Remember The Stars

by OmniaExtares

Summary

Draco has served his court mandated community service rebuilding the castle after the Battle of Hogwarts. What lies in store for him when the rest of the eighth year class returns in September? Will Draco be able to prove himself a changed man or will he fall by the wayside? A slow-burn Dramione story- Rated M for eventual smut and lemons. Additional pairings throughout.
Draco Malfoy paused in his labor, wiping the sweat from his brow and shaking his head to remove the damp tendrils of hair from his vision. After a deep breath, he raised his new ebony wand, lifting another brick of the former Gryffindor tower back into place. Draco was coming to the end of his last week of court mandated community service rebuilding the castle after the Battle of Hogwarts between Harry Potter and Voldemort.

The former Death Eater had been pardoned after Harry had testified on his behalf in front of the Wizengamot that ultimately Draco had had a change of heart and saved members of the Order. While Lucius had received the Dementor’s Kiss days after his trial, the youngest Malfoy was allowed his freedom under the conditions that he spend his summer on Hogwarts house arrest, rebuilding the castle. Professor McGonagall, now headmistress, volunteered to be his probation mentor at the encouragement of Potter. Draco’s final task was to complete his seventh year of school alongside his peers. Should he graduate with Exceeds Expectations or better on all of his N.E.W.T.s, he would be a free man by his nineteenth birthday come June.

“Draco?” McGonagall’s strong voice floated up the spiral staircase to where Draco was working. Draco couldn’t remember when exactly he grew from “Mr. Malfoy” to “Draco” in the headmistress’ eyes, but he’d grown to appreciate it, just as he grew to appreciate the severe Scotswoman.

“I’m up here, headmistress,” Draco replied.

“I think you’ve done quite enough for today, Draco. Have some dinner and get a good night’s rest. Tomorrow is a big day for you and your peers,” Minerva advised.

“I don’t think I could sleep if I tried, Professor,” the Slytherin replied honestly.

“And yet you must try. Tomorrow I announce I’m making you and Miss Granger head boy and girl and I know it won’t be easy for you,”

“You’re what?”

“I’m making you head boy,” McGonagall replied matter-of-factly.

“You- You can’t! They’ll eat me alive!” Draco protested

“I can and I will. It’s the best course of action for the sake of the school. Not only will it promote house unity but it will give you a chance to prove once and for all that you have changed. I have seen you grow far more than I could have imagined this summer alone.”

“I already have to live with all of them, you can’t force me to police them too. I don’t want to prove anything. I just want to pass my exams and get out of here.”

“And do what, Draco? Become a recluse? Live out your days with your mother in Malfoy Manner, surviving on the good fortune of your ancestors, never amounting to something special?”

“I…”

“That is my final word, Draco. Go. Eat.”
Draco walked out of Gryffindor tower. After a summer of repairing the castle with the professors, he knew he had scratched the surface of change. He knew in his heart he wasn’t evil. But when he looked in the mirror he still saw a cowardly little boy unworthy of his father’s love. He knew he didn’t deserve to be forgiven, that no one would love him but his mother, but he resolved that he would never be the boy he was at Hogwarts ever again. If one forgiving Hufflepuff saw him for who he’d become maybe that’d be enough.

Opening the door to the Slytherin dungeons, Draco trudged through the dark, empty corridor leading to the boys’ dormitory. He looked around the bedchamber that was the seventh years’ room. Last year, he had been a death eater, last year Severus was alive. Last year he pretended to torture first years to please the Carrows and his father. Thank Merlin for occlumency or he never would have been able to tell the younger students to fake their own torture at the other end of his wand. Thank the gods he wasn’t able to cast the cruciatus curse without truly meaning it. He was sure no one would ever believe him, he was sure they’d never forgive him even if they knew the truth, but if nothing else it made his nightmares just slightly less horrifying.

Thinking of nightmares, he sunk back into the emerald green bedding. This was to be his last night in the Slytherin dungeons. McGonagall had asked him to stay in the dark common room while she and other professors finished the new eighth-year dormitory. She wanted Draco to have as much of a normal experience as possible given all that had happened, and seeing the dorm he helped rebuild for the first time with his peers was one of those moments.

Draco fell into a fitful sleep as usual, dreaming of snake eyes, flashes of green and the screams of those he saw tortured and murdered by the Dark Lord and his former friends and family.
Chapter One - The Announcement

On the first crisp evening in September, Hermione walked into the Hogwarts Great Hall, flanked on either side by her best friends, Harry and Ron. “Welcome, welcome students. Please, be seated,” McGonagall boomed in her thick Scottish brogue over the great hall from her headmistress’ seat in the center of the staff table as students began filing in, “Eighth years to the fifth table! Eighth years on your right.”

“What does she mean, ‘fifth table’?” Harry wondered aloud. Hermione glanced to her right, past the Hufflepuff table that was normally against the south wall was a fifth table, about half as long as the other four. At the table sat those from each house who had returned after the war for their repeat seventh year, also known as their “eighth year”.

Given the education administered by the Carrows while Harry, Ron and Hermione were away, McGonagall had elected to hold all the students back a year in her usual no-nonsense fashion so that they could get an education suitable for their exams. Each class was given the year-designation which corresponded to their age group, however, this meant that until all the students involved in the war graduated, there would be an “eighth year”. Fortunately for the Golden Trio, this allowed them to return after the war for a seventh year of Hogwarts with their peers despite having spent their “real” seventh year on the run. Hermione couldn’t help but notice the lump in her throat that formed when she realized The Great Hall was noticeably lacking from casualties and students removed from school by their parents.

“I’m not sitting with them if that’s what she’s saying,” Ron said, looking at the five eighth-year Slytherins who had returned after the war.

“We haven’t got a choice, Ronald. Besides, if they’re showing their faces here, they must have good reason. Let’s hear what McGonagall has to say,” Hermione reasoned. She led the boys over to the table by the south windows, sitting them between Pavarti Patil and Michael Corner.

“It is truly an honor and privilege to welcome each and every one of you back to Hogwarts
this year,” the Headmistress began. “As you can already see, this year will not be like those in the past here. You will surely notice that we are far fewer than last year. Fifty of our own students and staff were lost in the battle of Hogwarts, more still elected not to return for a variety of reasons”.

Hermione glanced across the table at the five remaining Slytherins. Draco, Theo, Blaise, Pansy and Daphne were sitting unusually quietly on their own. The absence of Crabbe and Goyle was noticeable next to Draco. Oddly enough, the Slytherin Prince looked bigger without the brutes on either side of him.

“Before I continue with my announcements for this year, I would like to hold a moment of silence for those we lost last Spring.”

Harry, Ron and Hermione bowed their heads as McGonagall lowered the candlelight in the hall. After a beat Hermione glanced up, noting that all five Slytherins too had their heads bowed. *I never thought I’d see Malfoy bow to anyone*, she mused.

“And now, for the last few announcements before we begin our great feast. Regarding the staff, there will be quite a few changes this year. Argus Filch has yet to resurface, so security and regular upkeep will be taken over by Ms. Arabella Figg and her cats. Needless to say, the Carrows will not be returning to Hogwarts. As such, Potions will continue to be taught by professor Slughorn, Muggle Studies will be taken over by Mr. Arthur Weasley,” Ron blushed furiously, “And finally, Bill Weasley will be our new Defense Against the Dark Arts professor.” More than a few giggles and whispers surfaced from the female students with the announcement of the eldest, rugged Weasley joining the staff. Had Lupin not held the position five years ago, Bill’s new wolfish tendencies would have raised concern. Fortunately, the new ministry and Hogwarts administrations offered him a position which would allow him more time at home with Fleur.

“For our next order of business, the staff and I have decided that since our greatest casualties came from the seventh, now eighth, years on the frontlines, that we would pull you from your respective houses, to have you eat, learn and live together as a symbol of our unity not only as a community of witches and wizards, but as citizens of Hogwarts.”

“Did she say *live* together?” Ron hissed to Harry across Hermione.

“I’m not living with *them*, if that’s what she means,” Harry answered, nodding his head towards the Slytherins, who exchanged nervous glances but remained stoic.

“Shut it, both of you,” Hermione said as McGonagall called the erupting hall back to order.

“Now I know this seems shocking to you, and I assure you, you will not lose your places in your houses- you will still be competing for the house cup within your houses,” the headmistress continued. “Once we made the decision to create an ‘eighth year house’ the staff, myself, and a few special volunteers constructed your own dorm on the third floor to accommodate you during the rebuilding of the castle this summer. I’m sure you will find your rooms to be more than satisfactory.” Her tone was clear: the students would be living together without complaint or else.

“And finally, before we begin our festivities, it is my pleasure to announce those prefects who will become the Head Boy and Girl this year. Please congratulate Hermione Granger…” Harry and Ron exploded into applause along with the Gryffindor table behind them, Hermione beamed “… And Draco Malfoy.” An awkward silence fell across the great hall before a round of polite applause began from Hufflepuff. Hermione looked up, directly into icy grey eyes staring at her from across the table.
“I trust you will both take this honor seriously, and work tirelessly this year to prove that school unity can be found even in the most unlikely of pairings. And now, without further ado, let us eat!”

“Hermione, you didn’t tell us you made Head Girl!” Ron accused, grasping his chest as though personally wounded by this omission.

“Not that we’re at all surprised”, Harry added.

“Of course I would have told you if I had known!” Hermione laughed, shoving Ron playfully, “McGonagall must have known I would’ve hounded her to find out who the Head Boy was,” she said, mostly to herself. Ron only shrugged at the revelation and began shoveling the spoils of Hogwarts’ first feast in his mouth.

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When the students were well fed and ready to retire to their common rooms, McGonagall personally led the table of hesitant eighth years to their new dorm on the third floor of the castle. The Golden Trio glanced at one another as they approached what used to be a maze of puzzles guarding the Sorcerer’s Stone. The door, which once led to Fluffy’s room, was now an archway seemingly filled in with the same stonework that lined the hall.

“Watch carefully students,” McGonagall announced as she tapped a sequence of the stones, much like the gateway to Diagon Alley. “Now like other common rooms, this pattern will change every term. Furthermore, Hermione and Draco you’ll notice that since you are living with only other eighth years, you will not be staying in the Head Boy and Girl dormitory this year,” the headmistress explained as the stones rotated and moved out of the doorway. McGonagall stepped across the threshold with the students close behind.

The new eighth year dorm looked like all four houses had a hand in decorating it. The walls and floor were left the same grey stone as the hallway outside. Patchworking the floor was a collection of odd, mismatched rugs in various states of wear. The centerpiece of the common room was an ornate fireplace, large enough for five people to floo through. Covering the rest of the walls were bookshelves equipped with everything the students might need for their upcoming N.E.W.T.s. The ceiling was charmed like the great hall, but with a perpetually clear night sky for studying astronomy. Any inch of stone wall unmasked by bookshelves was covered with paintings, tapestries, and posters from the students themselves, from the Chudley Cannons to the Weird Sisters. The center of the common room was filled with squishy couches, armchairs and floor pillows, while against the walls there were cubbied desks for students to study at.

“To the left,” McGonagall said, gesturing to a staircase, “is the girls’ dormitory. To the right is the boys’”.

Hermione nodded to the boys as she joined the girls who were filing to the left. While the students were excited to explore their common room - and in particular Hermione was itching to examine the bookcases- they were exhausted.

The girls’ dormitory had curtains all around the stone walls, softening the ordinarily cold and hard room. Each student had a large four poster bed, charmed to their exact preference in softness, adorned with silk sheets and curtains in their house colors. The overall effect was a colorful and welcoming atmosphere.

The Patil sisters gasped seeing their dorm beds side by side for the first time since being sorted. Hermione walked towards her crimson bed which sat between Daphne’s and Padma’s. She considered unpacking but couldn’t stop herself from burrowing deep within her silken covers.
Within minutes, the murmurs of her fellow female students dulled as she was swept into the best sleep she had gotten in weeks.

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Draco had to admit the common room was nice, now that he was seeing it fully furnished for the first time. He was especially excited about all the academic pursuits available at his fingertips. The bedroom was exactly as he remembered it from his community service rebuilding the castle, except now it was filled with beds in every house color. As Draco settled into his emerald green bed between Theo Nott and Michael Corner, he couldn’t help but wonder what McGonagall was playing at, making him Head Boy. A year living and working with Granger was not going to be easy, and he didn’t need a swotty know-it-all following him around, messing up his probation. As he drifted off to sleep he made up his mind to go see the former Transfiguration professor about this obvious mistake she had made.
Draco awoke one late Sunday morning in September, to a tapping sound on the window of the bedroom he now shared with the male half of the eighth-year class.

