football team easily, one day becoming captain. He would be a prefect one day, Head Boy one day.

This was the proudest moment of the young boy’s life up to this point, and he was sure it was to be followed by even greater moments to come.

Behind him, Dillon could hear the bell over the door chime as another customer entered the shop.

“Hello, my dear. Shopping for a uniform, are we?” the shopkeeper’s assistant asked. Her voice sounded skeptical, and Dillon turned his head to see who had come in.

Standing in the doorway was a boy of around Dillon’s own age, and like Dillon, he was alone. But that was where the similarities stopped. Dillon’s family was a wealthy one, but that was clearly not the case for the other boy. His clothes had likely seen one or even two previous owners, Dillon suspected—older brothers in a family with more children than the parents could afford.

He wondered where the other boy’s parents were, and the shopkeeper clearly wondered that as well. She had just voiced the question when an elderly woman bustled into the store and stood behind the boy, placing her hands protectively on his shoulders. The woman and the shopkeeper spoke in tones too quiet for Dillon to overhear, and a moment later, the boy was shown to a dais across from where Dillon stood.

The owner of the shop herself left Dillon’s side in the middle of taking his measurements to tend to the newcomer. “Now then, my dear. Don’t you worry about a thing. We’ll get you suited right up, we will. Finest looking uniforms in all of Cliffsham you’ll have, or my name isn’t Fiona Bungard.” Placing her hands on her large hips the woman laughed, “And if my name isn’t Fiona Bungard, I’ve got on someone else’s bloomers!” Mrs. Bungard laughed heartily at her own joke.

Both boys looked away in embarrassment.

“Now then, my dear. If you’ll just hold your arms up like so.” She demonstrated, and the other boy obeyed. “Very good, now then . . . .”

For the next several minutes, instructions were given and followed. Mrs. Bungard completed the other boy’s fitting personally, while her assistant tended to Dillon.

Never before had Dillon been relegated to an assistant while the owner of whatever shop he was in took care of someone else. He didn’t know which he felt more, angered or interested. You would never guess it to look at the other boy—his ill-fitting clothes, his unbrushed, mousy brown hair—but for him to be seen to before Dillon, he was someone important.

‘And he will be going to my school,’ Dillon thought to himself. His own parents weren’t there just then, and the boy’s parents, whoever they were, had apparently relegated him to a servant to prepare him for school, and hadn’t even bothered to see that he was dressed appropriately. As busy as Dillon’s parents were, they’d made time to take him shopping for his first year of school themselves. Even his father had kept his schedule clear for the whole day, just to spend it with him.
But at this moment he was on his own, and this was his first chance to make a connection of his own. He’d learnt from the master, his father, on how to impress people and form connections that could prove useful one day, and this was his chance to prove himself as his Father’s son. He would make his father proud of him. Turning to face the boy, Dillon addressed him, “Hello. Cliffsham too?”

“Yes,” the boy answered, barely sparing him a glance as he spoke the single word.

Undaunted, Dillon tried again. “My parents are next door looking at new laptops, my old one won’t do. It’s nearly a year old. Then, I’m going to drag them for new football gear. My father says I’m sure to be picked for the team at Cliffsham.” He paused, expecting the boy to comment. When he didn’t, Dillon asked, “Do you play?”

“No,” said the boy.

“What, not at all?”

“No,” repeated the boy. He turned his head away and looked out the window.

Dillon was at a loss. He was doing what he’d seen his father do countless times, but rather than impressing the boy, the boy had turned away from him.

Unsure of himself for the first time in his life, Dillon pressed on. “My family have all gone to Cliffsham for generations. Grunnion House. Know what house you’ll be in yet?”

“No.”

Dillon was beside himself. His first chance to prove himself capable to his father, and he had been unable to get more than a single word—a single syllable—from the boy. He’d wanted to do this himself, without this parents standing beside him and without the benefit of his family name, to prove to his father and himself that he could. But he couldn’t. The boy wouldn’t even spare him a glance!

He tried again. “Did your parents go to Cliffsham?”

The boy remained silent for several seconds, leaving Dillon to fear he wasn’t even going to be given the boy’s customary one-word answer, but finally he said, “Yes.”

“Oh, well what house were they in?”

“I don’t know.”

“How could you not know? Don’t they talk about it? My parents—”

The boy cut him off, another thing that had never happened to Dillon before. “My parents are dead.”

“Oh. I’m sorry.” Dillon was, but in his surprise, he was afraid his voice had sounded uncaring, not sorry at all.

He had been just about to introduce himself and ask the boy his name, when the old woman who’d joined him in the shop came up to him and said that they were finished there. The boy stepped down from the dais, and Dillon called out after him, “I’ll see you at Cliffsham, I suppose.”

The boy exited the shop without another word, he didn’t look back at Dillon or acknowledge him in any way.
Dillon’s parents re-joined him a moment after the boy had left, but he was no longer in the mood for new laptops or football gear. Humiliated and smarting from such complete rejection, all he wanted to do was go home.

Going off to Cliffsham at the end of the next month no longer held quite so much appeal as it had only a very short while ago.

As Harry set the manuscript down, he looked at Draco. “Here, I thought you reminded me of Dudley. I never realised...Merlin, I looked like a right prick, didn’t I?” Draco opened his arms, and Harry crawled into them, apologising, “I’m sorry. Was I really that bad?”

“I couldn’t figure out why I couldn’t impress you. Showing off had always worked for my father. Probably because he never tried to impress you, I reckon.”

Harry flipped through the manuscript. “It’s about us. You wrote about us.”

“Do you mind? It’s very heavily fictionalised—well, all accept for those first couple pages, but the only two people who would recognise that are you and me.”

Harry shook his head. “I don’t mind.” He kissed Draco. “And I don’t care if anyone does see us in it.”

Setting the manuscript down on the nightstand, Harry settled himself in bed and Draco curled up behind him. The two men drifted off to sleep, their limbs twisted together. Their bedroom window was left slightly open to allow the cool night air in, and the first page of the manuscript fluttered gently in the breeze. The moonlight streaming in the window illuminated the title written in Draco’s flowing handwriting:

*Looks On Tempests*

*By Simon Wrentmore*

_Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken._

*William Shakespeare*

Chapter End Notes

With the exception of the Holly and Feather, all of the places I mentioned by name are real. Never having been to Guernsey, I tried to describe them as accurately as possible from what I found online. Luckily, there is a lot of information online. Even Harry’s house is a real house near the Constitution Steps I found for sale online

Harry’s feeding the next generation chocolate cake for breakfast is from Bill Cosby,
Himself. I couldn’t resist. My Harry is not a father, and rationalizing chocolate cake as an acceptable breakfast food is something I think I could see a “not-a-father Harry” doing. His own childhood was so bleak with the Dursley’s, I can see him wanting to indulge the kids in his life. My mom has a sweatshirt that says “What Happens at Gramma’s, Stays at Gramma’s.” I can see “not-a-father-Harry” having that philosophy with his godchildren and the other next generation kids. This time, though, he got caught. As for Bill Cosby, Himself—if you haven’t seen it, you must. You will never in your life see anything funnier.

End Notes

I’ll get the next chapter up soon. Leave me a review and let me know what you thought.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!