One more owl from Mrs. Weasley for Ronnykins and I swear… Draco muttered to himself, opening the arched window, ready to shake the snoring redhead awake. Instead, the owl thrust its leg towards Draco. The Slytherin reached out hesitantly and untied the scroll from the owl’s leg. The only person that could possibly be writing to Draco was…

Dearest Draco,

My apologies it has taken so long to reply to your letter. I spend so much of my days trying to get the Wizengamot to allow me to see your father. I know that if he could just see me, that a part of him would come back. It was such a joy to hear that you had been made Head Boy, even if it was done- no doubt- to make you look good and in turn, Minerva look good as your probation mentor. I was, however, disappointed to hear you were not optimistic in your evaluation of the other students’ reception to you. Draco, dear, you must try to make friends with your peers if you are ever to redeem the Malfoy name. I know I needn’t mention the importance of this to you as you are now The Lord Malfoy.

Please continue to study hard, and make new friends. Have you considered Potter, Granger or Weasley? Any one of them would do wonders for our standing in the public eye.

Sincerely,

Mother.

Draco sighed and rubbed his temples. Like him, his mother clearly saw McGonagall’s motive in making him head boy - to build him up on his quest to redemption. Unlike Draco, the Malfoy matriarch thought the headmistress had something personal to gain from Draco’s appointment to the prestigious position - a very Slytherin view indeed. The youngest Malfoy knew enough about Gryffindors to know that Minerva was indeed doing this out the kindness of her own heart rather than to make herself look more successful in reforming the former death eater.

As for his academics, Draco knew that he would be fine as long as he attended class. The only time his grades ever dropped was sixth year when he was, you know, trying to assassinate the most powerful wizard in the world. In fact, he had spent most of his free time this summer in the library, reading anything he could get his hands on. Draco always had a passion for learning, especially in the magical arts. His father supported this endeavor, of course, because he needed Draco to be the best. However, certain subjects he was not permitted to learn any more than strictly necessary, Muggle Studies for example. In the time Draco spent in the library, most of it was spent in the Muggle Studies section. Hogwarts actually had a fairly extensive collection of classic Muggle authors for students pursuing N.E.W.T. level studies. The Slytherin Prince spent the summer reading everything he could, from Shakespeare to Austin. He was astounded by the prowess of these Muggles- they were so much better than his father would ever let him believe. His favorites were authors who had written about magic, thinking it was just fantasy.
 Despite his new interests, the trouble lay in his mother’s request that he make... friends. His thoughts drifted to the Golden Trio, more specifically to the brightest witch of her age, Hermione Granger. To say he hadn’t noticed the witch before would be an understatement. In fact, it was his attraction to her at the Yule Ball in their fourth year that first began to dissolve his absolute confidence in his father, the Dark Lord and the Death Eaters. Of course, this crush didn’t stop him from taking the Mark, but it did earn him more than a couple beatings when his father found the threads of attraction during their Legilimency and Occlumency lessons. Nonetheless, his fascination with the bushy-haired witch had persisted. Hermione was the epitome of intellectual beauty. She rose above anything and everything thrown her way, not the least of which was Draco’s constant torment. After fourth year, Draco stopped calling her “mudblood” but he was just as ruthless as ever in his bullying, trying to fill his mind with hatred for his father’s sake, all the while studying Occlumency whenever he could to hide his true feelings.

It was a combination of Draco’s new outlook and longtime interest in the muggleborn witch that made him decide to pursue her friendship in particular. He knew Potter and the Weasel would never forgive him, but maybe - just maybe - Hermione would find it in her heart to see past his darkness. He knew he would never be worthy of her affection in the way his heart not-so-secretly hoped, but perhaps he had changed enough to be her friend.

Draco walked back to his bed in the dim light of dawn, and reached under his mattress, retrieving a thick green notebook, worn and battered from years of use. He muttered the unlocking enchantment and opened to the first page.

**December 10th 1994**

*I have to get this out. I have to get rid of these thoughts.*

*He’ll kill me. He’ll find out and he’ll kill me.*

*How could he love a son who finds a mudblood so... beautiful.*

*There, I said it.*

*Hermione Granger is beautiful.*

*Fuck.*

Draco opened the book to a random page, halfway through the hundreds in the notebook

**November 2nd, 1996**

*I could’ve sworn He saw her in my mind.*

*I guess years of hiding her from father paid off.*

*I feel so sick, so dirty every time he’s in my mind. She gives me so much strength but I can’t let her slip out of my subconscious or he’ll kill her. No- not kill, worse. Much worse.*

*How can I protect her when she hates me? How can I protect her now that I’m one of them? How could she ever feel for me what I feel for her?*

Draco grabbed a quill off his bedside table, turning the notebook to a fresh page close to the back of the book and began writing.

**September 12th, 1998**
Tomorrow I try to make Hermione my friend. Just that, just friends.

Tomorrow.

Finally.

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During the first few weeks of the term, the Eighth Years remained closely knit within their respective house groups. Little by little the Gryffindors, Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws had begun adapting to their cohabitation and started spending more time together in the common room and intermingling at the fifth table. Before long all hell had broken loose as the houses began sitting together in class, leaving the Slytherins behind in the back of each classroom.

That night, in the eighth year common room, Draco, Blaise, Theo, Pansy and Daphne were sitting in a secluded corner of the room as usual.

“Come on, Pans, you really never hooked up with Millie?” Blaise pushed.

“No, Blaise, I didn't. I told you already, it's been Beauxbatons girls for me ever since I figured out which way I really swing. You lot are the only ones who ever bothered to figure that out, too, so I’d appreciate it if you kept your mouth shut, Zabini” Pansy replied, glancing around the room.

“I imagine everyone still thinks you’re fucking Draco then, huh?”

“Pretty much, yeah”

“You’re kidding me, you still let them think that?” Theo admonished.

“They make their own assumptions, I just don’t deny it” Pansy defended herself.

“To be fair, if everyone thought I was sleeping with ‘the Slytherin Sex God’ I’d milk it too,” Daphne replied unashamedly. Looking at Draco.

“So you’re just cool with this, Drake?” Theo asked, appalled.

“Hmm?” Draco glanced up from staring at the fireplace across the room.

“I said, are you down with Pansy letting everyone think that your month of fooling around fourth year is still going on to this day, just so she can cover up her insatiable interest in pussy?”

“Classy, Theo,” Daphne added.

“What do you think of it, Draco?” Pansy asked, suddenly self-conscious of her assumed arrangement with the Slytherin Prince.

“I think we should make friends with the other houses,” Draco blurted out unceremoniously.

“Sorry mate, but, what the fuck?” Blaise jumped in first.

“So close, Drake, but also not even close to being what we were talking about,” Pansy dripped with sarcasm.

“No, listen, we’re all back here for one reason or another,” Draco looked at each of his
friends in turn, “we aren’t the bad guys, at least not anymore. We need to make friends with the other houses if we’re going to survive this year let alone life after Hogwarts”.

“You’re not wrong, Malfoy, but where the hell is this coming from?” Pansy asked, concerned. She was usually so in tune with Draco being his best friend since birth. Now, she had no idea where he was getting off. The rest of the Slytherins sat in silence, waiting for the blonde to explain himself.

“I got a letter from my mother this morning. We can’t end up like our parents. We have to change now or it’ll never happen for us. We’ll be ostracized forever”. Draco knew it was a risk but he hoped appealing to the politically practical side of the Slytherins would make them less suspicious of his already soft spot for a certain Gryffindor.

“I bet she’s a Hufflepuff,” Blaise threw in, “He’s fucking a Hufflepuff and doesn’t want us to make fun of him when he finally tells us”.

“Shut up, Z, Draco has a point,” Theo finally weighed in.

“How exactly are we supposed to do this, Drake?” Daphne asked after a prolonged silence.

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Monday morning came without ceremony, but when Draco walked into the common room, the air felt heavy. He could practically feel the doubt radiating off his housemates.

“Shall we?” he said.

The Slytherins nodded, and followed Draco out the dormitory passageway into the third-floor corridor. Not one of the students could think of something to ease the tension they all felt as they descended into the Hogwarts dungeons. They had no idea what Draco was planning or when he would execute it. All they knew was that the culture of Hogwarts would be changed for what they hoped was the better. If only Salazar could see them now: Five lonely, scared, orphaned, damaged Slytherins, scarred beyond repair from war. Doubting everything their families taught them. Doubting everything Slytherin himself stood for. They couldn’t change what they had done, they knew that. They had come back, though. They were here to answer for their crimes, whether they chose this path or not, they were here now. These were the five brave enough to look their past in its face.

To be fair, the other students didn’t hate these five students. They didn’t hate Slytherin. It was well known that anyone who dared return to Hogwarts from Slytherin was ready for the brave new world that the Battle of Hogwarts had created. They certainly didn’t have to like or trust them though.

Thanks to Professor Snape, each Slytherin eighth year had passed potions with flying colors and they were all enrolled in Slughorn’s N.E.W.T. level potions class. Draco lead his peers through the arched dungeon door, scanning the classroom. He knew if he arrived early enough, there would be just three students already in the classroom. Harry and Ron would have been dragged to class ten minutes early by their bossy best friend. The boys were sitting together at a workstation, while Hermione sat at the table in front of them, waiting for her partner, Hannah Abbott. Draco paused in the doorway. He squared his shoulders, lifted his chin, inhaled, and strolled confidently to the front row.

“May I?” He offered politely, sitting down without waiting for her answer. Draco turned to his left, and for the first time in his life, he smiled at Hermione Granger without a hint of malice.
Partnership

Chapter Three – Partnership

Ron Weasley stood up so fast, his stool crashed to the floor. Fortunately for Draco, Harry had the good sense and Seeker’s reflexes to grab Ronald by the wrist.

“The fuck do you think you’re doing, Malfoy?” Ron yelled.

“I’m sitting next to Hermione, obviously,” the blonde boy drawled.

“Oh it’s Hermione now? Move it, snake.”

“No thank you.”

“Ronald, I can handle this,” Hermione interrupted, glaring at her friend. “Draco, I can’t say I know what you’re doing, but as fellow Head Student, I’m going to give you the benefit of the doubt-”

“Bloody hell, Hermione, you can’t-” Ron started.

“Excuse me, Ron,” Hermione shot back. “As I was saying, I’m going to choose to believe you’re doing this for the sake of inter house unity. So, instead of making a scene and telling you to get away from me, I will simply say this: Just for today, Malfoy”

“As you wish, Granger,” Draco replied, eyeing first Ron, then Harry. The Chosen One simply released his grasp on Ron, and raised his eyebrows at Hermione as if to say, “are you sure about this?” to which Hermione offered a tiny nod. Satisfied, and with a deep desire to never cause drama at Hogwarts ever again, Harry sat down.

It was at this point that Professor Slughorn waddled into the room.

“Your attention please, students. Seeing as you have had a most… sporadic education in your years at Hogwarts, I have decided to assign a very special first project,” the old potions professor began. “For this assignment, you will work in pairs with a unique poison of my own design, for which you and your partner must find and brew an antidote.”

As soon as Slughorn mentioned partner work, the students began to murmur and glance around the room. Ron elbowed Harry while Hermione glanced backwards to catch Hannah Abbott’s eye.

“Let’s keep this simple, shall we? Your partner will be your tablemate,” Slughorn proposed. Hermione felt her stomach drop. She knew Draco was smart, that he was competitive academically, seeing as he almost always finished second behind her. That being said, she certainly wasn’t stupid enough to believe that the Malfoy heir would cut her a break.

“Listen up, Draco,” Hermione started, hoping that the use of his given name would soften the boy, “I don’t know why you sat next to me today, what your end goal is, but the fact of the matter is now we’re stuck together. If you think for one second I’m going to let my grade slide for any kind of funny business-”
“Relax, Granger. You were right. As always, you were right that I sat next to you in the name of house unity, and in the name of Head Students working together. Furthermore, I know you’re smart enough to be well aware of the fact that I very nearly bested you in potions every year since we were eleven. So, as far as this project goes, I don’t think either of us should be worried about the other.”

Before Hermione could argue, Professor Slughorn soldiered on, “I will distribute the potions at the end of class. I know you won’t try anything stupid with the poisons, because by definition of them being unique, I will know exactly who let some slip. Are we clear on that?” Hermione looked at Draco pointedly, he couldn’t help but snort at the idea that he would actually be so stupid as to poison the Gryffindor Golden Girl.

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Hermione and Draco were allotted the length of September to get settled before they were due to start running after-hours security rounds of the castle. It was the responsibility of the Head Boy and Head Girl to start rounds at nine every week night when all students were supposed to be in their common rooms. At ten, they would hand over the duties to a rotating pair of prefects. This system was established to help maintain order and the overall feeling of safety in post-war Hogwarts.

It was this responsibility that had Hermione currently knocking on the boys’ dormitory door.

“Draco get your ass out here right now, I am not going to be late to our meeting with McGonagall!”

“Me and my ass are not late, Granger. In fact, we still have ten minutes to get to McGonagall’s office.”

“Which means we’re late because it takes twelve minutes to get there, Malfoy!”

“Maybe for your short legs…”

“Get out here right now or I swear to Godric-”

“Swear to Godric you’ll what?” Draco asked as he stepped through the doorway

“I was going to say punch you in the nose- again- but frankly we don’t have time, so move it,” Hermione said, pushing him with both hands on his back.

“Didn’t know you liked it so rough, Granger. Hey! Easy with the goods!” Draco cried out when her push turned into a nice strong whack between his shoulder blades, “bloody Gryffindors…”

The unlikely pair ascended to the headmistress’s office in relative silence before Draco finally spoke up.

“When did you want to work on Slughorn’s assignment?” Draco asked.

“Sorry, what?”

“When do you want to start our project?”

“You actually want to work with me on it?”

“Well, it’s not exactly about what I want now is it, Granger? We’re partners and we’re both
bloody good at potions so we might as well do the project together. You don’t really want to hold Weasley’s hand through yet another assignment, do you?”

“Don’t drag Ron into this- but yeah, I guess you’re right we’re not a terrible match when it comes to academics. It might be smart to work together, as long as you behave of course”.

Draco laughed, “I promise to be on my very best behavior, oh Golden One”.

“Promise me you’ll never call me that again, either”.

“I promise”.

The two students arrived at the charmed staircase leading to McGonagall’s new office.

“Devon Rex” Hermione spoke clearly. The staircase shifted to allow the Head Students in.

“Come in, come in,” Professor McGonagall called out when Draco knocked firmly on the large oak door. “Ah, yes, Hermione, Draco, how are you settling in?”

“Wonderfully as usual, Professor,” Hermione beamed.

“Can’t complain, Professor,” Draco added, tactfully.

“Good, well, tomorrow is a big night as you are due to start rounds. It is your responsibility to give all students out of bed a verbal warning, and report repeat offending students. You are not, however, responsible for giving detentions or disciplining fellow students. Now, it’s not uncommon to find one or two students asleep or working late in the library. I prefer to give such studious students a bit of leeway,” she winked at Hermione, who had been caught out late in the library more often than one might expect of the rule-abiding girl. “Once you have confirmed the castle is clear, it’s up to the Prefects to make sure no one sneaks out on a shorter route centered around the individual dorms. Is that all clear?”

“Yes, Professor,” The students replied.

“Off you go. Once you’ve confirmed the castle is clear and are ready to send out Prefects just send me a Patronus, Hermione.”

“Yes, Professor,” the Gryffindor replied, aware of Draco’s sudden, shocked look in her direction.

When they were back in the corridor leading to the Headmistress’ office, Draco immediately accosted Hermione.

“You can conjure a Corporeal Patronus?”

“Um… Yeah, I learned fifth year…” Hermione replied hesitantly, waiting for the pureblood boy’s torment she was so used to. She figured he probably learned from his father at a young age. She began to walk back towards their dorm room, with Draco just a pace behind her.

“I’ve never produced anything close to even a blob…” Draco said, so quietly Hermione almost missed it.

“Oh. Well… it’s not easy. It’s actually one of the hardest charms I’ve ever had to master. It took me weeks.” Hermione said, glancing over her shoulder.

“Really?” Draco was now walking shoulder to shoulder with the girl.
“Yeah. Maybe… maybe I could help you sometime?”

“You’d do that for me?” Draco was genuinely shocked that Hermione would offer to spend any more time with him than was strictly necessary.

“Why not? We’re stuck with this project all term, we could take breaks from the potion to practice the Patronus”.

“Merlin, you’re serious. Yeah, okay, let’s do it. Should we start say, tomorrow?” Draco asked, suddenly nervous. He found himself rubbing the back of his neck and forced himself to keep his arms at his side.

“Uh, yeah, I’m free tomorrow. Library after dinner?”

“Oh, well I’m actually helping the Slytherin quidditch team tomorrow. We could work in the common room around eight if that works for you”.

“Of course, we have the same common room now. Eight works for me. I’ll see you then”.

They had arrived at the door to the eighth year dorm, and entered without another word. Draco immediately drifted to his friends in the corner, while Hermione made an excuse to Harry and Ron and hurried off to bed.

Tomorrow was going to be a long day.
The October sun was streaming through the window above Hermione Granger’s bed when she bolted upright, gasping. Her scream was barely held back. Most of the eighth year students were plagued with nightmares, not the least of which was Hermione’s. She knew going into the year that she and her dear friends Harry and Ron were suffering from the night terrors from their time bunking together at the burrow. However, she foolishly assumed she’d be alone in the nightly visions. Once Hermione arrived at the shared dorm she quickly realized the other girls suffered just as she did. The Patil sisters would often call out for Lavender late into the night; Pansy begged for her mother’s life; Hannah cried silently, waking with red puffy eyes. As for Hermione she saw Harry’s body in Hagrid’s arms over and over.

Hermione knew now that the boys were just the same. Neville searched his dreams frantically for Luna, Ron wouldn’t say so, but in his dreams he saw Hermione in Harry’s place. Harry was worst of all, sleeping just a few hours a night but he refused to take potions to aid his sleep or talk about what he saw. Most curiously, Harry noticed that in his hours lying awake at night it was Draco who had the most nightmares. Sometimes he begged for his mother’s life; sometimes it was for his father to spare his; sometimes it was just him begging forgiveness from anyone who would listen. Harry kept this secret from everyone, however. He knew Draco wanted to earn his forgiveness, that the last thing he would ever want was pity.

It was this late autumn sun that sent Hermione into a panic once she got her bearings. She knew that if the Scottish sun was out, that she’d be late for breakfast- or worse, for class.

Hermione was almost disappointed she didn’t have potions. She told herself she was simply dying of curiosity about the potion that she and Draco had been assigned. But she knew with their study session coming up it wasn’t just about the academics. Maybe she missed the faint smell of old books and amber that floated around Draco… No. Of course not, that would be absolutely insane.

.oOo0oOo.

Before she knew it, the day had flown by and Hermione was sitting between Ron and Harry at the eighth year table in the Great Hall for dinner. The boys were chattering over her about flight patterns and new play strategies for this year’s Quidditch teams. Professor McGonagall had thought it unfair to allow eighth years to play on the school Quidditch teams but had permitted former captains to stay on as volunteer coaches. This meant that both Harry and Draco would be assisting their former teams this year. Ron, of course, was gutted that he couldn’t play but settled for becoming a self-appointed assistant coach to Harry. Draco, on the other hand, felt that coaching Slytherins would only paint him as a continued pure-blood sympathizer, but McGonagall decided that extracurriculars were mandatory for the reformed Death Eater. Not only that, but the Headmistress had encouraged teams to practice in pairs as much as possible for the sake of inter-house unity. It was because of this that had Gryffindor and Slytherin booked for a scrimmage this evening.

Hermione trudged across the school lawn to the Quidditch pitch. In front of her Harry and Ron were still deep in an argument over which defensive fakeout would work better in their practice match against Slytherin today. Harry looked every bit the part of Head Coach- Not only
were the coaches instructed to wear the practice or competition robes along with their team; but
Harry seemed taller these days, as if he literally had a weight off his shoulders. His new trademark
five o’clock shadow ghosted across his jaw, making him look like the adult that the eighth years
now were- legally at least.

Hermione instinctively glanced over her shoulder, Draco was a few paces behind her,
dressed in his emerald robes. He glanced up and met her with his piercing silver eyes. Hermione
almost stumbled by how surprised she was at their brightness today. It seemed Quidditch could put
even the most surly student in a good mood. As if reading her thoughts, Draco allowed a small,
crooked smile to flicker across his lips.

Hermione actually tripped this time. She threw out her hands to catch her fall, tossing the
book she brought into the grass.

“Whoah, easy there,” Draco said, grabbing her elbow to help the girl up.

“I- sorry. It was uneven and-” Hermione tried to recover.

“Oh! Malfoy! What did I tell you?” Ron started, having turned around at the sound of
Hermione hitting the grass.

“Just helping Granger up,” Draco answered calmly, leaning down to pick up the book
Hermione had dropped. “Romeo and Juliet?”

“It’s a muggle-“

“I know what it is, Granger, but I didn’t take you for a romance enthusiast. I prefer Macbeth
myself,” he shrugged nonchalantly, and walked back toward the pitch as if he hadn’t just made
Hermione’s brain implode.

Hermione stared as Draco walked away, barely registering Harry’s and Ron’s hands on her
shoulders. Had Draco’s ass always looked that good in his Quidditch Uniform?

=oOoOoOo.

Hermione was curled up on a squishy chair, reading Romeo and Juliet when the boys
walked back into the common room.

“Let me change, then I’ll be back to work on our project,” Draco announced a little too
loudly in Hermione’s direction. No doubt making sure Harry and Ron heard his innocent intentions
to work with Hermione in the public space of the common room.

When Draco returned dressed in black slacks and a black quarter zip sweater, the
Shakespeare play had vanished and in its place sat a stack of potions textbooks on the coffee table,
nearly reaching Hermione’s eye level.

“Have you really never read Romeo and Juliet?” Draco started.

“Of course I have, I’m just re-reading it. Besides, how do I know you’re not just lying
about having read it yourself?”

“Well two things- I know the plot. Star crossed lovers from rival houses in Italy, the suicide
misunderstanding, the way it brings enemies together for the sake of young love,” Draco Said.
“Second thing- I don’t lie, not anymore. Are you… breathing? Or blinking?”

Hermione promptly shut her gaping jaw.
“But… you said you prefer Macbeth?” She offered, choosing to gloss over her amazement that he had read either in the first place.

“Yup”.

“But-”

“Look Granger, I had a lot of time to think this summer. I had a lot to learn. I decided to raid the Muggle Studies section in the library when I found out I would be dropped into the N.E.W.T. level for probation - reformation and all that. I still don’t understand Alice in Wonderland but I love Shakespeare. You can make fun of me all you want, I get it”.

Hermione paused. She knew he was confessing something monumental to her. Something he probably still kept from his family and housemates. Not only did he consume Muggle work, he admired and appreciated it.

“You might want to try The Chronicles of Narnia,” was what Hermione finally settled on saying.

“Pardon?”

“If you like Shakespeare, particularly if you liked Midsummer, you might like C.S. Lewis”.

“You’re just going to ignore the fact that I read Muggle work?”

“Yup,” she mimicked.

“Well, fuck me. Alright,” he actually chuckled to himself a bit. “Let’s get started on this potion before rounds, shall we?”

Hermione graced him with a shy smile as she reached for the first textbook in her stack.

.oOo0oOo.

Dear Mother,

I’ve thought about what you suggested- that I befriend the Golden Trio for the sake of my new image. While I think it’s ridiculous that you think Potter or Weasley would ever be friends with me, I have been paired with Granger for a term-long assignment.

Sincerely, Draco.

.oOo0oOo.

October 1st, 1998 - 8:50 pm

It’s been two weeks since Hermione and I were paired for the potions assignment. At first, I thought she hated me for sitting next to her that day. Merlin, I know part of her hates me already, and it kills me. She wouldn’t speak to me for weeks after it was assigned, but I’ve seen her working on it.

She finally agreed to work with me on the project but…

But she found out.

She found out about Muggle Studies.
I have to run though, our first night of rounds is tonight.

October 1st 1998 - 10:15 pm

We spent the night talking about Shakespeare.

I swear. We did.

She’s got the most incredible insight into the characters, she’s so bloody intelligent.

Mother can go fuck herself if she thinks I’m going to use her like that.

Dammit, what am I going to do?
Inevitable

Chapter Five – Inevitable

By mid October the students were already up to their necks in school work. Hermione tried to schedule as much study time as possible, but working with Draco proved to be surprisingly difficult. Not in the ways she expected, rather that he was always busy. He had meetings with McGonagall every week, Quidditch practice, and half a dozen N.E.W.T.s.

What made Hermione most uneasy was the way Draco acted during their study sessions. He was a perfect gentleman. Sure, he still teased her, and got frustrated and grumpy - he was after all still Malfoy. But his jokes no longer held the vicious edge they used to. The pair had even used their time circling the perimeter of the castle during rounds to practice the patronus charm in relative privacy. After all, the room of requirement had been destroyed by fiendfyre during the Battle. Draco continued to struggle though, still producing just a wisp of light. Hermione suspected he was struggling to find a memory happy enough, even if he’d never admit it.

Hermione resolved to help Draco find a happy memory to feed off of. After all, they were friends now… right?

Draco, dearest,

I’m delighted to hear you have been matched with Miss Granger for an assignment, I do hope you will use the position to your advantage and continue to befriend the girl. As much as it pains me to have you working alongside a Mudblood, it will help our cause. I have to admit, son, I have not been entirely forthcoming with you regarding our current political position. While it’s true that a friendship amongst the Golden Trio will help our family’s public image, the true motivation behind infiltrating the group is to keep eyes and ears on the Chosen One, Blood-Traitor and Mudblood who have caused us such loss and anguish this past year.

Over the course of the summer while you were away serving your sentence at Hogwarts, I have been in communication with those of our ranks who survived and fled England. The Carrows, Dolohov, Rookwood and McNair have all agreed to rejoin us- to rejoin you- to continue our Dark Lord’s greatest mission. As heir to the Malfoy name, it is your birthright, responsibility and duty to lead us back to power.

I know you must have questions, my son. First and foremost this letter is charmed to read as frivolous gossip to anyone besides you, as I suspect Minerva is reading my letters to you, if not all your mail. Second, the survivors and I will meet first on Halloween night to discuss the details of your leadership and future involvement past Hogwarts. Finally, as of now your duties will be to gain the trust of the Mudblood, by any means necessary. If you have to seduce her, so be it. Do not, of course, defile the Malfoy name by engaging with her physically. I shudder at the prospect of having to cover up a halfblood bastard. Don’t fear, my dear, for she can become your property however you like once all is said and done and you have married properly.

Please reply quickly with any further questions until we can meet in person. Be sure to charm all your correspondence in this matter. Best of luck with Miss Granger, though with your charm I know it’s hardly necessary, so long as you can stomach the filthy little girl for more than a
Draco stood in his bedchamber, dumbfounded, when the letter began to ignite in his hand.

“Fucking bitch!” he yelled, dropping the flaming parchment. “What the fuck is she thinking!?”

Draco immediately began to pace the bedroom.

“The fuckin’ hell are you doin’?” Seamus yelled out in his thick accent, sitting up from an apparent nap.

“Seamus? Oh, uh, girl stuff,” he floundered, “you wouldn’t get it.” Draco punctuated the statement with a trademark sneer.

“Fuck off, ya bloody git. I know more about-” Seamus argued back, but Draco was halfway out the door already.

Draco was halfway through the castle before he knew where he was going. Where he was going happened to be Hermione’s Arithmancy classroom, in the north wing of the castle. He realized he somehow knew exactly where she’d be this time of day… Knowing her schedule was completely justifiable, he told himself, seeing as they were Co-Heads and partners on such a major N.E.W.T. project. He shook his head to clear his thoughts as he barged through the door of Hermione’s classroom.

“Mr. Malfoy?” Professor Vector inquired, thin eyebrow raised.

“I uhh…”

Hermione was staring at Malfoy wide-eyed.

“Potion- Emergency- Smells funny- Explosion?- Granger.” Malfoy blurted out, as Hermione scooped up her skyscraper of textbooks and scurried to the front of the classroom. Draco heard Hermione whisper in Professor Vector’s ear - “Two weeks ahead”, “N.E.W.T. level”, “Boys”. Septima Vector giggled into her hand, nodding.

“What was that?” Draco asked once the pair was in the hall.

“What was that? What was your that!?” Hermione practically screeched.

“I asked first,” Draco said, smirking.

“You are quite literally impossible, Malfoy”.

“Malfoy again, is it?” Hermione just glared back at the blonde.

“I told Vector what I needed to get out of my extremely prestigious N.E.W.T. Arithmancy class,” Hermione put her hands on her hips, “which is to say that I told her - a hopeless bachelorette- that you were absolutely incapable of completing work without my help, due to your genetic predisposition to failure,” she said glancing south.
“You told a bloody professor that I was causing you to fail, and not only that but because I’ve got a dick!?”

“Uh, yup,” Hermione grinned, feeling cheeky. “So, shall I go back to class or will you explain what the fuck that was all about?”

Draco grabbed Hermione’s upper arm, pulling her to an alcove in the hall, behind a tapestry.

“My mother wrote to me,” Draco started.

“So? New dress or new shoes?”

“Will you extinguish the fire here, Granger? This is important”.

“Sorry, continue”.

“My mother wrote to me and… She’s starting a Death Eater uprising… And asked me to be the next Dark Lord…?”

“SHE WHAT?”

Draco clamped a hand over Hermione’s mouth. “Obviously I’m going to say no!”

Hermione locked eyes with Draco. Warm brown met icy silver.

“OooCaa”

“Sorry,” Draco said, removing his hand.

“You can’t”.

“Let me run this by you one more time, Granger. My mother is starting a Death Eater uprising and as heir to the Malfoy throne I am to be the next Dark Lord. What part of that is tickling your fancy, exactly?”

“What I mean to say is, of course you can’t do it. If you did, not only would you be totally and completely evil, but you would receive the same fate as Malfoy senior. The point I was trying to make is that she cannot know that. I know she’s your mother but if any of the lost Death Eaters discovered your… unwillingness… they wouldn’t hesitate to kill you”.


“Just trying to be logical”.

“And I was trying to burn down the Manor, with my mother in it, so”.

“Draco!” She smacked his arm.

“Feisty, just how I like you”.  
“Can it, Malfoy”.

.oOo0oOo.

Dear Mother,

I am humbled by your decision to not only include me in your plans but to judge me to be a
leader. With that I say, of course I will help you in any way I can. As such, I must request a few things from you. First, no harm must befall Granger or any of her peers for at least the duration of the school year. For any of them to get hurt would put suspicion solely on my shoulders and potentially derail all our plans. Next, you must keep me fully and promptly updated with the plans of the group. In doing so you will ensure my ability to be both out of harm’s way and free of suspicion should I need to have a valid alibi. Of course I want to be well informed as a future leader but for now keeping our secrets safe will be my primary concern. Finally, no one should die, yet. Death will be our biggest giveaway in a post-war world.

Yours,

Draco.

“What do you think, Headmistress? Hermione helped me draft it, and if it seems too weak I can-”

“Perfect, Draco. Good work, Hermione,” Minerva looked between the two young students. “If someone had told me Hermione would be coming to me this year with an evil plot to foil this year, I would’ve said ‘obviously’. If they had told me it would be with Draco Malfoy willingly in tow, I would’ve given my powers of being an Animagi to prove it”.

Hermione blushed again, glancing at Draco who looked wildly uncomfortable. The already pale boy was somehow paler and sweating profusely, despite his new mentor looking at him with immense pride.

“Draco, breathe, please. Your mother will buy this story, and together all three of us will protect Hermione and the rest of Hogwarts. All you have to do is continuing to trust each other, continue to excel in your classes, and the three of us will meet each time Mrs. Malfoy writes to draft a new reply that works for all of us. Does that work for you, Draco?”

“Yes, ma’am”.

“Don’t you ‘ma’am’ me, Draco, or I will ‘Mr. Malfoy’ you”. Draco looked up, smiling.

“Of course, Professor”.

“Now go, as I understand it the two of you have quite the potions assignment to work on”.

.oOo0oOo.

Hermione sneezed for what Draco estimated to be the millionth time that evening.

“Merlin, Hermione, go to sleep, will you? I can finish this lacewing distillation myself,”

“No, it clearly needs two people if you’re going to determine when exactly the distillation has turned chartreuse”.


“Okay, well since it’ll be forty minutes at least, how about I just wait it out here, at least until it changes color, then I’ll go straight to bed”.
Draco looked her up and down. “And you’re not freezing cold? Hot to the touch? Sneezing? Coughing?”

Hermione attempted a gasp in mock horror, only to fall into another fit of coughing.

“Muggle flu, Granger”.

“Oh, gosh, I didn’t know you were taking Magical and Muggle Medical Maladies this term”.

“Ha ha. I’m serious, you’re of no use to me dead, so just go to sleep”.

“I’m. Staying.” She insisted, snuggling deeper into her plaid flannel blanket on the common room couch. It was well past midnight at this point and they had just realized they needed to distill lacewing flies shortly before eleven and had decided to stay up and conquer this step before dawn.

“It wasn’t ten minutes later when Hermione began snoring quietly. Draco chuckled to himself and shook his head. He figured he’d finish the distillation himself as it was, but wasn’t expecting Hermione to pass out so quickly. He figured between pulling late hours since school began and the flu she was bound to fall asleep, but still.

Draco sighed and looked around the common room. The rest of the eighth years had turned in, seeing as most of them either didn’t have enough to occupy them late into the night yet, or didn’t pursue academics quite like Draco and Hermione did on a Tuesday night.

“Well Granger, looks like it’s just you and me,” Draco whispered. Hermione coughed again in her sleep, nearly waking herself up. “Dammit, woman,” Draco groaned, standing up off the couch, and stretching his arms up in the air. He padded barefoot to the door of the boys’ room, opening it a crack and glancing around once his eyes adjusted to the darkness. Nine of the ten bed curtains were drawn tightly, snores resonated around the room.

Draco returned to the common area, where Granger was dead asleep. He scooped his arms under her shoulders and knees, carrying the petite girl to the boys’ common room door. He shouldered it open, careful not to bump Hermione’s head on the doorframe. Once inside, Malfoy carried Hermione to his emerald silk-clad bed and laid her down. He knew if he slept in the common room, Hermione might wake up and barge into the boys’ area unknowingly, so he decided to charm the bed slightly wider, and lay down next to her, careful not to brush up against her.

When dawn broke, Draco was curled around something so soft he nuzzled his head further into the lavender scented hair in front of him, pressing his chest further into her back. Her back? Her? Hermione! It was at that moment that Hermione rolled over, snuggled her head into the space between his shoulders and neck, humming in her sleep. Slowly, she scooted back, craning her neck to look up at him as her eyes fluttered open.
As her large chocolatey eyes met his, Draco held his breath. He knew all hell was about to break loose. What he didn’t expect was for Hermione to blink up at him, a soft smile stretching across her full lips. As far as she was concerned, this was another lovely dream, one of many where she woke up in the arms of the Slytherin Prince. Not that she would ever tell anyone about that of course. As she gazed into his mercurial eyes, she started becoming more aware of the warmth of his arms around her, the beating of his heart and the soft brush of his breath against her cheek. *This is a hell of a realistic dream*, she thought…

Draco managed to cast a silencing spell in the same breath that Hermione shrieked. He winced at the volume of her cry first thing in the morning.

“What the honest-to-Gods-fuck am I doing in your bed, Malfoy!?” Hermione screamed.

“Hey, hey, be quiet. I don’t know how well my wandless silencing spell will hold,” Malfoy hissed.

“Oh, so you’re afraid someone will find out that-“ Hermione trailed off as the previous night came back to her.

“-That I put your incredibly sick self to bed, yes,” Draco finished.

“Oh, Merlin, I am so sorry Draco,” Hermione replied. Draco’s stomach warmed at her use of his given name, knowing it meant she really wasn’t mad.

“It’s okay. You fell asleep about ten minutes after we talked about the distillation. I knew I couldn’t get you upstairs to the girls’ dorm, being male and all. I figured if I left you on the couch in the common room you’d get a terrible night sleep and be woken up by whoever emerged first this morning,” Draco explained, somewhat bashfully, “so here we are.”

“Thank you, honestly. I feel so much better this morning too,” Hermione said.

“Good, I’m glad. Let’s get you out of here though”.

Draco stood up, facing away from Hermione and stretched his arms above his head. He apparently had decided to put his pajamas on last night, and was now wearing plaid bottoms slung low on his hips and a black cotton V-neck t-shirt. It was the most casual Hermione had ever seen him. Not to mention when he stretched, his shirt rode up, exposing a strip of his ivory skin just above his pants. When Draco turned back around Hermione’s eyes shot up to meet his. Draco smirked, knowing exactly where her eyes just were. The Gryffindor blushed furiously, eyes darting back down to the green sheets she was still tangled in.

Draco opened the heavy curtains and peered out into the dormitory. Luckily for the pair, those beds which had curtains open had already been left for class or breakfast, and the others were still shut tightly. Draco turned and motioned for Hermione to follow him.

“Thanks again for letting me borrow one of your books, Granger. As you can see it will be kept safe in my trunk with all my other *clearly well cared for* books,” Draco said, weirdly loudly.
“Wha- oh. Yes of course Malfoy. Just get it back to me promptly,” she added, as the two of them turned the stairs into view of the common room. Fortunately, the act was unnecessary as it was still breakfast time and the eighth-year common room was deserted.

.0Oo0oO.

Hermione sat down at the eighth year table about halfway into breakfast. Ron grunted in greeting, halfway through a stack of pancakes the size of his head. Harry, on the other hand, turned to her.

“Hey, you’re never up this late, you okay?”

“Just feeling a bit ill the last few days. I figured a little extra sleep would help prevent me from getting worse. You know I never miss class unless I’m practically chained to a hospital bed, so I’m trying to avoid any trips to Madame Pomfrey this year”.

“Sorry to hear that, coffee?”

Bless Harry. He was so over reading into anything suspicious post-war she could’ve walked into breakfast covered in hickeys and he wouldn’t bat an eye. Not that she would be covered in hickeys, especially after sleeping with Malfoy. Not sleeping with Malfoy. Sharing a bed with Malfoy. She shook her head to try to get herself off a dangerous train of thought.

It was then that Luna and Ginny mercifully walked over to the eighth-year table. Hermione felt terrible for how little she had seen of her two best girlfriends but with both of them being a year behind her, Harry and Ron, she just didn’t get a chance to see much of either girl. Hermione got up immediately to hug both younger girls, greeting them affectionately.

Ginny was swamped, being the new captain of Gryffindor Quidditch, as well as sneaking off to a new abandoned classroom with Harry every night. Hermione noticed that with the room of requirement gone, her friend group was becoming increasingly more creative about where their extracurricular affairs took place.

Speaking of the younger girls and extracurricular affairs, Hermione and Draco had stumbled upon Luna and Neville in a compromising position just last week during rounds. Draco had taken ten points from Gryffindor and Ravenclaw before Hermione gently reminded him that they were unable to do so. Hermione guessed that Neville’s abundant mortification was punishment enough, while Luna just giggled.

“Ronald, have you cleansed yourself of Snarflettes lately?” Luna asked. Ron, ever the conversationalist, just choked on his food.

“You should really work on your hygiene then,”

“What the bloody hell does that mean?”

“What Luna is surely leading up to,” Ginny gracefully intercepted, “is that we all want to look our best for the first Hogsmeade trip this weekend!”

“Oh no, Snarflettes are a pesky creature, transmitted by way of-“ Luna continued earnestly.

“Luna, is this something you’d maybe like to bring up more privately?”
“Yes, quite, Snarflettes are a terribly embarrassing condition”

“What?” Ron yelled.

“As I was saying!” Ginny raised her voice, refusing to have her enthusiasm for the weekend squandered by her best friend’s insistence on embarrassing her brother. “We are all going to Hogsmeade this weekend, so dress sharp, find a date.”

“A date? What are we, third years?” Dean interjected from down the table.

“Ooooh Dean will you be my date to Hogsmeade this weekend?” Seamus asked, his voice ear-splittingly high.

“Oh Seamus, you know I’d love to get you alone in the shrieking shack but my mom wouldn’t sign my consent form!” Dean replied, deepening his voice.

“Excuse me, but I am just trying to have a good fucking time this weekend,” Ginny stomped her foot.

“We are all looking forward to it, Ginny,” Harry said, trying to keep the peace.

“Thank you, love,” Ginny calmed instantly, “So, as I was saying. Find a date. Dress sharp. We are meeting at the Three Broomsticks at noon.”

“Neville, would you escort me to Hogsmeade this weekend?” Luna asked, turning towards the unlikely hero.

“Really? I mean, yes of course I would, Luna,” Neville beamed.

“Now that’s what I call efficient!” Ginny clapped her hands and turned to walk back to the younger tables arm in arm with Luna.

Hermione turned away from the pair to sit back down on the bench when she caught one Slytherin Prince staring at her. She quickly looked down at her feet as she stepped over the bench to take her seat.

“Oi, Daphne!” Dean bellowed across the table. Daphne’s head snapped up defensively. “Fancy going to Hogsmeade with me?” Seamus began to laugh until Dean smacked him in the back of the head. “I’m serious. Would you go with me?”


The clock in the Great Hall began thankfully chiming out nine o’clock at that moment, saving the rest of the eighth years from the peer pressure of finding dates first thing in the morning.
Friday arrived and the eighth years had paired themselves up weirdly well. By Thursday, Ron gathered the courage to ask his former housemate, Parvati Patil to accompany him. From where he was sitting, definitely eavesdropping instead of listening to his friends, Draco could hear her timid reply. Parvati politely declined the redhead, which made Draco chuckle silently to himself at first, until she explained in a hushed voice that it was “really just witches” she fancied, but she’d be happy to set the Gryffindor boy up with her sister. Draco’s eyes grew wide and he immediately pulled Pansy aside in the middle of a heated debate, which was stupid in Draco’s eyes anyway because he didn’t know what “leggings” were and why it mattered if they counted as pants.

“Excuse me, Malfoy but what the fuck do you think you’re doing?” Pansy accused.

“I just received intelligence from a reliable source” Draco lied, “That there is an eligible lesbi-witch in our midst”.

“Okay, first things first, ‘lesbi-witch’ is so dumb it’s offensive. Secondly, everyone knows Luna plays for both houses but she’s happily shagging Longbottom”.

“Wait, Luna likes girls?”

“What do you mean ‘Luna likes girls?’ who were you talking about?” Pansy asked, suddenly interested.

“Patil!” Draco said, indignantly he was so behind on politics outside of his former house.

“You’re gonna have to be more specific than that, sweetie,” Pansy said, sarcastically.

“I’m serious, Parkinson. I just heard the Weasel ask Parvati to Hogsmeade and she declined, citing a complete disinterest in the male persuasion”.

“Yeah, well, we’re all gay when it comes to Weasley”. Pansy said defensively. Draco snorted.

“Get real, Pansy. If you stick to Beauxbatons girls, you’re only getting laid three months out of the year, and as your friend I can’t let you succumb to that”.

“Oh yeah? And when’s the last time you got your dick wet oh Slytherin Sex God? Since you can’t very well take your eyes of Granger I’m guessing we’re working with at least a year of celibacy”.

“What the fuck, Pansy!” Draco raised his voice, looking around the common room.

“So it is true!” Pansy replied gleefully.

“I will neither confirm nor deny your accusations. I just thought I’d be a good friend and give you a heads up about Patil. Now as my good friend I trust you’ll keep your insane suspicions to yourself.” Draco said pointedly, turning and stalking back to the boys’ dorm.
By Friday, Ginny had meddled her way to finding every eighth year a date to Hogsmeade on Saturday, except for Blaise who refused to be “tied down” despite the fact that these were just weekend dates. As it stood, the couples already dating (that being Luna and Neville, Ginny and Harry and Ernie MacMillan and Hannah Abbott) had all agreed to come. Michael Corner had asked his longtime crush, Susan Bones on Wednesday during advanced Arithmancy. Susan had responded with a tactful, “can you really call yourself a Ravenclaw if you’re too thick to notice when a Hufflepuff likes you”. Ron was mysteriously set up with Padma by her sister Parvati, who had been cornered by Pansy and talked into going “as friends”. Seamus and Theo Nott had also joined the “going as friends” bandwagon and the pyrotechnic king of Hogwarts was practically giddy. Daphne was, of course, going with the ever-ballsy, Dean. Which only left… Hermione Granger and Draco Malfoy.

“It seems you’ll just have to go together, lest we leave either of you out!” Ginny practically squealed. “Star crossed lovers, indeed!”

“Oh, well thank you for the endorsement, Ginny, but Draco and I just don’t see each other that way and we talked about it and decided to stay back and work on our Potions project together, rather than join the ‘just friends’ group,” Hermione explained Friday morning at breakfast. Draco hadn’t taken his eyes off of her.

It was on their rounds Thursday night when Draco finally gained the courage to speak to Hermione about the night they had shared, and maybe even about his feelings towards her. Before he could say anything, the bushy haired witch interrupted his thoughts.

“Thanks for not, you know, being super weird about the other night,”

“Of course, Hermione,” Draco replied, hoping that she’d notice his use of her given name. She did, of course, and shivered. “Are you cold?” the Slytherin Prince asked.


“Oh, good,” Draco said, awkwardly.

“Yeah”.

“Would you- would you be at all interested in going with me to Hogsmeade this weekend?”

“What?” Hermione stopped dead in her tracks.

“Would you like to be my date to Hogsmeade?”

“I’m flattered, Draco, but I can’t help wondering what your angle here is”. “There’s no angle, Granger. I like you, I like the time we’ve spent together, and I’d like to do it more,” Draco confessed. Hermione stood speechless, which to be fair was a rarity for the bushy-haired witch. “I’m not leading you on. I don’t lie anymore, remember? But if you don’t want to be seen with me I get that too”.

Hermione found her voice after a beat, “Draco… I can’t believe I’m saying this, but I’d love to go with you…”

“It’s a date then?” Draco asked eagerly.
“But, I don’t think it’s the right timing,” said the ever-logical witch.

“What the fuck do you mean not the right timing?” Draco started, frustrated. “We survived the worst war wizard-kind has ever seen, we’ve come back against all odds only to be made Head Boy and Girl, we got paired to work on this blasted project together, what could you possibly not see about this turn of fate?”

“Draco, please, I know you must think I’m being irrational, but it’s already against the rules for the Head Boy and Head Girl to date—“

“-Fuck the rules”.

Hermione glared at Draco and cleared her throat, “It’s against the rules, and if this is for real, I would prefer if we gave it a fighting chance before going public, instead of being influenced by Ginny Weasley to have our first date somewhere as nauseating as Madame Puddifoots”.

“Oh, well, maybe we could spend the day together anyway while everyone is out?”

“I’d like that”.

The pair finished their rounds in relative silence, interjecting here and there whenever one of them thought of another test to run on Slughorn’s poison.

.oOo0oOo.

Ginny had been very nearly calmed down from the crushing blow that her best friend would not be coming to Hogsmeade (Slytherin Sex God in tow), when Headmistress McGonagall tapped on her morning glass of pumpkin juice.

“Students! Students your attention please!” The students all turned in their seats enthusiastically, McGonagall rarely made announcements in the morning. “I have some wonderful news for you all. I know this year has already been difficult. We have made some intense changes to say the least, and with such a small community of students this year I must say you have all made me very proud with your flexibility and willingness to adapt. As a reward for your hard work settling into this year and the dedication I have already seen to your schoolwork, the staff and I have decided we will be having a Halloween ball.”

Ginny jumped out of her seat and squealed, the Patil sisters grinned at each other, and Hermione’s forehead thumped onto the table in front of her.

“And as further reward to our wonderful group of Head Students and Prefects, the staff will be chaperoning the dance, and you will all have the night off,” Minerva looked at Hermione pointedly as the witch slowly lifted her head off the table in awe. “So get your robes cleaned, and dresses bought, and have a good Friday and a safe weekend”. Hermione was astounded. Not only did the severe Professor seem positively chipper this morning, but she had actually arranged to have the student leaders available to attend the dance. It was all very impractical, Hermione thought, but Ginny was already on her.

“You have to come to Hogsmeade now, Hermione! We need to get dresses, and shoes, and new makeup and—“

“Hold up, Ginny. I was serious when I said I can’t go this weekend. I’ll just have to send out for a dress from Witch Weekly or something…” Ginny narrowed her eyes at the brightest witch of her age. “…Or I can have you pick one out for me…?” she tried. The younger witch beamed. “But nothing too revealing! No cleavage, nothing strapless, no heels over—“
“Don’t you worry about a thing, I’ll get you the most beautiful dress in Hogsmeade. Second to mine, maybe,” she winked.

.oOo0oOo.

October 14th, 1998

I haven’t known what to write these past two weeks. I’ve just been so overwhelmed by how happy I’ve been.

Hermione slept in my bed, she just slept. I didn’t have a single nightmare. I was so scared I’d wake her up with my screams, that she’d learn that I have to silence my bed every night to hide from the other boys.

I finally got the balls to tell her how I feel. She probably just thinks it’s a crush.

If only she knew how long I’ve felt this way, how much she means to me.

But none of that matters, because she agreed to go on a date with me. If all goes well I’ll ask her to the Halloween Ball, but for now I’m just overwhelmed that she’s even willing to be my friend.

I don’t know what to tell mother, though. I don’t want her to find out about this or she’ll force me to use her, but if she finds out about any of it without me telling her, Granger is as good as dead.

.oOo0oOo.

Dear Mother,

There will be a Halloween ball at Hogwarts. I will be inviting Granger as my date. I know you do not approve of me being seen with her socially, but it will further our “friendship”.

Sincerely,

Draco.

Draco was overwhelmed with guilt as he sent the secret letter to his mother. He, Hermione and McGonagall agreed that all correspondence between him and his mother would be shared amongst the group. He didn’t want Hermione to think that he was just using her to improve his station like his mother wanted him to do. He decided that while he had to continue to imply he was using her to keep her safe, he would keep those particular letters secret to prevent Hermione from misunderstanding his true intentions. It wasn’t really a lie, he told himself, just an omission of the truth. For now.
Hit The Town

Chapter Eight - Hit The Town

By the time Friday arrived, Draco was convinced that he was no longer a person but rather just made up entirely of anxiety and nerves. His date with Hermione was planned for Saturday afternoon while the students were in Hogsmeade. They figured they had plenty of time seeing as students from fifth through eighth year were allowed in the village after dark now. Besides, knowing his Slytherin peers, the lot of them would likely be piss drunk by the time the stumbled home anyway. Draco had planned the date meticulously, hoping desperately that he would impress Hermione. He knew he had to be careful not to make the date too elaborate for fear of overwhelming the bright girl.

On top of Saturday’s date, the first official Quidditch match of the season was scheduled for Friday after classes. The opening game was Gryffindor versus Slytherin, which always drew the largest crowd of student spectators. It was however, the first time Harry and Draco would be going head to head as coaches. If there was one thing Harry was still competitive in, it was Quidditch, and Draco knew better than to underestimate him. He had spent hours that he knew should’ve gone towards creating plays and flight plans and drilling his team.

Hermione was falling behind Ron and Harry as they practically ran towards the pitch. She hugged her sweater around her as the late October wind bit her cheeks.

“Allright, Granger?” Draco’s voice cut through the air.

“Bit chilly for a game don’t you think?”

“It’s never too cold for Quidditch,” Draco winked as he walked past her to catch up with Potter. Hermione smiled in spite of herself, burrowing her face deeper into her scarlet and gold scarf.

The brightest witch of her age had never enjoyed a Quidditch match more in her life. As much as she fought herself she couldn’t take her eyes off Draco on the sidelines. She found herself noticing his strong jaw, with his regal nose and piercing silver eyes. He was like a Greek god chiseled from pure white marble. Not to mention his Quidditch robes which no longer hung from a tall skinny boy but rather clung to the broad shoulders and flat abdomen of a man.

Draco was thriving, the wind howled around him as he circled the sidelines, shouting up at his players. Fortunately for him it was mostly encouragement as the team was running like a well oiled machine. Ginny Weasley was the main reason his team was still neck and neck with the Gryffindors. She was shooting goals like it was her job- which he had no doubt it would be in short time. Luckily for him, his young seeker Martin O’Connor had just taken a nose-dive towards a shimmering speck across the pitch. Draco as well as the rest of the crowd fell dead silent as Harry’s seeker followed in close pursuit, but it was too little too late as O’Connor’s fist closed around the golden snitch.

The Slytherins cheered wildly, soon followed by many of the other students. It didn’t matter who won in the end anymore, it was simply an incredible match. Harry landed his broom and shook Draco’s hand with a firm clap on the back.
“I really thought we had that one, Malfoy,” Harry said good-naturedly.

“I’d agree but Ginny can’t carry your team forever, Potter.” Draco joked.

“Where’d you find that seeker?”

“He was a chaser for three years until we got desperate for a new seeker. Turns out he’s a monster when it comes to catching that snitch.”

“That he is. Good game, well played”

“Thank you,” Draco said sincerely, smiling at Harry Potter.

.oOo0oOo.

“Just for an hour, Hermione!” Ginny begged one last time.

“As much as I would like to pick out a dress more modest than whatever you’ve got in mind, Draco and I are falling behind on the project with Quidditch season starting. We really have to work on it,” Hermione argued.

“You’re no fun. Be sure to take breaks and have a little fun at least,” Ginny added with a wink.

“I don’t know what you could possibly be referring to, Ginevra”

“Has all that reading burned your eyes, or did you see Draco’s ass in those Quidditch robes yesterday? I imagine you did, because every time I saw you in the stands you were staring right at him,”

“You must be running late for Hogsmeade by now, Ginny. Go on, and take your fantasies with you,” Hermione said, quickly hugging Ginny before turning her around by her shoulders and pushing her out of the common room.

By eleven sharp, all the eighth years had rounded up their respective Hogsmeade dates and headed out for their day on the town. Hermione flopped down into a squashy couch as Draco emerged from the boys’ dormitory, dressed in dark jeans and a black button up shirt. Hermione was briefly self-conscious of her choice to pair her skinny jeans with just a tee-shirt.

“Ginny Weasley will be the death of me,” she announced. Draco snorted as he too sat down on the couch next to Hermione.

“What’s she done this time?”

“She won’t let me order a dress for the Halloween Ball and insists she take point in buying me the dress of her dreams.”

“It can’t be that bad,” Draco offered

“The last time she bought me a dress, I had to charm it at least four inches longer just to cover myself,” Hermione whined, to which Draco burst out laughing. “It’s not funny, Draco! It was practically made for the sole purpose a wardrobe malfunction!” Draco only laughed harder, and soon enough Hermione found herself joining in giggling at the ridiculousness that was Ginny Weasley.

.oOo0oOo.
Harry and Ginny were walking hand-in-hand down the cobbled streets of Hogsmeade when Ginny stopped dead in her tracks, turning around to Luna and Neville.

“Here, Luna!” Ginny squealed, letting go of Harry and grabbing Luna’s hand.

“They’re very beautiful, Ginny,” Lunna mused, admiring the shimmering dresses in the window of the Gladrags Wizardwear shop in front of them. Harry chuckled at his girlfriend’s enthusiasm before turning to Neville.

“Three Broomsticks?” he asked Neville who nodded enthusiastically, not taking wide eyes off the overwhelming display in front of them. The boys wished the girls luck and headed off down the road towards the pub.

When Ginny and Luna wandered into the shop, they saw the Patil sisters in the corner of the store browsing rack after rack of silken gowns, while Daphne Greengrass sat on a couch in front of the dressing rooms. Just then, Pansy emerged from one of the rooms wearing a scarlet satin dress with a strapless sweetheart neckline and mermaid skirt.

“Oh Pans! It’s perfect!” Daphne cried, clapping her hands in approval.

“You sure it’s not too… Gryffindor?” Pansy asked, looking up at the Patil twins.

Padma boldly walked towards Pansy, “I think it’s lovely, you really do look beautiful Pansy,” Pansy looked from Padma to Parvati, who quickly looked to the floor, blushing.

“I’ll take it!” Pansy announced to the woman bustling through the shop, grinning.

“Let’s get moving ladies, we have five more dresses to buy!” Ginny cut in, looking at all the girls, then pointing to the red-clad Slytherin girl, “Pansy, get on that couch, we’re going to need your advice”.

“If you insist,” Pansy smiled.

The girls loaded their arms with dresses and marched into the fitting rooms. Pansy cheered when Padma found a green high necked gown, telling her she should’ve been a Slytherin all along when she looked so good in emerald. Parvati settled on a knee-length pink dress that hugged her curves perfectly, which Pansy had unceremoniously dropped into her fitting room.

Daphne took much longer, trying on almost twelve dresses before she found the perfect purple number that flowed out from her waist to just above her knees. Luna found a baby-blue tulle dress who’s skirt had charmed butterflies flicking around it. Finally, Ginny found a midnight blue dress that clung to every inch of her Quidditch-playing figure like it was a second skin.

“Just one last thing, we need to find the perfect dress for Hermione,” Ginny announced when each girl had a dress in hand.

“She trusted you with that?” Daphne laughed, having seen the sexy gown Ginny was holding.

“In a sense. She had some rules to it but I didn’t listen, obviously,” the girls giggled as Ginny explained the situation to them. Luna had wandered off, however and returned with a small drape of fabric that looked like a silken pool of mercury.

“She would never….” Padma said.
“She would never, but she will now,” Ginny argued.

“I have to admit, it’ll go great with a certain lab-partner’s eyes” Pansy winked.

“Oh, you mean Draco Malfoy?” Luna said unceremoniously. “He has lovely eyes,” she added.

The girls were still laughing as they exited the shop with their packages.

.oOoOoOo.

While the girls were shopping, Harry and Neville wandered down the path to the Three Broomsticks. They were enveloped by the warm, stale air of the pub as they walked through the heavy front door. Dean, Seamus and Ron were seated at a large table in the center of the pub, working on what was unlikely to be their first pint of butterbeer. The two boys grabbed themselves pints from Madame Rosmerta and headed over to the other Gryffindors.

“Alright boys?” Harry asked as he sat down.

“Doin’ well, ’Arry. Where’ve our dates run off to?” Seamus replied.

“They’re shopping for their Halloween Ball dresses, I think,” said Neville.

“So just us for a while then, ay?” Dean said, glancing over his shoulder at the Slytherin boys seated in the far corner of the pub. Harry followed his gaze towards Blaise and Theo nursing their firewhiskeys.

“Oi! Blaise, Theo, come over here!” Harry called across the busy bar.

“The fuck are you on about, Harry?” Ron elbowed him.

“Inter-house unity, you twat. If the girls can do it, if Hermione can do it, so can we”. The Slytherins wandered cautiously to the table full of Gryffindors, “Potter,” Blaise nodded.

“Zabini, Nott,” Harry replied.

The boys sat down between Harry and Neville. Neville paled, flinching slightly as though he expected the boys to hex him on contact.

When the six girls bustled into the Three Broomsticks, giggling and chatting, they stopped short as they saw seven boys from both Gryffindor and Slytherin laughing over drinks together.

“What the fuck am I seeing right now?” Ginny said in awe.

“Something similar to what they’re seeing I bet” Daphne replied as the boys all stared back at the inter-house group of girls.

“Let’s sit, I’d love a drink,” Luna said brightly. Padma and Parvati looked at each other and shrugged.

“Let’s do this, ladies,” said Pansy as she linked arms with Ginny and marched towards the large table currently occupied by the boys.
“If I read one more word, my eyes are going to shrivel up and fall out of my head,” Draco moaned.

“Always with the drama, Draco,” Hermione smirked. “I suppose it’s about time for dinner. Do you want to go to the great hall together?”

“I actually had something else in mind,” Draco said, “Do you trust me?”

In spite of herself, Hermione nodded, “Yes, I do trust you.” Draco grinned, and Hermione decided she liked Draco best when he was smiling. It was a smile that encompassed his whole face, his eyes lighting up and crinkling at the sides.

“Well come on then,” Draco extended his hand as he stood up to help Hermione off the couch they had so thoroughly settled into.

“The books,” Hermione started, but Draco just waved his wand and the volumes stacked themselves and flew off to the bookshelves at the other end of the common room. “Show off,” she snorted. Draco winked.

Draco didn’t let go of Hermione’s hand as he led the girl out the common room and through the castle, descending the stairs to the large front doors of Hogwarts. Hermione raised an eyebrow at him as he lead her through the great doors and out into the night. She shivered as the cold wind met them at the threshold. Draco quickly cast a warming charm over the both of them with a small crooked smile.

The pair walked down towards the black lake. As they approached the large willow tree in the meadow by the water, Hermione saw the most beautiful spread of food, set upon a plaid blanket.

“It’s beautiful!” She cried, and looked over at Draco who was not admiring his work but rather looking directly at the witch.

“I asked Winky to bring a bit of everything,” he said.

“You know Winky?” Hermione marveled.

“Of course. She’s my favorite, but don’t tell the others or they’ll stop sneaking pie out of the kitchens for me”.

“But she’s a house-elf!”

“Astute observation”.

Hermione punched Draco in the arm. “No, I mean, I know she’s a house elf, but why would you know her?”

“Look, I know what you’re saying,” Draco said, rubbing his arm dramatically, “Like I’ve
said, I really have changed a lot—especially in the past year. One of those steps has been thoroughly examining nearly every belief my father ever instilled in me. I knew that if he had poisoned my mind so deeply with blood purity, that there had to be countless other prejudices to begin to break down”. He ran his hand through his hair, sighing. “So, while I was re-building the castle as part of my probation this summer, I began to apologize to the house elf staff when I could. Winky was the first to respond positively to me. She’s more than a little enthusiastic about me now, and over the course of the summer I made amends with the remaining elves”.

“Draco, that’s absolutely incredible!” Hermione was beaming. “I knew you said you changed, and I had seen it through the way you have been treating the other students, but this is just—”

“I appreciate it, but I didn’t do it to look better or to convince people I’m different now. The way I treated the elves when I was a kid… It just wasn’t right.”

“Well, I’m proud of you, Draco. I really am,” she smiled at him and he found himself grinning again.

“Come on, I’m starving”. Draco sat them down on the blanket which was charmed to stay warm on the quickly frosting ground, and the entire area was enveloped with a warming charm as well. The boy began unpacking food, filling a heaping plate for Hermione first, and then himself. Last, he pulled a chilled bottle of elvish wine from a basket and poured each of them a glass of the pink liquid.

“Not poison, I swear,” he winked as he took a small sip, then paused, raising his glass towards Hermione. “To inter-house unity,” he said.

“To inter-house unity,” she replied, giggling as she took a sip. The wine was sweet, fragrant and slightly bubbly. The pair began to eat in relative silence, engrossed in the decadent food. Here and there they would comment on a particularly good bite that the other had yet to try. By the time they had each cleared two platefuls, Hermione was stuffed. She leaned back on her elbows on the warm quilt and looked up at the perfectly clear night sky.

“It’s much nicer looking at the stars when you’re not on the freezing astronomy tower,” she remarked.

“Too true. I always try to come out here when I can. It’s hard though, the constellations are a bit too much of a Black-Malfoy family tree for my tastes. Its tradition, you know, to name us after the stars”.

“I’d noticed that. Where are you?” Draco leaned over towards Hermione to level his gaze from her perspective. He could smell her vanilla shampoo, her flowery perfume, and what seemed to be a lingering smell of books and parchment.

“There, that’s me over there”. Draco pointed near the northern horizon.

“I like it,” she said.

“I’m so glad you like my dots in the sky,” he joked.

“No really, I think it’s beautiful”.

“I think you’re beautiful”.

“Draco”.
“Hermione”.

“We can’t’.

“We don’t have to tell anyone. You always secretly liked breaking the rules”.

“Did not”.

“Now who’s the liar,” He smiled, lifting his hand to rest on her cheek. She leaned into his warm, calloused palm.

“You’re right. I always did like that,” she said, leaning in to meet his lips with hers. Draco sighed as his lips softened against Hermione’s. It was more than he had ever imagined it to be. She was soft and warm and tasted like chocolate and wine. He moved his hand to wrap it in the soft curls at the base of her neck. She in turn put her hand on his firm chest. When his tongue met her lips she pulled back ever so slightly.

“Easy, there ‘Slytherin sex god’,”

“Not you too!” He moaned, dropping his head to her shoulder.

“I’m only kidding, Draco”.

“It’s okay, we can go slow”.

“I’d like that”.

“Is it because- Are you a-” he started, awkwardly. Hermione burst into laughter.

“Are you asking me if I’m a virgin??”

“It’s okay if you are! I don’t want to make you uncomfortable”.

“Merlin, no I’m not”.

“Who?”

“Oh, like we have time to list all of yours while we’re at it,” Hermione teased.

“Hey now, that’s not very nice. I’ll have you know that there’s only ever been one for me…”

“You’re joking”.

“I’m not. Pansy and I hooked up fourth year but never did the deed. I lost it to Astoria Greengrass, Daphne’s sister last year. I think I was just looking for comfort, or normalcy,” he confided.

“There’s just been the one for me, too,” Hermione said.

“Ron?”

“No, he’s been in love with me for years, but after our kiss during the final battle at Hogwarts, I realized I would never see him as more than a friend, so I broke it off with him. I did something similar to you, I guess. I wrote to Victor after the war was over and we met up. I just wanted to feel normal, to feel like all the other girls after everything I’d been through”.

“You fucked Krum? The most famous Quidditch seeker in the world!?”
“Elegant”.

“I only meant… Damn, Hermione,” he laughed. Hermione wanted to hit him again, but instead she just leaned down and kissed him briefly.

“If I knew that would shut you up that well, I would’ve done it a long time ago”.

“You’re ridiculous, you know that?”

.oOoOoOo.

Draco’s head was buzzing, likely more from the kisses than the wine as he and Hermione walked hand in hand back to the castle. Hermione dropped hers from his grip as they approached the large front doors. As disappointed as Draco was, it was smart on her part as they heard the boisterous group of students stumbling up the path from Hogsmeade.

“Is that… Harry and Blaise?”

“Sure is,” Hermione squinted at the oncoming gang.

“What about Ginny?”

“They’ve been together for years, they’re fine apart. Besides, that’s Ginny in the back talking to Pansy,”

“She’s what?” Draco yelled. Hermione laughed in spite of herself.

“Afraid she’ll spill your dirty secrets, Malfoy?” she started walking towards the group without waiting for Draco’s answer. As she approached, Harry wrapped her in a hug picking her up off the ground. He was certainly sloshed at this point, and the rest of the group didn’t look much better.

“C’mon Ginny,” he slurred, letting go of Hermione. Ginny waved goodbye to the girls and skipped over to grab Harry’s hand as they weaved their way back up to the castle. The rest of the students joined Hermione and Malfoy.

“Did you find a dress for me?” Hermione asked Luna.

“We did!” She beamed

“We?”

“It turned out to be a group effort”. Luna said, looking to the other girls in the group.

“Merlin help me,” Hermione moaned. “Let’s see it then”.

“Oh, well Ginny’s taken it with her. She said you’d likely return it when you see it, so she’s keeping it until Halloween”.

“She’ll be the death of me. I swear”.

Draco caught Hermione’s exasperated expression and chuckled to himself as he chatted with Theo, Blaise, and the Gryffindor boys.

Together, the students wandered back to the castle. By now it was nearly eleven and the group dispersed quickly to their respective dormitories.
Draco knew he had no chance of getting to sleep anytime soon. He quickly drew the curtains around his silky green bed and reached under the mattress. Unlocking the journal, he turned to a fresh page in the worn volume.

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October 24th, 1998

Tonight was my first date with Hermione, or at least I hope she saw it that way, too. She was the one who kissed me! I knew I couldn’t make that move myself. I’m still terrified she hates me even when everything she does says otherwise. I’m starting to think she’s seen a change in me. I hope so desperately she has. The Halloween Ball is in just one week, and I want her to be my date but I know that it’s against the rules and no matter how she feels about me she wouldn’t risk her school standing to do it. I’ll have to settle for seeing her from afar. My feelings are growing faster for her than I originally thought possible. But, I have years of caring for her on my side, when I know she’s just now seeing me. That kiss though, that kiss will keep me going for weeks, I’m sure.
Draco woke from the first nightmare he’d had all week, drenched in sweat. He assumed his magical night with Hermione had been the reason the nightmares were kept at bay but he still hadn’t slept as well as the night she spent in his bed. In this dream, Draco saw the Dark Lord killing professor Charity Burbage time and time again. Her screams echoed through the manor and his ears were left ringing as he woke up. He shivered violently upon recalling the horrors of that night and every night he spent in the manor with the devil himself. He slowly propped himself in bed as he regained control over himself. A grey light caught the particles of dust swirling in the air as it snuck through a crack in his bed curtains. It dawned on him then that it was Halloween morning, which meant the school would be alive with anticipation of the ball soon enough.

Draco willed himself from the comfort of his perfectly charmed bed, laying his bare feet on the cold floor of the dormitory. As he opened the curtains of his bed, he saw Harry leaned over, head in hands sitting on the edge of his bed across the room.

“Nightmare?” he asked quietly. Harry only nodded. “Same here,” he said, standing up and stretching. He padded to the foot of his bed, grabbing a towel and fresh clothes, heading to the boys’ showers across the hall. The bathroom was freezing as none of the other boys had yet to wake, let alone shower. Draco quickly turned the nearest shower as high as it would go, hoping the steam would warm him quickly as he was still only clad in boxers from his sleep. As mirrors began to fog with steam, Draco stripped and stepped under the scalding water, adjusting the tap slightly to keep himself from melting entirely. The night’s terror was still throbbing at his temples, he heard screams of the innocent punctuating his every thought. He held his aching head under the hot stream of the shower, his platinum locks were plastered to his face by the water. As he stood, he tried to chase the terrible thoughts from the forefront of his mind, back to being locked away somewhere safely in the depths.

He thought of Hermione, of their night together a week ago now. A warmth bloomed in his stomach and began to take the edge off his headache. The consequence of this, of course, was that his imagination would take flight every time he thought of their kiss. He imagined what she felt like, what she looked like, what she… tasted like. He wanted to taste more of her.

His hand moved south, taking himself in hand. He was achingly hard. He slowly began to stroke himself, long and languidly. A low groan escaped his throat and he bit down on his lower lip to quiet himself. In his mind’s eye, he was undressing her, trailing kisses up her abdomen as he pulled a cotton t-shirt over her head. As he began to unbutton her jeans in his imagination, the door to the bathroom creaked open and slammed shut, taking his fantasy with it. His hand stopped its ministrations as he dropped his forehead to the cold tiles with a thud.

“All right over there?” Harry called from the next stall as the water rushed on.

“Just dandy, Potter,” was the frustrated reply.

“Good to know you’re a morning person,” Harry laughed.

“My morning was going perfectly fine until you arrived”.

Halloween Part I

Chapter Ten - Halloween Part I

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“Gods forbid I interrupt a morning wank to shower in a public bathroom,” came the laughing voice again. Draco just sputtered in reply, and quickly began washing himself in an effort to escape the crippling awkward situation the Chosen One had so elegantly dragged him into.

“Are you coming?” Potter asked after a pause.

“Am I what?” Draco cried.

“Are you coming, I asked, to the ball?”

“Oh, right, the ball. I… I don’t have a date”.

“Neither does Blaise, Pansy, Padma, Seamus, Theo…” Harry rattled off a list.

“No one wants to see me there,” he muttered, hands paused halfway through shampooing his gold locks.

“Sure they do. Come to the dance, it’ll be fun”.

“Fun?”

“Yeah, fun. Ever heard of it?”

“Wanker”.

“Prat. You can’t even tell me you have nothing to wear, as if you don’t currently have two sets of dress robes in a wardrobe”.

“Three sets, actually”. Draco said haughtily as he turned off his shower. Harry burst into laughter at his remark.

“So, I’ll see you tonight, then,” Harry said matter-of-factly, stepping out of his own shower stall with a towel draped around his waist. He shook his head in what Draco could only assume was both his way to dry and style his unruly hair. When Harry left, Draco leaned against a sink, eyeing his reflection in the mirror. He looked down across his chest that was still criss-crossed with the scars left by Harry’s sectumsempra curse. How the times had changed between them, from bathroom duels to friendly banter in the showers in a matter of years.

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“It’s hopeless!” Ginny moaned, dropping her millionth attempt at a tiny braid.

“You’re making it too complicated, Ginny,” Hermione said kindly, circling around Ginny to inspect her canvas. “Here, let me help you”.

For herself, Hermione had opted to use the same potion she had chosen for the Yule Ball to tame her mane. As she stood now, wrapped in a cozy robe, her hair cascaded down her back in loose spirals. In a matter of minutes, she had nimbly braided several strands of Ginny’s fiery locks into an intricate pattern at the back of her head. She conjured a small mirror and held it up to the younger girl as she inspected Hermione’s work.

“Perfect!” she beamed. “Onto your makeup, I’m thinking a smokey eye”.

“Absolutely not,” Hermione argued. Across the room Pansy giggled and turned around to face the two Gryffindors.
“You’re insane, Weasley, if you think you’re getting Hermione to do that on top of that dress,” she laughed.

“Well, as it happens I haven’t seen the damn thing! And, I have more than enough charms to make it decent so we need not make me look like a slag,” Hermione was practically hysterical.

“It’s so lovely, though,” Luna said kindly. The younger girls had been invited to the eighth year dorm to help the older girls get ready, seeing as they had been so helpful in choosing their dresses.

“Fine fine fine, a natural look it is,” Ginny said, descending upon Hermione, brush in hand.

Just as five rolled around, each eighth year girl, plus Ginny and Luna were dressed, dolled and shimmering. All that was left, quite intentionally, was Hermione’s dress. The bright witch eyed the silver fabric skeptically, sure there was not nearly enough fabric to cover any important bits. Ginny pushed the dress into her hands, turned her around, and pushed her behind the dressing curtain the girls had set up.

“You haven’t given me a bra!” Hermione moaned.

“You won’t be needing one,” Ginny giggled back.

“How many sticking charms will I be needing then?”

“No more than two I swear!” The girls erupted in laughter, not at Hermione’s expense but rather in excitement that the ordinarily conservative witch had somehow agreed to their antics.

“Just pass me the shoes,” she said wearily. Ginny threw a pair of strappy silver heels over the curtain. Hermione lowered them an inch and slipped them on.

“No fucking way!” She yelled through the curtain. “Absolutely no fucking way!”

“Yes fucking way, get that cute arse out here,” Pansy called. Hermione stuck her head out from the curtain first, looking at the group of girls with a cold glare. Remembering who she was, what she’d accomplished, she threw her chin up, squared her shoulders and walked out into the room amidst a chorus of squeals.

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Draco stood in the corner of the dorm, sulking. He was dressed to the nines, hair done and bowtie knotted perfectly by the time it was time to leave. A Malfoy was nothing if not punctual. Neville was actively attempting to unknot his shoes from one another, hands shaking with nerves at his evening with Luna approached. Harry was attempting to tie Ron’s bowtie for what Draco estimated to be the tenth time.

“Step aside, Potter,” Draco elbowed him, and made quick work of Weasley’s bowtie despite the redhead flinching away from him.

“Right, everybody ready?” Harry looked around the room.

“Ready as I’ll ever be,” Draco muttered. The boys opened the door to the dormitory and walked down the corridor to wait in the common room. They settled into the couches and chairs, fully expecting the girls to be another while.

Harry’s battle-hardened reflexes heard the door to the girls’ room click first. His eyes
snapped up as his fire-haired witch lead the parade of girls arm in arm with Pansy, around the corner to the common room. She grinned as the golden boy stood up and made quick work of the space between them, scooping her into his arms and kissing her soundly. He was briefly oblivious to the world around him apparently as he kissed his girl. Pansy came next, walking confidently to the center of the room and turning with her hands on her hips to watch as the girls entered. The Patil sisters came next, Padma smiling shyly at Ron who crossed to offer her his arm. Parvati stood somewhat awkwardly near Pansy to watch the entrance as well. Luna skipped into the room, butterflies flitting to keep up and galloped over to Neville, embracing him warmly. Daphne was second to last, walking briskly into the room and smiling boldly at her Hogsmeade date, Dean. The tall boy returned her smile with a grin of his own.

Draco was still staring adamantly at the rug under his feet when Hermione walked in. As if sensing her presence, he slowly raised his gaze, starting from her bedazzled sandals. She was a vision in her dress, which looked like she had bathed in mercury. The gown was adorned with barely there straps, as though they’d been spun from spider’s silk. Silver fabric draped over her chest in a low v-shape and the light fabric kissed her flat stomach and womanly hips before falling straight down all the way to her feet. As if she expected Draco’s awe-struck look to be directed towards someone behind her, she slowly turned, revealing now that the dress had almost no back. The fabric of her skirt started just above her hips, and everything above that was just creamy skin, shining hair and spider-silk straps.

Draco hadn’t fully shut his mouth when Hermione realized it was her she was staring at. She smiled at him and he snapped his mouth shut, turning it into a trademark crooked smirk. He wished he could keep a photo of her like this, blush creeping from her chest to her cheeks. It took nearly all his willpower not to run over to her and kiss her like the desperate man he was.

Incidentally it was Ron who first approached Hermione, smiling affectionately at her and hugging her briefly, if not a little awkwardly. When Harry resurfaced from kissing Ginny, he too hugged Hermione. Draco was suddenly overcome with possessive frustration that he could not touch his witch. Well, he supposed she wasn’t really his… yet. He vowed in that moment he would change that as soon as he could. He couldn’t tear his eyes off her as she walked over towards the other single girls. When she joined Padma and Pansy, Draco locked eyes with the Slytherin girl who raised an eyebrow and rolled her eyes at his far-from-subtle stare.

Draco stood, eyeing Theo, Seamus and Blaise, “shall we?” He asked. The group gathered their things and filed towards the door of the dormitory. Draco hung back until Hermione had passed him last in the line. He placed a warm, firm hand on the small of her back. She jumped slightly, nearly stumbling, then turned and shot him a glare which quickly melted into a small smile.
Students swirled across the dancefloor like colorful snowflakes. The group of eighth year students stood briefly in the doorway before marching into the Great Hall, smiling and laughing. Draco had dropped his hand from Hermione’s back when they had caught up to the rest of the older students, and the cold loss of his hand had followed her down the corridors. She longed for his touch now, more than she ever wanted to admit.

The Great Hall was decorated more extravagantly than any other Halloween Hermione had ever seen. Hundreds of carved pumpkins floated above a dance floor, casting a warm glow over the hall. Banners of purple, green and orange draped the walls of the hall, and the ceiling was perfectly clear and bright with stars. Round tables surrounded the shiny black dance floor, filled with students dressed in their best. At the front of the room was the professors’ table, where Headmistress McGonagall sat amongst the other professors, chatting and drinking.

A charmed tray of drinks floated by, offering pumpkin juice to younger students and butterbeer and firewhiskey to the older. Draco quickly grabbed a tumbler of firewhiskey, downed it and took another before the tray was out of his reach. Harry raised an eyebrow at Draco as he watched him drink.

“Not a word, Potter”.

“I didn’t say anything”.

Draco knew he could play off his anxiety as social, when really all he could think of was the fact that his mother was at their manor with at least a dozen death eaters right now. Hermione drifted next to Draco, firewhiskey in hand.

“Didn’t know you indulged,” he said.

“When you know what’s going outside these walls tonight, when you know what we know… You need something a bit stronger, don’t you think?”

Draco lifted his glass to hers, “cheers to that”.

“What are we going to do, Draco?”

“I have no idea. But I think it’s time we ask for a little professional advice,” he said, looking to Bill Weasley sitting at the head table with his wife, Fleur.

“I was thinking the same thing,” she replied.

“Let’s enjoy this night while we can, then,” he said, as Blaise approached, carrying a tumbler in each hand.

“Fancy a dance, Hermione?” the wizard asked. Draco glared at him briefly before schooling himself back to a neutral impression. He knew he could spare a single dance at best with the fellow Head in the name of tradition, but dancing with her more than that would only raise suspicion about their relationship.
“If you behave yourself,” she replied.

“No promises,” he winked, throwing back each drink and depositing the empty glasses on a nearby tray, then offered her his hand. She laughed and took his, following him to the dancefloor. Draco watched her as she spun around his friend, he didn’t notice Harry beside him as he was so entranced.

“If you can’t take your eyes off her, people will start figuring you out,” he said.

“When did you get so observant?” Draco drawled.

“I find being hunted by Voldemort for seven years has made me a little more in tune with details”. Draco flinched at the name.

“And furthermore, what exactly do you think is going on? We’re co-Heads, that’s all”.

“I’m not sure there’s anything going on, but you can’t deny being particularly… interested in her”.

“She’s alright I suppose, if you like prissy know-it-alls,” Draco said, defensively. Harry just elbowed him and went to find Ginny.

Draco had danced with Pansy, Daphne and Ginny before he gathered his nerve to ask Hermione to dance. She was just finishing a twirl with Ron when he approached the pair.

“Mind if I cut in?” he asked Ron.

“Actually, I do,” Ron said coldly.

“Ron, please, he’s Head Boy it’s good for us to be seen being civil,” Hermione pleaded with her red-haired friend. Ron just glared at Malfoy and stepped aside, keeping his eye on the former Death Eater for a moment before turning his back and marching into the crowd. Draco raised his left hand, and hesitated a moment before laying his right gently on Hermione’s waist. She tensed a moment, and put her right hand in his and placing the other on his shoulder. The witch smiled and squeezed his shoulder slightly, which he returned at her waist. They slowly stepped into the fray of dancing students, twirling and swaying in time with the music. As the song crescendoed, Draco put both hands on Hermione’s waist and lifted her as he spun. She let out a small squeal and smiled. Draco had never seen such joy on the girl’s face, and grinned back with excitement that it was him who made her smile so brightly.

Before he knew it, the song ended and the pair stood still for a moment, still connected, breathing heavily. Hermione was lost to Draco’s silver gaze for what seemed like hours before she caught herself and lowered her head.

“I wish I could kiss you,” Draco said almost inaudibly.

“You’re not alone,” Hermione murmured.

“I’m going to have to let you go,” he said.

“What?” Surprise and sadness graced Hermione’s face.

“The song’s over, Hermione, I have to let you go”.

“Oh, right,” she blushed, “thank you for the dance”.

“Thank you for the dance,” Hermione said, her voice quivering.

Draco smiled and took her hand, leading her away from the dancefloor. He looked at her with love in his eyes, and she smiled back. They walked through the crowd, everyone staring at them in awe. Draco and Hermione were the talk of the school that night, and they knew they would always remember this night as one of the best of their lives.
“The pleasure was all mine,” he dropped his arms, bowed slightly, and turned to walk back to his friends.

“Who knew what Hermione’s been hiding under her robes all these years,” Blaise said.

“Shut the fuck up, Z”.

“Oi what’s got your knickers in a twist, Draco?”

“She’s a person, and as good as she looks tonight she’s still a person”.

“Well if you’re not making a move, I will,” Blaise said.

“Good luck with that one,” Draco said haughtily. “She’s too smart for the likes of you”.

“Fuck off, she knows she’d be lucky to have me”.

“No one would be lucky to have you,” Theo cut in playfully, walking into the group.

“Just because you’ve got a not-so-secret hard-on for Finnigan doesn’t mean we’re all immune to women,” Blaise shot back

“Fuck you,” Theo said defensively, “we’re friends”.

“Whatever. Watch and learn boys,” Blaise said walking up to Hermione who was chatting with the Patil sisters.

“Seamus, eh?” Draco said to Theo.

“Blaise would never understand. I know he doesn’t give a fuck if I like guys too, he would never let me forget sleeping with a Gryffindor”.

“If I’m not mistaken, sleeping with a Gryffindor is exactly what he’s trying right now”.

As if on cue, a smack reverberated through the hall, and Blaise was clutching his cheek in surprise. Hermione had a satisfied smirk on her face before panic set in and she glanced to the professors’ table, where she was lucky to find they were too occupied to have noticed her outburst. Draco and Theo doubled over in laughter, and Theo actually fell to the floor in a fit of hysterics.

“The fuck did you say to her, Blaise?” Theo asked as Blaise rejoined them.

“I asked her if she wanted to Slytherin to my Chamber of Secrets…” The boys laughed harder, tears streamed down Nott’s face.

“Did- Did you think that was going to work? Has that ever worked?” Theo got out between laughs.

“Fuck you two,” Blaise said, walking away to the bar to nurse his ego.

“I better see if she’s okay,” Draco said and headed towards Hermione, Padma and Parvati. The girls were whispering in hushed tones, giggling and clutching their stomachs.

“Blaise is an idiot,” Draco said, “but I suppose he’s my idiot. Alright, Granger?”

“I think I took care of it,” she smirked.
“More than took care of it!” Padma said.

“That was bloody brilliant Hermione!” Parvati added. Draco joined their laughter and reached for drinks off a nearby tray.

“To well deserved hits!” He cheered, and they all took a drink.

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“Damn these shoes,” Hermione moaned several hours later, sitting at a table with Luna and Daphne. Dean and Neville had wandered off to the bar for another drink when the girls had announced they couldn’t survive another dance in their heels.

“How has Dean been?” Hermione turned to Daphne.

“He’s been a true gentleman,” Daphne said diplomatically.

“Did you enjoy your kiss in the hallway the other night?” Luna said sincerely, albeit obliviously. Daphne blushed furiously.

“Luna!” Hermione admonished the kind girl.

“It’s okay, I should’ve been more careful. But… it was good, it was really good,” Daphne said shyly.

“That’s wonderful, Daphne”, the older witch said, “truly”.

“Well, speaking of great kisses, I think it’s time I gather Neville and leave,” Luna announced. The girls giggled at her honesty and wished her goodnight. The students were filing out of the hall in groups and pairs by now, Ginny and Harry hadn’t been seen in an hour, and Hermione was quite tired. She looked around the room, realizing she’d lost track of Draco. They had been stealing glances and smiles all night, but she hadn’t seen him in a little bit. Assuming he too had found exhaustion, she excused herself from Daphne and decided to go to bed.

She was rounding the corner from the Great Hall to the stairwell when a hand reached out from an alcove and grabbed her wrist. Another hand clamped down over her mouth muffling her scream.

“Shhh,” a voice said, “I’ve been waiting for this all night”. The arms turned her around and she found herself face-to-face with Draco. He dropped his arms from her and she immediately punched him in the chest.

“What the fuck are you thinking!” She cried, “What if I had my wand out? I could’ve hexed you, I could’ve hurt you!”

“A risk I was willing to take,” he said lowly.

“You’re bloody insane, Draco,” she huffed.

“You like it”.

“I like it”.

Draco lifted his hands back up, moving Hermione’s hair away from her face and resting his palms on either cheek. The witch sighed and Draco leaned in to brush a soft kiss on her full lips. She smiled against his lips, then rested her forehead against his.
“You look so beautiful tonight,” Draco said, gazing into her warm brown eyes.

“Draco,” she started, but he silenced her with another kiss. This one was more earnest, and Hermione leaned into him as he wrapped his hands in her hair at the base of her neck. The witch’s hands drifted to Draco’s waist, pulling him closer until their bodies were flush against one another. Draco moaned slightly as Hermione’s body melded with his. Feeling bold, Hermione took advantage of his soft sound and licked the gap in his lips, feeling the warmth of his breath and the hard line of his teeth. He responded, matching her move, their lips and tongues and breath dancing together as they poured their passion into the kiss.

Draco lowered his hands from Hermione’s hair, trailing feather touches down her bare back, his hands coming to rest at her hips as he continued to ravish her mouth. The sounds she made were like a drug to him, and he thought he had never been harder in his life. He pulled the girl’s hips toward him, settling her against his own. She gasped when she felt his arousal against her stomach and instinctively pulled him closer, her body writhing against his as they kissed. The wizard lowered his hands further, cupping her silk-clad arse.

“Draco,” she halted her kiss.

“I’m so sorry, I-”

“Don’t be sorry, Draco,” she said kindly, “I just- I don’t want it to be like this, in a cold dirty alcove of a hallway”.

“Right, of course, I wasn’t thinking”.

“Neither was I”.

“Should we… Should we go upstairs? Somewhere else?”

“As much as I’m enjoying myself, we should stop, slow down,” she said, yet her voice was filled with longing and regret.

“I understand, we’ll go at your pace, I promise,” he said.

“Come on,” he took her in one hand and adjusted himself in his trousers with the other. Hermione chuckled as he did so.

“I’m sorry to leave you in such a… state,” she said.

“Nothing I can’t handle,” he laughed.

The pair walked hand-in-hand as far as the door to the eighth year common room, where they let each other’s hand slip away. Draco tapped the sequence of bricks and the archway cleared.

The common room was alive with students continuing the party. Hermione smiled, spotting Ginny and Harry with the other students and headed straight towards the group. Draco nodded to Blaise and Theo who were in the midst of the other houses’ students but excused himself to the dormitory. He didn’t want to blow his cover with Hermione and had quite the problem to deal with from his incredible snog with the girl. He figured if he spent one more moment looking at Hermione in that dress, he wouldn’t be able to control himself.

Luckily for Draco, all the students were in the common room or some abandoned classroom no doubt. The silence of the boys’ dormitory enveloped him as he shed his dress robes and settle himself into his emerald bed. He quickly shut the curtains around the bed and cast a silencing charm just in case someone should walk in. Laying back in his bed, he eased his hand into his
black boxers, grasping his now half-hard cock. He closed his eyes and pictured Hermione dancing in her silver gown, spinning and smiling. Stroking slowly, he quickly grew fully hard and sighed to himself as his imagination drifted to the alcove in the hallway. He could still taste the firewhiskey from her tongue on his. His hand moved faster as he imagined what could’ve happened if Hermione had not stopped him. He pictured himself dragging the thin straps of her dress down her smooth shoulders, revealing that she wore nothing underneath the silk as it pooled around her ankles. He fell to his knees in front of her, dying to kiss her, to taste more of her. He shuddered as his hand whipped over his weeping prick, and while imagining himself feasting upon the golden girl, he came.

He had completely forgotten about the Death Eaters as he was pulled to sleep, dreaming of Hermione.

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